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## ***Online Pedagogy and Academic Work***

Abstract:

This paper emerges from a study that foregrounds the complex nature of the consequences of a decision to implement a range of new technologies including a Learning Management System at one university. The paper draws upon data from interviews with academics to provide insights into the experience of being academic in the 21<sup>st</sup> century during a time when new technologies of teaching, learning and administration impact on the work of professional academics. It focuses on how academics view and understand online teaching environments; how they make professional judgments about their use of online environments in their teaching and how they make professional judgments about pedagogy. In doing this the paper looks at the differing levels of uptake of new technologies by academics, their levels of engagement and disengagement, the complexity of their relationship with these technologies and their impact on the pedagogy of academics in the study as it looks at patterns of usage in terms of age, gender and levels of experience of academics. It demonstrates the importance of pedagogy to academics and the problems that academics face many of which can be attributed to the impact of measures of bureaucratisation and standardisation including the introduction of an LMS that some argue has led to the homogenisation of the experience of teaching and learning for both academics and students.

### **Introduction**

This paper draws upon interviews that provide insights into the experience of being academic in the 21<sup>st</sup> century during a time when new technologies of teaching, learning and administration are impacting on the work of professional academics. This paper is by nature both political and emotional. I have taken on Foucault's challenge to tackle a real political task. Foucault argues that:

... the real political task in a society such as ours is to criticize the working of institutions which appear to be both neutral and independent; to criticize them in such a manner that the political violence which has always exercised itself obscurely through them will be unmasked, so that one can fight them

(Foucault, 1974 p. 171).

The 'real political task' is to make visible the consequences of whole scale changes, in the form of imposed new technologies of teaching and learning, on the experience of academic work. This paper presents insights into how academics experience this change process that is part of the politics of university administration. Academic work takes place within the current climate of competition in higher education in Australia and what Blackmore calls "the managerialisation and commercialisation of education" (Blackmore, 2007). The current funding model of higher education is implicated in creating this competitive climate, one in which Universities are constantly trying to gain a 'competitive edge'. The focus on the use of new technologies is one way in which some Universities brand themselves and market themselves to the public (Stensaker, 2005), one way they can be seen to be distinctive in an environment of increased national and international competition within higher education.

## **Background**

Academics in this study were all from a Faculty of Education. During semi-structured interviews academics were invited to discuss their experience of the imposed introduction of a Learning Management System (LMS) to support online teaching in the University and the impact of these changes on their pedagogical practices. During the interviews many academics brought up issues related to the impact of other measures of bureaucratisation and standardisation as well the introduction of a LMS.

The interviewees were all members of a Faculty of Education. The anonymity of academics has been maintained through the creation of composite characters. Connell used a similar methodology for his research into 'Teacher's Work' (Connell, 1985). This method of constructing 'composites' allows for 'sensitivity' in the presentation of interview data while also demonstrating respect for the expertise of the academics.

The selection and use of 'composites' also provides a means to maintain a sense of biography, 'the way things hang together and take shape (and sometimes fall out of shape)' (Connell, 1985 p.3) in the work lives of academics as well as the sociology of the workplace. All the detail, all the spoken words, come from the interviews although they have been deconstructed and reassembled so the characters are not real people, nor are they representative of any one academic. These composites are created to 'represent' particular experiences while protecting the privacy (and generosity) of my interviewees. The composite characters you will meet in this paper are Angelina, Miranda, James, Emma, William and Jemima.

The LMS that was introduced at this university is WebCT Visa. It contains within it a range of tools for web based content delivery, text based threaded discussions, quizzes and tests, assignment submission and the recording of student results and usage and behaviours of both students and academics.

### **Academic Use of the LMS**

One of the questions used in the interviews asked the academics to describe or rate themselves in terms of their skill as users of new technologies including computers and other communication technologies before the introduction of the LMS. It could be expected that the academics who volunteered were for the most part those who were less likely to be threatened by new technologies. Based on their responses about their level of skill and expertise and their comments about using technologies during the interviews I placed them into three categories. These categories are themselves problematic in that someone else might categorise them differently. Often academic's use of technical language is indicative of their use and familiarity with computers and computer systems. That is, some academics are more immersed in the discourse of online pedagogies than others.

Highly skilled users were those who spoke confidently about their use of technologies and who mobilised the technical discourses of the IT support people. Reasonably skilled users included those academics who spoke of themselves as being proficient but did not mobilise the more technical discourses of LMS and IT personnel. The low skill users included those academics who expressed fear and/or a lack of knowledge

about the LMS, who did not use the LMS themselves and did not mobilise the technical discourse.

The range of discourses around LMS and IT use indicated a small group of Highly skilled users(4), a larger cluster of Reasonably skilled users(6) and the concentration of less skilled users(7).

### **Characterising the relationships of academics with the LMS technology**

Academics indicated a desire to use the LMS to work collaboratively with their students in ways that promote intellectual conversations, but they saw this desire as being compromised due to the academics' lack of technical skill with the LMS or their lack of knowledge about how to create teaching materials that allow them to work in collaborative and democratic ways. A common response by academics to questions about the introduction of the LMS was that it was 'clunky' 'slow' and 'cumbersome'. Some indicated that the requirement on academics to use LMS develops a dependency on others to setup, manage and create learning resources. When online materials are created for academics by other staff, the time eventually arrives, sooner or later, when changes need to be made. In this situation academics are dependent on other staff to carry out these tasks when (or if) the other staff have time or are available, or if in fact the same staff are still employed in the same capacity within the faculty or learn to do it themselves. One of the most common emotions expressed during these interviews was that of frustration. This frustration develops due to a lack of agency by academics. If academics lack the skill necessary to carry out basic tasks such as uploading a unit guide or setting up discussion areas, the technical steps which are quickly forgotten when undertaken only a few times a year, or the system has changed, let alone use the LMS in innovative ways, then they feel they are positioned as unskilled workers in their own professional workplaces. This challenges their sense of professional efficacy.

The relationship of academics in this study with the LMS technology is an organic one – organic in that the relationship is ever changing and problematic - a relationship that does not fall easily into categories. But what is clear is that the differing levels of engagement and disengagement and the ensuing relationship with and to the LMS

across the faculty participants. The following are attempts to portray the complexity of these relationships.

For some academics their capacity and skill in the use of online technologies is an area of expertise which they value and for which they are valued and highly skilled proactive users. There are those who seem quite accepting of the university's mandated requirements and who have attempted to exploit the technologies in order to enhance the teaching and learning experience for their students. Some academics have for the most part ignored the LMS, getting support staff to carry out tasks so as to be seen to meet basic requirements of the university in relation to the LMS. These academics are not simply resisters, although many employ resistance strategies as part of their repertoire of responses to particular aspects of the new technologies. They are not simply adopters, although some have infused some aspects of the technology into their repertoire of pedagogical skills. Academics whose entire teaching workload is in off campus units have had to use and adapt to the technology in order to support and teach their off campus students. They have not had the luxury of totally ignoring the LMS although Jemima managed to use a limited in presence in the LMS to notify her off campus students that she would communicate with them via email rather than in the discussion space.

Academics who were deemed to be highly skilled users tended to use a range of new computer technologies in their pedagogical practices and in their research work as academics. Some had adopted new technologies with energy and vigour. But other deemed to be highly skilled users, used their previous experience of other technologies to argue the case against what they see as a technology based on a business model which they view as slow, clunky (as previously mentioned) and outdated before it was implemented. Academics complained that they wanted to be able to use the LMS in ways similar to how they had used other technologies. Miranda wanted to be able to move things around her online sites in the LMS by using "a drag and drop facility or something like that" as they could on their computers but this was not a facility of the LMS. She wanted to be able to use her 'web building skills to create resources' for her students. Others expressed a desire for 'a nice simple little system that is easy to manage and not very complex'. This was a common plea. 'Then I couldn't really stuff things up and that would be great!' was

Jemima's plea. Many academics wanted to only use the online discussion space within the LMS with their students but they wanted a discussion space that was fast, simple and efficient. Comments about the slowness and clunkiness of the LMS was made repeatedly, 'It tries to do too much!'

Some academics in the study expressed concerns that they did not have the power (access is 'given' to academics at an administrative level) to do certain things and they found that very frustrating. Miranda explained that she asked for more privileges so she could go in and extend and enhance the activities she was seeking to engage her students. In some instances, she acted without 'permission'. She said, "I'm aware of how complex it is and how busy I am. I think that there's a downside to everything and the downside to using the LMS in more innovative ways is that would be that I would be spending even more time working on THE LMS than I do already. So that is a real dilemma."

In particular, the mandated use of online technologies in this particular form was seen to intensify what was an already high workload at this university. Concern about the amount of time taken up using older technologies such as email, and the time taken up learning about, using and meeting the administrative requirements of the LMS was wide spread. Each academic had strategies by which they sought to manage this more efficiently.

There was a strong feeling that academics were having to undertake remedial action to rectify the inadequacies of the system to make it more workable and more student and teacher friendly. The highly skilled users group developed relatively sophisticated repertoires to make the system work for them despite its deficiencies. For these academics learning to use it came more easily than for others and they felt more comfortable; they quite liked the possibilities it provided, and they sought to integrate it more widely and effectively than did other academics. These were commonly highly sophisticated users of new technologies. Some were interested in the possibilities they foresaw by its usage. Some of these academics see the LMS as an integral part of being academic even though they find it cumbersome. Because of the complexity, there were elements of THE LMS that were rarely used even by the

highly skilled users, and each academic preferred particular elements of the system over others.

Some of the academics who made little attempt to meet even the most basic of requirements used support staff or colleagues to upload unit guides – a basic requirement. Some also use these same support staff to upload some resource files and/or to create a discussion space for students. Some of this group of academics view the LMS as outside their area of influence, their area of expertise so they avoid, ignore or actively try to position the LMS in negative ways. Because of the way they have positioned themselves within the faculty and because they only teach face, they can continue with little reference to THE LMS.

### **Patterns of usage: age, gender level of experience**

Patterns of usage could not be predicted by categories of age, gender or experience as an academic. Some of the older and longer serving members of faculty were those who used the technology least commonly (both male and female), one member who also fits this description was mentioned by many of the interviewees as the most skilled user of technology. She also identified herself as a high level of user of the LMS, one of the oldest members. She uses a range of technologies in the preparation of her teaching materials. She uses the latest technologies and spends vast amounts of time in this type of work. Other highly skilled technology users were both male and female and covered both longer serving members of faculty and newer members of faculty although there was a slightly higher number of highly skilled in the levels of newer academics in the faculty. So attitudes were not solely linked to age or gender. Of the highly skilled users of technology who chose to position the LMS as 'less than' all were longer serving male members of faculty. Of the highly skilled users who identified that they tried to push the boundaries and learn how to use the LMS in innovative and engaging ways all were female; both longer serving and newer faculty members.

Although gender was not a significant factor as might be expected from anecdotal comments and widely accepted views that females are less interested in, and less skilled users of, technology (reference) it was apparent that males who commonly



avoided the system whenever possible and highly skilled technology users who were male, actively worked to position the LMS in negative ways albeit in different ways. Interestingly, many of these were longer serving male academics. The less technologically skilled males, tended to use the excuse that the students did not like or did not use the system as their reason for not using it while their more highly skilled male colleagues tended to use technical deficiencies to explain their lack of use. The male academics who strongly avoided the LMS were often those who also seemed to be most threatened by change in general and who expressed nostalgic comments about the better quality of the work experience of academics in the past times. This nostalgia common amongst many academics is indicative of the radical changes to the nature of academic work.

### **Responses and resistance strategies**

The highly skilled users agreed with, Burbules (2004 p. 4) who says that the development of online courses will follow technical instructional design rules (some of them implemented through the design of commercial courseware), which have the effect of *standardizing* and *narrowing* the range of educational design options — typically based on the traditional assumptions of classroom teaching and learning (Burbules, 2004). William, deemed to be highly skilled user, complained that “It tries to do too much and that there are better technological models, and of course it is far too slow”.

These highly skilled user responses demonstrate how technical instructional design rules can be the criteria upon which decisions about educational technologies are made; rather than decisions based on sound pedagogical knowledge. Academics in this group were quick to investigate new web2 technologies eg blogs, wikis and podcasts. They support the emergence of new and better technologies in general but once the technologies become more widely used these academics tend to be highly critical of such technologies and actively work to position the technologies in negative ways. When a technology starts to be taken up by the mainstream these academics seem to quickly move their interest on to another set of new technologies. They spend a lot of time at the cutting/leading edge. In this case the LMS was created from a

business model by technicians who did not have an educational background. It was adapted for use in institutes of higher education which themselves have taken up corporate business models and managerialist systems to run their day to day operations. So it should not be surprising that academics in this group tended to actively resist the LMS and work to position it as less than.

One sub group of those who also rated themselves as highly or reasonably skilled, while showing awareness of these issues, were still motivated to find the best uses they could for the LMS. Many of these were females, both young and older members of faculty, both long serving and newer members of faculty but one male could also be placed in this group. They were interested to learn more about how they might change the LMS to get it to work in ways that more closely fitted their beliefs about effective teaching. They wanted to use the LMS in ways that are innovative and not necessarily in the ways envisioned by those in the technology or marketing divisions who expected all aspects of the branding of the system to remain consistent.

The creation of an online presence for each unit happens while operating in the 'build' mode where academics or educational developers prepare the online presence for each unit. Some academics soon realised that the administrators do not actually 'see' what individual units look like to students because only those enrolled in any unit actually see unless administrators have sufficient time to check on the changes in every unit across the university. So these academics changed the 'look' (against advice to the contrary) regardless of consequences. So these academics quickly realised that they could make changes to the look of their units by using different images for their icons and different colours and including multimedia that would be more representative of the focus of the units – the teaching of children in schools – that made them more engaging for their pre-service teaching students. Academics in this group, who described themselves as highly or reasonably skilled technology users before the implementation of the LMS, used their technological skills to exploit the LMS to make it work in ways that more closely fitted with their beliefs and values about effective pedagogy.

## **Pedagogy and the online environment**

William spoke of his concern about the lack of effective pedagogy in the online environment expressed a desire to:

provide students with opportunities to learn how to use the tools effectively – to know the difference between an ICT hammer and a chisel and an angle grinder how to use them as tools. But then I want to get them to the next thing; to help them to see how they can use them to construct something pedagogically effective; well that is something else again. Okay maybe they can use the LMS to click and look, but what have learned out of that about? Have they learned how to construct learning experiences for students in their present or future classroom that are going to facilitate the learning of those students? I think not.

Concerns about the underlying messages sent to students may be a consideration that does not concern those teaching in other faculties. But for those committed to the field of Education, then the hidden or implicit message that are sent to Education students is a central issue for academics. They do not want to be seen to be giving the message, 'Do what is say, not what I do!' They do not want to be caught in the contradiction of espousing theories about effective teaching, that they teach about and that underpin their research, that are not played out in their own teaching.

While these concerns may be valid some other academics take a different view as they try to tease out the possibilities and find ways to overcome or work around the limitations of the system. Some academics spoke of the ways in which they try to use the LMS in innovate and pedagogically effective ways but ways that are not necessarily predicted. Jessica said:

When I'm in a classroom face to face I might have an idea that I want to explore with the students I can go into the LMS later and conduct an online discussion after thinking through an issue. With the LMS I think a lot about how I might pose a question for an online discussion and what sorts of things I might ask them to do. I try to think about how they might all respond. I might post a message or a piece of information and they will respond to it and I'll come in the next day and it has all happened while I was away. And it might not have happened the way I wanted it to and I might not have met the objective that I had in mind. In a classroom situation that wouldn't have

happened because if it wasn't working I would change direction and said *'Oh well that didn't work really well did it? Let's have a think about why that didn't work.'*

Jessica also noted that "there's a downside to everything and the downside to the LMS is that to do more interesting things I have to spend more time working on the LMS than I do already". Emma explained that:

This stuff we do in the LMS is pretty static unless you get in and make it jump around. I think it is already old fashioned and will be replaced. I worked with a multimedia developer to prepare interactive learning objects for maths and literacy that my students were then asked to evaluate in terms of their appropriateness for use in schools. This was a pretty worthwhile experience in that we created interesting and challenging learning objects (activities). It was great to be able to draw on the skill of a multimedia developer because I did not have the programming skill to do this myself but I found it frustrating too. The long drawn out timeline did not really suit me. It was a lot of time and effort for both of us but in the end they weren't quite what I had envisioned. It wasn't her fault it is just really hard to explain what I wanted and she didn't have any teaching background so that took a lot of explaining. The real frustration was the lack of control on my part. I couldn't add to, edit or change any of it in anyway. I was always having to ask someone else to make even the simplest change I wanted. In the end I just accepted them as they were and did the best with them. Luckily I wasn't trying to present them as examples of great uses of computer technology.

This example of the frustration was experienced by Emma who is deemed to be in the highly skilled user group. For academics who are less skilled the whole experience of the LMS can be frustrating due to their lack of control over their teaching environment.

Some academics identified advantages the system afforded them. James stated that it "allows for more flexibility so students can be engaging with materials and others outside the class time and continue learning in a more flexible way. I think the online medium has huge advantages in terms of flexibility and learning, for collaboration, and cross cultural collaboration and therefore opening up views of other cultures". He

also acknowledged that “theoretically there are enormous possibilities as far as online work is concerned. Theoretically you could run some astonishingly elaborate pedagogical situations for students online” .... “but I don’t think we’ve got over the simple technical problems for most of our students; but on the whole I think what students want is the most direct way into the conversation”.

Frank commented that:

.. if you sit down and have to build a the LMS site for a unit it really does force you to think through the curriculum and learning activities and do a more thorough job so that’s sort of an upside of that.

Most academics in the study mentioned the importance of the social aspect of learning. The undergraduate teaching program makes particular reference to this view of learning throughout the four year program and one unit of the course includes a study of all of these. Thus academics in a Faculty of Education bring their specific understandings about teaching and learning and their expertise in this field to online pedagogies.

William spoke about the influences on his view of effective teaching. He said that he wanted his students to know and understand the work of people like Vygotsky and particularly the concepts of the zone of proximal development and scaffolding as he sees this as being crucial to effective teaching. William was not convinced that the LMS allowed for this type of teaching. He argued that because it is based on a transmission model of teaching and learning that is at odds with a constructivist approach to teaching and learning. William said that the LMS does not allow him to hand over responsibility for learning to his students because it was designed with a transmission model of learning model in mind. It assumes that the teacher is the knower and the transmitter of knowledge.

Emma also expressed similar concerns when she said:

I subscribe to the views about the social construction of knowledge and learning is the development of knowledge that is always linked to the students own world, their particular view point and that they’re building on previous knowledge, on their experience, related to their expectations and their particular goals and their agendas which are not necessarily the agendas of the

one who's in a teaching role and that those experiences and agendas and motivations and ways of learning that don't necessarily match up with the some sort of ideal student that often underlies the way that curriculum is developed and way that learning tasks are developed.

These academics refer to the LMS as restricting their pedagogical practices when really what they wanted to do was to use online pedagogies to open up rather than close down the educational experience for their students. In their view the business model underpinning the LMS allowed for greater control by administrators but caused the academics problems in terms of their teaching practices and the students learning experiences because of the lack of flexibility and the lack of student control of their learning environment. The LMS is designed to deliver content, to manage discussions, to record student results and to monitor usage and behaviours. It is not designed to allow academic staff to gradually relinquish responsibility to the students in the manner of scaffolding or indeed to have responsibility themselves for how something is presented to their students.

The LMS does not allow for the complexity of the teaching process. William said that, "the university is pedagogically naïve, lemming like, leaping into mandated, wholly online units is just ridiculous for on campus students". He was referring to the university decision to mandate the use of the LMS in all units and that all courses must have one fully online unit even for on campus students. It does not seem to take into consideration what the units were about, their objectives and indeed the arguments around what should be taught and how teaching might happen in differentiated ways. Those who wanted to provide more differentiated and individualised and/or situated learning that takes into consideration the specific contexts and learning in specialised faculties were not happy about the decision. They want to be able to select the most appropriate combination of teaching and learning contexts to meet particular student needs. This does not seem to be easily facilitated by LMS.

Comments by academics reflected the social and emotional aspects of learning and the relationship building that is possible and desirable in teaching. An oft repeated comment by academics in this study was that students want, and need to, develop

relationships with their lecturers; they want to have the 'conversation' with their lecturers.

Academics views and understandings about online teaching environments are bound up in their values about effective pedagogy. Desires around pedagogy also have to be mediated by the knowledge of the recent intensification of teaching workload with higher student/staff ratios (Marginson, 1997, Marginson, 2000, Blackmore, 2004) which reduces the opportunities for quality relationship building. Many of the academics in the study described how their pedagogy was being limited because it is being made more predictable due to the format of the delivery of teaching materials that is corporate in appearance, based on a business model and which is predicated by the use of templates for delivery in predictable and prescribed ways and with a common 'look' set out in consistent ways. Standardisation and consistency are equated in this bureaucratic view as quality. The Learning Management System introduced into this University was designed to create online environments that are consistent in 'look', consistent in operation. It was designed to deliver content in standardised ways while collecting data on system users. It was selected by and is managed by centralised administrators (Peszynski, 2005). It is primarily a management system, and only secondly a teaching tool. As a consequence academics tend to view it as an impediment to their pedagogical practices rather than as a tool to promote quality learning.

Academics perceive quality in higher education teaching as having a range of dimensions – ambiguity, aesthetics, excitement, challenging ideas, etc. The selection and implementation of a business model Learning Management System (LMS) meant that even if many academics wanted to make the environment look different (such as the use of different colors or images which portray the content of the area of study) or if they want to set up different forms of communication they are stymied by requirements and rules under which the computer system runs, by the lack of user friendly functionality and by rules and regulations put in place by administrators. Rather than a bureaucratic model of pedagogy academics in this study expressed a desire for a more democratic form of pedagogy which they did not see as being facilitated by LMS.

## **Pedagogical Conflict**

Many academics were challenged by the need to reconstruct and transform their work practices by the new technologies that do not necessarily mesh easily with the forms of pedagogy these academics value most. Wyn (personal communication with Davies, 2003 p. 96) describes how in institutions of higher education ‘There is a rush to use information technology, which can be very flexible, but fits best with modulated, unitised, pre-packaged kinds of teaching’. But modulated, unitized, pre-packaged kinds of teaching are not necessarily the forms of pedagogy academics in the Faculty of Education prefer. Sandra described her view of effective pedagogy in the following way:

I want to engage my mature age students with ideas, to give them confidence and the skills to find the information they need in a supportive environment I have established so that their ideas are accepted, that diversity is valued ... in which I’ve set up a culture that allows principles of effective teaching to grow and mature. I care about my students’ learning. I think it is important to be willing to learn from your students, to put your ego to the back, to give them confidence. I want to facilitate a group process, where students are listening to others’ ideas and where my belief in collaborative ideals can be realised because the group brings out much better perspectives.

This description of how Sandra wanted to engage with her students is at odds with Wyn’s description of (n.d.) ‘modulated, unitised, pre-packaged kinds of teaching’ which many see as promoted by the new LMS. She wanted to have a very ‘different’ relationship with her students than this system allowed. It is not online teaching and learning per se that academics see as the problem; it is the lack of control of a system that is perceived to be based on a business model rather than a model of effective pedagogy for online teaching.

Angelina described it thus:

I was initially keen to be involved with the new technologies. But I found I was really offended by it. It is so structured. I found I was losing my teacher presence. I was confident last year. I tried to take the whole lot of what I did in the previous conferencing system straight into the new one. I deliberately did that. I wanted to see if it would work. But it was so standardised ... so driven



by regulation rather than good pedagogy and assessment practices. I really wonder if the people who designed it and who manage the implementation, IT people, have any idea about what good pedagogy and good assessment practices look like.

Being an educationalist as well as an academic who has a history of teaching in online environments Angelina was in a position to be able to compare her previous experience with teaching online in this new environment. She found the new system less flexible, less able to meet her personal teaching style and less able to fit with her view of effective teaching and learning. Other participants made comments in a similar vein such as “Decisions about the selection of the LMS were made on technical advice and economic/financial advice not on theories of effective pedagogy”, “The university was naïve in its selection of a business model, pedagogically naïve.” “My main concern is that it (the LMS) really does position the teacher as the education designer, the builder, the producer of products, the producer of knowledge and I don’t want to be positioned that way in teaching – that is at odds with my beliefs about effective pedagogy.” Comments such as these reflect the concern of academics about the discordance between their views on effective pedagogy and the types of interactions they find possible through the LMS they are required to use and the processes of commodification of academic knowledge (Blackmore, 2007) to which they felt subject.

As with any technology, the technology itself is not the determinant of effective learning but how the technology is used and as the research into effective teaching demonstrates it is the teacher that makes the difference (Brown, 2000). Academics who have sufficient interest and sufficient skills in terms of pedagogy and in the use of necessary technologies, as well as the time and commitment are more likely to be effective teachers in online environments than those who do not demonstrate these traits and capacities. Those who do not have this combination of knowledge and skills are less likely to use the LMS effectively and are more like to display resistive technologies.

It was argued by some academics that the technology is in conflict with their pedagogical desires such as wanting to ‘model an open approach to communicating

with people and an open approach to knowledge'. They expressed concern about a view of pedagogy promoted by the LMS that is in conflict with their views on effective pedagogy. They want to employ a pedagogy that does not place them as the all knowing teacher. This highlights the dominant view of effective pedagogy within the Faculty of Education. James made it clear that he wanted to engage his students in a critical pedagogy. He was not happy to prepackage his teaching and deliver it to the 'market' as a commodity. Gregoriou terms this a didactic pedagogy in which education becomes the 'delivery of communiqués and the parceling and packaging of meaning into digestible (i.e., marketable) forms' (Gregoriou, 2004 p.233).

Miranda was concerned about the manner in which the LMS assumes a role onto the teacher was described in this way; "My main beef with it is that, it really does position the teacher (academic) as the producer of knowledge." Miranda did not want this role designated to her. She desired a more dialogical approach to learning in which her students learn to be 'critical thinkers who question and are open to new ideas'. The business model under which the LMS was developed assumes the teacher as the producer of knowledge, as having full control over the learning environment. It was not designed for collaborative learning nor does it encourage critical thinking. It does not readily support those who are strong visual learners. It is linear and hierarchical in its design and structure, primarily text based and control focussed in its delivery.

Walker (n.d.) argues that implementing an online distance program requires 'new forms of pedagogy ... time and resources as well as technical assistance... organisational infrastructure is vital to make educational programs work. There is no space for amateurism and lack of supportive infrastructure (dedicated library, study support, student records and admissions) ... all is visible and there are no places to hide' (Walker, n.d. n.p.).

This paper tell the story of academics with particular beliefs about their pedagogical practices, many idealist, highly motivated, battling to make the fit between their changing teaching practices arising from the commodification of their labour, and their ideals/beliefs. For academics in this Faculty of Education, the challenge to their expressed and shared commitment to what constitutes effective pedagogies, both on and offline, requires a change in their values and their beliefs and consequently to

their pedagogical practices, a change to which many are resistant, but ultimately they will have to demonstrate a degree of compliance due to the range of accountabilities and disciplinary technologies that are superimposed on them through quality assurance processes. This produces what Ryan calls a 'grudging compliance' (Ryan, 2005 p. 116).

### **The emotional dimensions of academic work**

There are also emotional dimensions to the changing nature of academic work in which there are new challenges. Wenger (1998) describes identity as a learning trajectory of forming who we are by where we have been and where we are going (Wenger, 1998). Many academics in this study expressed nostalgia for where they had been and experienced anguish about where the University seemed to be wanting them to go, particularly in terms of the use of the new LMS and other new technologies. Similarly Blackmore and Johnson (2001) found that:

‘while there is increasing recognition that any radical changes in educational practice arising out of the use of ICT require both teacher ownership and also extensive teacher professional development (Lankshear and Bigum 1998), there is less discussion over what that actually means in terms of teacher work identities. Policy makers assume a simple linear model of implementation that is highly technicist, and are constantly surprised when it does not happen the way they intended. Much of the educational literature on change management of innovation, whether curriculum reform, gender equity reform or the introduction of ICT, treat it as an organisational problem that can be addressed through providing more information or individual upskilling through professional development (Blackmore and Johnson, 2001 p.8).

They suggest ‘that such theorising of how change occurs is too simplistic because it fails to deal with the individual and collective identity work that has to be done to change fundamental practices and ignores contextual factors and discourses that shape the possibilities for change’ (Blackmore and Johnson, 2001 p.8).

The need for the nourishing of the identities of professional academics is one aspect of consequences in the emotional dimension in this example of the impact of change processes. Cornford and Pollock (2003), and King (2006) argue there has been ‘very little research into the collegial or the emotional dimensions of educator's experience

of the change process' (King, 2006). Even so some of the literature provides some useful insights. According to Fineman (2003) emotions-our largely invisible reaction to actions and social settings-are a dominant, all-embracing force for the actions, decisions, and productivity of employees'. She uses the example of workplaces that 'create ambivalent emotions of engagement and apathy (Fineman, 2003 p. 370). Engagement and apathy towards the LMS were both apparent in this study along with frustration, anger and even fear. Frustration was the emotion most commonly mentioned.

Fineman, (1993) talks about how emotion work is:

the effort we put into ensuring that our private feelings are suppressed or represented to be in tune with socially accepted norms... Emotional labour is the commercial exploitation of this principle; when an employee is in effect paid to smile, laugh, be polite, or be caring (1993:3).

According to Reed (Reed, 2007) this results in a cost to personal service workers not experienced by manual (Hochschild cited in Williams, 1988:106) or abstract intellectual workers but in this study academics fit the personal service workers profile more closely than the intellectual abstract workers profile. Some academics in this study experienced alienation. Some disengaged.

When academics such as those in this study are located in online learning communities, (particularly when such a requirement has been mandated as has happened in this case) some may perceive themselves as less able to successfully establish a 'teacher presence'. Angelina described it thus; "I felt really offended by the change. I found I was losing my teacher presence. It was really quite a bit of an identity crisis for me, and I had been really confident. I lost a lot of that confidence because of the "tool" (the tool being the LMS). Some academics described being positioned differently when required to use the online teaching and learning environment whereas others demonstrate a sense of professional identity and self-esteem that is tied to understandings and beliefs about what constitutes effective teaching in the strong face to face relationships developed with on-campus students. Academics who teach more commonly in these environments are understandably less

willing to forfeit these relationships by risking the use of the LMS which positions them as “less than”.

Giddens presents the notion of a ‘protective cocoon’ (1991 p.3) that we use to filter out any threats to our identity (including our professional identity), and to ensure ‘ontological security’. Comments by academics can be seen as them employing the protective cocoon as such a filter when they make comments such as ‘the online technology stuff is just another nuisance the university has created to make life difficult for us and to supposedly save them money’. According to Dixon (Dixon et al., 2004) ‘Identity is ‘never static or permanent, it is becoming rather than being, never singular and rarely unified’ (Baker, 2000 p.23) It is individual and changeable in and for different contexts and over time, and needs to be nurtured. Wenger (1998) suggests that we come to understand who we are in our organisational practice by what we perceive is familiar, usable and understandable, and just as importantly, we know who we are not by what is foreign, unwieldy, or unproductive. Thus, in this stage of implementation, when everything felt unfamiliar and foreign, participants had difficulty re-establishing and re-confirming their professional and collegial identities. Their professional identities were lacking in nourishment. This phase of the change process can be likened to Fullan’s (1992c) description of the implementation dip, where the costs of implementing a reform far outweigh the rewards. James describes the current dilemma in this way: “At the moment I think academic identity is being reshaped by a much more bureaucratic view of the role of the university lecturer.”

### **The LMS – a centralised administrative system?**

Lewis et al. (2005) express concerns that while their universities present ‘educational technology as an opportunity to move towards new models of pedagogy, the tendency was for teaching and learning software packages to be used as little more than centralised, administrative systems’ (Lewis et al., 2005 p. 67). In this study the implementation of a centralised system of networked technologies with the associated surveillance and accountability technologies (Wells, 2005) was experienced by academics as an increase in bureaucratic processes, an increase in the standardisation

of teaching and learning and as a move towards a top-down corporate managerial model, with an associated loss of flexibility and autonomy for academics as they go about their pedagogical and other everyday work practices.

One of the participants, James, spoke about how the increase in standardisation procedures thwarts any attempts to maintain the unpredictability of intellectual interactions; interactions which may lead to valuable intellectual conversations. This was supported by other interviewees who also indicated that standardisation, as a consequence of the implementation of the array of new technologies has led to increased predictability and therefore less opportunity for intellectual debate, and therefore less intellectual rigour as a consequence. Standardisation in particular challenges what many academics value as the intellectual work of the academy.

### **A New Work Order in the Academy**

Blackmore (2002) refers to the new pressures being experienced by universities that create new possibilities but also new problems for academics as educational workers. She associates this new work order with the 'rise of an information society; internationalisation and economic globalisation; and culturally diverse and mobile student populations'. She goes on to say that:

For academics, this means increased demands for innovation and productivity for the institutional and national good, at a time when employment is insecure. Meanwhile, deregulation of student and research markets is changing the relations between academics, their students (clients), their 'partners' in research and their stakeholders (professions, government, business). Finally, the internet, e-learning and e-commerce are changing the processes of knowledge production and dissemination (Blackmore, 2002 p. 422).

Blackmore elaborates on the range of new technologies can be seen to be changing the relations within which academic work takes place. As Blackmore suggests:

the response by universities to the dual problems of financing higher education and promoting access/equity has been a 'technofix', through online learning to increase access that will also be the new export education industry, converting academic content into high-quality online courses (Blackmore,

2002 p. 425).

The problem was that of access and internationalisation, and online learning provided what seemed to be a ready solution. Universities are also seeking to attract new niche markets of students, be seen to be seen as distinctive in local and global markets, and to service the professions. The mandated use of online learning provided symbolic status as to how the university was different and relevant.

The findings of this study show evidence of intense levels of emotion produced by the mandated implementation process. They demonstrate the level of emotional turmoil experienced by some academics and they provide vivid descriptions of the turmoil experienced. Not all participants experienced all portrayed emotions, but many of the experiences presented will be familiar to most participants in this change process. No distinct gender differences were found in either the degree or range of emotions portrayed in the data as all participants, both male and female, responded with high levels of emotion.

Experienced academics speak of their disappointment at the impact this enforced change has wrought on their positions as formerly highly respected academics. Some argued that the introduction of the LMS lead to the “homogenisation of the experience of teaching and learning for both academics and students”. Some felt the system lead to a loss of their teacher presence and professional confidence and were offended by the way they were repositioned by the technology. Even though some academics have developed technologies of resistance to manage their pathway through this ever changing landscape, they are not necessarily happy, some are angry, most are frustrated about the imposition of a system that has lead to their perceived need to perform resistance strategies.

Fullan (2003) argues that “it is not the pace of change that is the culprit, it is the piecemealness and fragmentation that wears us down” (Fullan, 2003 p.24-25) while others argue it is the pace of change that challenges our sense of identity as professional academics. It is more likely it is all of these things plus the ongoing nature of change. “*Just wait a minute and there will be another change.*” The next change may well overwhelm all of the previous changes.

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