STOP
THE DROP

Developing the motivation of adults at risk of drop-out

ISFCE
INSTITUT SUPÉRIEUR
DE FORMATION CONTINL
D'ETTERBEEK

BELGIUM

University of Aruba

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Developing the motivation of adults at risk of drop-out

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Introduction

We encompasses a network of 217 school institutions, including more than 17,000 learners.

1. 1. Creating the project and making bonds between the partners

The four partners implied in the project have been given the opportunity to discuss the drop-out issue among a specific audience composed of learners from an underprivileged socio-economic background. Each of our partners is actively part of the education system for adult learners and/or of the higher- type education system enabling adults to pursue studies. Dealing with the drop-out issue implies for our educational institutions to get more empowered in the process of helping the learners to free themselves from social exclusion and acquire the confidence needed to be able to cope with any obstacle during their curriculum.

The partners are the I.S.F.C.E. - Institut Supérieur de Formation Continue d'Etterbeek (Brussels, Belgium) or Higher Institute for Continuing Education in Etterbeek; the GIP-FTLV-IP - Groupement d'Intérêt Public-Formation Tout au Long de la Vie Insertion Professionnelle) (related to the Académie d'Orléans-Tours in France); the Z.F.B.A. Faculty - Zalaegerszeg College of Business Administration); and the University of Aruba. They have been striving for several years now to provide specific training and education, and help learners receive increased recognition for their qualifications or diplomas.

Each institution/school enables the learners to progress towards even higher qualifications and strives to reinforce social inclusion. In order to make sure that our students do not drop out and to contemplate the issue in all its complexity and find the adequate solutions, the partners have felt the need to develop a project of international scale. The project aims to share knowledge and ideas about new pedagogical approaches and working methods, develop new tools and put them in common to be more efficient and sustainable.

This has led us to get involved for the first time in a transnational project called Erasmus+, taking account of our specificities, our structural and practical differences as well as our cultural differences. This project's aim is to tackle the drop-out issue among adult learners.

The I.S.F.C.E.: we are proud of being the first higher non-university institution for continuing education in the French-speaking Community of Belgium (Fédération Wallonie-Bruxelles) to be in charge of the Erasmus+ project. In addition to its language classes (French, English, Dutch, Spanish), the I.S.F.C.E. offers a higher education program for approximately 1,700 adult learners with more than 100 nationalities, aged between 18 and 77 and from diverse social backgrounds (unemployed, young mothers, newcomers, ethnic minorities, etc).

The I.S.F.C.E. raises intercultural and intergenerational awareness. Furthermore, the I.S.F.C.E. enables students to combine work and family life through a course unit system inspired by the Bologna Process, in a relatively weak socio-economic and low qualifying context.

In this framework, the student can validate several course units in one of our four courses[1] by acquiring a package of specific skills. These non-university higher education students (more or less 250 learners), who have enrolled for the first time for a given course unit, are the target group of this project because the drop-out rate among this particular group is often higher than 30% in each academic year (2015-2016: 36.2%; 2016-2017: 38.5%; 2017- 2018: 34,7%; 2018-2019: 36%; 2019-2020: 29%). Despite numerous informal initiatives[2] and the Erasmus Chart of 2015, a first partnership project in 2016 did not go through. The I.S.F.C.E. then decided to give it another try but with more oriented objectives, more efficient and sustainable tools, based on a report from the AEQUES[3] that recommended institutionalising their tools and practices so to make them accessible for the whole structure.

The idea was to set up a wider consortium, with more ambitious results - by, among other things, putting in place the Erasmus mobility project[4] - based on a dialogue including both the educational staff and the learners.

The partnership is composed of four countries that have no previous experience with regard to creating a common structure for Erasmus+, but that are willing to focus on the learners' needs. The partners have been selecting the most accurate aspects of the issue - that is, early drop-out, challenging failure at school, the access to education for the unprivileged, social inclusion and equity. The pedagogical staff and the administrative and teaching staff, already aware of and trained to provide oriented guidance to students, agree to focus their effort on these specific target groups in order to involve the learners in the Erasmus+ process through their active participation. Concretely, three methodological tools have been developed:

1 I by gathering student thoughts and experience concerning their curriculum (what are the obstacles throughout their studies?) in the framework of debating groups[5] consisting of a maximum of 20 individuals for each country;

2 I by developing and testing our common toolbox - the learners have the possibility to experiment with new learning methods;

3 I by sharing our objectives and results internally and on a regular basis for empowering students to pursue their studies and get graduated.

The GIP-FTLV-IP: our French partner is part of the Académie Orléans-Tours and is an autonomous institution related to the National Education Ministry of France involved in adult education by coordinating and assuring the follow-up of adult training and long-life learning, especially in the field of vocational integration with the GRETA Network[6]. In addition, the GIP-FTLV-IP manages the administrative follow-up and budget monitoring of the Centre de Formation d'Apprentis and is responsible for the organisation of the academic projects related to education, vocational training and long-life learning. In figures, it encompasses a network of 217 school institutions, including more than 17,000 learners and delivering 187 diplomas and qualifications, providing counceling and offering no less than 500 training programs to enterprises, workers and individuals in over 22 different locations.

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1. Marketing, I.T., Exectuvie Assistant Training and Accounting
2. The recurring tools provided by the educational staff include : the teachers providing individual guidance to the students through a student board, organising preparatory classes for the units of the higher levels, providing French classes or mathematics classes, putting in place 2nd and 3rd degree-student mentorship for the learners of the 1st level.
3. AEQUES : in French, Agence pour l'Evaluation de la Qualité de l'Enseignement Supérieur - this organisation is essentially aimed at planning, in an independent way, the procedures for evaluating the quality of higher education in the French-speaking entity of Belgium (Fédération Wallonie-Bruxelles), at whatever education level in the Belgian system (universities and higher education institutions, graduate school of arts, continuing education institutions, etc.) (www.aeques.be)
6. GRETA: a network for adult training and long-life learning of the Académie Orléans-Tours, in the Centre-Val de Loire region of France; it provides public aid for training and long-life learning and develops guidance, skills and advice tools for the funding bodies (enterprises, OPCO, territorial entities, the French Employment Desk, etc.), the employed and unemployed section of the population. The GRETA Network includes GRETA Berry, GRETA Coeur 2 Loire, GRETA Val-de-Loire and the GIP-FTLV-IP itself. (Réseau GRETA Académie d'Orléans-Tours (ac- orleans-tours.fr)

At the GIP-FTLV-IP, 1,237 individuals take part in a program focused on individuals at high risk of social and labour exclusion (long-term unemployment, youth at risk, etc.). More than 95% of these people are women, 40% are more than 50 years old, 30% did not graduate from high school, 13% are considered to be disabled and more than 90% were in a precarious economic situation at the time of the implementation of the program. This panel of individuals, among whom only 40% managed to obtain a complete qualification, is thus our target group.

The GIP-FTLV-IP has expressed its wish to share with partners from different countries so to find solutions together. Even though building a strategic partnership is also new for the GIP-FTLV-IP, it already has experience in the Erasmus+ Mobility program (KA 104), it also monitors the project "Mission against drop-out" (in collaboration with the French board of education) and is involved in the initiative "Assure ton année"[7].

At the source of these projects and debates, there is a wish for an internal dynamic focused on researching and developing tools regarding lifelong learning, pedagogical innovation, searching for new methodological and self-empowerment tools, and creating a dialogue between the different parties involved, all of which is coherent with our vision of the Erasmus+ project.

The Z.F.B.A. Faculty: the Zalaegerszeg College of Business Administration is part of the Budapest Business School (BBS or BGE in Hungarian for Gazdasági Egyetem) - the largest university of Applied Sciences in Hungary. It extends over a field of 10 miles and is located approximately 150 miles far from Budapest, a few steps away from the Austrian boundary. It offers a campus environment on a human scale, with 600 students and 72 staff members.

The Faculty provides different study programs: Administration and Entrepreneurial Management, Finance and Accounting, Public Services, Business and I.T. It also offers non-university higher education programs and post- university training programs. In the domain of adult higher education, the students are aged from

25 to 34 years old and are seeking better employment or higher wages.

Despite all these considerations, the rate of Hungarian adult students in lifelong learning is still under the EU average numbers (7% for Hungary vs 10% for the whole of EU). It then appears necessary to increase that rate and give more access to qualifications, through our common project. All the undergraduate students who apply for the first time for a given course unit, equivalent to more or less 10 learners, will be at the heart of the project. The students that attend classes on a part-time basis and the students in short-term courses (20 to 40 students), still in the field of adult higher education, will also be included.

Moreover, let's take notice that the location of the school - a small town in the countryside - is not ideal for attracting students: drop-outs occur frequently. To overcome this obstacle and aiming academic succes, the education staff have developed a higher sensitivity towards the students' needs by focusing themselves on communication skills, empathy, privileging training programs and open communication with students.

For all these reasons, the Z.F.B.A. Faculty has seen in the Erasmus+ project a first opportunity to share and develop tools with international partners to find efficient and practical solutions.

The University of Aruba: this university is characterised by a long tradition of international collaboration, the Erasmus+ project is naturally part of it, as the University of Aruba has always been contributing to the transatlantic relationships between the Caribbean and the American continent, and also between the Caribbean and Europe.

The University of Aruba bring together scholars, researchers and teachers in order to collaborate for learning and research puposes. In its capacity of being part of the Kingdom of the Netherlands as an overseas territory of the Caribbean, and member of the European Union, Aruba offers many advantages, due to its

central position and its multicultural and multilingual context[8]. The University of Aruba seeks to reinforce them by, among other things, encouraging its staff and students to participate in the Erasmus+ program and in other new international cooperation projects focused on research and education.

This project will embody the objective of cooperation, as the staff exchange and student exchange programs do it in the first place. The University of Aruba brings together 700 students and 100 collaborators[9] and provides higher non-university courses and higher university courses with a Master's degree in Law, Finance and Accounting, Marketing, Hotel and Tourism, and Social Work. Despite the fact that the University does not offer a specific degree in second chance learning (yet), it estimates that the number of its students who are mid-career professionals or full-time or part-time workers is at least 60%. These students also have to combine their studies with their family-life in most cases. Diverse reasons, such as work-life balance, could explain early drop-out. A clear view on drop-out rates and an understanding of its causes will enable us to help students to meet their goals, while maintaining a good level of education. The students following the degree in Law and being older than 24 years old will be able to benefit from the project.

1. 2. The aims of the project

Keeping in mind that the main goal of this project is to increase the number of graduating students between 30 and 34 years old to at least 40%. The Europe 2020 Strategy strives to increase the rate within adult education and strives to improve access for individuals with an unprivileged socio-economic background to high-quality education. We aim to promote the personal and professional development of these individuals, their empowerment, adaptability, employability and active participation in society. For those who could not obtain any qualification at an early age from school or from higher education levels, it appears that having a diploma or qualification is definitely valuable in our current society, where finding a job is difficult without a diploma. Finding a work-life balance in combination with studies, while

nurturing motivation in the long term, is a genuine daily challenge. We intend to cope with the disinvolvement issue and try to trigger drop-out prevention in our respective contexts by promoting personal involvement and self-empowerment. The institutions engaged in this initiative are willing to unite their efforts by sharing good practices and drawing up practical solutions. Even if they are well aware of the causes of drop-out, these institutions will dedicate themselves to study and confront them thoroughly with the help of the students' feedback.

We can now define the broad objective of our project: lowering the drop-out rate among learners in our partner institutions by prioritizing efficient, practical and sustainable solutions; answering the following questions:
1) Why do some students in adult education drop out?
2) What are the best tools and practices with regard to orientation and prevention among our partners in terms of the existing education institutions and the respective national contexts?

The main goal of this project is to increase the number of graduating students between 30 and 34 years old to at least 40%

Our more **specific objectives** are:

- Raising and stimulating motivation among the learners throughout their studies;
- Improving qualifications and employability among the learners;
- Improving the partners' pedagogical practices.

Our **methodological objectives** are:

- Gathering and identifying the main factors causing drop-out in our partners' institutions;
- Sharing and comparing the results by highlighting the internal common factors;
- Creating, developing and implementing prevention means, which will be put together in the portfolio;
- Taking into account the good practices of our partners in order to prevent drop-out, exchange and develop solutions in our educational network;
- Building up together a portfolio with the tools and good practices for drop-out prevention and for an appropriate following-up of the students.

The **prospects** of the project are:

- Lowering the drop-out rate by raising and stimulating involvement and motivation among our learners;
- Acquiring knowledge about our specific target group and their difficulties;
- Improving our internal practices and tools for drop-out prevention;
- Implementing these tools and practices;
- Drafting the present portfolio, which includes the analysis of our target group - age, school curriculum, personal situation of the individual, gender, potential impairment, working situation, etc. - comparisons and conclusions, with the help of our data gathering and data management team of our institutions. The portfolio also contains a toolbox with practical elements in view of taking action;
- Improving the methodology through which the issue is answered among our institutions and improving our skills;
- Discovering and learning from other educational/pedagogical models and systems in different national contexts;
- Reinforcing the network with other European partners.

We are also thinking about an innovative project that would address the adult learners population in the first instance - a sector towards which the public authorities, many governments and the European Union pay much attention. Besides, the EU have settled the objective to decrease the average drop-out rate of young learners to less than 10%. The innovative aspect of the project also resides in our common willingness to prevent drop-out by providing to our teachers, and educational staff members some tools inspired by our own experience. Moreover, using the students' learning experience itself as the main source of information is key to understanding and dealing with the true underlying difficulties that arise during their studies. At last, the perspective of an international opening in the field of education, through new pedagogical approaches and working methods, is a great opportunity for our school institutions.

1. 3. The expectations

We are expecting much from all parties involved in the Erasmus+ project and also from our target group, the adult learners.

Indeed, we intend to:

- Raise the students' motivation to obtain a degree, by thinking about and working together on their specific difficulties;
- Make students get more involved in their studies;
- Improve employability and give fair value to the skills the students would have acquired during their studies, by enabling them to validate the acquisition of skills;
- Make sure our students are able to acquire cross-sectional skills necessary for the labour market, like team work, intercultural skills, problem solving and data collection;
- Make sure our students are able to motivate and help their peers to pursue their studies.

Concerning the educational staff, we are convinced that team work at all levels of our institutions will significantly decrease the drop-out rates. A new dynamic will emerge between our staff members, followed by what has been highlighted through our exchanges, internally as well as internationally. On the basis of the present portfolio, each and every one of us will be able to identify the obstacles and choose the most practical and relevant tools at each level.

Managing a project at an international scale results in a wide variety of specific skills by the educational staff such as linguistic skills (mostly in English), intercultural skills, management skills, cross-sectional skills (the direction management staff, the administrative staff and teaching staff work together on the same subjects and towards the same goals) and also problem solving skills.

At an institutional level, we intend to decrease the drop-out rate in each school institution of the partners in view of reaching our main goal. We also count on the sustainability of the project over time, thanks to the use of the present portfolio and its toolbox, and we want to improve our teaching and learning methods for being able to provide the best follow-up to our students. Finally, we also aim to strengthen our impact and international exposure with out European partners as well as reinforcing and developing partnerships of quality with our European partners.

The results of our project will also impact 2 kinds of actors. On one hand, a dynamic will be made possible between all the other practitioners in the field of adult learning, within or out of our network, because they will be able to use our toolbox. On the other hand, we will disseminate the results of the project and our recommendations to the policymakers in charge of adult learning education, so they can take measures at a wider and more sustainable scale at a political level.

Our local networks will be sensitized to the drop-out issue, with the possibility of providing better qualifications and improving student mobility at a national level.
The dissemination of the project at a national level will be done by the educational staff and through the network of the higher education institutions in each partner country so the portfolio can be accessible to each and every colleague.

At the EU level, the portfolio will be made accessible for any individual all over Europe through the Erasmus+ Results platform and our national contact EPALE[10] that will be asked to publish an article. We will have to be able to adapt to new student profiles if the aim is to make the project live in the long run. Each partner will be in charge of using the tools and good practices pointed out in the portfolio and disseminating them internally. The students and the educational staff will be given free access to the portfolio.

At last, the student mobility aspect will be a priority in order to enable our students to live an international high-quality learning experience and benefit from high-quality, cross-sectional pedagogical skills.

1. 4. Our working plan and meetings

We decided to set clear working objectives with the intention of building up the present portfolio, and we have planned a series of transnational meetings, which we consider paramount for our project. These meetings have been genuine working tools enabling us to form strong bonds between our institutions to have a better understanding of each partner. Five meetings of 4 days each were scheduled to make exchanges and decision making easier. You will find the detail about them, as well as the results, after this introduction in the chapters II. Methodology, III. 4 Approaches - description and definition, and IV. Summary Sheets.

New pedagogical approaches and working methods are a great opportunity for our school institutions.

10. EPALE - Electronic Platform for Adult Learning in Europe: EPALE is a European, multilingual, open membership community of adult learning professionals, including adult educators and trainers, guidance and support staff, researchers and academics, and policymakers. EPALE is funded by the Erasmus+ program. It is part of the European Union's strategy to promote more and better learning opportunities for all adults. EPALE does this by supporting and strengthening the adult learning professions. It enables members to connect with and learn from colleagues across Europe, through its blog posts, forums, the Partner Search tool, complemented by physical gatherings. EPALE provides a wealth of high-quality, accurate information relevant for adult learning practitioners. (https://epale.ec.europa.eu/en/about/)
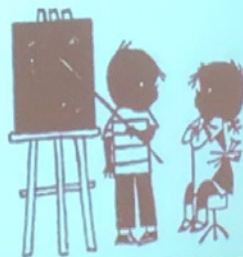
Methodology

In order to conceive the present portfolio, we have opted for a three-step methodology consisting of the following: a data collection about the causes of drop-out among adult learners, looking for solutions, in combination with providing guidance, and at last the drafting of the portfolio. A "toolbox" has also been created to provide practical advice, as a guideline aimed at implementing preventive actions against drop-out in the field of adult learning. Every transnational meeting/online meeting (during the Covid-19 measures) represents one step of the methodology.

2. 1. Data collection

At the first transnational meeting organised in Belgium in 2018, the partners began by laying out the whole context in which their respective target groups were dropping out, on the basis of data and numbers they had been collecting until then. And with the help of the practical experience and suggestions of our Hungarian partners, we have decided to build up conversation teams consisting of about 20 learners and teaching staff members or administrative staff members in the framework of three World Café sessions[11], in which everyone debated and shared knowledge about different axes - the individual axis, the institutional axis and the educational axis about the drop-out issue and its related obstacles and solutions throughout the school curriculum.

A detailed and analysed layout of each case has led to a briefing note for each partner and has been shared on Google Drive.

The second transnational meeting in Hungary in May 2019 made possible to share and confront our respective experience and organise the issues we have in common by a series of different approaches allocated to each partner.

- **Belgium:** the individual approach related to social aspects, like the influence of society, of family and friends, or of colleagues in the field of work, etc.;

- **France:** the institutional approach that includes the school facilities, the space design inside the school, the staff availability, the students' well-being;

- **Hungary:** the approach based on the educational system, the learning programs and the pedagogical aspect;

- **Aruba:** the approach based on the level of education in terms of the learning experience and the work-life balance.

Each partner organised a feedback session about the results highlighted by the respective partners, so as to keep our students and staff informed about the progress of our research and to include them in the process of problem solving.

Each partner organised a feedback session to keep our students and staff informed and to include them in the process of problem solving.

2. 2. The process of problem solving, elaborating good practices and building the portfolio

The second phase of the project is focused on the elaboration of each approach by using tree mapping tool in order to:

1. Identify the negative aspects of a given existing situation linked to its respective causes and effects, in the shape of a "problem tree", which is done using the data provided by national reports and specific contributions from the last meeting;
2. Reverse the problems into our current goals, in the shape of a "solution tree".

Once the causes of drop-out had been identified - be these specific to each partner or commonly shared -, each partner focused on problem solving and elaborating tools during a 3rd meeting organised in Aruba in January 2020.

As these tools and solutions are meant to be implemented in each school, the problem of applying them has emerged, and finding a solution for each and every specific issue appeared to be impossible. So we have decided to select the problems that were recurrent for each partner: 5 votes have been given to each approach and 3 to 4 tools/solutions that had the majority of votes have been selected and validated to be tested. During our 2nd meeting, this has led us to elaborate a testing schedule and build up a portfolio that would follow the 4 approaches identified in view to apply them.

2. 3. Building and testing the portfolio

This third, and long-running, step is about building, discussing and eventually validating the tools commonly generated, in the shape of a "toolbox".

Our last transnational meetings were held online due to Covid-19. We first defined a table of contents based on the four main approaches we have been working on. Due to the crisis, we decided to add a chapter related to the Covid-19

circumstances: indeed, we have been facing a situation where it is of utmost importance for our teaching staff to avoid drop-out among our students in a fast and effective way. To this end, our partners laid out the current circumstances, defined the theoretical framework, issued recommendations and discussed about potential obstacles, by depicting practical examples, for each approach. The team also did research online regarding the drop-out issue.

Then the partners drew "Summary Sheets" and we compiled them in a "toolbox", with all the different solutions related to each approach our partners were responsible for. This 'toolbox" is put in place to provide council about implementing practical solutions in order to avoid drop-out of adult learners..

Finally, apart from the special measures put in place to disseminate the portfolio in these unusual circumstances, Belgium has suggested to its partners to draw up and issue a common survey for teachers to collect opinions about distance learning/teaching and their solutions (new tools, new teaching methods) with the goal of keeping students engaged and so to avoid drop-out.

The testing phase initially scheduled for October 2020 has unfortunately been cancelled because of the Covid-19. It was meant to identify and evaluate the advantages and disadvantages of the solutions and tools implemented in each institution destined for the related target groups.

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11. Acording to Marco Paoli's definition (https://epale.ec.europa.eu/fr/resource-centre/content/world-cafe-un- outil-danimation-pour-faciliter-lemergence-de-propositions, consulted on February 9th, 2021), "a World Café is a methodological tool that provides a frame for meetings in an interactive and collaborative way by stimulating debate for practical solutions to a certain issue. It has become tradition in participative methods. The aim of it is to create a working atmosphere of confidence in order for the participants to share and brainstorm ideas collectively in an informal way by simulating a chat at a café. The room is then organised in different tables where the participants are invited to talk, debate and suggest ideas and solutions. Several sessions are organised with the following dynamic: being able to move from table to table frequently, and in doing so, exchange ideas between groups and make them feed each other ("pollination" method for a collective insight). "
[translation based on the original document and https://www.erasmuspluscourses.com/blog/category/academics/2 , consulted on February 12th, 2021]

4 Axes: description and definition

TOOL 1: THE CLASS/SECTION REPRESENTATIVE

3.1. The individual axis - How to lend an ear to all

Existing situation

Currently, there is no relay person within a group or section. Students' specific questions, specific requests or comments are not centralized and the answers provided to each individual do not benefit the whole group.

Teachers are not always aware of general problems related to misunderstandings, organisation, timing, interaction or pedagogy. They don't always make favourable changes for the students. They don't always evolve in their practice. They don't always easily detect organizational problems that should be communicated to the management.

Recommendations

The introduction of a class/section representative (and a delegate/substitute) would allow him/her to act as an intermediary and relay between the students, the teachers and the management. His/her role would be to facilitate exchanges, to suggest modifications and solutions, to orientate and provide their peers adequate support and avoid any misunderstanding between teachers and students.

Ideally, the class/section representative:
- volunteers for this task or is elected by the students;
- is approached by all teachers on a regular basis in order to consolidate monitoring and quickly address potential problems;
- ensures that the information is not distorted.

Obstacles

The implementation of this tool is difficult due to the organization of day and evening classes and because of the fact that students from different sections have common courses.

TOOL 2: TUTORING TO GUIDE STUDENTS IN THEIR STUDIES
(senior students tutoring/mentoring newcomers)

Existing situation

Students who have already followed several course units for the Bachelor's Degree of Management Assistant "mentor" newly enrolled students. During this mentorship, the mentors organise an information session for all newly enrolled students in which they explain the organisation chart of the course units they have to follow for their Bachelor's degree (course unit system - need to validate prerequisites for other course units) and the different rules specific to continuing education. Second-year students also give testimonials of their experience at I.S.F.C.E. and emphasize the importance of foreign languages in their study program.

Unfortunately, the support of the student benefitting from coaching in specific courses does not always continue throughout the year. Many students (mentors and mentorees) explain they have a lack of time due to their working-life, family-life or recreational commitments. The organisation of the day and evening courses also hinders exchanges between students.

Recommendations

The implementation of a tutoring / mentoring system would forge links and create a group spirit, which are essential for motivation, self-confidence and educational support. Ideally, mentors should offer help in courses they have successfully completed and they should commit to coaching their mentoree regularly until the end of the school year. Conversely, the mentoree must be available and willing to get help. This assistance can be provided through meetings, email exchanges, social networking, etc.

Obstacles

Implementing this tutoring/mentoring system can be hindered by:
- a lack of time;
- the day and evening course schedules, which can interfere with the students' exchanges.

3.1. The individual axis – How to lend an ear to all

TOOL 3: A THIRD PARTY WHO LISTENS TO STUDENTS

3.1. The individual axis - How to lend an ear to all

Existing situation

We already have a third party, in this case the associate director of I.S.F.C.E. She helps students when they are facing professional, financial or relational difficulties. Those who need help for course orientation, housing or health-related issues (psychological ones, for instance) can also talk with the associate director. The aforementioned problems could jeopardize the school career of our students.

Recommendations

Ideally, the third party proves to be devoted and empathetic. He/She can provide support and concrete solutions, suggest ideas and refer students to an appropriate service or professional support.

Students have to make an appointment for a meeting which takes place in a room where discretion is ensured.

Obstacles

None

TOOL 1: THE CLASS/SECTION REPRESENTATIVE

Existing situation

According to the regulations of the faculty council, the council must have three class representatives - two from the Bachelor's level, one from the Master's level. In practice four students sit together in the faculty council - one from every year of the Bachelor's level and one from the Master's level. The task of the student representative is also described in detail in the university study guide. It is stated that the students themselves determine who becomes their student representative. The student representative is regarded as a point of contact for the students who can get in touch with this person and ask all their questions and explain their problems related to the studies or university. Furthermore, the student representative is also the point of contact for the faculty if the faculty aims at making students get involved in certain activities or if it wants to know about the opinion of its students. And last but not least, the very important role that students have in the faculty council is that of expressing the opinion of the students and taking part in decisions regarding education and research matters on behalf of the students.

Recommendations

Although there are four student representatives, they only represent three votes in the faculty council. Every student should ideally have its own vote.

Obstacles

In order to achieve this, an amendment to the regulations of the faculty council is required and perhaps even an amendment to the Law on the University of Aruba.

3.1. The individual axis – How to lend an ear to all

3.1. The individual axis - How to lend an ear to all

TOOL 2: TUTORING TO GUIDE STUDENTS IN THEIR STUDIES
(senior students tutoring/mentoring newcomers)

Existing situation

The framework for student counselling can be found in the study guide of the university. As early as the first year, students can register for a course aimed at teaching them how to go through their studies. This course takes place during four hours every week, and is provided by two student assistants, both of whom are Master's students. It is not a compulsory course but an extra support for first year Bachelor's students, complementary to the Legal Skills course. This program started in 2017-2018 and is now used on a regular basis by approximately a quarter of the annual Ba1 students.

In addition, a faculty teacher is appointed as "study advisor". Students can contact him/her to discuss problems related to study planning, study progress, examination results, or even personal matters like motivation. The main task of the study advisor is to refer students to people within the faculty and / or university who can assist them and answer their questions in a relevant way.

Recommendations

The course for teaching how to manage one's studies is definitely a good option. Nonetheless, there should also be one for individual and professional guidance of students, for a fair fee.

Furthermore, programming a few lectures headed by senior student assistants who could share experience and give some tips could also be valuable. These lectures could even be integrated into the previous course.

Obstacles

Finding the necessary budgets to be able to offer individualised guidance to the students.

TOOL 3: A THIRD PARTY WHO LISTENS TO STUDENTS

Existing situation

In 2019, the Shoco Wellness program was established as a "go to place" for students who are facing problems that might hinder their study progress and personal well-being. Each faculty has its own "student counselling system". Some are quite extensive, others more basic. Shoco Wellness offers students the necessary help at a more professional level and offers students the necessary guidance. The Shoco Wellness Student Mental Health & Well- being operates like this:

1. The students can speak to an academic advisor named by their respective faculty counselling system, or they can attend one of the activities offered by the Shoco Wellness program directly.

2. Depending on the seriousness of the situation, a student can be referred to a Shoco counsellor (UA level). The counsellor analyses the situation of the student willing to participating in a group counselling program. This program is course-oriented and led by a psychologist.

3. A Shoco counsellor can also refer the student directly to his network of psychologists for short and long-term support. After group counselling, a psychologist can refer the student back to the Shoco counsellor, who would refer the student to the aforementioned network of psychologists.

The Shoco Wellness program did not stop during the COVID-19 pandemic and has been able to help many students facing various academic and personal difficulties.

Recommendations

The Shoco Wellness program needs to be maintained. The professionals and practitioners should also be given the right tools, in order for them to be able to address mental health problems or other kinds of personal problems efficiently. The educational staff prefer practising in a more confidential way. As a start, the Shoco Wellness has planned to reach out to the educational staff members to learn more on their well-being during the Covid-19 pandemic, with a focus on the shift in work style and environment.

Obstacles

None

GIP FTLV-IP (France)

TOOL 1: THE CLASS/SECTION REPRESENTATIVE

Existing situation

Group/class representatives, or "ambassadors", are elected to give voice to a given group of learners. Indeed, they are meant to represent the group of learners in front of the teaching team by passing on to the teaching team all the complaints, comments that the group of learners might have about the training plan, the organisation or the institution in a wider sense. In doing so, the group representatives ensure dialogue between the learners and the teaching team.

Recommendations

- Clearly explain the representative's mission before the vote,
- Set a time for the vote (one hour, for example),
- All along the training program, leave some time off to allow the group representative to share with the students,
- The teaching team must receive and examine the complaints presented by the student group representative.

Obstacles

The group representatives cannot apply on a voluntary basis.

TOOL 2: TUTORING TO GUIDE STUDENTS IN THEIR STUDIES
(senior students tutoring/mentoring newcomers)

Existing situation

Our institution set up a system of sponsorship for people who are involved in a training program to become home helper. This system has been operating for 3 years now. Some professionals we work with on a regular basis agree to sponsor one or several students all along the training program (9 months).

This sponsorship has three goals:
- Adapt the training program to the labour market;
- Provide practical advice to the learners;
- Get ready for finding a job;

The sponsor has to help his sponsee and gives him some advice. He also has to share his own professional experience and helps his sponsee to find an internship.

The sponsor, the sponsee and the institution sign a sponsorship charter.

Recommendations

- Former trainees are the sponsors of new trainees;
- The learner and his sponsor should be given the opportunity to schedule meetings all
along the training program.

Obstacles

Having difficulties finding a sponsor.

TOOL 3: A THIRD PARTY WHO LISTENS TO STUDENTS

Existing situation

All along the training program, a third party is designated to support and listen to students. Depending on the needs identified, the number and frequency of interviews can be varied. From the beginning of the training to the first steps of the post-training process, the support focuses on taking into account all the aspects of the student's life and experience. The main goal of this support is about empowering the student, much more than just giving punctual answers to a question.

Recommendations

- The third party should not be a member of the teaching team.
- The third party must have skills in active listening and socio-professional integration support.
- Schedule interviews all along the training session between the student and the person designated as the third party.

Obstacles

The possibility that there should be no qualified person in the institution to be designated as "third party".

TOOL 1: THE CLASS/SECTION REPRESENTATIVE

Existing situation

According to the law, there is an Association for Students for each Hungarian university (there is one at the national level as well). These associations are meant to represent and articulate the students' interests. In our opinion, they do it in a more or less effective way.

The associations can be criticized because they sometimes function like political parties, which is of course exactly the opposite of what is the original goal - that is, representing the students' interests. Quite often, the leaders of the associations are students who are spending much more time at the university than necessary, so they cannot finish their studies on time.

At our campus, we have 3 Bachelor's programs and 2 vocational training programs. The Management BSc students have some classes together with the Finance and Accountancy BSc students, both of which represent about 40 students each. The Business Information Technology students represent smaller classrooms, with around 15 students.

On average, the vocational training classes (Management, on the one hand, Finance and Accountancy, on the other hand) are the size of 20 students each. This is true for full-time students. As for the distance learning classes, the figures are about the half of those of the full-time classes. And we have no I.T. Business for distance learning students.

Our experience is that there is an informal spokesperson for each class. He or she spokes to teachers, etc. It could be a good idea to officialise it.

Recommendations

In addition to the intervention of a class representative, it would be worth designating a "mentor teacher". Indeed, a teacher could be designated to be at the head of one specific training programme. Another university, in Veszprém (Hungary), gives the example: mentor teachers help students who ask for this kind of support. And it appeared to be a successful initiative. The mentor teachers previously had to sign a non-disclosure agreement.

Another idea is to extend the role of the Students' Service Centre by mentoring tasks. Two relatively young ladies deal with the administrative problems of the students. They are quite close to them. Informally, they do kind of mentoring informally even now.

Obstacles

As it turned out, class sizes vary quite much, because there are common classes for different training programmes but there are also different classes within the same programme, due the existence of academic specialisations. So there is the risk that it would be more difficult for the class representative to keep the group together after an academic specialisation. Nevertheless, class representative can be a very good idea since at the beginning of the studies there are bigger classes and relatively more difficult courses (as mathematics and accountancy, for instance).

3.1. The individual axis – How to lend an ear to all

3.1. The individual axis – How to lend an ear to all

TOOL 2: TUTORING TO GUIDE STUDENTS IN THEIR STUDIES
(senior students tutoring/mentoring newcomers)

Existing situation

Mentoring starts with the "newcomers camp". The BBS Zalaegerszeg Faculty organises a camp at Lake Balaton for the newcomers every month of August - so before the semester starts in September. This event addresses the full-time students at a first instance. About 30 percent of the newcomers take part in it. To be frank, our impression is that the camp is rather about having parties than get prepared for their studies.

We presented a new initiative in September 2019. During the very first week - the so called "registration week", when there are no classes yet - we organised a training session for our newcomers, in order to prepare them for their studies. We held training session for one hour long, and for each study program/ course. The session was focused on how students should plan and manage their studying-life - being able to define one's study targets, deal with difficulties and situations of life in the best possible way, etc. Unfortunately, only about 25 percent of the full-time students (it was meant for them) decided to take part in it.

Apart from the newcomers program, we offer a facultative course on study methodology in the curriculum. But it is not quite successful since this course is not mandatory.

Recommendations

It is possible to extend the above mentioned newcomers training program both in time and content: we could deliver the training program also after the semester has started and there could be not just one but 3 or 4 parts, as well.

We think the first two factors could be or should be handled - at least to some extent - together. Our idea is to create a "Support Office for Students" within the official Students' Association. The rationale behind is that perhaps the task is too big for one single class representative. Class representatives and mentor students could work together, share their knowledge and experience, which would enhance their efficiency. We believe that, in many cases, class representatives would also be mentors at the same time. And note that we would need teachers have a check over it.

Obstacles

In our view, this measure is hard to implement in the case of distance learning classes since it is more difficult to schedule meetings on a regular basis on the campus. However, it can be worth choosing some cases of students as examples to present in leaflets and videos, for instance. In these materials, those students could report on how they have been coping with their difficulties; and by showing that they managed to deal with obstacles, they could motivate other students, which can be a crucial factor for somebody at drop-out risk.

TOOL 3: A THIRD PARTY WHO LISTENS TO STUDENTS

Existing situation

We don't have such a thing. We can only imagine a third-party mediation on a voluntary basis since we do not have the necessary budget. There is a psychologist at one of the BBS campuses in Budapest, but our campus is too small for it. So we do not have a third party dedicated to it specifically. Nonetheless, in practice, a third party intervenes when there is a problem. For instance, the Faculty management or colleagues of the Students' Service Centre (or other colleagues) may play the role of mediator if a conflict between a teacher and a student should occur. This is only made possible on a spontaneous basis.

We believe that such support becomes more and more important. This can be an important tool to cope with dropouts. Moreover, it can be a competitive advantage of the campus compared to other, higher education, institutions. Apart from his role of mediator, the third party could also be considered as a coach.

Recommendations

Some teachers or other educational staff members could just as well play the role of third parties, in an official way. It is important to distinguish between two types of problems: 1) the student has a specific problem he/she wishes to answer; 2) the student does not really want to study but feels pressured by his/her employer or family to do so.

We would also like to highlight the importance of mediation in the case a problem or conflict should erupt between the students and the teachers.

Obstacles

A lack of financial means

3.1. The individual axis - How to lend an ear to all

University of Aruba

TOOL 1: TEACHING & STUDY METHODOLOGY

Existing situation

The teaching methodology of the Faculty of Law is based on the principle of student-centred learning. This contains two core elements: 1. the student; and 2. the active aspect of learning. This means that the focus is put on the learning process by the student (actively acquiring knowledge, insight and skills), rather than on the teaching process by the teacher in its own sake (knowledge transfer). A major advantage of this teaching methodology is that we can act on a small, individual scale within the university/faculty system.

Regarding the study methodology, the University of Aruba also offers a course in BA1 for learning to acquire a good study methodology. The course is taught by two student assistants and can be taken on a voluntary basis. The course is mainly aimed at being complementary to the BA1 Legal Skills course.

Recommendations

The above-mentioned course is only provided for Ba1 students, but we think that students of higher levels would also need it; take the example of Masters' students who have to write their thesis and should be technically prepared for it. At a different level of the debate, lecturers have different views on the interpretation of the concept of student-centred learning. This leads to very different study methodologies, which is disadvantageous for the students.

What should be done in practice? This question collides with the fact that there is no clear separation between the concept of "student-centred learning" and all what the concept of "adult education" may encompass (andragogy vs pedagogy).

Nor is there a clear separation between what is referred to as "study methods" and their application as "teaching methods". Clarifying these notions would be helpful for our students.

Moreover, even though teaching a study method reveals to be a relevant and necessary, we are limited by the fact that the said study method is necessarily linked to, and so limited by, its related course.

Obstacles

- The University of Aruba needs to develop a vision on adult teaching and choose a method to implement. The same applies to teaching study methods specifically.
- There must be a consistent approach to the concept of student-centred learning, which would be followed by every teacher.
- Providing an opportunity for students of higher grades to have access to such a study methodology course would also be a good idea.

TOOL 2: REGULAR MEETINGS TO EXCHANGE ON TEACHING PRACTICE

Existing situation

Faculties at the University of Aruba (UA) devised their own committees and planned meetings to discuss topics related to teaching methodologies and teaching experience. One of them has highlighted a common debate that had arisen amongst the lecturers, and more especially amongst the long-running staff, who are eager to share knowledge and advice.

The Academic Learning Certificate (ALC) training and Blended Learning Bootcamp were momentums where various members of the different faculties were confronted to the fact that most of them were coping with the lack of proper methodologies and tools to enhance the quality of the teaching practice and the student learning experience, as well. Over that period of training, the educational staff of the faculties experienced team working during a few weeks or months so to share good practice and debate. That exchange on teaching practice revealed to be hugely beneficial to one and all.

Given the existing situation, you may have noticed that all faculties operate according to their own agendas, which implies that exchanges can only occur internally, within each faculty and during specific planned meetings or, sometimes, spontaneous gatherings.

Recommendations

Sharing on learning and teaching practice should not be limited to punctual training or bootcamp programs. It should become a standard and regular practice, especially within the framework of a small-scale higher education system, like the one of the University of Aruba.

To create professional bonds and opportunity for sharing, testing and evaluating the different teaching methodologies, the University of Aruba can organise retreats at the beginning of the year, towards the end of the academic year, or at the end of the year. Part-timers should also be included, so they can have a better understanding of the institution's expectations regarding an education of quality, as well as benefitting from the opportunity to practice with senior lecturers.

Obstacles

There are various obstacles that may hinder the organisation of UA wide meetings regarding the exchange of teaching methodology and experience.

Two of the most challenging obstacles are:
- Faculty academic calendars that do not run simultaneously;
- The delimited aspect of gatherings.

3.2. The educational axis - micro level - Focusing on the learning experience

University of Aruba

TOOL 3: (COMMUNITY) CAPACITY BUILDING FOR TEACHERS

Existing situation

The Faculty of Law has 8.6 full-time equivalent (fte) faculty staff members (i.e. eight full-time members and one part-timer for three days a week). At this moment only 11.6% (i.e. one person) is of Aruban descent. All other staff members are Dutch, from the European continent, and one person is Rwandese. No new local staff members were appointed from 2010. Almost all PhD-candidates who were appointed at the Faculty of Law in the past were of Aruban descent.

The last PhD-candidate was appointed in December 2009 and was the only one who succeeded to obtain his PhD since the establishment of the University of Aruba and the Faculty of Law in 1988. In 2017 the Faculty of Law was allowed to recruit two new PhD-candidates, but halfway through the job application process, the UA-management board decided unilaterally to stop recruiting PhD-candidates. Since the change of management in 2012, there has been no policy focusing on a capacity building program for the educational staff, nor a clear policy focusing on research.

The sole focus of the UA, apart from education, seems to be internationalisation - exchange programs and the establishment of a STEM-program in cooperation with the Catholic University of Louvain with EU-funding.

There are only two PhD-candidates from Aruban descent employed by the UA within this program. They are however PhD-candidates of the University of Louvain. Except for the Faculty of Law, no faculty of the UA is legally allowed to award a PhD-degree.

Recommendations

- Appoint local PhD-candidates;
- Establish a research program to increase research output (which is practically non- existent), because good education is based upon research.

Obstacles

A change in mentality within the UA is needed. People who are part of the board of trustees or of management are seen as more important than the university itself, which means that education and research output are neglected. There is a high employee turnover. The strategic plan of the UA and UA-policy are not currently focused on creating a sustainable university through (community) capacity building for teachers and fortifying research capacity.

TOOL 1: TEACHING & STUDY METHODOLOGY (part 1)

Existing situation

As far as the study methodology for students/learners is concerned, we give priority to a good knowledge of French, which facilitates understanding and communication during lessons and in everyday life.

We also emphasize the importance of a good knowledge of French when looking for a job (job interviews, writing a resume, etc.) A poor knowledge of French can have serious consequences: integration problems, reduced social contacts, difficulties in personal development, difficulties in writing a resume for a job, less rewarding work, etc. We therefore offer FLE courses (which stands for Français Langue Etrangère - French as a foreign language) adapted to our learners (newcomers, people with an immigrant background, expatriates, etc.) during the day and in the evening.

The courses are based on learning to speak and quickly acquiring everyday communication tools to immediately feel at ease in useful and everyday-life conversations. The teachers familiarise the learners with the culture of the country through recreational activities, in or outside the school framework (cinema outings, visits to places or museums, for instance). These French lessons are also suggested to Bachelor's students who are not proficient in French. We also observed that Bachelor's students have a lot of difficulties to structure their thesis, and most of them lack knowledge of grammar, spelling, among other things.

When it comes to oral presentations, most of the students struggle to focus on main ideas and to give fair value to their own work.

This is why two extra courses are organised to give students skills in writing and presenting topics for oral presentations in French, which is hugely important at the end of their studies. Every student can have an individual meeting with a teacher to help him/her in that way.

Furthermore, regular meetings to help students with writing assignments are organised: the teachers guide them in their procedures, their research and writing.

We are currently testing (February 2020) the Mooc tool from the University of Namur (https://www.unamur.be/det/mooc and https://www.fun-mooc.fr/courses/course-v1:unamur+163001+session01/about) as part of marketing courses. It consists of a course module through an online learning methodology course: how to organize your courses, how to acquire memorisation techniques, etc. We do not yet have sufficient perspective on the effectiveness of Mooc, which we have tested with a few students last year during the lockdown. But those who attended enjoyed the experience.

As far as the teaching methodology is concerned, we give priority to training programs for the teaching staff, offered via email or to be consulted via the website www.cepeons. be. These training programs are suggested but not imposed by the French-speaking Community's Ministry of Education in Belgium. Furthermore, to encourage teachers to update their pedagogy, the I.S.F.C.E. reimburses all the material they need.

3.2. The educational axis - micro level - Focusing on the learning experience

I.S.F.C.E. (BELGIUM)

TOOL 1: TEACHING & STUDY METHODOLOGY (part 2)

New technologies are also a priority: all the classrooms are equipped with an interactive board, so that all the teachers are incited to adapt and diversify their teaching methods. Training programs or sessions are organized to achieve this.

An e-learning platform (Moodle) is also used to promote digitalized tools and different ways of teaching. A training session was organized to help teachers to use this tool. And, in October 2020 to promote, our teaching staff have been trained to use this kind of digitalized tools. Note that, after the first lockdown, most of the teachers expressed the need to improve and adapt their lessons to this new way of teaching.

Recommendations

All our teachers have to inform the students about these extra courses, and also encourage them to participate.

Obstacles

- It is difficult for teachers who have a full working schedule to work overtime for remediation classes.

- It is sometimes not easy to guarantee a good level of communication with our students: how to pass on information correctly - e.g. students taking an appointment at the last moment for their final thesis. We must clearly define what these meetings are for.

TOOL 2: REGULAR MEETINGS TO EXCHANGE ON TEACHING PRACTICE

Existing situation

For teachers, management and administrative staff, we provide:

- a pedagogical day which can take place in many ways, by inviting an expert or any other external actor and our teachers to share on their good practices. We bring together all the teachers so that they have the opportunity to exchange information with each other. It is also an opportunity to do team building activities.

- meetings between the teachers of each section/class are organised, but those meetings are not always fruitful. Indeed, it is not always possible to meet after classes, due to the different working schedules of each and every one.

- meetings are also organised between the teachers of each section/class as part of the AEQES's[12] quality management strategy. We have to submit, on a regular basis, evaluation reports by section/class outlining our pedagogical approaches and practices and our continuous improvement strategies. External experts often visit us to check the school overall management strategy and the actions implemented to improve certain irrelevant practices.

Recommendations

- Make the training opportunities more visible (posting, emails, oral communication, among other things) and improve communication about them in a faster and more efficient way by highlighting their importance and relevance;
- Plan pedagogical days quickly and according to the needs;
- Strengthen regular meetings between teachers from the same section/class to exchange on teaching methods and organisational, relationship issues.

Obstacles

- Finding a schedule is sometimes problematic. Courses are organised in the morning, in the afternoon and in the evening and some teachers combine teaching with other professional obligations.

- Too many meetings can unnecessarily take a lot of time and hinder the motivation of our teaching staff. The informal way to exchange about pedagogy should also be given more value.

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12. AEQES is an independent public sector agency, practising formative evaluation based on a dialogue between all stakeholders within the Wallonia-Brussels Federation. Fully embedded in the European context, the Agency is responsible for assessing the quality of higher education and working for its continuous improvement.

3.2. The educational axis - micro level - Focusing on the learning experience

I.S.F.C.E. (BELGIUM)

TOOL 3: (COMMUNITY) CAPACITY BUILDING FOR TEACHERS

Existing situation

The I.S.F.C.E. has 40 teachers on a regular basis. Most of them are teachers specialised in one determined field. Some of them are experts - they combine teaching with their principal activity (e.g. a computer consultant teaches for a course in the Computer Science/I.T. area of studies.)

Teachers are required to update their teaching program. The official educational guidelines also change regularly because they must adapt to the demands of the field.

Recommendations

- Strengthen the "expert" or "coaching" quality of the teachers who guide students;
- Make courses more relevant to the labour market and offer activities/programs focused on the companies' needs.
- Strengthen the teachers' skills to lead a classroom of students, for example by inviting a specialist in andragogy - set of techniques likely to bring to knowledge, to educate, to train apprentices, workers, etc. - who can help teachers to connect with their audience;
- Keep good teachers and make them feel included. The I.S.F.C.E. gives priority to full-time jobs at school.

Obstacles

Regarding the recruitment of teachers, making the demand of the labour market - so of some determined fields of studies at the same time - match the supply of qualified teachers is challenging. Indeed, many qualified teachers in more specific fields are much better paid in the private sector and it is therefore difficult to attract them to teaching in the public sector.

TOOL 1: TEACHING & STUDY METHODOLOGY

Existing situation

A "welcome module" has been set up and includes the theme "learning to learn". It lasts 3 to 6 hours and it is systematically offered at the start of an education training program (with or without qualifications). It is addressed to all trainees and is available on all training sites. Its purpose is to welcome students and to promote integration and group cohesion (for instance, by presenting to the students their coat-of-arms and by organising "icebreaker" activities).

The objectives are the following:

• Allow the group to share their thoughts in an open and structured way about learning - activities in group to debate about the conditions favourable to learning (introducing what we call "verbalisation", introducing some theoretical insights related to the concepts of motivation, of error making, etc.);
• Identify methods that help to structure the learning process - the active memorisation method, mind maps, flashcards, among others; plus theoretical tools on the active memorisation method, the functioning of the different memory types, etc.;
• Concentrate over time and stimulate memory (What is "attention"? Identify distractors of attention).

Recommendations

• Provide enough space and equipment for icebreaker activities;
• Program the module from the start of the education training program;
• Adapt to the group/class dynamics;
• Make the group/class dynamics vary within a class session:

a quieter time for theoretical parts and a more dynamic approach for activities in group.

Obstacles

The profile of the practitioners in charge of the above-mentioned model must be in line with the needs encountered and should have followed various training courses - as part of his/her professionalization agenda - on learning strategies, learning to learn, neurosciences, and followed a Mooc program about attention.

3.2. The educational axis - micro level - Focusing on the learning experience

3.2. The educational axis - micro level - Focusing on the learning experience

TOOL 2: REGULAR MEETINGS TO EXCHANGE ON TEACHING PRACTICE

Existing situation

A "multimodality" working group has been set up in one of our centres since the end of 2018, with the objective of identifying, enriching and diversifying the teaching methods and breaking out of the traditional teaching scheme. This working group operates with a cross- sectional approach and meets once a month. It is led by one of the trainers of the group and is intended for all trainers involved in it.

From 2019, the meetings have welcomed around 30 trainers with a "hard core" of 7 individuals.

Recommendations

• Work on targeted themes as developing a good practice to reduce the risk of drop-out, building up a common knowledge module for all training courses, etc.;
• Use the right tools: the group uses the Trello and Slack tools, which are accessible to all, and reports on its activity to the members of the group via an internal newsletter;
• The group can work on themes in a "make-to-order" way, regarding the design of the teaching process, and can identify existing resources (without necessarily creating them);
• It would be useful to measure the effects on the practice of trainers, in view of promoting this initiative.

Obstacles

• It is necessary to succeed in involving the greatest number and not always the same "hard core"
• Resistance to change

TOOL 3: (COMMUNITY) CAPACITY BUILDING FOR TEACHERS

Existing situation

The GRETA Network in the Centre-Val de Loire region of France is composed of 3 GRETA, attached to the GIP FTLV-IP:
- The GRETA Berry which employs 76 people including a little more than 30 contractual trainers and 150 temporary trainers;
- The GRETA Coeur 2 Loire which employs 78 people, including around 30 contract trainers and 400 temporary trainers.
- The GRETA Val de Loire which employs 120 people including 55 contract trainers and more than 400 temporary trainers.
The trainers have access to the network's professionalization plan.

This professionalization plan aims at implementing new teaching methods, promoting the exchange of teaching practices, acquiring new skills and renewing approaches.

In a changing environment, it is also a matter of enabling professionals to master the training environment in order to be able to transmit to the target audience relevant and up- to-date information on the legislative environment for training.

As soon as they are recruited, the trainers benefit from professional training in adult education (educational engineering, animation of educational sequences, group dynamics, evaluation, etc.)

Throughout their career within the GRETA Network (5 days per year are reserved for professionalization for full-time staff, all statuses combined), the professionals are given the opportunity to improve their knowledge about adult learning and diversify their teaching methods to better meet the needs of the public to be trained (individualization of training, personalization of courses, modularization, innovation in pedagogy, integration of digital technology and ICT, etc.) and a better understanding of regulatory changes in vocational training. Our trainers can also make requests for other training programs, out of the framework of the professionalization plan.

Recommendations

It is necessary to allow as many trainers as possible to get involved in the professionalization plan. For achieving this, it is preferable that the direction or management (training managers, human resources manager) should support the trainers and encourage them to train.

The training offered in the professionalization plan is mainly used by our temporary trainers. We must also ensure that the skills of our temporary staff are updated, or at least those who intervene most regularly.

Obstacles

The trainers of the GRETA Network are mobilized for training and they are not always free to follow this training plan, due to schedule burdens (anticipating and dedicating time for the training program).

For the training of temporary contractors, it is more difficult to monitor and support trainers, and the working structures they work for are sometimes reluctant to finance the training program of a temporary trainer who also works for another employer.

3.2. The educational axis - micro level - Focusing on the learning experience

BGE/Z.F.B.A. Faculty (Hungary)

TOOL 1: TEACHING & STUDY METHODOLOGY

Existing situation

As mentioned earlier, we have a course on study methodology for students, however it is not compulsory. Besides, there is also a course on research methodology for students. It would be worth examining the success of the course since many colleagues criticize it when acknowledging the students' thesis. They notice that students' final thesis are becoming of lower quality. Their presentation skills (like presenting a ppt) also decreases.

Therefore, we have a project that aims at measuring students' skills both at the university entry and exit. It has not yet really started but we are hoping that it can help in the future and provide us some valuable information.

Recommendations

We already have online teaching materials for our courses. However, these materials are not really used. So, we could use it to a greater extent, with the main advantage that it could prevent students who are living far from the campus to take a long journey to get there each weekend and attend classes for merely 1 or 1.5 days. We think that the coronavirus crisis will accelerate this process. We are only having online classes, producing videos and other materials for students for two weeks. There is work to be done in that field. For example, the exams should also be updated, as the teaching materials have been updated too.

Obstacles

Not compulsory in the curriculum.

TOOL 2: REGULAR MEETINGS TO EXCHANGE ON TEACHING PRACTICE

Existing situation

The Budapest Business School (BGE) established an educational division called "Centre for Teaching Methodology". The Centre organises training programs/sessions and workshops almost on a daily basis (there are several events every week) with the objective of developing the teaching skills of our teachers. We think it is a great initiative.

Recommendations

What could organise 1 to 3 staff meetings per semester for lecturers teaching the same or similar subjects in all 3 faculties separately. We expect that about 70 percent of such meetings would be complaining in some way, but for the other 30 percent it would be useful. Staff members could take advantage of sharing experience and knowledge with each other, which is mostly restricted to informal small talks at our campus.

Obstacles

- 3 faculties and only 5 sites to host the meetings.
- Taking the journey to the campus during peak hours may take 2 hours (there and back).
- Teachers are somewhat overloaded due to the Covid situation.

TOOL 3: (COMMUNITY) CAPACITY BUILDING FOR TEACHERS

Existing situation

We have 27 teachers in our staff. Their number has been around 30 for several years. Besides, we have 4-5 guest lecturers each semester. We consider it is a number within the norm. We can rely quite well on our staff. We need the guest lecturers only for punctual, specific subjects so we think it is not worth having full-time practitioners in that field.

Recommendations

Even if we consider the idea of substituting guest lecturers by our own staff members, it would only be done for financial reasons. Is it worth alluding to our own staff? We can investigate this question.

Obstacles

Financial burden: higher education is not attractive financially (a postman earns more than an average university professor).

3.2. The educational axis - micro level - Focusing on the learning experience

GIP FTLV-IP (France)

TOOL 1: SINGLE INFORMATION DESK

Existing situation

The GRETA Network is labelled Eduform (this label guarantees compliance with the AFNOR BP X50-762 standard for continuing education services). The requirement for the quality of the information constitutes the first commitment of this label. The label recommends rapid and guided access to information on the service supply; the third commitment provides personalised advice on services and their funding possibilities. This requirement is intended to ensure that the service recipients are informed of their rights and can access them.

The information provided to the services recipients must be easily accessible, updated, accurate and understandable. It must allow them to make an informed choice on the services offered before any engagement.

Accessible, structured and updated information:
• There is an up-to-date description of all of the organisation's training programs and services, with their main funding methods. This information is available on various communication media including at least one website.

• The organization presents to the public harmonised, explicit and legible information and communication supports.
Personal advice:
• The request is studied by experts.

• The identification of needs and their analysis lead to personalised advice, taking into account the individual project of each recipient.

• Advice on financing and elements of financial management.

Recommendations

• The trainee's welcome booklet allows the identification of resources and contacts and is based on questions that the recipients may ask themselves: presentation of the training center, the teaching team, the training programme, etc.
• For each action, the administrative assistant is the point of contact for administration and remuneration resources, and, in doing so, becomes coordinator on educational matters. At the start of the process, a representative is named. He/she will provide his/her name and email address for any question relating to the device offered or funding.

Obstacles

• The multiplicity of information and interlocutors requires continuous monitoring to ensure the quality of the information and its updating.
• The singularity and complexity of the situations sometimes require referring recipients to professionals in the field of social intervention, health, etc.; the scope of intervention must be clearly delimited for each and every stakeholder, as well as the procedures for transmitting files, sharing information, monitoring and guiding the recipients.
• The need to build and maintain a network of professionals across the region.

TOOL 2: PROVIDE AVAILABLE COMPUTERS AND A QUIET WORKING ENVIRONMENT

Existing situation

A resource centre exists on the permanent GRETA's sites. It consists of a working room that makes a series of resources available to everyone: books, magazines, etc.; computers, printers; Internet access.

The resource centre provides, in an individualised way, the opportunity to "prescribe" online courses (for example in French) in addition to the courses already scheduled, according to the demand of the learners. Learners can also come with a prescription sheet, written by the trainer, which detail the skills to be reinforced. Besides, learners can learn how to use a computer and acquire skills and self-confidence with this tool. If learners find it difficult to master a concept during group lessons, they could voluntarily allude to the resource centre to work through another kind of medium.

The resource centre is a friendly, quiet and enabling place for social contact. Indeed, working groups regularly join there and are led by an animator. The learners can freely decide to come and join a group. One of the learners is then invited to present the group and its work related to the training course; he/she is supported by his/her fellows and no one is left aside in the process. "Pooling" then takes place and makes it possible to build up the course in a common effort.

This bond and this feeling of belonging to the group lead to motivation and support learning acquisition among the students involved. Icebreaker activities are set up during the first session to this end. At the start of the training course, a visit is organised so to explain how the centre works and the opportunities and resources offered. The resource centre

manager introduces different access methods to the learners. At some sites, learners can borrow laptops.

Besides, a shared online resource portal - Netvibes - has also been created with all GRETA's members: it is organised into themes (job area, internship search, French, mathematics, history-geography, languages, accounting, I.T., stress management, etc.) and updated on a regular basis. It's a tool that is introduced to trainees upon their arrival, and it can be consulted at any time. Learners can participate directly by publishing on this online platform.

Recommendations

- Improve the speed of the internet connection (by installing fiber, for example);
- Create closed spaces to be able to work in small groups.

Obstacles

- Sometimes, the computer equipment made available to learners may be outdated or not working optimally. It's not always easy to get the agreement and the budget to be able to replace outdated equipment.
- It is also sometimes difficult to encourage working in small groups in a non-isolated room.

GIP FTLV-IP (France)

TOOL 3: CREATE A GOOD WORKING ATMOSPHERE

Existing situation

The 32 permanent training sites of the GRETA Network spread over the entire territory of the Centre-Val de Loire region show disparities when it comes to the atmosphere and the quality of the working environment.

These environments differ depending on:

- the age of the schools that host the training;
- the financial means fixed and limited by the specifications and the allocated budget;
- the importance that training managers attach to the working environment. Management and teaching teams are aware of the need to create an environment that promote interaction, concentration and learning. The challenge is to create an environment that allows a modular arrangement and a pleasant decoration. Our network is labelled Eduform. This demanding label aims to place the recipient at the centre of the system to make him a genuine player in his training life. Among the 13 existing service commitments, 2 relate to the reception and adaptation of premises. These commitments constitute action levers for the actors involved.

Recommendations

- Allow learners to have a dedicated room throughout their training program to support their sense of belonging, allow the learners to feel they can appropriate the working space by decorating it, create a cafeteria space, allow students to leave their belongings there when they have to move;
- Create an equipped area to relax (with armchairs, a fridge, distributors, a microwave oven, a football table for playing), where you can have a coffee break, eat, read, meet other learners, etc.;

- Look for a suitable, ergonomic, comfortable, colourful furniture in good condition, which can be arranged differently and be adapted to the kind of work or activities that would take place there. We do not intend to reproduce the arrangement of a classical classroom;
- Place suitable lighting, green plants, small pieces of decoration;
- Guarantee the basic rules for equipment and premises maintenance (cleaning, repairing damaged equipment, etc.);
- Provide some facilities outside the buildings, such as a parking lot for bicycles, a shelter to wait when it rains, some benches for smokers;
- Take care of the surrounding noise, the temperature, the colours of the walls and the natural light entering the room.

Obstacles

- The obsolescence and lack of space in certain establishments and the cost of the establishment remodelling plan (extension, energy performance, etc.);
- The lack of importance /value given to these considerations, sometimes considered as secondary and no priority;
- The difficulty in anticipating the implementation of certain training courses, which can lead to implementing them in establishments that do not meet all the criteria for a good working environment.

TOOL 1: SINGLE INFORMATION DESK

Existing situation

We do not yet have an interactive information desk. For information, students refer to the website www.isfce.org or contact the secretariat directly. At the entrance of the school, booklets are made available. They inform (future) students about the procedures specific to each section (Marketing, Executive Assistant, I.T. Management, Accounting, Languages).

Recommendations

The installation of an interactive terminal will allow information to be gathered in one place so to quickly guide people looking for practical information. It is equipped with a multiple choice computer application which guides the student in their procedures at the I.S.F.C.E. and is touch-screen, like most mobile phones.

It is important to create a user-friendly home page that welcomes the student. A second page gives direct access to five essential windows concerning the courses, the teachers, the secretariat, the direction and providing general information. Each of these headings opens up info pages.
Regarding courses, the student must be able to select the section, the course code, the course title, the teacher's name and photo (or avatar), the schedule and the location. Regarding the teachers, you can consult the courses for which he/she is responsible, the timeframe of the courses, and the dates.

By selecting the "Secretariat" section, the student can quickly find out about
- the team
- the opening hours

- the various documents likely to be issued by/to the secretariat (list)
- the procedures for obtaining documents (via the info box, by phone or by going to the secretariat)
- how to make an appointment at the secretariat (via the info box, by phone or by going to the secretariat).
To get to know the management team better or to make an appointment, it will be possible to select the "Management" tab and inquire about the types of requests (via the info box, by phone or by going to the secretariat). At the end of his/her search on the tab, the student, after being thanked for his/her visit, is directed back to the home page.

Obstacles

- It will be necessary to ensure permanent updating, continuous monitoring of modifications and evolutions of the information provided and the website.
- Access and visibility of the terminal must be facilitated and long queues must be avoided.

3.3. The structural axis - Focusing on the infrastructure

3.3. The structural axis - Focusing on the infrastructure

TOOL 2: PROVIDE AVAILABLE COMPUTERS AND A QUIET WORKING ENVIRONMENT

Existing situation

Since May 2020, we have been arranging spaces and renovating some school facilities in order to install computers for our students. It is a quiet workspace where everyone can go and work alone or in a group. It was essential to create good working conditions (study in a calm atmosphere), which is not always possible on the first floor of the school (where a semi-open place serves as a meeting place and / or work).

Recommendations

We must consider Internal Regulations for the working room and the means of access to computers under supervision, in order to avoid any abuse or problem.

Obstacles

None

TOOL 3: CREATE A GOOD WORKING ATMOSPHERE

Existing situation

We have various premises including a recreational covered room, management and administrative offices (secretariat), a cafeteria on the first floor; a total of 3 floors and a basement, separated by an outdoor area with some facilities such as a parking lot for bicycles and some benches. All the classrooms have technical equipment - screen board and computer. Some classrooms are decorated with posters and some teachers have decorated them with green plants.

Students have access to a semi-open space (break room) on the 1st floor, next to the cafeteria, but which can be noisy and crowded at certain moments of the day. This is why we have redesigned this space to create a genuine workspace with computers.

Both students and teachers can eat at the cafeteria, which is a welcoming and relaxing space where students can chill out and interact in an informal, friendly way.

Recommendations

We recommend embellishing the working spaces, classrooms, break rooms, corridors and outdoor spaces to create a good atmosphere (decorations: posters relating to the courses and languages taught, green plants, paintings, etc.) Everyone should ensure the cleanliness of the classrooms and shared spaces.

Obstacles

None

BGE/Z.F.B.A. Faculty (Hungary)

TOOL 1: SINGLE INFORMATION DESK

Existing situation

As mentioned earlier, this is not an option for us. Still, the question is settled in our faculty. The thing is that it is impossible to have all the information centralised, despite the existence of the Students' Service Centre. They are in a position to have most pieces of information the students may need. Another possibility is alluding to one of our two educational departments. Some things (asking for enhancing the limit of a course, problem with the date of an exam, etc.) can only be dealt with at the related department and the students must explicitly request help. To a lesser extent, there is some information at the library. Students go there when they have to do a research or work for their thesis.

Recommendations

According to our experience, students are satisfied with the current situation.

Obstacles

None

TOOL 2: PROVIDE AVAILABLE COMPUTERS AND A QUIET WORKING ENVIRONMENT

Existing situation

We have about 50 computers and a very quiet working space at the library. It is absolutely satisfying for our 500 students. According to our research, students never complained about computers, except for one thing: the wi-fi signal is quite weak at the students' Hall. Unfortunately, our I.T. staff claims it is impossible to solve this problem since we would have to change the whole system. That would be very expensive.

Recommendations

Solving this problem reveals to be all the more important due to the current Covid-crisis and lockdown. Our students should have an appropriate study environment, with the adequate means at home.

Obstacles

Financial

3.3. The structural axis - Focusing on the infrastructure

TOOL 3: CREATE A GOOD WORKING ATMOSPHERE

Existing situation

We are doing quite well in this respect, thanks to the renovation of our premises plus the existence of many green areas at the International Business Faculty.

Recommendations

None

Obstacles

None

TOOL 1: SINGLE INFORMATION DESK

Existing situation

The university only has one General Information Desk. It is located at the entrance of the main building and one staff member can work there at a time. A screen with general information on room availability is located on the wall opposite to the information desk. Because only one staff member can work at the General Information Desk at a time, and this staff member has various tasks in and out of the university building, some days the services are not offered during the whole day. However, students can also ask for information at the nearby Office of Educational Affairs or the Office of Facility Management.

Recommendations

The screen in front of the General Information Desk displays a ppt presentation of the courses and class schedules during the day. This screen is not quite user-friendly, because students sometimes have to wait patiently that all slides have gone by to be able to check the information they need.

Obstacles

Practical obstacles exist with regard to making the information screen more user-friendly.

3.3. The structural axis - Focusing on the infrastructure

3.3. The structural axis – Focusing on the infrastructure

TOOL 2: PROVIDE AVAILABLE COMPUTERS AND A QUIET WORKING ENVIRONMENT

Existing situation

Currently the PC Lab has about 27 desktop computers that can be used during the day for studying and working on assignments. Unfortunately, it is not considered as being a quiet working space.

The library also has desktop computers available, eight in total. This area is considered a quiet working and studying space. However, these computers are not fully equipped with all the necessary software.

On campus, students can easily sit outdoor and connect their own electronic devices to the provided electrical contact points. These spaces are not considered quiet working spaces, but can be used for studying when a quiet working space is not necessary.
The university offers free wi-fi throughout on campus.

Recommendations

The amount of available computers in a quiet working space is not sufficient for all our students. Most students have their own laptop; however the available desktop computers are not enough for all our students (about 600 students per semester).

In addition to the PC lab, the university could ideally add a second computer room with a minimum of 50 desktop computers with all the required software. This second computer room could be made available as a flexible studying/working room that can also be used for class sessions if necessary.

The library only offers 8 desktop workstations, which is not

enough neither. Though the library is small, it could increase the amount of these to at least 10 to 12 computers, and furnish this space so it would be sound proof.

Obstacles

The university is very limited in terms of available rooms for studying and teaching. In addition, there must always be someone present to supervise the using of computers.

TOOL 3: CREATE A GOOD WORKING ATMOSPHERE - DECORATION, GREEN PLANTS, BREAK ROOM

Existing situation

The university has a beautiful courtyard and a garden. In the courtyard, there is a beautiful large mango tree and the garden is equipped with all sorts of plants and small trees. A lot of tables with seats are also available. It usually is a quiet and pleasant place. Students can also prepare their lessons or interact with each other.

Recommendations

The disadvantage of the courtyard is that it is often very hot. This is not only problematic for students, but also for their electronic devices. It is often windy, which inhibits studying as well. Better shielded areas that provide shade and better protection from the wind, sun and rain could be of relief.

Obstacles

The courtyard is already quite filled with plants, tables and seats, so additional space for screens seems to be difficult to arrange.

3.3. The structural axis - Focusing on the infrastructure

BGE/Z.F.B.A. Faculty (Hungary)

TOOL 1: IMPROVE CAREER ORIENTATION

Existing situation

We are quite poor in this respect. Higher education in general is barely linked to the labour market in Hungary. There are, however, positive factors as well. According to the law, our students have to participate in a vocational training program for one semester within a company. For some years, we have been offering dual training to our students. Currently, we have about 60 students training in companies within the framework of the dual training. In our opinion, the opportunities of the dual training are far from being fully exploited.

From time to time, we organise different events for students involving representatives of the

business life and labour market. There are about afternoons" and the like).

Recommendations

Introduce a career office and job fairs for students

Obstacles

Lack of funding

TOOL 2: PROVIDE TRAINING IN COMPANIES FOR THE EDUCATIONAL STAFF

Existing situation

We are also quite poor in this respect: on the one hand, because only a few teachers have connections with the business world; on the other hand, the companies do not really have the time and interest to train scholars. The idea of putting in connection scholars with professionals from the business industry has been put forward for some time now. Somehow, this has not yet been realised.

Recommendations

Still, what we could do is to make our short-cycle training programs more popular among companies. Indeed, the companies tend to require training programs that would be of a short-cycle kind. It seems that both the demand and the supply are there, they just simply do not meet. We should and could work on it in the future. Most believe that andragogy should be the driver of this convergence of interests.

Obstacles

The challenge of creating relationships between universities and the business industry.

TOOL 3: GUARANTEE INTERNSHIPS - ACCESS, LONGER INTERNSHIPS

Existing situation

As mentioned earlier, according to the law, our students have to participate in a vocational training program for one semester within a company. This is well regulated in our country. So we have no specific recommendations regarding this aspect.

Nonetheless, what could be improved is the content of the internship. In many cases, companies do not see the opportunity in represents and the potential of the skills being acquired by the students. On another hand, students are not motivated enough and ready for an internship. That is why it is quite common, unfortunately, that students do not strive to succeed in vocational training by neglecting some of its aspects (administrative process, etc.).

Recommendations

See above

Obstacles

See above

TOOL 4: INSIDE THE CLASSROOM
(Informations & more relevant classes)

Existing situation

We work mainly with economists. Business and economy are considered general and quite abstract fields to teach (compared to teaching physics or mathematics, for example). Some years ago, our university dean implemented a brand new lesson introducing business and economy to our newcomers, for which economists and other economical actors had been invited to talk about what they do.

Recommendations

- As said earlier, unfortunately, our colleagues are barely sensitised to the world of business. But, for all the reasons above-mentioned, we need to stimulate the relationships with the company industry.
- As for the curriculum, our teachers could use more case studies for their classes. On another hand, we could also use simulation programmes. We have such applications in the field of logistics, finance and marketing.
- Organise common events, workshops and visits to companies
- Make students aware of how the different subjects are related and intertwined

Obstacles

Unfortunately, there is also a lack of dedication among our students. A significant part of the students seeks nothing else but the diploma.

I.S.F.C.E. (Belgium)

TOOL 1: IMPROVE CAREER ORIENTATION

Existing situation

We regularly visit one of the education/job fairs (SIEP, etc.) and we invite students to participate. Furthermore, inviting former students in class to speak about their experience and working career is a good way to motivate and orientate students.

We promote our school to the CAIOR (Support Committee for the political axis related to information and studies orientation of the Brussels Academic Centre) and CSR instances (sub-regional commissions which bring together the directors of Continuing Education of Brussels).

Recommendations

- Create a club composed of former students, with a database gathering personal student data, reveals to be useful so to maintain contact with them.
- Create a LinkedIn account can be a good way to keep in touch, as well.

Obstacles

Former students' lack of time or interest to come back to school and share about their personal experience. Indeed, they often have a full-time job and a family, and they don't have much time to dedicate to the school they graduated from.

TOOL 2: PROVIDE TRAINING IN COMPANIES FOR THE EDUCATIONAL STAFF

Existing situation

There is a lack of relationships and contacts with the business world. Only a few teachers have connexions with companies, and the companies do not really have the time to train our teachers.

Every month, the management staff take part to a training session where other managers (APO.G.) are invited. The purpose of this training plan is to exchange about good practices, debate about management difficulties and find solutions.

Recommendations

Direct bonds between companies and vocational training programs must be built.

Obstacles

The complexity of the education system of the French-speaking Community of Belgium (Communauté française/Fédération Wallonie-Bruxelles).

I.S.F.C.E. (Belgium)

TOOL 3: GUARANTEE INTERNSHIPS - ACCESS, LONGER INTERNSHIPS

Existing situation

The internships are an integral part of the Bachelor's courses: they are determined by the educational program but their duration can be extended if the companies are in demand. Students are supposed to find a company for their internship but the I.S.F.C.E. also receives a lot of internship offers that we transfer to students.

Recommendations

We would like teachers to visit students on their internship sites more often in order to check the coaching offered by the company. It is a good way to keep in touch with good companies and collaborate with them on the long term.

We plan to allocate extra time to the teachers in charge of the internships so that they would have the opportunity to visit the students on site. This way we would like to forge a closer and more loyal relationship with these companies; which, indeed, is essential not only to ensure the quality of internships, but also to keep these corporate contacts as expert resources.

We would like to mention the fact that some less reliable students contribute to giving a bad image of the I.S.F.C.E., and we expect that forging and strengthening the relationships with professionals would allow us to better supervise these students.

Obstacles

Being able to find relevant and adequate internships.

I.S.F.C.E. (Belgium)

TOOL 4: INSIDE THE CLASSROOM (Informations & more relevant classes)

Existing situation

We make sure to communicate job opportunities via the school website.

Each year, some teachers invite experts as testimonial examples to talk about their career in front of the classroom. Here is an example: for the Dutch lessons of the Executive Assistant course, a teacher invited an executive assistant (Alison Stessens), who has written a book on "101 tips for a Virtual Assistant", to come and present her profession in front of the classroom.

Visits to companies are organised every year for Bachelor's students to show them the reality of the field. For example, within the framework of the Business Management course, the teacher organised visits to the CSC offices so to be able to introduce to the students the role of a joint committee and trade unions.

As part of the Quick Note-taking course, the teacher has been organising visits to the Bosch's home base every year. At the end of the academic year, the students are required to write a report. During the visits, students had to attend a presentation in three languages (French, Dutch, English) on the role of management assistants in the company. The students then realise the importance of mastering language skills in such a context.

The teacher of the Dutch course organises an annual visit to the VRT, where journalists receive our students and explain the functioning of the news broadcasting and weather forecast. The students are also invited to visit the editing rooms.

Most of the teachers are used to work with "practical cases" in class to show the reality of the field. We also provide concrete orientation for our students when writing their final thesis by showing them the reality of the job. For example, students in Accounting have to write a chart of accounts like in real life. Another example is the one of our students in Computer Science/I.T. who have to create an application for their final thesis.

Besides, some teachers participate to the YEP program (Young Enterprise Project). Numerous groups from the Higher Education Schools of Brussels and Wallonia participate in this program, which is a contest. It rewards the best entrepreneurial plan of the academic year. The program intends to reward entrepreneurship, creativity, dynamism, perseverance, innovation and the viability of projects among our students. The students are asked to examine a business plan. The YEP participants present their project to a jury of professionals, as well as to the public. The winning team will have the opportunity to represent the French- speaking Community of Belgium in the European Enterprise challenge.

Recommendations

Visits to companies are very appreciated by our students, so it is important to organise them every year and give priority to this kind of activities. Visits to the public sector could be a good experience, too.

Obstacles

Finding a company to visit is not always easy. Teachers often rely on their own personal network to find interesting and relevant companies.

TOOL 1: IMPROVE CAREER ORIENTATION

Existing situation

Career orientation is virtually nonexistent at the University of Aruba. No general program does exist to bring students into contact with potential employers. However, in practice, this contact is made for some students through local guest teachers or an internship. For example, last year two Master's students were given a job at law firms that are partly run by local guest teachers.

Recommendations

The University of Aruba has been suggested to organise different types of job events. A yearly "job-oriented marketplace event" would be of great help. It would also be useful to organise information sessions where students can make contact with potential employers and are also informed about what exactly the professional field needs. This way, a student could better coordinate his/her studies (especially the electives) with his/her job prospects.

Obstacles

Finding sufficiently varied professional contacts in the small labour market of the island.

TOOL 2: PROVIDE TRAINING IN COMPANIES FOR THE EDUCATIONAL STAFF

Existing situation

There is no standard training program for current, part-time or incoming staff with regard to teaching, testing or the use of online platforms for an improved class experience.

All lecturers are required to use Stone as a course management system; however this is not well balanced across the university, as some teachers are more advanced than others. On several occasions workshops were offered by the I.T. professionals to show lecturers the basic functionalities of the platform, but many use Stone (Moodle) as a deposit for information rather than a useful tool for interactive learning and distance and blended learning.

A delegation from a partner university - the University of South Carolina - visited the University of Aruba in 2019 and participated in our Blended Learning bootcamp program for lecturers from the various faculties of the island or other educational organisations. This bootcamp program gave the attendees insights into blended learning and improved ways to work on Stone. Even though this bootcamp program turned out to be efficient, it was only available for a small group of people. Other staff members and part-time lecturers had unfortunately not been given the opportunity to participate and gain experience.

Recommendations

The university can organize more information sessions on important educational issues that can help improve the learning experience and course relevance according to what is described in the syllabus.

Part-timers and new incoming teachers should be required to attend sessions to be introduced to the learning environment offline and online, in order to provide general high quality learning experiences.

Continuous training for current employees is necessary.

Obstacles

Find the necessary support on the island.
Provide sufficient time for teachers to follow all courses.

TOOL 3: GUARANTEE INTERNSHIPS - ACCESS, LONGER INTERNSHIPS

TOOL 4: INSIDE THE CLASSROOM (Informations & more relevant classes)

See TOOL 1: IMPROVE CAREER ORIENTATION

Existing situation

Students can do an internship as part of the third-year Bachelor's program. Students can choose between a full-time internship (12 ECTS) and a part-time internship (6 ECTS). An internship coordinator is appointed for each faculty to assist the students. However, it is mainly the students themselves who have to make the arrangements for their internship. A limited range of internships has been announced by the internship coordinator in a separate folder on the digital learning platform Stone. Furthermore, the students must find a suitable internship position and then collaborate with the internship coordinator.

Recommendations

It would be much more attractive for the students to select an internship as part of their study program if the idea is that they get recruited by professionals from the marketplace. This could be done through information evenings or an internship fair. The internship coordinator should also be supported in his/her task.

Obstacles

- weak link between the professional marketplace and the university,
- not enough teachers or support to complete all secondary tasks.

3.4. The educational axis - macro level - Towards a more practice-oriented education

GIP FTLV-IP (France)

TOOL 1: IMPROVE CAREER ORIENTATION

Existing situation

Our target audience is a group of 13 young individuals from the " ssure ton année" training program who have to define their educational and/or professional orientation.

The "Career Guidance Forum event" takes place at the beginning of the year, usually in January. It is oriented to career guidance and includes professionals, schools, training centres, and the like. It is a good opportunity for exchange and is also a good opportunity to gathering information for our students and orientating them.

The students are given support throughout this forum to ensure that they go to meet the training establishments and organisations and that they are well informed about the various careers and career guidance tools available for them. Indeed, they often do not have the chance to be accompanied by their parents on this kind of event and are alone in their career choosing.

Since the start of the training program, work has been done by the professional integration adviser on the basis of the students' wishes and interests. Indeed, during the session preceding the day of the forum, a map of the site is provided and, depending on the orientation chosen by each student, the stands to visit are determined.

A questionnaire intended for professionals is also drawn up by the students in order to meet their expectations and the questions they have in the best way. Groups of 4 students each are formed for practical reasons and to make the students feel confident and daring.

So that the students would not be passive, the professional integration advisor has also set up a "selfie challenge" for inciting the students to go and meet the professionals at their respective stands and dare to ask their questions. This challenge consists of taking a selfie of the group and of the professional interviewed in order to validate their visit to the stand; then, the students have to send it directly by email to the professional integration advisor. The winners are the first to submit all of their selfies. A debriefing is done during the session following the forum, on personal contributions and on the answers to the questionnaire drawn up by the students. The winners of the challenge were then rewarded. Autonomy and responsibility were worked on through that event.

Recommendations

- Good preparation beforehand
- Remain available at a fixed point in the forum for any questions or problems
- The students, who are still young, have to know how to send emails with attached pictures

Obstacles

None

TOOL 2: PROVIDE TRAINING IN COMPANIES FOR THE EDUCATIONAL STAFF

Existing situation

An experiment has been led so that professional integration counsellors can benefit from a company immersion to better understand the professional expectations and to become ambassadors of the sector in question. In this case, the sector chosen is the Hotel-Catering one. The objective is to allow the counsellors to experience the everyday working-life of a cook a little more closely and know about the transversal skills, soft skills and interpersonal skills involved in that kind of job. The actors involved are partners of the GRETA Network who are willing to support our staff throughout this professional insight. The expected duration of this immersion is one day.

Recommendations

We must be attentive to the professionals' reactions to be able to decipher the expected attitudes and good practices in the sector.

A single day may be too short if one would like to understand thoroughly the overall expectations of the sector. Moreover, the professional who receives the counsellor in immersion is required to be well aware of the challenges and implications of the profession while having the skills to provide sound explanations and make them understandable to the counsellor.

Professional practices can be very different from one establishment to another. That is why our initiative makes full sense when the counsellor is confronted to different or even opposing contexts. In the meantime, it prevents us from reducing professional experience to a single representation.

Other sectors in which the counsellors intervene could be the object of such an initiative, as the Security sector, for example.

This kind of initiative should be financed by the project to which it is attached, or it could even be put forward as part of a professionalization plan.

Obstacles

Without any prior preparation, the counsellor may risk being lost and, therefore, not paying enough attention during the observation process.

GIP FTLV-IP (France)

TOOL 3: GUARANTEE INTERNSHIPS - ACCESS, LONGER INTERNSHIPS

Existing situation

Internship periods have been set up in order to validate or not the orientation projects of the learners. The first internship period was scheduled at the beginning of March 2020, because, as the process started at the beginning of December 2019, it was necessary to work on the orientation projects at first hand and give students time to find the internship of their choice. Take also notice that young individuals of the "Assure ton année" training program are often destined to go further with apprenticeship.

The periods of business immersion are the way for students to enrich their professional experience and subsequently make contacts for apprenticeship more easily.

"Technical Job Search Workshop" is organised to work on the resume and cover letter writing process, by using tools related to the fields of internship, apprenticeship and job search. Motivational job interviews are also settled during the training sessions put in place.

Career surveys are carried out by young students. They can talk with professionals about their education curriculum, their job missions, the qualities expected for the job, etc. The business survey questionnaire is supervised by an integration counsellor.

Our young students have to take their responsibilities when looking for an internship. They have to carry out the search themselves; indeed the integration counsellor is not meant to find the internship companies in the stead of the students, even if they are granted guidance, advice and support. The students have to compile a list of companies by searching through Internet in order to go and visit them.

Recommendations

Let students develop autonomy by assuming responsibility for all steps of the process.

Obstacles

Cancellation of internship periods due to the current pandemic.

TOOL 4: INSIDE THE CLASSROOM (Informations & more relevant classes)

Existing situation

Job meetings are settled for training courses related to the in industry sector.

Temporary employment agencies intervene at the end of the training program with training groups in the building sector with the idea of presenting the expectations of agencies/companies and employers (they give particular importance to interpersonal skills). In general terms, these temporary employment agencies create contact and identify the companies that are willing to hire more staff and receive trainees. They take advantage out of it by keeping the trainees' resumes for potential future contracts.

Support for companies' internships is provided with particular attention to defining the individual objectives and determining the training obligations and requirements.

Recommendations

- Organise job meetings twice a year for all training courses;
- Involve temporary work agencies for all training courses;
- Prepare learners for the interventions of professionals (drafting the resume and cover letter for job search, simulate job interviews)

Obstacles

Lack of availability of the professionals involved.

Summary Sheets

Meets 2 SOLUTIONS

SOLUTION 1: AXIS 1 - INDIVIDUAL or how to lend an ear to all, guide, supervise and help students in their studies.

SOLUTION 2: AXIS 2 - EDUCATION (micro level) or what teaching and study methodology to put in place to optimize everyone's abilities.

Description

Who

- A kind of ambassador, point of contact for the students and for the school/university, intermediate and relay student, spokesperson who ensures dialogue between the learners (students from the same group or section) and the teaching team or management team.
- Substitute student if needed.

Role

- Facilitate exchanges, avoid conflicts, suggest modifications and solutions, direct towards adequate guidance and support, avoid any misunderstanding.
- Take part in decisions regarding education or research matters.

What / who do we need?

A student, and his / her delegate, reliable, available, open who centralises questions and quickly relays information.

Recommendations

Full-time students

- The students themselves determine who becomes their student representative or on a voluntary basis; the student can sit in the faculty council.
- Regularly consulted by the teachers in order to consolidate monitoring and quickly manage problems.

Teachers

- Take into account the class representative.
- Ensure that information is not distorted.

A mentor teacher

- Responsible for a specific program / section.
- Guarantees a group and the non-disclosure of confidential information.

A "Students' Service Centre"

- Deal with administrative problems of the students.

Positive contributions

- The answers or solutions provided to an individual benefit the entire group.
- Students dare to ask for help and show more confidence in themselves.
- The answers or solutions provided change the teaching practice of the teacher who bounces back when faced with a problem of misunderstanding, organisation, timing or relationship.
- The representative is the point of contact for management matters (if there is a wish to involve the students in certain activities or to know their opinion).
- It is important to explain their role/missions before the vote.
- A time for the vote must be set.
- Teachers must allow time to the students to share with them.

>< Risks/Obstacles

- Not being able to relay information:
  - Between students coming from different sections in a common course.

- Between students having lessons at different times of the day (morning, afternoon, evening).
- No volunteers to become class representative

Concrete example

The University of Aruba has three class representatives (Axes).

Meets 2 SOLUTIONS

SOLUTION 1: AXIS 1 - INDIVIDUAL or how to lend an ear to everyone, guide, supervise and help students in their studies.

SOLUTION 2: AXIS 2 - EDUCATION (micro level) or what teaching and study methodology to put in place to optimize everyone's abilities.

Description

Who

- Senior student and 1st year students.
- One "full-time" teacher per group / section.
- A study advisor (Aruba) to assist the students with their questions.
- A sponsorship (France) to sponsor one or several students during their training program.

Role

- The senior students guide and advise the newcomers (study program or study content, working method, the setting of objectives, motivation, etc.).
- The mentor teacher supervises and ensures the smooth progress and continuity.

What / who do we need?

- An informative or training session.
- Clearly defined support materials: meetings, email / class exchanges, social networks.
- Photocopies.

Recommendations

- The senior student offers help in courses he/she has successfully completed and coaches his mentoree regularly until the end of the school year; exchange experience and give tips.
- The (student) recipient of the sponsorship is available and taker of the committed support.
- Organisation of an information session or training session at the start of the year.
- Organisation of an (optional) working method course.
- Choose some students as role models and present their experience in a video, in leaflets.
- Testimonials based on relevant pieces of experience.
- A study advisor.
- Guidance by means of a course to teach "study skills".

Positive contributions

- Forging links and creating a group spirit essential for motivation, self-confidence and educational support;
- Feel useful and recognized as a mentor;
- Develop (new) skills (relational, educational, ...)
- Be an actor, not a "consumer";
- To refer to a "model of success" (= the senior student) that give motivation.

>< Risks

Difficulties in setting up:

- Organisation during the day and the evening (schedules).
- Distance courses, class representatives and mentor students can't work together.

Concrete example

The I.S.F.C.E. has been experimenting tutoring for years in the area of Bachelor of Manager Assistant.

Meets 3 SOLUTIONS

SOLUTION 1: AXIS 1 - INDIVIDUAL or how to lend an ear to all, guide, supervise and help students in their studies.

SOLUTION 2: AXIS 2 - EDUCATION (micro level) or what support to put in place to optimize everyone's abilities.

SOLUTION 3: AXIS 4 - EDUCATION (macro level) or how to better inform about job opportunities, how to better orientate students to prepare them to the working life.

Description

Who

A person who listens to students facing professional, financial, relationship, housing or health problems endangering their academic career or their personal well-being, and eager to get help.

What

A program like the « Shoco Wellness" one (Aruba) for Mental Health & Well-being.

What do we need?

A room intended to receive the students facing difficulties, not intended for the courses, free at any time.

Recommendations

- Meeting discreetly in a room provided for this purpose on the basis of an appointment.
- The person receiving the student is trustworthy, attentive and empathetic, it provides support and concrete solutions, suggests leads and refers the person to an appropriate service or to a professional.
- A trainer that coaches on how to manage stressful situations + personal development (debate, visualisation and breathing exercises).
- This person should not be part of the teaching team.

Positive contributions

- The individual facing difficulties feels respected and recognized and regains self-confidence.
- He/she returns to school more easily.

Concrete example

Student counselling system ; Shoco Wellness (Aruba).

4.1. The individual axis – How to lend an ear to all

4.2. The educational axis - micro level
Focusing on the learning experience, towards a contextualized and customized education

Meets 2 SOLUTIONS

SOLUTION 1: AXIS 1 - INDIVIDUAL or how to lend an ear to all, guide, supervise and help students in their studies.

SOLUTION 2: AXIS 2 - EDUCATION (micro level) or what teaching and study methodology to put in place to optimize everyone's abilities.

Description

In order to help students be independent in the best possible way that is expected of them in an academic environment, skill-based courses/meetings on study methodology should be offered.

Actor and role

- Teachers: design and teach skill-based courses.
- Managers/administrators: allow, facilitate and fund methodology and courses.

What / who do we need?

- Motivated and trained teachers.
- Adequate (online) study environment.

Recommendations

- As **learning skills** are obviously essential during the academic curriculum and afterwards, the courses 'learning to learn' are a good idea to implement from an early stage in the academic program.
- A good grasp of the **language used during one's studies** underpins the success of the student in his/her studies and on the job market. Beginner and advanced language courses can be offered as (compulsory) courses which would be part of the study program or in the form of personalised remedial courses.
- Because **writing and presenting skills** are paramount during the curriculum and on the labour market, courses teaching those skills can be offered as (compulsory) courses within the entire study program or in the shape of individualised meetings.
- Especially for adult learners community building activities can offer a great opportunity for students to get to know each other better, become more motivated and also get to know their teachers in a more personal way.

Positive contributions

- Greater study success.
- Greater study satisfaction with students.
- More personal contact binding between students and teachers and students between themselves.
- Closer relationships between the academic world and the labour market requirements.
- More variety in the study programs.

><Risks/Obstacles

- Skill-based learning not being compulsory in the study program.
- Difficulty of adapting skill-based courses to an online learning environment.
- Skill-based courses not being integrated in the study program or exams for regular (« core ») courses.
- Teachers not being trained in designing and teaching skill-based courses.
- Teachers not having enough time for remedial/individualised skill-based classes.

Concrete example

Centre for teaching methodology (Budapest Business School, Hungary).

Meets 2 SOLUTIONS

SOLUTION 1: AXIS 1 - INDIVIDUAL or how to lend an ear to everyone, guide, supervise and help students in their studies.

SOLUTION 2: AXIS 2 - EDUCATION (micro level) or what teaching and study methodology to put in place to optimize everyone's abilities.

Description

In order to strengthen teacher skills in an accessible and 'non-threatening' way, teachers should be incentivised to share about their teaching experience and practices - good and bad - with their colleagues.

Actor and role

- Teachers: share teaching experience; give feedback on teaching experience.
- Managers / administrators / quality management: facilitate sharing teaching experience.

What / who do we need?

- Teachers open to sharing their teaching experience.
- Teachers skilled in listening and giving feedback.

Recommendations

- In order to facilitate sharing teaching experience, teachers could periodically organise opportunities for sharing, testing and evaluating different teaching methodologies (retreats/yearly pedagogical day/monthly meetings/one-to-one meetings).
- In order to structure sharing about teaching experience, teachers could be incentivised or imposed to submit evaluation reports of their courses, including a section on feedback by colleagues.
- Another method of structuring about sharing teacher

experience is by setting up a working group of teachers and educational experts that invite teachers to share experiences on targeted and specific themes.
- As giving feedback in a clear and helpful manner is a skill in itself, teachers could be provided with intervision courses.
- In order to ease the sharing of teaching experience, teachers could be encouraged to share during faculty meetings on general matters and on policy matters that are already part of their schedule.

Positive contributions

- Better developed teaching methodologies.
- More understanding between teachers about pedagogical difficulties.
- More (personal) contact between teachers (of different faculties).

><Risks/obstacles

- Not including part-time or guest lecturers.
- Confining sharing about teaching experience to members of the same faculty.
- Failing in sharing activities because of harsh or unprofessional feedback.
- Formalizing the process, in a way that would inhibit teachers' motivation to participate.
- Teachers not having enough time to share about their experience.

Concrete example

A yearly pedagogical day, which brings together all teachers of a given educational institution to share experience and engage in team building activities (I.S.F.C.E., Belgium).

4.2. The educational axis - micro level
Focusing on the learning experience, towards a contextualized and customized education

Meets 3 SOLUTIONS

SOLUTION 1: AXIS 1 - INDIVIDUAL or how to lend an ear to all, guide, supervise and help students in their studies.

SOLUTION 2: AXIS 2 - EDUCATION (micro level) or what teaching methodology and support to put in place to optimize everyone's abilities.

Description

In order to facilitate the professionalization of teachers, measures have to be taken to build their capacity as teachers, coaches and researchers.

Actor and role

- Teachers: strengthening their teaching capacity.
- Managers/administrators: allow, facilitate capacity building+ financial support.

What do we need?

- Teachers open to spending time to learn new skills and become expert in the fields they teach.
- Adequate opportunities and (financial) support for building teacher capacity.

Recommendations

- In order to strengthen the teachers' capacity, an educational specialist could be hired and specific courses could be offered (by them).
- Teachers could be incentivised or imposed to update their teaching program, not only regarding the substance of the course but also regarding the teaching methodology used.
- Based on the idea that good teaching stems from good research, a faculty-wide research program could be set up, setting out an overview of relevant (local) themes and implementing a research board/working group, in order

to structure and inspire teachers to carry out research activities.

- On a more individual level, teachers could be incentivised to take up a PhD project.
- If in place, teachers/faculties could apply for membership of a (regional) network of teachers to develop their teaching skills.

Positive contributions

- Better developed teaching methodologies.
- More highly motivated teachers/" experts" in the field they teach.
- More understanding between teachers about pedagogical difficulties.
- More (personal) contact between teachers (of different faculties).

><Risks/Obstacles

- Teachers not being hired full time (i.e. having other principal/secondary job activities).
- Teachers not having enough time for remedial/individual skill-based teaching.
- Membership of teachers networks not being financed by management.
- Highly professional teachers/" experts" in the field they teach/taking up a (better paid) job outside of the academic institution.

Concrete example

Membership of the regional 'Greta Network' in order to facilitate the implementation of a professionalization plan for teachers (GIP FTLV-IP, France).

Description

The organisations offer their users a "physical" welcome (secretariat, Students' Service Centre, library) or a "dematerialised" device (booklet, website, interactive terminal, information desk at the entrance of the building, screen with class information) which constitutes the first point of entry to the information they need.

Actors

- Home Agent
- Administrative assistants
- Coordinators
- Referent prescribers
- Students' Service Centre

Role

- Identify services in the field of social and professional integration and provide useful contacts.
- Provide learners with clear, free and reliable information.
- Strictly observe the confidentiality rules.

What / who do we need?

- An interlocutor identified for each question that the learner may ask him/herself.
- Trainee welcome booklet given to the recipient and to which the recipient can allude to (for any questions he/she may have).
- A website with all the information the students may need.

Recommendations

- Ensure a serious monitoring to deliver reliable information/information of quality.
- Ensure permanent updating, continuous monitoring of modifications of the information and website.

- Maintain the network of partners by organising a meeting once or twice a year.
- Use vocabulary that is easy to read and understand (information access).
- Install an interactive terminal can allow information to be gathered in one place and to quickly guide people looking for practical pieces of information.

Positive outcomes

- The motivation and involvement of learners is supported by resolving their difficulty and improving their situation in relation to their rights.
- The learners' peripheral obstacles can be resolved.
- Learners know their rights and know how to have access to these ones.
- Rights access facilitates full access to citizenship.

><Risks/Obstacles

- If learners cannot find answers to their questions, they risk losing their motivation and giving up.
- If they cannot resolve their difficulties (transport, health, administrative problems, etc.), this affects their motivation and can fuel the feeling of not having access to information that opens the right to social and professional integration.

Concrete examples

- Trainee welcome booklet given individually at the start of each training program.
- A website with all the information the students may need.
- An interactive terminal.

4.3. The structural axis
Focusing on the infrastructure, the importance of an enabling environment

4.3. The structural axis
Focusing on the infrastructure, the importance of an enabling environment

Description

Computers available for learners and a quiet working environment where everyone can come and work alone or in groups exist in all the establishments. It's generally a working room offering various resources: books, magazines, etc.; a shared online resource portal, computers, a printer, an internet connection.

Actor

- Resource centre manager
- Trainers
- Learners

Role

- Accompany learners, organise group activities.
- Prescribe activities to perform (prescription sheet).
- Work independently, ask for help, work in a group.

What / who do we need?

- Resource centre animator.
- Spacious, equipped, welcoming room.

Recommendations

- Benevolent host, attentive.
- Improve the speed of the internet connection (by installing fiber for example).
- Create closed spaces to be able to work in small groups.
- Consider Internal Regulations for the working room and the means of access to computer devices + control in order to avoid any abuse or problem.

Positive outcomes

- Individualise the paths of each trainee according to his/her specific needs.
- Friendly place that facilitates social ties and work in groups, creates a feeling of belonging.
- Promotes independent work for learners and allows to study in a calm atmosphere.

><Risks/Obstacles

- If learners are not accompanied, some may have difficulties in working independently.
- If the equipment does not work correctly, learners may lose motivation.

Concrete examples

- Shared online resource portal (Netvibes) regularly updated and in which learners can participate directly.
- If learners find it difficult to master a concept during group lessons, it may be possible that they come to the resource centre to work through another medium.
- Icebreaker activities are set up for this purpose during the first session of a course.
- Learners can come and learn how to use a computer and acquire skills and self-confidence with this tool.
- An experiment to help the process of resume and letter of motivation writing worked well this year.

Description

Creating a pleasant atmosphere for learners means allowing them to work, concentrate, and learn in good conditions.

Who

- Public training policy makers, decision makers and training funders.
- The management staff of training programs.
- The pedagogical and educational staff.
- The learners/students.

Role

- Designate this tool in the project documents (scope of the project, specifications, internal regulations, charter, etc.) as being a priority requirement.
- Support any further initiative.
- Highlight and communicate on these good practices.

What / who do we need?

- A willingness of leaders and taking into account the commitments of the continuous improvement process.
- An allocated budget allocated.
- Take into account the criterion "quality of the environment" in the evaluation of the training program.

Recommendations

- Link the quality of the "physical" environment to the quality of the educational environment.
- Create a "physical environment" commission by associating staff and learners.
- Promote green spaces and embellish premises, corridors and outdoor spaces to create a good atmosphere (decoration, green plants, painting, etc.).
- Everyone can ensure the cleanliness of the premises and shared spaces.

Positive outcomes

- The quality of the environment is a good incentive to stimulate involvement into the training program (recreational and socio-emotional reasons).
- The atmosphere and the comfort of the training sites and working places promote social contacts.

><Risks/Obstacles

- A degraded environment can give learners a negative image of themselves, fostering a feeling of relegation or even discrimination.
- Potential lack of commitment by the training program towards the students can lead to lack of commitment by the learners towards the training program, as a reverse situation.
- The risk of giving a negative image of the training program.

Concrete example of the ISFCE

- A room equipped with computers is made available for learners who choose to meet there to work and help each other (collaborative dynamic).
- A rest room where learners meet to chill out, talk about their studies, in a friendly and relaxing atmosphere; this caring and enabling environment is very stimulating for the learners.
- A recreational covered room, offices for management and secretariat, a cafeteria, an outdoor area with some facilities such as parking for bicycles, some benches. Both students and teachers can eat and drink and have a rest at the cafeteria, which is also a good place for exchange and social contact.
- Premises with a screen and computer equipment, decorated with posters and green plants.

4.3. The structural axis
Focusing on the infrastructure, the importance of an enabling environment

4.4. The educational axis - macro level
Towards a more practice-oriented education

Meets 2 SOLUTIONS

SOLUTION 1: AXIS 1 - INDIVIDUAL or how to listen to everyone to guide, supervise and help students in their studies.
SOLUTION 2: AXIS 2 - EDUCATION (micro level) or what teaching and study methodology to put in place to optimize everyone's abilities.

Description

- Narrowing the gap between education and the labour market;
- Connecting students and employers;
- Extra support from experts.

Actors

- Students;
- Employers Governmental and non-governmental bodies;
- Connecting students and employers;
- The teaching and administrative staff Get in touch with former students.

Role

- Transferring information (both from the labour market to students and the other way round).
- Organising exchange events.
- Devote time & effort to deal with the issue.
- Make the field of education match with the labour market

What / who do we need?

Motivated students, teachers, staff, employers, other stakeholders.

Recommendations

- Go and visit education/job fairs & preparing students for it;
- Promote the schools at various levels and organising forums;

- Create a club made of former students;
- Create a LinkedIn account;
- « Gamify » the process (like the French example - the selfie challenge).

Positive contributions

- Enhanced students' motivation (since they are more aware of what the labour market expects from them).
- Making the process of finding a job more successful for students.
- Enhanced employers' satisfaction (more employees and easier process).
- More confidence and success among teachers (since they prepare students for the labour market).

><Risks/Obstacles

- Lack of time, money and energy;
- Lack of willingness to deal with the issue within the educational system;
- Lack of devoted & motivated actors;
- Lack of preparation.

Concrete examples

- The French initiative " Assure ton année".
- Job fairs in Belgium(SIEP and the like).
- Promoting the school to the CAIOR and CSR instances in Belgium.
- Dual training.

Meets 2 SOLUTIONS

SOLUTION 1: AXIS 1 - INDIVIDUAL or how to listen to everyone to guide, supervise and help students in their studies.
SOLUTION 2: AXIS 2 - EDUCATION (micro level) or what teaching and study methodology to put in place to optimize everyone's abilities.

Description

Providing school teachers with skills and competencies that the labour market requires.

Who

- Teachers
- Companies

Role

- Organising and participating in training events (knowledge sharing).
- Benefit from relationships between schools and companies (or even being both in a school and in a company).

What / who do we need?

- Company training sessions for teachers;
- Connections between the two sectors;
- Information or knowledge on what the labour market expects.

Recommendations

- Building direct links between companies and schools;
- Constant monitoring (by schools) of professional attitudes and expectations;
- Company visits.

Positive contributions

- Enhanced quality of teaching;
- More motivated teachers and students;
- Both teachers and students will be more aware of the labour market expectations;
- Enhanced employer satisfaction;
- Closer connections between schools and companies.

><Risks/Obstacles

- Lack of tradition, culture, time, money and efforts both at schools and in companies;
- Weak connections between schools and firms/companies;
- The complexity of an education system (like in the French Community in Belgium).

Concrete example

Company immersion in the Hotel-Catering sector in France.

4.4. The educational axis - macro level
Towards a more practice-oriented education

4.4. The educational axis - macro level
Towards a more practice-oriented education

Meets 2 SOLUTIONS

SOLUTION 1: AXIS 1 - INDIVIDUAL or how to listen to everyone to guide, supervise and help students in their studies. **SOLUTION 2: AXIS 2 - EDUCATION (micro level)** or what support to put in place to optimize everyone's abilities.

Description

Aim : longer and more relevant, meaningful company internships for our students.

Who

- Students;
- Firms/companies;
- School staff or other institutions that would make the connection with the previous two.

What do we need?

Taking more care of the internship programs make it more relevant and meaningful.

Recommendations

- Teachers should visit the students at the company during their internship program;
- Information evenings or internship fairs;
- Enhanced support and guidance for all parties;
- Giving more freedom and, at the same time, more responsibility to students in their rocess to make arrangements for their internships (which is contradicting the previouspoint but it is also legitimate).

Positive contributions

- More relevant and meaningful internship programs.
- Efficiency gain for the company.

><Risks/Obstacles

- Lack of time and willingness to improve the situation;
- Insufficient links between the professional field and the university field;
- Not enough teachers or support to complete all secondary tasks.

Concrete example

The internships are genuinely part of the study course (even by law).

Meets 2 SOLUTIONS

SOLUTION 1: AXIS 1 - INDIVIDUAL or how to listen to everyone to guide, supervise and help students in their studies.
SOLUTION 2: AXIS 2 - EDUCATION (micro level) or what teaching and study methodology to put in place to optimize everyone's abilities.

Actors

- Students
- Teachers
- Companies

What / who do we need?

Motivated students, teachers and professionals.

Recommendations

- Company visits;
- Job testimonies to exemplify lessons/Working with case studies or practical cases;
- Dealing with real life tasks for the final thesis (e.g. write a balance sheet in the area of Accounting Studies);
- Organising/visiting professional or business contests.

Positive contributions

- Enhanced student motivation
- Enhanced teacher satisfaction

><Risks/Obstacles

- Finding companies that are willing to cooperate;
- Teachers are far away from the business industry or from the reality of a given profession.

Concrete examples

- The YEP program (Young Enterprise Project);
- Business or professional contests for students (the idea of case study contests) (another example is a contest organised by the National Bank of Belgium);
- 101 tips for a Virtual Assistant - job testimony by Alison Stessens.

4.4. The educational axis - macro level
Towards a more practice-oriented education

Impact of the Covid-19 crisis on the project

The lockdown that we experienced during the Covid-19 crisis in 2020 and 2021 forced us to focus on essential matters that have the highest priority: keeping students in our classes despite this unprecedented and uncomfortable situation.

In order to assess the impact of this crisis on our students, we launched a quick survey to collect information about the risk of drop-out of adult learners and the way teachers could keep them on track. We have developed a ten-question questionnaire focused on new tools and new teaching techniques that have made it possible to motivate and "keep on board" our target audience:

1. In general, to what extent would you rate the student's participation to your distance teaching during the lockdown?

2. How would you rate the attendance of your students regarding assignments to be handed in?

3. In comparison with face-to-face lessons, how would you rate your students' motivation during lessons given live by videoconference?

4. In comparison with face-to-face lessons, how would you assess your relationship with students during distance teaching?

5. Do you have the impression that more students drop out during the distance learning period than the previous academic year?

6. Do you think that this type of distance education could constitute additional help for students who have more academic difficulties?

7. Since the lockdown, do certain digital tools now seem to add value to your courses to motivate your students? Even when they are carried out again in the classroom?

8. Please mention the digital tool that was, in your opinion, the most useful to motivate the students following distance teaching.

9. What is your best tip to hook your students as much as possible to your lessons during the lockdown?

10. Can you share examples of good practices that you have experienced about maintaining contact with your students?

Each partner submitted the survey to their teaching staff. The responses received1 were collected and analyzed. Here are the results.

In 3 out of 4 countries, student participation is judged to be good (very good, good or fairly good), which represents 72% of response.

It was only in Hungary that student participation was rated as bad (bad or somewhat bad), which is rated at 67%. The attendance of students in completing their homework is considered good in 3 countries out of 4 (very good, good or fairly good), which accounts for 75%. In Hungary, the response is more negative (bad or somewhat bad), with a 65% rate.

Compared to face-to-face lessons, the students' motivation during videoconference lessons is less good. At the European level, a response of 50% indicates "less good" motivation, 42% indicates no change and only 8% is judged "better motivated". The Belgian results show a contrast with a response of 23% for better motivation.

Compared to face-to-face lessons, the relationship with students during distance education is judged to be highly variable. Indeed, each one of the 3 answers proposed (better, no change, worse) collected one-third of the vote. Aruba, shows a deviation from this average - 50% consider the relationship as worse. It would seem that there is no increase in the number of students who drop out during the distance learning period in comparison to the number for the previous academic year (62% of response).

Only Aruba shows a reverse trend with 60% of response, which highlights a higher drop-out rate. However, Belgium and Aruba note that this type of distance education could rather provide additional help for students who yet have other academic difficulties.

On the contrary, the Hungarian response indicates the opposite, with 71% negative feedback; while for France the feedback is negative in 55% of cases (a more mixed situation).

In the current context, we can see that some digital tools add value to lessons and participate to motivating students. And this is also true when these tools are used back to the classroom (68% of response at the European level). The trainers used a multitude of tools. These tools correspond to different types of usage: synchronous communication (visio), asynchronous communication (forums), document sharing, creating interaction (quiz).

The trainers used different strategies to engage learners during distance training. This involved both support and adapted teaching methods, but also technical support in mastering the digital tool. The training methods have also been adapted in order to better correspond to the learners' needs.

In general, the trainers differentiated between long-term management time and management time within the lesson to ensure both pace and flexibility in the way they train learners.

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1. Belgium : 13 surveys returned ; Aruba : 10 surveys returned ; France : 71 surveys returned ; Hongrie : 24 surveys returned.

Conclusion

6. 1. Highlighting the problems encountered by our target group

Our main goal is dealing with the drop-out issue through the spectrum of the problems and obstacles the learners may encounter in real-life. We have been uniting our efforts to do so, while taking account of our common experience and differences. We have carried out surveys and organised World Café sessions on the site of our partner institutions in order to understand the causes of drop-out among our adult learners. Four main approaches have been highlighted and referred to as our four AXES that correspond to the main obstacles that arise during the education curriculum.

We now acknowledge that the social and cultural environment, as well as family-life, influence to a great extent the attitude of our learners, their motivation to learn and willingness to engage in studies in the long run. That is why, throughout our common project, we have been focusing our efforts towards understanding the daily-life problems of the students so to take these into account in our teaching practices and in administrative, more formal, procedures.

Furthermore, when the objective is countering a negative learning experience, we think it is essential to examine our teaching and learning methodologies, as well as the way students learn and study.

We believe that creating more opportunities for our lecturers to meet and engage in training programs, on the one hand, and improving training programs and internships, besides enabling job opportunities and triggering experience out of the academic system for our learners, on the other hand, are paramount for motivating our students.

At last, an enabling working environment, paired with giving access to efficient I.T. tools, are also important factors for personal achievement, empowerment and motivation among our learners, while contributing to the well-being of the educational staff.

We have come to the conclusion that putting the students at the centre of the debate to make them feel involved and provide them with self-esteem represents the key of success in studies.

At all levels, the schools can anyway act to prevent drop-out as much as possible by apprehending the adult students' reality in the whole of its complexity.

6. 2. Tools for sustainable and practical solutions

In view of completing our drop-out objectives, we have elaborated a series of tools designed for coping with obstacles in the most efficient way after having validated them in all our partner institutions. Therefore, we have built up a toolbox inspired by good practice instances from each partner and taking account of the difficulties encountered in the process of implementing some of the solutions proposed. We intend to provide practical solutions, which would be sustainable, as well as efficient, adaptable and perfectible across time.

Therefore, we have suggested implementing a system of student representation with a class/section representative, a tutor and a reliable contact for student guidance and support so to make learners more involved in their studies. It reveals to be quite easy to implement and works well in stimulating motivation (for oneself and towards the others). It makes the learners feel more involved since they participate more actively and feel more responsible regarding their own commitments and towards their fellows.

Moreover, we have been given greater importance to courses focused on study skills acquisition, writing and oral skills, as well as activities aimed at strengthening self-awareness and awareness for others, with the objective to encourage more efficient learning skills methods. We also intend to reinforce internships within companies in order to make the students be confronted to the real-life challenges of the labour market and, in doing so, create opportunities and improve the students' abilities

to find a job after their studies. Teaching them to be able to deal with team working and solve practical problems will make them more responsible, dedicated and aware of the challenges of their future working life.

Multiplying contacts with professionals in the field of education, participating more often in training programs, testing new teaching methodologies and pedagogical approaches, as well as sharing about teaching practices translates our willingness to enhance our teaching methodology and pedagogical practices. This implies our ability to question oneselves, elaborate relevant content for our courses, constantly adapt pedagogical practices and widen knowledge horizons above one's delimited field of studies or knowledge area. In doing so, we indirectly give learners insights into intercultural and transversal skills, which are given much value in our current society.

Interactive digital devices to find easily and rapidly information related to the structure of each educational institution or establishment, quiet areas, areas providing good working conditions to study and their remodelling for embellishments are the final tools we wanted to present and that we consider essential for creating an enabling working environment where students could evolve.

6. 3. The impact of the Covid-19 crisis on the project - how to adapt the education system to the current situation and cope with the drop-out issue

From March 2020, the Covid-19 crisis has been undermining our project. First, it was perceived as a real obstacle to education and an extra burden for our target audience. But then it revealed to be an opportunity for putting in place new educational resources, develop new devices and tools, and use tricks in order to keep our students motivated during the remote e-lessons.

In this unprecedented context, the four partners have conceived a questionnaire[13] for the educational staff in order to know about the impact of the crisis regarding the rate of student attendance and drop-out, the study dedication and the relational aspect of the issue. On another hand, we have intended to use at best digital tools, which give added value to education, and disseminate good teaching practices in order to maintain contact (of quality) with our students.

For the majority of our partners (with the exception of Hungary), the rate of distance learning attendance, as well as the compliance of tasks (homeworks, projects and the like), have revealed quite satisfactory. Note that most of the teachers inquired even acknowledged that the students' motivation while speaking of distance learning was less good or equal. Belgium was the only country where students showed more motivation. As far as the relationships between students and teachers are concerned, we have noticed that they are quite parted. Indeed, some think that they are better than before or unchanged, while others think they are less enriching than before the crisis. Concerning the rates of drop-out, it seems that the rates have not increased in comparison to the ones for classroom lessons. Nonetheless, Aruba noticed a quite huge rate of disengagement.

Two of our partners - Aruba and Belgium - have highlighted the fact that using digital tools14 as extra means for education can be advantageous for some students who are yet facing difficulties. Moreover, these tools were made available for all students. France and Hungary, on the contrary, have received a negative response. Nonetheless, each and every one sees in these tools a way of making lessons in real time more active and participative. A lot of teachers have been putting in place some tricks to stimulate students' attention, with and without technical tools, and they have shared good practices in that sense.

Distance learning reveals to offer good opportunities to develop extra tools, complementary to classroom lessons; but it should

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13. Cf chapter about the Covid-119
14. CooSpace, Syfadis, Socrative, Microsoft-stream, Kahoot, Google-classroom, Padlet, Zoom, Skype, Moodle, Whatsapp, Discord, Google-meet, Quiziniere, JitsiMeet, OBS-Studio, Youtube, Teams, Assimo, Paint, Voice recorder, etc. The teachers have also been using emails and the Google Drive platform.

be used with parsimony and it would follow certain rules. The distance learning tools enhance creativity and autonomy; it makes us seek solutions from a different perspective and adapt our teaching and learning methods. Nonetheless, we should stay aware of the fact that distance e-learning represents quite an impediment at first stake, impairing the structure of the lessons. So, the partners have given adequate equipment to the students who have no computer. Within the limits imposed by the Covid-19 measures in each country, some teachers have enabled the students to use the I.T. devices at school and use its Wi-Fi connection. In addition, some exams, written or oral, have taken place in presence to avoid communication problems.

6. 4. In view of a constructive and broad-scope impact of the project

As said above, even if we have had to adapt and question ourselves, the Covid-19 crisis has had some impact on our common project. Indeed, a first impact has been the delaying of the toolbox testing procedure till 100% of our schools open again. A second impact has been adapting the portfolio dissemination procedures to the current virtual, remote communication.

Despite these circumstances, we did not wait to maintain contact and share information by emailing or sending questionnaires to our students, teachers and administrative staff members to keep them informed and make them feel directly involved in a dynamic, interactive and motivating process of exchange. A lot of them even feel like making bonds with other international partners. We hope that this portfolio will help them finding answers to their questions or solutions to their problems and that it will prove effective with regard to drop-out prevention.

If we want our project to be a source of new ideas and solutions, we have to make sure that we can transfer the results, data and recommendations of the portfolio to the other higher education institutions of each partner country throughout Europe.

Giving incentives for better employment and qualifications will be possible through our international dialogue and also through our local authorities. As the European Union has put it in 2020, we wish to contribute to lower drop-out rate considerably and offer our students innovative and motivating orientation, which will also be useful to find employment in Europe.

In the following years, we hope to be able to gather testimonies of successful models to follow, reporting how our adult learners managed to overcome any obstacle related to their study curriculum or related to their personal life, so to demonstrate that education is accessible for everyone and at any time of life.
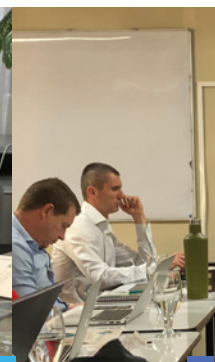
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