

Institutional compassion: a co-design approach to developing digital wellbeing

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Abstract

Higher Education Institutional digital strategies are a contested area. On the surface, well-versed narratives of digital strategies, institutional culture change and technical infrastructure to drive innovation are well documented in University public plans; however, the UCISA/JISC (2019) digital leadership in Higher Education report cites 70% of IT leaders expressing concerns about significant barriers to successful digital rollout. Organizational culture is the most significant, and one-in-four cite the of lack sponsorship from institutional executive teams. Changing the working practices of academics is of particular note in the literature, and thus models that can frame the changes and offer an evidence base drawing together national and international drivers are essential. Two of these, the European Union (EU) and JISC digital competency frameworks have been revised, and include for the first time some limited considerations around lifelong learning, wellbeing and self-development. Thus student digital wellbeing has finally making it onto the digital frameworks. It is timely to share the findings of our three year 'ontology of digital toolkits' study. Taking a mixed methods approach, and comprising a survey of TEL leaders (n=36), in-depth interviews and content analysis from seven UK HEIs, our findings identified 4 common themes; the role of the educator in engaging with TEL; the development of TEL toolkits as an institutional norm; a schism where educators are perceived as providers and students as receivers; and finally the gap identified by learners, both staff and students, as they struggle with archaic HEI structures which fail to acknowledge desires for lifelong learning and address digital wellbeing. Our findings indicate that staff attitudes to Technology Enhanced learning (TEL) remain problematic; students are not yet being fully developed as digital co-creators, and digital wellbeing is an area poorly covered sector wide. Current commercially created resources on digital wellbeing tend to be a series of apps and webpages, (often using images of white, female, middle aged women holding cups of tea, see <https://learndigital.withgoogle.com/digitalgarage/course/digital-wellbeing>) that typically (and paradoxically) suggest ways of digital detox, as if disconnection somehow magically produces 'digital wellbeing'. Such resources typically do not address, what the EU project on wellbeing describes as "peer pressure, cyber-bullying, oversharing of personal information [which] can all cause significant problems, inhibiting a young person's development as a confident online learner and citizen." (EU Digital Wellbeing 2019) We reflect on the possibilities going forward to support institutions as they continue to shape their policies toward the digital, offering a Digital Learning Maturity Model (DLMM). This model enables self assessment and benchmarking and encompasses the new dimension of institutional compassion, co-designed and with our learners. Our presentation explains the origin and purpose of the DLMM, provides information on how institutions can assess themselves against the five level of maturity and makes the case for institutional compassion as a key element in digital strategies. The presentation will be of

interest to those institutions wanting to benchmark their digital strategy and those seeking to provide greater prominence to staff and student wellbeing.