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My work is concerned with the priorities of empowering stakeholders (including staff, both academic and professional, as well as students) in post-compulsory education, and critically exploring the roles of technology in educational practices. These interests often collide, because technology is sometimes used in post-compulsory education as a vehicle for massification, standardisation and managerialism. I wish to open up such processes to contestation. Activity theory provides the fundamental basis for my work on these topics. Encountering activity theory allowed me to weave together my professional background in educational technology, on which I have worked in different roles for more than 20 years, with my Marxist personal commitments and activism. Understanding and building on the Marxist underpinnings of activity theory is particularly important to me. I first started engaging with activity theory in 2010, and have published using it since 2013.

Some specific strands of my current work are as follows:

1. Activity theory for understanding transformation in post-compulsory education

My work on this topic seeks to address the systemic contradictions underpinning change in post-compulsory education, and to understand possibilities for addressing those contradictions in collective and empowering, rather than managerial, ways. Some of that work is descriptive and critical. For example, I have conducted a review of participatory approaches to the design of new campus learning spaces, and several case studies examining the move to emergency remote teaching during the Covid-19 lockdown period. I am currently working on a critical review of 'digital transformation' initiatives in universities, and collaborating on a

longitudinal project which explores how economically disadvantaged learners relate to personal and industrial technologies in vocational education programmes. Yet, where possible, I seek to intervene to explore and develop new potentialities, typically using the Change Laboratory approach. I have used this approach in a range of settings, including the formation of institution-community partnerships and the re-design of a medical education curriculum.

2. The potential of digital platforms for expansive learning

As well as using activity theory to critique the imposition of digital tools, my work also addresses how digital platforms and tools might be used to support collective and empowering knowledge production in ways informed by activity theory principles. In such work I typically attempt to provoke expansive learning within online or blended Change Laboratory projects. In my project on forging institution-community partnerships, mentioned above, a significant proportion of workshops were online. I am currently using an online Change Laboratory approach to co-produce a new 'scholarship scheme' for professional technology staff in universities across the UK. In an upcoming project, I will co-design an online community with and for part-time, distance PhD students. My experiences suggest that online Change Laboratory work is difficult but that it can be useful, especially in cases where the activity systems we wish to transform are already online or where the stakeholders would not otherwise be able to collaborate.

3. Activity theory education

I also conduct work which addresses how activity theory is used and how neophytes approach it. I have an interest in how researchers use activity theory when writing about post-compulsory education or technology, which includes literature review work. My interest in neophytes learning the theory stems from my professional role. My work as an educator mostly concerns online PhD education for doctoral students studying part-time, at a distance, while working. I am director of a large doctoral programme, *E-Research and Technology Enhanced Learning*, and also teach on other such programmes. A subset of PhD researchers there become interested in activity theory but typically find their initial encounters difficult. I have thus become interested in how to 'teach' activity theory, which has occasionally included posting public YouTube videos. I regularly supervise PhD projects using activity theory, including those using the Change Laboratory or similar approaches, and I am interested in constructing useful resources to support such work. This is one reason why I have created the [Bureau de Change Laboratory](https://doi.org/10.21428/3033cbff.e68b3cb2) website, where I hope that resources useful for the wider community will continue to be posted on an ongoing basis.

Example publications

1. Bligh, B. (in press). The Change Laboratory as a collaborative approach to designing tools and activity systems for learning. To appear in: R. Cooper & A.R. Costa (Eds.), *Design for Education: Reimagining Spaces and Tools for Learning*. Routledge.
2. Bligh, B. (2023). Designing a Change Laboratory outline plan. Technical report. *Bureau de Change Laboratory*. <https://doi.org/10.21428/3033cbff.e68b3cb2>
3. Lee, K., Fanguy II, M., Bligh, B., & Lu, S. (2022). Adoption of online teaching during the COVID-19 Pandemic: A systematic analysis of changes in university teaching activity. *Educational Review*, 74(3), 460-483. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00131911.2021.1978401>
4. Scahill, J., & Bligh, B. (2022). Developing stakeholder agency in higher education sustainability initiatives: Insights from a Change Laboratory research-intervention. In K.

- Gamage, & N. Gunawardhana (Eds.), *The Wiley Handbook of Sustainability in Higher Education Learning and Teaching* (pp. 99-131). Wiley. <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781119852858.ch6>
5. Moffitt, P., & Bligh, B. (2021). Online tasks and students' transformative agency: Double-stimulation as a design principle for synchronous online workshops. *Journal of Vocational Education and Training*. Advance online publication. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13636820.2021.1998792>
 6. Moffitt, P., & Bligh, B. (2021). Video and the pedagogy of expansive learning: Insights from a research-intervention in engineering education. In D. Gedera, & A. Zalipour (Eds.), *Video Pedagogy: Theory and Practice* (pp. 123-145). Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-33-4009-1_7
 7. Bligh, B., & Flood, M. (2017). Activity Theory in empirical higher education research: choices, uses, and values. *Tertiary Education and Management*,23(2), 125-152. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13583883.2017.1284258>
 8. Bligh, B., & Flood, M. (2015). The Change Laboratory in Higher Education: research-intervention using activity theory. In J. Huisman, & M. Tight (Eds.), *Theory and Method in Higher Education Research* (pp. 141-168). Emerald. <https://doi.org/10.1108/S2056-375220150000001007>
 9. Bligh, B. (2014). Examining new processes for learning space design. In P. Temple (Ed.), *The Physical University: Contours of space and place in higher education*. Routledge.