

# Hail the maintainers!

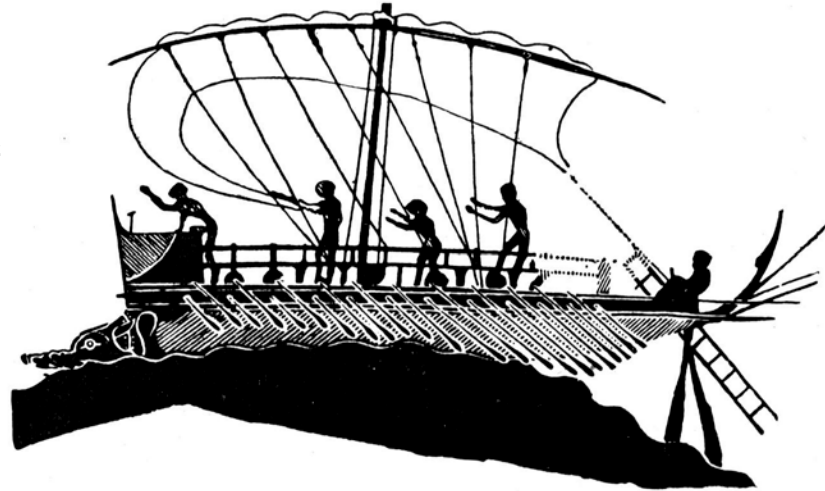
The balance between innovation and  
curriculum maintenance in curriculum  
renewal

Capitalism excels at innovation but is failing at maintenance, and for most lives it is maintenance that matters more. (Russell & Vinsel, 2016)

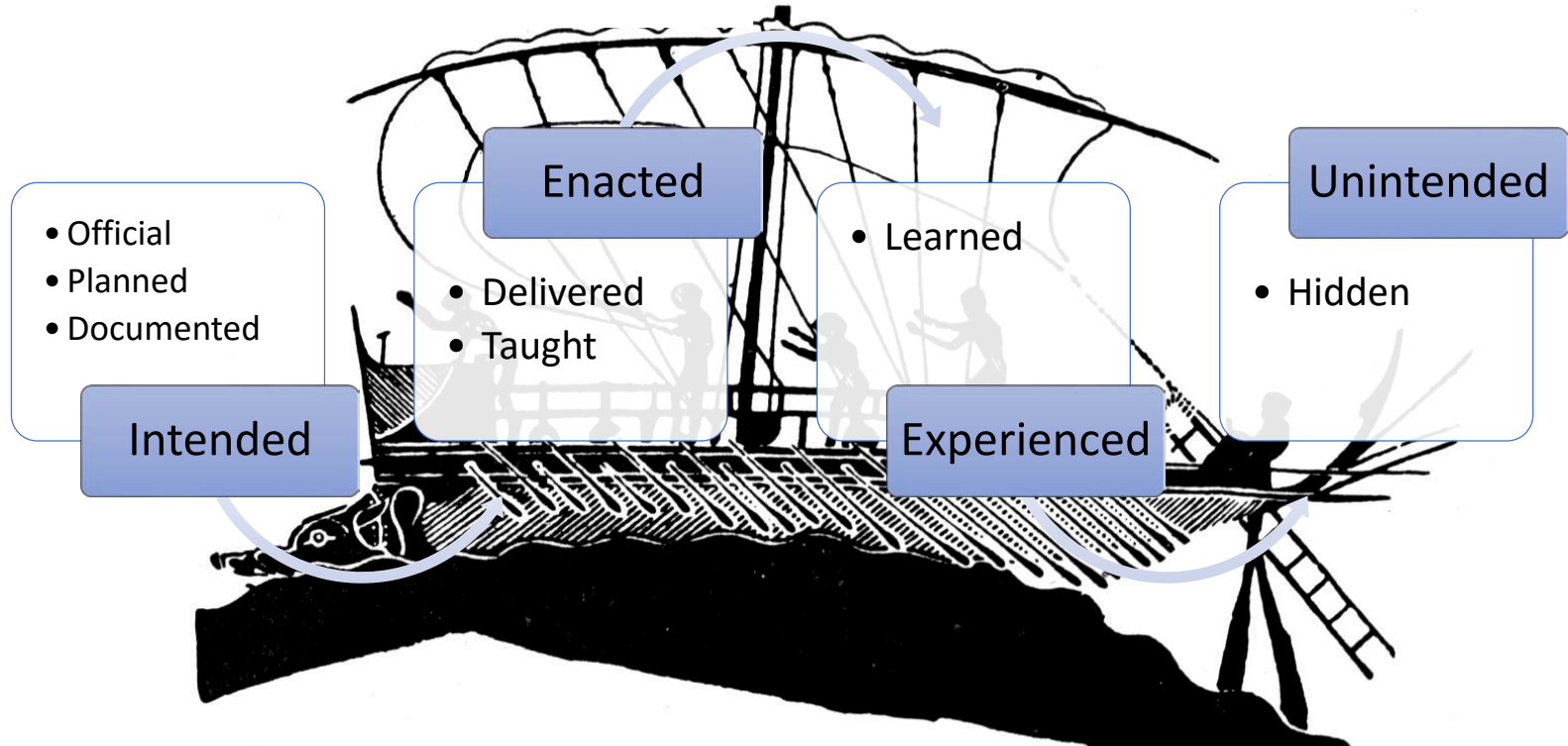
# The ship of Theseus paradox

■ The ship wherein Theseus and the youth of Athens returned from Crete had thirty oars, and was preserved by the Athenians down even to the time of Demetrius Phalereus, for they took away the old planks as they decayed, putting in new and stronger timber in their places, in so much that this ship became a standing example among the philosophers, for the logical question of things that grow; one side holding that the ship remained the same, and the other contending that it was not the same.

(Plutarch, 75 BCE)



# Curriculum is a continuous reconstruction



## It is the role of the curriculum leader to understand and maintain the strengths of the curriculum (and promote further improvements)

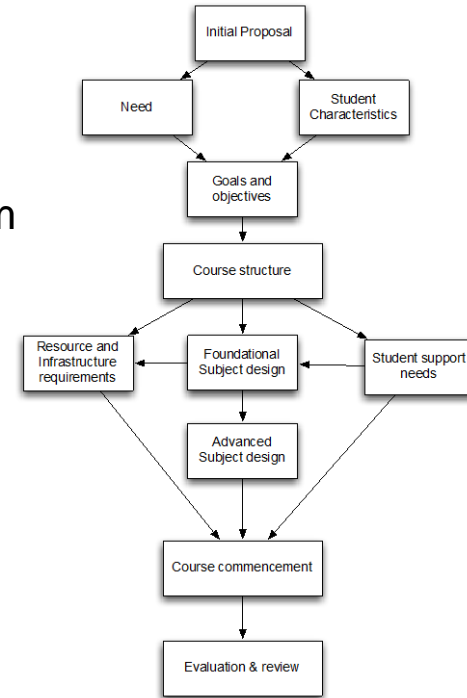
There are always multiple people involved in any process of curriculum development including developers, lecturers, tutors and students.

Over time there can be a substantial difference from the original planned curriculum and what is eventually experienced by the students.

The curriculum can become distorted or inefficient.

Distorted in achieving different outcomes than intended.

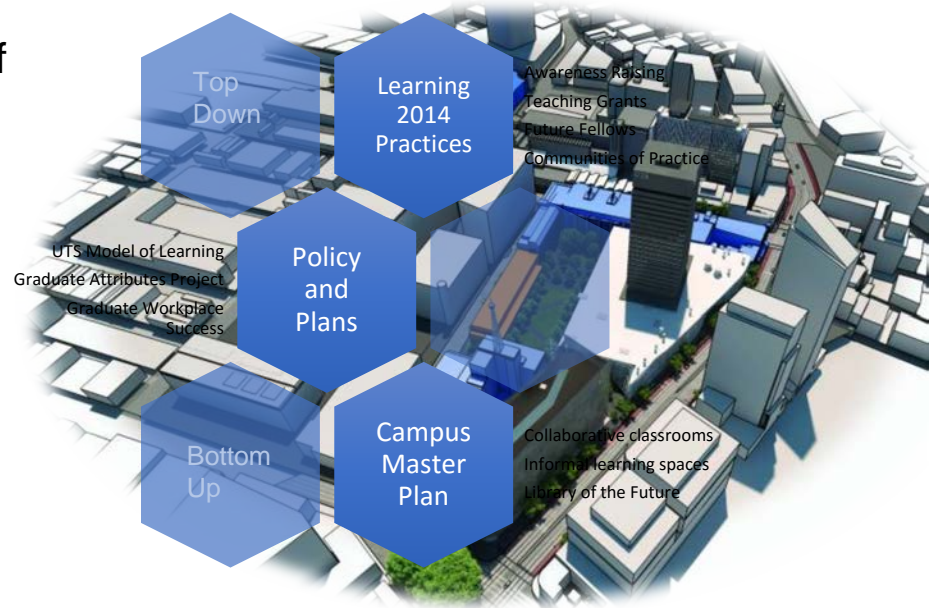
Inefficient in achieving the same outcomes over a longer period



# Institution-wide fundamental change to subject design

Transition of teaching to incorporate the best of online and the best of face-to-face learning activities and resources.

It was prompted by the once-in-a-generation investment in new buildings that initiated a major upgrade to the university's teaching spaces.



## Investigating Curriculum leadership

Participants were nominated because they had made significant changes to how they teach their subjects.

- improved a poor performing subjects, particularly in regards to failure rates, introduced a new approach to teaching related to the use of collaborative rooms or automated a large number of teaching processes

Each had been asked to review their teaching practices to ensure they provided the best of online and best of face-to-face experiences for students.

Seventeen subject coordinators were identified as having adopted blended learning practices.

Recognised as leaders in the area, either formally by being promoted to course directors or receiving fellowships with the role of encouraging others to make the transition to blended learning or by having a profile in the faculty as someone who has embracing new teaching approaches.

## Levels of curriculum change

Five subject coordinators identified their subjects already used blended learning practices and made **no change** as a result of the university strategy

Four subject coordinators made **some changes** to use blended learning practices

Five subject coordinators made **major changes** to use blended learning practices.

Three subject coordinators **completely redesigned** of their subject in line with blended learning practices.



## Status Quo

Five subject coordinators said they already using blended learning practices and therefore didn't make any changes as a result of policy

### **Approach to curriculum maintenance**

Changed their language to align with the university new terminology

### **How did they do it?**

Described making a range of incremental changes since their subject was first implemented to make use of new technologies, to get students more actively involved in learning or to respond to student feedback.

## Minor Change

Four subject coordinators decided to **Try before you buy**

### **Approach to curriculum maintenance**

Add a new element to their subject

### **How did they do it?**

Video recordings of guest lectures

- This was seen to have a number of benefits in regards to logistics of arranging speakers, managing the quality of presentations and student behaviour in lectures.

Introduced discussion of lecture material

- in-lecture polling technology

Add new assessment tasks- quizzes

# Major Change

■ Five subject coordinators recognised that change was coming and they might as well **get on-board**

## **Approach to curriculum maintenance**

Remove elements not working well to allow new activities

## **How do they do it?**

Replaced some or all of their own lectures with video recordings.

- lecture attendance had been falling and students requested a more convenient way of accessing the subject content.

The most common area of major change was to introduce In-class activities into tutorials or workshops.

- These activities often involved collaborative problem solving or students engaged in extended project work.
- The goal was to increase feedback on student performance through immediate feedback in tutorials.

# Radical change

Three subject coordinators decided to ask forgiveness rather than to ask permission

## **Approach to curriculum maintenance**

Knock down and re-build

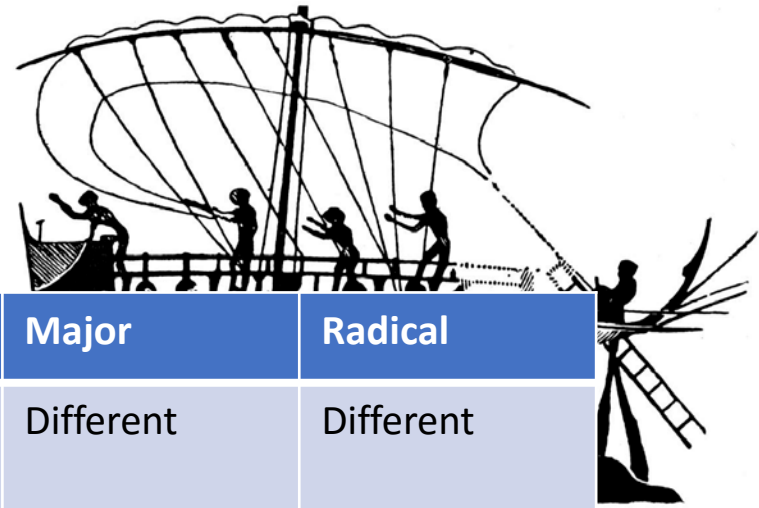
## **How did they do it?**

Took the opportunity to make changes they had wanted to make for a long time

- Promoted to a leadership position (HoS; Subject Coordinator; Teaching Champion)

Redefine the subject's learning outcomes beyond content

- Focus on graduate attributes, employability, global citizenry



	Status quo	Minor	Major	Radical
Material (what it is made from)	Different	Different	Different	Different
Form (design)	Same	Different	Different	Different
Intended purpose	Same	Same	Different	Different
Agent (How it is made and by whom)	Same	Same	Same	Different

## Curriculum maintenance

■ Participants were nominated because they identified as making major changes to their subjects

- Most made incremental rather than fundamental changes to the curriculum

Some responded to the university's call to adopt the best of online and the best of face-to-face

- Inspired with participating in teaching and learning events or presentations in faculties

Most made changes in response to local need

- logistics of arranging speakers
- managing the quality of presentations
- student behaviour in lectures
- dropping lecture attendance
- make use of new technologies
- to get students more actively involved in learning
- to increased feedback on student performance
- to respond to student feedback

A few found the new university policy direction a convenient justification for the changes they had always wanted to make

## References

Aristotle, *Physics*

Russell, A. and Vinsel, L. (2016). Hail the maintainers! *Aeon*. Accessed from <https://aeon.co/essays/innovation-is-overvalued-maintenance-often-matters-more>

Plutarch. "Theseus (23.1)". The Internet Classics Archive. Accessed from <http://classics.mit.edu/Plutarch/theseus.html>