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The Higher Education Technology Agenda

Dancing to the same tune: how can local and central IT teams work together effectively to enable and transform teaching, learning and research?

In higher education, IT services are increasingly seen as a core organizational capability with the potential to enable and transform learning, teaching and, more and more, research. Having the right IT service strategies and organizations in place is gaining increased importance for universities' executives. However, although drafting IT strategies has become a common practice for many higher education institutions, the reality is that this exercise is fraught with a number of challenges. This paper reflects on some of those challenges focusing on the particular case where central, local and specialized IT teams coexist. Questions in relation to the scope of a university IT strategy, its articulated objectives and implementation tools are discussed as well as some important Dos and Don'ts for both local and central IT teams.

Selecting the tune, or articulating and clearly and unambiguously communicating the right value propositions that frame the proposed IT strategy, is of paramount importance to all concerned stakeholders. Stakeholders need to see how what they have been invited to adopt will enable and empower them to meet and achieve their desired individual contributions to the institutional goals and objectives.

Dancing in harmony, to the rhythm, and following the right sequence of steps is a very important challenge; in other words, the inadequate coordination of the implementation of any IT strategy is potentially one of its most significant inherent risks. Managing the dependencies between the various IT strategy implementation plan building blocks is fundamental and the order in which particular projects are rolled out can be critical.

Bad dance partners can ruin the performance no matter how good the choreography is, and the lack of collaboration between IT teams and between IT providers and their customers

can undermine a very well prepared strategic plan. The presentation will suggest some local and central IT strategies to provide the best support for teaching and research and become a true enabler and transforming force for the institution.

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