What facilitates and/or inhibits full-time faculty members' participation in online (including blended) education in Illinois colleges and universities?

Evans Research Grant Presentation

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# Our inspiration for the project

Concept

- Qualitative exploratory study as first step
- Pilot study to be followed by a survey to faculty
- Generic themes from administrators and those working closely on online education initiatives
- Use data from pilot to inform survey
- Include ICCHE affiliated members

Sample (proposed)

- 4 community colleges
- 2 public universities
- 2 private universities

Sample (actual)

- 2 public universities
- 1 private university
- 2 community colleges
- 8 proposed and sought and 5 institutions participated
- Multiple administrators/institution were interviewed
- Total # of interviews=13
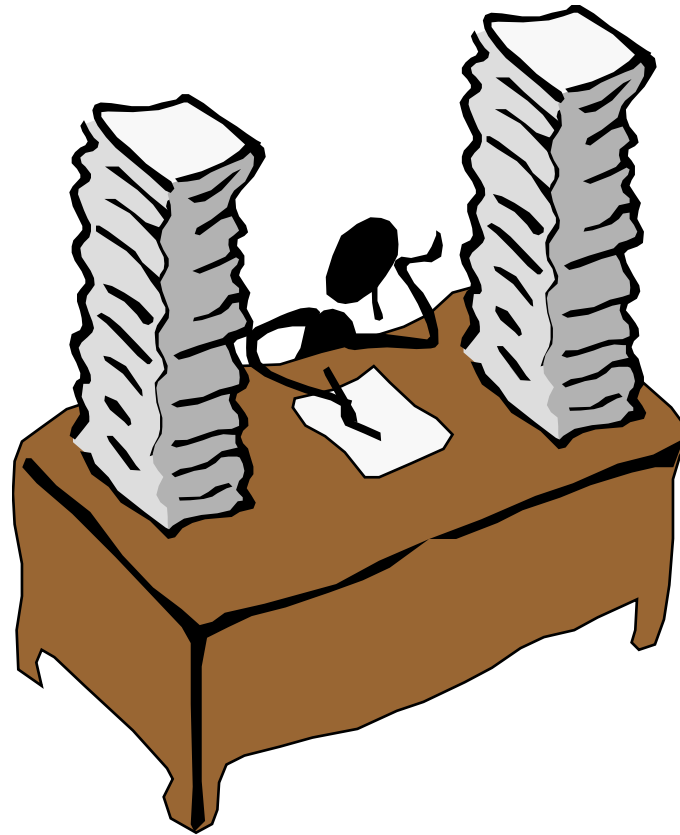
Disruptive Innovations

- Disruptive Innovation Theory (Clayton Christiansen)

- Two types of technological change:
  - Sustaining technological changes
  - Disruptive technological changes

- Exploratory Questions:
  - Is online education a disruptive or sustaining innovation for colleges and universities?
  - Does this depend upon institutional type?
  - How do administrators perceive their faculty's response to this innovation?

Expected themes:
Bottom-up
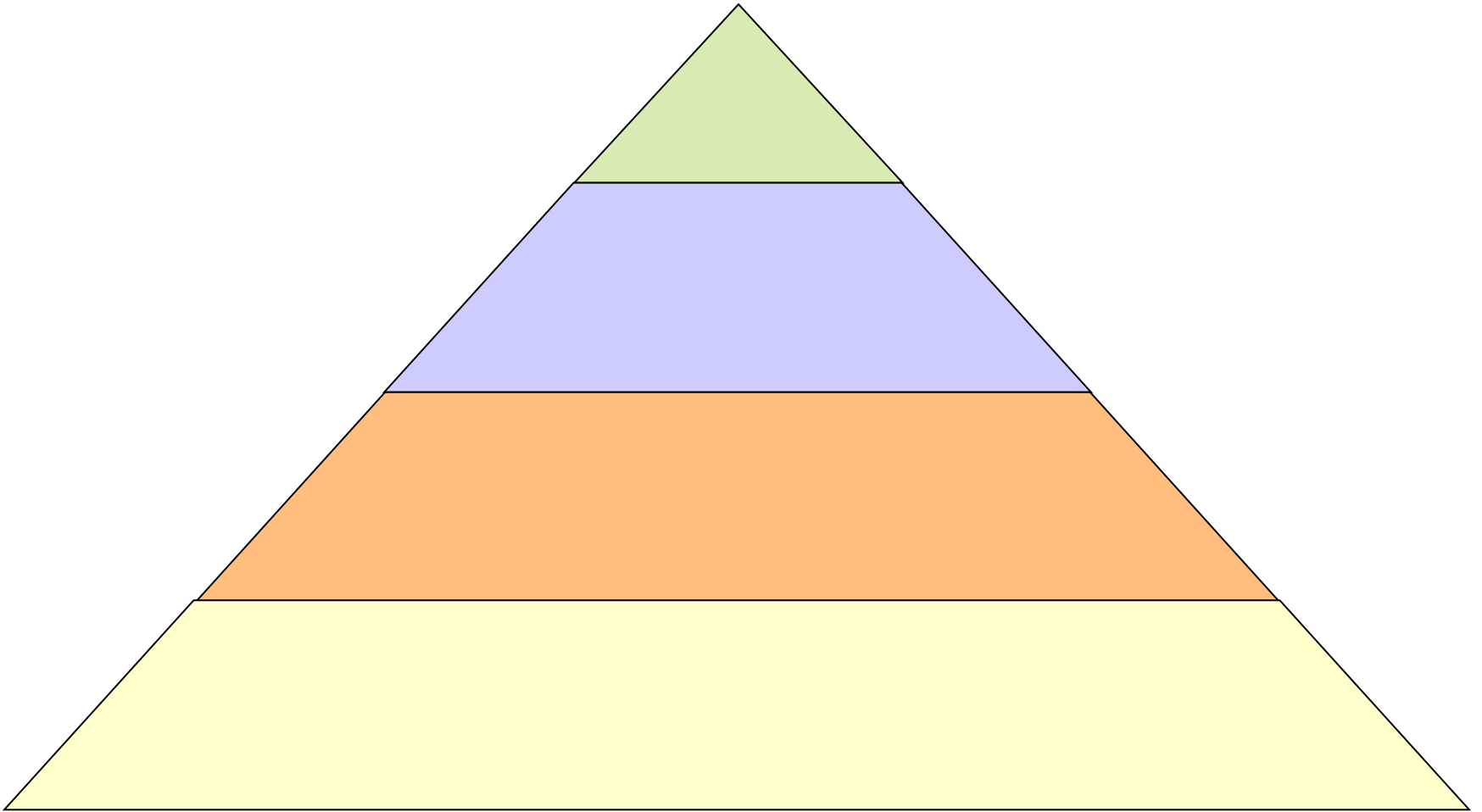
Expected Themes

• Some institutions, departments and individuals remain resistant to online education based on their perceptions that online equals lower quality.

• Approaches to and perspectives of online education vary from institution to institution.

• Interest in online education is growing

Unexpected Themes

• Community Colleges are eager participants in online education, both institutionally and among faculty. One Dean said she "doesn't need to encourage them, she needs to <u>discourage</u>" faculty from teaching online in order to ensure that there are full time faculty in face to face courses.

• Support & Training: Institutions vary greatly on the degree of support and training they offer their faculty.

• Intellectual Property is not a "hot" topic at most of these campuses.

• Differences in faculty interest in online education cannot be generalized by demographic factors or position.

Unexpected Themes:
Cohesion within institutions

- Some institutions have greater cohesion internally regarding online education than do others. At one 4-year institution one subject indicated "no difference in attitude regarding online education by faculty rank" and another person commented "the older faculty have less interest due to being less tech savvy and greater skepticism regarding quality of online education"

- While each institution in the sample expressed enthusiasm toward online education, institutions varied by degree

- Some institutions in the study were—across disciplines—highly invested in online education

- Other institutions—across disciplines—were more circumspect— more concerned about faculty workloads on campus and grappling with balance between on campus and online offerings

- The issue of disciplines emerged

Facilitating factors

Institutional
- Financial
  - Increase revenues without having to build new buildings
- Survival
  - One institution faced closing its doors because their target population could not pick up and move to campus. Online courses helped them stay open.
- Mission
  - Fulfills mission of the institution by expanding access
  - Serving one's profession by expanding academic reach.
  - An example was a school of nursing that found it necessary to move online given the shortage of nurses in America.

Facilitating factors

Departmental

- Financial

- Competitive Necessity
  - Business college observing their peers going online

- Student demand
  - Students wanting increased flexibility
  - Potential students are unable or unwilling to come to campus
    (Nursing programs, Seminary)

Facilitating factors

Personal

• Financial (stipends)
• Online teaching as part of load.
• Flexibility of schedule (particularly for adjunct faculty with other jobs)
• Peer pressure (the skeptical seeing "pioneers" having success).
• Support from colleagues.
• Observing students who needed increased flexibility
• "Increased interest in technology"
• "Like the candid interactions" in student discussions.
• Improvements in technology –not just putting powerpoint slides online anymore.
• Their own experiences as online students

Inhibiting factors (pedagogical)

- Preparation time
- Comfort (or lack thereof) with technology
- Curriculum doesn't lend itself to online
  - "Courses that are hands-one like studio art and courses that focus on classroom experiences like public speaking are generally not considered compatible with an online teaching platform."
- Belief that curriculum doesn't lend itself to online
  - Example: A department head who needed to wait until a "chair" retired as the "chair" was highly resistant to online teaching. Once the person retired the department was able to pursue online education.

Inhibiting factors (perception)

- "Faculty miss student interaction and energy they get from students"
- "A belief that online education isn't a quality education…."
- Perception that "online students won't be as good as classroom students"
- "Not comfortable teaching online, don't want to learn it."
- Fear of the unknown; Lack of understanding of how you teach online.
- "As it (online education) grows in popularity, some feel they must jump on the band wagon even if they don't believe it is as conducive to student learning as face-to-face instruction."
- Belief that online education does not match with the mission of the institution.

Inhibiting factors (support)

- Lack of technical/instructional design support
  - "Who helps when the technology doesn't work?"

Tipping points

- Demands of the field
- Competition with peer institutions
- Demographic trends
- Financial need
- Development stipends (or lack thereof)
    Faculty are not necessarily paid to develop courses
        online—even if they are expecting it
- Mission of the institution
- Strong interest in non-traditional student, historically, led one institution to see online programs as a good fit. In fact, an online program ended up helping the institution create on-campus programs.
- Faculty members direct experience—as student (in one case) and as teacher

On the horizon?

- Faculty with tenure living away from campus area due to online education
- Training programs—some now require extensive training prior to teaching online (especially for new faculty and adjunct faculty); others less organized but generally available for consulting purposes.
- IP didn't seem to be an issue across the sample, pockets of concern did emerge. More of a need to address.
- Possible expanded study, if resources are available.