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A tech-tonic shift: the complex dance of technology-enabled-learning and academic identity work in higher education

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ABSTRACT

The Covid-19 pandemic catalysed significant transformations in higher education, prominently manifesting through the accelerated adoption of Technology-Enabled Learning (TEL). This shift not only redefined pedagogical practices but also significantly impacted the teaching-orientated identity work of academics. This study explores the repercussions of TEL on academic identity within the post-pandemic educational landscape, moving beyond the confines of online learning to consider the broader technological influences on teaching and learning. The study commences with a review of the existing literature on academic identity work, including an analysis of both the internal and external influences that shape this identity work. Through 20 interviews conducted with the faculty of higher education bodies, the study introduces a taxonomy of five overlapping academic identity archetypes; the entertainer, the hunter-gatherer, the gatekeeper, the humanist, and the technologist. These archetypes provide a classification for understanding the complex, multifaceted nature of academic identities and their evolution in response to TEL. Within this classification, we also include the multitude of rituals and activities undertaken within each archetype as modes of identity work. As such, this study underscores the dynamic, fluid nature of instructor-orientated academic identity, recognising the challenges and opportunities posed by TEL. By fostering environments that acknowledge and leverage these diverse identities, academic institutions can enhance their faculty's capacity to innovate and excel in teaching in an increasingly digital world.

Introduction

The Covid-19 pandemic triggered unprecedented transformation in higher education (HE), shifting learning online and altering expectations and practices for both staff and students. Post-Covid, Technology-Enabled Learning (TEL) has become the norm, with increased expectations to integrate various technologies into curricula. This change raises questions about TEL's fundamental role in HE (Walz et al. 2023). Previously, TEL was seen as a manageable element of HE with minimal disruption (Selwyn 2016), leading to limited investigation into its significance (van Lankveld et al. 2017).

However, in recent years, TEL has redefined pedagogical activities, compelling educators to engage in transformative identity work. Some faculty members have embraced digital tools' flexibility and efficiency, while others face anxiety and a perceived loss of autonomy (Walz et al. 2023). Collins, Glover, and Collins, Glover, and Myers (2022, 212) note that academics are now engaging in identity work in an attempt 'to find out who they are becoming' amid technological influence. Thus, this study employs identity theory to explore: *how has TEL impacted upon instructor-orientated academic identity work?*

This study begins by examining academic identity work and its internal and external influences within the literature. The findings present a taxonomy of academic identity archetypes, illustrating how TEL has created new forms of academic identities and associated activities. Understanding these changes is critical for management in addressing the complexities of academic work through process and policy development (Bisaillon et al. 2023), thereby enhancing organisational effectiveness and faculty well-being (Vermote et al. 2023). This study is situated in a post-Covid world, considering how technology now impacts teaching activities in HE.

Literature review

Academic identity work

Identity is construed as the confluence of personal characteristics, values, and goals, moulded through societal influences and individual interactions (Turner 1980). A core tenet of identity theory is the co-existence of multiple role identities which comprise the self (Hogg, Terry, and White 1995). In a work context, identity theory provides an explanation as to how individuals' role-related behaviours are influenced by their perceptions of work-relevant tasks, objectives, and problems (van der Meer 2024). Here, role identities are prioritised within the self, with those deemed most important being more likely to guide behaviour in specific situations (Hogg, Terry, and White 1995). Importantly, individuals engage in behaviours that align with their role identities to signal their values to themselves and others in a process referred to as self-verification (Stets and Burke 2005).

For academics within HE, an instructor-orientated academic identity may encompass one's teaching philosophies, methodological approaches, and collective and individualised sense of self, derived from educational endeavours – a process known as identity work (Fitzmaurice 2013; Kreber 2010; Martin, Lord, and Warren-Smith 2020). Academic identity work is an ongoing, multidimensional project (van Martin, Lord, and Warren-Smith 2020; van Lankveld et al. 2017). Individuals continuously engage in 'work' and various roles, enacting rituals (i.e. interrelated behaviours) to express and shape their identities (Reedy, King, and Coupland 2016). Through engaging in multifaceted activities, academics draw upon personal experiences, academic lineage and traditions, feedback, and stories from those around them to shape their identity (Degn 2015). For instance, personal experiences inform pedagogical approaches, helping create authentic learning environments that resonate with students (Fitzmaurice 2013; Kreber 2010). Therefore, as academics engage in multiple roles, they project their internalised belief systems and values to achieve authenticity, legitimacy, and validation (Martin, Lord, and Warren-Smith 2020).

Identity work is fluid but anchored by a stable core that defines one's sense of self (Clegg 2008). As educators invest in their work, it becomes central to their self-concept (Kreber 2010). Disruptions to this stable core can cause existential panic, as academics may be required to navigate their evolving role within the academic ecosystem (Clegg 2008), such as with the recent proliferation of technology within academia. In this regard, identity tensions may not be able to be fully resolved, but the pursuit of resolution through actions can be productive and yield positive outcomes for the individual as part of their ongoing identity project (McNaughton and Billot 2016), illustrating the importance of identifying challenges and contradictions within identity work. Identity work often involves multiple actors and a collective context (van Lankveld et al. 2017). Therefore, the socio-cultural context of the

academic is crucial, and rituals of expression must be analysed in interaction with external and internal influences.

Navigating internal and external influences of academic identity work

The socio-cultural context for identity work involves dynamic interactions between individuals and their environment, influenced by disciplinary background, institutions, peer interactions, societal beliefs, student connections, power relations, and technology (van Lankveld et al. 2017). As individuals navigate academia, they internalise norms and values that shape their academic identity, professional aspirations, and perceived roles within the academic community (Fitzmaurice 2013).

The internal actors that influence academic identity can be categorised into academic management, administrators, colleagues, and students. Academic management practices and hierarchical institutional structures significantly influence stress, especially when 'top-down' approaches are employed without proper consultation (Collins, Glover, and Myers 2022). Academics may feel compelled to conform to management's vision, causing tensions in their identity work (Brown and Lewis 2011), particularly if institutional changes conflict with personal beliefs (Collins, Glover, and Myers 2022). In perceived 'neo-liberal' academic institutions that promote peer competition, individuals are pressured to self-manage their identities. This often leads to a 'surveillance' of colleagues whereby peers judge each other's performance, productivity, and effectiveness, fostering a culture of marginalisation (Harris, Myers, and Ravenswood 2019). Technology can exacerbate these issues through metric-focused accountability, such as monitoring grading time (Grant, Wallace, and Spurgeon 2013). Neoliberal management and the tension between administrative tasks, research, and teaching can undermine academic values and autonomy, reducing self-esteem if valued practices are seen as 'secondary' (Clarke, Knights, and Jarvis 2012). Similarly, academics may feel low worth when identity work is restricted or unacknowledged by management, particularly if value clashes then adversely impact career trajectories (Brown and Coupland 2015). While academic identities also encompass research and administration, we focus on instructor-related identities.

Stakeholders such as colleagues and students also influence academic identity (Harris, Myers, and Ravenswood 2019). Student engagement and feedback has been demonstrated to strongly influence identity due to the centrality of teaching in being a 'proper academic' (Fitzmaurice 2013). Similarly, collegial work environments are beneficial as academics become open to discussing ideas with colleagues, offering support, and nurturing a sense of community, resulting in emotional protection (Ylijoki and Ursin 2013). Appropriate training and development programmes with colleagues and administrators positively impact academics, especially when adapting to changes like technological advancements, helping them retain their 'expert' status (van Lankveld et al. 2017).

External influences on academic identity include society, industry, media, politics, and technological shifts. Neoliberal agendas introduce new forms of accountability, fostering uncertainty regarding academia's societal role (Martin, Lord, and Warren-Smith 2020). Increased external stakeholder involvement (e.g. private businesses, software providers, publishers, etc.), creates a tenuous environment where academics' control over assessment and teaching content is diluted. Societal expectations and market demands force institutes to justify themselves socially and economically, pressuring academics to conform to external expectations, even if these conflict with academic traditions such as the shift from knowledge generation to practical training (Martin, Lord, and Warren-Smith 2020).

Dunn and Kennedy (2019) highlight the dual influence of student-led technologies (e.g. social media groups) and institutional technologies (e.g. virtual learning environments) as critical in education. Technological changes can cause anxiety and resistance among academics who struggle to keep pace (Losh 2014). The encroachment of technology on traditional norms, such as student-instructor closeness and the blurring of roles between technology specialists and academics, complicates identity work, potentially undermining academic authority and weakening student interaction (Ylijoki and Ursin 2013). Technology alters the controlled nature of teaching

spaces and the 'presence' of academics (McNaughton and Billot 2016). Technology can also disrupt the teaching and learning process through 'death by PowerPoint', student distraction, information overload (Selwyn 2016), and enabling student malpractice (Shek and Cheung 2013). Additionally, the broad adoption of standardised technologies raises concerns about the commodification of teaching, where unique delivery forms may be replaced by branded/generic slides, undermining originality (Selwyn 2016).

Academics' acceptance of technological change now manifests as acts of compliance or resistance (Collins, Glover, and Myers 2022). This pursuit of authenticity across multiple roles can lead to uneasiness and feelings of unworthiness, especially with the rapid shift towards TEL and lack of expertise in new areas (Martin, Lord, and Warren-Smith 2020). Existing research highlights the influence of external and internal factors on academic identity, but there is a need to explore the diverse roles and rituals of academics in a post-Covid, TEL environment. This study aims to understand the nature of instructor-oriented identities amid the complexities of TEL.

Methodology

This interpretive qualitative research (Denzin and Lincoln 2005) was conducted with academics from 13 Higher Education Institutions (or HEIs) across the UK and the Republic of Ireland (ROI). Recruitment was undertaken by approaching academics via email and through the authors' networks, reflecting a purposive sampling strategy. All participants were required to have teaching experience of at least one year and experience of virtual learning to ensure familiarity with TEL tools. We focused on academics from business schools, specifically from the Management and Marketing disciplines. We conducted 20 interviews between June 2022 and January 2023. The participants varied in level of teaching experience (1–18 years), gender (10 female and 10 male), and geographical location (ROI: 7 and UK: 13) (see Table 1).

Semi-standardised interviewing (Arsel 2017) was the method of data collection, selected for its ability to elicit responses that offer depth, detail, richness, and nuance (Rubin and Ruben 2005) of the participants' lived experiences (Denzin and Lincoln 2005). Interviews were conducted online, allowing the researchers to recruit non-locally. Ethical approval was obtained from the first author's HEI. Following introductory questions, learning about the participant to later contextualise

Table 1. Overview of participants.

Participant ID	Country	HEI	Gender	Discipline
P1	ROI	HEI 6 (11)[a]	Male	Marketing
P2	ROI	HEI 1	Male	Management
P3	UK (Scotland)	HEI 2	Female	Marketing
P4	ROI	HEI 8	Male	Marketing
P5	UK (England)	HEI 7	Male	Management
P6	UK (England)	HEI 9	Female	Marketing
P7	UK (England)	HEI 10	Female	Marketing
P8	UK (England)	HEI 12	Female	Management
P9	UK (NI)	HEI 13	Female	Marketing
P10	ROI	HEI 6 (11)[a]	Male	Management
P11	UK (Scotland)	HEI 3	Male	Management
P12	UK (Scotland)	HEI 5 (3/4)[a]	Female	Management
P13	ROI	HEI 1	Female	Management
P14	UK (Scotland)	HEI 4	Female	Management
P15	UK (Scotland)	HEI 2	Male	Marketing
P16	UK (England)	HEI 7	Female	Marketing
P17	UK (England)	HEI 7	Female	Marketing
P18	UK (Scotland)	HEI 5	Male	Marketing
P19	ROI	HEI 11	Male	Management
P20	ROI	HEI 11	Male	Management

[a]This academic moved HEIs throughout the Covid and Post-Covid period. The number outside the bracket is where the academic resided at the time of interview.

their experience (Arsel 2017), the interview focused on topics revolving around impacts of TEL on the instructors' identity and practice that covered five areas: (1) instructors' conceptualisations of their role as educators; (2) instructors' decision-making and approach to course design; (3) the institutional environment; (4) interactions with peers and with students; and (5) inclusivity. The questions asked were not business school and/or UK/ROI-specific to afford greater transferability of findings.

Transcribed interviews were analysed in NVivo, following the reflexive approach to thematic analysis (TA) developed by Braun and Clarke (2006). This approach adopts reflexivity as a key element and recognises that we, as researchers and fellow HEI educators, bring our experience, skill, and research values, thereby influencing the generation of themes (Braun and Clarke 2022). We followed the standard six recursive phases of TA: familiarisation; coding; generating initial themes; reviewing and developing themes; refining, defining and naming themes; and writing up (Braun and Clarke 2006), ensuring our process was systematically and reflexively recorded (Nowell et al. 2017). To capture the complexity of the data, multiple researchers from the team were involved throughout the analytical process. Initial reflections were shared by the researcher who conducted and transcribed the respective interviews, identifying points of potential analytic interest; the transcripts were then systematically coded for semantic and latent meanings (Braun and Clarke 2022). Additionally, we organised in-person workshops to support the coding process, theme development, and theme review. This collaborative approach was used 'to enhance understanding, interpretation and reflexivity, rather than to reach a consensus about data coding' (Braun and Clarke 2022, 8). Throughout this process, we identified the distinctive behaviours of the participants in response to the adoption of TEL, and the tensions that surround them, affording us a basis for development of a robust framework of academic identity archetypes.

Importantly, the self as set out in identity theory can comprise multiple different identities (Hogg, Terry, and White 1995), thereby affording us the theoretical flexibility to explore multiple emerging instructor identities brought about by technology change. Drawing on the idea of self-verification as set out in identity theory (Stets and Burke 2005), we focused on behaviours reported by participants in their instructor roles, adopting an inductive approach to explore coherent interrelated behavioural patterns across our participants. Through considering the overarching theme which brought together these behaviours, we identify several instructor identities. These identity archetypes reflect the values underpinning and performances undertaken in forming these identities.

Findings

Academic identity is characterised by the adoption of specific roles and the performance of activities and rituals, indicating that identities are in a constant state of flux and negotiation (McNaughton and Billot 2016). Notably, academics are portrayed as individuals who assume multiple, overlapping and occasionally conflicting roles or archetypes, or as we depict them: *the entertainer*, *the hunter-gatherer*, *the gatekeeper*, *the humanist*, and *the technologist* (see Figure 1). Instructors vary in the roles they assume, whilst the importance of each role to their overall identity project is influenced by their socio-cultural milieu and personal perspectives (Degn 2015). Importantly, although we identify five distinct archetypes, we note that these roles and identities are dynamic in that instructors may move between archetypes, or these archetypes may overlap throughout the identity work process.

Instructor as entertainer

The Instructor as Entertainer encapsulates an identity that thrives on engagement, creativity, and the ability to captivate the student audience through interactive teaching methods. The Entertainer leverages digital platforms not merely as practical tools but as stage props for the performance of knowledge, where the art of teaching becomes an engaging show.
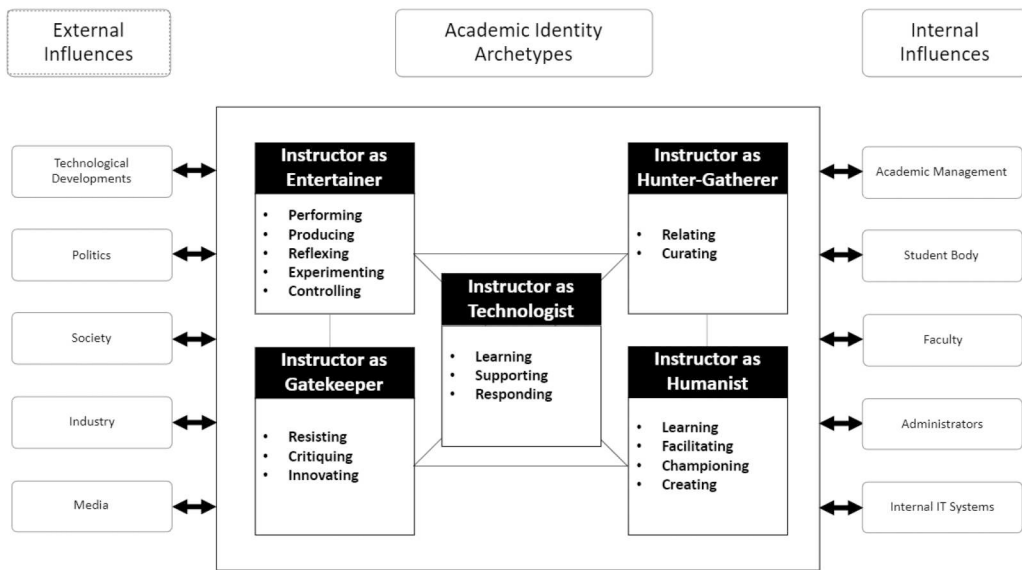
Figure 1. Proposed academic identity archetypes.

> It took me a while to find my groove, but I'd say I'm very content with my style and approach now. Just to give you an example, I'll start every class with at least one or two songs from YouTube, just lively fun music. Just while they're arriving at class … it helps to break the ice and gets people smiling. (P19)

The Instructor as Entertainer thrives on their ability to *produce and perform* captivating learning experiences, often turning to digital tools and platforms to enhance the theatricality of their pedagogy, symbolising how the instructor wants to be perceived through the atmosphere created within the classroom. Indeed, modes of digital storytelling incorporating objects such as audio, video, animation, comic books, and other digitised media were commonplace across the study. As such, there is an attempt to use technology to perform educational content that resonates with students, acting as a form of identity expression for the academic and means through which one can authentically differentiate themself (Kreber 2010). However, much of this expression relies on the academic's ability to monitor the reaction of the crowd, highlighting the importance of validation in identity work.

> Lecturing in front of a class, you're constantly reading [students'] body language … you can tell if they're waning … I'm always trying to read the room to direct where I'm going to go [with the lecture]. That was gone with online. (P14)

A significant aspect of the Entertainer's identity is the ability to be *reflexive* – to read and respond to the audience's cues. P14 states that the online learning environment posed challenges in this regard, as the loss of physical presence makes it difficult to gauge real-time student reactions. The above quotation underscores the tensions between the Entertainer's instinctual pedagogical reflexes and the limitations imposed by certain forms of technology, which dilutes the Entertainers ability to 'read the room' and adjust accordingly. This can create a sense of detachment for the academic, where the 'absent audience' leads to a lack of affirmation or validation (Martin, Lord, and Warren-Smith 2020) of their teaching work. Without the presence of students in a physical space, academics may find it challenging to gauge their impact and effectiveness, potentially diminishing their sense of accomplishment and connection with their audience – transforming a context where value was generated through relationality (Akkerman and Meijer 2011) to a less profound transactional connection. Importantly, identity work is often a co-productive experience (Turner 1980); such a feedback loop is particularly important when embedding new technologies within the classroom.

> [I became] much more experimental [post-Covid] … using things like in-class surveys and stuff that I've never used before … I know I could be doing more. (P9)

The readiness to *experiment* with new technologies is inherent to the Entertainer identity. The adoption of interactive tools such as online polling exemplifies this. However, experimentation also reflects the unpredictable nature of integrating interactive TEL tools and the careful balance between creating a tech-enabled participatory culture with robust classroom management.

> This year, I put it up [an in-class survey] and it descended into an absolute farce. Most of the responses were about Jeffrey Dahmer [renowned serial killer]. They were suggesting I had herpes … that I was fat … it was just pure abuse. (P1)

Albeit there was a willingness among some to continue experimenting, others felt that due to their loss of *control* and deterioration of academic authority, that they could not fully embrace technological change. Further, instances where students would anonymously post derogatory remarks with linkages to homophobia, racism, classism, etc., resulted in sacrificing experimentality in pursuit of greater levels of control over the classroom – a negotiation between the controllable and uncontrollable aspects of identity work (McNaughton and Billot 2016). Of course, total control is often infeasible given the omni-present nature of technological distractions such as social media and streaming services.

> Yesterday, I was teaching and they're all watching the World Cup on their laptops. There's a green glow in their face and that is 'normal' because they have control. And I literally had to tell them to stop talking … I know you're watching the match … And it just washes over them. (P1)

The distraction posed by readily available digital content, such as students watching sporting events during lectures, exemplifies the academic struggle for attention, highlighting what Shek and Cheung (2013) noted to be the tension between promoting learner engagement and managing digital distractions. As such, the Instructor as Entertainer navigates a complex landscape where the opportunities for enhanced interaction are tempered by challenges associated with experimentation, loss of control, competing forms of 'entertainment' within the attention economy, and overall classroom management. The adaptability and resilience of the Entertainer illustrates the limitations but also possibilities of TEL on identity work.

Instructor as hunter-gatherer

The identity of the Hunter-Gatherer is characterised by resourceful engagement with the ever moving and ever-present digital landscape. This archetype reflects an intellectual curiosity and a commitment to curating contemporary, relevant content that bridges academic theories with real-world applications, rooted in the desire to make learning resonate with students' lived experience.

> It's gone to the stage where examples from The Simpsons or The Office or whatever are getting blank reactions from students, which just tells me that I'm getting old and need to up my game. (P19)

> [T]here's not as many well-known references as there was in the past. I'm guessing 15 years ago, if you made a FRIENDS [TV Show] reference to articulate a point, everyone would get it. Nowadays, you can cite the most popular TV Show, and maybe 20% will have seen it because we're surrounded by so much content. So, you're always finding meaningful references … that's not always easy. (P4)

Thus, central to Hunter-Gatherer's identity is the ability to *relate* academic content to the students' world, making the learning experience relevant and engaging. This involves a continuous effort to update and adapt teaching materials to reflect current trends, technologies, and cultural shifts within society. Given the generational gap between instructor and learner, there is a challenge in staying relevant (Martin, Lord, and Warren-Smith 2020), particularly in an age where the saturation of available content through digital platforms makes popular references more elusive.

> That's purely probably social media [how the academic finds new examples for class] … watching what other businesses do, screenshotting and saving it for later. Overtime you kind of build up a bank of content … you're basically preparing for lectures whilst randomly scrolling through social media. (P4)

As such, the Hunter-Gatherer meticulously *curates* digital resources, where technology serves both as a tool and terrain for academic exploration, satiating the natural curiosity of certain instructors. The approach of constantly screenshotting or photographing relevant content is an ongoing ritual which illustrates how technology serves as both a catalyst for, and a challenge to, the curatorial and relational aspects of academic practice. Importantly, one's persistence in trying to relate to learners also redefines the boundaries (Clegg 2008) of the academic curation processes, where one's personal and work ecosystems collide as the teacher is always on the 'lookout' for screenshot-able digital resources, which can negatively impact upon one's work-life balance and ability to 'switch-off'.

Instructor as gatekeeper

The Instructor as Gatekeeper embodies an identity type founded in critical reflection, ethical considerations, and a commitment to maintaining academic rigour in the face of technological change. This archetype engages with TEL through a lens of cautious innovation, advocating for the judicious use of digital tools to enhance, rather than undermine educational quality and integrity.

> [T]hat we're using technology to get the students to respond [in class], is a bad thing. We should be able to get them to respond without the technology. How do we get the students to respond face-to-face? They could be wrong … that's fine … but speak up in class … get the conversation going. I think that's a much more an important question to tackle than what technology should we be using in class. (P2)

Central to the Gatekeeper's identity is a dual role of *resistance* and *critique* concerning the use of technology in education, highlighting issues such as accessibility, cost, and the pedagogical value of digital tools. This involves an appraisal of new educational technologies, questioning their impact on learning quality. P2 articulated this perspective by challenging the reliance on technology for student responses, advocating for engagement that precedes digital facilitation. Their sentiment underscores the Gatekeeper's commitment to fostering direct, meaningful interactions in the classroom, often viewing technology as an adjunct rather than a replacement for active learning. However, despite their critical stance, Gatekeepers are not averse to *innovation*. Instead, they seek to innovate within a mindset of educational values, emphasising technology's role in enriching the curriculum and assessment methods in ways that challenge students whilst upholding academic integrity.

> I look at my courses and I always try and bring in something [as an assessment] which is possibly more difficult to replicate than a standard essay … something like a presentation, which is impossible to bluff, or a live case study or something which can't be easily replicated by an essay mill or AI tool … if you've a good enough blend [of assessment], then over [the course of] a programme those who cheat should be caught out. (P2)

Gatekeepers approach TEL by advocating for pedagogical strategies that support authentic learning experiences and which guard against the pitfalls of technology, such as prominent use of AI for task completion. As such, navigating the balance between technological advancement and educational ethics presents an inherent tension for the Gatekeeper, particularly when challenging academic management or policies which are at an ideological counterpoint (Collins, Glover, and Myers 2022) to their own views and experience. The challenge lies in critiquing and resisting the uncritical adoption of TEL tools while also recognising and embracing their potential to innovate and enhance teaching practices – augmenting rather than undermining educational priorities, accounting for the political nature of academic decision-making within institutions (Collins, Glover, and Myers 2022). This narrative illustrates the critical lens through which the Gatekeeper views the adoption of educational technologies, advocating for solutions that genuinely enhance learning without imposing undue financial, logistical, or ideological burdens on staff and students.

Instructor as humanist

The Instructor as Humanist centres around an identity that prioritises and promotes empathy and inclusivity, with student wellbeing ultimately at the heart of teaching activities. This archetype views TEL as a means to democratise education, breaking down barriers to learning, thereby cultivating a supportive and accessible academic environment. The Humanist recognises the transformative potential of TEL.

> It's made it busier and maybe trickier to go about the day-to-day. I mean, the number of exceptional circumstances that we're all trying to deal with and sometimes the circumstances are just so weird and unusual … I just don't know how I'm supposed to … respond in an appropriate way. I don't have the skills and … training to be able to deal with these things. I personally feel I need more understanding of things like student support and mental health and learning more about disability services. (P9)

The Humanist's approach to *learning* is characterised by an ongoing commitment to understanding the varied needs of students, especially as these needs are amplified and diversified within the classroom environment. P9's statement highlights the Humanist's recognition of the complex and evolving requirements for supporting students using TEL. This underpins the need for educators to expand their competencies and sensitivities beyond traditional academic boundaries, furthering the work of Fitzmaurice (2013) who sought to show academic identity work being grounded in virtues and care. The importance of nurturing such identity qualities is even more prominent within an education system which is often underfunded in terms of student health and supports, where the onus to remedy often falls to those in proximity to the student (i.e. the academic).

> We've all taught people who have genuine disabilities, who five years ago might not have been even able to come into the classroom, because the technology wasn't there. It's great that they are [now] though, and they're learning something … but help those people … there's other students that I'm less sympathetic towards because I don't think it's a disability. I just think it's personality or they're just being too nervous … I think it's almost by choice that they're deciding not to participate in class. (P2)

> Commuting into the centre of London is a bit of a hassle. Nobody lives in the centre. Then there's the percentage of students who have childcare commitments, or work … So, students were loving the recordings. (P5)

In their role, Humanists *facilitate* learning experiences that are not only accessible but also empowering for students with diverse abilities and life circumstances. The adoption of TEL has enabled Humanists to reach students who might otherwise be marginalised from educational settings. The challenge for academics lies in balancing the utilisation of technology to accommodate certain students, while upholding standards and preserving the dynamics of the classroom environment within a digital world (Selwyn 2016), which is often a time-consuming task (e.g. allocating specific students access to lecture recordings). Ensuring that technology serves as an equaliser rather than a disruptor requires careful consideration of how to maintain academic rigour, which can be particularly challenging for academics, resulting in a fragmentation between their emotive want to care for students (Fitzmaurice 2013) and maintenance of academic standards.

> [T]here's an accessibility point to be made as well around the transcriptions [of recordings]. In the early days, I kind of embarrassed myself quite a lot by saying, 'this transcription stuff is just a work intensification'. Then someone from the equalities group said that some people need this transcription. (P15)

Whilst being a Humanist is becoming more important for all academics given the general tenor towards inclusivity, for some, *championing* the cause of accessibility and inclusivity is a hallmark of their academic identity. The above quote illustrating advocacy for transcription services and other accessibility measures is an example to this commitment. Through TEL, Humanists have found new ways to *create* safe spaces for discussion, reflection, and learning, enabling students to engage with each other in meaningful ways, fostering environments where diverse identities can coexist, and ultimately reaffirming the role of the wider collective in identity work (Akkerman and Meijer 2011).

While TEL presents opportunities for enhancing inclusivity and support, it also introduces challenges, particularly as many academics feel obliged to learn about matters of accessibility and inclusivity, without being trained to do so, or having the space to do so. It is often seen as another layer of work, which is highly productive from a learning standpoint, but largely unproductive in terms of progression and promotion unless engaged with in an overtly explicit manner (e.g. involvement in formalised Equality, Diversity & Inclusion (EDI) committees).

Instructor as technologist

The identity archetype of the Instructor as Technologist is often marked by a pragmatic embrace of technology, characterised by a proactive focus on serving the educational needs of students and supporting colleagues in, and through, the effective use of digital tools. However, the increasing reliance on technology introduces tensions related to technical issues, the potential for increased workload, and the need for continuous, often self-taught training, to keep pace with technological advancements (Collins, Glover, and Myers 2022).

> For instance, one of my sessions … [the projector] just shut down in the middle of the lecture. If it were to be me two years ago, I would want to literally record the entire thing by myself [again]. But now I decided that it's enough … I'm not re-recording it, and even if the students will be asking you about it, I will remind them that it is something in addition to the actual lectures, and [that] I don't have capacity to record everything again. (P6)

The embrace of TEL by Technologists is, for the most part, underscored by an acknowledgement of the challenges and limitations inherent in technology use, and the *learning* that must follow. For example, P6 described encountering technology failures during lectures and the pragmatic decision not to re-record disrupted sessions, highlighting the necessity for social norms to technology-related setbacks. However, the lack of clarity among what is common or expected among colleagues presents an ongoing challenge, as imperfection, whilst practical, may be taken as a form of laziness or demonstration of a lack of technological proficiency on the part of the academic, diminishing one's authority (Harris, Myers, and Ravenswood 2019) or perception of oneself. Much like the Humanist, however, some take it upon themselves to become experts in the realm of technological experimentation and implementation.

> And people [were] going the extra mile … being good organisational citizens and showing so much goodwill. A lot of learning happened 'on the hoof' and through the goodwill of others. Unfortunately, that dissipated a bit after Covid. (P5)

Beyond addressing their own classrooms, Technologists play a crucial role in *supporting* colleagues' adaptation to TEL. This may involve sharing knowledge, resources, and strategies for effective technology use, producing individual agency for identity work, whilst concurrently fostering a collaborative learning environment among faculty (Walz et al. 2023). Covid-19 highlighted the importance of such support, with P5 noting the significant learning that occurred '*on the hoof*' through the goodwill and cooperation of colleagues, often with little or no reward. This collective learning process underscores the Technologist's role in facilitating not just student growth, but also professional development within the academic community, particularly in the absence of formalised institutional supports. However, regardless of technology proficiency, its creep into one's workload was apparent across participants, presenting as a form of 'hidden work'.

> [W]hen the lecture is finished … you can say, right … I can forget about that lecture now, I'm finished. But I'm not. It's elongating the teaching process … what happens is you're getting an awful lot of emails afterwards that come in to you [straight after class] and then I'm replying to these now because it's still fresh in my mind. It all adds up. (P2)

The Technologist is particularly attuned to students' needs, navigating the expanded realm of digital communication to provide timely and effective *response* and *support*. The increase in email

communication post-lecture, for instance, extends the boundaries of traditional classroom inter-action, requiring academics to manage a greater volume of student inquiries and feedback. This situ-ation highlights the Technologist's commitment to maintaining an open and responsive dialogue with students, but also the potential over-reach that can occur, creating an 'always on' mentality with the academic being unable to 'disconnect'. As such, one of the main tensions faced by Technol-ogists is managing the workload and ever-evolving technical demands associated with TEL, balan-cing the time and effort required to utilise technology effectively against the benefits it provides.

Discussion

This paper investigated the impact of TEL on academics' identity work following accelerated tech-nology adoption. Identity theory emphasises that the self comprises multiple identities, with the most relevant ones influencing behaviour when there is a match between identity and action (Hogg, Terry, and White 1995), or 'work'. As such, this study contributes to the identity literature through the development of a framework (Figure. 1) which delineates five instructor identity arche-types: the Entertainer, the Hunter-Gatherer, the Gatekeeper, the Humanist, and the Technologist. These archetypes offer a classification for understanding the multifaceted nature of academic iden-tity, as impacted by TEL, acknowledging that the prominence of each archetype may vary depending on professional, personal and contextual factors. Importantly, the varied nature of these archetypes has implications for how institutions recognise and leverage instructor identities, as academics seek out authenticity, validation, and legitimacy in their work (Martin, Lord, and Warren-Smith 2020) based on their own value systems. We assert that providing flexibility and support for academics to navigate their roles in an increasingly digital world is a crucial mechanism in ensuring that aca-demics have the agency to respond to changing external and internal environments through the adoption of new teaching practices. This is particularly important, as instructors can play key and individually diverse roles in supporting institutions within rapidly changing environments (see van Lankveld et al. 2017). For instance, instructors embodying the Humanist archetype are invested in championing inclusivity and diversity, a priority area for many institutes.

Notably, our inquiry reveals the added complexity introduced by the integration of TEL into iden-tity work, leading to competing identities and fostering the fragmentation of academic identities due to the diverse roles and responsibilities associated with TEL and its practical challenges – often inducing forms of anxiety and stress (Losh 2014), whilst also the opportunity for new forms of self-verification (Stets and Burke 2005). As such, we add to the works of McNaughton and Billot (2016) in discussing the various activities engaged in within each archetype as academics navigate and negotiate emerging issues as part of their ongoing identity project. In the following sections, we posit important practical implications, particularly the need for alignment between academic iden-tity and institutional expectations. We then discuss the impact of TEL on faculty well-being when viewed through the lens of identity work. Finally, we present a set of potential future research direc-tions, accounting for the impact of emerging technologies on identity work and teaching practice.

Alignment between academic identity and institutional expectations

Given the importance of role-related behaviours in identity work (Hogg, Terry, and White 1995), alignment between an academic's work identity and institutional expectations is vital for job satis-faction and performance. Non-alignment, such as institutions prioritising research over TEL inno-vations, can adversely impact job satisfaction and performance (Walsh and Gordon 2008). Understanding and acknowledging the various identity archetypes should allow institutions to better align their strategies and the diverse identities of their academics, fostering an ecosystem where different types of identity work are valued and rewarded (Gander 2024). For instance, aca-demics proficient in technology often feel unrewarded for their skills, leading to toxic workplace cul-tures (Churchman and King 2009) and marginalisation (Harris, Myers, and Ravenswood 2019).

Recognition of innovative teaching practices should be integrated into promotion processes to encourage experimentation and creativity. Without proper institutional recognition, academics may gravitate towards less experimental and fulfilling modes of identity work. As stated by Vermote et al. (2023) those with a well-defined instructor-oriented academic identity reported less emotional exhaustion, resulting in a more motivating teaching style, and a lesser chance of the individual leaving academia. Notably, given varying levels of technology self-efficacy and adoption across instructors, teaching innovation should not be viewed solely through the lens of TEL utilisation, as this could lead to some instructors becoming disenfranchised.

Institutions must also implement processes to train staff and reward champions who aid colleagues in developing their technological proficiency, ensuring its use is pedagogically grounded (noting the role of the gatekeeper), whilst acknowledging time required for upskilling (Kenny and Fluck 2023). Zhao, Llorente, and Gómez (2021) noted that most HE educators possess only a basic level of digital competence. As such, training and development is critical in avoiding situations where academics feel diminished authority relative to technologically adept students, further resulting in low self-esteem. This is particularly important given the 'anchored' nature (Clegg 2008) of instructor identity for many academics. Concurrently, academics who engage in technologically proficient identity work also require supports and training. Hunter-Gatherers face the challenge of balancing their professional and personal ecosystems, often feeling the pressure of being 'always on'. This highlights the need for policies that support the right to disconnect and provide training on how to exercise this right effectively. Each instance shows that institutions must recognise the distinction between seen and hidden work (Kenny and Fluck 2023), ensuring that workloads account for the changing nature of identity work in a technologically-driven culture.

Identity work and well-Being

When one identity archetype dominates without adequate support or recognition, it can lead to fragmentation, increased stress, and the proliferation of antagonistic identity discourses among academics (Gander 2024). This misalignment between academic identity and organisational expectations exacerbates work-related stress and dissatisfaction (Bull et al. 2024). Unfortunately, many institutions have inadvertently neglected adequate workplace stress and mental health supports for staff (Ohadomere and Ogamba 2021). Institutional triggers of workplace stress, such as the implementation of technology without proper consultation and training, exacerbate this issue (Ohadomere and Ogamba 2021). Furthermore, stress and anxiety related to publishing pressure impacts how academics in dual teaching-research roles prioritise and manage their instructor – and researcher-orientated identities.

Concurrently, the lack of robust policies and procedures to deal with TEL related issues is commonplace within HEIs (Bisaillon et al. 2023). Cyberbullying, targeted towards academic identity, poses a threat to mental health and professional engagement. Identity theory explains that authentic expressions of identity are crucial during identity work as individuals engage in sense-making within academia (Fitzmaurice 2013). In this regard, the conflict between the Entertainer archetype and the unintended consequences of experimentation with technology can lead to low self-esteem, as academics may become targets for cyberbullying whilst engaging in their innovative approaches to TEL. This can result in disengagement, anxiety and sleep disorders (Bisaillon et al. 2023). Many academics feel unsupported by their institutes regarding problems such as cyberbullying, with a lack of clear policies and controls exacerbating the issue (Bisaillon et al. 2023), underscoring the urgent need for institutes to address these TEL related challenges.

Future directions for research

Although this research is situated within a business education context, many of the challenges noted by instructors relate to broader institutional and societal factors which transcend disciplines (Brown

2015). The accelerated adoption of TEL in particular, is a global phenomenon, relevant across disciplines and countries (Chugh et al. 2023). We believe this enhances the broader applicability of the identified archetypes within the HEI context. Future work may seek to develop on this typology through validating and refining the archetypes across disciplines. Additionally, this study is situated within the context of instructor identity, however we acknowledge that teaching is but one facet of academics' roles and therefore their identity. Although beyond the scope of this study, future research may investigate how these instructor identities intersect with academics' researcher and administrative roles.

In addition, we recognise that advanced digital technologies such as AI are likely to have a profound impact on identity work. By reducing administrative tasks, AI allows academics to focus on humanistic care and act as facilitators of learning, aligning their roles with personal and professional values (Huang, Saleh, and Liu 2021). This helps academics adopt roles like Gatekeepers and Humanists more effectively, improving resource allocation for mental health services and reducing stress (Gulliver et al. 2018). Additionally, AI promises personalised learning plans that may alter the nature of teaching and learning, potentially creating more distance between the academic and student, ultimately reducing academic 'presence' further (McNaughton and Billot 2016). Thus, the role of academics in informing AI systems remains uncertain, presenting implications for future research. Gatekeepers play a crucial role in the adoption of new technologies, emphasising the need for systematic feedback loops between management, academics and external stakeholders. These feedback loops are essential for evaluating new strategies, ensuring that TEL tools genuinely enhance learning and the student experience without compromising educational priorities. Given AI's rapid evolution, understanding its impact on academic identity work should be a research priority.

Conclusion

Overall, integrating TEL into higher education has complicated academic identity work. Recognising the diverse identity archetypes and their challenges allows institutions to better support faculty in navigating TEL complexities. This requires policy development, training, and recognition of diverse academic contributions. By fostering environments that leverage these identities, institutions can enhance faculty's ability to innovate and excel in a technology-driven world.

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