



Navigating digital transformations: Insights from eLFA 2023

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This special issue of the Journal of Applied Learning and Teaching features papers selected from the eLearning Forum Asia (eLFA) 2023 conference.

eLFA 2023 was held at the Singapore University of Social Sciences from 30 November to 1 December 2023. Delegates from across Asia, including Singapore, Hong Kong SAR, the Philippines, China, and India, participated in the conference. A total of 51 oral presentations and 16 poster presentations were delivered, showcasing diverse perspectives and research contributions.

Each paper in this edition offers valuable insights into the evolving landscape of digital learning. Exploring themes such as student agency, generative AI, and digital tools, they reflect the conference's central theme, "Digital Futures of Work and Learning: Forging the Way Ahead."

- **Flipped learning in action: Seven cases from Singapore's Polytechnics**

This paper examines seven case studies on the implementation of **flipped learning** across four Singaporean polytechnics. Twelve presenters from these polytechnics came together to collectively examine the sector-wide shift to flipped learning, highlighting shared challenges, innovations, and successes. The paper focuses on how these institutions leveraged technology and data-driven frameworks to promote self-directed learning—a critical skill for future employability. Key themes include the use of **learning analytics** to personalise support, the effectiveness of various **learning design models**, and the importance of **fostering social interaction** in both online and in-person learning environments. The authors conclude with practical recommendations for educators seeking to enhance flipped classroom initiatives, emphasising active learning while addressing challenges such as time constraints and student

motivation. With insights drawn from a sector that enrolls over 60,000 students, this paper provides valuable lessons for improving student engagement and learning outcomes.

- **Rethinking online assessments for adult learners – Exploring synchronous group presentations**

In the age of AI, this paper addresses the increasing concerns about academic integrity and the implications of generative AI tools in education. It examines the transition from traditional written assignments to **synchronous group presentations** in an online undergraduate course for adult learners at the Singapore University of Social Sciences. This shift aims to promote authentic assessment while fostering essential communication skills. The study highlights the positive impact of this approach on student engagement, collaboration, and critical thinking, while also mitigating challenges posed by AI-generated content. The paper suggests strategies for optimising online group presentations, including leveraging technology for effective feedback, peer learning, and flexible scheduling to accommodate the unique needs of adult learners.

- **Investigating students' perspectives on the integration of generative artificial intelligence in university curricula and assessments**

This paper explores the critical issue of integrating generative AI into higher education curricula and assessments, examining students' perspectives on its use. Conducted by academics at the Singapore University of Social Sciences, the study uses decision tree analysis to identify key factors influencing the acceptance of AI, including frequency of use and demographic

differences. It highlights both the benefits and challenges associated with GenAI adoption, advocating for a **balanced and ethical approach to integration**. The study emphasises the need for clear guidelines, ethical considerations, and a focus on developing critical thinking skills alongside technological proficiency to ensure responsible and effective use of AI in education.

- **Digital learning resources and student success: Analyzing engagement and academic performance**

In an increasingly digitalised educational landscape, this paper analyses the impact of digital learning resources such as Learning Management Systems (LMS), e-textbooks, and study guides on student engagement and academic success at the Singapore University of Social Science. Through data-driven insights from over 1,500 undergraduate students, it underscores the importance of meaningful interaction with these tools to enhance learning outcomes. The findings provide actionable recommendations for optimising digital infrastructure and learning design.

- **ChemPOV: Evaluating a digital game-based learning tool for organic chemistry through student-researcher collaboration**

This paper presents ChemPOV, a digital multiplayer game designed to enhance student engagement and understanding in organic chemistry. A hallmark of this initiative is the close collaboration between student researchers and educators at the National University of Singapore (NUS). The study highlights the transformative potential of **gamification** in STEM education, demonstrating how such tools can motivate learners and foster a deeper understanding of complex concepts. As a case study, it underscores the value of involving students as co-creators in educational innovations, offering practical insights for educators exploring digital game-based learning in STEM fields.

- **Fostering educational innovations in the era of global digital futures with students as partners (SaP) - Agency of university students in the Asian context**

This paper explores the concept of student agency within the unique context of Asian higher education, particularly in Confucian-influenced settings. Conducted by researchers from five universities in Hong Kong and the Higher Education Research and Development Society of Australasia (HERDSA) Hong Kong Branch, the study examines factors influencing student agency, including cultural norms, pedagogical approaches, and the role of technology in shaping student experiences. The

findings underscore the significance of **student-teacher partnerships, collaborative learning environments**, and a focus on **developing self-directedness** to empower students to take ownership of their learning.

Critical reflections and future considerations

The papers in this special edition collectively illuminate the ongoing digital transformation in higher education. They highlight several interconnected themes that warrant careful consideration as institutions navigate this evolving landscape.

The first notable theme centres on **digital infrastructure** and its integration into learning. The evidence presented suggests that thoughtful implementation of Learning Management Systems and digital resources can significantly impact student success. However, this raises important questions about how institutions can ensure meaningful engagement with these tools, specifically in the age of generative AI access.

A second prominent theme explores **pedagogical innovation**, particularly through flipped learning approaches. The successful cases from Singapore's polytechnics demonstrate how this model can foster self-directed learning while supporting student engagement. Yet, the sustainability and scalability of such approaches deserve further examination.

The emergence of **generative AI** presents both opportunities and challenges, as highlighted in several papers. While these tools offer new possibilities for learning and assessment, they also necessitate careful consideration of academic integrity and the development of critical thinking skills.

Perhaps most significantly, the papers collectively emphasise the importance of **student agency and partnership in educational innovation**. From game-based learning development to curriculum design, involving students as active participants rather than passive recipients appears to enhance both engagement and learning outcomes.

While the context of generative AI is new, many of the following questions build on longstanding themes in the literature, reflecting ongoing concerns in the field:

1. How can institutions balance the promise of data analytics with ethical considerations and student privacy?
2. What frameworks can guide the responsible integration of generative AI into curriculum and assessment design?
3. How might traditional power dynamics in higher education need to shift to better support student agency and partnership?
4. What role should industry partnerships play in shaping digital learning initiatives to ensure relevance for future workforce needs?

5. How can institutions ensure that digital transformation enhances rather than diminishes the human elements of learning?
6. What metrics should we use to evaluate the success of digital learning initiatives beyond traditional academic performance measures?

These questions invite deeper reflection on how institutions can navigate digital transformation while upholding core educational values and ensuring equitable access to quality learning experiences.

We are confident that the insights shared in this special edition will contribute meaningfully to the ongoing dialogue surrounding the digital transformation of education. By fostering collaboration, critical thinking, and adaptability, educators and institutions can prepare learners for the digital futures of work and learning, ensuring that education remains relevant, engaging, and impactful in an ever-changing world.