

AN ANALYSIS OF QUALITY ASSURANCE IN ELEARNING: COURSE MANAGEMENT LEVEL

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Abstract: *The purpose of the study was to examine concepts and principles of quality assurance in eLearning for course management level. The author reviewed, and analyzed the existing literatures, researches and case studies, particularly emphasized on quality assurance in eLearning process that relevant to the course management system, especially in course production process and delivery of eLearning. This study highlights an important view of the application of quality assurance concepts and principle through eLearning at course management level. Since the quality assurance system in eLearning concerns, involves with many people from different department and management level; administrators, teachers, IT technician, staffs, stakeholders, students and community, the quality assurance through eLearning at course management level required certain aspect of leadership and management for administrators and instructional leadership for instructors. The teaching learning process for course development and management was categorized into 4 phases for course management level; planning and analysis for online course, implement of design and course production, delivery the online course, and assessment and evaluation.*

Keywords: *eLearning, Quality Assurance, Course Management*

1. INTRODUCTION

In the globalization era, technology plays important role in shifting and reshaping the education paradigm. Quality assurance in the field of education can be viewed as several parts and level of management, noted that the professionals in education have learned from the industry with regard to quality management; therefore, the concepts of quality assurance in education and eLearning could be done and applied in different level of educational management such as university level, faculty level, program level and course management level, especially The quality of teaching and learning process. . Education in Thailand today delivered mostly through traditional methods and needs to be uplifted to meet the standards of the teaching profession. To meet the goals of education that is, contribute to the economic prosperity of a nation, the delivery of knowledge and transmission of updated knowledge and information through updated technology are done in a variety of learning modes. To keep pace with the rapid changes in knowledge delivery, the quality of eLearning can be another option for the learners who are full time work study anywhere at any time, and any place which courses, contents, and interactive learning activities are conducted and delivered via the internet based. With regard to quality assurance concepts in universities, there are some aspects, including aspects of integration of quality concepts in the curriculum and using quality concepts to improve program administration level and course management level.

1.1 Purpose of the study

The purpose of the study was to examine concepts and principles of quality assurance in eLearning in development process for course management level.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The author reviewed the literatures on quality assurance concepts and principles, eLearning quality assurance that ensures the quality in eLearning in teaching and learning process for course management level.

2.1 Quality Assurance in Education and eLearning

Most of universities have implemented some form of internal self- monitored and regulated for quality assurance procedures and regularly practice. The OHEC (Office of Higher Education Commission, Ministry of Education, Thailand) sculpts the QA framework that systematically covers inputs, process, and output (OHEC, 2557 B.E.). it is a comprehensive and practical QA frameworks for program administration in different level; bachelor, master, and doctoral degree , includes 6 quality components: quality standard control, quality graduates, quality of students, quality of faculty members, quality of program, teaching-learning and student evaluation, and quality of learning support facilities.

Cheng and Tam (1997) defined “education quality is the character of the set of elements in the inputs, process, and output of the education system that provides services that completely satisfy both internal and external strategic constituencies by meeting their explicit and implicit expectations.”. It is a systematic approach and a multi-dimension concept that cannot be accessed by only one indicator. The author proposed multi models of quality in education. There were 7 models:

1) Goal and specification model:

The model considered educational quality as achievement of stated goals and conformance to given specifications. It is assumed that there are clear, enduring, normative and well accepted goals and specifications as indicators and standards for educational institution or educational systems.

2) Resource - input model:

The model considered education quality as natural result of achievement of quality resources and inputs for the institution. It is assumed that scarce and quality resources are necessary for education institutions to achieve diverse objectives and provide quality services in a short time.

3) Process model:

The model considered education quality as smooth and healthy internal process and fruitful learning experiences. It is transformation process. A smooth internal institution process enables staff to perform the technical tasks effectively and student to gain fruitful learning experiences.

4) Satisfaction model:

The model defined education quality as the satisfaction of strategic constituencies. It is assumed that the satisfaction of strategic constituencies is crucial to its survival, should be determined by the extent to which the performance of an educational institution can satisfy the needs and expectations.

5) Legitimacy model:

The model considered education quality as the achievement of an education institution's legitimate position or reputation. It is assumed that an educational institution needs to be accepted and supported by the community in order to survive and achieve the mission.

6) Absence of problems model:

7) The model considered the education quality as the absence of problems and troubles. It is assumed that if the absence of problems, troubles, defects, weaknesses, difficulties and dysfunctions in an educational institution, this institution is of high education quality.

8) Organizational learning model:

The model considered the education quality as continuous development and improvement. It is assumed that education quality is a dynamic concept involving continuous improvement and development of members, practices, process, and outcomes of an educational institution.

The author concluded that the seven models have the strengths and weakness, with focus on different perspectives of the process for tracking quality in education and suggested that there is a strong emphasis on the purpose of education quality in ongoing educational reforms in both local and international contexts. Policies concern to implement educational changed for education quality.

On the other hand; Johnson F. et. al. (1999) viewed quality assurance in management perspective and explained six quality concepts for education based on quality management principles:

- 1) Leadership: Leaders create unity of purpose and set direction of education, generate and maintain the internal environment in which people can become fully involved in achieving the school's objectives, need to ensure that the strategies, systems, and methods are exercised to build up knowledge, skills, and attitudes that consistent with school goals and objectives.
- 2) Understanding stakeholders: Schools should understand current and future needs, meet student learning requirements, and exceed the community's expectations. Students are the customers of the school, primary beneficial of an education.
- 3) Factual approach to decision making: effective decisions and actions are based on the analysis of data and information. Quality system management is based on measurement of student performance, stakeholder's satisfaction, employee data, the learning process, support services, and each set of data collected, records of comparisons and benchmark.
- 4) Involvement of people: People at all levels; teachers, staff, and administrators are significant to full involvement, produce and maintain a high level of quality education and success in schools.

- 5) Process approach: Learning is achieved more efficiently when related resources and activities are managed as a process. The quality system is designed to control and improve the value.
- 6) Continual Improvement: School improvement in process and results should be a permanent objective of schools.

Redmond R.et.all (2008) reviewed the literatures, selected and described six of the 14 principles and implications for organizational management and highlighted the relevance of these principles within higher education. The findings were; 6 selected principles; principle 2: Adopt a new philosophy with management learning what their responsibilities are and by assuming leadership for change, principle 3: cease dependents on mass inspection for quality by building quality into the service, principle 5: Aim for continuous improvement of the service to improve quality and decrease costs, principle 7: Institute leadership with the aim of supervising people to help them to do better job, principle8: drive out fear so that everyone can work effectively together for the organization, principle 9: break down barriers between departments and encourage department to work together. Deming's principles on teamwork was not only about problem solving and decision making but more fundamentally it was about breaking down organizational and professional barriers. This was necessary for creating opportunities for people to generate new insights and ideas for improving good quality of the service provided by the organization.

There were relevant researches and case studies of the quality assurance related to the course management system, especially in course production process and delivery for eLearning, such as

Abdous M'hammed (2009) proposed a process lifecycle model for ensuring quality of eLearning development and delivery. The quality assurance was intertwined with the eLearning development process. The researcher reviewed the existing literatures, focusing on QA frameworks, procedures, and methodology. A process oriented lifecycle model structured around three sequential nonlinear phases was presented: before; planning and analysis; during design, prototype and production; and after: post production and delivery. This model was supported by an advanced information system used to organize, track, collect, and generates reports regarding QA changes and needs updates emphasized that QA required a supportive environment that explicitly recognized quality as a work value and as an enabler for reaching organizational goals. The au

Nkhosi T. Dianne (2009) described practical mechanism and tools used for quality assurance processes in an evolving, dual mode university, adopting ICTs in the provision of open and distance learning. The researcher utilized a descriptive, single-case study approach, explored the processes adopted by UWIDEC as integrated the use of ICTs in its programme delivery. The course developers were content specialists for the courses and each worked with a course development team comprising a curriculum specialist, editor, web designer/multi-media specialist and technician. The findings revealed that In order to provide online distance education that fit for purpose, an organization must ensure: institutional support; effective course development; learner-cantered interactivities delivery; support for students; support for faculty; and a system of evaluation. The university (UWIDEC) attempted to develop a series of tools

which were based on guidelines provided by international organizations involve in quality assurance processes and procedures in higher education.

Belawati, T. and Zuhairi A. (2007) conducted a case study on the practice of a quality assurance system in open and distance learning at Universitas Terbuka Indonesia (The Indonesia Open University). The researcher emphasized the quality in ODL, covered some aspects included pedagogical processes, production and delivery systems and philosophy and outlined the background and the processes involved in manuals, raising awareness and commitment among staff, internal and external assessment and benchmarking.

3. METHODOLOGY

The author reviewed, and analysed the existing researches and case studies, particularly emphasized on quality assurance in eLearning process that related to the course management system, especially in course production process and delivery of eLearning.

4. RESULTS

The authors review found a noteworthy finding that adds value to the literature. Since the quality assurance system in eLearning concerns, involves with many people from different department and management level; administrators, teachers, IT technician, staffs, stakeholders, students and community, the quality assurance through eLearning at course management level required certain aspect of management and teaching learning process for course management level which was categorized into 4 phases for course management levels:

Phase 1: Planning and analysis for online course

Phase 2: Implement of design and course production

Phase: 3 Delivery the online course

Phase 4: Assessment and evaluation

Phase 1: Analyzing and planning for online course: there are 2 people involves at this phase, instructor and instructional designer to discuss, analyze the information concerning the overview and the nature and characteristic of the course for course design consideration. This phase requires a set of quality standards of content templates and production includes outlining of the timeline, assumptions, and expectations

Phase 2: Implementing of design and course production: there are 4 people involves at this phase, instructor, instructional designer, the programmer, and the instructional technology. The separate functions and responsibilities during the design phase is unique and require working as a team collaboration. In practice the online instructors are appending significantly more time in the design phase to ensure the comprehensive, appropriate, and consistency of the contents.

Phase: 3 Delivery the online course: This phase requires a guideline of course delivery for instructor with the specific guidance needs to maximize the course delivery function and structured instructional activities which is the replacement for the in-class time of a traditional seated course and the documentation of these activities forces instructor to address issues of

quality and quantity of online activities. These can be synchronous or asynchronous activities must be equivalent to the numbers of hours in a seated course.

Phase 4: Assessment and evaluation: During delivery of online course, the instructor is required to assess the interface usability and student feed aback towards the learning management system to encourage the improvement of course, content, learning activities includes the learning tools, learning support facilities, and conducive learning environment.

For the continuous improvement of quality of eLearning, the instructors are required to collect data and information regularly for being a mirror and reflection of the whole teaching and learning process throughout the course management. Furthermore; the administrators and instructors need to acquire leadership and management skill

5. CONCLUSION

The study highlights and reflected on the quality assurance in course development process in practice. The eLearning quality assurance for course management level requires definite aspect of leadership and management for administrator to establish unity of purpose and education quality assurance directions and support resources and facilities, environment that added QA value and achieve goals and objectives of the institutions, Instructional leadership for instructors to manage course , teaching and learning process effectively. The course management level is as important as course planning and design, and delivery , it would be helpful to further study and boos up the standards and visualize the eLearning quality assurance in the future towards effective online teaching and learning process with updated technologies and learning environment for new generation with implementing quality of teaching learning process; more student engagement, interactive learning and motivated learning activities in conducive learning environment.

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