

BJET Editorial 2020, vol. 51 (1)

Hennessy, S., Mavrikis, M., Girvan, C., Price, S. and Winters, N

BJET had a busy year of celebrations for its 50th anniversary. As we enter 2020, we reflect on the 50th volume: we were privileged to be able to produce six bumper issues with papers that took stock of the state-of-the-art in the field, and scanned the horizon for future research.

In the first issue, several papers reviewed the field systematically -- including a content and authorship analysis of BJET by Bond, Zawacki-Richter & Nichols (2019 -- providing a historical account, which inspired further reflections throughout the year. In our editorial this time last year, we raised a concern that, over the past 50 years, key methodological challenges and implications for practice, have remained fairly constant (Hennessy, Mavrikis, Girvan, Price, & Winters, 2019). We invited Charles Crook to respond to our editorial. In Issue 2, he made a call for stronger disciplinary alignment with theoretical traditions of Educational Studies in order to address concerns that the field foregrounds technology over pedagogy. He also challenged the field's methodological pre-occupation with the micro-level of educational practice rather than empirical meso- and macro-level studies. Lastly, echoing others in the field, he advocated for more consequential research–practice exchange (Crook, 2019). Reflecting on the year, it was heartening to read papers that navigated these challenges, particularly through nine special sections and their corresponding editorials as outlined below.

In Issue 3, the special section on “***Developing Critical and Theoretical Approaches to Educational Technology Research and Practice***” (Jameson, 2019) responded to our 2018 editorial (Hennessy, Girvan, Mavrikis, Price, & Winters, 2018), answering the question “To what extent are educational technology researchers really leading, critiquing and shaping the field?”. Among other interesting papers, Hew, Lan, Tang, Jia & Lo (2019) reviewed 503 empirical papers from three prominent journals in the field, including BJET, and find that more than 40% do not make any reference to a theory, 25% vaguely described the theories that they used and 35% utilise theory to conceptualise research, to inform data collection or to discuss the results. We agree with their call to educational technology researchers — for the field to mature, researchers need to be more explicit about the theories that underpin their studies.

In the same issue, the papers in the special section “***Facilitating innovation with technology: Key actors in educational ecosystems***” provide accounts that show the challenge the educational technology research community is facing to influence adoption and innovation patterns of teachers. As Gu, Crook & Spector (2019) argue in their editorial, while generalisability remains difficult, researchers need to understand, capture and express the context and the conditions that constrain and

afford technology adoption. In an indication of our appreciation of the challenges around influencing practice, we have worked with BERA and Wiley to make the practitioner notes freely available outside the paywall.

In Issue 4, the section “**Affective potentials in informal technology-enhanced learning settings**” (Hollett & Ehret, 2019) looks at how affective experiences within and across informal learning settings contribute to social change and enable technologies to persist, or not. Similarly, papers in “**Lifelong learning Ecologies: Linking formal and informal contexts of learning in the digital era**” (Sangra, Raffaghelli & Veletsianos, 2019) look at the broader picture of the learning experience, employing the construct of learning ecologies as a framework to analyse emergent educational phenomena.

Issue 5 contains three special sections. Continuing the theme of integrating formal and informal learning, papers in the first section “**Future learning spaces for learning communities: Perspectives from the learning sciences**” (Eberle, Hod & Fischer, 2019) present empirical findings and frameworks that reconceptualise the way we think of physical and virtual learning spaces and their role in learning experiences. The section “**From active-in-behaviour to active-in-thinking in learning with technology**” (Wang & Wegerif, 2019) brings together a range of innovative approaches that go beyond simple behaviour interaction with resources or peers, but instead focus on how active thinking and meaning-making can be strengthened. Lastly, papers in “**Technology acceptance models: What we know and what we (still) do not know**” (Scherer & Teo, 2019) review the current issues and challenges surrounding technology acceptance models and present new frameworks and classifications, offering explanations of some of the contradictory findings in the field.

To close the volume, Issue 6 contains two special sections that revolve around the topic of artificial intelligence that has attracted a lot of attention this year. The first section, “**Learning Analytics and AI: Politics, Pedagogy and Practices**” (Buckingham Shum & Luckin, 2019) included more reflective papers discussing existing literature and case studies of different scales, but also explored future open research questions. The complementary section “**Human learning and learning analytics in the age of artificial intelligence**” (Starčić, A. I. 2019) reported mostly new empirical evidence and technical advances in the state-of-the-art.

Celebrating the completion of the 50th volume, Issue 6 has a special front and back cover aligned with our theme of the year: past, present and future. At the back, we have included the cover of the inaugural issue of BJET that focused on audiovisual technologies. This acts as a stark reminder that, as mentioned in last year’s editorial, although some of the technologies in the field may quickly be superseded, the methodological implications and any transferable reflections remain contemporary and applicable. On the front cover, we highlight the human side of the journal and our commitment to diversity and celebration of the work going on in the majority world.

Many of the photos depict edtech research carried out in sub-Saharan Africa (by Sara Hennessy and colleagues: www.oer4schools.org). We would like to thank all those teachers, students and African colleagues who participated, and the Commonwealth Educational Trust that sponsored this research. Note that we are commissioning a special section of BJET focused on Latin America as part of our strategy to highlight and encourage more research submission from the majority world.

We are excited to report that work on edtech in low income countries has in fact been given a big boost this year with the launch of the **Research and Innovation Hub on Technology for Education** (<https://edtechhub.org>; @GlobalEdTechHub) funded by DfID (UK Dept. for International Development) for the next 7 years. The new Hub represents significant (£20m+), long-term investment by the UK government in a pioneering educational technology initiative aimed at improving educational quality in low-resource contexts. It is a collaboration between multi-disciplinary groups of researchers, including a consortium of six main partners, plus other organisations based in a number of low-income regions across Sub-Saharan Africa, South East Asia and the Middle East. The consortium conducts, commissions and evaluates mixed methods research aiming to understand how educational technology use can support education systems to change, improving outcomes for all learners in a scalable and sustainable way.

BJET editors represented the journal at several conferences, most notably AERA, AIED, BERA and EC-TEL. These engagements offered opportunities for potential authors to try out ideas on us, and for early-career researchers and doctoral students to learn first hand about the reviewing and publishing process, and get practical help on their first publishing journey. In addition, editors and associate editors of various journals in the field had the opportunity to exchange best practices, reflect on differences, similarities and the identities of the respective journals. In particular, we would like to thank the Education and Publication Chair of EATEL, Christian Glhan and Mar Pérez-Sanagustín for organising the respective sessions at EC-TEL and we are looking forward to continuing the dialogue with BERA, AERA and other learned societies.

Attending these conferences also provided the opportunity to take note of the emerging themes and future directions in the area. We were encouraged to see increased attention to critical data studies and ethics in the field given the emergence of artificial intelligence and data analytics. Looking to the year ahead, many of the themes are captured in our forthcoming special sections: augmented and virtual reality, hybrid learning spaces, constructivist educational technology and constructionism, post-humanist perspectives on technology-rich learning. There are several more sections on artificial intelligence and analytics including robotics, deep learning, multimodal learning analytics and, as mentioned above, a special section on Learning Analytics in Latin America, reflecting the burgeoning developments in this area.

Finally, we'd like to name this year's awards winners. The Best EdTech Paper at BERA Conference Award went to Kongkiat Kespechara, Somying Saithanu, Chonlada Sittitoon, Apansarin Kanarat, Pinanong Hakard and Dollaya Hirunyasiri from Sodisri-Sridwongsa Foundation, Thailand for *Using learning analytics to visualize how different teaching plans affect learning outcomes, focusing specifically on skills, in a rural primary school in Thailand*. We also gave a Best Early Career Researcher EdTech Paper at BERA Conference 2019 Award to Lesley Sharpe from Loughborough University for *Utilising technology to facilitate inclusive participatory research with young people with impairments*. The winners were awarded book tokens by our publisher Wiley. A big thank you to Board members Elizabeth Hartnell-Young and Feng Kuang Chiang who kindly assisted us with the judging again this year.

We are pleased to announce the "British Journal of Educational Technology Best Paper Award" for 2019. A shortlist was drawn up by our International Advisory Board and the final selection was made by the Editors. It was a difficult decision between three papers. In line with the emerging interest in Artificial Intelligence, our final choice was Ben Williamson's paper in the special section on "Learning Analytics and AI: Politics, Pedagogy and Practices" in Vol 50 (6). Williamson (2019) raises concerns around the application of Artificial Intelligence and Learning Analytics in Education and emphasises that these technologies are being appropriated to serve various commercial and political agendas. Two further papers, on a related theme, were highly commended. As mentioned earlier, Hew et al. (2019) in Issue 3 provide empirical data demonstrating the lack of theory and therefore maturity in the field. Johanes & Thille (2019) balance the discussion by reporting the results of interviews with data infrastructure developers showing that they are acutely aware and engage with epistemological, methodological and ethical aspects of their work as they navigate complex socio-technical decisions. Our personal congratulations to the authors of all three papers.

We look forward to what the new year brings. In particular, we warmly welcome a new early career Editor, Louis Major (University of Cambridge) – already an enthusiastic member of the BJET community. We also welcome Kaushal Kumar Bhagat (Indian Institute of Technology), and Esteban Vázquez-Cano (National Distance Education University - UNED) who in addition to Jimmy Jaldemark (Mid Sweden University) who is already in that role, will support the editorial team as Arbitration and Triage Editors. However, we must sadly say goodbye to Carina Girvan (University of Cardiff) who steps down in January. We would like to publicly acknowledge all of the contributions she has made to the journal's work since we originally came together as Editors; she has offered a great deal of expertise in her specialist areas and has also been a wonderful team player. She will be sorely missed.

Finally, we thank all our authors, readers, reviewers, Board members and colleagues at Wiley and BERA and wish you a very happy new year.

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