

# SHINY NEW TOOL VERSUS VERY BIG PLATFORM

by

TELEDVISORS IN HATS

## Introduction to this session



### NARRATOR:

If you came to the Untitled Ed Tech game before afternoon tea, then you would have played from the viewpoint of the teacher. In the game, the academic valued the educational function of the new technology but they valued the good reception of it by the students even more.

In this session we try, through several small stories, to capture more of the viewpoints of the characters in university educational technology adventures and look to illustrate the timelines of projects and the dilemmas they face.

We will need you, the audience, to help us with this - we want you to take part in our stories, and we want you to guide the timelines as you listen to the issues as seen by the different characters.

This first story is called - **Shiny Tiny Tool versus Very Big Platform.**

## ACT I SCENE 1



### CAST

**TEL EDVISOR TEAM MEMBER**

**TEACHING ACADEMIC EARLY ADOPTER**

*TELEDVISOR SITTING AT COMPUTER, TEACHING ACADEMIC EARLY ADOPTER COMES UP AND MIMES KNOCKING ON HIS OFFICE DOOR.*

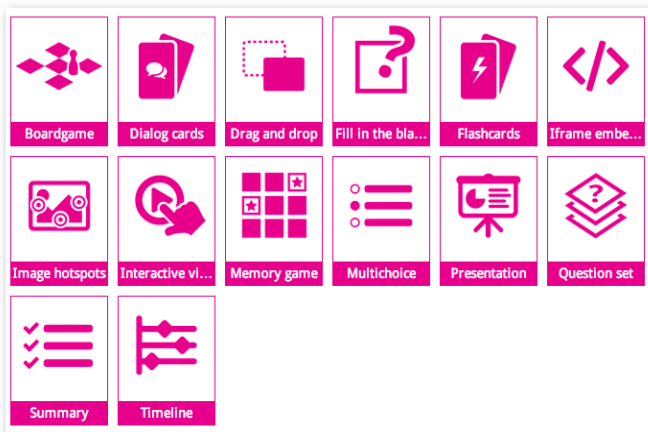
TEACHING ACADEMIC EARLY ADOPTER: Hi, TELEDvisor, how are you going?

TEL EDVISOR TEAM MEMBER: Hey, one of my favourite academics, a teaching academic who is an early adopter of lots of technologies.

TEACHING ACADEMIC EARLY ADOPTER: Yes, well that's just why I'm visiting you. I want to get you to let me add this great little tool to the learning management system. It's the best, I saw it at a meet-up last week, and it does great quizzes and drag and drop and scenarios and video lessons.

TEL EDVISOR TEAM MEMBER: Ah yes, I know the tool you mean I think, is it this one?

*DEMOS A DRAG AND DROP TOOL ON THE SCREEN*



TEACHING ACADEMIC EARLY ADOPTER: That's it, I really think it will be good for my students and make the multiple-choice questions attractive - they really need to test themselves on the fundamental knowledge in the course, and it's so important that **learning is self-directed**.

TEL EDVISOR TEAM MEMBER: It's a great tool with a lot of uses, but what does your DEAN say about it?

*TEACHING ACADEMIC EARLY ADOPTER TURNS TO FACE THE AUDIENCE AND REMEMBERS: ...*



## CAST

**DEAN**

**TEACHING ACADEMIC LATE ADOPTER**

**TEACHING ACADEMIC EARLY ADOPTER**

*DEAN AND TEACHING ACADEMIC LATE ADOPTER ARE SITTING ON CHAIRS HAVING A FACULTY MEETING. THE TEACHING ACADEMIC EARLY ADOPTER MOVES CLOSER TO THEM TO HEAR*

DEAN: So we have to report back to the Education and Innovation directorate on our faculty priorities for educational technology spending.

TEACHING ACADEMIC LATE ADOPTER: Oh not again, I've only just worked out how to use the last tool they said would streamline my teaching. So far it takes me 3 hours extra a week to use the save time feature.

DEAN: Well, you've always been a late adopter of technology, haven't you. Whereas you (LOOKING TOWARD THE TEACHING ACADEMIC EARLY ADOPTER) are always so up-to-date. What happened to that last thing that you were so keen on, was it Google Burst?

TEACHING ACADEMIC EARLY ADOPTER: Google Buzz, Dean, that was a very long time ago.

DEAN: It sort of disappeared, didn't it?

TEACHING ACADEMIC EARLY ADOPTER: Yes, Dean, they killed it off and replaced it with Google Wave.

DEAN: What happened to that?

TEACHING ACADEMIC EARLY ADOPTER: Well, they killed it off and replaced it with Google Plus.

DEAN: And then?

TEACHING ACADEMIC EARLY ADOPTER: Well, that's been killed off too.

DEAN: Educational technology, it's like the worst excesses of the French Revolution.

TEACHING ACADEMIC LATE ADOPTER: Why can't they decide what they want us to use and stick to it? It never seems to progress,<sup>i</sup> they just keep changing the name.

TEACHING ACADEMIC EARLY ADOPTER: Anyway, you got my email about the great new Shiny Tiny Tool? It's got so many possibilities, even you would like it, you late adopter.

TEACHING ACADEMIC LATE ADOPTER: I want technology to do the thing it's meant to do efficiently and leave me alone to teach the way I know how.

TEACHING ACADEMIC EARLY ADOPTER: But that's what makes technology so good, the potential that exists between what the designer thinks they have made and the possible futures that we teachers can imagine.<sup>ii</sup>

DEAN: Um, I got the email, and I can see you are keen. What does it cost?

TEACHING ACADEMIC EARLY ADOPTER: Well, it's actually a free product at the moment

DEAN: Oh so we don't need to discuss it here then, it doesn't have budget implications

TEACHING ACADEMIC EARLY ADOPTER: So you're happy for me to explore using it?

DEAN: I suppose so, tread carefully, see what the TELEDVISOR unit says

TEACHING ACADEMIC EARLY ADOPTER: Thanks, Dean!

*TEACHING ACADEMIC EARLY ADOPTER TURNS BACK TO  
TELEDVISOR AT THE DESK*



## **CAST**

**TEL ADVISOR TEAM MEMBER**

**TEACHING ACADEMIC EARLY ADOPTER**

TEACHING ACADEMIC EARLY ADOPTER: Oh yes, he's very supportive

TEL EDVISOR TEAM MEMBER: Great, I'll talk to my boss.

## ACT I SCENE 2



### CAST

**TEL EDVISOR TEAM MEMBER**

**TEL EDVISOR MANAGER**

**IT ADMINISTRATOR**

### *TEL EDVISORS TEAM MEETING*

TEL EDVISOR TEAM MEMBER: Hi, Boss.

TEL EDVISOR MANAGER: and I'd like to thank the IT Administrator for attending our meeting and letting us know some of the upcoming university wide projects.

IT ADMINISTRATOR: Thanks, Manager of Technology Enhanced Learning. As usual we in Information Technology are keeping the big picture in mind, and especially the security of the University systems, as per policy.

TEL EDVISOR MANAGER: We all appreciate that, IT Administrator, although you sometimes take these responsibilities nearly too seriously.

IT ADMINISTRATOR: Not at all. Knowledge is precious, and **learning is access to that knowledge**. The students can't have their access interrupted by anything.

TEL EDVISOR MANAGER: I hear the new DVC is floating the idea of a new Very Big Platform, I guess that might be a bit disruptive.

IT ADMINISTRATOR: We're only at scoping stage with that, we'll need a lot more resources if we have to make that change

TEL EDVISOR TEAM MEMBER: And the teaching staff will need a lot of preparation

IT ADMINISTRATOR: Well of course that's not part of our business

TEL EDVISOR TEAM MEMBER: Anyway, can we talk about my request to use this excellent Shiny Tiny Tool?

IT ADMINISTRATOR: No, it's quite unacceptable, security wise

TEL EDVISOR TEAM MEMBER: Oh, what's its problem?

IT ADMINISTRATOR: So many - it's developed by the community, and there are multiple ways to do the same thing, and new bugs are constantly being introduced and fixed, and each installation allows you to customise the settings

TEL EDVISOR MANAGER: So it's got the same problems as our learning management system, then?

IT ADMINISTRATOR: Yes, but we've got to have a learning management system, or the students' learning won't be managed. We don't have to have your Tiny Tool.

TEL EDVISOR MANAGER: Let's get the academic to do the business case and we can look at it a bit further. Here's the template for the innovation case (GIVES A BIG WAD OF PAPER)

IT ADMINISTRATOR: And here's the appendix on assessing risk  
(GIVES A BIG WAD OF PAPER)

TEL EDVISOR MANAGER: And here's the plan of meetings needed to  
assess the case (GIVES A BIG WAD OF PAPER)

IT ADMINISTRATOR: And the branding guidelines and student  
interaction guide (GIVES A BIG WAD OF PAPER)

TEL EDVISOR MANAGER: And the policy for integration in the LMS  
(GIVES A BIG WAD OF PAPER)

TEL EDVISOR TEAM MEMBER: Great, thank you. (TRIES TO BALANCE  
ENORMOUS STACK OF PAPER)

TEL EDVISOR MANAGER: And I'll see you again when the Vendor  
comes to show us the Very Big Platform.



## ACT I SCENE 3



### CAST

**TEL advisor TEAM MEMBER**

**Teaching academic early adopter**

*BACK IN THE TELEDVISORS OFFICE*

TEACHING ACADEMIC EARLY ADOPTER: So how did it go, can I use the Shiny Tiny Tool?

TEL EDVISOR TEAM MEMBER: They're worried about security and they have asked you to make a business case (OFFERS THE BIG STACK OF PAPERS)

TEACHING ACADEMIC EARLY ADOPTER: Ah, that's too much! It's like they want to stop me from using it at all. Don't they understand the value of a new tool to attract the students' attention? Novelty is so important in getting the student into the learning sequence, **learning needs attention.**

TEL EDVISOR TEAM MEMBER: I think they're a bit distracted by the Very Big Platform that seems to be on the table for implementation.

TEACHING ACADEMIC EARLY ADOPTER: But this is way too complicated, this isn't my job - couldn't you fill it in for me?

Can you help me fill out the form?

- Flux MCQ – yes/no

If the poll says yes, the  
teledvisor should help

Then the TEL EDVISOR TEAM MEMBER  
sits down and starts writing up  
the case on the stack of paper  
(TURNS OVER LOTS OF PAPER)

**If the poll says no**, the  
teledvisor should **NOT** help

Then the TEACHING ACADEMIC EARLY  
ADOPTER sits down and starts  
writing up the case on the stack  
of paper (TURNS OVER LOTS OF  
PAPER) for the rest of the drama

ACT I SCENE 4



**CAST**

**VENDOR**

**DEAN**

**TEACHING ACADEMIC LATE ADOPTER**

**IT ADMINISTRATOR**

**TEL ADVISOR MANAGER**

**TEL ADVISOR TEAM MEMBER**

**TEACHING ACADEMIC EARLY ADOPTER**

*VENDOR IS MAKING A PRESENTATION*

VENDOR:                   And as you can see here, the Very Big Platform can be configured to send small 'nudges' to the students in the form of mild electrical impulses, to remind them of upcoming submission dates.

DEAN: Yes, it's all very impressive, but I can't help feeling a little bit Groundhog Day. You know, you, or another vendor, you bring in these wonderful products, and it's all going to be wonderful, there's going to be a revolution in education, if we adopt the technology today, then tomorrow will be transformed - but then tomorrow never comes.<sup>iii</sup>It's almost as if **technology is not enough by itself** to change the university processes.

VENDOR: But you've got to appreciate how ground-breaking this tool is - this is the summit of educational technology, and it can be integrated with every piece of academic software. The system can gather more than 15 hipplobytes of data a day.

DEAN: It would really help with reporting if we could give the retention taskforce some big data on student activity. And it would help me if I could track my under-performing academics.

TEACHING ACADEMIC LATE ADOPTER: What?!

VENDOR: See this screen, it's a dashboard that tracks the student, from when they get up in the morning to when they go to bed at night and monitors all their interactions with teachers with this little green dot here which shows where in the new learning spaces they are located. And it's visible to students, so it can help with their responsibilitisation.

TEACHING ACADEMIC LATE ADOPTER: And how do you know that the software works?

VENDOR: (BIG PAUSE) The universities who we have sold this to love it. We have dashboards that show 67 points where students could be getting bogged down.<sup>iv</sup>

TEACHING ACADEMIC LATE ADOPTER: No, I mean, have you tested it to see if it actually helps students learn?

IT ADMINISTRATOR: Well you can't tell if the students are learning, can you,

TEACHING ACADEMIC LATE ADOPTER: Yes, I can, my job depends on it

IT ADMINISTRATOR: but you can see if they are doing what they should. **Actions are learning.**<sup>v</sup>

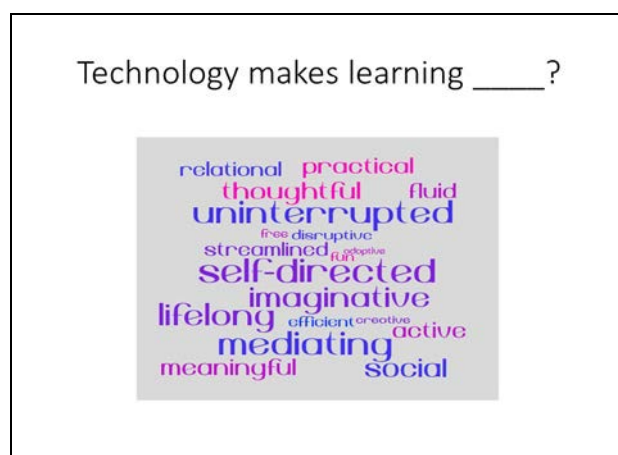
TEACHING ACADEMIC LATE ADOPTER: Well, no, really, **learning is relational**, and technology should be the same. At the very least, **learning is a story of adaptation**,<sup>vi</sup> and the role of technology is to support the flows within the system.

DEAN: I try not to think about technology, but I guess I would hope that any tool is simply a part of creative human practice, whatever mediates human activity<sup>vii</sup>

TEACHING ACADEMIC LATE ADOPTER: Right on, Dean. Technology is whatever can be used in the **transformation that is learning**, both material tools and tools for thinking.<sup>viii</sup>

TEL EDVISOR MANAGER: If you do think about it, even our current LMS is different depending on who you are and what you want to do with it - it's a closed product, it's an open system, a course site, a communication medium -- it's very **fluid**,<sup>ix</sup> as I guess **learning is**.

*FLUX QUESTION, WORD CLOUD*



The players in this drama have very different ideas about learning and the role of technology. What do you think: **Technology makes learning**

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## WHILE WAITING FOR WORD CLOUD RESULTS

TEACHING ACADEMIC EARLY ADOPTER: (DUMPS BUSINESS CASE DOCUMENTS ONTO THE TABLE) So what about my Tiny Tool?

TEL EDVISOR MANAGER: We need to decide on the Very Big Platform first, sorry.

VENDOR: Why is it so hard for the university to make a decision on this? It's a business, isn't it?

DEAN: Well it's certainly corporate, but it's not really a business. Universities and their staff adopt a much wider set of goals and objectives than even the most diversified of corporations.

Unlike companies, universities both collaborate and compete -- and they do so with very long time horizons and a mass of constraints and objectives that you just can't unravel. Higher education, like educational technology, is more an ecosystem than an industry.<sup>x</sup> It certainly poses a dilemma.

## CURTAIN

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<sup>i</sup> Oliver, M. (2016). What is technology? In N. Rushby & D. Surry (Eds.), *The Wiley Handbook of Learning Technology* (pp. 35-57). Wiley.

<sup>ii</sup> Binder, T. (1996). Participation and reification in design of artifacts: An interview with Etienne Wenger. *AI & Society*, 10(1), 101-106.

<sup>iii</sup> Mayes 1995, quoted in Oliver 2016

<sup>iv</sup> Feldstein, M. (2019, October 21). What I Didn't See at EDUCAUSE. Retrieved 22 October 2019, from E-Literate website: <https://eliterate.us/what-i-didnt-see-at-educause/>

<sup>v</sup> Gibson, 1979

<sup>vi</sup> Laurillard, 1993

<sup>vii</sup> techne

<sup>viii</sup> Kuuttii 1997, quoted in Oliver 2016

<sup>ix</sup> Enriquez 2009, quoted in Oliver 2016

<sup>x</sup> (from Maloney, E. J., & Kim, J. (2019, July 24). Theorizing digital learning. <https://www.insidehighered.com/digital-learning/blogs/technology-and-learning/theorizing-digital-learning>