THE PRACTITIONERS' FIELD GUIDE FOR IMPLEMENTING EDUCATIONAL TECHNOLOGY

Leading with educational technology

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How can institutional leaders encourage engagement with educational technology?

Centrally-led changes to teaching have been known to spark reluctant responses from teaching staff, and even in some cases resistance. To counter these reactions, institutional leaders – presidents, vice-rectors, deans – can play key roles in encouraging staff engagement with educational technology. Institutional leaders can empower informal leaders by providing space for creativity, delegating decision-making, and allocating resources.

> **Institutional and informal leaders: What's the difference?**
> While institutional leaders include presidents, rectors and deans and others in formally recognized leadership positions, we also recognize that people without these formal capacities can assume a leadership role. These informal leaders may hold any position within the university.

How to lead with encouragement

A **first step** for institutional leaders is to identify informal leaders – staff members who have expertise and are creative in this area. These informal leaders we classify as individuals who are intrinsically motivated to work with technology and already successfully engaged with educational technology. Such individuals can be located throughout an institution and are not limited to one field or department.

Identifying informal leaders

> "… for me personally two colleagues from our faculty were quite central. [They] took charge of this [digital teaching], they are extremely committed, they are very tech-savvy and put in a degree of extra work that is greatly appreciated. [They] have also designed little learning videos [for others]" (Lecturer)

The **second step** is to involve both informal and institutional leaders in administrative discussions about educational technology. Most importantly, informal leaders should be granted decision-making capacities regarding the application and selection of educational technology in their respective disciplines. In addition, they should be given a voice in related issues such as strategy building, funding, teacher training, incentive schemes and other organizational matters. We found in our case studies that giving informal leaders the power to make changes about educational technology policy kept motivation high in such partnerships.

> **Empowering informal leaders**
> "We have a very decentralized organizational structure. We assigned a lot of competencies to the departments and the departments in turn have passed those competencies to the individual study areas and teachers. The goal is to increase motivation and identification — that each person can say, "I did that myself," and not, "I had to apply something that others somewhere gave me."" (Central-level leader)

In the **third step**, institutional and informal leaders should aim to work in tandem to identify the pressing challenges – financial, technical, personal or bureaucratic – hindering the uptake of educational technology. Surveys, focus groups or workshops with staff members are useful formats for understanding how challenges may be experienced differently across disciplines and departments.

> **Listening to informal leaders**
> "… [there is a] feedback loop from teachers and tutors at the coalface who are sharing their learning and that's filtering up. People are listening to it and then trying to find solutions which accommodate these new thoughts and ideas." (Head of study program)

With their vantage points, institutional and informal leaders bring different perspectives to the table when unpacking and addressing these challenges. Ideally, these discussions lead to the generation of practice-oriented solutions which ensure that educational technology fits the diverse needs of a variety of study programs and teaching environments.

Finding solutions
"It's also true that we offer a variety of different courses … where students seem to be very receptive towards technological innovation. Not just as a subject for studying, but also in terms of getting more creative with the use of technology for the purpose of the course. So, perhaps instead of writing an essay, they would be happy to produce a short video, this kind of stuff. But this is not the experience of all students. So, I guess in order to accommodate these different expectations, and these different student cohorts, there is quite a good degree of flexibility." (Lecturer)

By distributing power to informal leaders, institutional leaders can in turn become ambassadors of educational technology within their institution. However, this does not mean that the responsibility of educational technology rests solely on their shoulders, and this extra responsibility should be acknowledged and compensated. Rather institutional leaders prioritize fostering a partnership with staff members, which positions both parties as co-owners of educational technology.

Co-ownership of educational technology
Institutional leaders and staff members collectively take responsibility and make decisions on how to include educational technology in the classroom and the institution as a whole.

DISCUSSION GUIDE: FACILITATING CO-OWNERSHIP

Building a partnership with informal leaders
- Who are the informal leaders in educational technology at my institution / faculty / department? What is their expertise?
- How can a partnership between institutional and informal leaders be organized to ensure joint decision-making?
- How can the extra responsibilities of informal leaders be recognized and compensated?

Assessing challenges
- Working jointly, what are the main challenges institutional and informal leaders identify, which hinder the uptake of educational technology?
- What formats — surveys, focus groups or workshops — are best suited to understand how these challenges are experienced differently across the institution?
- How can institutional and informal leaders work together to find solutions that address different needs across the institution?

Strengthening co-ownership
- What other actions can institutional leaders take to foster the co-ownership of educational technology?
- Are there any obstacles at my institution preventing a co-ownership approach? If so, what would need to change?