FACULTY DEVELOPMENT: A STAGE MODEL MATCHED TO BLENDED LEARNING MATURATION

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ABSTRACT

Faculty development programs are critical to the implementation and support of curriculum innovation. In this case study, the authors present lessons learned from ten years of experience in faculty development programs created to support innovation in technology enhanced learning. Stages of curriculum innovation are matched to stages of faculty development, and important lessons for success as well as current challenges are delineated and discussed.

KEYWORDS

I. INTRODUCTION

Babson College, located in Wellesley, Massachusetts, is recognized internationally for its entrepreneurial leadership in a changing global environment. Babson grants BS degrees through its innovative undergraduate program. It grants MBA and custom MS and MBA degrees through the F.W. Olin Graduate School of Business at Babson College. Both programs are accredited by the AACSB International—The Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business, and the New England Association of Schools and Colleges. In the 2009-2010 academic year, more than 1,800 undergraduate and 1,600 graduate students attended Babson, representing more than 45 states and 57 countries. About 20 percent of the undergraduates and 16 percent of the graduate students are from outside the United States. Additionally, Babson offers distinct executive education programs to help companies reach their strategic goals: Custom Degree and Credit Programs, Consortium Programs, and Open-Enrollment Programs. By infusing the spirit of innovation into our academic programs, Babson educates leaders capable of anticipating, initiating, and managing change. Moreover, the College continues to be recognized for its curricular innovation. One of the major innovations has been the College's focus on online learning blended with face-to-face classes.

At Babson College we have been designing and delivering blended learning courses in our business graduate, undergraduate and executive education programs for the last decade. When we launched our first blended program we were on the bleeding edge of educational innovation and we have the scars and scabs to show for our creative spirit. However, we have persevered with our most notable success, the Babson Fast Track MBA which has grown from 30-40 students admitted annually in 2001 to in excess of 200 students admitted in 2010. This program has attracted a new market segment for Babson's graduate school and has enrolled students in a Boston based program from all over the United States as well as from Europe and Africa. Recently Babson has expanded this program to San Francisco, California. Students participate every six weeks for two full days in face-to-face (F2F) instruction and work online in between these sessions. With these regular two-day sessions and a five day residency at the beginning of the program, approximately fifty percent of the program is on line and fifty percent face-to-face (F2F).

Through the programmatic developmental phases—design and experimentation, launch and revision, and growth and expansion— we have also progressed through stages of faculty development. This paper

traces the stages of faculty development at Babson we found necessary to incorporate blended learning into our portfolio of programs successfully. The authors will describe the stages, the development processes, lessons learned, and persistent challenges.

II. PHASES OF CURRICULUM INNOVATION—STAGES OF FACULTY DEVELOPMENT

Diffusion of Innovation is a way to understand the processes of communication, adoption and implementation of innovation in an organization. In Everett Rogers' excellent work in this area [1] his descriptions of stages of innovation diffusion have evolved to the five stages of knowledge, persuasion, decision, implementation and confirmation. _Knowledge_ is when exposure to an innovation; _Persuasion_ is when an individual or group takes action to investigate the innovation; _Decision_ is when the innovation is accepted/rejected for implementation; _Implementation_ is the process of using and proving the worth of the implementation; and _Confirmation_ is the total diffusion of the innovation throughout the organization.

Rogers overlaid these stages with categories of individuals and their willingness to be innovative. These innovator categories are: Innovators – those with a bias toward new technology and love to be the first with the latest and the greatest, Early Adopters – those that "see" how this new technology can revolutionize and want to be the leaders in this revolution, Early Majority – those that are more pragmatic and "see" technology as a means for increased productivity, Late Majority – the pessimists who see only the problems with new technologies and are persuaded only when the new standard has been firmly tested and Laggards – those that ignore technology. In this article we use these innovator categories to describe the stages of faculty development in order to: understand the important characteristics to look for when identifying individuals to participate in the various stages of innovation diffusion; design the appropriate faculty development programs for these individuals; and insure the innovation diffusion pathway is clear for the successful widespread implementation of critical innovations.
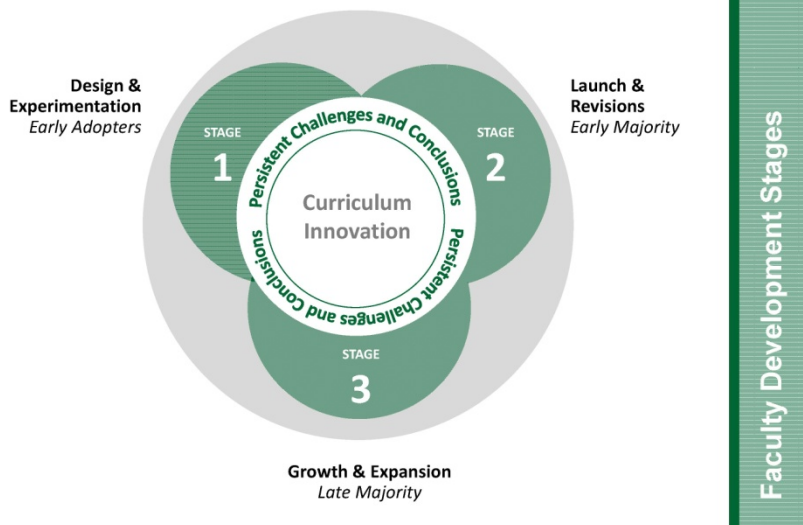
A. Phase 1: Design and Experimentation—Stage 1: Early Adopters

Curriculum innovation at Babson is generally guided by three principles: Experiment, Research and Share. We want to constantly be experimenting with new curriculum and technologies to enhance

learning; examine the results of our experimentation through thoughtful research; and share our conclusions to improve student learning with the Babson Community and with external audiences as well. Faculty Early Adopters are critical to the design and experimentation phase, especially as we scope and begin new and major curriculum design initiatives.

In this faculty development stage identifying the correct faculty and giving them room to experiment are the critical design components. Faculty need to be selected who have a reasonable level of knowledge about curriculum design, have a history of classroom experimentation and have actively shared results and on the Babson campus, are willing to play with new technologies. Let us examine the logic for each of these faculty selection criteria more thoroughly.

1. Curriculum Design

Early Adopters have a base level of curriculum design and teaching experience from which to explore new methods and ways to improve student learning. These faculty pioneers understand what they are changing because they have actively designed courses, thought about student outcomes and have delivered courses for which they have been totally responsible for the content and design.

2. Risk takers in the Classroom

The second criterion for selection as an Early Adopter is that the individuals have taken risks in the classroom. They have experimented with new ways to teach material and improve student learning. Furthermore, they have been systematically reflective about their experiments (i.e. publications, reports to their academic departments, embedding lessons learned into other courses etc.) Too many times faculty experimenters like to play with new "things" and the experimentation stays in their specific classrooms. That is, frequently these professors do not even use what they learn from their experiments in other classes they teach. These individuals from our perspective are not pioneers but are serial experimenters. Early Adopters have a desire or need to return to home base and bring others out to the frontiers of curriculum innovation. They are reflective and when they discover an innovation that improves student learning they want to share this valuable finding with others. One other important benefit of this criterion is that these people are typically known in the school community not only as innovators but as supporters and promoters of innovation and improved student learning. These professors are likely to be thought leaders which will help to more rapidly embed successful curriculum innovations throughout the relevant curriculum.

3. Willingness to experiment with new technologies

The third criterion is the willingness of the individual to experiment with new technologies; they do not have to be technology wizards but neither can they be technology phobic. At Babson, and we would argue for most schools, learning technologies and indeed all emerging communication and gaming technologies are rich sources for curriculum innovation and improved student learning. Faculty Early Adopters must be at least not adverse to learning technologies, the most likely sources for curriculum innovations. This criterion is especially important as future generations of students become increasingly at ease with technology and more importantly learn through technology.

Once the Early Adopter faculty is identified the individuals need to be matched with program needs. This involves assessing the initial market/program needs, a thorough knowledge of faculty and proper incentives to entice faculty to play. These enticements will vary depending on the individuals and where the curriculum initiatives fit in the overall strategy of the institution. Types of incentives used at Babson have been releases from teaching responsibilities, curriculum design stipends, summer monies and support for writing and publications.

After this faculty are selected they need to be matched with curriculum designers and technologists for essentially individual tutorial arrangements. That is, faculty development is tailored for each early adopter based on his/her project and his/her background. For example, a marketing pioneer professor may need to learn how to incorporate instant survey procedures in class as well as structuring projects using real-time Twitter and Facebook to explore guerilla marketing using social media. The curriculum

design specialist needs to be adept in these areas to work with effectively work with the faculty.

Also critical in this stage is to have people with the technical savvy and the ability to relate well to faculty to insure consistent quality in the blended learning units. This group must provide the means to maintain the delicate balance of supporting individual creativity and innovation but assuring a common quality of the student learning experiences. The trials and tribulations of this effort as Babson's blended programs evolved will be discussed in this following stage.

Finally in this stage we have found student assistants to be invaluable. Frequently an inhibitor to curriculum innovation is the fear the technology will not work in the classroom and the faculty cannot efficiently fix it—an embarrassing situation. Having students trained in the technology and driving the classroom applications has been an excellent support for our faculty, a good use of student talent and a reward, both financially and in terms of resume building for our students.

In summary, as curriculum innovation is just beginning, faculty Early Adopters need to be selected, individually supported and rewarded not only financially but with campus-wide recognition in order to begin to sustain innovation and begin to embed successful experiments in other parts of the curriculum. Designation as Curriculum Innovation Fellows, Faculty innovator awards and endowed chairs for curriculum innovators are examples of recognition possibilities to support the successful strategic implementation of curriculum innovation.

B. Phase 2: Launch and Revisions—Stage 2: Early Majority

In this stage, if early experimentations have proven successful and schools need to support continued experimentation while beginning to integrate the successes throughout the program. For example, in our blended Fast Track MBA faculty pioneers used Elluminate, an online classroom synchronous communication software supporting desktop sharing, instant messaging, voice-over-IP and video transmission, to support bringing students and faculty together online (when in different locations) for office hours. The students found this practice incredibly helpful and thus many more faculty needed to be trained on this tool.

At the same time, we found many faculty who wanted to become involved in (or the school wanted them to become involved in) our innovative blended programs. Systems needed to be created that would be fiscally responsible and yet would allow extensive support of these faculty as they learned to use tested innovative methods to improve student learning. Important to these efforts, was the creation and use of online learning units for faculty to begin to systemize faculty development and minimize individual technical staff time needed to support the faculty. Thus Stage 2 became a combination of some individual tutoring but also the use on online, self-paced learning units and synchronous group sessions to expand the use of successful innovations. In our Elluminate example, new professors were trained using online tutoring sessions and group experimental Elluminate sessions. Then during the first few times they used Elluminate each faculty was accompanied in the session by a either curriculum technologist or a student 'driver' to help the professor drive the session and make sure things went smoothly. This stage is also impacted by the general technology education and expectations of the entire faculty.

By now it is probably clear to the reader that the most easily developed faculty have been developed and we now need to explore Stage 3; the stage that encompasses how to deal with the not-so-willing faculty. In this stage the technology savvy of the entire faculty as well as their willingness to participate in curriculum innovation initiatives needs to be improved. By necessity we at Babson had to better leverage the skills of our technology group in order to train a larger group of faculty with a broader range of backgrounds.

C. Phase 3: Growth and Expansion—Stage 3: Late Majority

This stage is necessary when an institution makes a sustained commitment to curriculum innovation in general and, in the Babson case, blended learning specifically. The Early Adopter and Early Majority groups of faculty have been essentially all tapped and, if the curriculum innovation has been successful, probably mentally and physically exhausted. The need for this stage is highlighted by: the explicit

strategy to maintain or grow the innovative program for the long run; a struggle to attract new faculty to teach in blended programs (and thus maybe the need to hire faculty specifically for blended teaching); and the over stretching of technical staff to help the faculty. The steps in Stage 3 implementation included incorporating blended learning innovation in faculty annual reviews, designing a faculty program that used faculty time efficiently in their blended learning development and ensuring that appropriate resources were available to support the community-wide use of educational technology.

To support blended learning for most faculty, a learning community needs to think big picture which includes course design resources, technical support resources, training resources including understanding the times in which faculty do their work and need support. Furthermore faculty incentives for development in curriculum innovation need to be in place to encourage wide-spread participation by faculty.

The three most important components of Stage 3 are: faculty incentives for curriculum innovation; a well designed development program with open enrollment; and a coordinated collection of online learning modules, advanced workshops, discussion groups focused on curriculum innovation training and seminars. Let's look at each of these components more deeply.

Faculty incentives for curriculum innovation

At Babson the major incentives were incorporated in the faculty annual review form and process. A section in "Teaching Assessment" was added requiring a discussion of the curriculum innovations used by faculty in their classes. Faculty were required to discuss curriculum innovation in their annual reviews as well as include this major evaluative criterion in their statement of goals for the next year and three year periods. Babson's blended Fast Track MBA program enabled faculty to excel in curriculum innovation. Secondly, faculty professional development became an important component of the annual review. Faculty were required to describe and discuss types of programs in which they were enrolled or plans they were implementing to develop in teaching and research. Development in teaching in a blended in environment became a major focus for many faculty which increased the popularity of blended teaching and led to the second major component of Stage 3, namely the Innovation in Blended Learning Faculty Development Program.

4. Innovation in Blended Learning Faculty Fellows Development Program (Blended Fellows Program)

Developed jointly by the provost and the staff of the Curriculum Innovation and Technology group, the Blended Fellows Program is 3-4 months in length and comprised of five stages: 1) pre-work; learning in a blended environment (faculty as students); 2) online curriculum design (faculty working as designers); 3) teach and take (faculty teach the online module they design and are students in online modules designed and taught be other Fellows); 4) reflection (faculty discuss highlights and recommend possible program improvements); 5) teach (faculty teach in a blended Babson program).

As of the Spring, 2011 approximately 60 faculty (approximately 40 percent of full time faculty) have been certified as Babson Innovation in Blended Learning Faculty Fellows with a continuing demand of 10-12 new faculty each year. Typically all new full-time faculty who are likely to teach in the blended Fast Track MBA enroll in this program during their first year at Babson. Adjunct professors hired specifically to teach in the Fast Track MBA program are now required to become Babson Faculty Fellows. This program has been in existence five years and has become an important program for Babson to support its strategic initiative in blended learning and to show that school administration supports faculty in their development and transition to a new learning model; and for faculty to develop important skills to help students learn.

5. Collection of Advanced Technology Faculty Learning Units

The third component of stage three is the development of learning opportunities for the growing number of faculty who are have completed the Fellows Program, and are teaching in blended programs or are experimenting with technology enhanced learning modalities. At Babson these learning opportunities

have taken three basic forms; self-paced online learning units, advanced classes offered by CITG and regularly scheduled faculty workshops focused on innovations faculty should consider or "points-of-pain" in the current blended programs (e.g. controlling discussion boards or conducting efficient synchronous online office hours). The key to this stage is thinking about these strategically, understand how groups of faculty best learn and schedule these in such a way to enhance faculty development, not overwhelm faculty with too many alternatives.

III. PERSISTENT CHALLENGES AND CONCLUSIONS

After ten years of experience at Babson two challenges have persisted and warrant highlighting.

The Fellows Program remains a standalone program and the only official program Babson leadership has created for its faculty. In order to truly embed faculty development in an institution's culture, a series of program should be in place. Recently Babson has begun a teaching seminar for faculty, has created a technology enhance learning faculty group focused on the undergraduate program and is considering creating a faculty development program in the integration of ethical decision making into required business courses.

Resources such as summer stipends to support faculty development have not been forthcoming. Faculty must complete the Fellows Program on their own time. Because of this fiscal fact of life, the program has to be run over an extended period of time (approximately four months) and the number of faculty through-put is lower than it needs to be.

"Laggards" in Everett Rogers terms are faculty who will forever resist innovation in general and technology-sourced innovation specifically. Although we at Babson occasionally convert Laggards to Late Majority Adopters, more frequently we work to place them in traditional learning situations and minimize the impact they can have on stifling curriculum innovation.

Babson has progressed through a number of phases of curriculum innovation as it experimented with and implemented online teach in its MBA programs ultimately settling on a blended model of online and face-to-face teaching. Stages of faculty development have been matched to these phases of curriculum innovation to form a faculty development road map for other colleges and universities as they contemplate a major curriculum innovation or adopt curriculum innovation as a major component of overall strategy. Critical success factors are stage identification, proper faculty selection for each stage, the crafting of faculty development programs for each stage, and the development of faculty incentives and delivery methods that encourage faculty participation. When these factors are thoughtfully implemented, successful curriculum innovation and adoption will follow.

IV. ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Michael L. Fetters is the Walter Carpenter Distinguished Professor of Management and Professor of Accounting at Babson College. Prior to this appointment, Dr. Fetters was Babson College's first Provost and served in this post from 2003-2006. Prior to the creation of the position of Provost, Dr. Fetters was Vice President for Academic Affairs and Dean of the Faculty for five years and served as chairperson of the Accounting and Law Division for nine. He was on the faculty team that designed and launched the innovative, integrated entrepreneurial MBA program, and on the design and launch team for the integrated undergraduate program. In addition, he designed and directed the MS in Strategic Cost Accounting Program for Lucent Technologies, and is currently working on the design and teaching of Babson's distance learning offerings offered in blended MBA programs. He has been selected twice by the graduate students as the Thomas Kennedy Professor of the Year. He has also won the college's prestigious Walter H. Carpenter Award for Exceptional Contributions to Babson College. Dr. Fetters consults in the areas of strategic planning and financial data interpretation, pedagogical design and executive education. His consulting clients include many small businesses as well as Advest, Lucent Technologies and Hewlett Packard. He has published numerous articles and book chapters as well as presented nationally and internationally on the topics of financial statement analysis, women in

professions, curriculum innovation and pedagogical research. Currently, Dr. Fetters is on the Board of Directors for Recycline, Inc. and the National Foundation for Teaching Entrepreneurship (NFTE) where he serves as the Chair of the NFTE Audit Committee. He serves on the Accreditation Quality Committee (AQC) and on accreditation review teams for the international business accrediting organization, AACSB International. Dr. Fetters holds a Ph.D. in Business and an MBA from the University of Wisconsin-Madison. He received his B.S. from Ohio State University and is a CPA.

Tova Garcia Duby is the Senior Manager, Blended Learning Implementation in the Curriculum Innovation and Technology Group at Babson College. Her focus is on creating a unified effort around blended learning; starting with the Fast Track blended MBA program and then branching out to all areas of campus. She works closely with Deans, Faculty Directors, Graduate Programs and Student Affairs, Undergraduate Program Administration, ITSD, Faculty and Staff as a liaison between the different groups to support the successful implementation and growth of Babson's blended learning and teaching initiatives.

Her background includes eLearning platform management, operations and project management, systems training, desktop support, and systems analysis. Before joining Babson College, she worked as a business systems analyst at John Hancock, where she provided project management and systems analysis support to the business community. Prior to her time at John Hancock, Tova was a senior member of the desktop support team at Allmerica Financial, a role she entered into after being a part of the systems training group. She holds an MBA from Clark University and a BS in business communication from Bentley College.

V. REFERENCES

1. **Rogers, Everett M.,** *Diffusion of Innovation,* New York*:* Free Press, 2003.