"JazZinG uP" the teaching in a Re-newing Poly-Versity Centre for Innovation & Entrepreneurship

J.-P. Mellalieua,b

aNew Zealand Centre for Innovation & Entrepreneurship, Unitec New Zealand Institute of Technology, Private Bag 92025, Mt Albert, 1142 Auckland, New Zealand
bUniversity of Botswana, Faculty of Business, Centre for Academic Development, 0000 Gaborone, Botswana
ceo@myndsurfers.org.nz

Principal Topic The article responds to the apposite questions: What new key initiatives could be adopted by a newly-reformed, tertiary-sector, dual-mode school of business, innovation, and enterprise (Sbie) to ’jazz up’ its practical application of modern information and communication technologies, and other innovations in teaching and learning? ... How should the new initiatives be deployed in order to embrace not only the school’s current core teaching activities, but also the school’s need to create and introduce risk-managed learning environments and learning adventures that give credence to Sbie’s aspiration to deliver ‘real world’ and research-informed learning?

Methodology/Key Propositions In view of the urgency for implementing practical responses to earlier versions of the foregoing apposite questions, an emergent (chaordic) strategy was implemented. In effect, several initiatives were trialled by the author as part of his teaching duties allocated in upon his return in February 2006 from a 9-month tour of duty in southern Africa and the southern United States. The initiatives, conducted with the assistance of the institution’s centre for teaching and learning innovation first focussed on overcoming students’ aversions to team-based learning, expanding the use of on-line learning systems, increasing the use of digital multi-media resources, and introducing the Enterprise in Action (EIA) ”the- atresport”/”reality TV” programme format. (Mellalieu, 2006). With little time to complete a comprehensive literature review or survey of the school’s staff and students about their use of teaching and learning technologies, the ‘pracademic’ implementation approach was informed by the author’s prior experience - episodically successful - with creating and implementing computer-based strategic decision support systems (Mellalieu & Hall, 1984), adventure and action learning environments, and novel, self-directed pedagogical approaches such as Enterprise MasterWorks (Mellalieu, 1998, 1989), and the EIA programme format mentioned earlier. In general, the chaordic approach was underpinned by the author’s observation that innovative and creative output can be generated from students (learning partners) if the teacher (facilitator) deploys a ”reward” system informed by the dictum to ”oe reward excellence; reward outrageous failure; but do not reward mediocrity” 1(Mellalieu, 2001, 2004). Tenuous memories of Ackoff’s (1978) seminal principles of idealized design and interactive planning informed tacitly the author’s approach, as did his aspirations to explore the application of the principles of ”chaordic leadership” (Hock, 2000), and grounded theory research methodology (Dick, 2006), all the while under strict demands for quick results and a decrease in student complaint rates.

Results and Implications The article describes the start-up and conceptual launch of SBE-LAB 2013 in March 2006. As an early priority, team-building techniques were used in class to help establish productive heterogeneously mixed seven-person student ”learning clusters” and assignment teams assembled from the learning partners. As part of the classroom pedagogy, strategy business cases discussions on strategic planning were held, focussing especially on the ”growth pains” experienced by small/medium enterprise, newly de-regulated state sector enterprise, and enterprise facing turnaround situations. The use of the BlackBoard® on-line learning system was expanded beyond nominal use (by Sbie teachers), especially in relation to the tutor offering unsolicited advice on the requirements for assignments and preparation for forthcoming interventions in teaching and learning. The performance criteria for pre-class preparation, written language, professional presentation, and oral contribution expected of the students was framed isomorphically, so that students were encouraged to imagine that they were working as part of a team of world-wide strategy consultants. However, within the first few weeks of two of the author’s four courses, a significant number of complaints began to issue forth from many students. The complaints pertained to the perceived lack of ”real” teaching;
the minimal, and apparently disorganized use of formal "talk and chalk" lecturing; the over-abundance of email from the teacher generated by the on-line BlackBoard "Announcement" sub-system; and the teacher's allegedly "manic crusade" to raise substantially the students' ability to write formal executive reports for professionals for whom English is an Alternative Language (EAL). In attempts to resolve the first semester's difficulties in the teaching/learning environment for the two courses, several additional innovations were introduced to the second semester delivery of the courses, commencing in July 2006. The introduction of a peer review of students' assignments one week prior to their final assignment submission has generated good results in raising student's confidence and performance in document preparation. An A+ Assignment Writing Guide (Mellalieu, 2001), presented in the genre of a project management work break-down structure and Gaunt chart aids the students to both plan their assignment writing task, and evaluating the 'earned value' against target earned value (grade) for a specific assignment presented by their peers. The article concludes with lessons drawn hitherto from our experience in commencing the launch of the SBE-LAB 2013 concept. The results are discussed in relation to the product and system development literatures including 'voice of the customer'. See, for instance, Coleman, Frederick and Mellalieu (2006), and the LASO framework for the management of technological transformation (Uys (2003)). The focus on the needs of the new and re-newing business crystalizes SBE-LAB's priorities for courseware, student/staff development, and acquisition of appropriate information and communication technologies. Our 'stretch intent' is to perfect a wide-spread explosion of 'real world learning adventures' designed and executed by - and for - the school's staff, its students, stakeholder, and other learning partners. Ultimately, the SBE-LAB concept envisages several 'learning laboratory environments' where teachers and students can learn - with confidence and safety - how to apply new technologies and new pedagogies relevant for "new" - and re-newed - business. Finally, the emergent principles for successful, rapid, high-impact 'Hyper-Action Grounded Research', are elucidated.

Contact
Jeanne-Pierre Mellalieu. New Zealand Centre for Innovation & Entrepreneurship, Unitec New Zealand Institute of Technology, Private Bag 92025, Mt Albert, 1142 Auckland, New Zealand. (T) +6421420118, (F) +64212181233, Email: ceo@myndSurfers.org.nz