

# Integrating Open Computing in the MIS Curriculum: Chronicle of a Failure in a Developing Country Context

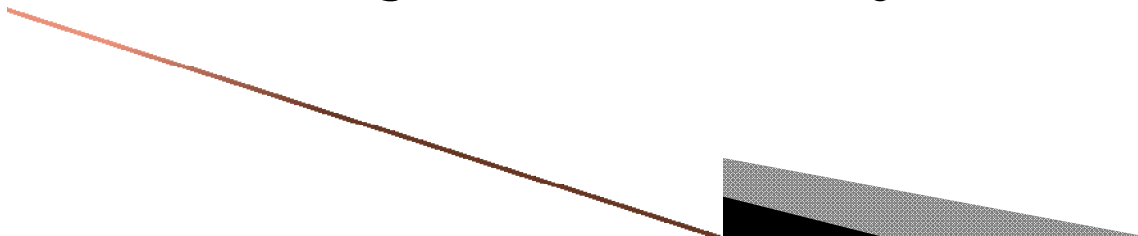
Sofiane SAHRAOUI, Mediterranean School of  
Business, Tunisia

Muhammadou KAH, American University of Nigeria

Pre-ICIS Workshop on  
Information Systems Research and Education in Developing Countries  
Paris-Dauphine, Dec 14<sup>th</sup>, 2008

# Open Source vs. Proprietary

- } Open source stuck at the software stack level
  - Web services, security, authentication, messaging, web tier clustering, etc.
  - Largely absent from the application level especially at the enterprise level (exp. ERP, CRM, etc.)
  
- } Aversion to FOSS mainly due to:
  - Gap between technologists and non-technologists
  - Risks attached to entrepreneurial modes of SE
  - Higher IT skill requirements of FOSS to configure and maintain
  - ICT governance is key



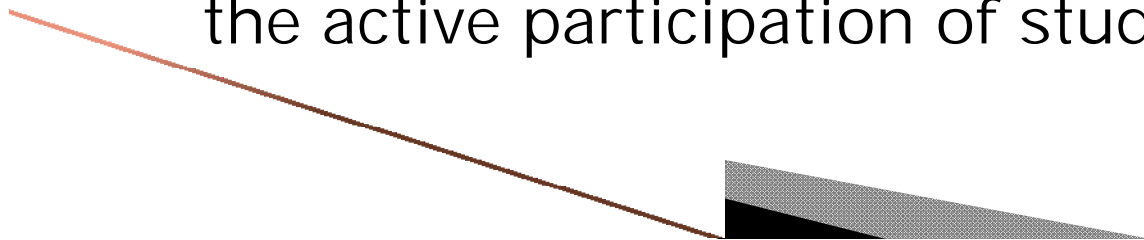
# FOSS in HE

- } Natural fit?
- } Technology customers vs. technology innovators
  - Academic alliance programs to shortcut the cost advantage of FOSS
- } Popular FOSS applications in HE
  - Programming: Linux, PhP, Perl, etc.
  - DB: MySQL
  - E-Learning: Sakai, Moodle, Wikis
  - Enterprise applications: Quali
  - Global projects: providing on-line textbooks to the developing world



# FOSS Initiatives @ NEU

- } open computing experimental lab with appropriate hardware and software;
- } lap-top based open source toolset for business students;
- } open source-based track for MIS majors;
- } academic alliance programs with open source vendors including training, support, and certification for faculty, IT instructors, and students.
- } workshops and seminars with the participation of industry as well as academic speakers;
- } establishment of an open source user group with the active participation of students and faculty



# Project Outcomes

## } Initial Success:

- Establishment of an e-lab to support FOSS education and training
- Research program on FOSS with several publications

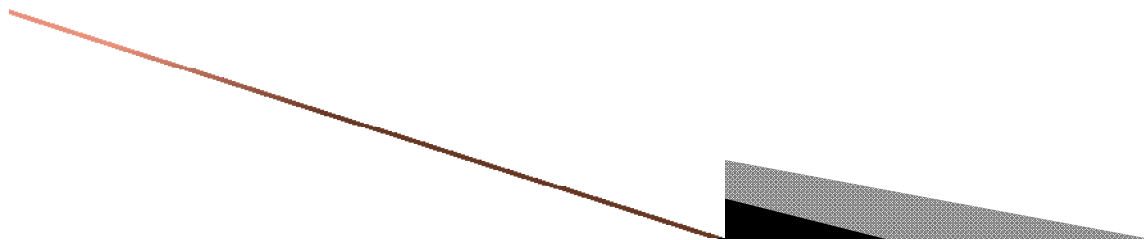
## } Roll-back

- Project 'sponsor' left the university
- E-lab reallocated to the graduate program
- Establishment of a new testing center in the university centered on the ICDL certification led to the redesign of introductory IT courses to become Windows-centric
- Adoption of a proprietary LMS at the university level following the hiring of an e-learning coordinator who specialized in BB à resources withdrawn from Moodle
- Aggressive strategy of proprietary vendors to 'sell' academic alliance programs



# Analysis of a Failure

- } No shared vision about the benefits of FOSS in the university environment
- } FOSS perceived as yet another IT project
- } No strong discourse of legitimation
- } Militancy side of the project (and of the sponsors) turned off many
- } NEU lacked consistent processes of IT planning leading to haphazard decision-making for IT adoption



# Critical Questions

- } The chicken and egg dilemma in FOSS and other IT innovations in developing countries:
  - What comes first? Good governance structures or ICT for education?
  - The establishment of good governance is a long term process that could delay the adoption of innovative ICT in HE
  - The implementation of ICT within dysfunctional governance structures is costly especially in terms of faculty resources and morale

