The Institutional landscape of the Swiss Virtual Campus

Benedetto Lepori and Sibilla Rezzonico
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Content of the presentation

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Educational Management in the SVC

- Financed by the Swiss Virtual Campus
  - Study organisational and institutional issues for SVC projects
  - Propose strategies for projects
- Main hypothesis
  - Institutional and organisational issues are very important for the success of eLearning project (see section 2)
- On-going work
  - Analysis of SVC projects
  - Analysis of strategies of Swiss universities
- Products
  - Handbook for SVC projects
  - Reports
  - workshops

Educational Management (2)

- Realisation:
  - Institute for Communication and Education, Faculty of Communication Sciences, Università della Svizzera Italiana
- Organisation
  - Project leader: Edo Poglia
  - Steering group: Lorenzo Cantoni, Mauro Martinoni, Jean-François Perret, Peter Schütz
  - Project team: Benedetto Lepori, Chiara Succi, Sibilla Rezzonico
- Time
- Web site
  - www.edum.ch
- Contact
  - sibilla.rezzonico@lu.unisi.ch

Why to speak about institutions?

- eLearning activities do not stand alone, but are embedded in an institutional context
  - it determines largely the realisation of eLearning activities
  - It is essential for their sustainability
- Understanding the institutional context helps
  - To understand the rationale of choices
  - To design viable strategies
- This is particularly important for the SVC
  - Development of single courses in the existing university setting
To be more analytical

Resources:
- money
- people
- infrastructures

eLearning activity
Integration into curricula
Target public
Institutions

Institutional strategies

- the management of an eLearning activity involves different institutional levels:
  - inside a higher education institution (e.g., university direction, department, institute)
  - with external actors (e.g., state)
- the management of these relationships is very important for educational activities
  - objectives may be different
  - coordination/division of tasks is essential
  - organisation of resources and financing
- the institutional context largely determines the behaviour of the actors
  - norms and values
  - institutional processes (power and decision-making)

The Swiss higher education system

- A very complex institutional structure
  - Competences are spread between different institutions; no central governance body
  - Differences between Cantonal universities/HTI/Fachhochschulen
  - Power sharing between Confederation and Cantons
- The higher education market
  - Many existing institutions
  - A small market
  - Fragmented (e.g., language)
  - Very short geographical distances

Norms and values
Institutional practices

SVC programme
The Swiss higher education sector

- Confederation
- Cantons
- FIT board
- FOPE
- FOES
- Swiss University Conference
- Dep. of education
- Federal institutes of technology
- Universities of applied sciences
- Cantonal universities
- Faculties
- Institutes

The Swiss Virtual Campus

- eLearning as a separate institution has no possibility in Switzerland:
  - Too many competitors in a small market
  - Pressure to increase financing to the existing universities
- Modernisation of Swiss universities as the main political goal:
  - External markets play a secondary role
  - An approach starting from the existing educational offer
  - Networking as a goal
- SVC as an impulse programme:
  - Focus on financing development projects in the existing higher education institutions
  - Building large project networks
SVC projects

- SVC projects are strongly integrated in their university environment
  - An “integrative” approach starting from the existing didactics/course and leaving a large role to the professor / face-to-face teaching
  - Localised products closely adapted to the specific situation (maybe different between project partners)
  - All human resources come from university
- Advantages
  - Direct impact on university teaching/learning
  - No problem of integration in the curricula
- Problems
  - Joint use of resources very difficult
  - Long-term use of the course (change of professor)
  - Development of professional resources (look and feel; scalability;...)
  - Almost no scale effects (over space and time)

Universities and faculties

- Universities play a small role in the programme
  - Almost not involved in the selection of the projects
  - Co-financing the project
- But active in developing initiatives:
  - Reflections on strategies
  - Creation of support structures
- Universities are willing to put money for development project limited in time but
  - Long-term support must be taken over by the faculties
  - There is no interest for new markets
- Faculties are largely absent from the debate
  - With some exception
Some open issues

- we need institutional arrangements for the functioning of eLearning
  - who takes the responsibility of eLearning products/courses/activities?
  - how different support tasks are to be realised (at national, regional, university, sub-university level)?
  - how eLearning will be financed?
- We need models for eLearning in Switzerland
  - Goals
    - Modernisation of university teaching/learning?
    - New markets (vocational education; Markets abroad)?
    - how to handle diversity
    - how to redefine functions

- the economic viability of these models has to be assessed
  - there are no reduction of costs, but there are models which cost more than others...
  - who will pay? for which benefits?
- development of eLearning has to be closely linked to the strategic choices on universities
  - definition of target public
  - renewal of curricula (Bologna process)
  - modernisation of management and administration rules

Conclusion

- The SVC programme has been very effective
  - in the development of contents and tools for eLearning
  - in the diffusion of competences in the Swiss universities
  - in coping with the complexity of the Swiss university system
- but much work is needed
  - to go from the development and experimentation phase to the establishment of eLearning in the Swiss university system
  - not only through financial support, but also conceptual and institutional development