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My journey with Cultural Historical Activity Theory (CHAT) traces back to my doctoral study in eLearning which I started in 2011. From the outset, I was drawn to Activity Theory, particularly as expanded by Yrjö Engeström, as it provides a robust framework for analysing and understanding the complexities of educational processes. This expanded version of Activity Theory has offered a powerful lens for my research work since then, guiding me to delve deeper into the social and cultural contexts of learning and teaching processes and practices.

In my research, I have utilised Activity Theory to systematically dissect the dynamics within educational environments, focusing on how digital technologies influence learning and interactions. This approach has illuminated the intricate interplay between learners and teachers (subjects), their objectives (objects), and the mediating artefacts (tools and technologies) involved in the educational process. With Activity Theory as a theoretical and analytical framework, I have been able to uncover the tensions, contradictions, and opportunities within these interactions, providing invaluable insights into both the successes and challenges of technology integration in education.

My application of Activity Theory goes beyond mere theoretical engagement; it has been a practical tool in identifying and evaluating the underlying factors contributing to the successful or problematic implementations of technological innovations in learning environments.

In this profile, I will highlight two key contributions I have made to the CHAT literature.

### **[Learning during a pandemic: an Activity Theory analysis of the challenges experienced by Aotearoa/New Zealand university students \(2023\)](#)**

Using Activity Theory as a framework, this article provides insights into the challenges and contradictions faced by university students in New Zealand during their online learning experiences amidst the COVID-19 pandemic. This was based on a national research project, and a comprehensively designed mixed-methods approach encompassing a large-scale survey, focus groups, and interviews conducted across all eight universities in New Zealand.

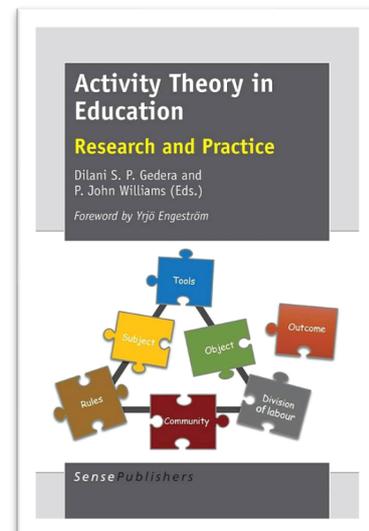
This article discusses significant challenges, including the adjustment to new technologies, diminished social interaction, disrupted daily routines, and the strain of managing multiple roles. It highlights how these challenges, framed as contradictions within an activity system, can spur changes in educational practices. The findings lead to actionable recommendations for educational institutions and stakeholders to enhance future teaching and learning strategies.

## [Activity Theory in Education: Research and Practice \(2016\)](#)

Forwarded by Engeström, *Activity Theory in Education: Research and Practice* brings together cutting-edge scholars from a number of continents. Through in-depth case studies the authors highlight how Activity Theory is used in education and discuss the theoretical as well as pragmatic use of Activity Theory frameworks in a range of contemporary learning contexts.

The first section of the book focuses on empirical research on using Activity Theory in analysing students' and teachers' experiences of learning and teaching in face-to-face and online learning contexts.

The second section contains insights into identifying historical and systemic tensions in educational contexts using Activity Theory. The third section discusses conceptual and contextual aspects of educational contexts through Activity Theory, and Section four discusses the application of Activity Theory in understanding teachers' Pedagogical Content Knowledge and curriculum development.



“In spite of the widespread and rapidly increasing use of Activity Theory in educational research, few collections of this work are available. *Activity Theory in Education: Research and Practice* is such a much-needed collection of practical experiences, theoretical insights and empirical research findings on the use of Activity Theory in educational settings.”

– Yrjö Engeström, Centre for Research on Activity, Development and Learning (CRADLE), The University of Helsinki.

### **Example CHAT publications**

Gedera, D., Forbes, D., Brown, C., Hartnett, M., & Datt, A. (2023). Learning during a pandemic: An Activity Theory analysis of the challenges experienced by Aotearoa/New Zealand university students. *Educational Technology Research and Development*, 71(6), 2271-2295. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11423-023-10284-3>

Gedera, D., & Williams, J. (2016). *Activity theory in education research and practice*. D. S. P. Gedera & P. J. Williams (Eds.), The Netherlands: Sense Publishers. <https://www.springer.com/gp/book/9789463003872>

Gedera, D. G. S. P. (2016). The application of Activity Theory in identifying contradictions in a university blended learning course. In D. S. P. Gedera & P. J. Williams (Eds.), *Activity Theory in education: Research and practice* (pp. 53-69). The Netherlands: Sense Publishers. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-6300-387-2\\_4](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-6300-387-2_4)

Gedera, D., Williams, J., & Wright, N. (2015). Identifying factors influencing students' motivation and engagement in online courses. In C. Koh (Ed.), *Motivation, leadership and curriculum design: Engaging the Net Generation and 21st-century learners* (pp. 13-23). Singapore: Springer Science. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-287-230-2\\_2](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-287-230-2_2)

Gedera, D. G. S. P. (2014). Mediation engagement in E-learning: An Activity Theory analysis. (University of Waikato, Hamilton, New Zealand). Retrieved from <https://hdl.handle.net/10289/8847>

Gedera, D. G. S. P. (2014). Students' experiences of learning in a virtual classroom. *International Journal of Education and Development using Information and Communication Technology (IJEDICT)*, 10(4), 93-101. Retrieved from <http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1059024.pdf>

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Gedera, D. S. P., Williams, P. J., & Wright, N. (2013). An analysis of Moodle in facilitating asynchronous activities in a fully online university course. *International Journal of Science and Applied Information Technology*, 2(2), 6-10. Retrieved from <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/236627380>