Collaboration between Universities in web based learning;   management issues

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Proposal

The paper addresses the issues that arise when two or more institutions collaborate in the production and delivery of web based education provision.

Many such collaborative ventures are funded as time-limited projects by government or other bodies. They work well while their external funding remains, but subsequently decline where the management processes and funding arrangements necessary for their continued and healthy operation have not been embedded within the basic organisational and funding mechanisms of the institutions.

Based on a case study of eight Colleges which agreed to collaborate in the delivery of common educational provision across all the Colleges by means of Web-based learning environment, the paper identifies some of the reasons which lead institutions to engage in web-based learning, the reasons some seek collaborative arrangements and factors which dissuade institutions from participating. It discusses the factors that need to be addressed in reaching a collaborative agreement between partners in such a venture, covering academic, administrative and resource issues. It describes how such a collaborative arrangement can work and discusses its consequences for the students, for the staff and for the participating Colleges. The consequences of the particular case study include expected, unexpected, desired and undesired outcomes. The paper then discusses the issues involved in transforming a project-based development into a system that works within the institution's normal systems, as adapted to include web-based learning.

The emphasis in this analysis is on managerial issues and on the mechanisms for distributing costs and income since it is these issues which are often neglected, but are key to ensuring or hindering the success of collaborative ventures.