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The Future is Connection:

Collaboration, Creativity and Compassion in a Digital Society

What makes educational innovations sustainable in tertiary education? Lessons from the LMS and beyond

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The sustainability of educational innovations such as Learning Management Systems (LMS), ePortfolios, and GenAI agent tools such as Cogniti in higher education may be considered in terms of their longevity and their impact on learning and teaching. This in turn is determined by many diverse factors including cost, relevance, usability, alignment with institutional policies and laws, integrability with existing university technologies, accessibility, impact on well-being, and security. This fish-bowl format panel discussion, which creates opportunities for audience members to switch places on stage with panelists if they have something to contribute, will draw on the knowledge and experience of experts from many corners of higher education in exploring what is needed for sustainable innovation. It will give participants and attendees a deeper understanding of big-picture factors which shape learning and teaching in an ever-increasingly complex higher education sector.

Keywords: LMS, sustainable educational innovation, educational technology, pedagogy

Area of focus

Change is almost a constant in contemporary tertiary education, with rapidly emerging technologies and neoliberal policy settings creating both opportunities for and expectations of innovation (Marshall et al., 2024; Tight, 2019). Scholarly journals and conferences like ASCILITE regularly highlight new ways to enhance learning and teaching with technologies; however, many of these reports focus only on small scale projects in fixed periods of time (Bearman et al., 2024). To maximise their benefits, these pedagogical innovations need to be adopted widely and transformed into business-as-usual practices in learning and teaching (Feixas et al., 2018). The hard work of sustainably embedding these new pedagogical approaches and technologies is not commonly examined.

Where this work has been explored, researchers have found that the idea of sustainability when it comes to educational innovations is viewed differently by different stakeholders and is shaped by their needs and interests (Bearman et al., 2024). While an academic may need a solution which does not place excessive demands on their workload and drives student engagement in their learning (Villala et al., 2026), an IT manager needs a secure tool which integrates effectively with existing systems (King et al., 2017). How higher education institutions address these divergent requirements plays a vital role in determining the sustainability of educational innovations.

Ideas to be explored and their significance

This panel discussion will explore some of the big questions around sustainable educational innovation in

higher education from a diverse range of viewpoints. These will include:

- What makes an educational innovation sustainable?
- What aspects of sustainability should be prioritised and how can we centre people in this discussion?
- Recognising the learning management system (LMS) as the most "business-as-usual" educational technology in higher education, what can the design and implementation of the LMS teach us about making other innovations sustainable?
- How can pedagogical approaches informed by Indigenous knowledges, such as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander yarning circles or Māori ideas of "ako torowhānui" (holistic learning), contribute to sustainable innovation centred around well-being and care?
- Are innovation and sustainability mutually exclusive? – must all innovation succeed at scale?

Panel format

This session will use a "fish-bowl panel" format, in which one chair on the stage is left vacant for audience members to join the session if they have particularly insights or expertise relevant to the question at hand and panellists are encouraged to leave the stage if they feel they are no longer needed. This creates a dynamic discursive environment for attendees which has been shown to contribute to engagement with the session. The session will begin with some guiding questions, but the discussion is designed to be able to flexibly accommodate diversions if a new topic of interest emerges. Initial panel members are the listed authors.

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