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EDUM Educational Management in the Swiss Virtual Campus

E-learning strategies of Swiss Universities

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EDUM
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in the SWISS Virtual Campus

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Objectives of the presentation

- Analyse the strategies of Swiss Universities for e-learning:
 - Objectives and planning instruments
 - Institutions involved
 - Support measures
- Show differences between the universities
- Point out problems and open issues

Introduction

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Methodology

- Interviews with
 - Direction of the university and/or
 - Responsibles for e-learning
- Universities
 - cantonal universities (all except Sankt Gallen)
 - FIT (Zurich and Lausanne)
 - Fachhochschulen (SUPSI)
- 13 interviews between June and November 2002

Strategies and objectives (1)

- Almost all universities are developing some reflection on the use of e-learning:
 - Level of development quite variable
 - No formal strategies
 - Involvement of university direction not always present
- The rationale: improve teaching/learning for existing students:
 - Improve quality
 - Little interest for new markets (except for vocational training)

Strategies and objectives (2)

- An integrative approach for e-learning:
 - Improve existing didactics on specific points:
 - Laboratory activities
 - Personal study (e.g., courses with a large number of students)
 - Use different technologies for different needs
 - Starting from very basic technologies (e-mail; powerpoint)
 - Full on-line courses are not a priority
- No reduction of costs
 - E-learning will cost more than existing courses
 - Reduction of costs is not an objective

Institutional models

- A clear idea of the division of tasks
 - University direction:
 - support for the development of e-learning courses
 - Finances
 - Infrastructure for e-learning
 - Faculties/departments
 - Recognition of e-learning courses
 - Financing the maintenance and use
 - Professors/institutes
 - Development of e-learning projects

Institutional models

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Institutional models

- A strong bottom-up model
 - Professors/institutes realise e-learning courses and take the responsibility for their maintenance/use
 - University has a support function, but doesn't take responsibility
- The role of the faculties/departments is not clear
 - Seem to be rather passive (with exceptions)
 - Should be responsible for take-up of the courses
- There are no wider strategies
 - Development of specialised institutions (departments for on-line learning...)
 - Development of complete curricula

Institutional models

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The relationships with the SVC

- A role of stimulus for e-learning
 - At the level of projects
 - At the level of institutional support
- Difficulties of control
 - in the selection of projects
 - In the realisation of the projects
 - Loss of control/autonomy in the development of e-learning
 - Little financial means to cope with the needs of the SVC
- Inter-university co-operation
 - Limited institutional cooperation
 - Large network project are problematic for their maintenance

Institutional models

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Support measures

- Most of the Swiss universities have set up some form of support for e-learning:
 - Support centres (FR, LS, ZH, ETHZ);
 - Central coordinating units + existing structures (informatics services)
 - Local centres with a wider function
- Types of support
 - Technical support
 - Financial support
 - Pedagogical support
- The level of resources is quite different:
 - From less than 100.000.- sfr to several mio.
- there is almost no money available for maintenance and use of e-learning

Support measures

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Conclusions and open issues

- Very rapid development of e-learning
 - Both at the level of projects and of the universities
 - We are still in an experimental phase
- Large differences in the level of engagement and development between the Swiss universities
 - not only related to the size of the university
- Lack of strategies to institutionalise e-learning in more stable forms
 - E-learning as an addition to the existing organisation of university teaching/learning

Conclusions

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Conclusions and open issues

- Sustainability of e-learning projects is not assured
 - Too strongly linked to personal initiatives
 - Little institutional responsibility
- Why to invest in e-learning in the situation of the Swiss universities?
 - Improvement of quality may not be a sufficient motivation
 - Should all universities invest in e-learning?
 - Improve linkage to vocational training

Conclusions

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