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A possible approach of course design

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Abstract

Quality in education is in general as complex as controversial and it is mainly due to the multitude of factors and variables it implies. One of the essential aspects giving quality to educational services is curriculum. Similarly to any other product or service, curriculum quality begins from the design stage.
The present day market is a dynamic one and especially a very competitive one. The education providers – and we refer here particularly to universities – take, as any other enterprise, certain risks when projecting and launching a certain product on the market. The present paper envisions an original approach to quality at course level, as a university product, by promoting a nine-step curriculum design model. For each particular stage, the model proposes, in an inter-disciplinary methodology several techniques, methods and tools meant to offer a reflective, structured approach, meant to contribute to reducing the possible risks with the idea of a pertinent and in real time answer to the expectations and needs of the stakeholders.

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Keywords: curriculum design; quality; innovative methods and techniques

1. Introduction

Given the globalisation of the operational space of educational process and the request-offer relationship in education, the democratic education, the creation and development of the European area of higher education and the flexible mechanisms of collaboration and mobility offered by the European Union in this respect, higher education must be submitted to a reinvention process.

Having this premise in mind and considering a holistic approach to “quality” in the educational process, this paper suggests in an original approach, under a methodological aspect, a theoretical model of curriculum design at

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course level. The model sets forth original elements by combining educational science design specific methods with quality management and project management ones. It does so planning specific elements in sustaining "performance-centred design" of teaching-learning-evaluation processes in higher education and establishing agile processes in developing university curriculum.

2. The course design model

The proposed course design model supposes the following next steps:

1. Identification of determinant factors for a successful design of a course;
2. Establishing fundamental teaching-learning philosophy;
3. Establishing course goals and objectives according to general outcomes of the study program;
4. Establishing content and course sequences;
5. Developing the evaluation strategy of learning outcomes;
6. Designing the teaching and learning process;
7. Identification of possible configurations of the course;
8. Establishing final configuration;
9. Course evaluation (Crişan, 2012).

Considering the restriction of space, the present paper aims to presents only a selection of those steps, as can be seen in the following pages.

3. The design process and the subsequent methodology

3.1. Identification of determinant factors for a successful design of a course (step 1)

In order to identify factors which contribute to the success of designing processes of a course, we suggest the usage of brainstorming together with Ishikawa diagram (cause-effect) (Okes, 2009).

Ishikawa diagram (also called *fishbone diagram*) is a causal diagram created by Kaoru Ishikawa (1968) that show the causes of a specific event. Common uses of the Ishikawa diagram are product design and quality defect prevention, to identify potential factors causing an overall effect. Each cause or reason for imperfection is a source of variation. Causes are usually grouped into major categories to identify these sources of variation.

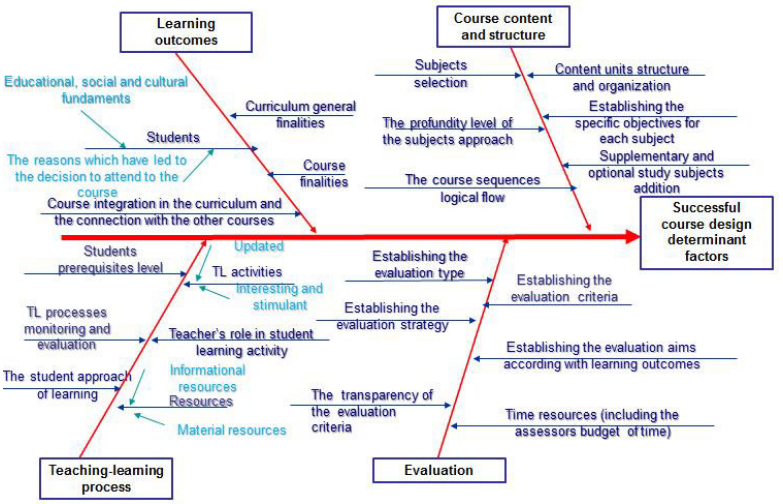

Fig. 1. Cause-effect diagram: determinant factors for the success of a course design

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