Chapter IV

Toward Technological Bloat and Academic Technocracy: The Information Age and Higher Education

George S. McClellan, Dickinson State University, USA
Gary A. Cruz, The University of Arizona, USA
Amy Scott Metcalfe, The University of British Columbia, Canada
Richard L. Wagoner, The University of Arizona, USA

Abstract

While the strategic goals of Knowledge Management might seem new to the academy, higher education has been central to the growing Knowledge Economy and the Information Age for some time. As electronic communications and information systems have been widely adopted in colleges and universities, little scholarship has reflected upon the organizational and social changes that these technologies bring to the academic workplace. This chapter provides the theoretical groundwork...
for understanding three key transformations in higher education: the
digital restructuring of academic labor; the use of technology as basis for
efficiency arguments; and the unintended consequences of IT accretion,
which we call “technological bloat.” As a consequence of these
transformations, a new organizational structure may be emerging in
higher education.

Introduction

The 1990s and the early 21st century have seen the rise of a new capitalist
production cycle called the New Economy (Carnoy, Castells, Cohen, &
Cardoso, 1993). The New Economy is a product of the Information Age, a
period marked by rapid ascendance of the importance of knowledge and
access to information (Rifkin, 2000). This chapter explores the impact of one
aspect of the Information Age: the increased use of computers and computer-
mediated communication in higher education institutions.

The exploration begins with a discussion of the increasing pressures experi-
enced by higher education in the Information Age and then moves to a
description of the ways in which the conceptual framework known as aca-
demic capitalism can be useful for understanding the context within which
higher education is acting and reacting to change. Next, the theory of technoc-
racy is identified, discussed, and related to higher education and the use of
information technology. The chapter then turns to a discussion of the implement-
tion and efficacy of information technology in higher education, specifically in
the field of student affairs. The discussion addresses the extent to which
expressed budgetary and service goals are met by the implementation of new
technologies and the potential for technological bloat as an unintended
outcome. The chapter concludes with the suggestion that the predominant
organizational structure of higher education may be shifting to that of an
academic technocracy as a result of the impact of higher education’s focus on
computing and computer-mediated communication. Suggestions for future
research are also offered.
Related Content

**Student Mobility in Higher Education Explained by Cultural and Technological Awareness in Taiwan**

**A Case of an IT-Enabled Organizational Change Intervention: The Missing Pieces**
[www.igi-global.com/chapter/case-enabled-organizational-change-intervention/24978?camid=4v1a](www.igi-global.com/chapter/case-enabled-organizational-change-intervention/24978?camid=4v1a)

**Closing the Circle: From Dewey to Web 2.0**
[www.igi-global.com/chapter/closing-circle-dewey-web/23485?camid=4v1a](www.igi-global.com/chapter/closing-circle-dewey-web/23485?camid=4v1a)

**Evaluations of Online Learning Activities Based on LMS Logs**
[www.igi-global.com/chapter/evaluations-online-learning-activities-based/56269?camid=4v1a](www.igi-global.com/chapter/evaluations-online-learning-activities-based/56269?camid=4v1a)