

# **IT Governance and Organisational Structure in Higher Education: A Review of Structural Change Implications and Impact on ICT Service Support and Teaching and Learning**

**Noel Wilson and James Uhomoibhi**

**University of Ulster, Northern Ireland**



# Setting the Scene

- Background
- ICT Governance
- ICT Organisational Structure
- Service Quality Management
- Working with Faculties

## About Us

- One of 9 Universities in Ireland
- 4 campuses
- Largest in terms of student numbers
- Major on undergraduate programmes
- Centres of Research Excellence
- A new Belfast campus at planning stage – for 2018
- Combined IT, Library and Reprographics Department



“Although the knowledge economy should be good news for higher education, **universities now confront a variety of technical, legal, and cultural forces that threaten to relegate us to the periphery.** Avoiding that fate will require us to redefine the university on a scale not seen since the emergence of the research university.”

*James Hilton, University of Virginia*

There are, for instance, increasing pressures for institutions to think of themselves as 'modern organizations' (cf. Lockwood, 1985; Barnett, 2000). **Key in the emergence of this organizational view of universities is a demand for clearer roles, relationships and responsibilities, as well as more efficient work practices**

A Wildavsky - Information as an Organizational Problem (1983)

## What is Governance?

*'An integral part of enterprise governance and consists of the leadership and organisational structures and processes **that ensure the organization's IT sustains and extends its strategies and objectives**'*

The IT Governance Institute  
<http://www.itgi.org>

## Extract from JISC Document

### *A Framework for Information Systems Management and Governance*

#### **Governance: Vision**

As information systems and IT become increasingly ubiquitous in all aspects of HE activity (teaching and learning, research, administration, etc.) it is necessary to take a coordinated, institution-wide approach *not only to the acquisition of IT but also to the current and future information requirements of the institution and how these can be best supported. This focus on information rather than technology will become even more important in the future.*

*Published March 2006      [www.jisc.ac.uk](http://www.jisc.ac.uk)*

## A Suitable Framework (Service centric approach)

### **Governance**

*Vision and Strategy*

*Alignment – with Vision and Strategy*

*Assurance – of Alignment*

### **Leadership and Management**

Organisation

**Services**

Resources

*Based on the JISC model*



## ICT Governance - *University of Ulster*

- Information Systems Governance and Strategy **Committee**
- Membership drawn from senior managers associated with academic and administrative functions
- Drive is towards a stricter regime for the setting, implementation and adherence to standards
- Greater levels of accountability being sought

“The Information Systems Governance and Strategy Committee is responsible for reviewing progress on the existing IT Strategy (SUCCINCT), defining a new strategy for 2010-2013, management of IT projects and defining and approving policies in relation to IT Security and Standards.”

## ■ Issues

- ***Policies and Codes of Practice***
- *Information Assurance*
- *Legal Aspects*
- *Standards*
- *Green IT*
- *Desktop, Server and Data Centre standards*
- ***Major ICT Programmes and Projects***
- *Replacing corporate systems*
- *New campus development*
- ***Risk Management***
- ***Financial Planning/Budget Management***

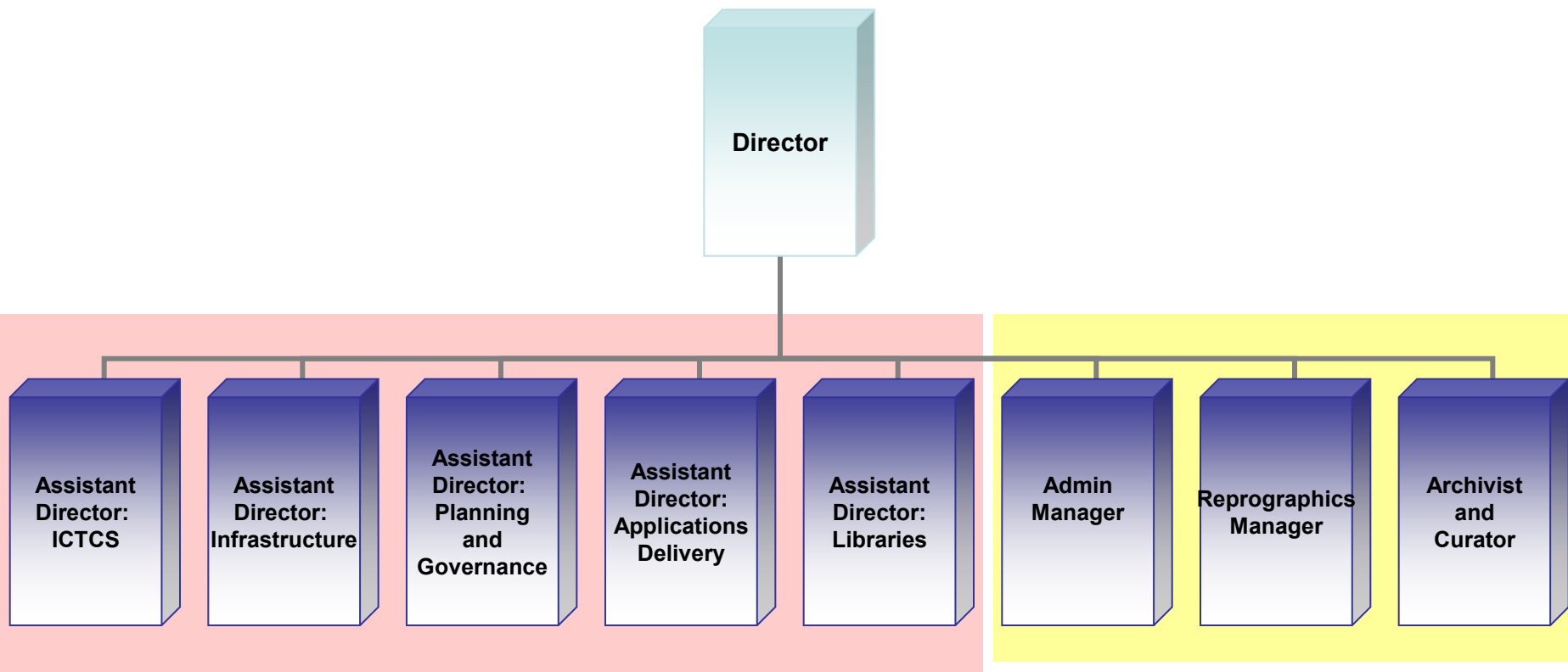
- **Approach**
- ***Establish a portfolio of University-wide policies***
- *Develop and implement a parallel communications plan*
- *Seek 'buy in' from all departments*
- ***Project Management: Key Systems***
- *No programme management in practice , but required*
- *PRINCE2 progressively being adopted and ISG&SC seen as a key stakeholder*
- *Project prioritisation and resource estimation issues being exposed*
- ***Risk Register and Periodic Reviews***
- ***Budget Profiling and Improved Project Initiation (Mandates)***

## Benefits:

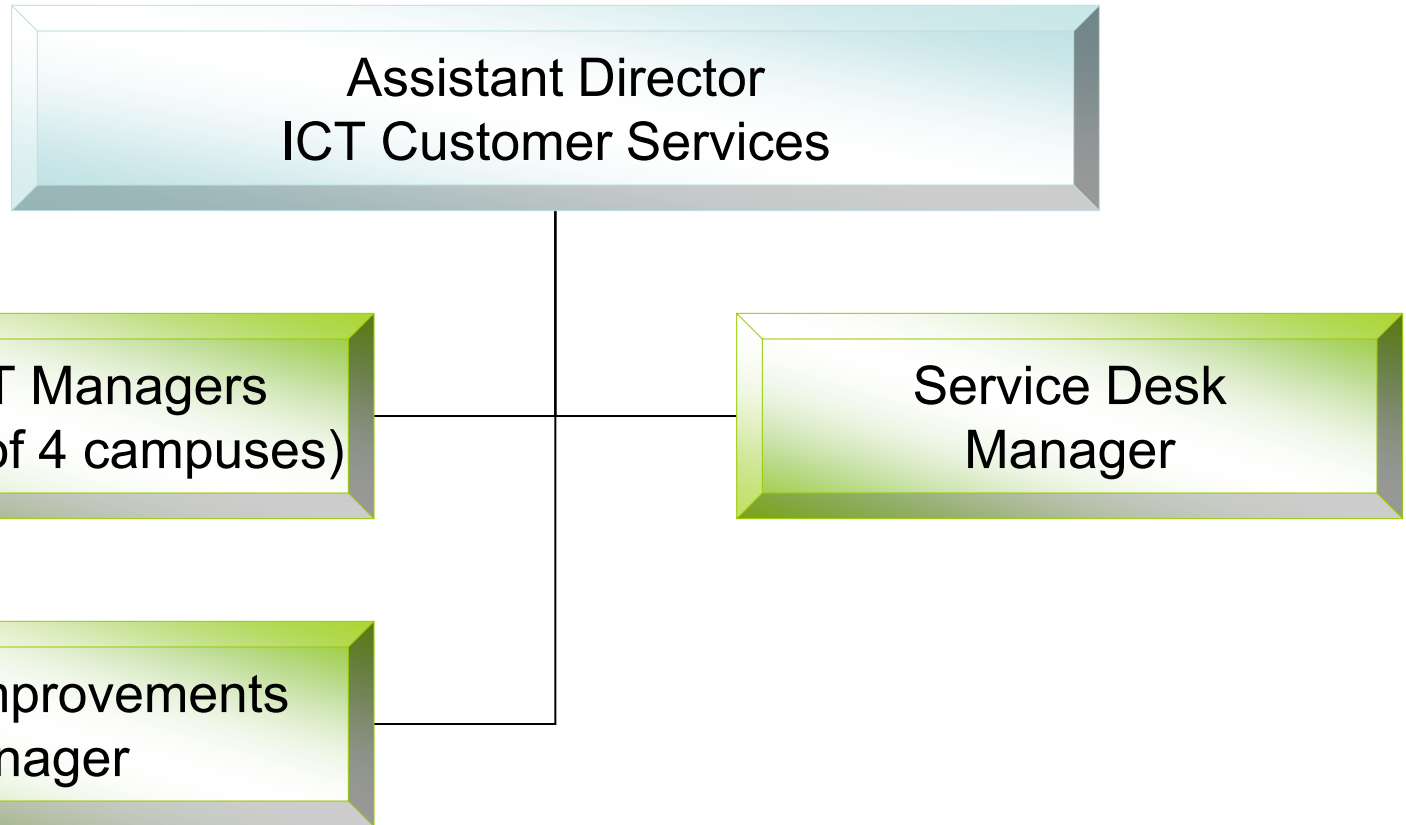
- Senior management more aware of ICT and related issues
- Project Office established
- Information and information security now a primary focus
- Policies being established and agreed
- Technology a secondary consideration to business needs
- Dealing with many audit-related requirements
- Project planning getting a 'make over'
- Greater focus on service quality management

## Dis-benefits:

- Rapid pace of change – policies faster than ‘into practice’
- Communications Plan – requires substantially more work
- ICT– *“an IT department matter”* – Stakeholder Management
- Difficult to engage academic and administrative staff equally
- Managing Change – *“we have always had the freedom to ..”*
- Culture change at senior management level – commitment
- Slow change to working practices by IT staff – *am I contributing to the business need?*



## ICT Customer Service



# What has improved and how?

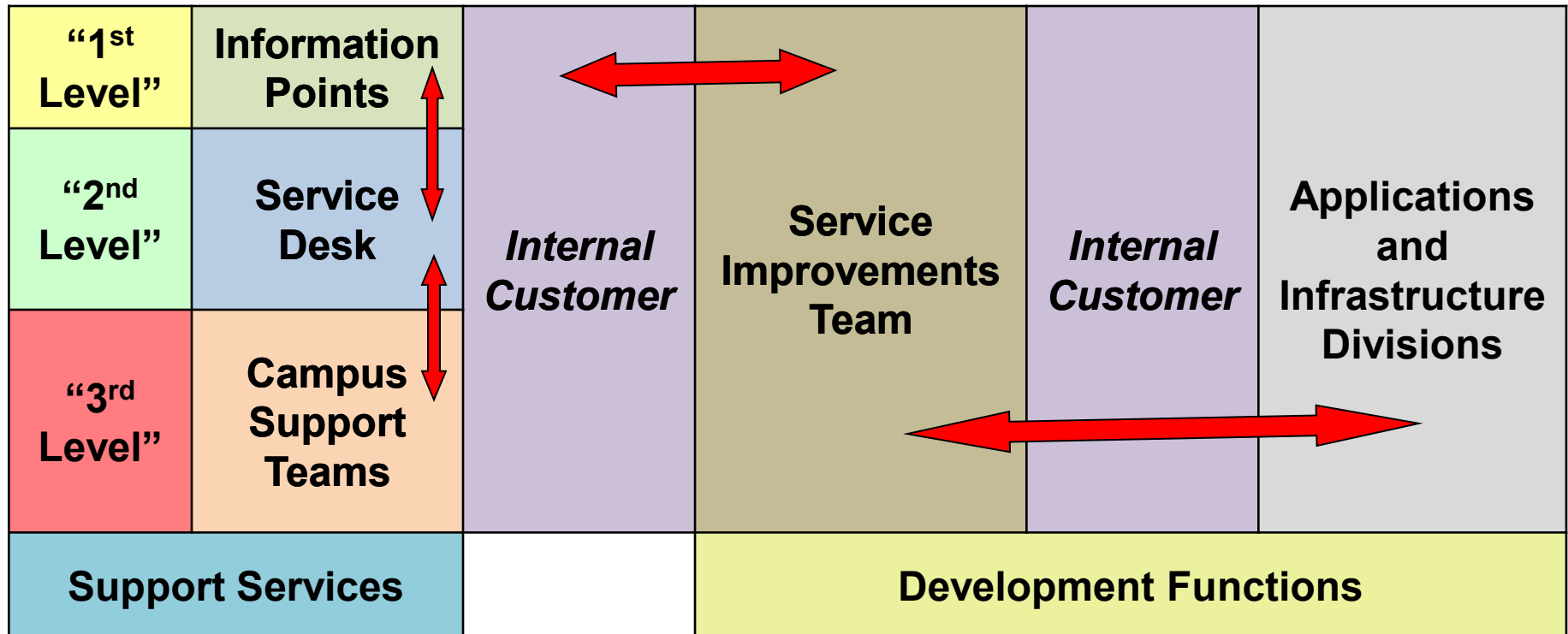
Improvement	How?
Student support via LRC presence <b>“Voice of Customer”</b>	Restructuring of department
Service Desk support <b>“Service Quality Management”</b>	Six Sigma project improving managerial responsibilities
Standards for Desktops <b>“Standards setting”</b>	Governance driven standards setting
Cost of Service delivery “down” <b>“Financial Management”</b>	Budgetary restrictions and awareness of need to provide “VFM”
Engagement with Faculty ICT staff <b>“Stakeholder Engagement”</b>	Closer working at operational level and via committee representation (ISD SMG)
Better management of desktops <b>“Change and Configuration Management”</b>	Asset management; ITIL-like practices-change and configuration management

# What still needs improving?

Improvement Area	How?
More resource for service improvements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Further reduce size of campus-based support teams; roll-out more tools</li> </ul> <p><b>Restructure again!</b></p>
Managerial responsibility for call management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>CPD activity; routine reporting to be mandatory</li> </ul> <p><b>Progress with ITIL roll-out</b></p>
Expand change, configuration and release management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Progressively develop Service Management Group's remit</li> </ul> <p><b>ITIL roll-out to all ISD's IT areas</b></p>
Stakeholder engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Poorly understood so requires promotional work for "awareness raising"</li> </ul> <p><b>PRINCE2 (project management) issue</b></p>
Communications Planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>More "grass roots" engagement</li> </ul> <p><b>"Voice of the Customer" Concept</b></p>



## Relationship between Support Services and Development Functions



## Use of the “Six Sigma” Method

- **Why?**
- Service Desk function needed a ‘make over’
- Management using performance data was not practiced
- Quality of Service mandated a ‘root and branch’ review
- Growing ‘pressure’ to centralise ICT support necessitated the provision of a ‘best of breed’ service
- New governance and strategy continue to mandate improvements
- Students’ and staff expect services of a ‘commercial’ quality
- **Issues**
- Managerial reluctance to accept that ‘junior’ staff could make a positive input to a change programme
- Availability of *suitable* data
- Intra-campus and Inter-campus cultural baggage
- Inadequate documentation of procedures
- Minimalist managerial oversight of service desk performance
- Continuing managerial issues

## Key Factors influencing the Change Programme

Pre 2000	2000-2008	2008-
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Remove “islands” of responsibility</li> <li>- Acknowledge AV and IT convergences</li> <li>- Improve managerial structure</li> <li>- Focus on financial planning and management</li> <li>- Recognise growth in help desk concept</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Converge campus service standards</li> <li>- Improve Quality of Support Service</li> <li>- Separate Operations &amp; development duties</li> <li>- Project management capability &amp; capacity</li> <li>- Enhance service quality management capability</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Further need to reduce risk of campus-based developments</li> <li>- Focus on adoption of enabling technologies</li> <li>- ITIL-compliant service</li> <li>- Unify support services for all users</li> <li>- Strengthen links with business plans</li> </ul>

People make changes...  
(Lewis et al, 2005)

What do staff and students want?

Reliable and consistent IT service

Professional “when wanted” support

No difference between central and faculty services and facilities!

Latest software especially collaboration tools

People make changes...  
(Lewis et al, 2005)

How can we achieve what's  
sought?

New Policies demand better communications

Centre extends offers to engage in training

Poster campaigns, planned “road shows”

Making more services available ‘in the cloud’

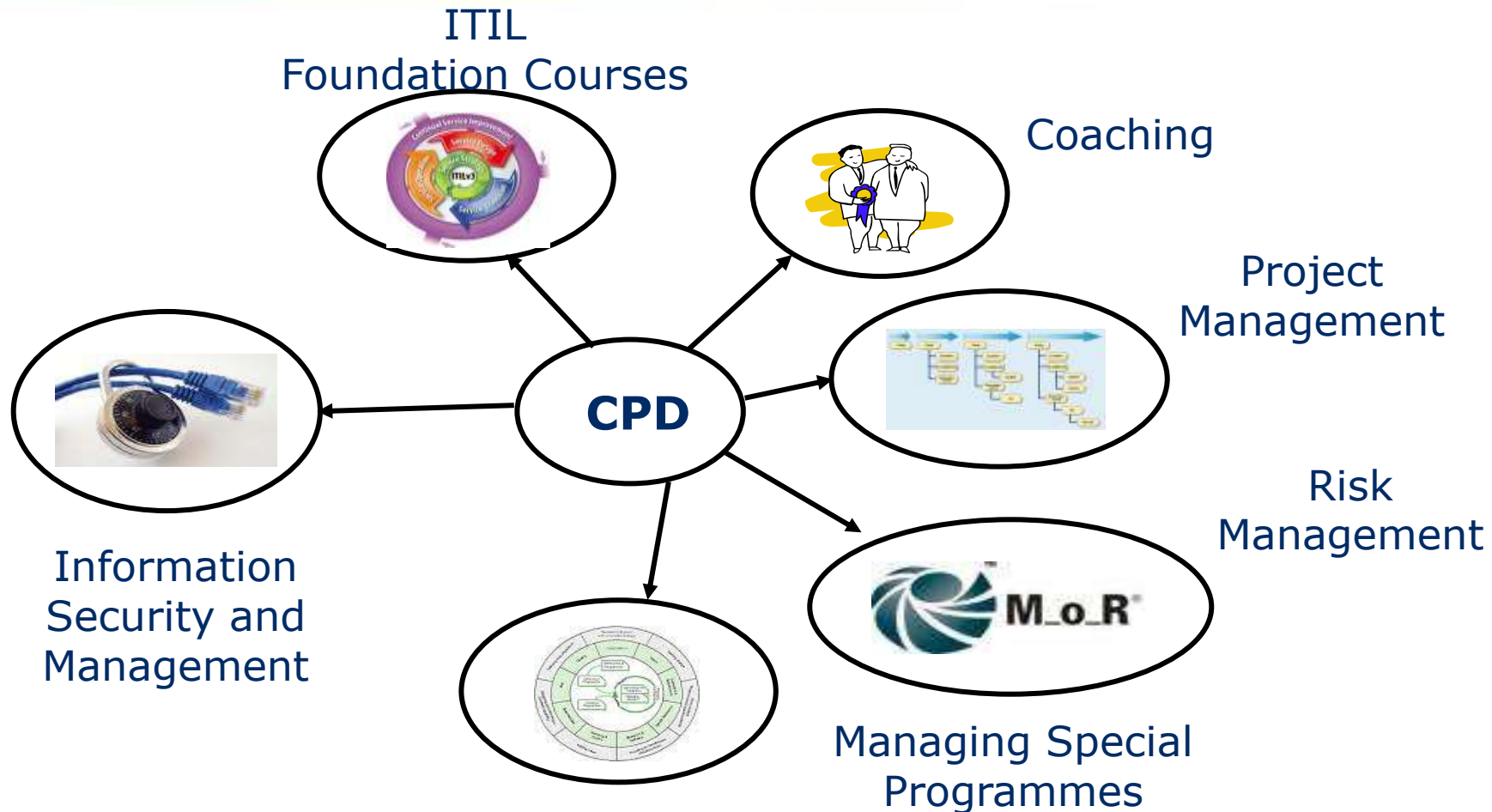
Expand and maintain digital presence in classrooms

**“Ongoing continuing professional development**

**supports aspects of the change process**

**by ensuring soft and technical competencies**

**are aligned to present-day requirements”**



# Conclusions

- The track we are on is correct
- The pace of policy outstrips the pace of practice
- Culture and change management is difficult
- Training has been intense but benefits slow to show
- Customer base is wide so ‘one size fits all’ not always appropriate
- Financial management coming ‘of age’ when required
- ITIL demands documentation, but “documentation is unnatural to IT technical staff” !