

## GRID FOR A STRATEGY

### UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCES AND TECHNOLOGIES OF LILLE 1

#### 1 VISION

- Analytical dimension: challenges, identification of drivers of change

The process started with a decision of internal actors who wanted to contribute to the economic and social rebirth of the Region. Progressively this policy contributed in building the identity of Lille 1.

The preparation of the last contracts with the Ministry is based on the evolution of the environment of the University.

This institutional position was based on our vision of the evolution of professional life and of the challenges that employees (employed or not) will have to face in the future:

- a professional life in deep transformation (the current economic crisis is providing additional evidences of this evolution): increased internal and external mobility, professional routes less linear, fragmented by ruptures, periods of unemployment, changes in employments, reconversions;
- a large part of the future occupations which are not yet existing, obliging educational institutions and, on the forefront, universities, to prepare and equip students to face this situation and to provide them with possibilities to come back to formal studies several times during their professional pathway, in order to face radical evolutions in technologies and organisations;
- but activities more “intelligent”, more complex, offering more and more opportunities to learn formally and informally.

Strategies, organisation and arrangements are necessary, but are not enough. The only chance to be successful is progressivity (to respect the rhythm of colleagues, to take time for experimentation,...) and sustainability. Sustainability depends of men and women involved in the process, of the permanent support from the successive presidents of the university and from their management team, and of the possibility to attract young generations, whose interest is most based on investment in research, because their individual careers leads on this investment. And, until now, lifelong learning is not a criterion in Shangai ranking and not yet considered as a contribution to excellence by the majority of Rectors (even they have no chance to get a good ranking). And finally this radical evolution of our institutions is so much in rupture with traditional approaches that even good results are fragile and may be questioned, as soon as a difficulty appears.

- Strategical dimension:

- Missions/statements

The strategy of the University of Lille 1 Sciences and Technologies is guided by a vision of education and training which is not limited to initial education, or to a conception of

lifelong learning based on continuing education, but by an integrated organisation of all educational provisions.

To offer answers embedded in a lifelong learning perspective to diversified populations of students, contributing by this way to the economic and social development of the Region.

This strategy received the full support of the ministry when the Minister decided to sign every four years a contract with each university on the basis of a strategic plan.

On the basis of the experience accumulated during the two first contracts, Lille 1 decided recently (2006) to propose to the ministry to become a pole of experimentation in France for access and participation in the university of students of all ages providing them with opportunities to build, according to their project and resources, linear or fragmented learning paths from Baccalauréat to Doctorate.

This implied for us to work simultaneously on three dimensions:

- to ensure better transition between secondary schools and university after the Baccalauréat or a short cycle vocational degree;
- to organise the integration of adults in “normal” programmes by providing flexible learning pathways and validation of what they have learnt informally or non formally;
- to give support to the acceleration of mobility between education and work, between universities, between countries.

This strategy is based on two key notions: learning path and guidance. This means that Lille 1 intends to provide demanding research based but flexible learning provisions, adapted to the characteristics and constraints of its students. This means to aim at individualisation of learning paths taking into account on one side the project of each student and on the other side what he/she learnt before in different settings formally or informally. This leads to the definition of specific arrangements and the implementation of a Service dedicated to guidance and counseling likely to help students to build learning paths the most adapted to their project and individual resources, to support them in making it concrete and to give them an integrated service to avoid difficulties or problems linked to scattered or not connected services.

The contract 2010-2013, just signed between the ministry and the university confirms the strategy of our university regarding the lifelong learning perspective. This contract reinforces the orientations of the previous contract and adds new steps in our future progression:

- Motivations
- Values

## **2 OBJECTIVES**

Two main objectives:

- To reach higher academic successful rates for students and to contribute more effectively to the professional insertion of the young ones or to the professional re-insertion or progression of adults;

- To develop a culture of lifelong learner for all, preparing students to become partners for life of our university and guaranteeing them with long term services.

This orientation implies a complete reorganisation of our pedagogical and administrative relationships to students.

### **3 ORGANISATION**

The main decision regarding organisation was taken in 1986 when the president decided to create a central unit having to elaborate and implement a lifelong learning strategy. This obliged the “old” Institute of Adult Education to concentrate its activity not on University level but on pedagogical engineering and work with local and regional authorities, with companies on populations with low levels of qualifications.

The SUDES started with 4 staff in 1986. It employs now around 30 permanent employees. Excepted people dealing with administrative, logistic and financial issues, the most important part of the activity of the Service is dedicated to guidance and counseling.

### **4 ACTORS**

- Internal/external
- Isolated actors/teams/ collective approach

### **5 DISCUSSIONS**

- Risks vs. benefits

On the basis of our experience we have identified four main benefits. To appear as a lifelong learning organisation, offering flexible pathways and making possible validation of non formal and informal learning and permanent access:

- to make our university more attractive for students, and especially for non-traditional students;
- to appear as a dynamic institution, open to external demand and preoccupations;
- to increase external contacts at local, national or international level and develop links and partnerships with companies, local and regional authorities;
- to explore new ways for funding.

- Strengths vs. weaknesses

Commitment of rectors, heads of faculties or departments, demand and support from external partners (Region, professional bodies, companies,...), participation of colleagues, shared approach based on permanent discussions, common culture willingness to contribute to the development of the Region, teams of very competent professionals

But

Difficulty to think globally initial and continuing education, priority on young generations, difficulty to mobilize a new generation of teachers, progression in careers based on research, permanent risk to come back to academy

- Debates, conflicts

And, to consider initial education and lifelong learning as a unique process still remains a challenge. We have made some progresses towards articulation and coherence. And finally we are not sure that it would be the solution. We think that we have to provide coherent and permanent answers to the needs of learners, but in different ways taking into account their specificities. The needs of a 20 years old student are not the same as those of a 40 years old employee, having worked during 15 years and having a family.

What is necessary now is to find a new equilibrium between priorities.

- Level and type of involvement

There is not yet a unique definition of a lifelong learning institution in our university. The general perception is that we have to move in this direction, to create a common culture by discussing and experimenting, to organise progressively programmes and services, but if we ask to the president, the vice-presidents, heads of faculties, members of the Council of administration, we will not have a common answer. It is for the moment a common conviction supported by concrete actions, but not a shared vision of the final result.

## 6 DECISION

- Priorities:

The central objective of the last contract signed with the Ministry was to make closer initial and continuing education, to interlink the two logics, and to help “students” to adopt new attitudes. Individuals have to take the entire responsibility of their personal and professional pathway, in the perspective of several returns between education and training during their professional life.

Five goals orient this next step:

- To reinforce activities in access, advice and guidance, in management of individual routes.

One proposition is to set up “An Individual personal and professional route Management Centre” broadening services which are currently offered and providing new tools.

- To reinforce the use of validation of experience at transition points of the professional routes and to improve guidance methods and tools to take into account new needs more linked to human resources management in companies.

- To increase the flexibility of provisions provided to “adults” by developing a permanent offer based on the diversity of programmes offered by the university, allowing “returners” or

candidates being partly awarded in validation procedures to find immediately solutions (based on a range of pedagogical modalities) to start or finish a learning process at any moment of the academic year.

- To build training programmes for staff engaged in this process (teachers, advisors and counsellors, administrative and financial officers,...), to develop competences in providing appropriate answers to make this project successful.
- To capitalise and disseminate the tools developed in guidance of “adults” to all students.

## 7 IMPLEMENTATION

- Key elements: infrastructure, human resources, organization

The lessons learnt from our experience

The main difficulty has been to convince our colleagues to be part of this process. The problem was not lying in the University management; this strategy was a central decision, but in our capacity to mobilise the heads of faculties and departments, our colleagues to implement it. On the basis of this rather long experience, we are able to identify five key success factors:

- a permanent involvement of the management of the university during the last twenty years;
- regular policy discussions with the different Councils of the University and with Faculties and Departments, but also with external actors (regional and local authorities, social partners,...);
- the existence of a Service not doing things separately but acting as support for the lifelong learning activities developed by Faculties and Departments, offering central services, elaborating solutions and tools;
- the mobilisation in continuity of teachers and staff;
- a common preoccupation: to meet the needs of participants.

This could be drafted in what we call the successful triangle which implies the learner as end-user of the process and a couple made of two internal partners, the teacher and the advisor, providing in articulation the expected services.

- Roadmap, workplans, timing
- Budget: costs – resources

The University of Lille 1 has not yet a unique budget because the law imposes on universities to identify the continuing education budget in the university budget

The continuing education accounts are presented separately to Council of Administration.

The director of the Continuing education Service is responsible for this budget. She presents the Continuing education budget and balance sheets each year to the approval of the Council of Administration of the university.

We have calculated ratios making us able to identify what are the real costs of our different activities. These ratios are revised regularly.

Our strategy has never been to make money, but to offer services. However the internal rule is that our activities must be balanced and continuing education contributes to the running costs of the university (10% of the incomes).

Regarding strengths and weaknesses, we think that we have established a good balance between public and private money. So, we offer provisions to a wide range of populations. We have also established good relationships with our external partners based on the quality of our services; this means that we have well established partnerships offering some guarantees for “permanent” funding. The university is often the only institutions or organisation thanks to its equipments in laboratories or to the competences of our teachers able to offer some services or answers to the needs expressed by companies. Our weaknesses are linked to our bureaucracy, to the rules of public accounting; or they are linked to the availability of our teachers and searchers (continuing education is an activity among others, considered as less important than research).

Our challenge is really to anticipate. To survive we have permanently to renew our provisions and services, to understand what will be the future needs or demands, to be prepared for that and to prepare our staff to move to new activities. This obliges us to monitor the evolutions in our environment, to be aware of the evolution of regulations and laws, to be in permanent contact with companies, to discuss with regional authorities.

- Evaluation: indicators
- Management, leadership

High level of commitment of Rectors over the last 25 years

## 8 PERSPECTIVES

- Further developments
- Next steps

The contract 2010-2013, just signed between the ministry and the university confirms the strategy of our university regarding the lifelong learning perspective. This contract reinforces the orientations of the previous contract and adds new steps in our future progression:

- the information and reception Centre of SUDES will be transformed in a Centre whose mission will be to help individuals to manage their professional paths, linking in a closer way education and labour market;
- to provide sustainable solutions or opportunities to guarantee to individuals with continuity in their individual learning paths, especially at transition points;
- to develop validation of non formal and informal learning as a support for formalisation of what they have learnt in different settings;

- to develop validation of non formal and informal learning as a tool for human resources management in companies;

- to introduce more flexibility in programmes in sharing them in several “competences certificates” awarding a part of the whole qualification as step towards a full degree and to develop learning outcomes oriented approaches;

Simultaneously we will continue to work with our internal partners to better articulate initial education and continuing education, providing complementary services.

On the basis of our experience, we think that there are three conditions to meet to move towards a lifelong learning organisation:

- debates about lifelong learning issues must be part of all discussions in the University. All decisions taken at pedagogical, organisational, financial level have necessarily an impact on the provision of lifelong learning;

- to work simultaneously and permanently with teachers; start with very good cases, explain and demonstrate the benefits and the added value of adults’ access and participation

- to work simultaneously on three dimensions: administration and organisation, pedagogy and financing.