



Communities and Agents of Change;

Explorations of a framework for blended (e)Learning institutional change



Assoc. Prof. Peter Duffy,
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*Innovative Technology Enhanced Learning
in the Performing Arts*
演藝教學創新中心



18°C

23:40

Look where you're going, not at your phone



25+ years in Education
and Technology

3C Project Funded

*Special Assistant eLearning to the Vice-
President Academic*

Head of the Innovation Hub

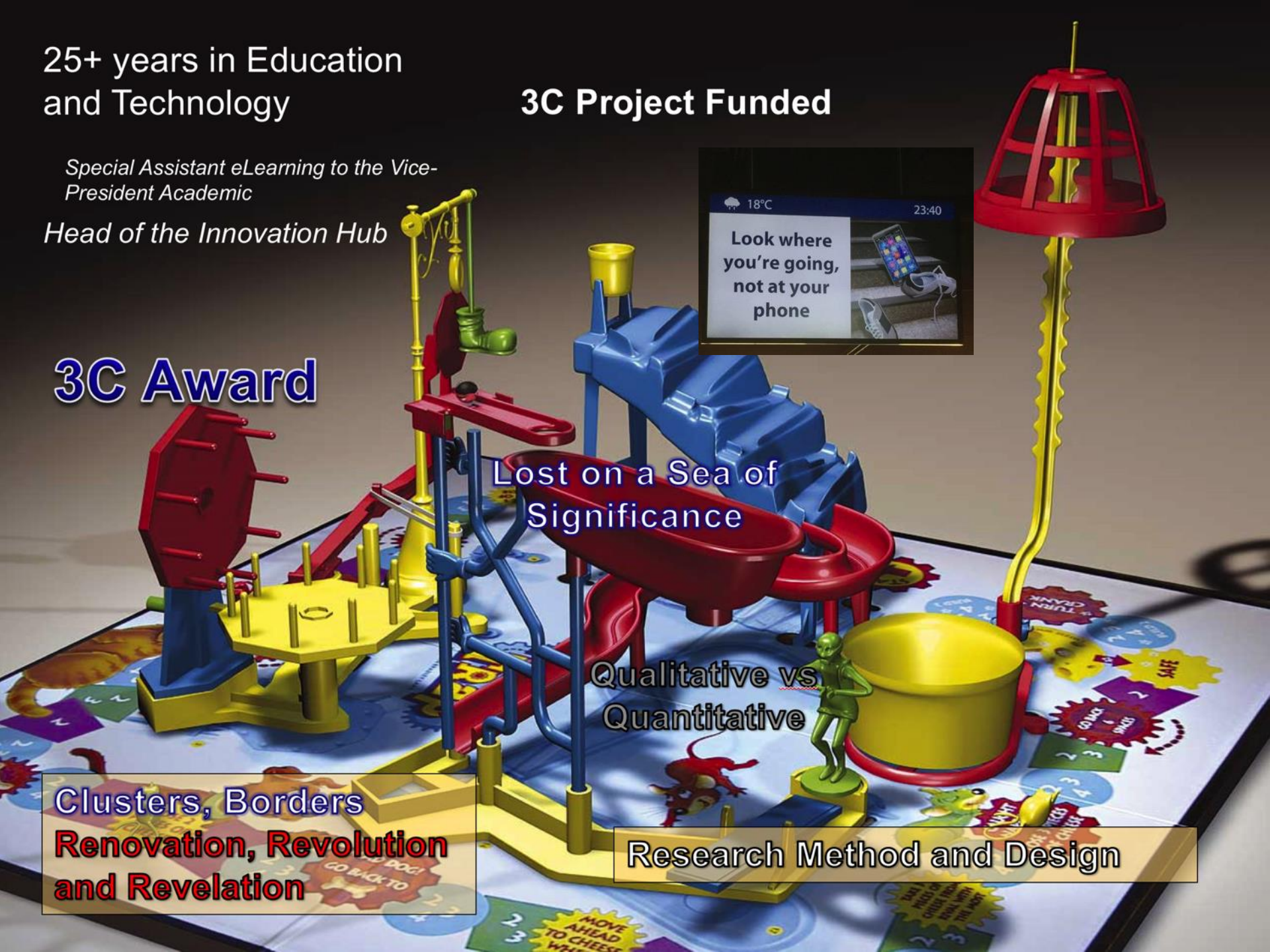
3C Award

Lost on a Sea of
Significance

Qualitative vs.
Quantitative

Clusters, Borders
Renovation, Revolution
and Revelation

Research Method and Design





Context and Conception

The **3C project** was a two year institutional initiative at Hong Kong Polytechnic University.

The broad aim of the 3C Project was to enhance the (e)Learning / Blended Learning culture at PolyU

3 concurrent foci (3C) of

- Collaboration;
- Community ;
- And Context .



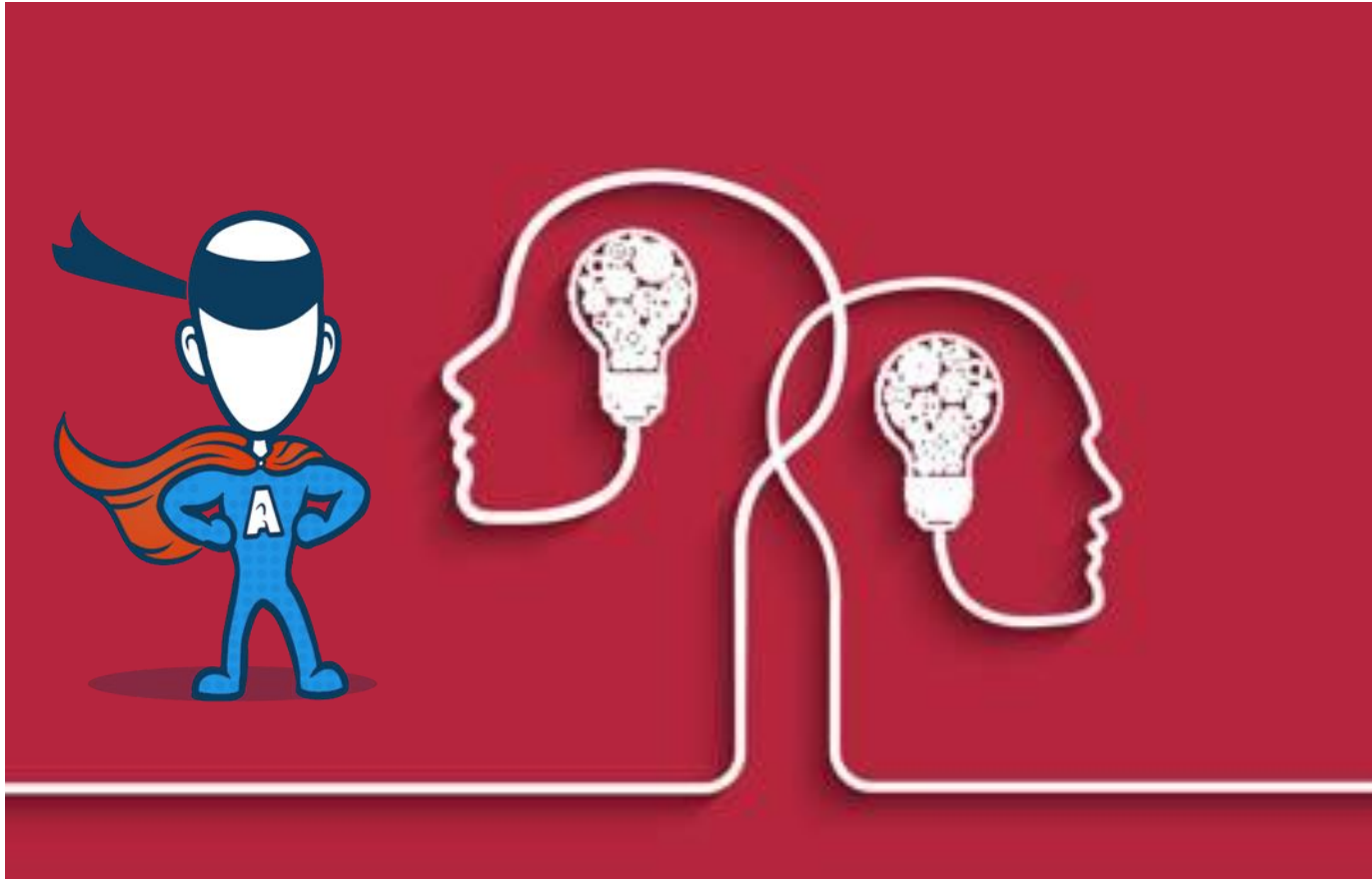
9 core components (or deliverables) to this institutional approach:

1. Invited international experts in eLearning to work in Departments, with eLearning Advocates
2. Needs Analysis
3. (e)Learning Mapping online resource
4. Learning Design Templates
5. **Establish eLearning Advocates**
6. Teaching and Learning Innovation Annual Award, including eLearning Showcase
7. Symposium to share PolyU best eLearning practices
8. Dissemination / Advocacy
9. Evaluation report on the project



WHY the eLearning Advocates?

- they were drawn from **all faculties and schools**,
- they were involved in all aspects of the 3C project and all deliverables across the 2 years, and they represented a **cross section of roles** at the institution including Professors, Departmental Heads, Chairs of Departmental Learning and Teaching committees, Senior Teachers, Senior Researchers, volunteers (and the volunteered) and Library / ITSU and eLearning support staff,
- they represented **diverse views**; while they were “eLearning Advocates’ in name, they represented a cross-section of skill sets and positive or negative opinions about the use of technology and,
- they had the most **consistent and lived experiences of the 3C model** (and project deliverables)



“What are the qualitatively different ways the eLearning Advocates perceive the 3C model as a framework for blended (e)Learning institutional change”?

Findings



This category refers to **broad structural aspects** that had built on or influenced the goals of the 3C project or related issues regarding eLearning at this particular institution. The reference to “renovation” as a metaphor is an acknowledgement that any eLearning change must pay heed to the existing aspects within an institution that will impact on the change process and work being undertaken. When being interviewed, the eLAs described these influencing factors across;

- **Funding,**
- **Research expectations versus teaching,**
- **Staff understanding of the possibilities and pre-existing perceptions of eLearning and;**
- **SFQ’s (or Student Feedback Questionnaires)**

“Some would use e-elements to compose a blended learning so that the e-element can enhance the efficiency of the teaching. But the purpose is enhancing the efficiency. But whether they will go on go further is a different story, because they need to put the rest of the time to do other work and research, you know, in order to get promotion” [eLA3]

“aligning the use of technologies for teaching and learning with the institution's strategic and operational plans, ensuring the adoption of new technology within current policy frameworks and aligning technologies in teaching and learning with the budget process” (ACODE, 2014, p.55)



Findings



This category refers to **specific aspects of the 3C project** and the associated deliverables that contributed to (or not) the goals of eLearning change. The reference to “revolution” as a metaphor acknowledges that, because this was the first project of its kind in this institution, we were in essence trying to initiate a grass roots “revolution” in relation to how eLearning was enacted and perceived, using the 3C approach and deliverables as the spark. The eLAs described these 3C specific factors across;

- Recognition,**
- The eLA community,**
- Training, and;**
- eLearning examples**

“In the past, people were working independently. Even the departments might have had different e-learning initiatives, but they didn’t have a lot of chances to gather together, to share experiences, to discuss the issues of concern. Now we have a chance, we have a platform for people to gather together and through the friends of e-learning [referring to the eLA community] and blended learning, and we can exchange ideas, share our good practices and, eventually, we can distribute these ideas back to our departments. That is just a very good idea.” [eLA5]

a collegial network is fundamental for effective professional development in education (Lieberman, 1995)
“agentic professionals” (Billet, 2009)
“Academic Neighbourhoods” (Polanyi, 1958)
“Pioneering Practitioners” (Marcinkiewicz, 2000)



Findings



Revelation

This category refers to comments and feedback related to **unexpected factors** that had not been considered as part of the project but were **significant influencers** on the 3C approach. The reference to “revelation” as a metaphor highlights the nature of large-scale institutional projects and unexpected and emerging outcomes. The eLAs’ comments about these factors can be categorized as;

- **Leadership,**
- **Students,**
- **Time, and**
- **Professional Development**

“...up to now, **no key performance measurements cover this**, and the senior management has yet to hand out a mandate that, in fact, anything other than face-to-face can be counted towards the so-called quality hours of interactions per subject per semester” [eLA8].

“Leadership at executive levels is a success factor. The participation of faculty deans is vital, as they are at the interface between an institution’s decision-making bodies and teachers on the job. They encourage the cross-fertilisation of strategic approaches, build and support communities of practice, and nurture innovation in everyday practice in the classroom.” (OECD, 2009. p.



Recommendations



Renovation

1. **Funding** is an important part of supporting staff in teaching and learning projects but must include time release, ideally in the budget model
2. **Research expectations versus teaching must be made clear** at an institutional and practical level
3. Staff understanding of the possibilities and **challenging pre-existing perceptions** of eLearning must be addressed with many opportunities for discussion, ideally from eLA colleagues as much as learning designers
4. **SFQs** or evaluations of teaching per se **must include technology**, not as a separate entity but as an accepted part of learning and teaching improvement (assuming other related considerations such as transparency about “what” exemplary teaching in the 21st century includes as being in place)



Recommendations



Revolution

5. **Recognition** is essential in terms of identifying best practice as well as opportunities to celebrate
6. The eLA community was **a significantly positive influence** on the eLearning institutional change. Recommended is to consider to **expand** this community and **formalise** it as fit for purpose
7. **Training** should be provided often and should ideally be a continuous and ongoing aspect of maintaining currency of knowledge in the higher education context; from a student perspective it should also include a focus not on what to click for what technological function, but rather a focus on why and how technology is used in their institutional learning journey
8. eLearning examples (or “show me”) should be **contextual, relevant and ideally generated by both staff and students** as co-collaborators in learning improvement



Recommendations



Revelation

Revelation

9. Leadership is essential in terms of all aspects of support for any cultural change endeavour, with many opportunities to **communicate**, and responsiveness to all levels of staff
10. Students should be seen as **essential partners in the process of eLearning change** and involved often and strategically
11. **Time** is an essential component in any change process and should be **built into the structure of any project**, in particular for the academic staff directly involved as part of their workload or time-release.





The field of eLearning “is marked by a juxtaposition of new technology and old pedagogy.” (Levy, 2005)

Academic Pressures



What are you doing to save time?



Conclusion

“..maybe we should just have learning, we should have teaching, why should have the E, you know? I know we like to put everything into categories, and organize everything and classify everything, but maybe there is a case in this case for not separating; this is a needed and necessary part of teaching” [eLA11].

*“The landscape and borders of learning and institutional change are complex, because they are drawn from the forms of the past, transformations of the present and possible territories of the future. Refashioning the eLearning borders of an institution and associated goals regarding institutional change is not a process related to information processes, nor can it be drawn from a blueprint per se, but has **to evolve as responsive to the constituent parts of the whole**. This research and the perceptions of the eLAs, have been identified as some of the constituents of the 3C model that have formed an essential part of the 3C project. **The eLAs’ roles as change agents** in this context and the recommendations drawn from their perspectives identify a set of considerations worthy of further analysis.*





*Sticking Wings onto a
Caterpillar does not
make it a Butterfly
It requires transformation*



QUESTIONS

