Assignment 3: Analysis and Comparison of Approaches to E-Learning

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Change

Universities are "notorious" for their slow pace of change (Bates & Sangrà, 2011, Ch. 8, p.2). At one time their very consistency and tradition was a strength...but not anymore. "Everything has changed, is changing, and will continue to change: students, faculty, research, the processes of teaching and learning, and of course, technologies" (Dziuban, Brophy-Ellison, & Hartman, 2007, para 18). Faced with unprecedented change in part due to competition, technology innovation, and evolving learner expectations, demographics and needs, universities find themselves in a "change management challenge" (Farrar & Redish, 2014). While there are "pockets of innovation" in areas such as faculty development and institutional change there is very little wide-scale transformation (Johnson, Adams Becker, Estrada, & Freeman, 2015; Teach Online. (n.d.).

E-learning is more than enhancing what currently exists by adding technology to the mix (ETEC 520, n.d.-b). The infusion of technology into teaching and learning serves as a catalyst and creates an opportunity to reexamine what learning is, how people learn (and how they expect to learn) and the role of universities in this continuously changing landscape. To do this university's need a plan. Bates (2011, para. 7) suggests "the main benefit from developing a plan is that it sets an agenda, gets people thinking about the issues, and in particular leads to faculty and instructors thinking about how they want to teach and how technology can help them". However, to be effective, a plan needs to move people from thinking to action. Too often the word "plan" is a noun: a product, something completed and filed. It needs to be a verb: part of an iterative process that guides implementation and includes assessment (Grant, Hamilton & Hamilton, 2013).

Strategies and Organizational Context

As Bates (2011) notes, a good e-learning plan often derails at the implementation stage due to internal politics, lack of funds, lack of will and grassroots resistance. It is imperative for

successful implementation that strategies target both the tangible/concrete aspects of the plan

such as course creation, project management and ongoing financial and faculty support (ETEC

520, n.d.-c) and the less tangible but often more entrenched challenges related to the

pedagogical, technological and cultural shifts (Bates & Sangrà, 2011; ETEC 520, n.d.-d;

Johnson, et al., 2015) needed to create institutional change. With this in mind, this paper will

focus on six strategies to support e-learning implementation:

1. Ambitious e-Learning Strategy, Publically Shared
2. Leadership, Policy and Governance
3. Measureable Outcomes, Data Collection and Accountability:
4. Infrastructure Technology Spaces and Places
5. Faculty Support and Buy-in
6. Recognition, Reward and Promotion

University College London

UCL is a research university located in London, England. Established in 1826, it was

opened to provide access to higher education to those who were typically excluded. UCL calls

itself London's Global University, focused on real-world problems and an (increasingly)

interdisciplinary approach, with the goal of developing employable graduates ready to become

global citizens who "rise to the challenge" (About UCL, n.d.). UCL prides itself on being a

research university noting it is the top-rated university in the UK for research strength. At the

same time UCL has an ambitious goal to "...raise the profile of teaching and to invest in teaching

innovation, ultimately establishing UCL as the hub of an international network of research-led

institutions that foster excellence in teaching and learning." (E-learning Strategy 2012-2015,

2012, p. 1).

Ohio State University

The Ohio State University is a top-10 public research university in the United States. It too would like to be recognized as a global university. Their goal is to move from "excellence to eminence" on the global stage and eLearning is a large part of their strategy. Like UCL, Ohio State understands the changes, challenges and resistance universities face as they attempt to change. They recognize technology is not only a factor in this change but an opportunity for growth, revenue and improved student learning. The Office of Distance Learning and E-Learning (ODEE) is laser focused on providing students "...with an enriched educational experience for a lifetime of learning through technology-ready classrooms, centralized learning systems, innovations in technological pedagogy, and distance education opportunities" (ODEE, 2016, para. 2).

Implementation Analysis

UCL has many sound implementation strategies contained within its "Strategy for eLearning 2010-2015" document and its recent revision (online draft form). This newer document includes ten strategic and very specific aims that can be categorized into four areas: Measurement, Commitment and Reward, Support for Teaching and Learning and, Infrastructure. (Figure 1) In addition, various other related strategy documents and departments, include, recognize and support the plan, helping to build out a coordinated effort to create "radical change" (Draft e-Learning Strategy, 2016b).
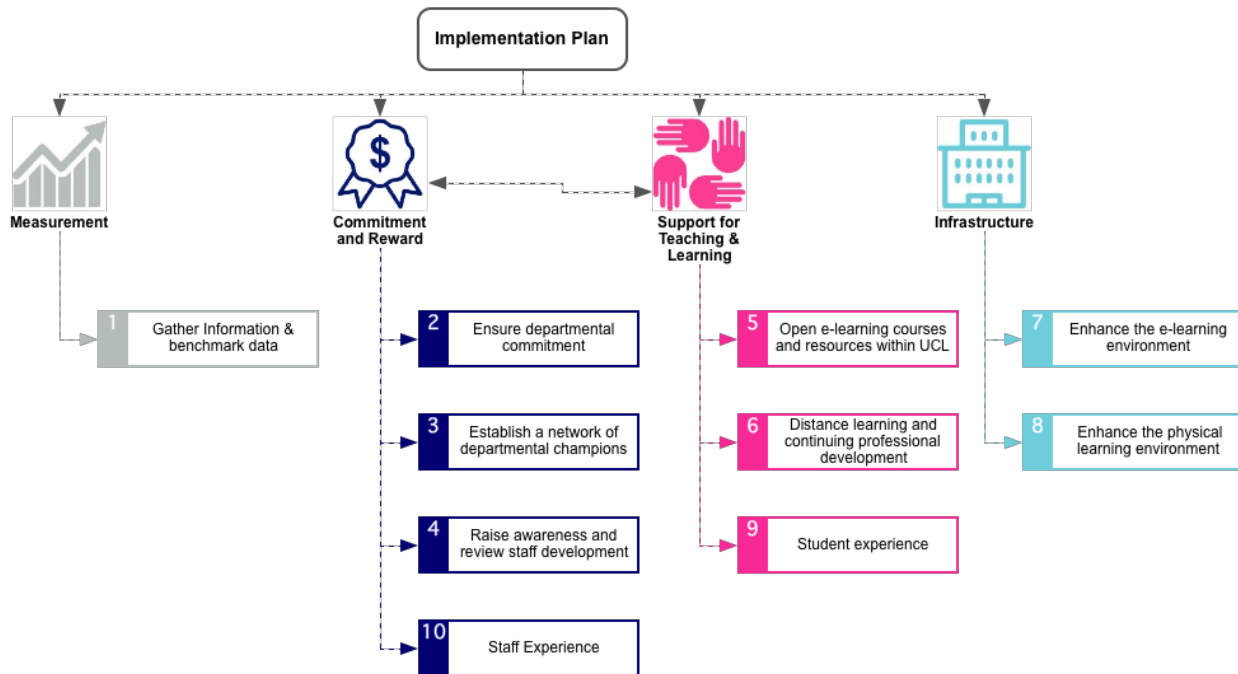
Figure 1: UCL's Ten Strategic Aims

Ohio State's ODEE Strategic Plan 2014-2018 contains many, (many) metrics driven implementation strategies to help create a "new dawn". (Hofherr, 2014, p. 1) Unlike UCL that organized its plan around very particular actions and behaviours, the ODEE plan focuses on ten strategic goals: Money and Numbers, and Technology Tools and Infrastructure. (Figure 2) This focus directs and narrows their implementation to things that are easily counted.
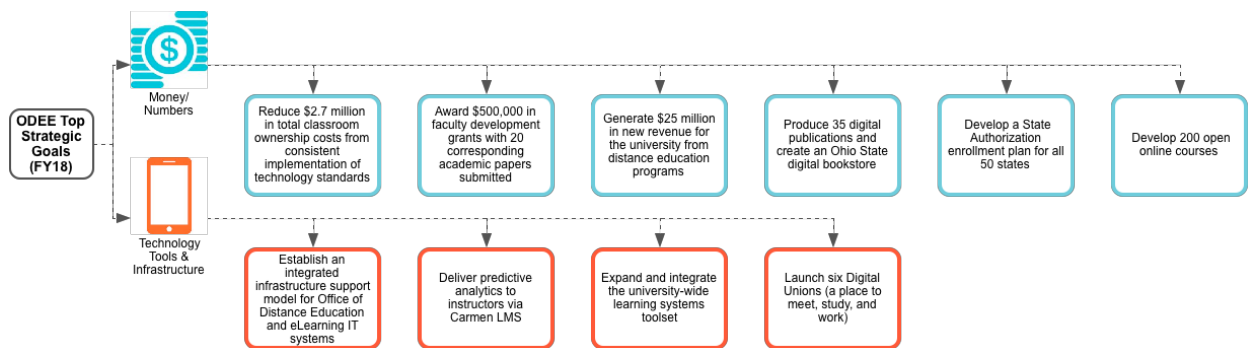

Figure 2: ODEE's Top Strategic Goals

#1 - Ambitious e-Learning Strategy, Publically Shared

UCL well-defined E-Learning Strategy document and draft document have similar aims. Both include deep exploration of the context and rationale behind the plan, and include mission, vision and guiding principles as well as strategic aims. The document clearly defines what e-learning is and how it will support the university's goal for teaching and learning, as it sets out a bold plan to implement change.

If the strategy document was a "stand alone" call for change, its direct approach could very well "ride roughshod over some powerful interests" (Bates, 2011, para. 14), however, the document is both informed by and cross-referenced in a variety of policy and strategy documents including the UCL Council White Paper 2011-21, the Institutional Learning and Teaching Strategy 2010-2015 and the recently published UCL 2034, and the university's Education Strategy 2016–21.

Ohio State has an organized, structured and highly detailed e-learning strategy that includes an overview of Ohio State's mission, vision and values, a comprehensive internal and external environmental scan and a detailed list of cultural values before listing its own mission, vision and strategies. Although the document does not specifically define e-learning it does reference technology-ready classrooms, centralized learning systems, distance education opportunities and need to change teaching and learning.

The e-learning strategy is publically supported on the university's website as an academic priority which effectively elevates the plan's importance and supports implementation through this prominence. The strategy document also highlights this powerful endorsement by connecting the plan's five focus areas to the university's four core competencies: Teaching & Learning,

Research & Innovation, Outreach & Engagement, and Resources Stewardship (Hofherr, 2014, p. 3).

#2 - Leadership, Policy and Governance

The UCL e-learning strategy document highlights two critical "enablers" for e-learning implementation. One is a new central support and governance structure for e-learning. It ties initiatives and departments together under a centralized IT department, identifying key roles and relationships. While this might cause some friction or turf wars, the interconnections across the university are viewed as necessary to heighten awareness, build support and create consistency across departments. For example, within the document Digital Education is given a much expanded role partnering with both the Centre for Advancing Learning and Teaching - CALT (in charge of advancing teaching and learning), and UCL Estates (responsible for facility infrastructure), effectively connecting technology, teaching and learning spaces. This same group is also tasked with a new "innovation and evaluation" function to explore "...different technologies and educational approaches and identify and enable best practice" (*E-learning strategy 2012-2015*, 2012, p.6), raising the profile of the group and giving them the authority to act.

At Ohio State, the inclusion of e-learning as an academic priority signals central support for the initiative. It is indeed "an opportunity to start a university-wide initiative" (Hofherr, 2014, p. 1). However, unlike UCL who include a comprehensive definition of e-learning in their strategy document, Ohio State only references indicators of e-learning but does not emphasize the enormous pedagogical shift that is required. As such there appears to be a misunderstanding

of the meaning of e-learning at the administration level. Reviewing the university's academic

priority dashboard, e-learning is equated with online/distance learning (Ohio State University,

n.d.-b). (Figure 3) Success is assessed by the number of courses delivered rather than the quality

of teaching, the innovative use of technology or the improvement of student learning. This

misunderstanding positions e-learning strategy as a technical change rather than a pedagogical

one.

THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY								January 2016 Board Meeting FY16 YTD | Through December 2015	
ACADEMIC INITIATIVES	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	**2020 Goal**	Current Status
C. Developing eLearning									
1. Number of online programs offered			6	6	7	10	13	N/A	▲
2. Number of online course sections taught	506	560	646	589	831	1,023		N/A	▲ ▶ ▲
3. Number of students enrolled in online courses	19,647	22,719	26,959	24,817	31,325	37,957		N/A	▲

Figure 3: Academic Initiatives Dashboard

On the other hand, the e-learning plan is supported in the leadership and governance area

at very high levels, since the Vice President of the ODEE is also the Chief Information Officer

for the university. These two huge roles effectively unite the "...IT strategy, policy, standards,

and direction of processes for the university's estimated 35 indirect and distributed IT

organizations" together with "…all forms of the university's distance education and eLearning

efforts" (ODEE, n.d.-b, para. 1 & 2). This is a powerful combination to support, manage and

fund the e-learning plan and is an effect strategy to ensure the plan is implemented. On the

negative side, perhaps two different people in the roles would help to balance the definition of

e-learning as both technology implementation and pedagogical transformation.

#3 - Measureable Outcomes, Data Collection and Accountability

In the draft e-learning strategy document UCL recognizes the needs for robust

mechanisms to monitor the quality of e-learning, and the need to implement an iterative model of

improvement for e-learning based on faculty and student feedback. This was missing in the

earlier document. Changes include new requirements for each department to gather benchmark

data, data collection through the establishment of user groups, user feedback, and surveys to

understand student and staff experiences and requirements. There is also a plan to investigate

learning analytics software to measure student success and the impact of e-learning. The

university would be wise to do this as this data is readily available and big data can provide

important information unavailable through survey or discussion.

The Ohio State e-learning document heavily relies on measurement and data to ensure

compliance and successful implementation. Each focus area includes statistics, numbers and

dollar amounts that serve as benchmarks. For example under Classroom and Collaborative

Spaces (Figure 4) the chart contains a long list of "to do" items (Hofherr, 2014, p. 11). Each

implementation metric has a numerical target and timeline. This is repeated for each of the other

four focus areas. While collecting data is important, Ohio State seems to focus on numbers at the

expense of less quantifiable indicators such as pedagogical understanding or innovative use of

technology required to effectively implement e-learning (ETEC 520. (n.d.-d). This checklist

approach to strategy implementation makes it appear as though implementation is successful,

and it is, but on only one side of the technology/pedagogy equation.

STRATEGIC METRICS AND INDICATORS

METRIC / INDICATOR	GOAL / TARGET	FISCAL YEAR
Reduce total classroom ownership costs through consistent implementation of technology standards	$2.7m	FY18
Launch additional Digital Unions	6 (total)	FY16
Outfit additional classrooms with enhanced videoconferencing technology	10 (total)	FY18
Outfit additional classrooms with enhanced student computing	5 (total)	FY18
Decrease classroom technology incidents	10% annually	FY16
Reduce general public computing spaces to four strategic central campus locations	4 (total)	FY18
Ensure proper wireless capacity per seat	3 devices/seat	FY15
Provide additional classrooms with enhanced student computing	4 (total)	FY15
Provide additional classrooms with enhanced videoconferencing technology	8 (total)	FY15
Provide additional designated collaborative common area spaces	6 (total)	FY15
Upgrade classroom pool classrooms to technology standards	100%	FY16
Provide additional designated collaborative common area spaces	9 (total)	FY18
Upgrade classroom pool classrooms to digital technology standards	100%	FY18+

Figure 4: Strategic Metrics and Indicators Chart for Classroom and Collaborative Spaces

#4 - Infrastructure Technology Spaces and Places

UCLs e-learning strategy to enhance the e-learning environment is more high level and less clear in it implementation. It appears to still be exploring ways to build out infrastructure in this area as as such is seeking feedback from a variety of stakeholders, trialing e-assessment technologies and supporting innovation with small projects and trials to "explore, incubate and evaluate emerging technologies and educational approaches" (*E-learning strategy 2012-2015*, 2012, p.8). This section will need to be bolder, with more decisive actionable steps to accelerate change.

Implementation plans for the physical environment are more robust with a goal to build out access to technology on campus, including 400 workstations, and establish a "learning innovations space" (*E-learning strategy 2012-2015*, 2012, p.9) for staff and students to explore new uses of space and technology that included staff development and student support. Together these strategies represent the university's growing understanding that successful implementation requires opportunity to explore and data to inform next steps although no clear or consistent methodology or approach is has yet been established.

Unlike the UCL plan that struggles somewhat with infrastructure decisions, at least in the e-learning area, Ohio State does not suffer from hesitancy. The plan focuses 40% of its implementation plan on infrastructure. This is logical given the combined VP and CIO roles. The plan includes many improvements to the f2f environment which includes: the launch of six Digital Unions (creative makerspaces), outfitting 10 enhanced video conferencing classrooms, establishing five enhanced student computing classrooms, and dozens more examples. In addition, they have just as robust a plan for the online learning systems with the top strategic goal to "Establish an integrated infrastructure support model for Office of Distance Education and eLearning IT systems" (Hofherr, 2014, p. 15), effectively solidifying the relationship between the two departments. With technology there is always a cart/horse dilemma. Ohio State appears to erring on the side of being "technology ready". This strategy may accelerate implementation **if** teachers and students have the skills to effectively use the technology.

#5 Faculty Support and Buy In

As we will discuss in the next section, recognition is as important as support for e-learning implementation. Very often there is overlap. However, not everyone can be a

superstar or e-learning champion and a wise plan addresses both. In the UCL e-learning strategy document, this support is referenced in several areas. Under "Raise awareness and review staff development" practical guidelines and course development templates for "best use" are provided. In addition, there is peer support, and e-learning induction courses for new teaching staff and online just-in-time and ongoing development opportunities for all staff. This work is supported through the UCL Teaching and Learning Portal (CALT), which provides UCL staff with guidance, resources and case studies to enable faculty to teach effectively. In the same document under "Distance learning and continuing professional development", there is a detailed implementation strategy to build out distance learning with advice, guidelines and policies, and exemplars to encourage risk taking.

The second big enabler within the e-learning strategy document (the other is under leadership, policy and governance), focuses on the importance of engagement and commitment. Recognizing the need to obtain buy in from various staff, the university created a network of local champions to act as coaches and cheerleaders for e-learning. However, there is also a degree of compliance in the plan as there is a **requirement** for each department to produce an e-learning statement and plan (Draft E-learning strategy, 2016-c, #2). The plan will then be "reviewed, monitored and reported" to the Learning and Teaching Information Services Group. This form of pressure and support is often effective to help move through the "implementation dip" that has stalled many initiatives (Fullan, 2001, p.6). However, faculty may resist "compliance" implementation and so slow the process anyway.

The Ohio State plan has a "fait accompli" approach to most of the plan, with little option and choice, **except** for teacher support and buy in. Faculty is provided with a plethora of tools, templates and support, but unlike UCL there is no requirement for them use it or for departments

to reference the use of e-learning in their planning. While there are incentive grants, state of the

art technology and a new faculty innovation centre, there are no metrics attached to faculty.

Accountability is on the delivers of the support, not the receivers. This continuation of the status

quo around faculty expectations and buy in, is exemplified in the plan's goal to

"...(i)ncrease...reach by building relationships with faculty, departments, and colleges and

sharing information about the value of ODEE services" (Hofherr, 2014, p. 13) Whether this

"grassroots" strategy will be an effective implementation strategy at Ohio State is difficult to say,

but given most faculty's historical resistance to pedagogical or technological change, this

strategy may disprove the adage, "if you build it…".

#6 - Recognition, Reward and Promotion

Commitment to changing how faculty are recognized and rewarded is a bold strategy to

help incentivize the implementation process. Many UCL documents recognize this, and reward

good teaching. For example, the newly released Education Strategy 2016–21 includes rewarding

staff for their investment in teaching, recognizing "...that teaching can often appear less

rewarding – financially – than research" (UCL Education Strategy, 2016, p. 23). Another

important document is the Institutional Learning and Teaching Strategy. It has a large section

entitled "Raising the Profile of Teaching: Staff Development". This section is notable for its

acknowledgement of "the need to invest substantially to ensure that excellence, aspiration and

innovation in teaching are rewarded and disseminated across the university" (Institutional

learning and teaching strategy 2010-15, 2001, p. 10). Also highly notable and bold is the

commitment to ensure the existence of clearly defined procedures to support promotion based on

excellence and innovation in teaching and a commitment to balancing teaching and research

requirements across the faculty so that junior and part-time staff are not overburdened with

undergraduate teaching. Within in the e-learning document there are many strategies to

recognize faculty including identifying, celebrating and rewarding (including a student award) to

recognize the very best examples of e-learning and promoting them as exemplars.

Although Ohio State's e-learning plan acknowledges the need to recognize and reward

good teaching it takes a rather timid approach in direct contrast to UCL. There are plans to

establish a Faculty Award program recognizing commitment to technology-enhanced teaching

but given there are only by 10 recipients by 2018 this may have limited impact. There is also

$500,000 available in faculty development grants with corresponding academic papers submitted

(Hofherr, 2014, p. 14) which seems to reinforce research not teaching.

One of Ohio State's academic priorities, alongside developing e-learning is "discussing

new models of faculty evaluation and rewards in an interdisciplinary climate. We will work to

identify ways to change process and procedures to facilitate interdisciplinary teaching and

scholarship" (Ohio State University, n.d.-a). However, as their statement highlights they are only

at the discussion and identify stage. There is little incentive to change. If there is no recognition

for teaching and learning through tenure, the university sends a strong message to faculty about

what it values. As a result few will take up the work (Bates, A.W. & Sangrà, 2011, Ch. 8, p. 7).

Indeed, on their academic initiatives dashboard Ohio State gives themselves a caution and a fail

in this area. This is definitely an area for improvement as will be discussed in the next section.

Recommendations

Both UCL and Ohio State have bold, clearly articulated plans that outline key strategies for implementation complete with responsibilities and timelines for completion. UCL's plan is definitely more focused on the goal of excellence in teaching and learning through the implementation of e-learning while Ohio State's plan is more focused on the goal of eminence by building out of technology resources and infrastructures to support teaching and learning. Both plans have high-level buy in and support, although Ohio State's support and funding is somewhat more stable given the dual role of the person in charge of e-learning.

At this point the two plans differ greatly.

There is evidence that UCL recognizes the need to collect data to drive implementation but there is room for improvement. This would involve ensuring each department collects benchmark information on students from surveys, grades and observations as well as other data analytics available through their LMS. The university could require departments to include specific "number" goals to measure the success of the implementation plan and to set new goals in the future. This might include student satisfaction, the number of courses that implemented e-learning and the strategies used, course enrollment and completion numbers, and hours of department in-service completed.

The other suggestion for UCL is to take bolder steps to explore new technologies and use their existing technologies in transformative ways. UCL recognizes that e-learning can support "...more interactive, creative and constructive learning" (E-learning Strategy 2012-2015, 2012, p.

1), but acknowledge faculty rarely use technology in ways that can support these new

approaches. To make this happen, the university could go further, require each department

include one new or innovative use of technology in their departments plans. They could also add

students' insights and learning needs into the implementation process. Again there is evidence of

an increased awareness of student voice including documents that acknowledge students want

access to technology, want to learn with technology and want assessment practice that are

reflective of the changes to teaching and learning (*UCL 2034*, 2014; UCL Education Strategy,

2016), but again, UCL could develop this further by asking students to help identify technology

to better support their learning and engagement.

Ohio State's eLearning strategy is definitely all business. Its data driven approach forgets

the emotions and learning needs of the people involved. Their laser focus on accumulation of

technology ignores that many faculty members do not know how to use the technology and

without both pressure and support, the use of technology often remains in the area of substitution

and replication of practice (Puentedura, 2012). Given that metric driven methodology is accepted

at Ohio University, it is recommended they also use this approach for faculty learning. A

framework such as the SAMR - Substitution, Augmentation, Modification, Redefinition

(Puentedura, 2012), TPACK - Technology, Pedagogy, Content Knowledge (Koehler & Mishra,

2009), or RAT - Replication, Amplification, Transformation (Hughes, Thomas, & Scharber,

2006) model can be used to identify the various levels of technology use and its application to

practice, and then create a series of metrics to assess faculty. Along with this, they also need to

take the time to clearly define e-learning and create a marketing campaign to share with all

stakeholders. Currently, there is confusion around the use of the term. Used in tandem with the

benchmarks for transformative use of technology, Ohio State would see growth in both the acquisition, and effective use of technology.

Finally, connected to this Ohio State needs to take on the difficult task of changing how faculty are recognized and rewarded. This will mean moving past discussion to developing a dual track tenure program. Of all the implementation strategies discussed in this paper, the absence of this strategy, almost guarantees the failure of faculty, on a wide scale, to change how they teach or the tools they use. (Bates, A.W. & Sangrà, 2011, Ch. 8, p. 7)

Conclusion

As Guri-Rosenblit (2005) concludes, faculty will have to change. They will need to learn new skills, teach in new ways and learn to collaborate with others on the creation of courses and resources. It is difficult to say if Ohio State's technology and data driven approach will be more or less effective that UCL's teaching and learning approach. "E-learning pedagogies are probabilistic...that is to say, there is no such thing as the 'perfect' approach..." (Nichols, & Anderson, 2005. P. 3). As such, while UCL could focus more on data and innovative uses of technology; and Ohio States could adopt a more people centric approach, and clearly define both e-learning and what that means for tenure, both plans have effective implementation strategies that will serve to move their respective university forward towards their definition of improved teaching and learning.

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