

Interview by Martine Plompen with Dieter Euler, Chair of Business Education and Educational Management, Director of the Institute of Business Education and Educational Management and Scientific Lead of the Swiss Centre for Innovations in Learning at the same Institute at the University of St. Gallen.



running e-Learning programmes in the field of management education. For that reason, there is a strong need for a certification initiative such as CEL as a quality improvement programme.

What are the main objectives of CEL?

Dieter Euler says: To a large extent, a system of quality improvement grounds its own quality on criteria which are theoretically sound and supported by empirical evidence. For that reason, the Swiss Centre for Innovations in Learning (SCIL) evaluated the relevant literature and subsequently conducted an empirical study. The aim was to identify the main factors to ensure a sustainable development of e-Learning innovations. Based on research a set of criteria could be isolated and clustered into five dimensions:

- Pedagogy, covering all aspects concerning the learning and teaching process. They address questions like: What type of learning environments does the programme consist of? What is the (added) value of those learning processes supported by e-Learning?
- Economics, covering all aspects concerning the efficiency in the use of resources. The main question is: Are the resources in terms of funds and competencies efficiently used?
- Organisation, dealing with the question: Are the organisational measures in running the programme adequate to the underlying objectives of the programme?
- Technology, dealing with the question: Is the functionality of the technology implemented adequate to the underlying objectives of the programme?

- Culture, taking up the question: Are the cultural factors of change and innovation considered adequately?

These five dimensions are to be the main categories of a systemic view on e-Learning quality development within programmes. Additionally, it seems necessary to include criteria dealing with the profile of the programme, taking up questions like: Are the main characteristics of the programme transparent for any interested party? What (added) value does the programme provide, especially by integrating components of e-Learning? Any of these dimensions are to be furnished with concrete criteria, each of which is part of a coherent system.

What kind of learning interventions will be eligible?

Dieter Euler says: Eligible are programmes related to management education and correspond to the equivalent of at least 100 hours of candidate learning effort. Programmes must end with an assessment, evaluation, examination or the like and must be operated on a durable basis. A programme is to be regarded as "e-Learning supported" if a minimum of 20 % of its overall duration is delivered by teaching and learning methods within the range of e-Learning. This is the case if at least one of the following two requirements are fulfilled:

1. Interactive multimedia: the programme utilises one or more media types other than printed text or recorded lecture material.
2. Network interaction: the programme requires the use of a network to provide interactivity, or to connect different students to an e-Tutor / e-Moderator or to

each other.

Within this frame, e-Learning can be regarded as an enrichment of traditional learning and teaching methods, it may be an integrated part of the learning environment ('blended-learning'-approach) or it may be implemented as a comprehensive virtual programme.

Finally, the programme must be connected to the strategic development of the organisation. The objective of the management education programme must be consistent with and fully integrated into an overall strategy of institutional development and quality improvement.

Can you describe the certification mechanisms?

Dieter Euler says: The certification process consists of the following steps:

- Preliminary Inquiry: The CEL-staff provides information about the scheme.
- Formal Application: A data sheet for application is to be completed in order to give basic information on the programme.
- Eligibility: CEL screens the information and determines whether there are major obstacles to eventual certification. In case of major questions, there has to be an exchange with the customers.
- Self-assessment: Applicant writes a self-assessment-report covering the quality criteria set out.
- Audit Team Review: Based on this report two auditors review the programme in question within a one-day visit.
- Final decision by the Awarding Body.

How many programmes have already been certified?

Dieter Euler says: We have already started with the pilot phase with two renowned universities and we will have another pilot in the corporate sector this year as well.

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