

1. Rationale and motivation

1.1 Context

1.1.1 In France :

Continuing Education is a growing activity in France in a context of competition. The Market is shared between educational organisms (universities, high schools, nationally subsidized organisms (AFPA, CNFPT, CNAM, ...) and private companies.

1.1.2 Inside University Pierre et Marie Curie

The Department of Continuing Education (DCE) descends directly from the Education Board of University (Presidency level). Its role is organizing continuing education activities in two educational fields :

- Courses aimed at higher education, aiming to award national degrees (bachelor, master, engineer, ...) and university diplomas
- Short training sessions which last typically from 1 to 5 days, aiming to refresh skills in professional fields

1.2 Mission of the Department of Continuing Education

In all cases, the department has to :

- inform and counsel adult students, and register them,
- define training engineering
- recruit teachers inside University
- organize the logistics of courses
- evaluate results
- manage quality.
- manage administrative matters (contracts, finance, ...)

In the particular case of awarding national degrees, adults students are integrated inside regular university programmes. Therefore, specific needs are to be fulfilled :

- special attention in welcome and counsel of adult students
- accreditation of prior experiential learning (APEL)
 - for admission purpose
 - as equivalent to one or several credits of a course
- definition of the best suited programme according to the career plan
- organization of tutoring system

1.3 Delivery of courses

Delivery is of the responsibility of teachers of all domains covered by University :
Medicine, Biology, Computer sciences and TIC, Electronics, Chemistry, Mathematics, Earth Sciences, Basics, ...

1.4 Some figures

The number of employees of the department is around 25. Number of students in continuing education is about 5 000 (number of students of University is about 30 000).

Number of teachers delivering continuing education programs is about 500.

1.2 Motivation for quality

Initial demand came beginning of 1977 from the Director of DCE, based on the intuition that this activity which had to survive inside a competitive context could not remain outside the general trend of development of quality in France. The situation inside University was at that time a complete ignorance of anything about quality.

Since this date, more and more customers are asking questions about ISO certification. So far, they do not demand formally certification, but pressure is increasing.

2. Objectives

Our objectives have varied overtime. In the first phase, the objective was to integrate quality in the minds of people as a necessary approach in the national context. In this phase, time was not an objective, as we were very concerned not to create dislike of quality.

In the second phase (from september 2001), the objective is to get ISO certification along the ISO 9000/2000 standard.

3. Models

The two phases correspond to the adoption of a different model.

3.1 First period (1997 – 2001),

EFQM (European foundation for quality management) was chosen to reach our first objective.

EFQM is a European model which has emerged as a credible alternative to ISO for quality management.

A number of reasons pushed us to this choice :

- ISO 9000/94 was product oriented and thus considered as non-adapted to continuing education

- EFQM was more flexible than ISO 9000/94 ; the principle of self evaluation allows operation of own choices (not imposed by any external organization)
In the context of complete ignorance of quality, acceptability of this principle was more probable. In addition, we adopted the principle of a relatively low speed of implementation to avoid emergence of radical resistance.
- The EFQM flexibility allowed us to adapt the autoevaluation questionnaire to University context (suppression of the economic criteria and adjustment of vocabulary).

3.2 Present period

In the present period, from september 2001, we moved to **ISO 9000/2000**, to achieve our second objective of certification

- This new standard is service oriented. As we sustain the opinion that continuing Education is a **service** offered in a competitive field, this standard seems perfectly adapted to our situation and the requirement of customers.
- The standard itself offers a very clear description of the model which can be applied without any restriction. It is really a help for implementation.
- People were at that time better prepared to accept a standard leading to certification than at the very beginning of the project.

In summary, we could say that the EFQM period was a good preparation to the implementation of ISO 9000/2000.

4. Organization and implementation

Whatever the model we used, we have organized the project with a double level of piloting.

4.1 Strategic piloting

It is effected by a committee under the leadership of the President of the University. This committee includes the President, the Director of Education, the General Secretary, the Director of DCE, the Director of logistics and the project manager.

So far, this committee has held two meetings per year. Its role is an overall supervision of the project, the validation of strategic decision and the allocation of means which would not be possible for the Director of the Department.

Actually, the Strategic Committee is the organism mentioned in the ISO9000/2000 model loop.

4.2 Operational Piloting

It is made by the project manager who reports directly to the Director of the Department. Day by day decisions are validated by the council of direction of the Department.

5. Results

5.1 Results from first period 1997 – 2001 (EFQM period)

Results have been obtained in four fields :

- Inside the department, improvement was clearly noticed in the awareness by employees that an adult/student is a customer. This result was certainly a consequence of the implementation of an internal information process and a relatively deep work of definition of responsibilities of all members of the Department. Finally, a better climate of cooperation between people inside the Department was established.
- In the field of evaluation of courses, a limited number of courses were submitted to an evaluation sheet
- A tutorship system was designed and implemented in some courses leading to a national degree
- Involvement of the President in this quality approach was not the least important result.

Comments

The EFQM period gave us most interesting results inside the Department. The initial self evaluation questionnaire indicated a lack of communication between employees and between management and employees. All our effort aimed to break communication barriers thanks to meetings organized regularly by the Director and the organization of task forces to solve in a participative way a number of technical problems.

This was particularly successful, and when we had to define the level of quality we wanted to implement in view of ISO certification, we had no problem finding employees willing to be involved in this essential quality task.

Today quality is a concept completely integrated among the people of the Department. It is not yet the case for teachers toward which we have not yet applied pressure. A large number of them with some strong opposition to the notion of quality of teaching lead us to continue to move slowly in this matter.

5.2 Results from second period, from 2001

The effort was concentrated to documentation in view of certification :

- Selection of method and software for process and sub process description
- Description of administrative, financial and training engineering process using "Qualigram" software.
- First draft of a quality manual

Those actions are still under progress. Certification is envisaged in 2004. Generalization of evaluation of training is in progress. It should be complete at the end of this year.

A Quality manual is to be completed this year.

It includes or will include all information concerning organization, quality management and quality policy, description of processus, definition of mission of employees, ...

Reports are supplied twice a year to the Strategic Committee, to be approved by President.