Implications for Brazil of lessons learned from distance/e-learning providers in other countries

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Topics

- Exemplars from round the world
  - what works, what does not
- Lessons to be learned from "mega universities" and meso-level projects
- Understanding the state of play of e-learning in universities: Benchmarking
- Ensuring change in universities: Academic Transformation
- Tentative recommendations for Brazil

Exemplars from round the world

- I shall not talk at all about:
  - Brazil
  - Other parts of South America
  - United States
- Other speakers will cover these
- Now see the exemplars…

Megaprojects – UK successes

- UK Open University
- London University External Programme
- University for Industry (LearnDirect)

Megaprojects – other successes

- Open University of Catalonia (UOC)
- Swiss Virtual Campus (consortium)
- Athabasca University
- FernUniversität and other traditional DL providers in EADTU

- The Malaysian DTUs (e.g. UNITAR)
- Thailand (e.g. RAM)
- China (e.g. Tsinghua)
- [and several in US – Phoenix, UMUC...]

Megaprojects – failures

- UKeU (UK eUniversity)
- Scottish Knowledge and then Interactive University
- TechBC (Canada)
- [Also several in US]

Not complete success or failure

- Dutch Open University with Dutch Digital University
- Open Learning Agency (Canada) >> Thompson Rivers University
- Finnish Virtual University

Lessons to be learned

- Helicopter level
  - Be very cautious about new-build opportunities: "keep off green fields"
  - Also be very cautious about unstructured unpurposeful investment in the traditional university sector
  - Be quite cautious on consortia
- Detailed
  - See what follows...

Critical Success Factors

1. Brand management
2. Good market research, *and* willingness to act on it
3. Time to market: short
4. Cost of marketing: low
5. Realism about differentiators: vital
   - *quality* is not a differentiator; *price* is; VLE functionality is *not*; open source is *not*
6. Hybrid managers ("corporate university")
7. Talented staff *and* rapid staff development
8. Collaboration management (of partners)
9. Cost management
10. Realism about languages

Critical Success Factors: what's next

- The list of Critical Success Factors is being extended by work under the Re.ViCa project and arising from the changes in the UK e-learning scene.

- The aim is to come up with a longer list oriented more to "step change", both in "mega universities" and in traditional universities in the meso-level context of "academic transformation" of programmes of study.

Benchmarking

- Like Activity Based Costing, Business Process Re-engineering, Quality Enhancement, etc, the term "benchmarking" has been around for many years.

- But many are now not sure what it means!

Benchmarking: definition

A process of self-evaluation and self-improvement

through the *systematic* and collaborative comparison of *practice* [process]

and *performance* [metrics, KPIs]

with competitors [or *comparators*]

in order to identify own *strengths and weaknesses*,

and *learn* how to adapt and improve

as conditions change.

[Xerox]

Benchmarking: results

○ In the last two years, over half of the 120 English universities have been benchmarked for e-learning.

○ A much better picture – but still incomplete – is now available of the capabilities of the university sector.

○ There is similar work in New Zealand. More is starting up, e.g. in Wales and Australia.

Academic transformation: problem

○ Universities are reluctant to change what and how they teach, even when demographic and business pressures are strong, and even when new markets emerge.

○ Many patterns of incentives have been tried in many countries, but at best lead to incremental change, usually with increased costs.

Academic transformation: solution

- There is a model of Academic Transformation first trialled in the US which has been used in various ways in Scotland and England.
- This is the model of Carol Twigg at NCAT, developed under Pew funding.
- There are other potential models including, in the past, Business Process Re-engineering (well known) and MIT90s (less known).

MIT90s

- First developed in the early 1990s by a group at MIT, applied to IT-induced transformation of US corporates.

- Later applied to the education sector: in UK, Australia especially.

- Has notions of transformation levels and of trajectories of change.

- Is a useful contextual scheme for benchmarking. (Piloted by Strathclyde University in Scotland.)

Transformation and Pathfinder

- The six Scottish Transformation Projects have concluded.
- The 37 English Pathfinder projects are still finishing their work.
- No official reports are yet available, but some unofficial conclusions can be drawn.
- Some conclusions can also be drawn from the relative success of the Swiss Virtual Campus, the less successful Finnish Virtual University, and the failed Dutch Digital University.
- Few other European countries have funded such projects. (France has, but not much is known to English analysts.)
- There are some relevant EU projects under the Lifelong Learning Programme including for teacher training.

Meso-level initiatives in England

- Many English universities (Leicester etc) have developed Distance Learning programmes – but many are still not very e-enabled.
- Several (Derby, Middlesex, Staffordshire etc) have developed a Virtual Campus style of operation to deliver e-learning both for DL and for Work Based Learning (WBL) oriented to employers.
- But most of these initiatives seem to stall at a certain level and cannot grow beyond that – the "second stage ignition problem".
- Lack of clear government support for distance learning (including overseas) is an ongoing problem.
- Increasingly, government support and direction of e-learning is implicit, not explicit. This makes it harder for universities to develop robust policies.

Top-level and tentative proposals from an outsider

1. A clear and convincing market research study is needed to demonstrate what new markets are available to universities in Brazil and what old markets may be declining. (Has this been done?)

2. University capability to deliver e-learning by Distance Learning and other means needs to be analysed, ideally by themselves, with specialist advice.

3. A system of incentives from the Ministry needs to be in place to encourage change. These should involve the corporate sector where appropriate.

4. Guidance and support is needed from the Ministry to ensure that change is brought about. The change team should comprise experts; in few countries is it feasible for them to come wholly from within the sector.

5. The focus should be on academic transformation linked to curriculum reform for subjects of national priority – high-level skills, teacher training (Mathematics and Science especially), not to adding more IT into universities or increasing the cost base of universities for their existing types of student.

Benchmarking – a national scheme

1. Focussed on ensuring that an institution satisfying the criteria can rapidly deploy substantially increased amounts of DL and eL

2. Aligned to National Policy indicators for distance learning and e-learning

3. Sustainable, evolving, refining and re-normalising across time but slowly and systematically so as to allow valid year on year comparisons for the sector

4. Compliance costs affordable for both large and small institutions

5. Consistent across the whole university sector – and able to be used also by private universities

6. With some scope for international comparison rather than being "purely Brazilian"

7. But with extensions for topics of specific institutional, national or state interest

8. Public and documented within an "open educational methodologies" paradigm

9. Suitable for collaboration both among similar universities across the nation and with in-state groupings

Thank you for listening

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- http://www.matic-media.co.uk/paul.htm
- http://elearning.heacademy.ac.uk/wiki/index.php/Professor_Paul_Bacsich
- http://www.europace.org/rdrevica.ph
- http://www.sero.co.uk/team.html