Special issue call for abstracts

Developing student teachers' critical understanding of digital technologies – beyond techno-utopian perspectives

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Developing student teachers' critical understanding of digital technologies – beyond techno-utopian perspectives

There is a significant body of research literature in teacher education exploring the use of digital technologies to enhance the delivery of teacher education programmes. There is also a sizeable body of work that has explored how teacher education equips student teachers with the relevant digital competencies to utilise digital technologies in their teaching. This body of research has helped to advance teacher educators' understanding of the challenges faced by student teachers in integrating digital content and technologies in the classrooms. While this is an important area, the abundance of digital technologies and its wider influence on society, is an area that student teachers need to have greater understanding of. For example, there are increasing concerns about the impact of digital technologies on the lives of young people and their mental health and their well-being. These issues pose significant challenges for schools. Increasing digital technology integration in schools also pose broader questions around the encroachment of commercial interests in public education. Issues of equity and inclusion are also critical with evidence of increasing inequality as a result of greater digital technology use, despite claims of the opposite. Issues of sustainability and the

environmental and human costs of this ever-increasing digital expansion are also critical, but receive limited attention. These challenges are set against a wider soft governance agenda driven by techno-optimistic education polices and global ed-tech corporations that present this digital transformation only as positive and transformational. Within the complex milieu of arguments for and against greater digital technologies in schools (often driven by parents and external voices), student teachers must navigate through these different positions to develop their own professional perspectives and identities on these issues, mindful of their educational values. These challenges are further compounded by the growing digital backlash driven by concerns about the wider impact of digital technologies. This poses challenges for teacher educators who may need to fulfil programme and accreditation requirements in terms of advocating for digital technology use, but also ensuring that student teachers understand the wider ethical, social and democratic issues raised by technologies in schools and wider society.

This special issue welcomes papers, empirical studies, position papers and reviews. Contributions that explore how teacher education and teacher educators develop this more critical understanding of digital technologies in teacher education, how student teachers and teacher educators respond to such issues and the opportunities and challenges of adopting this more critical perspective are particularly welcome. Other aspects of interest to this special issue include how teacher education is responding to issues such as: digital inequalities, digital platforms and platformisation of education, mental health and digital well-being of students, sustainability and e-waste, digital ethics and the corporatisation of education, teacher values and social justice.

Pre-submission abstract:

Prospective authors should submit a **300-word abstract by 27th February 2026**. This proposal should outline the paper's title, aims, methodology/approach, and relevance to the special issue. Following review of the abstracts, the guest editors will invite selected submissions to submit a full manuscript.

Abstracts *should not* be submitted via the journal's submission system, but should be emailed directly to the Guest Editors at oliver.mcgarr@ul.ie with the subject line: "Abstract for JET Special Issue".

Timeline and review process:

Abstract submission (27th February 2026)

Full paper submission (12th June 2026)

Publication of special issue (December 2026)