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The Future is Connection:

Collaboration, Creativity and Compassion in a Digital Society

Negotiating identity and relationality: An AI-enhanced polylogue on human-centred learning design practices

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This poster presents a developing AI-enhanced polylogue methodology and conceptual framing to understand how third-space professionals in higher education are negotiating their shifting roles and identities while designing human-centred learning and assessment.

Recent technological disruptions (e.g., widespread proliferation, advancement and use of generative AI, focus on cybersecurity, adoption of data-enabled technologies and ecosystems) have intensified tensions around higher education assessment structures and practices, exposing the limitations of isolated, task-based evaluation of student learning (Boud et al., 2020; Corbin et al., 2025). In response to the challenges posed to learning and assessment in the contemporary higher education landscape, emerging scholarship has foregrounded relationality and human connection alongside a shift to more program-wide approaches to assessment and assurance of learning (Lodge et al., 2023; Nicola-Richmond et al., 2025). This has highlighted questions about how educators can sustain meaningful relationships with each other and with students amidst these disruptions (Maldon et al., 2025).

In this work-in-progress project, we focus on these relational questions and explore how technological disruptions are reshaping the roles and identities of educators, specifically curriculum designers working in third-space roles at the boundary of academic and professional domains (Whitchurch, 2012). We build on work that positions teaching and learning as fundamentally relational, emphasising connection, trust, care, and dialogue between educators, students, and third-space professionals (Riddle & Hickey, 2023). Our aim is to understand how relationality may be conceptualised in the context of transforming curriculum to support human flourishing and critical engagement with generative AI in our everyday learning design practice, particularly in the design of program-level assessment, feedback, mentorship, and collaborative sense-making structures.

The project employs an AI-enhanced polylogue methodology inspired by Markauskaite et al. (2022). The AI-enhanced polylogue is a structured, multi-voiced inquiry, where participants engage in iterative cycles of individual reflection and collaborative dialogue, involving AI as a reflective interlocutor to surface gaps, alternative perspectives, and assumptions. Over several months, three curriculum designers independently responded to targeted questions in reflective logbooks, then engaged in semi-structured conversations about connection in higher education, program-level learning design, evolving educator roles, and the contributions of third-space professionals. This was complemented by a collaborative chat with a generative AI tool, in which participants used AI to probe gaps, tensions, and alternative perspectives arising from the conversations. These strands are then brought together in collaborative critical reflection sessions to identify emerging patterns in relational practice and their significance in program-level curriculum design.

This poster shares early themes from the logbooks and conversations. Early analysis highlights how participants experience and navigate tensions between increasing technological mediation alongside their third-space roles and their commitment to relational practice. The importance of human-centred learning design and its implications will also be examined and shared. The project contributes to contemporary discussions on inter-collegial practices that keep connection, trust, and dialogue central in increasingly AI-mediated educational environments. As part of this project, participants treat disruption as an invitation to remake educator identities

and practices in more relational, collaborative, and inclusive ways.

Keywords: third-space, programmatic, generative AI, relational, human-centred, learning design

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