CITY UNIVERSITY
LONDON

Transforming Academic Identity through engagement in Technology Enabled Academic Practice – challenges and opportunities.

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Objectives

To introduce some basic concepts about academic identity

To set out some of the challenges for academic staff using learning technologies

To discuss what institutions are doing to engage staff in the use of learning technology

To describe how City University's MAAP programme creates opportunities for staff to develop sustainable expertise in using learning technologies.

Sources of Academic Identity
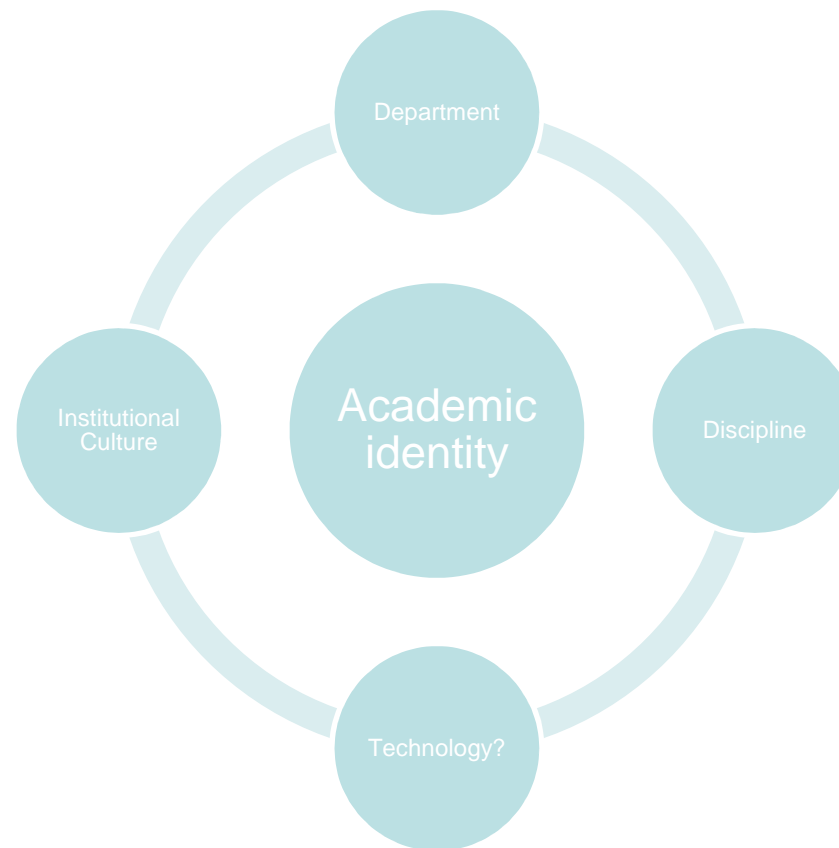
The Challenge....

A recent JISC paper asserts that
'*Learning technology is set to change both the prevailing teaching paradigm and the academic role*' (JISC 2010) (Techno-determinism?)

Is there a paradigm shift? Will it transform the academic role?

The challenge is:
to provide incentives and support for staff to engage with technology enabled teaching and learning when they are:
1. Facing increased institutional demands to engage with technology at all levels of their practice
2. Time poor
3. Often inexperienced in the use of learning technologies, including web 2.0 technologies
4. Uncertain how to apply technologies in their academic practice in ways which are sustainable
5. Concerned that technology might undermine their role (OER, wikiversity etc..)

Some current approaches to academic identity

- Para academic (Macfarlane 2011)
- Blended professional (Whitchurch 2009)
- '*the impact of e-learning on academic identity, a factor which has not so far replaced academics, but may be displacing them*' *the impact of e-learning on academic identity, a factor which has not so far replaced academics, but may be displacing them*' (Hanson 2009)
- Impact of the New managerialism

Taken together are these part of a 'declinist' discourse where technology is implicated in undermining the traditional academic role.....

Do you agree?

Impact of technology on Identity

Learning technology can be both oppressive as well as liberating and empowering:
Castells (1999) identifies three aspects to the impact of technology on identity
1) legitimizing identity introduced by dominant institutions of society to extend and rationalize their domination over social actors (administration, surveillance, compliance)
2) resistance identity generated by actors in opposition to the logic of domination (blogs and wikis, extra- institutional CoPs)
3) project identity produced by those who seek to build,
around a project, a new identity that redefines their position

A framework for understanding how academic identities are adapting to the new challenges is drawn from all three elements

Discussion questions

- What is your institution doing to motivate and reward staff to engage with technology enabled academic practice?

- What are the opportunities and barriers to staff engaging with learning technologies?

- How do you feel the use of such technologies is changing academic identity?

- How would you describe the impact/influence of engaging with learning technologies on your own academic practice? Has it changed your views on teaching and learning? Can you describe how?

15 minutes

City University

- Located in London
- Focuses on professional/vocational subjects
- Large number of postgraduate students (38%)
- Pre-1992 institution, research focus
- Highly independent School structure – devolved decision making
- 12,000 students, 1,500 staff (800 academic/research, 700 support)
- Partnerships with other institutions/professions/business

Learning Development Centre (LDC)

What we do...

- Staff Development, including MA in Academic Practice (MAAP)
- Training Sessions, including technology workshops
- Events – Good Morning City! Learning@ City conference
- Learning and Teaching Award Scheme
- Learning Development Fellowship Scheme
- School Liaison Scheme

- Staff are also supported by School based learning technologists, funded to support Moodle transition

Masters in Academic Practice - MAAP

The Academic Practice programme at City University is designed for University lecturers and other staff engaged in supporting student learning in higher education. It is designed to help staff:

1. Demonstrate a range of skills related to academic practice that can be enhanced and applied in both a specific and general education context
2. Develop as reflective practitioners who engage with appropriate and relevant research and literature
3. Promote evidence-led innovation and change in academic practice
4. Critically evaluate current practice and identify opportunities for innovation, change or sharing good practice.

Module leader on 2 of the constituent modules – TEAP (30 credits) and ICT in HE (15 credits)

Technology Enabled Academic Practice (TEAP)

The module consists of six topics (with a credit value of 30). This programme is at M Level. It can be taken to achieve credit towards the award of a Post-Graduate Certificate or Diploma in Academic Practice (Technology- Enabled) or as part of the route to a Master's in Academic Practice.
The topics contained within this module are:
1. Building learning communities
2. Learning & teaching models in technology-enhanced environments
3. Reflection
4. Learning design
5. Assessment
6. Evaluation
Each module is assessed through development of a reflective e-portfolio, curation of a collection of online resources, and is supported by collaborative learning activities. As part of their assessment students produce a technology-enabled curriculum, learning, or technical design project related to their practice.
Year 1 – 15 students
Year 2 - 25 students

Who are the students?

Drawn from the five schools, SOA/SOSS, Cass, City Law School, SEMS/SOI, SHS
- Mix of 'traditional' and 'professional' academic staff
- Also includes learning technologists and Information Services professional staff
- All brought together in a Community of Inquiry/ Community of Practice model – collaboration between students is encouraged and assessed through the module activities..

The Opportunities…

1. Working within a supportive community to produce a project directly relevant to their academic context
2. Projects count for 50% of the overall assessment and are intended to benefit their own academic practice
3. Opportunity for academic and professional staff to share problems and work on solutions
4. Experience as online/blended learners helps to design appropriate activities for their own modules/programmes
5. Opportunity to join an evolving community of practice where ideas and expertise can be identified and exchanged
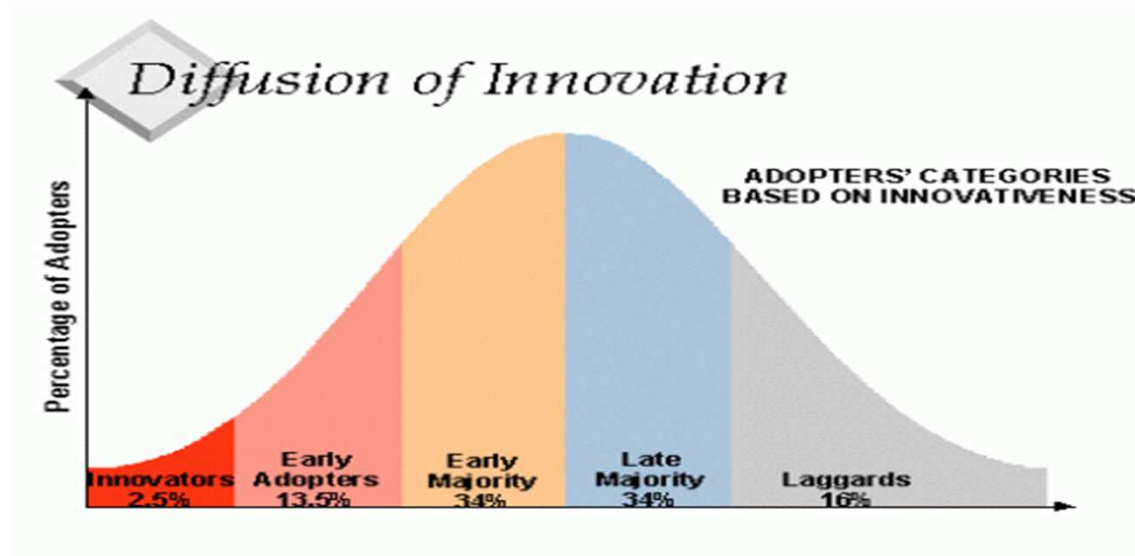
Examples of Projects

Application of Semantic technologies in Biology, Engineering, Law

Mobile applications - Law

Modules and part modules using a range of tools including the VLE, e-portfolios, Adobe Presenter and Connect and podcasting in a range of blended learning contexts

A model of technology diffusion

Students self identify at all points of this model, with most placing themselves in the middle two categories

http://mobile-libraries.blogspot.com/2010/06/mindtime-past-present-future.html (accessed 20.04.2011) Based on: Rogers, Everett M. (1962). Diffusion of Innovations. The Free Press. New York.

Some quotes from the first iteration

1. I can honestly state that undertaking this module has been a life changing experience! Not only has it radically changed my academic practice, but it has given me a new found confidence and interest in technology which I never thought was within me. However, it has also renewed an interest in the pedagogical underpinnings of my practice which I had relegated to low priority in contrast to the high priority I had set upon keeping ......updated.

2. I (...) believe that my learning on the module has been both significant and deep. I have just undertaken a brief 'interim' evaluation of the MSc module I used as a vehicle for my project and the students were very positive about the approach. I still find it hard to believe that I have managed to run a module using a blended learning approach when in January I had not heard of most of the technology enabled approaches I used.

3. I hope to stay engaged with the new community of educationalists and co-learners I have developed whilst on the module. I will certainly endeavour to continue to improve my technology enabled academic practice.

Feedback and Questions?

References

- Castells, M. (1999) *The Power of Identity - The Information Age,*
- Clegg S. (2008) Academic Identities under threat? *British Educational Research Journal ,* 34, no 3
- Hanson, J. (2009) 'Displaced but not replaced: the impact of e-learning on academic identities in higher education', Teaching in Higher Education, 14: 5,
- JISC (2010) Briefing paper 6 Learning Technology: Key Implications for Academic Staff http://www.jisc.ac.uk/media/documents/programmes/jos/briefing6_academic_finalcopy_jw.pdf (Accessed 01.09.2010)
- Macfarlane B.(2011)The Morphing of Academic Practice: Unbundling and the Rise of the Para-academic .*Higher Education Quarterly,* 65:1.
- Whitchurch C. (2008) Shifting Identities and Blurring Boundaries: The Emergence of Third Space Professionals in UK Higher Education', *Higher Education Quarterly,* 62: 4