

STRATEGIC THINKING ABOUT E-LEARNING

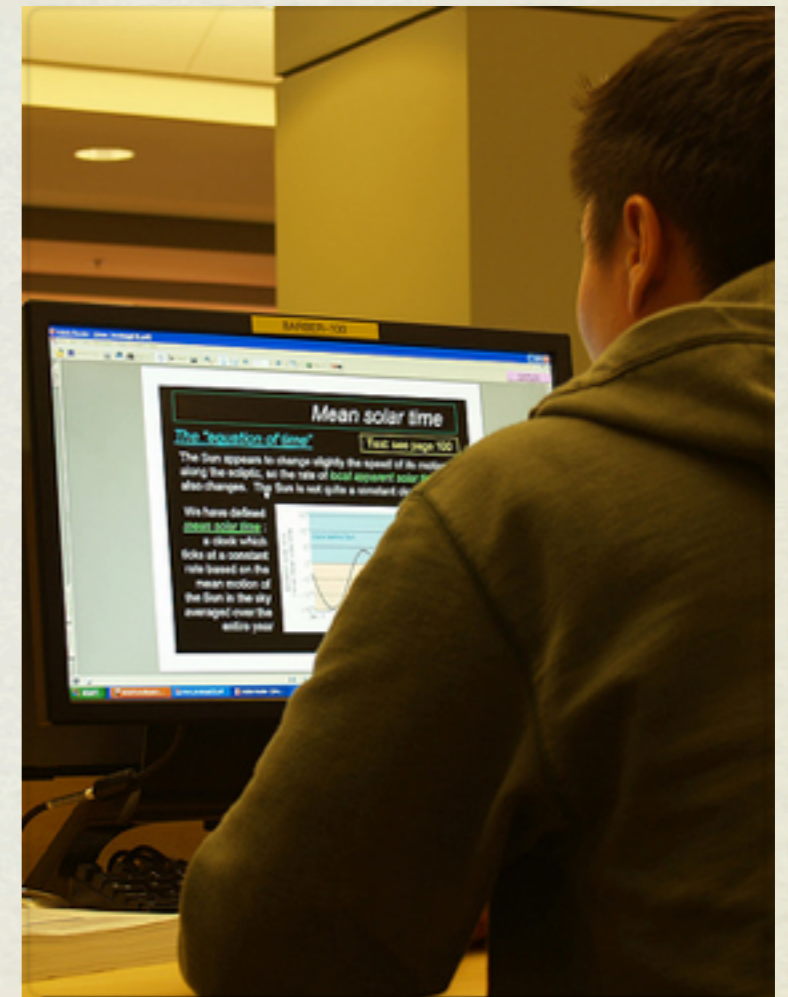
Tony Bates

THE STUDY

Topic: the strategic management of digital technologies in universities and colleges

co-author, Albert Sangra; spring 2011;
Jossey-Bass

11 case studies: five in North America,
six in Europe



THE CASES

North America

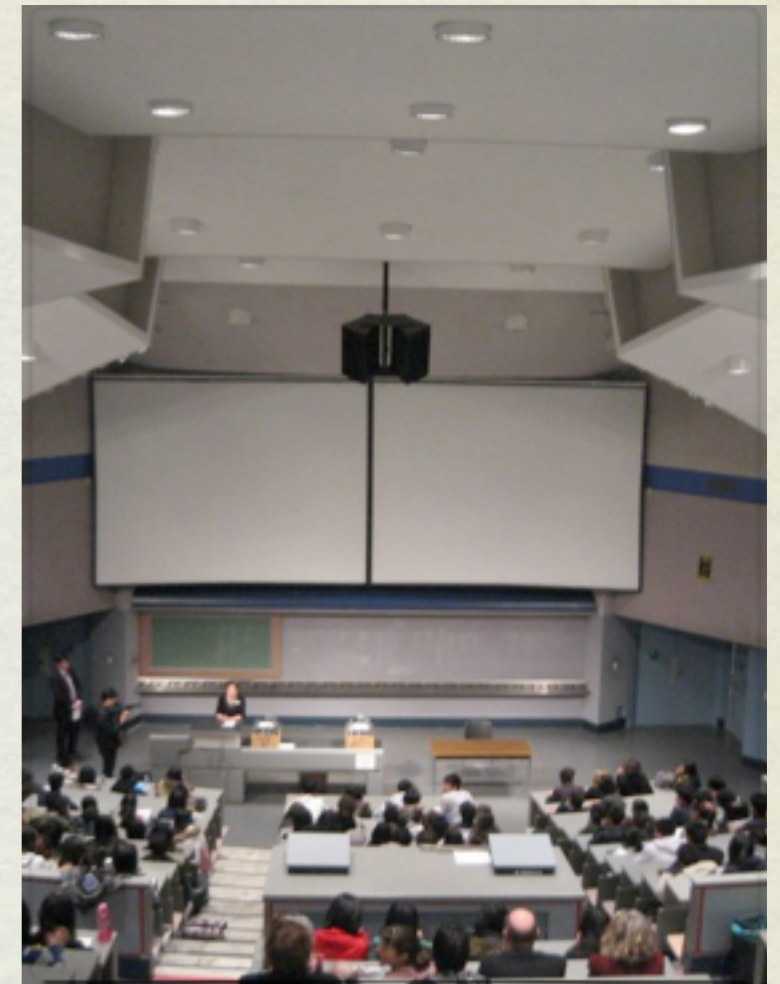
- Virginia Tech
- University of Central Florida
- UBC
- SAIT
- Collège Boréal

Europe

- University a Coruña
- University of Alicante
- University Rovira i Virgili
- University of Milan
- Open University of Catalonia
- Open University of Portugal

THE TOPICS

- Why universities and colleges must change
- Developments in technology
- Measuring technology integration
- Leadership and strategy
- Organization structures
- Quality assurance
- Resources, money and decision-making
- Barriers to change
- Building a 21st century university or college
- Executive summary



KEY RESULTS

Main goals for technology (Bates/Sangra):

- increase flexibility of access for diverse student body
- increase personalization of learning and interaction
- develop 21st century skills
- increase cost-effectiveness (better services; lower cost)



KEY RESULTS

Main goals for technology (case studies, campus-based institutions):

- digitalize administrative services
- enhance quality of classroom teaching

Goals too conservative and not measurable



First question: reinforce classroom model, or new models, especially hybrid?

KEY RESULTS

- Instructors in most institutions were not adequately prepared to teach well (with or without technology)
- Academic administrators in most institutions were not adequately prepared to make good decisions about technology
- Training of all instructors in teaching should be systematic and compulsory (especially in universities)
- Administrators on appointment need special orientation for technology decision making

KEY RESULTS

Second question:

(a) should there be formal accreditation in teaching for all instructors in post-secondary education

(b) what do academic administrators need to know about technology?

KEY RESULTS

- No institution knew the real cost of e-learning
- Accounting/budget processes do not capture 'true' technology costs in teaching
- Increased spending on learning technology support units
- Few institutions knew where the money would come from
- Unintended consequences: larger classes, more contract instructors, increased faculty workload
- Important to replace activities (or increase revenues)

KEY RESULTS

Third question: how to evaluate the investment in e-learning?

RESULTS IN CONTEXT

- technology only one aspect of management; and new
- management is messy (Mintzberg)
- administrators were doing their best
- good technology management at UBC, Virginia Tech, University of Central Florida, OU of Catalonia
- organizational culture: fear of managerialism



CONCLUSIONS

- overall lack of innovation at an institutional level everywhere
- in most institutions, technology used to reinforce the ‘industrial’ fixed time/place classroom model
- lack of new models for combining digital/face-to-face learning to:
 - meet 21st century competencies and skills
 - increase flexibility for a very diverse student body



CONCLUSIONS

- if you believe quality of classroom teaching is generally good, no problem
- if you believe teaching needs to change to meet new needs and contexts, then intelligent use of technology essential
- institutions need to set 'innovation in teaching' as strategic goal - and reward it



THREE QUESTIONS

- Should technology be used to reinforce the current classroom model, or should it be used for radical change in how teaching and learning are delivered?
- Should it be a requirement for all faculty and instructors in post-secondary education to have formally accredited training in teaching before they are allowed to teach? And what do senior administrators need to know about technology?
- How can we evaluate the investment we are making in e-learning (especially as we don't track costs or benefits)?

CURRICULUM FOR INSTRUCTORS

- epistemology and learning theories
- biological basis of learning
- design of teaching
- learning technologies
- + electives (research in teaching, cultural issues, etc.)
- all embedded in project work

ORIENTATION FOR ADMINISTRATORS

- questions to ask about technology proposals/issues
- know institution's key goals/objectives
- briefing on roles and operation of units that support technology applications, by directors of units
- key technologies in use and possible new developments
- IP, security and privacy issues
- readings on management of technology in HE
- site visits to 'best practice' institutions