

## **Enacting blended learning tactically: academic identities at work**

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An increasing number of universities around the globe name online and blended learning as critical components of their strategic direction vital for their survival. This is done in the context of vast societal changes encapsulated by the notions of the digital age, the information society, and amplified by the recent emergence of massive open and online courses (MOOCs). Despite an ongoing sense of urgency evident in the official university discourses, over the past decade institutional practices have not changed dramatically (Clegg, 2011). The discrepancy between university rhetoric and day-to-day practices is not extensively examined in the literature. Recent literature reviews on blended and technology enhanced learning highlight that research in the area tends to focus on 'success stories' about implementation of technology-driven innovations, while there is a lack of research exploring how academics perceive the change, and what impact teaching online has on their work and identities (Clegg, 2011; Torrisi-Steele & Drew, 2013). Scarce research in this area highlights the struggles and contradictions experienced by academics who venture into the world of online teaching. The reported experiences evidence the change beyond mere 'functionings' as an academic, and demonstrates how it challenges the core of academics' values and understandings of what academic work is (McShane, 2005, Clegg, 2011). This paper contributes to the literature exploring this interplay between the strategic institutional discourses and academics' tactical responses and identity negotiations in the context of a University-wide blended learning initiative.

We approach this by first examining a higher education teaching development program as a case study within which the official and strategic institutional discourses interact with individual perceptions and local practices in Faculties. The study draws from pre- and post-teaching development program surveys and focus groups focusing on participants' self-reported confidence in relation to their teaching practice in both in-class and online contexts. We then draw on Ball, Maguire and Braun's (2012) educational policy research that proposes to shift our attention from policy and strategy 'implementation' to 'enactments'. 'Enactments' are understood as different ways policy becomes interpreted, translated, reconstructed and remade in local contexts, that often involve messy negotiations and sense-making by individuals. Thirdly, we discuss how the strategic positioning of a teaching development program as a vehicle for 'rolling-out' an institution-wide blended learning approach is complicated by academics' identity work evidenced in their responses to institutional imperatives and tactical rationalisations for their attitudes and actions. Finally, we propose how the role of teaching development programs in institutional change processes could be reimaged to accommodate for more complex sense-making and academics' 'becomings' through identity work by focusing on blended learning strategy 'enactments'.

## References

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