

Title of presentation

Is Belonging Enough? Nostalgia, Mattering and Belonging as a Framework for Inclusive Online Practice in the Pandemic

Presenters

Dr Nicholas Bowskill, Mr David Hall, Ms. Lucy Hutchinson & Ms Melody Harrogate

Abstract

The contribution made by this paper is to indicate how successful institutional uses of technology, made during the pandemic, might relate to a range of emotional outcomes at both individual and social levels. A framework is provided. The paper goes further by highlighting concerns that a focus on sense of belonging, for the support of wellbeing and learning, may be insufficient in emergency education. Wider implications are discussed for staff and student inclusion beyond the pandemic.

The global Coronavirus pandemic, at its height in the first wave of 2020, reaped havoc with education across all sectors causing schools, colleges and universities worldwide. Institutions closed and learning moved online. Staff and students worked from home often with little knowledge, experience, or skills to adopt distance education. For many, the use of technology was new, and they were unprepared. The necessary applications extended to student support, wellbeing, learning and teaching. Institutions responded by deploying technology at short notice. This was often in contexts with unequal access and varied resources.

Combined with the wider health concerns, this situation caused anxiety and stress for many, but a key question relates to the uncertain relationship between the successful use of technology and the resulting emotions. How did institutions use technology to good affect? How do those digital interventions map onto any emotional consequences?

Based upon empirical research, drawn from case studies of schools in the UK and in China, this paper presents a three-part framework mapping the way technology has been used in specific institutions during the pandemic in the first wave of 2020. These are cases of two institutions both with largely positive experiences of coping during the pandemic. Analysis shows the use of technology (1) making experience communal, (2) making experience visible, and (3) making experience flexible.

We extend this initial framework of technology deployment during the pandemic and argue, from our data, that we can map emotional outcomes onto each part. This elaborated framework includes a sense of mattering (technology making experience flexible), a sense of belonging (technology making experience communal) and a sense of nostalgia (technology making experience visible). Finally, we draw implications about the need for further research into the adequacy of any institutional focus based solely upon developing a sense of belonging to address wellbeing. This is considered further for educational settings within and beyond educational emergencies.