Assessing the quality of online and blended learning using the methodology of e-Maturity Model

A pilot study in adult education in Flanders

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Research questions

• Research is part of a the Adult learners online (Alo!) – project incuding:
  ▪ 4 Flemish universities
  ▪ 3 centres for adult education (AE)
  ▪ consortium of relevant partners in AE and VET in Flanders
  ▪ 5 research teams

  ▪ Focus of our research team = continuous quality improvement (CQI) of existing and new online and blended learning programs (OBL) at the institutional level

  ▪ Research question:
    ▪ Which indicators and procedures should be included in instruments for an effective CQI approach of OBL?
    ▪ How can AE providers effectively implement these elements in CQI instruments for OBL
    ▪ What are the effects of the CQI approach on the quality improvement of OBL programs/courses offered in adult education?
Content

• Concepts
  • continuous quality improvement (CQI)
  • total quality management (TQM)
  • quality culture

• context of online and blended learning in adult education in Flanders + state of play quality assurance approach

• self-assessment instrument eMM
  • criteria for selection
  • characteristics

• pilot study in a center for adult education (CVO): CVO Antwerpen
Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI)

- CQI is strongly related to the Total Quality Management (TQM) movement

- TQM is orientation on:
  - customers
  - processes
  - quality instead of quantity
Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI)

Quality cycles based on TQM

Deming’s PDCA-circle

The Radar Circle of EFQM
(European Foundation for Quality Management)

Model of a process-based quality management system from ISO 9001:2000
(International Organization for Standardization)
Quality culture

- The concepts of Total Quality Management are generally accepted in European education
- But to some:
  - to bureaucratic
  - to technocratic
- Vivid debate on quality culture with:
  - quality management approach &
  - quality commitment and engagement of all stakeholders?
- How?: foster self-reflection f.i. by using self-assessment
The context of adult education (AE)

- Formal education and vocational education training
- Great diversity of learners
- Growing popularity of online and blended learning (OBL)
  ⇒ discussion on the quality of OBL

N enrolments in blended learning modular courses

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Associate Degree Programs</th>
<th>Secondary Education Programs</th>
<th>Teacher Training Programs</th>
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<tr>
<td>2013-2014</td>
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<td>15,000</td>
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<td>6,000</td>
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% enrolments in blended learning modular courses

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<th>10%</th>
<th>20%</th>
<th>30%</th>
<th>40%</th>
<th>50%</th>
<th>60%</th>
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<td>2014-2015</td>
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Current state of quality assurance in AE?

• Focus group interviews in 5 centers with:
  • policy makers and quality assurance coordinators
  • teachers in OBL programs

• Results:
  • no specific approach for OBL provision
  • limited alignment between institutional and program level
    ⇒ need to foster/reinforce the internal quality culture
  • no need for a statistic framework with predefined standards but:
    ⇒ centers prefer dynamic and developmental procedures and procedures
Why eMM has been selected?

• literature review on existing standards, guidelines, benchmarks and assessment instruments for OBL

• Criteria:
  • oriented towards adult education or adaptable for adult education
  • focused on the institutional level
  • aimed at CQI
  • learner centered
  • oriented at different stakeholders

• selection of e-learn maturity model (eMM)
Characteristics of eMM

- assessment of the e-learning capability of institutions in 35 processes in 5 process areas:
  - learning
  - development
  - support
  - evaluation
  - organization

- division of each process in 5 dimensions
- assessments scores for 0 - 4

Figure 3: eMM Process Dimensions
characteristics of eMM and RQ

- assessment shows strengths and weaknesses
  - detect improvement areas
  - negotiate common accepted improvement plans

- Research questions:
  - Is eMM appropriate for the context of OBL in AE?
  - Can eMM be used in its current format or are adaptations advisable?
  - How can eMM be contextualized for institutions with a different level of maturity
    - pilot study in CVO Antwerpen
Pilot study eMM in CVO Antwerpen

- Preparatory meeting with the management:
  - selection of the most appropriate contexts
  - selection of staff members to be involved

- Individual assessments of 3 process areas

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<tr>
<th>Assessors</th>
<th>Process areas assessed</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Learning</td>
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<tr>
<td>Principal</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>OBL Teachers</td>
<td>Foreign Languages</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Second Chance Education</td>
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<tr>
<td>Training managers</td>
<td>Second chance education</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Entrepreneurship training</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Computer science (associate degree)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Accountancy (associate degree)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Staff</td>
<td>IT support</td>
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<td></td>
<td>media support</td>
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- Planned: groups assessment + improvement plan
Preliminary results of the pilot

- Assessors were positive, but:
  - translation = needed
  - full assessment = too long
  - a lot of practices ≠ for OBL
  - some processes ≠ AE (f.i. library services)

- Mean of assessments = first glimpse of institutions OBL-capability
Preliminary conclusions and next research steps

• eMM is suited to conduct self-assessments in AE but:
  • more contextualization is needed
  • necessity to carefully define the role of assessors
  • what about centers with different levels of maturity?

• thank you!

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References


References


