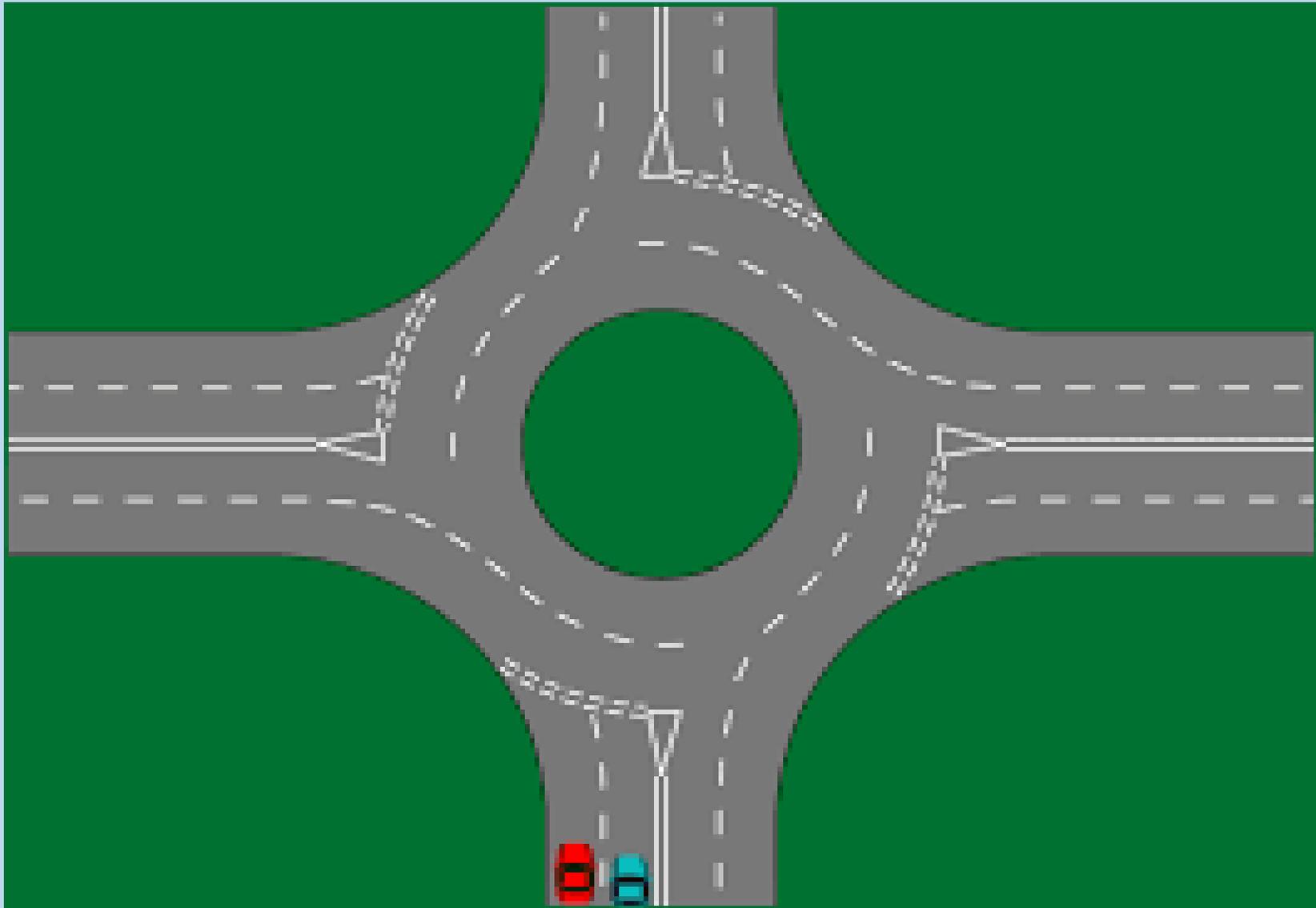


Exploring the challenges of managing a blended learning course



Source: https://www.td.gov.hk/filemanager/en/content_1977/en_go_straight_2.htm

Why Bother?

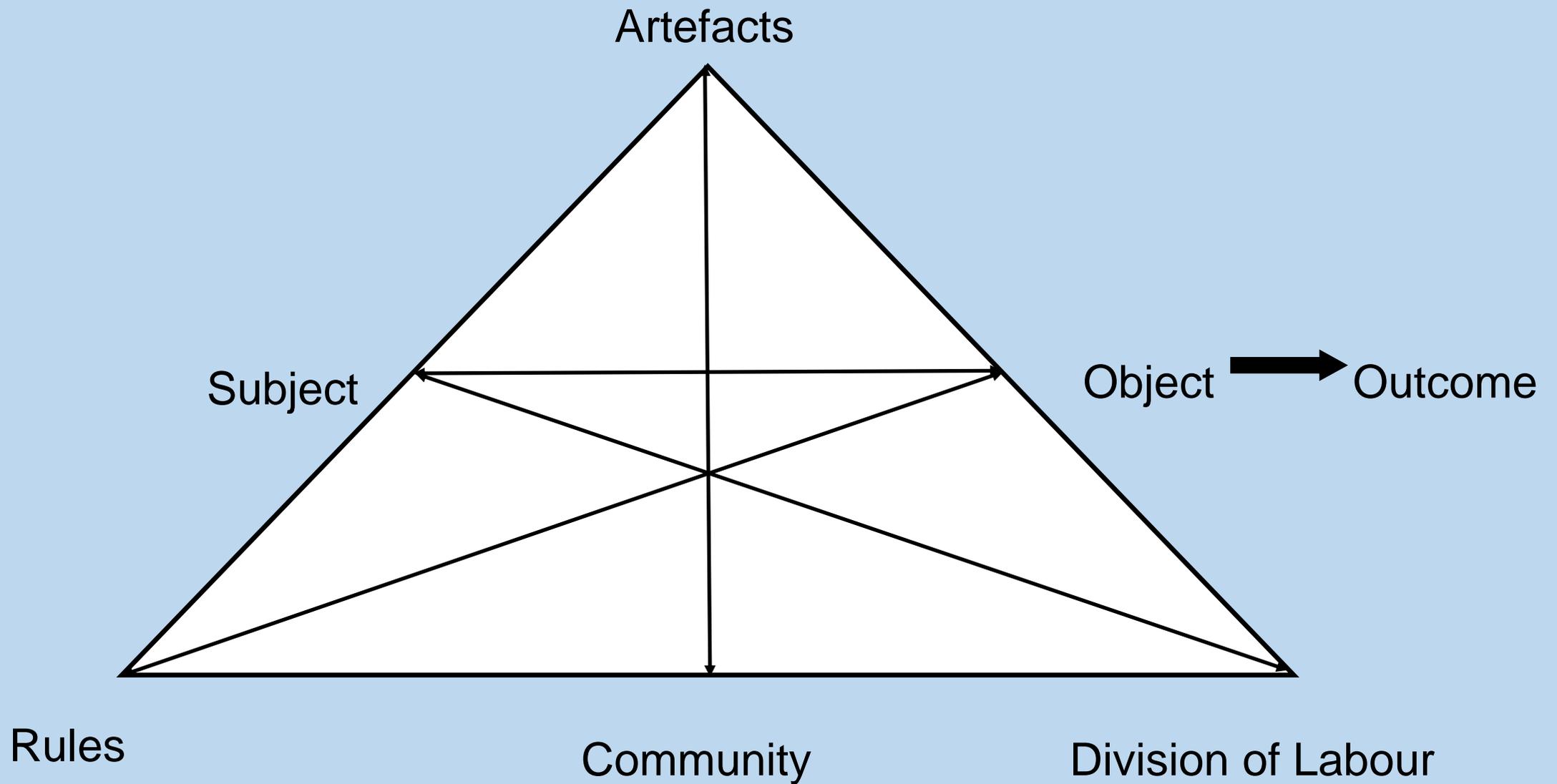
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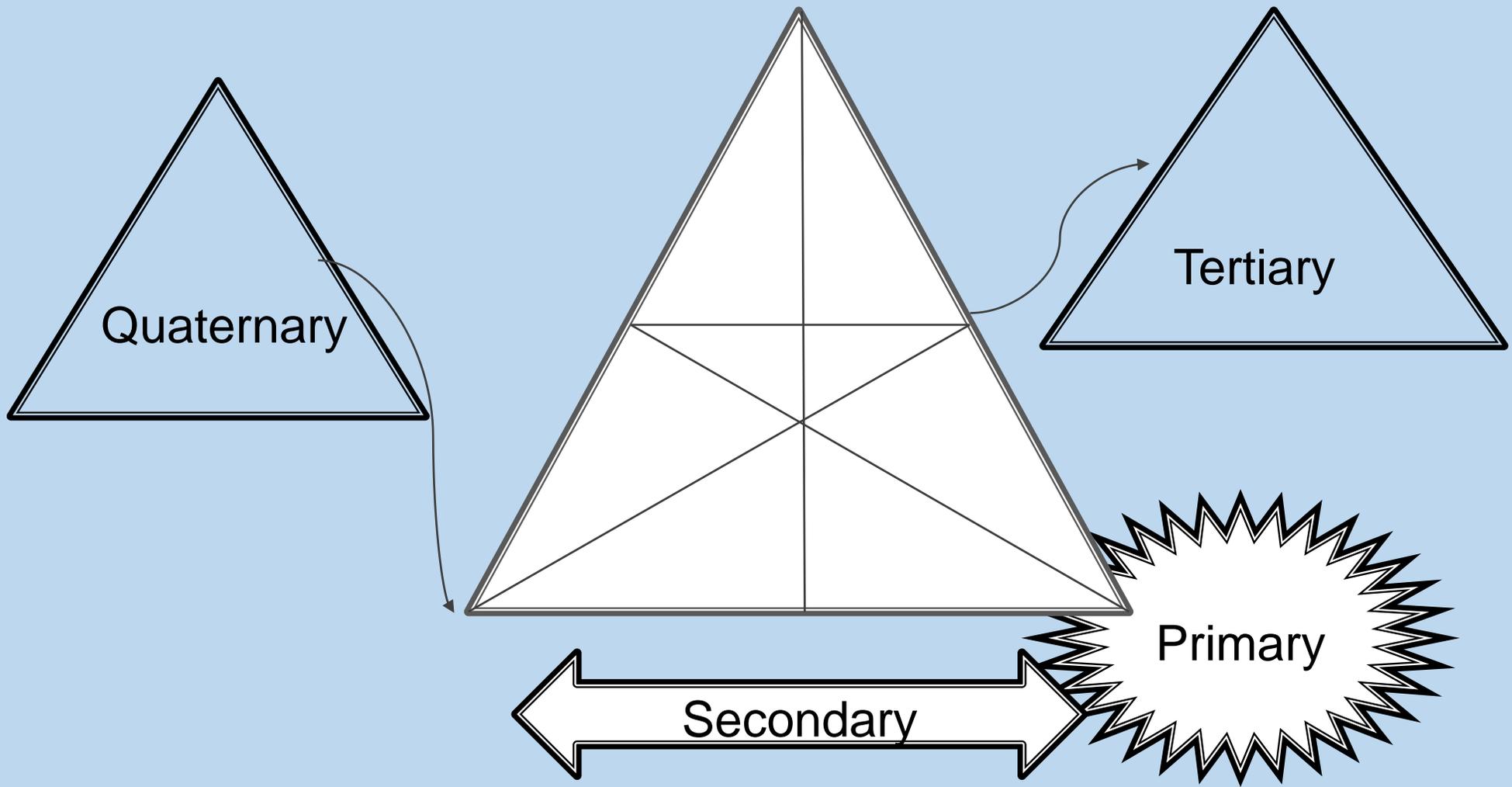
THREE

Mechanism to Define Course Management

- Activity Systems Model
 - Elements
 - Contradictions
- Blended Learning Management Typology
 - Managerialism
 - Collegiality
 - Neo-Collegiality



Activity Systems Model (Engeström, 2015)



Quaternary

Tertiary

Primary

Secondary

The Managerial/Collegial Dichotomy

Managerial

- Centralised Power
- Manager-led
- Individual Managers Decide
- Guided by Outside Influences
- Funding-led Research

Collegial

- Decentralised Discipline Power
- Academic led
- Academic Committee Decides
- Autonomous
- Research for Research sake

Managerial



Collegial

Neo-Collegial

Attribute	Explanation
Rationale	What was the primary motive behind developing the course?
Driver	Was the development top-down or bottom-up driven?
Organised	How was development organised; centrally or decentrally?
Leader	Who led the development?
Staff Dynamic	What was the relationship between those involved in developing the course?
Development process	Was the course developed systematically or iteratively?

Category	Managerialist	Collegial	Neo-Collegial
Motivation	Business goal	Teaching and learning	Both business and Teaching and learning equally prioritised
Driver direction	Top-Down	Bottom-up	Bottom-up and Top-down
Organised	Centrally	Decentralised	Centrally managed with decentralised control
Led	Professional	Academic	A professional academic
Development	Systematic	Iterative	Systematic with space for innovation
Staff interpersonal dynamic	Multidisciplinary team	Individual academic or collaboration between academics	Collaborative and multi-disciplinary

Defining the three cases

- Describing each case through the elements of the ASM
- Place each case on the Spectrum
- Define the contradictions for each case

ASM Element/HEI	A	B	C
Subject	Academic coordinator	Professional coordinator	Academic-professional coordinator
Object-ive	Managing the utilisation of educational technologies to attract more work-based students	Managing blended learning courses to satisfy students' needs for a flexible learning environment	Manage a blended learning course to widen participation by offering a more flexible learning environment
Artefact	The techniques of the TEL unit	Project management instruments	Academic meetings and project management tools

ASM Element/HEI	A	B	C
Division of Labour	Minimal horizontal delegation	Vertical cross-department, cross-role delegation	Horizontal and vertical cross-department, cross-role delegation
Community	Narrow and largely internal	Students, department, HEI and beyond	Throughout the organisation and beyond
Rules	Regular rules and irregular issues	Self-defined	HEI is in transition

HEI A

Collegially Managed Blended
Learning Course

HEI B

Managerially Managed
Blended Learning Course

HEI C

Neo-Collegially Managed
Blended Learning Course

Contradiction/HEI	A	B	C
Primary	Work overload and lack of skill	Insufficient resources and insufficient time	The threat to traditional roles
Secondary	Academic freedom, collaboration and the right to say no	Working professionally without offending academically	Is collaboration and support compatible?
Tertiary	Maintaining the status quo	Clashing with the older structures	Will collaboration survive or be subsumed
Quaternary	Not acknowledging a change in format	An organisation within an organisation	Insufficient rules

Pros and Cons?

- HEI A's approach retained academic control, but the resulting burden on academic staff was too great
- Highly managed HEI B led to an organisation within an organisation that clashed with older structures and processes
- In HEI C, the collaborative nature allowed a blurring of roles and a collective responsibility to emerge, but it's a long-term project that involves cultural change in baby steps

Primary Contradiction /Critical Conflict

Critical conflicts occur when there is an imbalance in the use and exchange value. What educational technology does is introduce an imbalance into the use and exchange value of the academic. Educational Technology reduces the use value of the academic, while the exchange value stays the same.

All efforts to manage educational technology are concerned with trying to counter that imbalance

The Issue

How far does academic control need to stretch?

- Does an academic have to control all the processes, tasks and decision making to protect academic integrity
- Will taking a managerial approach exacerbate the fear that online education industrialises the craft of academic (Musselin, 2007) and removes the academic from directly impacting the personal learning experience for each student.

Takeaways

- Mechanism for practitioners to define how they are managing their blended courses
- An idea of the problems that you may encounter depending on the route selected

Context is King

References

Engeström, Y. (2015). *Learning by Expanding: An Activity-Theoretical Approach to Developmental Research* (2nd ed.). New York: Cambridge University Press. <https://doi-org.ezproxy.lancs.ac.uk/10.1017/CBO9781139814744>

Musselin, C. (2007). Transformation of academic work: Facts and analysis. In U. Teichler & M. Kogan (Eds.), *Key challenges to the academic profession* (pp. 175-190). Paris and Kassel: UNESCO Forum on Higher Education.