

A Review of My Secret #EdTech Diary: Looking at educational technology through a wider lens

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Abstract

Technology has come to play an integral part in the educational process of students around the world. School administrators and teachers rely on technology to gather real-time data, provide meaningful feedback, and assess student learning. In 2020, school personnel across the globe needed to provide services to students despite limitations put in place by the COVID-19 pandemic. In *My Secret #EdTech Diary: Looking at Educational Technology Through a Wider Lens*, Al Kingsley analyzes post-pandemic lessons in the educational technology (EdTech) field from various viewpoints. Using his experience as the CEO of an educational software company and a member of a school board of governors, Kingsley describes lessons from the rapid development and use of educational technology during and after the COVID-19 pandemic.

Structure & Content

Kingsley uses his first chapter, “Unpicking EdTech,” to provide readers with a background in educational technology. Histories of the first research projects and research scientists describe how student experiences with teaching machines in the 1920s and programmed tutoring in the 1960s affected learning. This chapter also provides a table of common three-letter acronyms (TLA) and a glossary of standard EdTech terms used in the educational systems of the United States and the United Kingdom.

The chapter “Lessons Learned” contains viewpoints of educators and educational administrators regarding their experience during school closures and distanced learning. Kingsley describes how the COVID-19 pandemic provided an outlet for a revolution in educational systems and the educational technology field. Software developers seized on this need for methods and tools to reach students. Throughout the chapter, Kingsley (2021) describes the importance of developmentally appropriate pedagogy to implement learning, and he even highlights this idea by stating, “Pedagogy

trumps the medium” and emphasizes the concept with textual features (p. 57). To support this, Kingsley uses Mishra and Koehler’s technological pedagogical content knowledge framework, and he discusses how the widespread use of online learning has impacted the relationship between content, technology, and pedagogy. Throughout the Lessons Learned chapter, Kingsley expands on research and resources to discuss the lessons from the mass utilization of online learning during the COVID-19 pandemic. With his background as a CEO of an educational software company, Kingsley finds it critical to include the perspective of technology vendors in his book. Various software and hardware components support students, teachers, and educational administrators daily, and vendors must compete to fill the needs of those parties. Vendors strive to create systems that maximize the user experience and support. As technology develops and enters the market, consumers choose products based on problems currently faced by educational systems. Still, as those problems find solutions, new problems occur to cause disruptions in the market. Kingsley describes how this disruption connects to Clayton Christensen’s innovator’s dilemma and can impact the growth of educational technology businesses (2013).

Strengths

In each chapter, Kingsley utilizes a variety of frameworks to connect the research and the practice of education. These connections create a meaningful discussion on how the COVID-19 pandemic expanded research on online learning and impacted education. He explains how the closure of schools and extensive use of technology to facilitate learning during the pandemic allowed for the rapid growth of the educational technology industry. Kingsley uses a variety of perspectives to describe the lasting impact on the field. Vendors, innovators, teachers, students, administrators, and instructional designers have a voice in Kingsley’s book, generating a comprehensive list of lessons learned in the wake of the 2020 school closures.

Weaknesses

Kingsley frequently refers to organizations or concepts throughout the book through their respective acronyms. Some acronyms throughout the book need to be clearly defined or explained. Kingsley wants to encompass a wider audience, and he utilizes acronyms from the educational systems of the United Kingdom and the United States. Adding a glossary or appendix to define commonly used acronyms may increase readers’ comprehension of the book.

In terms of his arguments, Kingsley’s background as an educational technology vendor and a member of a school’s board of governors gives him a unique insight into how the governance of educational technology changed following the COVID-19 pandemic. This, in turn, limits Kingsley’s understanding of the effects of educational technology and

the COVID-19 pandemic from the classroom perspective. Providing insight from practicing educators may provide an additional lens to Kingsley's understanding of educational technology development. While the chapter of his book "Voices Aligned" features some teachers, Kingsley leaves these perspectives from his "Lessons Learned" chapter.

Conclusions

In his book, *My Secret #EdTech Diary: Looking at Educational Technology Through a Wider Lens*, Al Kingsley describes how the field of educational technology has changed following the global COVID-19 pandemic. During this time, technology's role in education rapidly expanded to allow access to learning despite ongoing conditions. Kingsley used his experience as a CEO of an educational technology company and a member of a school board of governors to provide a detailed explanation of how technologies have shifted to fill the new roles necessary to continue learning. The lessons described in the book include ties to current research, and Kingsley provides an explanation of how models about innovation, pedagogy, and technology directly relate to his learned lessons. While Kingsley uses the voices of educators to show alignment in all parts of the field, his lessons do not include the perspective of practicing classroom teachers.

References

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