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Continuing Education (CE) Benchmarking Network for Organisational Learning

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With funding from EU Atlantis programme and FIPSE (US), eight university partners have been engaged in defining quality measures for continuing engineering education programs. With new funding and three new partners, this work is being extended to all of continuing education.

Background

We are basing this work on a specific version of the EFQM model developed and modified during previous EU-funded projects (ALFA II-0180-A, DAETE and UNI-QM). The intention and purpose of adapting the original EFQM model to the continuing professional education sector is to make it more accessible and useful. For this reason a tool was developed and adapted to the specific context of university-based continuing education or learning organisations.

In the DAETE assessment, the various EFQM sub-criteria have been adapted to the needs of organisations involved in continuing education management. Through regular monitoring the effectiveness of each activity is assessed, and the results are used to determine and implement improvements. It is important to consider the following basics of the continuous improvement cycle:

- Assessing current status. One way to do this is to Self-Assess organisation. The process of Self-Assessment can help to understand and agree upon the current state.
- Defining business priorities. In order to align organisation and business strategy, it is necessary to understand present strengths and areas for improvement. The EFQM's Fundamental Concepts can be used to compare to organisation/programme's beliefs and strategies.
- Identifying what needs improving. Self-assessment can help provide a detailed map for the organisation.
- Identifying how to improve. Learning from other organizations through benchmarking and research. Identifying the good practices of others.... but first, developing a strategy that will help to direct your efforts.

Session layout

With over 50 universities providing data to the past activities, this session will provide a brief review of lessons learned, data gathered, and benchmarking tools already developed. The audience will be engaged in how the past and current activities can be more inclusive, incorporating all types of continuing education activities. Sharing the lessons learned provides for insight into new roles of CE management and staff, enabling better programs for the future. Each attendee will be provided with a booklet used for benchmarking activities and the opportunity to supply their data for comparison with other CE organizations. The session will provide time for inquiry regarding the benchmarking methodology, extension to wider CE audiences and suggestions for best practice sharing.

The presenters will involve the audience in an international benchmarking activity based upon the European Foundation for Quality Management. As a group of European, Chinese and US based institutions delivering continuing education, we will showcase some of our best practices, benchmarking results and involve the audience in joining the effort.