Symphonie Praxis
A suite exploring faculty experiences and policy frames surrounding digital technologies in BC’s post-secondary education system

by

Christopher Hamilton Gratham

BSc, The University of British Columbia, 1989
MSc, The University of British Columbia, 1991

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Abstract

This study explores faculty members’ lived experiences with digital technologies in their teaching practice at British Columbia University (BCU), and it investigates these individual experiences within overlapping and interrelated contexts at the global, provincial, and institutional scales.

The study was inspired by the researcher’s practice in educational technology leadership at BCU and those experiences, along with the researcher’s perspective as geographer, are seen throughout the study.

The research is informed by critical theory of technology to situate the different perspectives used to frame technologies. It draws upon research on globalization to analyze provincial and institutional policy documents. It also draws upon Bourdieu’s ideas on capital to understand power and influence shifts: particularly within the institution and how participants’ capital shifts over time.

The study illustrates the complex and sometimes contradictory ways that faculty members see their relationship with digital technologies in their practice, and it highlights how government priorities can become institutional policy and ultimately manifest in faculty members experiences.

The study shows how the role of the instructor and the field of higher education are changing, and it situates increasingly ubiquitous digital technologies in the change. It illustrates how participants attribute tensions in their practice to different logics between themselves and BCU administrators. And it shows how participants take on the responsibility themselves of increasing their use of digital technologies, even when they don’t believe more technology use will help their
practice.

This research contributes to the ongoing discussions regarding higher education policy and the roles for digital technologies within that field.
Preface

This dissertation is an original intellectual product of the author, Christopher Hamilton Gratham, and was undertaken under the supervision of principal investigator Dr. Michelle Stack of the University of British Columbia (Faculty of Educational Studies). The fieldwork reported in Chapter 6 was covered by the University of British Columbia Behavioural Research Ethics Board Certificate H11–00889 and the BCU Research Ethics Committee Certificate 2011–20.
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List of Abbreviations

A number of terms recur frequently throughout this dissertation. The first time I use each term it is written out in full, and each subsequent time it is replaced by the abbreviation listed below.

**BCU**  British Columbia University, anonymized name used for the institution where this study was conducted

**CET**  Centre for Educational Technologies, anonymized name used for the office of education technology support at institution where this study was conducted

**UBC**  University of British Columbia

**LMS**  Learning Management System

**CTL**  Centre for Teaching and Learning, anonymized name used for centre at the institution where this study was conducted

**WWW**  World Wide Web

**MOOCS**  Massively Open Online Courses

**BC**  British Columbia

**CCU**  College and University Commission, anonymized name used for a higher education accreditation granting body
Acknowledgments

I would like to express deep gratitude to my supervisor, Dr. Michelle Stack, for her guidance, patience, and good humour throughout my research and writing journey. In addition to the many hours of reading, discussing, and revising details of my research, I feel very fortunate that she was receptive to my creative – sometimes overly so – thoughts and able to help separate the potentially useful from the distracting paths.

I would also like to thank the other members of my research committee – Dr. Deirdre Kelly and Dr. André Mazawi – for their thoughtful and useful feedback, for sharing inspiring ideas, for their attention to details, and for their kind guidance.

I would like to thank the study participants – my colleagues at BCU – for their time and interest in my study and for their dedication to their practice.

Finally, I would like to thank my family – Suzanne, Evan, and Colin – for understanding how important this project has been to me and for allowing me all the time away from them that this journey required.
Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my sons – Evan and Colin. Follow you imagination, ask questions, keep an open mind, and persevere.
Chapter 1

Prelude

Imagine you have front row seats in a great old concert hall. There you sit, eyes closed, as J. S. Bach’s grand orchestral work envelops you like the sun’s rays on a warm spring day. At times all the intricate parts, all the sections, all the sound waves coming from each of the hundred musicians merge into a greater, comprehensive experience. But then, what’s that?

Ever so gradually, you notice as the flutes start an ascending phrase, and your attention is drawn to its intricate turns and twists. Where did that come from? Was it always there? And why didn’t you notice it earlier? It seems very familiar. Didn’t the horns play something just like it a few minutes ago. Hold on. What’s that now?

You hear the same thing from the violins. Well . . . almost the same thing, but this time it’s turned over head-on-its heels and syncopated. You marvel at how this line descends, interjects, yet still perfectly complements the flutes. And then, suddenly, you notice something else.

The low strings are playing an ostinato pattern, repeating an slow arpeggio, providing a harmonic foundation supporting both the upper lines. When did that start? Was it going all along?

Then your mind shifts and you start to wonder just what makes this work sound as it does today, right here, right now, in this hall, with these musicians,
and with you there listening? Surely Bach was trying to say something with this music, and it clearly reflects the early 19th century Weimar. But was it like that scene in the Milos Forman’s film *Amadeus* where the deaf Mozart hears, in his head, the complete and final version of his famous requiem as he wrote it down? It can’t be so. For the orchestra as you heard it today didn’t even exist in Bach’s time. Some of the instruments didn’t even exist in his time.

Then you wonder how the conductor’s experience comes out in today’s performance? And what about all the musicians? They’ve heard the piece from many different recordings. They are highly trained. But they’ve got their own stories and experiences too. They might have had a bad day, a fight with their stand mate, good news from their family. How do all these elements - sometimes sweet, sometimes discordant - meld into what you are hearing right now?

This metaphor helps me to place my practice and my research. I have front row seats, listening to the changing role of digital technologies in higher education. But I am also on stage, actively performing the work as well, and maybe even conducting a few parts.

Even at my least modest I can’t muster enough hubris to claim to fully hear all the interacting lines and the entire work. Instead, in this research I hope to be able to identify some of the most striking lines and phrases and to make connections with both the external and internal factors that contribute to the entire work.

Much of my practice concentrates on the detailed level, much like following the twists and turns of the flutes, the violins, or the horns. These details - the phrases and timbres - are critically important components of the whole; but they are not the entire work. They exist within a host of overlapping contexts.

I believe that one of the problems in the practice of educational technology leadership is that those detailed lines are the only elements heard. We are often so focussed on certain individual phrases from the performance that we don’t hear the entire work and all the influences that created it.

My general approach in this research is to place myself in that in-between zone, my focus oscillating between the individual phrases and lines and the pro-
cesses and structures interacting together to form the larger work.
Chapter 2

Allemande: Context and Setting

A movement which introduces the main themes of the work

I’m starting to look like an outdated old goat. Kevin - British Columbia University (BCU) Faculty member

You could literally hire James Cameron to make Math 101. Marc Andreessen - Founder of Netscape

Kevin$^1$ is the jelly-filled doughnut of teaching. Meet him in his overflowing office and, before you’ve talked to him for even five minutes, before you’ve barely even poked at the surface, his passion for teaching and his students oozes out. You can’t miss it; it’s all over everything he touches: the books, papers, the art. It’s all over everything he says: his goals and aspirations for his students. Yet, Kevin’s work has begun to take on a sour taste.

On the face of it, Kevin should be near the apogee of his career. He’s got a PhD, is well respected in his field, and has published widely. He’s worked as a department head, a program advisor, and he has supervised many students. He has

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$^1$All participants and the institution are referred to by pseudonyms. See Table 4.1 for participants’ demographic information.
made lots of contributions to the community - both related to his academic discipline and as a volunteer in areas outside of his academic expertise. He’s taught at BCU with glowing reviews from students and colleagues alike: he’s a master teacher, although far too modest to say so himself. But despite all these accomplishments, Kevin still feels like an old goat being readied for pasture. Why?

Many of Kevin’s concerns get revealed when he speaks about the changing role of digital technologies in the teaching practice. Despite ample evidence to show that he already does a great job teaching – excellent teaching evaluations and commendations from students — Kevin feels pressure to change the way he teaches. He feels pushed to incorporate more technologies into his teaching, even though he doesn’t think it will help his students. Kevin wants to respond to the demands he feels from students, colleagues, the University, and larger society as a whole. Yet he has a difficult time reconciling those demands with his own expertise and experiences.

While my discussions with Kevin usually begin grounded in some very practical aspect of how to apply a particular technology to his classes, the discussions tend to zoom out to a larger scale that questions just how appropriate certain technologies are in higher education and who gets to decide how technologies should be incorporated into the practice. And it is when addressing these larger scale, more general questions, applied to his specific situation, that we get to the seeds of Kevin’s discontent.

If we think about Kevin’s dilemma, it is not really based in the technologies themselves: they are the surface sheen. Instead, his problems reveal much more deeply rooted, fundamentally political questions. They reveal questions asking what values we want to promote in higher education: just what are our aims? They ask questions like who determines what technologies are used and how? They ask how those choices are made? They question how much autonomy individual faculty members have, and how much they should have? They ask how

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2Throughout this dissertation I will use the terms technologies, educational technologies, and digital technologies interchangeably to refer to digital and network technologies.
much autonomy individual institutions have, and how much they should have?

My research is based in a similar perspective to the way I have described Kevin’s dilemma above. I am interested in digital technologies in higher education, but it’s not the technologies themselves that I am particularly interested in. Instead, I view the technologies as a framing device to help focus attention on the political aspects that are tied to the increasing use of technologies. And as digital technologies become more pervasive in society, I think that these political questions that accompany the technologies become increasingly important to investigate.

Digital technologies are now deeply intertwined with across many aspects of our lives. Just think about how often you use your smart phone, the Global Positioning System in your car, browse the web, use social media, stream music files, or even use WiFi or the cellular network. Or Google yourself to see your digital footprint. Modern technologies have become so embedded, so integral, and so pervasive in our lives that we live in a technopolitan culture (Winner, 2010).3

And this culture is just as evident in higher education as any other realm of society. For example, just think of how often we hear the terms knowledge economy, e-learning, and information age associated with higher education. Or go into a university classroom today to see the pervasive use of the digital technologies such as the World Wide Web (WWW), Learning Management System (LMS), mobile devices, clickers, and digital projectors – just to name a few.

These technologies are so pervasive that to many they have already replaced any possibility of doing education any other way. As Netscape founder, and now venture capitalist, Marc Andreessen explains it:

We can’t use the old approach to teach the world. We can’t build that many campuses. We don’t have the space. We don’t have money. We don’t have the professors (Roose, 2014).

As he describes it, “if one observes how thoroughly our lives are shaped by interconnected systems of modern technology, how strongly we feel their influence, respect their authority and participate in their workings, one begins to understand that, like it or not, we have become members of a new order in human history” (Winner, 2010, p. ix).
Andreessen doesn’t rue the loss of the *old way*. To him the benefits of more technology in education are so obvious that they are beyond seriously questioning:

The question is for the 14-year-old in Indonesia staring at a life of either, like, subsistence farming or being able to get a Stanford-quality education and being able to go into a profession (Roose, 2014).

Andreessen’s prognosis for higher education incorporates what he calls *entertainment-industry economics*. Referring to the current level of Massively Open Online Courses (MOOCS), he calls the production values pretty low. But in, say, ten years he forecasts a different vision:

What if we had Math 101 online, and what if it was well regarded and you got fully accredited and certified? What if we knew that we were going to have a million students per semester? And what if we knew that they were going to be paying $100 per student, right? What if we knew that we’d have $100 million of revenue from that course per semester? . . . You could literally hire James Cameron to make Math 101 (Roose, 2014).

This technopolitan view is not just a vision for the future of higher education, it has already brought very real changes. For instance, last year Florida lawmakers committed $35 million to create a *reduced-cost, online-only* bachelors program at the University of Florida. And the University’s plans are even larger: by 2024 calling for an enrolment of 24,152 students over 35 different degrees, and projecting $76.6-million in revenue and $14.5-million in profit. Furthermore, University of Florida online plans to attract thousands of international students, charging tuition rates four times as high as the $112 per credit paid by in-state students (O’Neil, 2014).

And just as Kevin’s questions surrounding the expanding use of digital technologies at BCU are fundamentally political rather than technological questions, I think the most important questions as this technopolitan culture becomes ever more deeply and widely entrenched in society are also fundamentally political questions and not technological ones.
Yet, I am concerned that the debates arising out of expansion of digital technologies - both in institutions like BCU and in the greater society - are often limited to narrowly focussed instrumental questions concerning the utility and efficiency of various technologies as tools. For example, at BCU the questions have become focussed so narrowly on which LMS to use (which are valid questions), that we don’t also question the consequences, implications, and other issues that go along with using LMS in the first place. To use Andreessen’s idea, the discussion centres around which famous director should we hire to make Math 101 - James Cameron or Norman Jewison - rather than what are the pros and cons of doing Math 101 this way? What we are missing is the space to query the broader, deeper, and richer questions that engage the values, goals, and meanings of higher education, technology, and their interactions.

I wonder how we have arrived at a situation where the debates about such an important and complex area have been so conceptually limited. So, in a sense, I approach this research from a stance of criticism. But this criticism should not be taken as an anti-technology stance. Instead, I think it should be viewed from a positive stance, just as we would cast literary or arts criticism. I aim this research as a critical self-reflection, an attempt to understand complex interactions, and I try to provide new resources to re-invigorate debates about the roles for digital technologies in higher education.

Perhaps you are someone like Kevin: a long-time faculty member with specific questions about digital technologies. I am, and I write from this perspective. Maybe you are a faculty member who sees potential for technologies to enhance teaching. I am, and I write from this perspective too. Perhaps you are involved in educational technology leadership or management: your work involves supporting, encouraging, and mentoring faculty in using technology. I am, and I also write from this perspective. Maybe you are a critic of technology: asking broader questions surrounding the roles and choices of technologies in higher education. I am, and I write from this perspective too.

If you share any of these perspectives or questions, I hope you find some useful
snippets or even nuggets in the way I have approached this research. But even if you don’t have a particular interest in the technologies, I think that this research will be helpful to anyone with an interest in policies and experiences in higher education.

2.1 Positioning Myself

My departure point for this research is unabashedly sympathetic towards the question and perspectives raised by my faculty colleagues like Kevin. Others might view the questions differently, but my interests result directly out of my long-time practice as a faculty member in the British Columbia post-secondary system. In particular, experiences through my work in educational technology leadership at BCU provided the motivation to attend the EdD program at the University of British Columbia (UBC) and inspired this research project.

As an EdD student, reflecting on my practice at BCU, I kept returning to a number of questions that seemed important yet that were also given short shrift if even considered at all in the practice.

In this section, I review my practice in order to make visible these questions and how I came to think about them. I want to make this background visible for two reasons. First, while I make efforts to understand different views and perspectives, my knowledge is necessarily limited and so are my claims to knowledge. Second, by bringing my experiences and perspectives to the fore, I open up the possibility that this unique combination may offer a fresh perspective to the knowledge in this field.

2.1.1 Leadership in Educational Technology

I have worked as a faculty member at BCU for the past 25 years, and the majority of my work has involved positions in educational technology leadership. While the formal names of the job titles have changed - liaison, manager, director, special appointee, chair, etc - I have always viewed this work as broadly encom-
passing the following two domains: working with faculty members interested in incorporating digital technologies into their teaching practice; and working with senior administration, faculty, staff, and students to determine when educational technologies make sense, and, if they do, which particular ones to use. From my perspective, this practice is situated in the intersection of fields of technologies, policy, politics, and education.

**Busy practice**

My interest in this topic grew from my experiences in this practice. And my practice is so crammed full with the day-to-day support and administrative tasks that there is almost no time left to follow the current research in the field, let alone add to it. And the practice is so busy that I was worried about falling under the spell of accepting the norms just because, “that is the way we do things around here.” I did have questions about the influences on and impacts of digital technologies, but I didn’t have the time to investigate those questions.

While I can’t claim with certainty that others in educational technology leadership positions have succumbed to the same spell, colleagues at other institutions have shared similar concerns about the lack of time to read or perform research in their practice. Furthermore, faculty colleagues at BCU have also frequently expressed frustration trying to find time to properly evaluate and understand how to use digital technologies in their teaching.

With this research project I try to break the spell and stop the pattern of continuing on out of habit. I try to make sense of questions that I previously couldn’t carve out the time to investigate. I turn my focus to the types of cracks illustrated by Kevin’s story and to the observations from my own experiences explained below.

**Perception and prestige**

I received my MSc from the UBC in 1991: a time long ago, before the widespread reach of the WWW and just as personal computers were starting to appear. I had
experience with networked computers during my graduate work and did have a personal computer at home; however, my technology expertise was at best average for my peers in graduate school. I was not an expert in technology and certainly had no background in using technologies in teaching.

Upon graduating I began working at BCU as a full-time faculty member in the Department of Geography. I was one of the youngest and least experienced faculty members at the institution. But despite my lack of experience, colleagues perceived me as having a level of technology expertise, granting me more influence and prestige than I would have otherwise expected.

I had little experience teaching and almost no knowledge of the inner workings of power within the institution or BC’s post-secondary system. I had almost no background in the theory or sociology underlying technology. Yet I could program in FORTRAN.

This perceived expertise in technology compared to colleagues at BCU gave me more symbolic capital⁴ than my more experienced peers, and eventually led me to be asked to work on and chair technology committees, and eventually to create and manage a new centre for supporting faculty members use of technologies, the Centre for Educational Technologies (CET).

If we fast forward to 2015, the technology landscape at BCU has changed. The political and financial environment has also changed drastically and BCU is now in a period of contraction and not one of expansion. I am no longer amongst the youngest faculty members, and technology use and expertise has become far more widespread. So widespread in fact, that BCU has closed the CET that I created and where I worked. Support of faculty with digital technologies has now been reclassified as training and is now performed by the BCU’s IT department.

It is undoubtedly true that the average level of technology expertise of BCU faculty is much higher now than it was when I started, and I have less symbolic

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⁴A form of capital that is not formally recognized as capital in the way as are economic capital (e.g. money) or cultural capital (e.g. degrees). Symbolic capital (e.g. prestige, reputation) depends on other people believing someone possesses those qualities. See (Bourdieu, 1986) for a full description on the forms of capital.
capital due to a perceived expertise advantage in technology. Yet at the same time, my work towards the EdD degree and my experience and expertise working have greatly expanded my knowledge of the field: practical, theoretical, and analytical.

This example from my practice shows how my own prestige and power at BCU has been influenced by factors outside of my expertise relative to the field. Arguably, I should not have been given the work that I was in educational technology leadership so early in my career. At that point, my background and expertise did not leave me well equipped to fulfill the demands of the position. But my perceived expertise in technologies increased my influence and power and led to the work. Now that I have a much stronger background in educational theory, leadership, and the sociological aspects of technology use – in addition to over 20 years of experience in the work – I am much better equipped for a role in educational technology leadership. Yet that role no longer exists at BCU.

With my own personal experiences as but one example, I wanted to investigate how other faculty members experienced the relationships between technological know-how and their prestige and influence within BCU.

**Dichotomies**

Another area of curiosity that arose from my practice is the apparent dichotomous views – both from those working in the field and in some of the research literature – that frequent discussions around technology in education.

I would often hear people categorized into one of two opposite groups. Terms like *techies* or *luddites* are frequently used to describe those who seem either keen or reticent to use technologies. Similarly, terms like *early adopter* and *late adopter* are often used to indicate those either ahead of or behind the mainstream in their technology incorporation. Even terms like *digital immigrant* and *digital native* (Prensky, 2001) have moved into the common vernacular of faculty and administrators when referring to people’s views on and use of technologies.

While these labels may sometimes be useful to represent the distribution of a population, or the goal of a particular effort, or possibly even the future based on
a choice of technologies, my experiences at BCU indicated that they provided an overly simplistic view of faculty positions related to technologies. Many faculty I worked with seemed to be both early and late adopters – and middle adopters too – sometimes all at the same time.

Not only did I find these labels over-simplistic, but I also noticed a tendency to problematize those on the wrong side of the dichotomy. For example, I would attend meetings where a key goal was to try to understand why the late adopters were lagging and what was wrong with them, or what was wrong with what we were doing to cause them to be so far behind, and what could we do to bring them “on board” with using the technologies more or faster. To perhaps stretch the point, I sometimes felt like I was assumed to be in this group with a utopian view of the role of technology in higher education and the most important thing I could do was to convert the dystopians.

My experiences with this relatively simplistic portrayal of dichotomous camps troubled me. Firstly, in my practice I didn’t actually see faculty neatly confined to these opposed positions. Instead I felt that their views were far more situational and contextualized. Secondly, I felt it was unwise to problematize those faculty who didn’t use technologies very much. Instead of trying to make them use technologies more, I wanted to know why they didn’t choose to use the technologies. I wanted to know their reasons and their views.

Neutral and democratic perspective?

In addition to seeing how pervasive these false dichotomies had become, my practice also unearthed for me questions regarding values and attitudes towards technologies in general, and specifically in education.

Work in educational technology sometimes involves choosing one technology or another, and I found it very interesting how these projects were framed as an instrumental task that involved listing the technical features of each option almost like a pros and cons list. While this process might have some benefits, it struck me as incomplete at best, only considering the instrumental and technical aspects
and not allowing room for any more fundamental questions regarding what technologies we want to use and why we want to use them. This approach treats the technologies simply as neutral tools for us to use as we see fit and doesn’t consider any values that might be embedded within the inner workings of the various options.

For example, when deciding which LMS to use, the project was presented this way: as an instrumental choice between neutral technologies. Yet the two competing systems had value choices deeply embedded in their design and these seemed fundamentally important for faculty to discuss. One system was built with a strict hierarchy - administrator, faculty, TA, student - with a cascading set of privileges. The other system conceptualized everyone as participants in a “virtual space” and presented a much reduced hierarchy where all participants had equal abilities to write, post, create, and contribute. Viewing these two platforms only from a list of features misses out on a fundamental difference in design philosophy embedded deeply into all aspects of how the system works.

Viewing choices like this as purely instrumental also misses out on the political aspect of these decisions. On one hand the structures at BCU to make decisions about technologies often appeared democratic, at least at the instrumental technical level. We had committees full of people from the various faculties and constituent groups. Yet at the same time the portrayal of technologies as neutral and instrumental tools, with little if any room for debate about the meta level questions regarding the values intertwined with the technologies, limits the how democratically the decisions are made. Many faculty who would be happy to enter debates involving values and the aims of education show little interest in committees deciding on technologies based on lists of features. Presenting technology decisions in this manner resulted in decision making structures far less democratic than they appear to be.

These experiences piqued my interest to learn about the ways people think about and talk about technologies and the structures at the institution that allow and don’t allow those discussion. I wondered if faculty see these technologies as
neutral tools or do they see them wrapped up within a larger social context? I also wanted to know how faculty viewed the procedures and processes surrounding technology decisions at BCU and if they saw them as structures that opened up the kinds of debates around technology that faculty found useful.

2.1.2 Geographic Viewpoint

While those specific questions noted above arose from my practice in educational technology leadership, through my time as an undergraduate and graduate geography student and more than two decades teaching undergraduate geography courses a geographic viewpoint is indelibly imprinted on my way of approaching problems.

Scale

The concept of scale is a key element that underlies the geographic viewpoint. In its simplest form, scale refers to size, either absolute or relative. Geographers talk about scale in a number of different ways, and particularly relevant to this study are the concepts known as phenomenon scale and analysis scale. As the name suggests, phenomenon scale represents the size at which the structures and phenomena of interest occur. These scales are often referred to by terms such as micro, meso, or macro-scale or local, regional, and global scale. Accurately defining the phenomenon of interest and determining the scales at which they occur is an important component of geographic research.

Once the scale of the phenomenon is determined, the next step is to acquire data to analyze that phenomenon. The level of data resolution (or granularity) of these data is what geographers call the analysis scale. Ideally the analysis scale matches the scale of the phenomenon of interest. But this is often not possible or practical: the data simply may not exist at the appropriate scale of the phenomenon. For example, satellite data at resolution of 30m may be able to provide

5See Montello (2013) for a good overview on the concept of scale in geography
information on local and regional scale phenomena but can not provide the granularity needed to draw any conclusions about micro scale phenomena.

Following from my observations and experience in educational technology leadership, a main aim of this study is to investigate how faculty members understand, talk about, and negotiate the role of technologies in their teaching practice at BCU. The geographic perspective reminds us that this specific phenomenon occurs at the scale of an individual in one institution, and that it can best be investigated by analysis at the same level – individuals in that one institution. In other words, to find out how faculty members at BCU interact with technologies and their teaching, I need to use data collected from individuals at BCU.

While this correspondence between the phenomenon scale and the analysis scale might seem blatantly obvious, it is too often missing both in research and in data used in educational technology leadership.

Some research is focussed on larger scale trends or on theoretical constructs. And while these may be valuable in their own contexts, connections to the working practice of educators are difficult to establish without analysis at the institutional scale.

Similarly, the practice at the institutional scale decisions regarding educational technology use and implementation are often made without data from that same, larger scale: that is, without the knowledge of how faculty at that very institution perceive, use, and feel about the role of technologies in their practice.

**Systems**

While isolating and identifying the scale of the phenomenon and analysis is a useful organizing construct, clearly there can be interactions between phenomena, both at the same scale and between scales. The geographic viewpoint uses a systems approach (or theory) to analyze these between-scale interactions. This systems approach recognizes that most phenomena don’t exist in a vacuum; rather,

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6 Nespor (2004) provides a more complex exposition of the concept of educational scale: tracing spatial and temporal trajectories as pupils and teachers move through the educational systems.
they are part of an interlinked system of different processes.

To illustrate the concept of a system, think of a typical home hot water heating system. This system incorporates taps, pipes, hoses, valves and a hot water tank. Energy is input into the system through a heat source (e.g. natural gas or electric heat) and is lost from the system by running hot water from a tap and by loss to the air inside the house. While we may have good reason to study an individual component of the system (e.g. to find a leaking tap), often we will want to study the entire system or interaction between components of the system. Furthermore, each individual component (pipe, valve, etc.) may have a different significance when viewed as part of the entire system than it does when looked at as an isolated piece.\footnote{This example is was originally presented by Haggett et al. (1977, p. 17).}

On the surface this system may seem simple - pipes, hoses, taps, and energy - yet there are many complex interactions that may be hidden. For example, we might want to study the turbulence in the water flow or the detailed chemical reactions in order to know the diameter and composition of pipe materials needed.

Similarly, the role of digital technologies in higher education is sometimes characterized as a relatively simple system: students flow into the system, classes and ideas are the energy input, and the digital technologies are the pipes and taps that direct the flows. Yet, most people engaged in higher education easily recognize that this view is far too simplistic. Instead, they see that system is full of numerous, sometimes barely visible components and influences that interact in many complex ways as people follow their trajectories through the system.

In this research I have organized the phenomena and analysis into the following four scales: global, provincial, local, and personal. I use the term global scale to refer to phenomena that are primarily observed and analyzed at national or international levels. Provincial scale refers to phenomena and analysis at the level of province of British Columbia (BC). I use the term local scale to refer to phenomena and analysis primarily focuses on levels smaller than the provincial (e.g. regional, institutional, Faculty, and departmental). Finally, I use the term
personal scale when discussing attitudes and perceptions of individuals. This research report analyzes and reports on findings at each of these scales and also makes connections between the scales.

2.2 Aims and Research Questions

This study begins with the overarching aim to understand BCU’s faculty members lived experiences with digital technologies in their practice. Integrating my background with insights gained from research literature, I realized that faculty members’ lived experiences with digital technologies are best understood through integrating their stories within local, provincial, and global contexts. To investigate this aim, I adopted two specific research questions as follows:

1. What policy frames are used surrounding digital technologies at BCU within British Columbia’s multi-layered post-secondary system, and how do these frames reflect and intersect with global trends?

2. What frames do BCU faculty members use surrounding the use of digital technologies? How do these frames intersect with the policy frames? In what ways do they coincide and where do they differ? What structures at BCU impact these faculty frames and how do they do so?

I begin engaging these questions in Movement 3 with a summary of relevant academic literature to establish the background and theoretical frameworks upon which I draw for the study. In this movement, I start at the global scale and organize the theoretical positions that have been used to study technologies. I then turn to review some of the empirical studies – which are primarily at the personal and local scales – that have influenced the field of educational leadership. Next, I review some constructs and empirical studies which help connect this personal scale to local scales. Finally, I finish this movement by returning to review global scale concepts – such as globalization and neo-liberalism – and engage how they can be connected to the smaller scales.
In Movement 4, I explain the theoretical, strategic, and methodological details of the study.

My first research question looks at provincial and local scale policy and interactions within the context of the larger scales, and in Movement 5, I investigate this question and analyze two particularly important provincial policy documents as well as policy discourse from BCU within the overarching context.

The second research question centres on understanding the lived experiences of faculty members at BCU: how they perceive and act upon the role of digital technologies in their practice in the particular context of the positions and policies – analyzed in previous chapters – and the politics of the institution. In Movement 6, I analyze scale data collected from faculty interviews at the personal scale, and identify themes and connections between this data and the larger scale phenomena.

Finally, in Movement 7, I summarize and synthesize the results from the various scales and makes recommendations for further research.

2.2.1 Significance of Study

I believe this study is significant in a number of ways. First, by focussing intently on faculty experiences at BCU and by engaging with theory, it can prove useful to practitioners at BCU itself. Second, the reflective nature of the interview process has provided participants with time and resources to reflect and build a more complete understanding of the layers of complex interactions that influence the role of digital technologies within the milieu of their practice. Third, because it is an empirical study of the interactions between the local scale phenomena at BCU and the overarching contexts of provincial and global scale influences, I believe this study is relevant to other institutions within similar policy contexts.
Chapter 3

Courante: Literature Review

To investigate the research questions presented in Section 2.2, I draw upon and integrate a number of related existing theoretical approaches and streams of research. In this movement, I review relevant literature from each of these streams and show how I will draw upon each of those streams and their theoretical underpinnings to conduct this research study.

In Section 3.1, I start at the global scale and provide an overview of the approaches taken toward technology studies. In Section 3.2, I review examples of how thinkers have applied concepts from the area of critical theory toward technology studies, integrating these larger contexts into smaller scales. In Section 3.3, I review the most common approaches taken toward research into faculty perspectives toward e-learning – studies that primarily concentrate on the personal scale. In Section 3.4, I engage how Pierre Bourdieu’s concepts of field, habitus, and capital can be applied to explain interactions between personal and local scales within organizations. Finally, in Section 3.5, I summarize the global scale policy perspectives influencing higher education and investigate how phenomena at this scale can be integrated with provincial, local and personal scale phenomena.

To conduct a comprehensive background of relevant research and theoretical
ideas, I compiled a bibliographic database\(^1\) of writings relevant to my study. I used a number of methods to find these writings. First, as my thinking about the topics has evolved, I made special note of papers, books, and articles of particular interest and added them to my database directly. For each of these, I combed through their bibliographies to delve more deeply into the sources of the thoughts they present – sometimes drilling down a number of levels – which provided a second source of relevant literature.

To ensure that my literature sources were not only limited to these first order sources and their direct bloodlines, I also added to my database by performing numerous searches using Google Scholar, UBC Library, the Directory of Open Access Journals, Educational Full Text, Academic Search Complete, JSTOR Arts and Sciences Archive, SpringerLink Journals, and the Education Research Complete holdings. Through these sources I conducted multiple searches of the literature on studies related to faculty use of technologies, policy related to higher education and technology, and to the use of theoretical concepts that I felt might prove useful (e.g. critical theory, capital, globalization, neoliberalism, etc.). I conducted searches both on individual key words and using various boolean combinations of terms of interest such as the following: “educational technologies”, “Instructional and computer technologies”, “ICT”, “technology”, “teachers”, “teaching”, “faculty”, “higher education”, “schools”, “policy”, “globalization”, “neoliberalism” “field”, “symbolic capital”, and “responsibilisizing”.

### 3.1 Overview of Approaches to Technology Studies

Before delving into the specific literature on policy, faculty, higher education, and educational technology, it is helpful to review the variety of theoretical approaches that have been applied to technology studies in general.

I find the work summarized by Feenberg (1999, 2002, 2000) a very useful way

\(^1\)Currently 293 items where each resource is cited, annotated, ranked, and categorized in a taxonomy of keywords
to organize these approaches as shown in Table 3.1².

Table 3.1: Views on Technology

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Technology is:</th>
<th>Autonomous</th>
<th>Humanly Controlled</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Neutral (complete separation of means and ends)</td>
<td>Determinism (e.g. modernization theory)</td>
<td>Instrumentalism (liberal faith in progress)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Value Laden (means form a way of life that includes the ends)</td>
<td>Substantivism (means and ends linked in systems)</td>
<td>Critical Theory (choice of alternative means-ends systems)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.1 summarizes the positions into four main perspectives – determinism, instrumentalism, substantivism, and critical theory – based on two main criteria: whether technologies are autonomous or human controlled; and whether technologies are neutral or value laden.

Taking the view that technologies are value neutral, we can follow along the first row and see there are two positions based on whether or not people have the freedom to determine how technologies develop and evolve. If the answer is no, then the technology is autonomous and humans are just following as technologies evolve along its own laws. Feenberg calls this position technological determinism and gives modernization theory as an example of this stance.

The determinist tradition is widely seen in social sciences today through the belief that, “the driving force of history is technological advance” (Feenberg, 2003, para. 25). In this view, technology shapes society in the service of progress and efficiency. Therefore, “it is not up to us to adapt technology to our whims but on the contrary, we must adapt to technology as the most significant expression of our humanity” (Feenberg, 2003, para. 25). In my practice, this view usually appears in statements that present technology as driving educational change and that faculty must either accommodate the change (e.g. use the LMS for course ...

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²much of the explanation of this table is adapted from (Questioning Technology, Feenberg, 1999)
Still in the first row, representing a neutral view of technology, instrumentalism is characterized by a stance that humans can control the steps in the evolution of technologies. From this perspective, technology is value-free and the ends are separate from the means. Consequently, technology has no preference for how it is used and humans can control technology and use it to suit our own desires. As Feenberg says, “Technology in this scheme of things encounters nature as raw materials, not as a world that emerges out of itself . . . but rather as stuff awaiting transformation into whatever we desire. This world is understood mechanistically and not teleologically. It is there to be controlled and used without any inner purpose” (Feenberg, 2003, para. 17).

According to Feenberg, this instrumentalist view is the most commonly represented conception of technology, and as I have shown in Movement 2, I see it frequently in my practice when people say that technology is (just) a tool.

In contrast to instrumentalist and determinist views, substantivism (first box in the second row) doesn’t see technology as neutral; rather, it attributes values to technology that can be related to specific conceptions of the good life. And because technologies embody certain specific values they can’t be seen as merely instrumental and they can’t be used for different purposes by different people with different ideas of the good.

Feenberg uses the metaphor of choosing a religion to illustrate the substantive view of technologies. He writes:

When you choose to use technology you do not simply render your existing way of life more efficient, you choose a different way of life. Technology is thus not simply instrumental to whatever values you hold. It carries with it certain values that have the same exclusive character as religious belief. But technology is even more persuasive than religion since it requires no belief to recognize its existence and to follow its commands. Once a society goes down the path of technological development it will be inexorably
transformed into a technological society, a specific type of society dedicated to values such as efficiency and power (Feenberg, 2003, para. 29).

We can certainly see a similarity between substantiﬁve and determinist views. However, while determinists believe that technology is the neutral servant of humankind, substantiﬁve theory offers a more nuanced and comprehensive perspec-tive incorporating these notions around values.

The view that I most closely associate with, and where Feenberg has developed his work, is represented by the box labeled Critical Theory. This approach shares some characteristics of both instrumentalism and substantiﬁsm: like instrumentalism it sees that technology is in some sense controllable, and like substantiﬁsm it also sees technology as value-laden.

The difference between substantiﬁsm and critical theory is somewhat subtle so deserves further explanation. In substantiﬁsm, technology is associated with values of efﬁciency and power, values which represent a technological way of life. So even if we can make choices between technologies, those choices are of little consequence since they are simply different paths within a technological way of life. In contrast, critical theory of technology sees the values embodied in technology as uniquely embedded in and related to speciﬁc social situations. Consequently, in this perspective technology choices are of consequence and these choices can lead to not one, but many different possible ways of life, “each which reﬂects different choices of design and different extensions of technological mediation” (Feenberg, 2003, para. 40).

Critical theory shares the view with instrumentalism that technology deci-sions are humanly controllable. But it does not share the instrumentalist stance that technologies are value neutral. Critical theory sees the means and ends as connected. As Feenberg describes the difference, “even if some sort of human control of technology is possible, it is not instrumental control. In critical theory, technologies are not seen as tools but as frameworks for ways of life. The choices open to us are situated at a higher level than the instrumental level” (Feenberg, 2003, para. 42).
I find critical theory particularly appealing because it leaves space for these higher level, meta choices about which values we wish to embed in the technological framework of our lives. As Feenberg describes it, “Critical theory of technology opens up the possibility of thinking about such choices and submitting them to more democratic controls” (Feenberg, 2003, para. 42).

But what form might these democratic interventions take? Are people sufficiently concerned and informed to take technologies into account in election-like formats? Feenberg argues that we are not. Instead he recounts small-scale examples (e.g. environmental movement, use of email and social networks to organize protests, and net neutrality\(^3\)) that point to the potential of greater participation in decisions about uses of technologies.

While each of these examples may seem small on their own, Feenberg suggests that perhaps together they represent a significant step toward a democratic rationalization of technology. Critics of critical theory question this focus on these small scale political gains, claiming that the theory overestimates their significance in light of the larger picture of global capitalism (see for example, Veak, 2000).

### 3.2 Critical Theory in Educational Technology

While most of the writing I have found on this critical theory approach concentrates on its theoretical aspects, it has been applied in a number of empirical studies related to digital technologies in and education.

Hamilton & Feenberg (2005) employ critical theory in their empirical study that contrasts the technical codes\(^4\) that led to the prevalence of CAI (Computer Aided Instruction) in one setting with different codes that privileged computer conferencing in another environment. In the analysis they point to the importance of bringing to the foreground the values associated with the choices:

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\(^3\)Principle that all types of data on the Internet are treated equally by Internet providers and governments with no differential pricing, throttling, or blocking.

\(^4\)Technical codes represent the “background of values, assumptions, definitions, and roles that guides technological design” (Hamilton & Feenberg, 2005, p. 111)
The essential question to ask in a revised politics of online education is whether the technology will work to facilitate the transmission of static information, fostering standardized modes of interaction between human users, machines and commodified knowledge, or whether the technologies and online programmes can be rooted in an essentially social ideal of education, extending and enabling new forms of mediated interaction. (Hamilton & Feenberg, 2005, p. 116)

And in particular, they point to the socially specific nature of these choices when they conclude that, “[t]echnology could potentially support either one of these programmes. But, as outcomes, they are in no sense given prior to specific appropriations within particular social settings” (Hamilton & Feenberg, 2005, p. 116).

Flanagin et al. (2000) have applied these ideas in a study of the development and structure of the WWW by examining its technical design, usage patterns, and formal and informal policies. By conceptualizing the Internet as a series of choices by designers, users, and policy makers, this approach allows them to interrogate the underlying social and cultural values that led to its development and expansion. In this study they concluded that the very design of the Internet reflects many of the values of its developers – values, “that appear to foster equality and freedom of information, and a certain empowerment achieved through the ability to associate easily with others from a diversity of backgrounds and locations” (Flanagin et al., 2000, p. 423).

Friesen (2008) applies a critical theory perspective to interrogate three widely held and quoted beliefs about e–learning: that we live in a knowledge economy, that users enjoy “anywhere, anytime” access, and that institutional change is governed by fixed “laws” of progress in computing. He does this by examining specific claims and comparing them to actual social conditions. Through his analysis, Friesen concludes that these common-sense beliefs are actually myths that, “simplify or obscure a complex social reality that is constituted by different and conflicting forms of knowledge, and these claims are shown to work to the benefit
of interests that are hegemonic and conservative in nature” (Friesen, 2008, para. 1). I find much promise in incorporating this critical theory approach to educational technology studies, particularly in the way that it provides a more subtle approach compared to the commonly applied instrumental views on technologies. While my research interests are not specifically rooted in details of technologies themselves as are most of the applications of the theory cited above – for example, I am not investigating details about design of specific software or networks – I find this framework relevant for my research. In particular I find the approach taken by Friesen a particularly useful guide when analyzing policy discourse in Movement 5.

3.3 E-learning Research – Personal Scale

Everett Rogers’s book, *Diffusion of Innovation* (Rogers, 1995), can be used to help explain how much e-learning research literature focusses on the personal scale and situates faculty members’ attitudes towards technological change. In Rogers’s model, technologies are “disseminated” through a largely passive audience of “users”. Because the technologies are ready-made and the population mainly passive, the model allows for two dichotomous responses – either adaption or resistance. Much e-learning research focusses on teachers’ attitudes to technologies and attempts to categorize those responses using this model: teachers are portrayed as either early-adopters or late adopters; innovators or laggards (for examples, see Mahony & Wozniak, 2006; Bull et al., 2002; Woodell & Garofoli, 2003). And as I have shown in Movement 2, this tendency for binary categorization extends beyond the academic literature into the common language used in the practice of educational technology leadership.

Numerous empirical studies have drawn on Rogers’s work to investigate how faculty members use technologies in their practice. The vast majority of these too have focussed greatly on teachers’ attitudes towards technology (for examples, see Gressard & Loyd, 1986; Woodrow, 1992; Watson, 1998). These studies focus
on teachers’ attitudes because, “[t]eachers’ attitudes are major predictors of the use of new technologies in instructional settings” (Gulbahar & Guven, 2008, p. 38).

Noting the importance of teachers’ attitudes, Albirini (2004) tries to delve deeper into the causes of these attitudes: “[w]hile the study of teachers’ attitudes is in itself important, a more significant challenge is to identify the factors that may have produced these attitudes” (Albirini, 2004, p. 7). In his doctoral dissertation, he examined 887 Syrian teachers’ attitudes towards technologies and the factors that contributed to those attitudes, “including computer attributes, cultural perceptions, computer competence, computer access, and teachers’ personal characteristics” (Albirini, 2004, p. 7).

Also trying to explain teachers’ attitudes, Rogers (1995) stays at the personal scale when he investigates key attributes of the technologies themselves that influenced whether they are accepted and adopted by faculty. In this work, he identifies the following five key attributes of a technology that would make it likely for faculty to adopt: that it has a clear advantage over previous methods, that it is compatible with existing practice, that it is not too complicated or complex to use, that it shows observable results, and finally, that it can be tested on a limited basis before its full-scale adoption.

Some recent research in educational technology studies tries to make connections between the personal scale (attitudes) and the local scale factors (school level), such as the Gulbahar & Guven (2008) study of 326 Turkish primary school social studies teachers. In this study they identify factors that most encouraged teachers’ use of technologies, and the relate those attributes to teachers’ perceptions of their own computer expertise. Amongst other things, they found that teachers felt strongly about a sufficient support structure and resources, ample training time and resources, and ongoing opportunities to share and develop skills and experiences surrounding their technology use.

Other researchers have also made connections between the personal and local scale and identified a number of these issues as particularly important in determin-
ing faculty adoption of technologies. For example, Demetriadis et al. (2003) focus on the importance of training and support offered by the institution and conclude that, “[t]raining efforts are generally welcomed by teachers but consistent support and extensive training is necessary in order for them to consider themselves able to integrate [technologies] in their teaching methodologies” (Demetriadis et al., 2003, p. 35).

This stream of e-learning research is helpful for my study because it allows me to draw upon a solid base of literature surrounding faculty attitudes towards the use of technologies. Furthermore, the research that more broadly focusses on factors contributing to these attitudes reiterates the importance of institutional support and training. Yet, despite these useful insights, e-learning research is also of limited use to me because of strategic, theoretical, and ethical concerns.

The strategic concern surrounds the focus of the e-learning literature on faculty members’ attitudes towards technologies. The concept of faculty attitudes is related to, but not a direct match with, my research interest of how faculty frame technologies. In the literature, the term, “attitudes” tends be used in restrictive ways – do faculty use certain technologies or not. While this is an interest to me, I use the term, “frame” to indicate my focus on the broader concept of how faculty members organize, perceive and communicate about technologies in their work. Because e-learning research focusses so much on individual attitudes, I feel that it misses much of the interactions and influences of the overlapping contexts at the organizational, the governmental, or the global scales.

In addition to my interest in a broader conception of framing, I am also concerned that most of the e-learning research focusses so much on the personal scale, with only a few examples broadening the scope to the local scale of the institution. As I explained earlier, while I am interested in the personal scale of faculty framing, a key element of my research lies in making explicit the connections to the higher level scales.

My theoretical concern is that much of this research treats technologies as neutral and is therefore grounded in instrumentalism, a stance that conflicts with my
critical theory perspective. Because of the theoretical approach of this literature, faculty use of technologies is viewed as the instrumental choice made by rational individual teachers based on their attitudes towards, and the attributes of, the technologies, and the research largely fails to acknowledge the values embedded in those decisions.

My final concern – which I call ethical in nature – is with the ethical stance that seems to underpin this research stream. Much of the research in this stream seems pre-occupied with an overarching goal to understand ways to increase faculty adoption of new technologies. When technologies are presented as solutions to problems, then getting more faculty members to use technologies is a logical solution to those problems. From this perspective, much of this research takes a stance that understanding teachers’ attitudes is a prerequisite to limiting faculty resistance and ensure the success of technology implementation (For example, see Albirini, 2004; Woodrow, 1992; Watson, 1998). I do not share this deficit model view of faculty members and do not endorse an overarching goal of trying to get more faculty members to adopt technologies.

3.4 Bourdieu - Connecting the Local and Personal Scales

As I worked through thoughts about my research questions, I found it useful to engage the ideas of Pierre Bourdieu – especially when trying to make connections between personal and local scale. While Bourdieu does not explicitly take on technologies per se very much, in his books on media he does suggest that “technical objects” are worth serious study.

Some authors (see for example, Sterne, 2003) have engaged Bourdeusian concepts interrogating how technologies become technologies through social practice by invoking the concepts of habitus, capital, and field5.

5*Habitus is a concept that mediates between relatively structured social relations and relatively objectified forms of economic or social agency or interest. Bourdieu uses the term field to describe groups of interrelated social actors, and capital to describe the specific forms of agency
Engaging these ideas has reminded me to pay careful attention to how I define the objects of my study. In contrast to the approaches of the e-learning studies discussed in Section 3.3, which define technologies themselves as the objects of study, I take the Bourdeusian approach that, “technologies do not have an existence independent of social practice, [and] they cannot be studied in isolation from society” (Sterne, 2003, p. 385). I have learned from this approach that the objects of my study are not the technologies themselves. Instead, I am studying the policies, the framing, and the politics that surround technologies in higher education. And these ideas from Bourdieu are particularly useful to help me understand the social practice within the organization.

Kvasny (2006) uses Bourdieu’s theory to inform her empirical study investigating the effectiveness of community technology centers in providing computer skills to inner-city communities. In this research, she questions the underlying assumptions for the centers – that greater access and computer skills will improve the life chances of those involved with the centers – and reframes the problems as primarily social rather than technology based.

She concludes that, while these programs are often seen as successes in that they do actually increase the digital literacy of some members of the community, they represent policy built on misrecognition of the problems causing inner-city poverty. Rejecting the common-sense framing of the problems as being rooted in technological divides, Kvasny examines the role of culture in reproducing, “long-standing social inequities [that] shape beliefs and expectations regarding ICT and its impacts on life chances” (Kvasny, 2006, p. 160).

In another study, Kvasny & Trauth (2002) challenge the commonly held belief that technologies can help under-represented groups level the playing field and create more of a meritocracy. Here they examine dominant discourses about power within information technology and investigate how people from various under-represented groups respond to these dominant discourses.

In another study, Kvasny (2005) also employed Bourdieu’s concept of habitus and prestige within a given field” (Sterne, 2003, p. 375).
to explain the discourse and conceptions around inner-city technology training centres. Here she compares the discourse of the officials who created the centers to that of the inner-city residents making use of the facilities. She finds that the officials implementing programs talk about the programs’ benefits as providing technical skills to allow participants to become job-ready. In contrast, she finds participants’ discourse shows that they believe that they have only made “baby steps” and, for the most part, they remained unemployed, or underemployed, after completing programs.

She also compared how the officials who implemented the programs spoke about the benefits they themselves receive from the implementation. To the officials, their own personal benefits centered around the increased communication and networking that the technologies provide. Yet when the same officials spoke the benefits for the program participants, they did not speak about those same networking and communications aspects. Instead, they spoke about providing participants with much more basic computing skills.

Davis (2005) has engaged Bourdieu’s concepts in a particularly relevant study that analyzes the process and political implications associated with the development of a web-based foreign language software project at large US public research university. This study focuses on a single large department, and it follows chronologically through the successful development of a software project and concentrates on the organizational framing and politics surrounding the project.

One of the key findings of this study was evidence to refute the determinist position, characterized as:

the entire form of society is . . . determined by technology: New technolo-
gies transform society at every level, including institutions, social interac-
tion and individuals . . . Human factors and social arrangements are seen as secondary (Chandler (1995) as cited in, Davis, 2005).

This study highlighted the importance of symbolic capital and tracked the distribution of capital, both economic (the project brought funding to the department) and symbolic (the project both raised the prestige of the department and recon-
figured the power and prestige within the department) through the lifecycle and aftermath of the project. And as these configurations of capital changed, so did the habitus – the sensibilities, the accepted norms, and the dominant values – of the field (department).

This stream of research shows how I can draw upon Bourdieu’s concepts to help analyze the changing nature of the field of higher education – specifically teaching at BCU. Furthermore, they provide good examples of how to apply the notion of power and symbolic capital to help make connections between the personal and the local scale in this study.

3.5 Globalization and Educational Policy - Connecting to Provincial and Global Scales

While my initial motivation for this study grew out of my practice and questions about how faculty at BCU think about and engage with technologies in their practice, it is clear that these personal and local scale phenomenon exist within a larger, global scale framework of complications, interactions, and feedbacks. Through my studies and research, I became more aware of ways of thinking about these global scale phenomena, and I wanted to see how these scales were connected. I wanted to draw connections between ideology, policy, practice, and faculty members lived experiences surrounding technology and education.

In their analysis of globalization and educational policy, Rizvi & Lingard (2013) relate scales to Bourdieu’s concept of fields. They suggest that educational policy exists within the context of overlapping fields: a global field (which I am calling global scale), a national field (which for this study I am also calling the global scale), and a regional field (which I am calling provincial scale). By noting the overlapping between layers, they highlight the opportunity to study the interconnections between those fields.

Robertson & Dale (2013) point to a large change in the influence of different scales on educational policy over the past few decades, with greater power being increasingly felt from global scale actors and agencies. While globalization and
what it means is a contested notion, the concept has been presented as influencing changes in higher education when described as, “the economic, political, and societal forces pushing twenty-first century higher education toward greater international involvement” (Altbach & Knight, 2007, p. 290). But, it is more than just a concept used to describe empirical changes in economic activities. It represents, “both an ideological formation and a social imaginary that now shapes discourses of educational policy” (Rizvi & Lingard, 2013, p. 23).

While it is beyond the scope of this dissertation to critique the different views on globalization in education, I don’t want to reify globalization as the “cause” of education policy. So instead of thinking of globalization as a blanket structural cause, I think it is useful to see these global trends as important factors that influence and impact education policy - which is still local and contextual - and ultimately how the policy affects the practice of educators.

On this scale it is not only the increasing power of globalization that impacts exerting educational policy, but how, “[c]urrent forms of privatising and globalising in and of education are connected together by a common political project - that of neoliberalism” (Robertson & Dale, 2013, p. 427)

Since the elections of Thatcher and Reagan in the early 1980’s, neoliberal economic policies - including cutting back government budgets, privatizing government operations, and charging user fees for many services - have taken over from more interventionist policies that had prevailed earlier (Klees, 2008; Rizvi & Lingard, 2013). Not only were these policies implemented in North America and Europe, but they had a much broader reach on the global scale as the IMF and World Bank changed policy direction as well (Klees, 2008, p. 311).

While globalization and neoliberalism do not necessarily move in lock step, some suggest it makes sense to characterize how they overlap by using the concept

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6 “Neoliberalism, here, is treated neither as a concrete economic doctrine nor as a definite set of political projects. Rather, I treat neoliberalism as a complex, often incoherent, unstable and even contradictory set of practices that are organized around a certain imagination of the market as a basis for the universalization of market-based social relations, with the corresponding penetration in almost every single aspect of our lives of the discourse and/or the practice of commodification, capital accumulation, and profit making” (Shamir, 2008).
of “neoliberal globalism” (Dalea & Robertson, 2004, p. 140). As a result of these ideological and technology shifts, governments have increasingly moved towards, “a minimalist role for the state in education, with a greater reliance on market mechanisms” (Rizvi & Lingard, 2013, p. 3).

According to Rizvi & Lingard, hand-in-hand with neoliberal thinking and globalization, a “social efficiency” perspective is becoming the dominant view of the goals of education. This view, “requires education to play a more important instrumental role in developing workers able to contribute to the economic productivity of nations and corporations alike” (Rizvi & Lingard, 2013, p. 79). Simultaneously, Klees argues that the rise of neoliberalism and globalization has led to a sea change in thinking about education characterized by, “the increased use of some form of user fees; the privatisation of more educational activities; and the direct connection of management and financing of education to measurable output” (Klees, 2008, p. 312).

Brown (2003) points out that neoliberalism not only refers to economic policies, but it also encompasses a political rationality that involves, “extending and disseminating market values to all institutions and social action” (Brown, 2003, para. 7). And with this rationality, the state “must not simply concern itself with the market but think and behave like a market actor” (para. 10) and therefore acquiesce to market forces in spheres that would otherwise be considered separate moral and political realms.

Recent advancements in communications and computing technologies have certainly been key players in the burgeoning neoliberal globalism, as evidenced by the ubiquity of terms such as “knowledge economy” and “knowledge society”. And in higher education, these technologies have been equally influential in the language and debate, leading to predictions of a, “dramatic revolution” (Tett, 2013) that would mean less faculty autonomy, could lead to the end of “courses” as we know them (Kim, 2014) or even entirely eliminate the need for post-secondary institutions (Saccaro, 2014), to be replaced by distribution of information and communications through the WWW such as free websites (e.g. wikipedia), openly
available course websites (e.g. open education movement), or unlimited participation courses (e.g. MOOCS).

While some academics question the headlong rush towards increasing technology use, for the most part the media frame the technologies as an unalloyed good: promising a, “budding revolution in global online higher education” and of MOOCS specifically that, “[n]othing has more potential to lift more people out of poverty” (Friedman, 2013).

And there is no doubt that digital technologies are becoming ever more ubiquitous in higher education. For example, consider results from the recent survey on the use of LMS’s in the US: 99% of institutions have LMS’s in place, and 99% of faculty and 83% of students use them – at least to some extent – while 56% of both faculty and students saying they use their LMS daily (Dahlstrom et al., 2014, p. 4). The study goes on to summarize that, “global LMS revenue was estimated at $1.9 to $2.6 billion in 2013, with projected growth to $7.8 billion by 2018” (Dahlstrom et al., 2014, p. 5).

So how does the ever increasing reach of technologies in higher education tie in with neoliberalism and globalization? One connection arises when technologies are presented as answers to economic imperatives.

For example, Moody’s investors rating service recently downgraded the entire US higher education sector from a “stable” to “negative” outlook due to, “mounting fiscal pressure on all key university revenue sources” in general, and in particular noting that, “universities can expect the share of their operating revenues from state appropriations to continue to stagnate or even decline” (Moody’s, 2013). Increased use of digital technologies can be touted as a mandatory path in light of neoliberal austerity measures towards education funding (Olds, 2013). As Moody’s writes, this represents a, “fundamental shift in strategy by industry leaders to embrace technological changes that have threatened to destabilize the residential college and university’s business model over the long run” (Moody’s, 2013).

Thrift sees these trends as indicators of a move towards “Big Ed”: a push
towards all but the elite universities moving from independent institutions to becoming more like chain stores. As he describes this future:

[T]hese conglomerates will be public-private entities based on supplying performance-based contracts financed by government and on meeting demand from individual consumers who will have large arrays of information about quality variability available. The days of relying on block grants from government will pass (Thrift, 2012).

Another trend becoming apparent is the increase in partnerships between higher education institutions and private companies. For example, Rochester Institute of Technology (RIT) recently signed an agreement with furniture manufacturer Steelcase to create a “classroom as a learning tool” space (Bolkan, 2014). And this “Partner or Perish” perspective is not without its risks, including the limited choice of platforms, limited transparency of many agreements, and the result that most of the revenue from partnerships goes to the private partners (Kolowich, 2014).

In addition to the potential pitfalls noted above, in the rush towards digital technologies as solutions, faculty members often do not have a place to make their views heard (Azevedo, 2012). And the pressure to strike digital technology deals quickly can have great consequences all though the hierarchy in higher education management too. Recently, the University of Virginia dismissed its president because of her lack of push on the technology front. She was perceived as, “not on the cutting edge and going where Stanford and Harvard were going” (Azevedo, 2012).

At the same time that digital technologies are framed as solutions to global and national economic problems, they are also presented as part of a very local scale solution to a language of “personalized learning” that reframes, “the learner or person as the ideal subject of education policy and philosophy” (Pykett, 2009, p. 375). This personalized scale framing masks a, “more centralized, target driven, performance-led, managerial, and competitive education system” (Pykett, 2009, p. 375)
Higher education in British Columbia is influenced by the same pressures we see globally, including shrinking public funding. As former UBC President Stephen Toope describes it, “the big problem in the West is that government grants to higher education are basically flatlined, and have been, in our case, for five years . . . there is less money being spent on a per capita basis than in the 1970’s” (Todd, 2014). Four decades ago, the provincial government used to provide 70 per cent of UBC’s budget, but today it has dropped to less than 45 per cent, a per student grant decline from $17,000 to $11,000 in today’s dollars (Todd, 2014).

These declining government grants have led BC’s universities to seek more donations, embrace market principles (e.g. rent out facilities, reconfigure programs with new fee structures, etc.), recruit and enroll more full fee paying international students, and to cut “a swath of programs” (Richter, 2014).

While these examples all illustrate evidence of globalization and neoliberalism in specific policies, how are they related to the local and even personal scale? The concept of responsibilization here can prove very useful to help make the connections.

The term responsibilization was developed in the literature on governance, and it refers to the set of processes by which individuals become responsible for tasks for which they formerly would not have been responsible, tasks that might have been the duty of the state, an institution, or perhaps not even recognized as a duty at all (O’Malley, 2009). The term is closely associated with a neoliberal political discourse and is founded on a “general neoliberal drive to ground social relations in the economic rationality of markets” (Shamir, 2008, p. 3).

Many authors refer to responsibilization as a technique of governance, and as such, “in contrast to mere compliance with rules [it] presupposes one’s care for one’s duties and one’s un-coerced application of certain values as a root motivation for action” (Selznick (2002) as cited in Shamir, 2008, p. 7).

A key element in this connection to overarching ideology lies in individuals being constructed as, and identifying as, autonomous and independent contractors who believe that the duties or tasks before them will benefit them – in an
entrepreneurial or employability sense (Boltanski & Chiapello, 2005). If people see themselves as autonomous and see benefit in certain duties or tasks, then they will responsibilisize them (take on the responsibility for those tasks themselves).

Again, this is not only an economic connection, but a political and moral one. As Brown (2003) describes it:

In making the individual fully responsible for her/himself, neoliberalism equates moral responsibility with rational action; it relieves the discrepancy between economic and moral behaviour by configuring morality entirely as a matter of rational deliberation about costs, benefits, and consequences. (Brown, 2003, para. 15)

3.6 Summary

As this movement has shown, there are a number of research traditions upon which I draw to investigate my research questions. I am firmly rooted in the critical theory approach to these questions, and this approach acts as my main theoretical guide at all scales of analysis. In particular, I draw upon these guides when analyzing provincial and local policy documents in Movement 5. I draw upon some useful resources in the e-learning literature in Movement 6. In this movement, I also draw upon the concepts and research incorporating Bourdieu’s ideas to help understand the dynamics and relations at the BCU’s local scale. Finally, I draw upon global scale ideas such as globalisation and neoliberalism to help situate policy framing at the provincial and local scales and I use the concept of responsibilization to make connections to the personal scale.
Chapter 4

Sarabande: Methodology and Methods

A movement which summarizes how this work was constructed

4.1 General Research Strategy

To investigate the research questions presented in Movement 2, I needed to make numerous interrelated decisions on a number of levels as pointed out by a number of authors (see for example, Bryman & Teevan, 2005; Creswell, 2003; Denizen & Lincoln, 2011; Crotty, 1998). Creswell has conceptualized this multitude of interrelated questions about research design as follows:

1. What knowledge claims are being made by the researcher (including a theoretical perspective)?

2. What strategies of inquiry will inform the procedures?

3. What methods of data collection and analysis will be used?
4.1.1 Knowledge Claims

A number of authors have identified the positivist and constructivist traditions as the two main paradigms that dominate educational research (see for example Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Jonassen, 1991; Alexander, 2006).

The positivist position entails an objectivist ontology (that phenomena are external to observers, and beyond their impact) and takes a deductive approach to theory, stating a hypothesis, then employing the scientific method attempting to be value-free in testing the hypothesis. As I showed by summarizing the research in Movement 3 and my practice in Movement 2, positivist frameworks dominate the e–learning research and the practice of educational technology leadership.

In contrast to this tradition, the constructivist paradigm rejects the positivist notion of an objective reality for a relativistic ontology that reality is local and specific and constructed by individuals and groups (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, p. 193). The overarching goal of this approach is to, “see through the eyes of the people being studied” (Bryman & Teevan, 2005, p. 154) and to understand their behaviours and beliefs in their own particular contexts.

This research project is grounded in the constructivist tradition. My overarching concern in this research and the way I have formulated the research questions show that I am interested in “visiting” (Creswell, 2003, p. 9) the context of faculty at BCU. I am interesting in gathering information and trying to interpret (make sense of) the multiple threads of how participants see digital technologies play out in their practice. I am interested in analyzing policy discourse and making connections with larger scale trends and with the lived experiences of study participants.

In addition to positivist and constructivist positions about knowledge claims, Creswell (2003) identifies a third position he calls advocacy/participatory research. This position grew out of a concern that a, “constructivist stance did not go far enough in advocating for an action agenda to help marginalized people” (Creswell, 2003, p. 9) and can be seen in some of the research summarized in Section 3.2 and Section 3.4. While my research is not driven by the emancipation and so-
cial justice concerns of much participatory research, I do embrace some elements associated with this paradigm.

In particular, I draw on the elements suggested by Hostetler that, “good educational research requires our careful, ongoing attention to questions of human well-being” (Hostetler, 2005, p. 16). Specifically, I hope that these findings can be used to bring about a change in practice at BCU. I also hope that, at least in some small way, study participants have been given the opportunity and incentive to reflect on and make connections between their own experiences with digital technologies at BCU and the institutional and provincial contexts within which their experiences have played out. Finally, I hope that at some level this research helps to spark or stoke political debate about the values and aims of education and the roles that technologies should play in working towards those goals.

4.1.2 Strategies of Inquiry

Having established the stance upon which I am seeking to understand the problem and make knowledge claims, I chose research strategies that were epistemologically consistent with this approach: strategies that employed qualitative methods emphasizing words and meaning rather than numbers and statistics.

Much qualitative research takes an inductive approach to build theory from observation in the field, “from the ground up”. However, in addition to this role of building theory, some argue there is also a role for qualitative research to “test” theory (see for example, Silverman, 2006).

My approach to this research should be seen as combining both building and testing senses of this relationship with theory. My first research question looks into how policy frames technologies and this question can be viewed from this “testing” perspective by investigating how these theoretical constructs play out in policy documents. The second research question delves deeply into individual participants’ lived experiences at the local scale and therefore can be viewed more from the inductive approach of building theory. By asking for rich detail of participants’ experiences and trying to interpret the multiple threads looking
for important themes, I am building the themes and theories. Additionally, these
detailed conversations will also provide opportunity to “test” if the theories are
evident in participants’ discourses about their experiences.

In addition to employing qualitative strategies, the very nature of my over-
arching question suggests a case study framework is an appropriate approach to
the topic. Case studies entail in-depth investigation, bounded in time, of a single
location, and they try to understand phenomena within real-work context, “es-
pecially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly
evident” (Yin, 1994, p. 14).

BCU ¹ was founded approximated forty years ago during the rapid expansion
in BC’s community college system. Nearly a decade ago, along with a number
of other colleges, BCU’s designation was changed to university status, and today
it serves approximately 15,000 students (combined full-time and part-time) and
offers programs leading to certificates, diplomas, and degrees in numerous pro-
grams.

I have been a faculty member at BCU for the last twenty five years. I started
teaching Geography full-time, then spent approximately fifteen years as Manager
of BCU’s CET, and have recently returned to teaching Geography full-time.

I chose BCU as the location for this study for a number of reasons. First, it
is the site of my practice and the setting where my questions originated. Second,
I also am deeply immersed in the culture of BCU and therefore have much tacit
knowledge of the setting: I understand much of the unarticulated contextual un-
derstandings that are taken for granted by BCU faculty members. I believe that this
tacit knowledge allows me to build a richer understanding than if I were studying
a location where I did not have this detailed knowledge. Third, I intend to cycle
the findings from my research back into my practice at BCU.

¹In addition to anonymizing the name of the institution, I have purposefully kept the details
brief in order to protect the privacy of the individuals involved in the study.
4.1.3 Research Methods

I have used the approach to knowledge claims and research strategies described above to lead to two specific methods (or procedures) to investigate the specific research questions: policy analysis and qualitative interviews.

4.2 Policy Analysis

Because, “much of social life in modern society is mediated by written texts of different kinds” (Peräkylä, 2005, p. 869), analyzing text is one of the main empirical materials available to qualitative research. To investigate my first research question – how does policy frame digital technologies? – I draw from methods associated with textual analysis to analyze policy documents and discourse at both the provincial level and the institutional level.

The Canadian education sector is primarily under provincial jurisdiction; consequently, BC provincial government public policy heavily influences the day-to-day practice at BCU. While the concept of “policy” is a complicated notion involving actions, non-actions, intentions, directions, processes, debates, etc. (see for example, Rizvi & Lingard, 2013; Taylor et al., 1997; Ball, 1994), I have chosen to analyze two influential policy documents that represent much of the thinking behind BC public post-secondary education policy at the provincial level. I chose these documents because they were both very influential in influencing post-secondary institutions in BC. Additionally, I chose them because they bracketed my study – from just before to just after – and illustrate a very quick change in government policy surrounding digital technologies in higher education.

Released a few years before this study began, Campus 2020: Thinking Ahead. The Report. Access and Excellence: The Campus 2020 Plan for British Columbia (Plant, 2007) was meant to be a, “broad, conceptual map rather than a detailed blueprint” (Metcalfe et al., 2007, p. 1). This plan was widely discussed throughout the higher education field across BC and within BCU, and it was extensively discussed amongst educational technology practitioners. Additionally, the plan was released around
the same time that the provincial government changed BCU to university designation, and this plan frequently surfaced in discussions surrounding the changing vision, mission, and mandate of BCU.

BC’s Skills For Jobs Blueprint: Re-engineering Education and Training (Government of BC, 2014) was, as its name implies, released as a blueprint for the post-secondary system in BC. As it was released after I had completed the interviews for this study, I could not have found any direct links to the document in participants’ comments. However, the language used in this document provides interesting insight into the changing context in which I conducted the interviews. Furthermore, subsequent to much of my data collection, this document has become even more important as it has tied funding to programming decisions at BCU.

To analyze these provincial policy documents, I drew on methods of thematic analysis as described by Braun & Clarke (2006) as well as discourse analyses conducted by critical theorists such as Feenberg (1999) and Friesen (2008). I began the analysis by familiarizing myself with the documents through multiple, careful readings. Next, I identified passages of text either explicitly or implicitly related to digital technologies in higher education. Within these identified passages, I identified and reviewed common themes, paying particular attention to ideologies presented as common sense, self-evident, neutral, or objective (Friesen, 2008).

In addition to policy at the provincial scale, I also analyzed institutional policies at BCU. I used a similar approach as described above for the provincial policy documents. However, at this scale, to help maintain anonymity, instead of analyzing the full-text of policy documents, I chose the source as general policy discourse in addition to small text snippets from BCU policy documents. I considered as BCU policy discourse concepts and directions discussed during the qualitative interviews (see Section 4.3) where it was clear the participants and the researcher both understood the context and meaning of the policy. BCU policy documents either published publicly or made available to all BCU faculty members were also included as institutional policy documents. Having identified the data sources for
BCU policy, I analyzed this data with the same methods as described above for the provincial policy.

4.3 Qualitative Interviews

To investigate the second research question – the frames participants use surrounding digital technologies – I rely on data collected from semi-structured interviews with ten BCU Faculty of Arts and Sciences faculty members.

I have leaned heavily on the writing of Kvale (1996) to guide my interview planning. He uses the metaphor of the interviewer as a traveler to illustrate a constructivist approach to interviewing (Kvale, 1996, pp. 3-6). I find this metaphor particularly relevant here because I viewed these interviews as a journey that will leave me with stories to tell. And like any traveller on a journey, I find that the processes change me and my perspectives. This view led me to choose a semi-structured interview format, and I encouraged participants to see the interviews as conversations about a topic of mutual interest.

Flowing from my research questions, and thinking about the thematic order and dynamic structure of the interviews, I mapped out an interview guide that lists the topics and sequence for the questions, as shown in Appendix B.

With the goal of having ten faculty members participate in the study, from my UBC address I sent invitations to 47 BCU faculty members from on Faculty (see Appendix D for the invitation letter). I choose these faculty members because I had worked with all of them before, because they were from an area of BCU with which I had tacit knowledge, and because they all used technologies in their teaching to some extent. Twelve faculty members expressed interest in participating, but two were not available within the timelines to complete the study. This left ten participants interested and available – which was the number I had originally planned to have. These participants were asked to complete a short demographic survey\(^2\) and the results are presented in Table 4.1. In this table, age refers to the age of participants when the interviews were conducted, and seniority refers to

\(^{2}\)Demographic questionnaire is included in Appendix D.
how many years participants had been working at BCU when the interviews were conducted. Expertise, use, and potential are self-rated on a Likert-like scale of 1 – 5, where 1 refers to the least and 5 refers to the most. Expertise refers to participants’ expertise in digital technologies. Use refers to participants’ current level of use of digital technologies. And potential refers to participants’ feelings on whether increased use of technologies has the potential to improve teaching.

**Table 4.1: Interview Participants Demographic Data**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pseudonym</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Seniority</th>
<th>Expertise</th>
<th>Use</th>
<th>Potential</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Robyn</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>51 – 60</td>
<td>&gt; 20</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sara</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>51 – 60</td>
<td>15 – 20</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victor</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>&gt; 60</td>
<td>&lt; 35</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michael</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>51 – 60</td>
<td>20 – 25</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>31 – 40</td>
<td>&lt; 5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lisa</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>51 – 60</td>
<td>20 – 25</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barb</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>51 – 60</td>
<td>20 – 25</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jane</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>51 – 60</td>
<td>20 – 25</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kevin</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>41 – 50</td>
<td>15 – 20</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greg</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>41 – 50</td>
<td>6 – 10</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

While it was not a specific goal to try to include all demographics, the participants are relatively evenly split by gender and technology expertise. The participants do however, skew very heavily to the more experienced and older end of the continuaums. The participants originate from 5 different departments, all from the same Faculty.

With each participant, I scheduled an initial interview of approximately one hour length, at a location of mutual convenience. I recorded each interview on two mobile digital recorders, and then transcribed the interview data to text documents. I sent transcriptions to participants, asked them to verify what I transcribed was both accurate and what they intended to say, and encouraged them to clarify or elaborate on any elements of the conversations. For three participants, I scheduled follow up interviews to clarify and expand on one or more questions. Again,
I transcribed the second interview and sent those transcriptions to the participants for verification.

I started analyzing the data – coding interview transcripts and identifying finding themes – with paper copies, using pen and highlighters. I quickly found that using specific qualitative data analysis software was essential to keep track of my work.

I initially read through interview transcripts and noted which answers related to which interview question and which research question. I started by grouping codes into hierarchies identified in my initial research questions. For example, a top level code called *symbols* contains subsidiary codes identifying different ways faculty used symbolism to describe their experiences with technologies. Another top-level code, *org*, contains all the codes surrounding descriptions of how relationships and politics at BCU show up in faculty descriptions. These codes and hierarchies evolved, and over the course of analysis I had three revised versions of codebooks (see Appendix C for a sample of one hierarchy from my codebook). Through an iterative cycle of identifying and analyzing codes, I gradually developed themes that recurred and cross-cut through the interview data.

I find the musical metaphor I present in the Prelude to this dissertation is also a helpful way to think about analyzing interviews with participants in the study. Perhaps it would be even more appropriate if we changed the genre from classical to improvised jazz. Now, instead of pre-composed parts, the musicians use only a very basic agreed upon harmonic structure (chords) to spontaneously compose (improvise) the performance.

How would we analyze this performance when we don’t even have a musical score upon which to consult? Some of the key elements would certainly include the following: a detailed understanding of the chords, the rhythm, and the style; perfect pitch would allow us to write down the exact notes they musicians are playing; attentive listening and observation; and in depth knowledge of the setting and background that lead to the performance.

Turning to the interviews for this study, I know the main chordal structure, the
basis for the performance well. The interview conversations followed interview questions that grew out of my research questions. And while I don’t have perfect pitch, I recorded all the interviews and transcribed to text all the conversations. Where answers were unclear or inconclusive I conducted follow-up interviews with participants. Finally, my work at BCU, and in the same faculty as the participants, allows me to approach the analysis with a good understanding of the background and context surrounding the interviews.

Just as others would interpret a musical performance differently, there are other ways to analyze these interviews. However, I believe that the care and attention I directed towards thorough analysis, and my knowledge of the context, all support my analysis as warranted.

4.4 Credibility of Research

Within the interpretivist tradition a proliferation of research methods has led to multiple and contested approaches for evaluating educational research.

For example, Lincoln & Guba (1985) suggest that the evaluation of qualitative research should centre around the concept of trustworthiness, which they say consists of the following four aspects: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability.

Alternately, Howe & Eisenhart (1990) propose a set of four general standards for qualitative research: fit between research questions and data collection and analysis; effective application of specific data collection and analysis techniques; alertness to and coherence of background assumptions; and overall warrant.

Tracy (2010) presents a pedagogical model of eight “big–tent” criteria that all excellent qualitative research should meet: worthy topic; rigour; sincerity; credibility; resonance; significant contribution; ethics; and meaningful coherence.

Because there is no one “gold standard” for evaluating this research I have chosen to take certain elements from each of these approaches and summarize those that I think are most important to demonstrate the credibility of this study.

I think that this study is credible because I have been careful to ensure a fit be-
between the approach to knowledge generation, my strategic approach to the study, my formulation of the research questions, and my methods of data collection and analysis. My epistemological position led to the research questions, research questions led to the strategies, and the strategies led to the methods and analysis.

Not only have I been careful to ensure and show this line of reasoning, but I have been in frequent contact with my supervisory committee of UBC EDST faculty members. I believe that my attention to detail, and the supervision by an experienced committee, speaks to a worthy topic and appropriate rigour that meets the standards of good practice in the field.

I have kept detailed documentation of the procedures and findings throughout the study. All procedures were recorded in a detailed research log that is available for review by my committee. I have sent summary memos to my supervisor after each meeting. Additionally, detailed notes and written interview transcriptions have been provided to the study participants in order to ensure the accuracy of the those conversations.

I have paid careful attention to the ethical dimensions related to the research and study participants. I have taken extensive efforts to ensure the personal privacy and ethical considerations towards participants and the study has passed the scrutiny of the UBC Behavioural Ethics Review Board and the BCU ethics research committee. (see Appendix A)

Finally, I believe this research is credible because I have acted in good faith by being as transparent and reflective as possible about the influences on the research. Throughout this report, and particularly in Movement 2, I have in detail described my practice, background, and motivation behind this study and how my thoughts regarding this research have changed over the length of the study.

4.5 Researcher Positionality

My positionality in this research is both as an insider and an outsider. I am an insider in that I am a faculty colleague of those I have interviewed. At the same time, I might be seen as somewhat of an outsider by some faculty, because of
the word “Manager” in my job title or because at times I have not been teaching regularly in the classroom. Ultimately, I am formally and informally a colleague with those faculty members participating. I am in the same faculty association, and I have no involvement in the evaluation of faculty.

I have taken a number of steps to reassure faculty over any concerns related to my position. First, I have assured them that their participation is valued, but voluntary, and that they could opt out at any time for any reason. Second, I have reiterated that the purpose of my study is not to quiz participants on their knowledge of educational technologies; rather, the purpose is to understand their views and experiences. And in this area, they, not me, are the experts. Finally, I reminded participants that we will be documenting their views collaboratively: I shared my analysis with them and invited clarification and elaboration to ensure that I am accurately representing their opinions. Specifically, I sent participants digital copies of interview transcripts and invited their feedback, comments, and suggestions to ensure that I accurately documented the conversation. Furthermore, I also encouraged participants to clarify or expand further upon any comments that were documented in the interview transcripts.

As stated above, the primary ethical consideration of this study concerns the privacy of the participants’ identities. To mitigate this concern, I have used pseudonyms and research numbers for participants and departmental areas in any communication regarding the data collected in the interviews.

A final ethical consideration revolves around information and data about BCU of which I am aware but is not publicly available. To mitigate this concern I have not specifically identified BCU and have not used exact wording from any BCU policy. I acknowledge that an enterprising reader could determine BCU’s actual location; yet, I still feel that not disclosing the site is helpful at least in preventing the casual reader from knowing the location.
Chapter 5

Minuet - I: Findings from Policy

A movement which looks at the provincial and local scale policy

5.1 Introduction

Now that I have summarized the related research and frameworks upon which I draw in Movement 3 and the details of the research method in Movement 4, I turn to analyze the data for this study.

In this movement, I focus on the provincial scale in section 5.2 and analyze two particularly relevant policy documents, and I focus on the local scale in section 5.3 and analyze BCU institutional policy. My goal in this analysis is to investigate my first research question:

- What policy frames are used surrounding digital technologies at BCU within British Columbia’s multi-layered post-secondary system, and how do these frames reflect and intersect with global trends?

5.2 Provincial Policy Documents

Higher education falls under provincial jurisdiction, and consequently BC provincial government public policy heavily influences the day-to-day practice at BCU.
While the concept of “policy” is a complicated notion involving actions, non-actions, intentions, directions, processes, debates, etc (see for example, Rizvi & Lingard, 2013; Taylor et al., 1997; Ball, 1994), as described in Movement 4, I have chosen to analyze two documents that represent much of the thinking behind BC public post-secondary education policy. First, I look at Campus 2020: Thinking Ahead. The Report. Access and Excellence: The Campus 2020 Plan for British Columbia (Plant, 2007), and then I analyze the BC’s Skills For Jobs Blueprint: Re-engineering Education and Training (Government of BC, 2014). Then I summarize the two documents, noting in particular the changes in BC’s post-secondary educational policy between 2007 and 2014.

5.2.1 Campus 2020

Geoff Plant, a former member of the BC Liberal government, was appointed as special advisor to the Premier and Minister of Advanced Education to lead a project to review and make further recommendations for BC’s post-secondary system. The final report (Plant, 2007, hereafter called Campus 2020) represents a conceptually broad view toward restructuring the BC post-secondary system focussed on the goals of equity of access and capacity of excellence in both teaching and research. Table 5.1 shows some of the key elements surrounding authorship, consultation, and themes in Campus 2020.

Metcalfe et al. (2007) have analyzed Campus 2020, highlighting questions surrounding provincial planning structures, access and equity, aboriginal education, vocational training, adult education, and the funding of BC’s post-secondary system. However, questions surrounding Campus 2020’s relationship with educational technologies have remained largely unstudied. In this section, I investigate two key assumptions underpinning Campus 2020’s conclusions: the assumption that technological change is inevitable, and the assumption that the knowledge economy drives higher education.
Table 5.1: Campus 2020 Report

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author/Date</th>
<th>Geoff Plant 2007</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ministries Involved</td>
<td>Premier</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Advanced Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Key Consultations</td>
<td>public post-secondary institutions and associations</td>
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<td></td>
<td>private post-secondary institutions and associations</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Aboriginal Associations</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Faculty associations</td>
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<td></td>
<td>post-secondary student associations</td>
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<td></td>
<td>unions/labour organizations</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>K-12 system</td>
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<td></td>
<td>multicultural organizations</td>
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<td></td>
<td>business organizations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>industry training/trades organizations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>local government</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>federal government</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>general public</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Key Themes</td>
<td>Access and Equity</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>World class Institutions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Knowledge Economy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Inevitable Advance of Technology</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Technological change is inevitable

While the role of technologies in BC’s post-secondary system are not always explicitly stated in Campus 2020, they are, nonetheless, implied as central to many of the report’s observations and recommendations. As the report states, “[f]ew issues sparked more animated discussions among Campus 2020 participants than the question of technology’s impact on the future of learning and education” (p. 33). The report characterizes participants’ responses as falling in three camps: that the technologies will revolutionize higher education, that it was a “dangerous fad to be resisted”, and finally a more moderate “middle way” perspective suggesting technologies as, “tools in the educators toolkit . . . increasing the range of options for learning without displacing traditional, classroom-based, face-to-face teaching” (p. 34).
The language used in Campus 2020 presents technological change as a given when it characterizes, “[t]he relentlessness, inevitability, speed and unpredictability of technological advancement” (p. 34). By framing technological change as “inevitable” and “relentless” and evoking the “impacts” of technologies, the report is firmly rooted in determinism as it casts technological change in as unquestioned and suggests that the only role for educators and institutions is to either pre-act or re-act to these inevitable changes.

In some places, Campus 2020 does offer us choices: “[w]e can stand by and allow technology to shape education, or we can embrace the challenge of asking educators to shape technology” (p. 34), so it does show elements of instrumentalism. However, those choices it offers are constrained within the bounds of the inevitable march of technological change, and are limited to choosing – or shaping – the impacts of the change, and it does not question the inevitable march of technological change.

The language of Campus 2020 represents a hard (as opposed to soft) form of technological determinism (Smith & Marx, 1994). In hard determinism, technologies have the power (or agency) to effect social and educational reform. These examples could also be classified as optimistic, rather than pessimistic, forms of determinism because they emphasize the positive potential of technology over the negative aspects.

But Campus 2020’s determinism is not the only way one could view technological change. Imagine instead a view that casts technological change in a different light, as contested, constructed, and intertwined with social and economic factors. Framed this way, the relationship between technology and education is much more complex than that presented in Campus 2020. From this view, technological change would be seen not as the driver of educational change. Rather, technological change would be seen as a political process. Framed this way, technological change would not be seen a given (as the report says), but as a scene of struggle and negotiation.

Campus 2020 claims that technology innovations will afford faculty flexibility
by, “increasing the range of options for learning without displacing traditional, classroom-based, face-to-face teaching” (p. 34). But this has not necessarily been the case. As I show in Movement 6, participants from BCU feel they have less and not more flexibility: they are required to produce course outlines in one software product (MS word), they have one LMS system, and are required to submit final grades in one specific way. And not only do they feel they have less flexibility, they say that technologies have displaced classroom-based face-to-face teaching. And as I will show, this lack of choice and autonomy associated with technology is a major concern for most BCU faculty interviewed for this study.

Perhaps some of this myth casting increased flexibility to technologies can be explained by a misunderstanding of the typical lifecycle of software implementation in higher education institutions. Many of these technology applications were developed in the institutions themselves as grass roots individual or group projects of faculty and other developers. And in those early, trial stages they do afford more choices and flexibility to faculty.

However, as applications become more mature and mission critical they frequently move away from faculty control into a centralized, institutionally managed department (typically an IT department). The applications then become centrally managed and they exhibit many characteristics that faculty and students associate with administrative aspects of the institutions. For example, the first time anyone accesses the LMS at BCU they are required to digitally sign a code of conduct and a statement that they will follow copyright rules. Then, when looking through a list of course sites, people browse through a hierarchical structure of Faculties and Departments before arriving at a list of courses for each individual instructor. And when a new course is created in BCU’s registration system, an empty course is automatically created in the university’s LMS, and students are automatically registered in the LMS site for the course, even if the instructor was not planning to use the LMS.

For example, the CET at BCU has developed two different LMS systems; One of the major LMS systems was developed as a faculty project at UBC
These examples are just a few of the changes at BCU as the LMS moved from faculty project to a centrally controlled system, and they show how this evolution resulted in less, not more, flexibility for faculty and students.

**Knowledge economy**

Campus 2020 uses the language of the “knowledge economy” as a fundamental rationale for changes to the BC post-secondary system. For example, it says, “in a rapidly shifting, knowledge-intensive economy, it’s no longer good enough simply to acquire a body of knowledge”, noting that, “[w]orkers will increasingly need to be adaptable and flexible in responding to emerging job requirements” (p. 33).

With this language that Campus 2020 treats knowledge as a commodity, perhaps a “super-commodity” where the role of the post-secondary system is to prepare “workers” by making them “flexible” and “adaptable” to succeed in the “knowledge intensive economy”.

And with this view of the post-secondary system as a tool for post-industrial knowledge generation, the report casts our current forms of schools and universities as shopworn remnants of an old paradigm. Consequently, Campus 2020 predicts the declining importance of the physical classroom as, “[t]he bricks and mortar classroom will yield increasingly to the virtual classroom, and to alternative locations for learning: in communities, in workplaces and in homes” (p. 10). It asks us to, “break free from traditional learning approaches” (p. 33).

To reconfigure for this new paradigm, Campus 2020 calls for more flexibility in learning, for multiple literacies, and for more diverse and interactive distance learning options. While claiming that education now is about much more than knowledge, it calls for us to make content available online, noting that, “much of the curriculum of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, one of the world’s great universities, is now available online” (p. 50).

With this view of the knowledge economy, Campus 2020 makes connections to globalization and the demand for BC’s institutions to become more competitive. It says our institutions must be, “destination(s) of choice for the best and brightest
students from across the province and around the world” (p. 11). And in numerous cases, it cites our need to become “world-class” institutions (for example, p. 9, p. 74, and p. 76), because, “learner(s) will pick and choose course options from institutions across the province and around the world” (p. 9).

Ultimately, Campus 2020 connects the changes it says are required because of the knowledge economy to a language of competitiveness and commercialization. As the report says, “In an emerging knowledge economy, this may be one of the key contributors to achieving the Great Goal of creating more jobs per capita than anywhere else in Canada” (p. 80). And to ensure this of competitiveness, the report calls for more demands for accountability as, “we will need to develop nationally accepted metrics of higher education activity and achievement” (p. 31).

But where does this notion of the knowledge economy come from, and why does Campus 2020 accept it without question?

This language can be traced back at least as far as Daniel Bell’s notion of the knowledge theory of value (Bell, 1976)². And as with the notion that technology change is inevitable, the idea that we live in a knowledge economy can be contested. Friesen (2008) calls this knowledge economy a myth, and he points out how it emphasizes the most crucial value of education and knowledge as productive forces, drivers of a profit-making economy.

Portraying knowledge in this light, primarily as productive force, also privileges some types and characteristics of knowledge over others. The neutral, consumer, and utility-like aspects of knowledge are brought to the foreground at the expense of the aspects of self-development or as an element of social change or democratic decision making. Additionally, focusing on the economic framing of knowledge leads the reconceptualization of knowledge itself as commodities: often referred to as learning objects or knowledge objects, which can be modularized, exchanged, re-purposed and re-packaged, and commodified.

If we contest this notion of the knowledge economy, then we can contest many of the conclusions of Campus 2020, and consider alternate views where the most

²Bell appears to deliberately use this phrasing as a variation of Marx’s labour theory of value
important values of education are different: perhaps focussing on education’s emancipatory role, its importance in producing involved, democratic citizens, or the role educational institutions play in social reproduction.

Biesta (2006) reminds us the language matters when we talk about education, and he makes a strong case that we have lost something in the shift of language from “education” to a language of “learning”. The language of learning allows for a reframing of education as an economic exchange, where, the educator (and educational institution) are seen as providing the goods and services to the learner (consumer). That is, education can be framed as a product provided by the producer (teacher, institution) for the consumer (student). “This is the logic which says that educational institutions and individual educators should be flexible, that they should respond to the needs of the learners, that they should give the learners value for money, and perhaps even that they should operate on the principle that the customer is always right” (Biesta, 2006, p. 58).

Of course there are many benefits to being flexible and reacting to the needs to students: making courses more accessible is clearly a good thing. However, Biesta agues that the more important question lies in whether or not the fundamental educational process itself should be framed as an economic transaction. He argues that in a true economic transaction the consumer knows, in detail, what he or she wants, but in going to school the student only knows what they want in a more broad and general sense: they want an education. But the details of the educational transaction are left largely up to the social interaction between educator and student.

Another problem with framing education as an economic transaction is that it limits the range of acceptable questions to ones relating to those related to efficiency and effectiveness, and this framing leaves little room for questions about the purposes and aims of education. If all the focus is on the needs of the individual learners, “it also creates a situation in which there are hardly any opportunities left for democratic deliberation about the content and purpose of education and its role in society” (Biesta, 2006, p. 60).
Campus 2020 provides mixed messages in this regard. It notes that participants in the report’s consultation phase almost unanimously agreed that, “[t]he idea that higher education policy should be a response to what the marketplace needs is an approach that views learners narrowly as economic objects and inputs, rather than as citizens” (p. 9). Yet, it frequently uses the language of learning and presents higher education along the lines criticized by Biesta: focusing on “learner choice”, institutions bringing “more flexibility into learning modalities” (p. 9), and the entire sector to adopt more “flexibility, adaptability and responsiveness . . . ‘nimbleness’ ” (p. 10).

5.2.2 BC’s Skills for Jobs Blueprint

BC’s Skills for Jobs Blueprint (Government of BC, 2014, hereafter called the blueprint) was published in 2014 by the BC Liberal government as a policy direction towards, “re-engineering education and training so that British Columbia’s students and workers have the skills to be first in line for jobs in a growing economy” (p. ii). As I show in Table 5.2, which summarizes some of the key elements of the blueprint, this document notes a marked change in policy from that of Campus 2020.

When comparing the summaries in Table 5.1 and Table 5.2, some key differences become apparent before even delving into the details of the language in the policies. For example, one obvious difference is that while Campus 2020 was authored by Geoff Plant, the blueprint has no designated author.

There are also significant differences in the groups involved in creating the policy document. Within government, Campus 2020 only lists the Premier’s office and the Ministry of Advanced Education as key government contributors. In contrast, the blueprint lists the Ministry of Jobs, Tourism, and Skills Training as a key area involved in the policy creation – suggesting more focus on job training. And when looking at consultations from outside of government, the different approaches become even more clear. Campus 2020 lists a host of groups and associations as important consultants when creating the policy, most of which are
Table 5.2: BC’s Skills for Jobs Policy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author/Date</th>
<th>2014</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Ministries Involved | Premier  
Jobs, Tourism, and Skills Training  
Education  
Advanced Education |
| Key Consultations | Employers  
Industry  
ITA  
Industry sector advisory councils |
| Key Themes | LNG  
labour market projections  
resource industries  
training more responsive to employers’ needs  
skills  
jobs |

related to either the secondary or post-secondary system in BC. In stark contrast, the key areas consulted for the blueprint are all industry related.

And the key themes of each policy are also markedly different. While I have problematized some of the approach and language in Section 5.2.1, nonetheless, Campus 2020 is squarely centred on education. In contrast, the blueprint frames policy more around the language of “training”.

The blueprint’s focus on training shows its pre-occupation with economic conditions. It says that, “[m]atching labour market requirements with the skills we are graduating will mean that British Columbians can take advantage of our growing economy” (p. 7).

The blueprint rationalizes this focus on training because it forecasts one million job openings in BC within the next eight years (p. 7) due to “major new opportunities including expanding liquefied natural gas (LNG) development in Northern B.C., increased trade with Asia, new mines and mining expansions, growing forestry exports as well as increased activity in the resource sectors, transporta-
This jobs and skills focus is evident in the blueprint’s plans for all levels of education. For elementary through high-school students it says, “we want to give you an earlier head start to hands-on learning so you’re ready for the workforce or more advanced training when you graduate” (p. 6). And as those students move on to post-secondary, the links to job preparation are even more direct: “If you’re in a college, university or institute, or are thinking about attending, we’re matching training with jobs in demand, and maximizing the spaces available to provide the programs you need to compete successfully in the workforce” (p. 6).

The blueprint summarizes the three primary objectives of its policy as follows (p. 8):

- A head-start to hands-on learning in our schools.
- A shift in education and training to better match with jobs in demand.
- A stronger partnership with industry and labour to deliver training and apprenticeships.

With this language the direction of policy is clearly focussed on jobs. But we could problematize what a “head-start” actually means and for whom it is a head start. The policy language justifies the changes as giving students a head-start, but a critic might say that it gives industry a head-start by using public funds to “train” new employees.

And the notion that this is a head start for industry is further bolstered by the blueprint’s focus on industry partnerships. The blueprint describes how the government will be, “working closely with employers, industry, labour and the ITA (the provincial body responsible for apprenticeship training) to target skills training to high-demand occupations, remove barriers that limit labour mobility and increase the participation of industry and labour in the skills training system” (p. 16).

While the consultation with employers suggests a collaborative model of planning for the re-engineering of the system, the collaboration doesn’t extend further
than industry, and the blueprint makes no mention of collaboration or consultation with experts in education.

In a similar vein, the blueprint states that to, “make the most effective use of our training resources” (p. 17) we need a “solid base of information” (p. 17) to, “support our goal to better match training and education with industry needs and provide the best information on labour market trends to educators, counsellors, students and their families” (p. 17). Here we see the blueprint focuses on providing this information to educators (or trainers) and it doesn’t suggest a collaborative relationship with educators as it does with industry.

In calling to provide this best “labour market” data to students and their families, the blueprint also treats students in this one-dimension and one-directional manner. It is one-directional in the sense that it is providing information to students, but does not consult them about what their aims are for their education. And it is one-dimensional in that it treats students as consumers. As noted above in the analysis of Campus 2020, Biesta (2006) suggests that this one-dimensional framing of students as rational consumers closes off debate and questions about the aims and purposes of education.

The blueprint does not make frequent mention of technology in relation to education. And by not engaging this idea, it implies as a given that skills and job training embody technologies.

In the few specific examples where the blueprint engages technologies with respect to learning, it does so from the perspective of enabling workers to more easily access training. For example, it promotes, “[e]-learning modules that let students learn at their own pace and at the most convenient time for them from any location” and suggesting, “[r]emote learning sites that bring teachers and resources to students in remote locations through the use of technology such as video conferencing” (p. 20).
5.2.3 Summary of Provincial Public Policy

Comparing the Campus 2020 report of 2007 with the Skills for Jobs Blueprint of 2014 shows how rapidly policy language and focus has changed in a short time.

While there are some similarities in the language – both documents cite “inevitable” changes as the key reasons for their overhauling of BC’s educational system – they attribute the changes to different causes and prescribe different paths to meet the changes.

Campus 2020 attributes much of its proposals to the technology driven expansion of the “knowledge-economy”. But just seven years later the concept of knowledge-economy is completely absent from the blueprint. Instead, in 2014, the blueprint attributes its re-engineering of the system to the “incredible opportunity” of up to 1 million new jobs in the LNG, mining, forestry, and resource sectors.

What has happened to the knowledge-economy driving the changes recommended in Campus 2020? Has it already come and passed us by? Are we still waiting for it? And where were these incredible opportunities for skilled jobs in 2007? Were they not there? Were they too far away to see? Are they really here now?

Not only is the concept of the knowledge-economy absent from the blueprint, the concept of knowledge itself is rarely invoked. In the document’s 52 pages, the word “knowledge” only occurs eight times, and usually directly connected to job skills (e.g. “knowledge and skills”). This represents a huge shift in policy from Campus 2020, where knowledge (or at least the knowledge economy) is pre-eminent. Not only have the driving forces behind these policy documents changed so quickly, but this rapid change in focus makes us wonder if the documents’ narrow-focus in the first place is misplaced? That is, was such a focus on the knowledge-economy too limiting in Campus 2020?

While Campus 2020 did encourage faculty to play a role and engaged them in questions, those questions were in the context of a taken for granted paradigm shift from the old ways to the new ways demanded by the knowledge-economy. While
it asks questions, did Campus 2020 ask the right questions? Instead of querying how to best respond and re-act (or lead and pre-act) to the knowledge-economy, should it have asked much more broad and fundamental questions about the aims, purpose, and content of education as suggested by Biesta (2006)? In Movement 6, I show that BCU faculty are far more concerned about those types of questions than the ones raised by Campus 2020.

The Skills for Job Blueprint similarly is one-dimensionally focussed on re-engineering our system, this time to prepare for the predicted boom in skilled and trades jobs. While Campus 2020 called for consultation with educators, that is almost entirely absent in the blueprint. The blueprint calls for considerable collaboration and partnership with industry, but the collaboration with educators and students is primarily one-directional and takes the form of government and industry providing educators and students with job prospect information by economic sector. While undoubtedly most students will want a job at some point, does this one-dimensional focus on the job market also miss the fundamental questions raised by Biesta (2006)? Does it risk treating students so much as consumers that it forgets any other aspects of educational endeavours? Again, in Movement 6, I show that BCU faculty bring a different perspective and ask different questions than those asked by the Skills for Jobs Blueprint.

5.3 BCU Policy

Because the largest source of BCU’s funding comes from the provincial government, BCU policy is heavily influenced by provincial policy, and this provincial scale influence on local policy can be seen both directly and indirectly.

A direct impact is evident when provincial policy specifically directs funding to particular programs. For example, The Skills for Jobs Blueprint explicitly directs institutional policy because twenty-five percent of provincial operating grants to post-secondary institutions needs to be, “aligned to training that matches with high-demand occupations and jobs” (p. 12). And it is the provincial government that decides which occupations are high-demand and which programs at
institutions like BCU match those areas. Unless it wants to forego this funding, BCU must directly apply this funding towards training programs in designated areas.

Provincial policy also impacts BCU policy through its governance structure. In accordance with the University Act (Government of BC, 1996), BCU’s Board of Governors is responsible for the management, administration, and business affairs of the university. A majority of board members are appointed - through the Lieutenant Governor in Council - by the BC provincial government, and as political appointees, these board members are pre-disposed to align with government policy and therefore align board policy in agreement with that of government.

Local policy implications also arise from how the University Act designates the BCU Senate as the body responsible for policies regarding academic and curriculum content. Designated in the act as a “Special Purpose Teaching University”, the composition of the BCU Senate is legislated as different from those of BC’s earlier designated universities. The majority of BCU Senators are non-faculty members while the majority at a university such as UBC are faculty members. In cases of controversial academic issues where groups may vote in blocks, the balance of power at BCU is clearly tilted against the faculty member perspective.

While the BCU Board and Senate have numerous policy documents, few relate directly to digital technologies, and where they do exist it is difficult to square the policy document with the practice at BCU. For example, BCU’s mission and goals specifically state a goal to develop a Centre for Teaching and Learning (CTL). While this centre was created, it was then eliminated shortly a few years later and has yet to be replaced.

Another inconsistency lies in the same policy’s direction to support exemplary instruction [and] use of educational technology. Nearly a decade before the policy was created, BCU had already created the CET and actively promoted and rewarded the use of exemplary teaching using educational technologies. But shortly after the policy came into effect, this centre and the associated incentives were dismantled.
Some of these inconsistencies can be traced to BCU’s efforts to gain accreditation. Soon after it received university designation, BCU quickly began the process of applying for accreditation from the College and University Commission (CCU). One of the CCU’s recommendations during the accreditation process was a call for a more centralized and strategic plan for teaching, learning, and technology support. In response, BCU created a CTL and designated a Director and hired staff. Shortly after the CCU officially granted BCU final accreditation the CTL and Director were eliminated and remaining staff were shifted to other areas in BCU.

It is difficult to make the connection between BCU’s stated mission, vision, and goals policy and the creation and subsequent scrapping of the CTL. The timing of the actions within the accreditation process suggests a response to that process. Furthermore, budget pressures have been extreme in recent few years as BCU has taken the decisions to eliminate numerous programs. These budget limitations could have also played a role in decisions to remove the CTL as those areas do not generate revenue for BCU and spending in those areas do not count as students in reporting to government.

Throughout the transition and early growth as a university, BCU had been without an academic and strategic plan and this could possibly explain the disconnect between policy and practice regarding educational technologies. Recently, BCU accepted and published its first academic plan which is intended to guide the institution’s strategic planning over the next three years. This new academic plan may lead to tighter links between institutional policy documents and the practice at BCU. Heretofore, much of the local practice has developed in response to disparate local effects: specific implementation polices of various departments, committee resolutions, and individual employee practices.

Numerous examples abound of policy, generated by local internal areas (e.g. the IT department), impacting the day-to-day practice at BCU including acceptable use policies, email and website appropriate use policies and policies regarding technology acquisition and development. Examples from a broader level of constituents might include the choice of LMS, student registration and records sys-
tems, and content management systems for departmental website. Departments or programs also develop policies related to educational technologies. For example, some departments create a policy to create an LMS site for each course to which faculty must upload at least a course outline. Another department created a policy that student grades will be submitted electronically rather than on paper. In some cases these policies seemed to arise out of general consensus of the faculty members while in others they are more in response to changing dynamics in the practice (e.g. fewer staff have lead faculty to create their own course outlines, assignments, or course outlines).

As I show in Movement 6, these specific policies as practice had a big impact on faculty experiences with technologies.

5.3.1 4th Hour Policy

As the research progressed, I realized that interview participants made only infrequent mention of particular provincial level policy. Additionally, while they spoke of local policy as practice, they also did not frequently refer to specific BCU policy documents that explicitly relate to technologies. Instead, I found that participants related their current working conditions to other local policies: policies that at first glance didn’t appear to be related to technologies, yet were intricately intertwined with those technologies. And of these local policies, a recent time-tabling policy change – known in BCU discourse as the 4th hour – elicited the most frequent and fervently emotional responses.

For most of BCU’s history, regular 3-credit academic courses were scheduled with an extra hour of contact time - a 4th hour - compared to the three contact hours the same course would have at most institutions. Faculty members felt largely autonomous in how they could use this extra, 4th hour. The vast majority of faculty used the extra hour as face-to-face class time: some faculty simply taught as they normally would for an extra hour each week, others held seminars or reading groups each week. Teaching a class for four hours a week was the norm.
Two years before I started this study, BCU changed the way courses were scheduled, removing the 4th hour. Courses that formerly had four scheduled contact hours were revised to have three contact hours. The extra, 4th contact hour was removed from the class schedule. Faculty were still expected to teach the 4th hour in some way, but no longer had classroom space to use for that hour.

Like other institutions, BCU has experienced cyclical fluctuations in enrolment: during up-swings classes were full and there were long wait-lists; during down-swings many classes would not be full. The 4th hour policy change was implemented during one of the up-swings in enrolment. BCU was bursting at the seams. Classrooms were full, wait lists common, and BCU had no extra space to accommodate more students. So the implied and stated rationale for the policy change was to free-up more classroom space.

In some ways, removing the scheduled 4th hour seems, if anything, like a reduction in faculty workload. After all, faculty had less scheduled class time and no one was monitoring how much material was covered during a class. If they wished, instructors could simply teach a quarter less material. Yet participants in this study didn’t see the policy in this way.

Instead, they unanimously preferred having the 4th hour scheduled in the timetable, citing the extra help they could give to students and the freedom to teach more or different material it allowed. And not only did participants prefer the previous 4th hour arrangement, but this new policy, and the way it came about and was implemented stirred up deep emotions.

As I show in Movement 6, the policy change associated with the 4th hour had multiple impacts on participants: participants had very practical concerns on how to manage material and students with one hour less contact time, they had an associated pressure to incorporate technologies such as the LMS, and they were troubled about the decision making process and the timing and implementation of the policy change.
Chapter 6

Minuet – II: Findings from Interviews

A movement which looks at how faculty at BCU frame digital technologies

6.1 Introduction

In Movement 5, I summarized relevant policies on provincial and local scales within which BCU sits. I now focus on BCU faculty members’ lived experiences and present the main findings from analyzing interviews with the ten BCU faculty members who participated in this study. Specifically, I explore in depth my second research question:

- What frames do BCU faculty members use surrounding the use of digital technologies? How do these frames intersect with the policy frames? In what ways do they coincide and where do they differ? What structures at BCU impact these faculty frames and how do they do so?

As I have established earlier, faculty experiences and framing should be viewed in overlapping layers of contexts from scales previously discussed. While partic-
Participants themselves made relatively few explicit connections between their experiences and global trends and policies, in this movement I will identify some of these connections. Similarly, participants only made a few direct connections to provincial policies, but in this analysis I draw some connections between these scales too. In contrast to not making many connections to global and provincial influences, participants did commonly relate their experiences directly to specific local policies at BCU, and in particular, to the 4th hour policy as I discussed in Section 5.3.1. Here, I will highlight these links and integrate them to the larger scale phenomena.

As explained in Movement 4, I analyzed the interviews and codes to build common themes. The following sections present the most important themes I have built from analyzing the data. These themes overlap and intersect in numerous places, yet for clarity of discussion, I have organized them into three main categories – autonomy and independence, the changing nature of instructors’ work, and the changing relationships within BCU. Furthermore, some important elements of my analysis – ideas related to symbolic capital and responsibilisizing – span across all themes and are discussed throughout the sections. Finally, in the last section of this movement, I synthesize and summarize the key elements arising from these themes.

6.2 Autonomy and Independence

Participants frequently spoke in terms that surround the intersection of technologies and how they saw their own sense of professional autonomy and independence.

Starting from recollections of their early use of digital technologies, many participants brought ideas around autonomy to the foreground. As Victor, the most senior study participant, says:

Well, a long, long time ago, BCU was lending out Apple II’s so I borrowed one for the summer, with very few instructions in how to use it. I was fine for about two or three weeks, and then I did something, and I couldn’t get it
to work, and nobody was around at all who could help me. It really was the summer, and summer used to be totally dead here.

Not only do Victor’s comments illustrate this notion of autonomy, but his language – “long, long time ago”, “nobody was around”, and it was “totally dead” – evoke images of a pioneering journey into the wild west: a journey full of self-reliance and total independence. Other participants also evoked the same images, and to some it wasn’t just a metaphorical journey as Robyn recalls experiences from her days as a graduate student:

I do remember those punch cards that you had to use at [my grad university].
There was one computing science building ... trudging uphill both ways.

Some participants expressed these notions of autonomy during their early experiences with digital technologies not in this language of a journey, but rather simply as them being the first, or amongst the first, to use the technologies, as Kevin’s comments show:

I really think I was one of the first people to use email that I know. I know that very few people did this because I had email addresses with all my friends that I could communicate with and it was . . . like five.

While seeing themselves as amongst the first, participants realized that they were just barely ahead of the mass migration. Kevin again:

It was a very steep upward curve. Because the first year there was just a few, and then the second year there was quadruple that, and the year after that it was almost like everyone.

Participants spoke about both positive and negative aspects of these early experiences, but most of the stories focussed on a positive slant. For example, Michael speaks with pride about his days as a graduate student:
When Apple first came out, the first one, the first Mac . . . it was tested on us at [my grad school] before they brought it out. So I worked on an Apple the year before it came out.

Some faculty even describe their early experiences as a spark of inspiration for their further use of technologies, as Barb enthusiastically recounts her experiences:

I remember being here working on my dissertation and I actually bought a computer, a little PC. No one in this whole [area] actually had computers in their offices – or very few people did – but I had one in my office, and I had my own printer. I remember realizing that you could go into the databases by doing a dial-up out to my grad school, and I could sit here with my cup of tea and scroll through the abstracts, and I thought I had died and gone to heaven! I just thought WOW!

It seems that for these participants, their autonomy – or more accurately their perception of their own autonomy – plays an important role in their narratives about digital technologies and their work. And this language is consistent with what both the academic literature and popular usage have come to associate with early adopters.

There were very real limits on their independence and autonomy in these early experiences. For example, Victor describes his feeling of autonomy when he got to take home a computer to play with. But there were strict boundaries around his choice: there was only one computer, one operating system. Yet despite these constraints, participants like Victor still focussed on their feeling of autonomy.

When recounting these early experiences participants primarily focussed on using technologies mostly outside of the regular working life as faculty members. They spoke about using email with friend and taking a computer home to play with over the summer. And even when talking about aspects related to the work, such as connecting to academic databases, Barb paints a relaxing image while enjoying her cup of tea.
Participants characterized these digital technologies as interesting areas to investigate, possibly with the thought of adding them to their classes at some point. And when viewed from this perspective, participants spoke of feeling autonomous and not unencumbered by limits to their technology choices.

While they frequently still used the language, the ways that participants spoke about autonomy and independence changed markedly as they went chronologically through their experiences with educational technologies. In contrast to these descriptions of early pioneering journeys, participants talked about their current experiences in ways that were complicated by numerous influences and are frequently marked with contradictions. Kevin’s description of his feelings with using technologies today was typical of participants when he says, “[it’s a ]sensitive issue with me”.

One of the factors that complicates these notions of autonomy is the connection between technology expertise and symbolic capital and how participants’ symbolic capital has decreased over time.

In Movement 2, I recounted my own experiences at BCU and analyzed how my perceived expertise in technologies raised my symbolic capital and led to positions that would typically require more seniority than I had. Similarly, participants’ stories recounting pioneering experiences with technologies also show how they associated their own leading edge technology experiences with high symbolic capital.

However, over time, most of these participants seemed to lose much of this symbolic capital as they left the leading edge and other faculty members gained this capital. Kevin’s story about his experiences on a new degree advisory committee illustrate how he saw his current symbolic capital:

This steering committee is fairly tech savvy. Everyone who is on it is really 
... I’m really a little behind. [It’s] one of the reasons I have to become LMS literate fast.

Kevin associates other committee members’ greater technology expertise with more symbolic capital than he has and suggests a hierarchy developing associated
with this symbolic capital. For Kevin, this is a situation he feels the need to address quickly by becoming more LMS literate, “fast”.

While Kevin didn’t comment here on why his colleagues are more technologically savvy than he is, a number of participants contrasted their use of technologies now with that of younger colleagues. As Robyn describes it:

[While] I don’t really see the advantage of it [the LMS], but I also know that almost everybody [younger] uses it, and I probably should because of that. I feel kind of like the only person who doesn’t.

Robyn’s comments show how the narrative has changed. Instead of the pioneering narratives participants used when describing their first uses of digital technologies, she now characterizes herself as lagging behind her younger colleagues. But Robyn still evokes the language of autonomy – “I probably should” (use more technologies).

Participants expressed a range of reactions to feeling behind, and these reactions complicated their earlier perceptions of autonomy and independence. Greg’s comments show one way participants reacted to this feeling:

It does take me longer, I think, to adapt to using these technologies than somebody that’s younger, but I will still take the time and effort, most of the time, to try to figure it out if I do think it’s going to be important.

Like Robyn, for Greg the autonomy narrative is still strong as he expresses confidence that he has the choice – if he thinks it is important – to learn and use the technologies. But this feeling of autonomy is complicated as Greg goes on to express more ambivalent emotions about incorporating technologies into his teaching:

To tell you the truth, my mixed-mode courses I haven’t been using all the tools in there probably as well as I should. Is it out of ignorance? Partially. Was it out of a desire to [not use them]? I’m not a control freak – but just to ensure things were going as they should be? Well, that was part of it too.
Here we get a window into Greg’s internal conflicts about the technologies. On one hand he feels he has the independence to choose the technologies he wants to use. But on the other hand, he comments that he hasn’t actually been using all the tools as he should.

But who determines how he should use them? Greg seems to take the responsibility on himself saying that he doesn’t use them, partly because of his ignorance of the tools and partly because he wants to be completely comfortable with a technology before incorporating it into his teaching.

While the narrative of autonomy is still there, the concept of autonomy seems to have changed. When discussing autonomy earlier, participants spoke of it in the sense of them deciding whether or not to take home the computer and, if so, how to play with it: they spoke in a narrow sense focussed on the technological object itself.

But when discussing autonomy in their current practice, participants not only speak about autonomy in the sense of using technologies, but they also refer to autonomy in the broader context of their role as academics. And the question of who determines which technologies faculty should use seems very important in the context of participants’ claims about independence.

And talking about autonomy within these broader contexts uncovers more complications and contradictions in participants’ framing. Kevin’s comments illustrate some of the complications:

I’ve been very pleased – lucky maybe – that there’s been no policies at all, that no one is telling me that I should use it or I have to use it [technologies]. You know, the Dean’s office is never looking out and saying you’re not keeping up with it. So I don’t feel pressure from administration to get on board.

Here Kevin is very clear in this statement that he is independent in his choices and that there is no policy forcing his moves. Yet, just moments later in the interview, he expresses a different view:
I do feel there’s pressure that way. I feel that . . . you know it’s not an intentional policy to sort of put pressure on old goats . . . but I think that is part of it. It’s just that the new young faculty come in and they’re all very, very . . . [computer savvy]. They all did their PhD’s and Masters degrees with computers. And I didn’t do that.

Here we can see the contradictions. Kevin says that there is no policy forcing him to use technologies and that he doesn’t feel pressured. But then he talks about feeling the pressure trying to keep up with his younger, more technologically savvy colleagues. Kevin expresses his frustration when he went on to describe his feelings:

I’m getting older and the average faculty age is getting younger I’m starting to look like an old outdated goat around here. And I gotta be a bit current and I know there’s great things about [the LMS] and I just gotta pick it up. I just don’t want to be left behind. I’m feeling that I’m already left behind.

Here we can see Kevin’s complicated situation. Even though he earlier said that he doesn’t feel pressure to use more technologies, he now says that he does need to use them to keep up with his younger more technology-savvy colleagues. Kevin associates symbolic capital with technological expertise, and this comment shows how he sees his symbolic capital is slipping. Moreover, with his sense of independence and autonomy, Kevin places the onus on himself to “pick it up”. If responsibilization is a technique of governance, then Kevin’s thoughts show how these participants embody this technique and take the onus upon themselves: how they responsibilisize.

As I will discuss in upcoming sections, these comments indicate a change in the nature of the work these participants do and a change in the symbolic capital important to this work. When Kevin talks about getting “current”, he is referring to becoming more current with the technology (with a high symbolic capital). It is interesting that he is not referring to keeping “current” in his field – which previously would have counted for more symbolic capital.
6.3 Changing Work

In addition to these notions of autonomy and independence, participants also frequently linked digital technologies to a host of issues surrounding changes in their teaching practice.

6.3.1 Time Crush

When speaking about their current teaching practice, participants made multiple and frequent connections between technologies and the amount of time they take. As Michael says:

I have very little time to actually test things out, and it drives me crazy when I have to . . . I’ve got so many things going on in my life; I can’t take the time to find a new way to do things.

As Michael illustrates, participants’ perceptions of time associated with using technologies in their practice encompasses a number of emotions and elements, many of which are intertwined with many of the other themes arising from this study.

One common concern focussed how much time new technologies take to incorporate into their practice: time to learn to the technology, time to learn how to incorporate them into their pedagogy, and time to maintain the products of the technologies. Michael crystallizes the concern succinctly:

Because you have to keep up on it. I don’t have time.

Sara’s comments are typical of how participants speak of the time required to learn new digital technologies:

I definitely would talk about frustration, frustration about having to learn so much, but where’s my time to learn this?

Becoming increasingly animated (speaking more quickly and gesticulating with her hands), Sara continues on to explain how the time associated with the technologies affects her workload:
If I’m going to embrace the technology I do want to do it well. So when students say, “Oh, this link isn’t working, this isn’t working”, you know, I feel like I’ve bitten off too much, that I’m trying to deliver this, but I don’t have the time to maintain it, and then it’s a substandard product.

This topic was clearly a very sensitive one with Sara, bringing out her frustration. Throughout most of the interview she speaks about her love of teaching and interaction with her students. But here, when referring to the time crush she invokes language of an educational “product”, which is uncharacteristic of how she spoke elsewhere. Here we see evidence of how she responsibilizes the neo-liberal perspective that casts education in the language of markets and the economy.

These excerpts illustrate the stark contrast to participants’ positive depiction of their earlier experiences with digital technologies. When speaking about their current use of technologies, participants’ comments expressed more negative emotions now that the technologies have become more pervasive. It seems that many participants have difficulty in reconciling their past experiences and views with the neo-liberal language they see surrounding digital technologies.

Yet even though they feel pressured to use the technologies, participants still use the language of autonomy and talk about their own choice to use – or how much to use – certain technologies. In addition to learning to use the technologies, this autonomy narrative continues into the tasks of managing and monitoring them throughout the term. As Greg says:

It’s my site, it’s my course: I’m responsible for it. If I’m responsible for it then I should be actively moderating. There’s more responsibility on my part to at least be aware of and to moderate the discussions. And you know what? Frankly, I don’t want to take that on.

Greg clearly takes ownership in the details of how a course runs and the tensions surrounding the technologies are clear. He feels that if he’s going to use the online discussions then he’s responsible for moderating them. All his experience
teaching tells him that this should be his role, and that is a task he takes on in his face-to-face classes. But he’s now feeling pressure to take on this new task that he doesn’t feel well-equipped to do.

At the same time, Greg seems to be asserting some degree of independence and staking his claim on the space – these are my courses, and I will decide what they need and do the work to maintain them. Greg’s comments indicate he feels like he has been able to assert his independence to a large degree and decide which technologies he will incorporate and which he will not.

In addition to the time it takes to learn and monitor the technologies throughout a term, participants also spoke about the time the technologies take out to set-up and to use.

Lisa describes a typical scenario:

Okay, turn on the computer, turn on Internet Explorer, turn on the [LMS] site, sign in, sign into this and into that, and, again, 10 minutes have gone by before you can start to teach a class.

As Lisa describes it, these more mundane technology aspects eat into the time she has for what she sees as important in her practice – working with students.

Participants expressed different emotions when talking about this set-up time. Like Lisa, some seemed to grudgingly accept it. To others, it was a particularly sore point, as Michael illustrates, while becoming increasingly frustrated recounting a story of how much teaching time he lost to set-up:

15 minutes of class was lost because of trying to set up a video, and I even came in 10 minutes early.

And it’s not only classroom time that leads to this frustration, but also “wasted” outside of the classroom. Lisa explains the time wasted when she arrives in her office each day:

So I think this was definitely unintended. We didn’t anticipate that back in the early days of building computers, learning about programming. I turned on my computer in my office... and how long it takes to boot up.
Flowing from their comments on how much time the technologies take to learn and their products take to maintain, many participants, feeling overworked already, questioned whether or not spending more time with technologies was the best way to use their time.

Kevin’s comments illustrate this feeling:

When I’m spending time setting up (the LMS) and learning it on my own trying to learn it - that could be time maybe better spent reading yet another journal article or keeping up with (my field). There’s so much literature, there’s so many amazing new books that I never get around to read, but now I gotta spend time with technology.

Victor’s comments show similar sentiments:

It’s really time consuming, and I still actually find it way more interesting and way more useful to add to my knowledge base in the discipline

Both Kevin and Victor are senior faculty who cut their academic teeth during a paradigm before ubiquitous digital technologies. Their views of the practice grew from a place where knowledge in their disciplines was valued very highly and they used to spend much of their time related to their discipline – reading a journal article, adding to knowledge base. These were the traditional signs of symbolic capital they associated with the field.

But with ubiquitous digital technologies, they see symbolic capital in higher education changing. The traditional capital associated with knowledge of their field is now of less importance and symbolic capital associated with technology expertise in now more valued.

Kevin and Victor both spoke about a change in symbolic capital in the field that shows a change in the role of the instructor from discipline expert (although that seems to be still implied) to technology expert. They did, however, differ in how they reacted to this shift.
Victor, who was very close to retirement when the interviews were conducted, acknowledges the work involved with the technologies but still asserts his autonomy in choosing to use his time to, “add to my knowledge base in the discipline”. He does use the technologies to a certain extent, but he seems quite comfortable with a relatively low level of use. Because he is so close to retiring, it seems that Victor has little risk by not building technology expertise.

In contrast, Kevin – ten years younger than Victor – seems to lament his loss of autonomy when he acknowledges that he has, “gotta spend time with technology”. Even though he would rather spend his time in areas traditionally associated with symbolic capital (keeping up with his field), he talks about how he must instead build this capital by acquiring technology expertise.

And not only have the extra time demands of technologies impacted their current workload, but some participants showed concern about the extra time required by possible technical problems tipping them past their coping point. Kevin describes these concerns as he says:

I’m really worried that I might have some [LMS] issues over the course of the semester - and my semesters are always pretty stressful and I gotta keep up with you know like 4 or 5 different courses. If I have an [LMS] problem, is it going to take me away from being completely …. I like to be so thoroughly prepared for my lecture. And I’m worried that when I’m sitting there preparing for my lecture or the next days lecture that I’m going to be sitting there trying to figure out some [LMS] issue.

Here he describes his workload already as “stressful”, trying to prepare for and keep up with all his courses. He realizes all the extra time it takes to set-up and maintain his courses in the LMS and he now adds an extra concern, anticipating the time crush he would be under trying to deal with LMS problems. We can see from these comments that it is not even the actual extra work causing problems, but it is also the anticipated extra work as well.
6.3.2 Changing Definition of the Role

All this extra time that participants identify does not just represent additional hours, but it also points to how the role of instructors has changed along with the increase of technologies.

For example, when discussing her teaching strategies Robyn points to processes involving students in “active work”, and she worries that the demands associated with the technologies take away from students going through this process:

I think that because of things like [the LMS], or people who aren’t going to class because the PowerPoint is on [the LMS], and they just need to sit and... And, you know, I think it’s making them expect us to give them more and maybe making them a little bit lazy to do their own work. I’ve been here long enough to notice that change. Somebody asked me the other day, are you going to give us an outline for the midterm? I said no I think you should make your own outline, because that’s part of studying. I said, you’ve got your course outline, so you know the topics. You know the chapters to read from your course outline.

Here Robyn shows the pressure she feels to meet the expectations of her students, set by actions of her faculty colleagues. According to Robyn, many of her colleagues have used the technologies - the LMS in this case - to upload so much content that it takes away from what she sees as the important “active work” that students need to do to learn. But despite these pressures Robyn doesn’t change entirely; her form of resistance is to still insist that her students still do some of this work that she sees as so important.

Some other participants don’t offer the same resistance. They feel the technologies have many problems; yet, they still use them. Given the previously mentioned time constraints, and despite the problems, they see digital technologies as an aid to covering more curriculum. As Sara says:

Part of it is time management. We don’t have enough time in class to effectively discuss things, and it’s frustrating. You know, we’ve shortened it
down to one and a half, three hours of contact a week, and I really feel that. I feel that a huge part of the learning comes with, actually, students talking about things, either in small groups or as a classroom as a whole. So, this is in some ways a substitute for the time we’ve lost in class.

Sara’s comments show how the definition of her work has changed. The amount of class contact time has decreased due to the loss of the 4th hour and she now has to determine how to use the technologies as a “substitute” for the time she has lost in class. Her work has now changed to incorporate not only technology expertise, but also the management skills to determine how to meld the technology into her curriculum plans.

Other participants coped in different ways. They use technologies, but do so very little in the first weeks of a term, because they feel that the face–to–face environment gets their relationships with students off on a strong footing. As John says:

Building a very strong rapport with those students in those first two weeks [is important], because then I can go anywhere. That’s what gives me the license with the students. You feel the temperature, you know what is happening with your class. So I think rapport is the key.

John’s comments shows how participants view teaching as an embodied activity, the face–to–face contact allowing him to “feel the temperature”. Knowing when and how to shift from the completely face–to–face to using the technologies more is a new part of the work for these participants.

Participants spoke about how technologies have changed students’ workloads. As Michael says:

They [already] have enough to do. They don’t need more assignments. I’ve got more than enough in the text and the way I do stuff in class.

Kevin describes similar sentiments:

With the assignments, the essays, the lectures, and the textbook I think that’s enough resources. (Becomes more animated) I don’t think they need more -
that’s the thing. I don’t think they need more. I think they’re already having trouble keeping up with those. So if you add on a whole bunch [more] . . . I just don’t know if it’s going to add any quality to their learning.

These comments show how participants worry about students having too much work. And it’s not only that, but their faculty work has changed too in having to arbitrate how to incorporate the technologies and determine how much work to give his students.

Some faculty feel that the technologies make it too easy to give students more work: too much work. For example, as Sara mentions regarding the [LMS] and study outlines:

I think people are giving them too much now, because it’s just so easy to do it. And I’m even falling into that. Like I just told you, I starting to think I should send them these lecture outlines, and maybe that’s just pressure because I’m hearing other people are doing it.

Participants frequently spoke about many of these concerns in the context the recent change in the 4th hour policy at BCU. For some faculty, the biggest loss is felt by the students who need the extra classroom time for help. As Lisa says:

For those students on the more challenged side, the classroom is crucial, and they’ve taken the classroom time away. The [LMS] site doesn’t replace it.

And it’s not just the reduced time for classroom help that hurts. Lisa also regrets that she now has less time to cover important content:

I regret the loss of classroom time. It’s a quarter of our classroom time. I’m finding I get to the end of the semester, and I swear, you know, I have no time to get to at least a couple of chapters. My experience is that for most of the students, the classroom time is crucial.

For others, the loss of flexibility due to less classroom discussion time is the biggest drawback for students. As Jane says:
You know, there’re all kinds of things that people do, but you can’t do it in person anymore, and you can’t have the discussion in person any more. It’s a shame. . . . I don’t think they realize how technology doesn’t replace the ability of students to sit in a classroom and talk with each other and the ability of instructors to help that to happen.

Cleary frustrated, Jane goes on:

Oh, well they took 25 percent of the face time out of the classroom, expect us to get the same results, and I can’t get the same results. I mean, that’s a lot of time with students. So what’s gone is I don’t show the movies I showed. I don’t allow, like we said, up to 10 minutes, maybe, of discussion. Not often. One minute, two minutes is more likely.

Here Jane talks about the technologies changing her job as she loses the “flexibility” to use the classroom time as she wishes to. She values the work as spending time in the classroom and helping students talk with each other, but with the change in policy, more technology, and her changing work, she has lost some of that chance to, “help that to happen”. And she makes connections between the change in work not allowing her to, “get the same result”.

In addition to listing a number of ways that the participants feel the loss of a 4th hour hurts students, the comments also reveal how these faculty talk about themselves as objects of this policy: they feel like the policy has been done to them. In comparison to the language that participants used to describe their earlier experiences - where they are the subjects and “use” technologies - the language they employ here – “they” took it away from us; “I regret the loss”; “I don’t think that they realize” – how these faculty members now feel objects of the policy. They feel they have lost their voice and their autonomy.

Not only do they see the technologies as increasing and changing the nature of their own workload, but these excerpts all show examples of how participants see technologies used to overload students with too much information and work. And they don’t stop at the technologies at the university, but feel that students are suffering from technology overwork in their lives as a whole. As Greg says:
[Students] I’ve talked to recently say that it’s a lot of work, and they’re start-
ing to resent the amount of work involved in updating Facebook, checking
up on their email, in using technology as a social tool. So they’re starting to
resent the amount of time that they have to spend doing that, but they feel
they have to socially in order to keep up. If they fall behind, then they’re
falling behind, and this is normative. It’s an expectation now in their social
group that they do this, and if they don’t then they may be running a little bit
afoul of their group.

Greg’s comments challenge the popular perception that youth want more tech-
nology both within the larger context of their lives and their student lives in par-
ticular. He questions the technological deterministic view as discussed in Move-
ment 3 and the technology centric forecasts for education offered by those such as
Andreessen in Movement 2.

### 6.3.3 Bureaucratization, Efficiency, Standardization

I previously discussed faculty concerns about the extra time it takes to learn, to
use, and to manage technologies such as the LMS, and how incorporating these
technologies forced them to make complicated choices about if, when, and how to
incorporate these technologies into their teaching. In addition to these concerns,
participants also spoke about a seemingly continuous line of extra tasks – often
mediated by digital technologies – making more and more demands on their time.

Michael’s comments are typical of participant concerns:

> There seem to be more forms we fill out, we take things online. Like, instead

of just filling out a form that’s already printed, you’ve gotta go in there,
you’ve gotta find it.

Not only is it forms online, but participants pointed to numerous examples
of workload increases they attribute to technological change. For example, BCU
recently switched from a paper based to a digital entry system for faculty to submit
final grades. As Robyn says,
(Now) I have to go in on the website and do [input] the grades . . . it’s just something we didn’t do before.

These comments show how work that was formerly done by others (support staff, managers, administrators), mediated by technologies, has now been downloaded to faculty members. Taken in isolation, it might make sense for many of these tasks to be transferred to faculty members, but with so many different tasks downloaded, these participants feel like they can’t keep up with the workload.

Even participants who expressed a desire to incorporate technologies into their pedagogical practice often spoke of the time required as something they would have to trade off against other time demands on their workload.

BCU has used three different LMS’s in the past twenty years, and participants spoke about the increased workload and frustrations in moving course materials to the new system. As Sara says:

Each time we make the transfer . . . I know we have resources available to us, but I have to find the time to relearn that, and sometimes the things don’t transfer well.

Robyn speaks about extra additions to her workload in other aspects of her job that, at least at first glance, don’t seem related to technologies:

I have to download all the images off the website for the textbook . . . it’s stuff you didn’t have to do before.

Robyn here describes all the extra work associated with technology when she adopts a new text book. Previously she might receive a package or slides or overhead transparencies to use in her classroom. But now, she has to download all the images for each chapter, un-compress the files, and then import them into the LMS or sort them into her own filing system. Additionally, many publishers will now include banks of quiz questions with each book. To use this bank, Robyn needs to download the questions, un-compress them, figure out how to import those questions into the LMS, then use the LMS to release the questions to students when appropriate.
As these comments show, not only has increased reach of technologies led to more work teaching with the technologies, but the non-teaching aspects have also intensified as these aspects are now more bureaucratized.

Participants also spoke about digital technologies in the context of efficiency and standardization. On a campus with limited classroom space, waiting lists for courses, and small classrooms, faculty see technologies being pushed as a way to use this limited space as efficiently as possible, as Sara says:

They went the route where we don’t have the room space, so by default pushing people into using online, because really, there’s nothing else left.

Participants are suspicious about this push for efficiency, and they are deeply concerned by the prospect of the technologies leading to standardization. Jane’s comments illustrate a common concern with the implementation of technology at BCU:

Mark my words. you’re younger than me. You’ll be here when I’m gone. What it will require is that every course outline is going to look exactly the same. It will have to fit exactly the same template. It will have to be this, that, and the other thing. And it will be absolutely consistent, because that’s the only way the system can work. Not because it’s the best. Not because it’s the smartest, but because that’s what the system requires.

Jane goes on to attribute the push for consistency to both the administration and to the larger forces requiring the standardization.

As the place gets bigger, it’s taking on a more corporate appearance, and one of the things I’ve noticed very much . . . and I think technology makes this sort of a circle of inevitability . . . is this massive, massive push for consistency. All of us must do things the same way at the same time in the same way, because if we don’t were wrong. And I think an awful lot of that comes out of admin’s need to measure things somehow.
These comments show how participants draw connections between technologies, standardization, and requirements for accountability. Jane, who has had more administration experience than other participants and thus may have had more insights into this area, notes how technologies can be used to measure and surveil faculty and students. We see a concern that the expansion of technology will require faculty to lose autonomy and do things the same way. Jane goes on:

Jane’s comments also show participants’ concerns that the push for consistency and standardization will lessen their autonomy further. As she says:

But it’s a lot easier to do when you’ve got a lot of technology going. There now comes Survey Monkey, and out comes this and that and the other thing that you can all get on, and you can be required to do all of it in exactly the same way.

6.3.4 Support Issues

In addition to stress over a heavy and increasing workload, participants also frequently expressed concerns around support structures in place of technology use. And as technologies have become more embedded in the work these concerns around support have also increased.

To some participants the promise of technologies, coupled with a poor support system, is their top concern. As Victor says:

That’s sort of my nightmare. You set up all those expectations, and then the technology can’t fulfill those expectations.

Victor’s “nightmare” comment shows just how important the support structure is for participants. Some faculty see the potential for faculty to incorporate technologies as most closely tied to the level of support. As John says:

I think when it comes to technology and education in the classroom, the institution has to do a much, much, much, much, much better job of making instructors lives easier, facilitating the use of educational technology instead of impeding it.
In some cases it is the support and knowledge of certain kinds of hardware and software. As Lisa describes,

They won’t put [a certain application] on our computers. So I did it myself, I didn’t even get their support. But I was having trouble connecting to . . . in fact, I still haven’t connected that notebook to the network. And I went up there to find out why, and he looked at it and looked at it and tried to figure it out. I had to take it back to the vendor, and he said, oh, you have to push this button. And I understand the IT Department doesn’t know every computer, but it didn’t give me a lot of confidence that he knew anything!

Lisa describes her experiences with another application,

It was great! It was a great program, and then they finally told us no. We won’t put it on any machine because we don’t support it. So we wanted it . . . like, even if we could just have it on one machine in a classroom.

Lisa’s comments certainly show concerns about her autonomy to choose and use the technologies as sees fit. Moreover, they illustrate the gap between what she sees as the promise of technology support and the reality for faculty. This loss of autonomy is shown again here by how she is an object of the decisions – “they told us” they wouldn’t put it on because they didn’t support it.

Barb comments further on this gap:

I do find that there’s lots of stuff out there, but how we as faculty get to access this is very frustrating.

John sees great potential pedagogical use of technologies, and he suggests that BCU should expand options for faculty rather than limit them:

I know that it is limited in resources, but allowing instructors to trial certain technologies – because the ones that do work have such an impact on student learning that it’s a great investment. I think the institution has to be more open to that and give more license to its instructors to experiment with educational technologies without needless constraints.
And in addition to software concerns, participants also expressed their support concerns while speaking about the state of the computers in their office, as John describes:

I think that the equipment we are given is atrocious. It’s deplorable that we are expected to do our work efficiently and optimally with the equipment we are given. That’s why that is sitting over there — (he points to his BCU supplied old desktop computer and monitor sitting a pile in the corner of his office).

Barb’s and John’s comments highlight contradictions they feel surrounding technologies. On one hand, policy and discourse tout the benefits of using technologies, and they believe there may be real benefits and they identify technologies they would like to use. Yet on the other hand, they see that the focus on standardization of technology choices - in the name of support and efficiency – limits their ability to employ these technologies.

While the language of “efficiency” is often used as a reason to incorporate more technologies, these participants turn that argument on its head here. John invokes the terms “efficiency” and “optimally” to argue against the poor state of technologies given to faculty at BCU. John is essentially saying, “how can we be efficient if we don’t have up-to-date equipment”. He raises an interesting internal conflict in this language. Institutions such as BCU are seen as, and touted in policy as, technological advanced and well positioned to be “efficient”. Yet faculty members like John feel they can’t be efficient and work optimally because, at least from their perspective, BCU does not provide them with current enough technology.

I found it interesting that participants attribute those software decisions solely to the IT department at BCU, and they don’t speak about what we might call the politics of software, which would incorporate a broader view of the marketplace and how institutions such as BCU are positioned within this field.

Jane also talks about the wasted time and she seems to indicate a hierarchy dictating computer age within BCU:
Admin people always get new computers, we get their hand-me-downs. Faculty are - and I’m not suggesting that faculty are more important than others - but faculty always end up with the computers that take 20 minutes to boot up and then maybe do and maybe don’t.

It’s not only the computers in their offices that cause concern, but also the speed and reliability of the BCU network. Many participants recounted stories of times when their plans for a class were disrupted by network problems. Jane had planned an entire class around viewing a series of short web-based videos and then having group discussions surrounding the videos. Upon arriving in the class Jane found the network not working, and she was unable to run the class as planned. Clearly frustrated, Jane sums up her feelings on using the network for anything in her classes:

I don’t think I will ever, ever take the risk of putting anything up that I could not live without, because that’s just asking from trouble from God as far as I’m concerned.

Victor describes similar concerns:

I know faculty in here who have come in and not had their stuff on the LMS. They put their PowerPoint on the network drive, got into class, and couldn’t access the network drive any longer. Nobody had been told that. So you go in there, and you rely on this stuff because it’s supposed to be there. You don’t take overheads in or stuff like that. You’re totally stuck.

These comments show how the role of instructor has changed as the larger context within which the role has changed. Prior to technologies becoming so ubiquitous, he would simply prepare overheads at home or in his office. But now, by using PowerPoint and the network, greater emphasis is placed on the performance in class mediated by those technologies. And it’s not just one set of technologies - PowerPoint and the network - replacing another - overheads and a projector. But it is also a change in his feeling of control and autonomy
in the practice. It’s true that the bulb could go out on his projector, but Victor knows how to switch to the spare bulb and feels in control of the situation. With the Powerpoint being inaccessible over the network, Victor feels powerless and “stuck”.

6.4 Changing Relationships

In addition to these themes around autonomy and changing nature of their work, participants spoke in great detail about interpersonal relationships related to their practice and how these relationships have changed.

6.4.1 Changing Relationships with Students

One common thread that emerged was how participants spoke about and valued their personal relationship with students and ways they see digital technologies changing those relationships.

For many participants the foundation of their educational practice is built upon relationships founded upon students and faculty physically being in the same space at the same time and engaged in the educational processes. Greg was demonstrative as he describes this sense of space and time:

When they’re [students] in the classroom and they’re going to be there, they’ve got to be there.

Here Greg is referring to physically being there and also being fully engaged in the educational process. And he sees digital technologies in the classroom as a challenge to creating an engaged community:

Students very often can distract themselves. Having access to the internet draws them out of the classroom.

And it’s not just specific distractions Greg is referring to. He really is expressing his core values about the educational process:
But you see, [technologies contribute to] why I think sometimes students look at themselves as being observers in the classroom and not participants. And as educators, I think it’s our role to make it clear that they are participants, active and responsible. They’re responsible for the process as much as the instructor is.

Greg’s choice of language here is evocative. He attributes technologies the power to cast students as objects – “students look themselves as observers in the classroom” – instead of subjects – “active participants” engaged in the process and as responsible for success as the instructor. This change from active participant (subject) to observer (object) parallels participants’ descriptions of faculty roles changing from technology pioneer to those who are responding to a system and lack the autonomy.

Greg’s observations that classroom technologies lead to students being distracted and less engaged stands in marked contrast to the policy language discussed in Movement 5, which calls to “engage all of us as citizens more directly” (Plant, 2007, p. 92) and for the community to “participate actively in discussions about programs for learning” (Plant, 2007, p. 44).

Greg and others see digital technologies in the classroom hindering this engaging environment they want to create, turning students into passive observers. He sees the technologies distracting both the specific students using the technology and also others in the classroom. Greg again:

If they don’t want to [be there], then don’t. Just don’t be there. Don’t be there distracting others. Because it does distract others. I think some people think there’s no problem with just checking their smart phone or working on their laptop. They think, well, I’m not bothering anybody else. Sorry, I don’t buy that. You are!

Greg became animated when speaking about this distraction, and he creates the following analogy to turn it on its head:
If I’m instructing class, even students themselves, if they want to text, they say why the hell shouldn’t I be able to text, or why shouldn’t I get on my computer and check my Facebook. And it’s the same students who, say, if you came to see me in my office and you’re in the middle of explaining something to me and you ask me a question or are talking about something and I pull out my smart phone and I start texting my wife, maybe chuckling, smiling about something, screwing around on my computer, or reading a book, pulling out a magazine, twiddling my thumbs, clipping my nails, how would that make you feel? And they’d say well you can’t do that!

Greg seems be yearning for a sense of connection with his students that now seems lost to what he sees as the distraction associated with technologies.

Additionally, Greg’s comments indicate how technologies bring about a further change in his relationship with students: a loss of his authority as teacher. Lisa’s comments echo these sentiments when she speaks with sadness about a situation where she was trying to connect with her class:

I was talking about a heart-rending, serious problem, and these two guys in the back of the classroom were smiling into the computer because they were watching something. By the time I walked back there they had changed it of course, but I find that is distracting to them, It’s also distracting to the people behind them. But it’s also distracting to me, because I’m completely put off. I’m telling this story about this heart-rending situation, and they’re smiling into the computer.

Both of these participants connected distractions associated with technologies in the classroom as hindering their engagement with students and a corresponding feeling she is losing authority and respect. In these stories they both associate student engagement with students focussing attention on the instructor, wherever they are spatially in the room. But when students engage with the laptops or phones, both participants feel like other students’ focus moves from the instructor to the students using the technologies.
These ideas surrounding place and students being actively engaged and involved in the classroom are frequently expressed using the language of “communities” of learning. While participants spoke frequently about digital technologies hampering the sense of engagement that creates these communities, some participants felt that it is possible to use technologies to create this sense of community. For example, as Michael says about a colleague:

She does it well. She creates a community online, and it’s not just a place to go to do stuff. It’s actually a place to be.

Michael’s language describing his colleague is very evocative. She uses technologies to create real communities that are not just places to, “go to do stuff” – places of disinterested transactions – but places “to be”, to exist, to engage, to interact, to live. Michael admires that his colleague can create these communities online, but he doesn’t feel inclined to create those same communities online himself:

If I’m going to put my energy into creating learning communities, I’d rather create it face−to−face and spend my time in class and meeting people outside of class.

Creating this sense of place and these communities as “places to be” is clearly important to Michael. And he does acknowledge that his colleague uses the technologies very well to create those communities. Yet Michael chooses not to put his “energy” into creating online learning communities, instead he wants to direct his energy to creating those communities inside the face−to−face class.

Michael’s comments and actions demonstrate one way participants reacted to the challenges to their autonomy presented by expanding use of technologies. Michael asserts his independence by resisting using technologies to create the places he speaks and instead focussing his “energy” to create the communities in the face−to−face classroom.
Even within the face–to–face synchronous classroom setting, some participants see the technologies as an impediment to the sense of relationship and community they are trying to build. As Lisa describes one situation with a guest presenter:

He said, well, you know, I guess we should get the projector and laptop and set it up. And I said, you know what? I think not. I think that for this topic what we need is more face–to–face, people to people, and the technology gets in the way, and even just setting up the technology can get in the way.

Like Michael, Lisa sees the technologies as impediments to the elements of the community she is trying to build, and she uses language that evokes images of the technologies as real physical barriers to the place she wants to build. And like Michael, Lisa has also developed strategies to resist the technology to carve out her idea of community and resist – in this case not setting up the laptop and projector.

These participants all seem to refer to spatial aspects of teaching and how technologies influence those notions. When asking that students be “there” and “engaged” they seem to be referring to the relationship as embodied — being in each others’ physical presence. But it is more than just being physically there in that space because, as participants pointed out, students can be physically in the same space but not be actively engaged. A number of comments show that some participants feel like technologies – by causing distractions – can easily lead students to this condition of being physically there but not engaged.

I find it interesting that no participants commented on the same phenomenon – being physically present but not actively engaged – while bracketing technologies. Surely students can “tune-out” what is going on in a class even when they don’t have a technology to distract them. Moritz (2013) investigated this phenomenon and found that the use of mobile phones had no impact on student engagement. As a result of this study, he suggested that these discussions focussing on rudeness and respect reflect more about cultural values than about actual engagement.
Nonetheless, participants in this study did not evoke distractions other than those related to technologies.

Furthermore, except for Michael’s comment on his colleague, these participants did not discuss students being actively engaged when not physically present in the same space. Surely we have all experienced at least moments where we are fully engaged when we are not physically in the same space.

6.4.2 Changing Relationships with BCU Colleagues

In addition to these changes in relationships with students, participants spoke about their relationships changing with their faculty colleagues and with administrators at BCU. Many of the participants’ views relating to the role of technologies at BCU can be understood through the framework of symbolic capital and the changing power relationships within the institution.

The time it takes is not valued

As the comments above show, participants framed technologies as very time intensive. While a number of participants seem willing to put in the extra time required, they expect this time and effort to be acknowledged. But they feel this is not the case. Sara, who based on the pre–interview participant survey, incorporates more technologies than the other participants, expresses similar concerns to others:

It takes an awful lot of time, and I feel that, I fear that people are thinking that we only teach three hours now, or something like that. I put in as much time or more than I ever did by maintaining my websites and things like that, and I think that the students have got a lot of value there, but it is a lot, a lot of work.

These comments indicate a changing dynamic between faculty and administration and suggest that the power relationship is tilting more towards the administration.
This imbalance becomes more apparent in participants’ comments that attribute this lack of recognition to university administrators who don’t come from a teaching background, and therefore, don’t understand the time involved. As Sara describes it:

Anyone who’s not involved in teaching, they don’t get how much time we spend on these things. And it’s totally being devalued, all of that work, even further devalued.

Jane was clearly frustrated as she expressed her thoughts:

I think that most of the people making the decisions are not people who actually have spent much time in the classroom. We’ve got various people out there who’ve spent very, very little time in a classroom at all, not to name any names particularly, but we’ve got all kinds of them. I don’t think they have the slightest idea of what goes on in most classrooms to be honest with you!

Jane’s comments show how her role is changing and she feels the loss of power and respect because “they” – those with decision making power – value different attributes than she does. The skills that Jane values and would like to associate with symbolic capital – skills associated with teaching experience – are given short shrift by those in power.

**Procedures around policy change**

As I mentioned in Movement 5, participants most commonly related their experiences with local scale policy, and in particular the 4th hour policy dealing with class contact time. In particular, participants took issue with the rationale and questioned the processes surrounding the policy change.

This policy evoked strong emotions amongst participants. As Michael describes it:

I think that was just a joke, a bureaucratic decision that had really nothing to do with pedagogy at all.
Michael is clearly making a political critique here when he calls the process a “joke”. His comments point to the tension between bureaucratic and pedagogical values, and Michael strongly sides with pedagogical values.

Participants understand that the 4th contact hour was dropped to free up class space, and they question the process and consultation that resulted in the decision. Michael again:

It was about getting more classroom time, and what’s really interesting is that when we went through that whole process and we then had the delay that went on and on… because I was on that committee. We were going to send out the poll to everybody, because we had to get it out because the students were going to leave, right? And the one question that it would have asked, would you rather have the four hours in class or three hours with this, disappeared off of that [poll].

These comments were typical of how faculty questioned the consultation processes. Michael was on the committee investigating a possible change, but wonders why the planned question about the policy was never put to students. Comments like this seem to indicate a checkbox consulting process – consultation done in order to say that it was done, but not to actually impact policy.

Some participants questioned which areas at BCU had the most influence in the policy change, as Michael says:

It was so that we had more classroom time, so that we would have more courses, particularly out of [the] Business [academic area].

Participants mostly attributed the decision to BCU administration, which they felt is out of touch with the teaching practice. As Jane says:

I think that most of the people making the decisions are not people who actually have spent much time in the classroom. we’ve got various people out there who’ve spent very, very little time in a classroom at all, not to name any names particularly, but we’ve got all kinds of them. I don’t think they have the slightest idea of what goes on in most classrooms to be honest with you.
Jane’s words complement Michael’s earlier commentary about the tension between pedagogical and bureaucratic rationales, and they show how these participants face a changing environment where decisions are made by an administration that values financial (space) concerns more than pedagogical ones.

While participants did not often relate their local working conditions to larger scale (provincial or global) policies, Jane did mention that the policy process was likely driven as response to pressure from the provincial government. She says:

The government does put on real pressure for FTE. You’ve got to get this FTE out there. Well how do you get them? We don’t have rooms where you can put 500 students at a time. I’m pretty sure if we did our admin would be very happy for us to be doing those kinds of things, but we don’t have the architecture for it so they’ve got to make the most out of their 35-people room, and government is constantly cutting down, cutting down, and cutting down and yet demanding that you do more and more and more. So ya, I think they are pushed by government.

Participants see the elimination of the 4th hour as an easy solution for the administration because the technologies such as the LMS are so ubiquitous that they were viewed as an easy way to solve enrolment and space issues.

For example, as Sara says:

They went the route where we don’t have the room space, so by default pushing people into using online because, really, there’s nothing else left.

Similarly, as Michael describes it:

[Y]ou had two choices. You had one where you had these meetings outside of class, which not everybody could come to, so what the hell good is that? You’re not really doing anything with that, or you use the LMS, and not everybody was doing it well, so you’ve got all of these people using [the LMS] in crappy ways, including me, even though I tried.
These comments do show faculty making significant connections between local policy and the larger field. In particular, as we now see in provincial policy (Government of BC, 2014), provincial government funding largely determines space and programming issues at the institution. When talking about the pressure from the provincial government, these comments really show not just faculty, but also the BCU administration as objects: pawns subjected to or implementing a top-down approach to policy.

As Sara says with these policies, “there’s nothing else [choices] left”. When seen through this lens, the promises associated with technologies that manifest in these policies do just the opposite of what the technologies are touted to do: choices are limited and local level autonomy is lessened in favour of more control by the provincial government.

Additionally, comments such as Michael’s – “you’ve got all these people using the [technologies] in crappy ways” – challenge the assertions of technology supporters that the technologies lead to more engagement.

As other comments surrounding technologies have shown, the 4th hour process and implementation caused frustration and resentment amongst many participants, who felt the decision took away their autonomy and accompanying professionalism. As Michael says:

I remember them saying, well, don’t you think it’s kind of arrogant to think that the only way somebody can learn is in a classroom? And I’m going, well, don’t you think it’s kind of arrogant to think that the way I teach in the classroom isn’t really good?

Michael’s comments directly call into question symbolic capital and issues of power within the institution.

Sara’s comments echo the similar sentiments about the policy implementation:

I have, God, resentment, really, about the way the process came. We should have had so much lead time, and we should have had paid time to build the skill set so that then you could actually create things.
For Sara, the resentment comes not so much from the technologies; rather from the process and loss of autonomy. As she points out:

I think the whole thing was a big fiasco. We always had the capability to teach for three hours and have our fourth hour as something else, but they took away the options for us by not having room space accessible for us, and I think that was really wrong.

Sara’s “fiasco” comment can be seen echoing Michael’s earlier characterization of the process as a “joke”. There are both commenting on the process and the values and logic behind the decision. They are both making political statements that the decision come from places and people who don’t have the kind of symbolic capital valued by these participants.

Or as Michael bluntly puts it:

You always had the option to go down to three hours and have the fourth hour online, or whatever I wanted to do. Now suddenly you had to do it.

These comments reveal a change in faculty work and attitudes that is hidden in a strictly instrumental analysis of technologies and efficiency.

When faculty spend so much more time with the technologies – learning, troubleshooting, maintaining, etc. – there are other consequences for the other parts of their work. They either have less time to spend on other other parts of their practice, which for many participants means the areas they have traditionally associated as important in their work - reading, staying current in their field, engaging face-to-face with students. Or, they end up simply doing more work, some of it unpaid.

Additionally, as faculty members’ attitudes shift towards resentment, mistrust, and feeling like objects, it makes sense that there would be some negative impact on their work. Some participants worry that reducing the contact time associated with the loss of the 4th hour is the first domino to fall in the chain towards a larger teaching load. As Sara says:
You know, here’s a real fear: that we’re going to . . . What if we go down to three-hour blocks and somewhere they say, Well, now the norm will be that you teach nine sections, or something like that. That’s a real nightmare, because we’ve just said you don’t have to worry about that fourth hour anymore.

Participants attributed many institutional policy decisions to BCU administrators applying a bureaucratic logic. As Jane describes it:

It was very clear that they were trying to free up classroom space so they could run more classes. What that means is that you can’t say, Well, I’ll have a one-hour discussion and, you know, divide my class into four groups and have one-hour discussions with the four groups. There’s no room. There’s nowhere to take them. We don’t typically have room in our offices for those things. So the point, I think, very quickly became stick people into more technological means of delivering material. But I think it’s a screwed-up mess to be honest with you.

Why is it a screwed-up mess? Jane problematizes this further:

I don’t think they realize how technology doesn’t replace the ability of students to sit in a classroom and talk with each other and the ability of instructors to help that to happen.

Notice how Jane attributes the decision to “them” – BCU administrators – and makes the political commentary on the processes and result. Jane attributes the conflict to an apparent disconnect in values between faculty like her who do know teaching and an administrator group who largely do not. Or as she puts it bluntly:

We do have a whole bunch of administrators who don’t understand teaching.

### 6.4.3 Changing Expectations

I asked participants if they felt pressure from BCU to use technologies. At least initially, almost all participants said they did not feel pressure. Kevin’s earlier
comment that he feels pleased – lucky maybe – that he doesn’t feel pressure to use technologies expressed typical sentiments for these participants. And not only did they not feel pressured, but they frequently used the word “trust” to describe how they felt BCU treated their use of technologies. Victor describes his feelings as follows:

In the same way as we’re trusted to take the material we’ve got to teach it in the way that we see as the most valuable way of teaching it. We’re not like a lot of school teachers, where there’s a curriculum we have to follow. We can decide on our own version of that curriculum.

Here Victor uses “we” to refer to university instructors in general, but also specifically to himself and his faculty colleagues at BCU, whom he again characterizes as having a lot of autonomy.

But the contradictions appear when the same participants express pressure to use technologies. So where does this pressure come from? Most of the participants responsibilisize and assign it to themselves. As Kevin says:

The pressure comes from me.

However, digging more deeply, we can see the pressure comes from different sources. Some can be attributed to the desire to keep up with peers As Kevin says:

I mean the pressure I feel . . . I just want to keep up.

Here Kevin refers to the change in his work associated with the spread in digital technologies. He earlier mentioned that he values keeping up with developments in his discipline. But his comments here refer to building symbolic capital by keeping up with his colleagues’ technology use, even though he questions whether using those technologies will help his teaching.

These comments show how strong the narrative is with these participants. It’s so strong that it leads him to responsibilisize the need to “keep up” with his colleagues technology expertise in order to nurture his own employability in within
the larger contexts of the hard technological determinism of provincial policy discussed in Movement 5 and neo-liberal ethos discussed in Movement 3. It is also worth note here that Kevin takes on the responsibility himself of keeping up his technology skills: he doesn’t question here whether or not BCU or the provincial government should take on that responsibility.

Greg, too, puts pressure on himself. But for him it is not so much to keep up with colleagues; rather, to make connections with his students. As he says:

If I feel pressure it’s more from me. It’s internal, and I’m driven more to use the technology so that it’s something the students will relate to, something that will give meaning to the material that I’m trying to pass on to them.

Here we can see Greg responsibilisizing the need to up his technology game, as he takes on the role of “autonomous entrepreneur” (Shamir, 2008, p. 10) and the responsibility to prepare himself to make that change.

Robyn describes the pressure she feels to try and keep up with her colleagues:

I’m sometimes embarrassed to admit that I don’t have it [technology] now. You know, I just feel bad. You know, oh, you don’t have a LMS site. It’s almost like I feel like I should, that I’m obligated to do it.

Robyn’s comments show how she accepts the rationality that these technology changes are inevitable: she used to feel more control, but now she has lost her sense of agency and feels bad that she hasn’t kept up with the changes.

Kevin describes his situation as follows:

The pressure is coming from myself to keep up. I’m not being told to do so. I feel that there’s really good technology available for use if I put my mind to it and start learning it and applying it so I know it’s within reach if I wanted it.

Kevin reiterates again his independence and autonomy and responsibilisizes the need to, “put my mind to and start learning” the, “good technology available”. With these comments we can see some of Kevin’s conflicting tensions. On one
hand he feels like an “old goat” who needs to take advantage or the good technology available to him. But on the other hand, he questions whether or not he really wants that technology as he has made frequent comments about his doubts that the more technologies will make his teaching better.

Not only did these pressures lead to participants responsibilisizing the need to change, but participants also expressed frustration as changing policies went further and required that change. When describing a policy change that required faculty to start inputting grades electronically, Victor describes he reaction to system problems:

I wondered what the hell was going on! Was it me? Is it the wrong password? I better go check what my passwords are. Really frustrating, and it wasted a lot of time.

When discussing this story further, Victor comment that his worry is not about pressure or “encouragement” to use technologies, but the lack of support infrastructure in place:

At one level my concern is sort of the opposite; not that encouragement or coercion but the resources available for faculty to do it if they want to. Certainly I’ve had the feeling over the last four or five years that we’re more and more encouraged to do that, to use the LMS in class, or that sort of stuff in class. But you get to class, and it doesn’t necessarily work. The computer . . . you can’t log on. They’ve changed the password without telling anybody, those sorts of things.

So close to retirement, Victor doesn’t talk about feeling pressure to use technologies, but he worries that his younger colleagues – who do feel that pressure – won’t have enough support in place to successfully use the technologies.

Not only do participants feel pressure to keep up with their colleagues, but they also spoke the perception that students expect or demand they use more technologies. As Robyn explains:
I think the students are kind of taking it for granted that we all have this technology.

Jane recalls this expectation from students as motivation when she started using email:

It was becoming increasingly important to me to be able to access email on evenings and weekends, and I hadn’t felt that need until you start having the students and colleagues who expect you to respond evenings and weekends.

And this accessibility was even more important to Jane when she was in a Department Head role:

Certainly as Chair in the last few years it’s been crucial to me.

Jane here is referring the expanding temporal scope of her work, especially as Chair, where she now need to uses the technologies to be accessible to students, administrators, and other faculty colleagues alike.

This need to stay accessible signifies a significant change in the role of an instructor who used to be unavailable away from campus. Greg describes his motivation to use more technology to stay current with the students:

Technology is something these students, now young adults, grew up with. The less familiar with it I am, the less efficient I’m going to be as an educator. They’re used to using technologies and want to continue to do so.

Here Greg invokes the neo-liberal market language of “efficiency” with positive connotations of making him a better teacher and he responsibilisizes the need to acquire these skills.

Victor echoes similar thoughts when he says:

Students, who increasingly live their lives with computers and that sort of technology, sort of expect to be taught that way.

Kevin also perceives this student expectation, but also the expectation of their parents too. As he describes his reason to use the LMS:
The students expect it . . . and even students’ parents I’m starting to find. I’ve heard a parent say, oh, my daughter has a professor who doesn’t even have his powerpoint slides up or something like that. Wow! That really struck a chord with me .. I think parents really recognize that their kids learn with technology and they want their children’s professors to have that technology.

These comments show Kevin’s cognitive dissonance around technologies in education. Previously he stressed how he believed much of his success in teaching related to his “old school” ways. But here he showed surprise at his own comment that even his students’ parents “recognize that kids learn with technology”.

Sometimes faculty members talk in terms of student expectations, but they are also talking about how students view their technology use compared to other faculty members. As Robyn says:

I’m thinking, oh, they’re going to think the other teachers are giving them all this, and I’m not.

When referring to faculty colleagues use of PowerPoint slides, Jane notes that there is a student expectation to use more modern technologies:

I read a lot of faculty evaluations, and I have sometimes seen comments from students (about PowerPoint) It’s so old fashioned. And I don’t actually really care what other people are using in their classrooms, but I care what students think . . . if they’re expecting this and they’re seeing this as old fashioned and behind the times and clunky, its probably interfering with their process.

By citing “faculty evaluations” Jane extends the pressure further than meeting her students’ needs. Faculty evaluations are institutional practices of accountability and surveillance, and Jane makes note of these comments in these evaluations and responsibilizes the need to live up to “what students think I’m using”.

What does it mean to be, “old fashioned”? It seems to imply somehow being not as good of a teacher. But why is it bad and does it really mean this? Jane’s
choice of language – “clunky” and “behind the times” – speaks of an inevitable, progressive, and deterministic view of technologies as I discussed in Movement 3. Jane’s concern with, “what students think I’m using” shows her responsibilisizing the need to act as an entrepreneur herself and move forward with her technology use.

She also talks about students as a homogenous group in this view and when she talks about meeting, “their needs”. But what does it mean to meet their needs? Are the needs of each individual student so similar that it even makes sense to talk about it this way? Jane doesn’t problematize these questions as she distills students’ needs.

Jane’s language here also adopts a neo-liberal model metaphor for rationalizing an increase role of technologies. Here she talks about meeting the needs of students (consumer) adopting the neo-liberal ethos applied to higher education through provincial policy.

6.5 Synthesis and Summary

6.5.1 Change in way Faculty Talk about Technologies

When I look at these interview conversations as snapshots, shedding light on participants’ experiences, I am struck by the transformation in how they talk about technologies in their practice through the different stages of their careers.

Participants often spoke about their early uses of technologies using the symbolic language of the pioneering journey, and while they did recount frustrations, the overriding image was that they were proud of being amongst the first to do this work.

These views on their early uses of technologies mesh with and illustrate participants’ identity of themselves and the academics as independent and autonomous: they got to choose and use the technologies as they saw fit.

In these early stories, the technologies were mostly seen as additional to the main demands of their practice. But they didn’t speak of the technologies in the
sense of extra work; rather, as a bonus that they could take home and play with in the summer or on weekends. Furthermore, participants spoke about the technologies themselves as discrete objects – computers, word, printers – separate from them and their teaching.

But as the conversations turned towards their more current experiences with educational technologies, their feelings became much more complex. Recounting these more recent experiences, participants’ spoke of technologies no longer as discrete objects, but rather as thoroughly embedded in their practice. And the technologies changed from being additional toys to deeply embedded, participants talked about their experiences with the technologies very differently.

Many participants expressed concern over the time it takes to learn, maintain, and support the technologies. While participants also had to take time to do those things before, they didn’t seem to see it as being so onerous because they were making the choice to play with the technology. But now, with the technologies deeply embedded in their work, participants’ viewed the time requirements as more onerous and demanding.

Numerous participants also talked about support issues in a similar manner. Their previous, pioneering experiences also required IT support from BCU; however they rarely commented on support issues from those early days. But once the technologies became more ubiquitous and embedded into their practice, participants expressed a host of concerns around support for the use of technologies.

Discussions around support also revealed participants concerns surrounding about how they see themselves, how they are viewed by their students and colleagues, and how their role as instructors is changing over time. Most of the participants talked about their own experiences as students and their earlier experiences teaching with faculty seen as the experts, the “sage on the stage”. Participants were used to being, and being seen as, the authority. But that has changed.

With technologies so ubiquitous participants are no longer the authority on all in the classroom. At the very least, their students know more than they do about the technologies. And with access to the internet, students can instantly
have access to information that the participants - the teachers - don’t know about, even in their own field of expertise.

Not only does instant access to information change the participants’ role in the class, but their concerns over support further eroded their feeling of authority. Participants expressed concerned about how they would look “stupid” or like an “old goat” to their students if they couldn’t get the computer working properly at the front of the classroom.

In addition to expressing these concerns, participants’ framing of their current views frequently include contradictory feelings towards technologies. On the one hand, participants said that they don’t feel like BCU is forcing them to use technologies; on the other hand, they cite numerous examples of where they are required to use certain technologies such as the LMS or to input grades on-line using a student record system.

Participants feel conflicted. They want to be great teachers and they feel like they are doing great work already. Yet, they also feel, for a host of reasons, that they should incorporate more technologies into their teaching, even when they are not sure that the technologies will actually make their teaching better.

6.5.2 Different Logics

Some of the contradictions faculty face can be attributed to different logics evident in the interviews: one logic attributed to administration and the other attributed to teachers.

A logic attributed to the administration is illustrated by the fourth hour scheduling policy. Embedded in this logic is a neo-liberal ethos that efficiency (here manifest as the efficient use of space) should be an overriding priority in higher education. Based on this logic, the problem of long wait-lists for classes can be solved by eliminating the fourth hour, scheduling classes with less contact time, and adding more classes to the schedule.

However, now BCU is not facing the same burgeoning enrolment, and in particular the academic areas represented by participants in this study no longer have
excess enrolment. In fact, few courses in these areas have wait lists, and there are often classes with much fewer than a full complement of students. But there is no talk off adding a fourth scheduled hour back to these classes now that space is available. Instead, classes that are less than eighty percent full are cancelled, and the dominos fall such that some faculty members lose work.

The logic here is one of efficiency. But rather than being efficient working to the goal of having more students receive an education, it is a case of economic efficiency. This logic hinges on having more full classes – that can cover their costs – and not having classes run that are not full – and which would cost BCU money.

The increasing use of technologies at BCU can be looked at as an extension of the logic of efficiency. Incorporating the LMS allows faculty to use classroom space and time more efficiently. Having faculty create and edit their own course outlines is more efficient because it requires fewer support staff. Similarly, requiring faculty to submit grades on-line through a student registration system is more efficient than a paper based system that might involve more staff.

In stark contrast to this logic of efficiency, most participants talk about their own logic of education differently. This logic focusses almost entirely on relationships with students. Faculty talk about these interactions as the foundation of education. They talk about the relationships developing over time and in specific places. And this sense of time and place is something that participants feel is difficult to find when technologies are used to replaces face-to-face interactions with students. Participants spoke of their goals to, “make them [students] feel important” (Lisa), and, “to see themselves as having power and agency” (Michael), which these participants feel can only be enacted through their synchronous (in time and space) engagements with students.

6.5.3 Responsibilisizing

Notions of independence and autonomy kept recurring through much of the participants discussions. Earlier in their careers, the symbolism of the pioneering
journeys focussed on this autonomy. But as their uses of technologies continued, participants still spoke about their autonomy, but their stories were more complicated and sometimes contradictory. They spoke about not feeling pressure from the university to use technologies, but they expressed ways that they did feel pressure.

The narrative of autonomy is so strong that participants seemed to reflect the pressure back on to themselves, responsibilisizing the need to “keep current” and use technologies like what their younger colleagues, their students, indeed much of the field of higher education are doing. Contradictions also occurred as participants like Kevin felt the need to use more technologies – to “up my game”– even though he already thought he was doing a great job teaching and doesn’t believe that the technologies will improve his teaching.

This notion of autonomy is very powerful for these participants, and it led to them responsibilisizing the need to learn and use more technologies as they framed themselves as independent, entrepreneurial contractors, solely responsible for maintaining their employability — even when those technologies stand in contrast to what they feel are good educational practices.

6.5.4 Changing Field

The field of higher education has clearly changed with the widespread reach of digital technologies. And with the field changing the definition of work has changed for these participants. As it represents symbolic capital in BCU, most participants talked about the increasing importance of technology expertise and the declining importance of reading, publishing, and keeping current in their field – areas that they would traditionally associate with more symbolic capital.

While participants still use the language of autonomy, they clearly feel that they have less autonomy and independence over their work. Much more of their time is spend dealing with the concerns around technologies both inside the class and outside of it. Their work has become more bureaucratized and much more administrative work has been downloaded onto them. important form of symbolic
capital for these participants.

The teaching practice has changed considerably as participants struggle with the practice of engaging students in the sense of place and space that they have traditionally valued in their practice.
A movement which ties together previous themes and looks toward the future

In Movement 5 and Movement 6 I have given detailed descriptions of the data and answers to my two main research questions. In this movement, I recap and recast the evolution of my thoughts throughout the research process, I note additional observations and conclusion that resulted from the research, and I point to the limitations of the current study and areas of interest for future studies.

### 7.1 Recasting and Additional Conclusions

*I’m starting to look like an outdated old goat.* Kevin - BCU Faculty member

*You could literally hire James Cameron to make Math 101.* Marc Andreessen - Founder of Netscape

Yes, you have seen these quotes before in Movement 2. No, they have not been copied here by mistake. I have repeated them here because they are still
meaningful to me. But as my knowledge has expanded, and as the context at BCU has changed, I now see these statements in a different light. Now, having analyzed historical approaches towards technologies, having analyzed policy at different scales, and having analyzed data from interviews with study participants, I see these statements in the context of complex interactions and feedbacks between multiple scales of influence.

The seeds for this study grew from my experiences working with faculty members as Manager of BCU’s CET, and my first idea was to investigate why certain faculty use technologies one way and why other faculty members use it a different way.

In my work, I experienced faculty enthusiasm towards technologies, but I also noticed unease, conflict, and contradictions about the technologies and how they were being implemented at BCU. And I became increasingly more intrigued by these tensions. I wondered how could someone like Kevin, with such a stellar teaching record, feel like an anachronism? And at the other end of the spectrum, I wondered how someone like Andreessen could see the technologies as such unalloyed blessings?

My initial thought was to investigate the tensions by trying to understand faculty members’ individual attitudes and perspectives towards the technologies. And remembering my background and norms of my practice, this approach seemed like the obvious one to take.

After all, as I reviewed in Movement 3 there is a long history in e–learning and technology literature of investigating individual’s attitudes and perceptions towards technologies. And the language used (adopter, resister; digital native, digital immigrant) treats people as isolated individuals, cast under positive (adapter, native) or negative (resister, immigrant) connotations depending on how much they incorporate technologies into their teaching.

And this individualized, atomized approach is not just prevalent in the research, but has been acquired by those working in educational technology leadership as well. Even the everyday language used by those in the practice, that of
“users” and “tools”, implies that it is a matter understanding individual faculty members psychology to lead them towards using the technologies.

But as I progressed through the EdD program I became exposed to a diverse set of conceptual resources that gave me a new perspective on statements such as those by Kevin and Marc Andreessen. These resources helped me to understand more about policy generation, implementation, and implications. They helped me to understand different ways of approaching leadership. They helped me to understand the historical context of thinking about technologies. And they helped me to think anew about just what the purpose is of higher education. Incorporating these new resources into my thinking, it didn’t make much sense to investigate faculty perspectives in isolation. Instead, I found it useful to think of those faculty perspectives within the context of policy – at BCU, provincial policy, and national and global influences – within the context of historical approaches to technology, and within an expanded idea of the role of leadership.

I could see how BCU policy, such as the fourth hour policy, impacted both educational technologies at the university and how participants talked about those technologies. I could see how provincial policy - such as the Campus 2020 report and, more recently, the Skills for Jobs policy - interacted with institutional policy and participants practice at BCU. I could see how faculty members’ actions, by responsibilisizing the demands of incorporating digital technologies even when those using those technologies represented what they felt as good teaching practice, were making policy by their actions.

Although I had been working managing the CET for many years, I came to the job with technology skills, and not with a strong background understanding the theory and history of technology studies. I found it very helpful to be able to place my current context within the historical and theoretical frameworks that have been used to view technologies. The ideas reviewed in Movement 3 provided me with a helpful context within which to place individual statements, policy, and global trends.

And though I had been working for more than a decade in a role of educational
technology leadership, I had never previously thought much about what leadership means. In fact, I doubt that I would have been able to articulate a clear conception of my own views on educational leadership at that time, but I did recognize that my work environment was heavily influenced by the dominant bureaucratic-managerial model where leadership results from hierarchical rank within an organization and is centered around goals based on the needs of the organization and not those based on the needs of its members or of the greater society (see, for example Foster, 1989).

My thinking around these questions surrounding my practice has evolved as has my thinking and actions around educational leadership. I question the bureaucratic model’s initial assumptions equating leadership and management, and instead view leadership in my practice as (Foster, 1989) describes it:

Leadership is at its heart a critical practice, one that comments on present and former constructions of reality, that holds up certain ideals for comparison, and that attempts at the enablement of a vision based on an interpretation of the past. In being critical, then, leadership is oriented not just towards the development of more perfect organizational structures, but towards a reconceptualization of life practices where common ideals of freedom and democracy stand important (Foster, 1989, p. 52).

I have tried to take this critical approach to leadership towards my practice and this research. First, I am being critical of my own views by asking if my perspective and experience is appropriate for investigating these questions. Additionally, I question my role as an educational leader. Just because I am in a position of some decision making power, does that give me the right to carry out the practice as I see fit? I am also critical of the views of the faculty participants in this study. Why shouldn’t someone like Kevin try using more features of the LMS? And how does he know that his “old-school” teaching style is really the best? And I am critical of BCU. While it purports to create and implement policy in the service of greater student access or success, who gets to make those decisions? And how are those terms defined?
While this approach to leadership is a fundamentally critical practice, Foster reminds us that it is not enough to just be critical. If the critique identifies social inequities then this approach must be, at least to some degree, transformative. It also must be educative by aiming at the transformation through analysis of the current conditions and presentation of a vision of possible alternatives. And finally, the approach is ethical in at least two respects. It is concerned with the individual ethical actions of the leaders and also with the overall ethical commitment of the community. By thinking about these issues, writing about them, and implementing them in my practice, I am trying to enact change.

As I travelled through the EdD journey, I was able to draw upon these resources and perspectives, and I began to look at statements like Kevin’s and Andreessen’s with a much better understanding of the larger contexts and interactions between those contexts.

My perspective went from viewing the individual statements from completely atomized faculty members to seeing them as reflecting and interacting with the larger scale forces. While I was still interested in the same topic, the new perspective lead to me to focus on understanding how faculty members frame digital technologies within the contexts of policy and larger scale influences such as globalization. And I became more interested in looking at the different scales and the interrelationships between them.

To return to the musical metaphor, instead of just hearing individual instruments, my new perspective made me better equipped to hear the entire orchestra.

**Conclusion 1** The study of policy, leadership, and education during the EdD program gave me a much more broad and integrated perspective towards observations in my day-to-day educational technology leadership practice.

At the same time that my knowledge and perspective were changing, the specific context at BCU changed markedly between the study’s nascent stage and now that it is complete. While change may be a constant in higher education, this change was faster and more significant than any others during my two and a half decades of working experience.
BCU was newly designated a special purpose teaching university just before the study started. However, at least for faculty members, the day to day operations and practices were very much the same as during the previous decades of history as a community college.

When the study was conceived BCU had burgeoning enrolment, waitlists for classes, and not enough building space to create any more classes. Furthermore, traditional academic areas - where the study participants teach - accounted for the majority of BCU’s faculty and student body. At that time, the use of digital technologies in the teaching practice was seen as a largely based on each faculty member’s choice. For example, if faculty members wanted an LMS site for any given course, they contacted the CET to create the site for them. Finally, when the study was being formulated, I was working full–time as manager of the CET, working with faculty members who were interested in incorporating educational technologies into their teaching.

Today the context is very different. BCU has been established as a university for nearly a decade, and it has entirely new governance and academic leadership. As participants reminded me frequently during interviews, none of the academic leadership moved to those positions from teaching roles at BCU.

BCU is now following strategic directions aligned closely with the BC provincial government’s policies of skills and jobs training. BCU is expanding degree offerings in areas designated (and funded) as growth areas by this policy, and the university has cancelled a number of programs and degrees in areas not designated and funded by provincial government policy.

Today the overall enrolment at BCU is lower than in the past. In particular, lower enrolment is most noticeable in the traditional academic areas (those in which study participants teach): most of the traditional academic areas offer twenty to thirty percent fewer courses than they were when I started this study. At the same time, BCU has expanded its degree and course offerings in applied areas. The traditional academic areas now account for less than one third of BCU’s faculty and student population, and the internal power has shifted from the academic
to applied faculties.

Now, digital technologies are ubiquitous and their use in teaching practice is the norm. In contrast to the example above from the early days of the study, LMS sites are now automatically created for each running of each course. Faculty no longer request a LMS site, but it is created automatically, betraying the assumption that faculty members will use those sites. All students in each course are also automatically enrolled in these automatically created LMS sites. While faculty members are not required to use the LMS site, using them has become normative. Additionally, because sites are automatically populated with students, faculty feel pressure to use the LMS even if they were not otherwise planning to do so. And in addition to LMS technologies, all BCU classrooms are now equipped with instructors’ podiums (computer, DVD, etc), data projectors, and document cameras.

Finally, my own work has changed drastically. The CET was eliminated two years ago. While no official reason was announced, I was told that the change was made to save money because faculty members are all now so familiar with the technologies that a CET office was no longer required to help with the pedagogical aspects of using the technology and that any questions faculty had could be answered by the IT department.

And within this context of these changes, the timeline seems significant. For many years, the working lives of most faculty participants had not changed substantially. As I was beginning the study, changes related to government policy (fourth hour policy, changing program mix, increase in technologies) were just starting to become noticeable. And now, that the study is completed, those changes are even more apparent: BCU has undergone substantial change to its programs to align with government priorities, digital technologies are ubiquitous both in the classroom in non-classroom aspects of faculty practice.

The findings from this study may have changed if the timing were different. For example, the impact of the policy documents studied were just beginning to be felt at BCU when I conducted interviews with participants. Had I done the study five years earlier, I suspect participants would have not spoken of these policies,
and I suspect they would have spoken even less about provincial policy effects. In contrast, if I interviewed the participants today, I suspect participants would have made stronger connections to provincial policy.

**Conclusion 2** Understanding the current and historical context is important to help understand how faculty frame educational technologies.

Wearing my geographer’s hat, thinking about scale and interactions between scales provides a useful way to think about this research.

In this study participants spoke most often about their immediate personal and local scale. A number of the research questions asked about their particular setting and conditions, but some questions also asked them about conditions and influences in a more general sense. But despite these prompts to increase the scale, participants talked mostly about experiences at their own scale. That is, they talk about their teaching, their experiences, the relationships with colleagues and students.

And when asked to try and make connections, they primarily did so at the local scale - within their classes and their departments. And when they make connections with policy they also mostly did so at the smallest, institutional scale policies such as the 4th hour. Participants did occasionally talk about larger, provincial scale factors, yet rarely make direct connections to their personal local conditions.

This local scale thinking is illustrated by the recurring talk about autonomy. While many of the participants’ experiences can be connected to provincial scale policies (e.g. expansion of use of technologies related to BC Campus, 4th hour related to demand for government reporting and in increase in FTE’s, etc.), participants themselves rarely seemed to make those connections. Instead, they seemed to relate those experiences to the local, institutional scale. Thinking about things on the local scale seems to be a way participants make sense of their practice and their identity.

When participants spoke about their early experiences with technologies they often referred to the technology as discrete from themselves (the computer, that
old thing, etc.). And as an object separate from themselves, it seems relatively easy to understand technologies when spoken about on this personal scale.

**Conclusion 3** Using the geographical concept of scale is helpful to analyze how faculty see their experiences with technologies.

**Conclusion 4** Participants frame technologies at their own personal scale as they talk about their experiences using technologies in their practice.

But now that the technologies are more ubiquitous and embedded, it seems that this similar line of thinking, primarily in one scale, can explain some of the conflicts faculty express. Not recognizing the interactions between the scales (influences of provincial or global policy) leads to responsibilisizing and some of the contradictions. For example, comments like, “Even though I’m not convinced that it will make me a better teacher, I need to take the time to learn the technologies” don’t recognize connections to larger scale phenomena and therefore contributes to a feeling of lack of power to make any changes and a feedback loop that further enhances thinking on a local scale. At least for some participants, the result is a contradiction between what they feel like they have to do and what they feel is good practice. Without recognizing the interactions between scales and being able to move between these scales, the influences and feedback are easily missed.

**Conclusion 5** Looking only at the personal scale leads to missing the interconnections between scales that impact the participants’ current context. Not seeing the interconnections in this study led to participants’ responsibilisizing (taking on the blame of not keeping up).

The participants in this study were all experienced faculty members with backgrounds in the Social Science disciplines. To varying degrees, participants were all familiar with concepts such as power, fields, and globalization. Yet, I found that they didn’t draw on these concepts when referring to digital technologies within their own practice. Again, it seems that when focussing on the small, local
scale, participants didn’t recognize the interactions and make connections to these larger scale phenomena or even invoke concepts with which they are familiar.

Although I didn’t specifically ask participants to comment on concepts such as globalization, I did ask them to draw any connections they could between their local conditions and larger scale influences. I found it surprising that they didn’t invoke the language and ideas from their academic fields. As changes at BCU have become more evident, an area of future study would be to investigate if participants would now draw upon these concepts and the language of their fields to make connections between policy and their practice.

**Conclusion 6** Participants in the study were familiar with certain theoretical constructs but did not draw upon these when trying to understand their own working experiences with technologies in their practice.

### 7.2 Limitations and Future Research

This study has a number of limitations, mostly related to the time and context of the study and to the nature of the participant group.

Because it is a case study conducted at a particular location and time, the results are necessarily limited BCU at that specific time. Furthermore, the study participants all came from the same Faculty from within BCU, and all of the participants were full-time faculty members, most with high seniority. Including participants from more areas from within the university, and including those with less seniority or with something other than full-time status, would have likely brought in different perspectives. Additionally, I did not have access to agreements between BCU and technology companies and vendors, so this study was not able to accurately assess the scale, importance, or impact of these agreements on local and provincial policy.

There are numerous areas of future study related to this topic that could prove useful and complementary to this study.

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It would be interesting to conduct the same study again now that the impact of provincial policies has become more evident. Would the participants speak differently about those policies? Would they draw more connections at different scales?

Within one institution (say BCU) it would be useful to explore how the different detailed contexts within the institution could lead to different views and perspectives on technologies. How would faculty members from an area with increasing symbolic capital view the changes?

It would also be useful to expand to other institutions within BC to investigate how similar provincial and global contexts interact with different settings and contexts. What differences and similarities would arise in those contexts?

It would also be interesting to return to my final conclusion – that the participants didn’t draw upon those theoretical constructs with which they are familiar – to see if they explicitly draw upon those ideas now, in a different context, when speaking about technologies in their practice.
Chapter 8

Postlude

Did you hear that? The oboes just tumbled down a scale in descending thirds. What’s that now? An arpeggio from the entire string section, a crescendo matching the rising pitch.

In the prelude, I opened this work by introducing the analogy of the researcher as an audience member to a grand orchestral concert, shifting focus between the individual instruments and the sound of the entire orchestra, between the individual themes and the larger sound, meaning, and effect of the piece.

Now that the study is complete, I think the metaphor is still relevant, but it needs to be extended.

Sometimes you are aware of the sound of the entire orchestra, the warmth blanketing you. So in tune. So in time. Like everyone involve as integral, intermeshed vital parts of the same, living organism. But hold on. What’s that? Something is off. This is not in tune. This is not in time. Now it goes every more awry. The entire performance crashes, out of sync. It grates and disturbs you. It has become harsh, discordant, cacophonous. And then you realize that you are not in the audience, you are on stage: a performer, a participant.

In the original metaphor I placed myself as an observer: an outsider. Now I realize that I am also up on the stage performing the piece too, just like the
participants in my study. So I am an insider doing this research as well. Yet, at the same time, I still maintain elements of being an outsider: I have actually collected and analyzed the data and bring in the host of theoretical and conceptual resources described in this dissertation. Perhaps the metaphor might best be thought of as shifting perspectives, sometimes from the audience and sometimes as a performer on stage.

Additionally, the metaphor should be extend to include the details, results and consequences of the performance itself. When participants discuss their early experiences with technologies, or moments in the classroom where they make strong connections with students, they speak in a tone and language that mirrors moments of musical consonance, where the harmonies and rhythms embody a sense of calmness, smoothness, and order.

In contrast, participants’ conflict and angst with the tensions they feel surrounding the technologies can be seen as parallel to elements of harmonic dissonance or rhythmic tension within an orchestral performance. Using this extended metaphor, we could see the tension and contradictions participants express as analogous to tensions and dissonance in the musical performance. That dissonance could result from the individual themselves, from their section, the entire orchestra, or even broader. And we could extend the metaphor to see the “different” logics described in Movement 6 as musical tension and dissonance, resulting from fundamental differences amongst the performers in concepts of tone and time.

Extending the metaphor to include myself as a performer and the overall effect of the piece helps me to think about my own role in my practice. As a section player or a section leader, I contribute to the overall effect of the piece: to the timing and the tuning.

But how will I act? I can focus my efforts on altering my playing to helping the ensemble play more in time and more in tune. On the other hand, I may want to work towards discordance and alternate rhythms as ways of resisting what I see as misguided direction and policy.

I can not answer that question with one overarching, consistent answer. In
some situations I will act to try to make the performance more harmonious, while at others times I will resist and work towards cacophony. Like the policy and participants in my study, my actions and response will largely be influenced by the particular context within which I am situated.
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Appendix A

Research Ethics Board Certifications

This research project was approved by the UBC Behavioural Ethics Research Board (Certificate H11 – 00889 and the BCU Research Ethics Committee (Certificate 2011 – 20).
Appendix B

Interview Guide

Planned questions for the first interviews are listed below.

Questions

What comes to mind when you hear the term Educational Technologies?
How would you define Educational Technologies?
Our field is rife with terminology and jargon. Rather than provide a definition of the terms (e.g., educational technologies, ICT’s, etc), I want to find out what those terms mean to the participants. Moreover, this conversation will allow us to construct a common language for the remainder of the interview. What meanings do people make of the terms?

Please tell me a bit about your history using technologies. Can you remember your first experiences with computers? With the internet? What were those experiences like? Did anything excite you? Frustrate you?
Did you work as a team or on your own?
This will help to establish their technological expertise and also will be probed to identify some of the symbolism they attribute to technology. I hope to elicit rich stories to help illustrate how technologies are a part of their habitus.
Can you tell me about how you use educational technologies as part of your practice at BCU?
I will ask the participants to tell stories about if and how they use technologies in their teaching. I am interested in looking for the connections (or lack thereof) between their professional use of educational technologies and use of technologies in their private life. I will follow up on these examples and ask why they use the technologies the way they do. I anticipate responses will help explain how they feel about technologies and the influence of institutional politics in how those understandings are translated into their practice.

Can you give me some specific examples when you have incorporated educational technologies into your teaching? Have you found it useful or not and how so? Can you give me some examples of where you considered incorporating technologies but decided not to do so? Why not?
Following from the previous question, this question aims to probe into the specific and detailed circumstances impacting each participant’s choices surrounding educational technologies.

How do your views on educational technologies connect with those of your department and colleagues? Your faculty? The university’s administration? Are there any directives or policies that influence how you use educational technologies in your practice?
Here I will probe how the relationships within the functional areas at BCU play a role in impacting technology usage. I anticipate this will lead into a number of follow-up questions, depending on their responses, to establish the detailed nature of the impact of these relationships and their educational technology usage. For example: Do they feel pressured to use technologies? Do they feel encouraged? How so? How do factors such as their seniority, experience, and position play a role?
In my study, I’m trying to connect how people talk about the aims of education in general with how they see the role for technology. So here’s the million dollar question: What do you see as the ultimate aim(s) of education? Please tell me about any experiences that helped you establish this view.

Here I am trying to understand faculty member’s views about the aims of education.

And the second million dollar question: How does your understanding of those aims of education relate to how you think about and how you use educational technologies?

With this question, I hope to more fully understand the connections faculty make between their vision for education and the role they see for educational technologies within this view.

Do you have an ideal scenario you could imagine for educational technology at BCU?

Following up on the previous questions, I am interested in how participants believe technologies could best serve education. I hope to see what they think is possible and desirable. For example, do they see the ultimate role of educational technologies as producing more employable graduates, as personal productivity enhancers, as social networking tools, as something else entirely, or as a combination of these concepts.

Now the opposite. Could you envision a nightmare scenario for educational technologies at BCU?

As opposed to the previous question, here I am interested in their dystopic view. I believe this will help to further bring out the symbolism participants attach to technology as well as more details about the political setting and power relationships.
Appendix C

Sample Code Book

Table C.1 presents a sample from Version 3.0 of my code book. This sample shows the codes, descriptions, and sample excerpts primarily related to how participants used symbolism in their descriptions of their experiences with digital technologies. Other top level code tables in the code book (not included here) include those related to organizational issues and structure, those most closely related to participants’ expressed emotions, those related to the details of their teaching practices, and those related to their aims of education.
### Table C.1: Codes associated with the top-level code: symbol

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>symbol</td>
<td>Top level code that that exhibits symbolic meanings. These represent and idea, process, or entity</td>
<td>“I was one of the first”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pioneer</td>
<td>describe their early technology use in terms of lone-ranger, epic, lonely, a journey</td>
<td>“fully diffused through BCU. Everyone had a computer in their office of course, and every faculty member was on email”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ubiquitous</td>
<td>the technologies are common place in the system</td>
<td>“as Im getting older and the average faculty age is getting younger, Im starting to look like an old outdated goat around here”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>oldgoat</td>
<td>anachronism, out of date</td>
<td>“Theyre all better than me .. every single one I’m finding that.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>immigrant</td>
<td>faculty describe themselves as digital immigrants and different from the digital native students. They use the technologies but aren’t as fluent in them.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Term</td>
<td>Description</td>
<td>Quote</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>serendipity</td>
<td>describing things that seemed to happen more by accident or circumstances than by plan</td>
<td>“I think it sort of just evolved that way. I think I ... I never though I would ever be doing this ”, “So I guess I accidentally stumbled upon a place I'd never even heard of ...”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>upgame</td>
<td>describes feeling like they need to incorporate technologies to stay current or be perceived as staying current</td>
<td>“I feel all my colleagues and using it and I just gotta raise my game in that area”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>repository</td>
<td>describing technologies such as moodle as a place to put material for later retrieval</td>
<td>“site or platform to put course materials on. Powerpoint slides, course outline, and assignments”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>social</td>
<td>describes technology in a social sense, i.e. about community, communications</td>
<td>“I wanted to communicate with a few friends”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>timesink</td>
<td>describing technologies as taking too much time, or too much of the limited time available. Related to organizational and emotion top-level categories (overworked) and time pressure</td>
<td>“that could be time maybe better spent reading yet another journal article or keeping up ... but now I gotta spend time with technology”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
overload describing student as having enough to do already and worry that adding more through technology is too much. Also related to teaching category and organization

“with the assignments, the essays, the lectures, and the textbook I think that’s enough resources.” “if you add on a whole bunch of website or Moodle assignments, or things like that I just don’t know if it’s going to add any quality”

lateadopter describing themselves as being late to start using technologies

“I was a very reluctant starter”

lazy describing the feeling that putting everything up on LMS makes the student lazy by taking away valuable educational opportunities (e.g. like creating their own notes)

“(access) … makes the students lazy because they’re expecting us to give them more”

native describing students as digital natives

“They’ve grown up with them. They’re used to dealing with them and want to continue”

lovehate describes their two sided relationship with technology

“I have a love-hate relationship with technology”

security describe worries about job security related to increasing use of technologies in teaching

“They can do everything by distance, and that can put me out of a job”
| tool | describing technology as a tool to be used as the instructor wishes to accomplish certain tasks |
| spin | describing gov’t or admin spin to encourage the use of technologies |
|      | “It’s a really good tool to help me do what I want to do.” |
|      | “… a government coming along and deciding to call this the green of education …” |
Dear Colleague:

My name is Chris Gratham, and I am writing you as a doctoral candidate in the Department of Educational Studies at the University of British Columbia. My doctoral dissertation involves conducting a study entitled “Examining the Symbolic and Political Dimensions of Faculty use of Educational Technologies”, and I am seeking BCU faculty members who are interested in participating in this study.

The seed of this research project was planted through my experiences and observations working with faculty at the CET. Educational technology literature and practice typically view faculty use of technology through an instrumental lens: faculty enumerate their particular goals, evaluate the attributes of the technologies available, and, within the limits of the institutions support structure, decide which technology is best suited to achieve their goals.

While not discounting an instrumental component, my experiences at BCU suggest that there are other dimensions that are at least as important in influencing faculty choices surrounding educational technologies. These ideas have been further cultivated during the last four years of my doctoral studies as I have incor-
porated sociology, educational, and technology literature into my views.

In this study I am interested in going beyond the instrumental and investigating the impact of these other dimensions on your use of educational technology. I am interested in how you think about education and technology and how these thoughts mediate your use of educational technology. I am interested in how your background, your family, and your discipline influence your educational technology choices. I am interested in how the details of how the relationships within your departments, disciplines, and the university itself impact your technology use.

My research objective is to investigate the symbolic and political dimensions that impact faculty use of educational technology at BCU. To achieve this objective I plan to interview up to ten faculty members. If you choose to participate in this study, it would involve less than two hours of your time and include the following activities:

- Respond to the brief demographic questionnaire on the last page of this letter. This questionnaire will take less than ten minutes to complete and will allow me to select study participants with an eye to diversity in age, gender, discipline, seniority, and expertise in technology.

- Participate in an interview related to your thoughts on teaching and technology, your background, your experiences using technology, and your experiences at Capilano. This interview will take about 60 minutes.

- Participate in a follow-up interview with the goal of clarifying any points of confusion in the first interview or raising any new questions that have arisen out of my analyses of the initial interviews. This follow up interview will take between 30-45 minutes.

Your participation in this research is completely voluntary. If you agree to participate you may withdraw from the study at any time without any negative consequences or any explanation.
The data for this study will be used to write my doctoral dissertation and any accompanying articles.

Confidentiality in responding to questions during individual interviews will be protected by using pseudonyms for all participants, their colleagues, and their departments. Furthermore, all recordings, data, and paper for this study will be kept locked in my home office with backup copies locked in the UBC office of my research supervisor, Dr. Michelle Stack.

In addition to myself, the research team for this study consists of the following members of the Department of Educational Studies: Michelle Stack Ph D, Associate Professor and research supervisor; Deirdre Kelly Ph D, Professor; and Andr Mazawi Ph D, Associate Professor. If you are interested in participating in this study please complete the Demographic Questionnaire for BCU Faculty on the following page and return within seven days to me via campus mail or to my email address.

Best Regards,

Chris Gratham
Doctoral Candidate
Department of Educational Studies
The University of British Columbia
Demographic Questionnaire for BCU Faculty

1. Name:

2. Primary Department:

3. Gender:

4. Age: <30, 31-40, 41-50, 51-60, >60

5. Appointment Status (RFT, RPT, etc.)

6. Number of years teaching at BCU:

7. What is your expertise level using technologies? (Choose a number from 1-5 where 1 represents very little expertise and 5 represents expert use):

8. How much do you incorporate educational technologies in your teaching? (Choose a number from 1-5 where 1 represents very little and 5 represents to a large extent):

9. Do you think that increased use of and access to educational technologies has the potential to improve your teaching? (Choose a number from 1-5 where 1 represents very little or no potential to improve it and 5 represents great potential to improve it):