

## Book Review of *Teaching and Learning with Technology: Pushing boundaries and breaking down walls*

Naidu, S. & Narayan, S. (eds.) (2020). *Teaching and learning with technology: pushing boundaries and breaking down walls*. Suva, Fiji: USP Press. 218 pages. ISBN 978-982-01-0998-8.

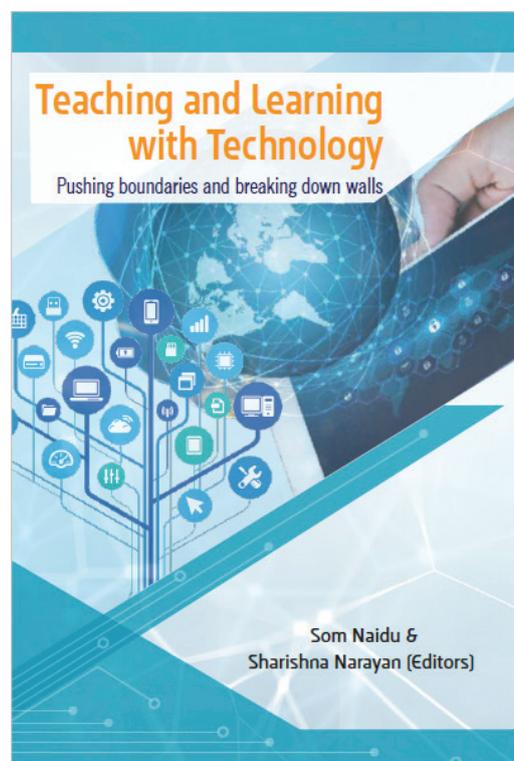
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### Introduction

Technology has brought an immense amount of advancement as well as complexities in education. Across the world, educational institutions have been trying to establish culture as well as a system to facilitate the optimum use of resources. The University of South Pacific handles education of a diverse group of learners and has a very large and solid base in the region. The project and the subsequent documentation of the learning outcomes sound ambitious as well as a committed offering. The influence of Technology always carries the need to study its impact as well as the possibilities for improvement. As Prof. Som Naidu has pointed out in the preface about a debate of media versus method, this work seems to suggest a logical as well as an implementable model of teaching-learning with technology. Whether it is the influence of technology on learning or it is the counter-argument we can see that both the technology and the teaching-learning activities influence each other to a significant level.

### Structure and content

There are 11 chapters in this book and all of them have got their agenda streamlined but these are not restricted in their vision as well as in their focus. While covering various challenges and issues in mobile and blended learning the team has also brought inputs about learning outcomes concerning two different contexts in online learning. Experts and pioneers, in the area of technology-empowered learning, say that technology changes the way we use it. The current book seems to bring out some valid and useful insights about the same. The media and the method are correlated and interdependent is what we see in the introduction itself. The concern is to make the methods successful enough to leverage the media. Because it is being referred to education and the teaching-learning process the primary focus is on the improvement of learning and teaching strategies. This makes this book useful to teachers, curriculum developers, elearning and mobile learning designers and researchers.



## Overall impression and relevance to the field of distance education and e-learning

The 21st-century approach of project-based learning inspired and got support from the USP team when they experimented with the use of technology in teaching History. Checking the students out and making the new technology to understand history seems magical. Therefore 21st-century skills that students and even teachers need to possess –communication, collaboration, creativity and critical thinking will become double beneficial if collaboration helps them. We see the same in the research about teaching history using Technology. The fieldwork which was done to let the students be collaborative and the static nature of teaching history became engaging.

Chapter on evaluating students' perceptions of blended learning has placed the First Things First. Because students are the actual users and flag-bearers of the technological goodness, they need to be asked and engaged at the very onset. Their response, as well as their reactions, seems to have guided this research in a good direction.

The development of an application which brought all the students together to understand history is great. The chapter 'engaging with living histories' is followed by a collaborative online reading with PERUSALL. Peer to peer learning in the form of online collaboration among students was accomplished in the Perusall LMS, as we noted that this is a tool to help and support online group based reading. This sounds great because reading has been pushed to the back seat and is being considered useless. The study has rejected the lack of interest among students as the motivation to bring ahead innovative learning.

One of the most significant and impressive inputs in the book is its recommendation of developing environments that encourage learning rather than running after the task to motivate learner. It says that if the learners will have the desire to study they will certainly engage in activities. Therefore, the teaching and learning with technology should focus on developing motivating learning environments.

The book discusses the formative assessment in large online classes. We see that the massive open online courses offered these days on various popular platforms also give an option of peer assessment where the fellow learners get the task as well as the option to review and assess the submissions made by their peers.

Education is not challenged by Logistics or Technology alone, there may be the natural circumstances and the demography-cum-geography of the region. Needless to mention in detail that USP has enough to manage on this account. The haves and have nots are also been demarcated by nature. The chapter 'It Rains A Lot Here' talks about Mother Nature and the conduct of the online assessment amid nature's challenges.

Supporting the flexible assessment of competencies with portfolios and another chapter titled researching learning and teaching technologies for flexible learning are also useful to understand how the complete teaching-learning phenomena have to be designed. The way these things are to be integrated and the way these things are to be used both these aspects have been studied.

There are different ways of delivering education since decades we have kept ourselves to pedagogy which is an instructive approach of teaching. Due to the lack of a holistic approach, this mode has been less productive. There have been two ways of delivering education known as Andragogy and Heutagogy. Both these approaches take us away from the Limited impacts of Pedagogy. As stated in this research, we get self-directed and flexible learning environments in these two approaches of teaching. Making the students aware of various needs and nuances in education, the chapter supporting the transition to tertiary level how students engage with academic literacy, is worth a read.

There is a very significant and unique chapter which talks about one of the most recommended and required aspects of modern education. That is inclusiveness. We know that technology should be used in education to bridge the gap between the have nots and the haves. To start working

for those who are differently-abled because of their physical limitations and ignoring the ones who face financial handicap will be killing what education means. This work keeps both the Financially challenged and Physically Challenged in view.

The project studies are not like the boring or stereotype passages after passages, rather the writers have written stories. This is an impressive way of telling the story of technology with the story-telling technique.

To sum up the review, I would put on record that this work is an excellent document to pave way for further betterment at the USP as well as the institutions that wish to follow the model. As placed in the title of the book - Pushing boundaries and breaking down walls – the book concludes successfully by taking this affirmation from the reader.

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## References

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