

“Université de l’Alternance”

A French model to build business-university cooperation

SUMMARY

“Dual studies” is a key issue for the development of our future organization of training program and studies. Indeed, the University of Lille is involved in an innovative project, with the perspective of the implementation of a "University Vocational Training Center" dedicated to “dual studies”. Our department of continuing education is the leader of the development of this entity in collaboration with all the faculties, main organizations and services dedicated to Life Long Learning and Partnerships with companies. This project encompasses the main patterns of a business-university collaboration and is so called “Université de l’Alternance”.

During this 2 years project, “Action-Research” will be implemented with the participation of a PhD in Sciences of Education to evaluate the impact of dual studies on the labour market and on the integration of graduates in the labour market. The participatory action research will also develop methodology, templates and models to define quality standards on the practices of “alternance” at university.

CONTEXT AND GENERAL DETAILS

At first, we have to consider the terminology « Alternance ». For us, it encompasses all type of dual studies including theory at university and practices with companies: vocational training, apprenticeships, contracts of professionalization (specific contracts in our Legal framework), internships, work-based or linked training, tailor-made courses including theory and practices. In the document, we will use the word “Alternance” when it deals with global strategy of development of studies involving companies, and business-university cooperation. « Alternance » allows the university to transform its training offer, and to develop innovative training program, with innovative pedagogical transformation. It fosters also university-companies cooperation.

This topic is relevant as regards the stakes linked to the transformation of vocational training in France but also at European level (considering VET and international mobility). The reform of Vocational Training in France is an opportunity to transform the training at university. The recent Law of 2018 introduces major changes in continuing VET and apprenticeships with the creation of a new authority (France Competences) and the publication of a decree to regulate the funding of vocational training with a distribution of 64 % to 72 % dedicated to the financing of “Alternance”. The reform focuses mainly on two pillars: certification and transformation of the training offer at university. It also includes the liberalization of the training market for “dual studies”.

The University of Lille is involved in the development of continuing education, vocational training including apprenticeship, with various models of “Alternance” and a solid structuration within the faculties, departments, high schools, schools of engineers, or university institutes of technology. Partnerships and cooperation between companies and university can be organized through advising board, tutoring, participation of companies to a jury, participation of professional in the courses as trainers. Different categories of staff at university collaborate to make it possible: teachers,

researchers, training counsellors, pedagogical engineer, training engineer, staff in charge of employment. Models and tools were also developed: portfolio, tutoring booklet.

Nevertheless, our system has to be improved, considering the reform of the French model for vocational training. Indeed, companies do not always see the university as a potential partner because they still consider university as an academic institution not enough grounded to the Labour market and professional standards regarding jobs. This mismatch is sometimes is also due to the fact that the academic staff do not always consider that students can learn also at workplace and only consider that they will implement what they learn at university within the company. This new paradigm – learning at workplace - is a “preset” to implement “Alternance” within their training programs.

Except in very specific sector (engineers, high school linked to university,) apprenticeship or dual studies are not always considered as an opportunity to guarantee to the students a qualitative training (including theory and practices) and giving him/her a better opportunity to find a job when graduated.

LEGAL FRAMEWORK

In the framework of the reform of the vocational training with the new Law of 2018 “For the freedom to choose one’s professional future” the University has to face major changes (including “Alternance”).

The university has thus the opportunity to become a “University Vocational Training Center” at a wider scale, since the university of Lille will merge with High Schools (to foster competitiveness at international level). The development of dual studies is an opportunity for the employment and the development of partnerships with companies, and also a way to get new fundings from private sector.

More over, the Law introduces an innovative modality to develop training with companies : training at workplace – Formation en Situation de Travail (FEST) allowing companies to train directly their employees, or newcomers (with some specific requirements concerning the supervising of the training). The legal framework fosters innovative development of programs with a collaboration between Sciences of education and companies and/or training centers.

PEDAGOGY

This new position requires a qualitative, competitive and innovative training offer. The university has to consider the analysis of the situations and context of students, and possibility to adapt the training to match to the needs of the companies. Our department of continuing education, with the team of pedagogical engineers, and training engineers, will focus on innovation regarding practices in tutoring, digitalization, situated learning, work-based training, ...

The company is a major partner in the construction of these innovative programs, to co-build “contents” and to participate to the evolution of skills of individuals. Even if dual studies, and models already exist, the university has to reshape it regarding a competitive market.