



Technophobes versus technophiles: understanding the enemy's position through reflection



JANUARY 3, 2020

It may only take one conversation in academia to discover that there are alternative views and beliefs to those that are your own. For me, it has always been apparent that not every scholar or academic shares the same confidence that technology harnesses the power to change the world for the better, and subsequently improve lives. For instance, Ormerod (2018) recently published a book titled 'Why Social Media is Ruining Your Life', where it is argued that social media is a 'double edge sword' that 'cuts deeply both ways' and this is a narrative that many scholars and researchers subscribe to. Furthermore, social networking sites rarely receive positive headlines across media outlets and this is exemplified in a recent article by BBC News (2019) where 'social-media use' is considered as 'disrupting teen sleep and exercise'. I often find that I alienate myself even more when I passionately advocate the use of social media platforms and discuss my current research on social media and pedagogy.

Upon describing my research interest in social media to fellow scholars in the social science community, I have received responses such as 'it does more harm than good', or 'I just stay away from it' and 'Facebook isn't a learning tool'. The lack of understanding on issues around my research (in other words, the benefits & drawbacks) can often become confusing as well as frustrating for both parties. Dissimilar to most arguments for and against different social science principles/philosophies, with regards to technology you are either a self-proclaimed 'technophobe' or 'technophile'.

Molina (2015) describes a technophobe as someone who rarely adopts new technologies, whereas a technophile is someone who makes the most of the technology efficiencies and is active on social media. Essentially, there are those who adopt technology and those who ignore it, although there may be underlying reasons why this is.

Upon synthesising the literature, I found that other 'Education Technologists' or those with involvement in 'EdTech' have similar experiences to my own. A high volume of papers reference professional development as a challenge that exists in using and understanding technology in teaching. Trowler (2008) argues that there are a complex range of personal, social and professional factors that influence pedagogy with technology in education. CPD must be transformative and consider these factors as illustrated in Ingleby, Wilford & Hedges (2019), and additionally, as a researcher I must be able comprehend those with opposing digital identities.

I recently spoke with an academic who specialises in IT in education and who seems to be sceptical about all technological advancements since the early 2000s. I asked him why he was opposed to social media and he told me that 'there are so many developments in technology that I no longer feel like an expert...I am unable to embrace them as my skills quickly become out of date. First, I have to learn it then I have to accept it'. This personal reflection revealed how his view of social media had never been addressed in workshops or internal training. The absence of personal, social and professional considerations in CPD has guided him to make a technology shift, moving away from a once proud technophile into technophobe territory. Suddenly, references such as 'I just stay away from it' seem to be credible responses, and thus, educational institutes must take ownership of appropriately training their educators to meet the high demands of the present day learners, who can expect new technology to be embedded with their learning experiences. It is no longer reasonable to host workshops that centre on the functionality of education technology (in other words, 'the what'), over personal, social and professional backgrounds (in other words, the why and how).

A grasp of social media is more significant than just building an online community, as social media holds the potential to improve the confidence, the social learning and the creativity of learners (Lewis 2017). Longfield (2018) argues that those who feel marginalised by disability, migration or sexuality can be introduced to a wider selection of peers via social media, thus benefitting their social well-being. It is possible that the absence of social media in the classroom could have a detrimental impact on the future workforce; schools omitting a tool that yields over 70,000 job vacancies is highly irresponsible (see West 2017). In my view, King (2015) summaries the predicament best:

'The speed of technological innovation and industry is moving faster than higher education's ability to adapt. How can we expect students to be effective and successful employees when we're using outdated models to prepare them?'

References

- BBC news. 2019. Social-media use 'disrupting teen sleep and exercise'. [Online]. [20 December 2019]. Available from: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/health-49330254>
- Ingleby, E, Wilford, B & Hedges, C. 2019, 'Teaching with technology and higher education: A brave new world?', Practice: Contemporary Issues in Practitioner Education, vol. 1, no. 1, pp. 73-88.
- King, M. 2015. Why Higher Ed and Business Need to Work Together. [Online]. [20 December 2019]. Available from: <https://hbr.org/2015/07/why-higher-ed-and-business-need-to-work-together>
- Lewis, T. L. 2017. Social media and student engagement in anatomy education. Anatomical sciences education, 10 (5), 508–508.
- Molina, R. 2015. Are you a technophobe or technophile? [Online]. [20 December 2019]. Available from: <https://www.brightbull.co.uk/blog/are-you-a-b2b-marketing-technophobe-or-technophile>
- Ormerod, K., 2018. Why social media is ruining your life. Hachette UK.
- Trowler, P. 2008. Cultures and change in higher education. theories and practice. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Author

Ryan Williams

ryan.williams@tees.ac.uk

 Share on Facebook

 Tweet

Tags: [EDUCATION](#) [PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT](#) [TECHNOLOGY](#)

SHARE THIS PAGE WITH YOUR NETWORKS

