

Digital transformation, transforming lives

 By [Simon Goldstone](#)

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We live in an increasingly connected world. The technologies, both emerging and established, that connect us, have the power to influence and reshape the ways in which we live, work and learn.



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The internet, as part of our multi-dimensional digital reality, connects people, resources, cultures and contexts. It is within this environment that the social-learning theory of (Siemens and Downes) [Connectivism](#) advocates that learning doesn't merely happen within the individual learner, specifically: it transforms the learning space between the networked connections.

What does this mean for our perception of the traditional classroom? A space, all-too-familiar, for the out-dated and simple content-transfer model of learning: from the lecturer (as expert) to the (captive) student.

This digital transformation, in the most fundamental way, has wrestled the notion of content authority away from institutions, connecting their very classrooms and the personal learning environments of both lecturers and students to a seemingly-infinite multiversity of information, resources and collaborative connections.

Imagine then, a class of connected students and staff, working within a simulated case study, part of an Early Childhood Development programme. Everyone has either a mobile app, thereby creating an augmented reality worldview, facilitated through their mobile camera, or enhanced by a pair of wearable smart glasses, connected to the network and again augmenting their point-of-view – these are all part of a mixed and immersive environment.

This is the possibility of Extended Reality (XR) technologies, constructing a real-time and often impossible learning experience for each and every learner within a connected and collaborative environment.

Think next of the possibilities for the biological, scientific, political and legal application of these technologies.

The application of instructional design, supportive technology and learning science yields an emerging concept: learning engineering. With its roots in the application of engineering design to construct learning infrastructure and to deploy learning-focused technologies, the process seeks to develop personalised learning pathways that are unique to the learner.

What a time to be a student!

The successful digital-transformation project, however, requires institutional investment and considerable change. The adaptations, chiefly include, but are not limited to, technological, cultural and staff development transformations. Without these fundamental foundations in place, the successful implementation and experience from the project is at risk.

Technological transformation

Technological trends and developments can often dictate the pace of digital transformation, if not evaluated and managed with insight and precision. However, these advances, when deployed with purpose, have the potential to transform processes across the board, from a senior management perspective right down to the core processes of the institution: teaching and learning.

Cultural transformation

A transformation in institutional culture to support the adoption and the utilisation of digital transformation is all about change management.

Institutional role-players, leaders and staff are actively required to collaborate across and outside of their traditional departments with the goal of developing the speed and dexterity required to meet the dynamic transformational requirements.

Staff development transformation

Commitment to digital transformation in staff teaching practice and learning experience spaces demands a radical up-swing in information literacy and information technology skills.

Staff development practitioners and ICT personnel often need to collaborate and support one another in facilitating the transformational development opportunities – and to do so at a suitable rate of change – in as much as each learner often requires a personalised learning pathway, staff – both academic and administrative - in turn have their own requirements.

Ultimately, digital transformation, if deployed to develop new and increasingly effective processes and practices in Higher Education, and in turn, resulting in deeper student engagement and better learning experiences, is poised to facilitate the transformation of the learner. An adept and empowered learner, able to navigate a personalised life-long learning journey.

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