Continuous Improvement of Teaching Quality through Course Evaluation by the Students

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Abstract : The Distance Learning University in Switzerland (UniDistance) is offering bachelor and master courses as well as further education programs. The professors and their assistants work at traditional Swiss universities and are giving their courses at UniDistance following a blended learning and flipped classroom approach. A standardized course evaluation by the students has been established as a component of a quality improvement process. The students' feedback enables the stakeholders to identify areas of improvement, initiate professional development for the teaching teams and thus continuously augment the quality of instruction. This paper describes the evaluation process, the tools involved and how the approach involving all stakeholders helps forming a culture of quality in teaching. Additionally, it will present the first evaluation results following the new process. Two software tools have been developed to support all stakeholders in the process of the semi-annual formative evaluation. The first tool allows to create the survey and to assign it to the relevant courses and students. The second tool presents the results of the evaluation to the stakeholders, providing specific features for the teaching teams, the dean, the directorate and EDUDL+ (Educational development unit distance learning). The survey items were selected in accordance with the e-learning strategy of the institution and are formulated to support the professional development of the teaching teams. By reviewing the results the teaching teams become aware of the opinion of the students and are asked to write a feedback for the attention of their dean. The dean reviews the results of the faculty and writes a general report about the situation of the faculty and the possible improvements intended. Finally, EDUDL+ writes a final report summarising the evaluation results. A mechanism of adjustable warnings allows it to generate quality indicators for each module. These are summarised for each faculty and globally for the whole institution in order to increase the vigilance of the responsible. The quality process involves changing the indicators regularly to focus on different areas each semester, to facilitate the professional development of the teaching teams and to progressively augment the overall teaching quality of the institution.
Keywords : continuous improvement process, course evaluation, distance learning, software tools, teaching quality
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