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# **An anthropology of education management**

## **Out of socio-political field studies of adult education conception**

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2015

### **ABSTRACT**

*This chapter takes a close look at the curricula designers' conception activity. The author conducted a fieldwork allowing a precise sociological description of the management tools used to account value when engineering a new training. A description of expected sales revenues, investment as well as running costs and financial analysis sets a an economical perspective on value management. However, on field, this economical perspective is confronted to the values of the profession that are critical to understand the curriculum designers' activities. Teachers resist to being transformed into product managers. A discussion on this professionalization around new values leads to develop a direction of research towards a French model of education, where valuation helps to solve the paradox of meritocracy - this constituting an anthropological model of education management.*

*Keywords: Value management, Professionalization, Distance education, Adult education, Curriculum design, Financial analysis, Training marketing, Ethics, Meritocracy*

In this chapter one studies quality management in distance education (Moore, 2012) and adult education organizations (Lescure, 2010) as an ethno-methodologist of education (Hammersley, 1985 ; Mercer, 2007 ; Trowler, 2012 ; Author, 2015) : one describes how metronomic of value (Vatin, 2008) of accounting tools meets professional resistances when changing teachers into product managers. These social studies are located in France and embedded in a political comparative analysis : resistances to money management is part of a differentiation from the dominant Anglo-American model based on commoditisation of education (Shummar, 2008, 1997) that includes budgeting in a total quality care perspective (Barnef, 1992 ; as opposed to Sallis, 2002). This is why one proposes a French model of evaluation (Author, 2014) reflecting upon quality management. The main scientific contribution to the handbook being a concise anthropology of education management perspective on quality and evaluation.

## **INTRODUCTION**

The general perspective of this chapter is to identify value management in education, and more specifically in adult education and higher distance education. When one is designing a new bachelor degree in distance education, inspired by the North American model but compatible with the European constraints (ECTS for example) ; when one is defining a two years curriculum preparing a national French technical degree, or even a two days professional program for adults, what are the values that determine the decision of whether to invest or not?

One uses the plural to analyse values since one deals with different economic conceptions in the value chain : the value for the learner (that includes human capital, updated skills for career purposes and lifelong employability but also learning experience that enhance the training quality to his/her eyes), the value for the client (directly the learner who pays for it or sometimes the company or state investing in one of his/her employee), the value for the teacher (the one who deliver the training and has a view on its quality), the value for the training engineer who designs the curriculum (that includes an economic approach with costs and revenues and a financial analysis, but also the professional pedagogical values of the community of practices), and so forth (aggregated values for strategy decision makers in the hierarchy, perceived value for the internal clients within the education organization such as the HR assessing curriculum designers,...).

Within this multiplicity of points of view, one will focus on curriculum designers in major education industries (mega-university in public distance

education or private companies dealing with vocational education). Even through the eyes of the curriculum designer, it appears that value analysis is plural since there is sometimes a conflict between a rational economical approach (accounting what is the money involved and figuring out a priced value) and a rather more affective professional approach (the pedagogical values of the community of practices dealing with education).

Therefore the objectives of this chapter are multiple:

- Presenting field data of value management in French adult and distance education
- Out of these cases, discussing globally economical value management with the broader perspective of professional values
- Identifying good practices in curriculum design (value management and pedagogy quality) for education professionals readership
- As a broader objective out of these specific cases observed and discussed, facilitating the dialog between management sciences and education sciences as to what concerns scientific knowledge but also technical knowledge, know-how and know-how-to-be within higher education organizations

## **BACKGROUND**

The rise of a society of knowledge with a higher level of general education led to an industrialization of education (Perriault, 2012 ; Moeglin, 2010) in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. To meet the increasing demand of education, universities grew up and used new tools to deliver their teaching. Amphitheatres and books were soon completed by postal communication, phone, the Internet... until the integration into Learning Management System supporting modern distance education. It is therefore possible to observe mega universities counting more than a hundred thousand students.

Regional policies, such as lifelong learning in Europe developed in the Bologna process, foster the development of adult education. Professionals come back to schools or universities in order to gain other qualification and pursue their careers. This new audience as a major consequence: education is no longer limited to pupils and a by-law obligation; it is also an investment for adults who are ready to pay to get a degree.

This society of knowledge constitutes therefore an economy of knowledge, characterized by a commoditization of education (Shumar, 1997, 2008). The state-delivered public good is transformed into a private good provided by companies, which one can buy or sell. Even if more and more open educative resources (OER) are to be found online (or even massive open online courses - MOOC), the pedagogy (or sometimes andragogy) is sold and one has to pay to

access to programs. This will seem normal to Anglo-American readership used to this economic and money-based culture, it is odder to continental Europeans and more specifically French people since there long has been a tradition of free state education (Author, 2014).

Within this general background, one will take a closer look at curriculum designer, that is to say the workers within the economy of knowledge and its education industries, specialized in the engineering of trainings: the ones who create and implement the education modules. What are the management tools they use in order to assess the value of a training project? Are these economic tools sufficient or could they be completed by broader instrumental perspectives on professional values? If Marx (1867) and Becker (1984) have discussed the question of economical value and more specifically the question of human capital, followed by technical developments (Carnevale A.P., Schultz E.R., 1990; Rumble G., 2003; Pottiez J., 2011), it appears that education sciences recent investigations on “professionnalization” (Wittorski, 2007; Jorro, 2007) can add to the question of what is valuable for a community of workers in education.

## **MANAGEMENT TOOLS TO ESTIMATE ECONOMICAL VALUE**

The main focus of the chapter is to present management tools used by curriculum designer in order to estimate the economical value of training when they are planning it. The value analysis is made by training engineers, on field, during the conception phase.

### **Research question, hypothesis and methodology**

What are the values of a training? This simple research question leads to other ones: how is value estimated? What are the different dimensions of this economical approach? Are the management tools sufficient to entail a value-based decision? Are there other criteria, like professional values (pedagogy, quality,...) implied?

One’s main hypothesis is that a social sciences field enquiry allows to know and describe management tools used in education organizations: both the good practices and their misuses and critical aspects. Questioning the notion of value may allow to understand the management logic within the education organizations and to describe them properly.

One supposes that management tools, even complex and rather comprehensive, are not sufficient and are always completed by professional considerations. The economical value of a training would be compared to its coherence with the professional values of the curriculum designers’ community of practices.

In order to test this supposition, one conducted a fieldwork consisting in a participatory observation. One got hired first in a private company providing professional education – as a training project manager in charge of the conception of short programs for adults. This fieldwork was conducted in parallel with one's PhD dissertation work and lasted for two years. The methodology of such ethnography within education organizations is well described by the review *Ethnography and Education* encouraging long run fields within education organizations and where one published an epistemology article in 2015 (Author, 2015).

A second range of data was collected in by another fieldwork in public distance education. Similarly, one has been hired in an industry of higher education as a curriculum designer and training manager for three years – while being affiliated at an education sciences laboratory to maintain a clear insertion within a research policy. One was affiliated to the axis “organizations of training” and therefore one's productions (Author, 2014) was clearly focusing on the description, from inside, of an adult education organization.

After these two fieldworks, one is now hired by a university and is presenting a retrospective analysis of these data. Since it is the interest of both the readership and the current education sciences laboratory (focusing on conception of trainings), one will detail the estimation of value at the moment of the curriculum designer or the project manager is planning a new training. It is the moment when specific management tools are used and the analysis of curriculum's value is the more intense.

One's methodology is therefore close the sociology of management practice, inspired by ethnomethodology, symbolic interactionism and authors such as Becker (2008) or Goffman (1959). One is focusing on the meaning given by the social actors to their acts and the values they defend when taking decisions. These decisions are economical in the traditional sense, dealing with money investment and return on this investment, but also in a professional sense since they belong to a community with codes, norms and rules such as pedagogical quality. By observing these actors in action, by endorsing the role of one of them, one pretends to have a proper position to reflect upon this collective sense making.

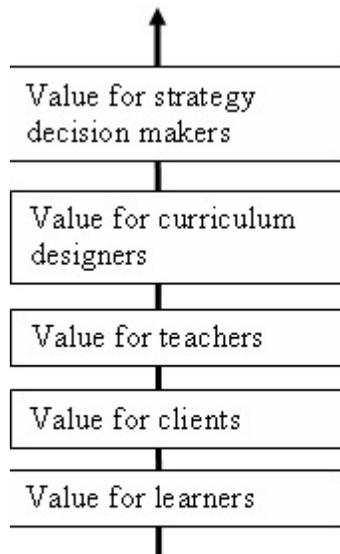
One will now present the official management tools used to estimate the value of a curriculum when conceiving it. This will be done in three parts: 1/the marketing value of a training (the expected benefits), 2/ the production value of a training (the expected costs) and 3/ the financial analysis comparing the previous ones (in order to determine thresholds).

## **Marketing value of a training: benefits**

The first management tool used on field by training executives in adult education – whether in public or private sector – is *marketing*. The curriculum designers are looking for *clients* (even if their professional ethos sometimes leads them to talk about “users” or “learners”) to whom sell the planned training.

In the private sector the distinction between *client* and *consumer* is important since the curriculum designers plan to sell the training to a HR executive client in another company, who will distribute it to his/her employees in order to consume it. The HR executive is the client who puts into his company’s training catalogue the training designed by the project manager.

Therefore there is not a single value (the one for the curriculum designer), but a chain of linked point of views about what constitutes the value of a training. At the bottom of the line is the learner, then the client and even the teacher who is going to deliver the training. In the middle of the line is located the curriculum designer, but he his supervised by the strategy decision makers of his/her company and these are dependant on national policies as to what concerns the regulation of the market where there are operating. Stakeholders such as HR department assessing the curriculum designer can also have a say upon the value of his/her training in order to assess his performance within the education organization. This chain of value can be represented as follow in the figure 1:



*Figure 1*  
*Chain of value*

Therefore the economical value estimated with management tools is not always the same: it can differ according to who is making the estimation. Is it the learner who wants to increase his/her lifelong employability and spend quality time during the training period? Is it the client who wants to adapt his/her employee to his productive goal, sometimes with a short term perspective? Is it the teacher who mostly obeys to the contradictory logics of the individuals in presence at the training and their different goals as to what concern the program? Is it the training engineer split between economical value of return on investment and pedagogy ethics? Or the strategy decision maker who makes arbitration between different markets?

As announced in the introduction, one will focus on the curriculum designer point of view. The training engineer first starts with a market study. He/she is in charge of a permanent intelligence of his/her markets (or sector) in order to detect a potential new training need. He/she is reading everyday the professional press of the marketing, consulting websites and juridical news. Once he/she has spotted a new demand, he/she conceives an offer in order to meet it and to target the potential clients. The product is therefore conceived in a marketing logic. Once developed, the curriculum designer can use different *communication channels* in order to reach the target: catalogue of trainings (both paper and online), advertisements through emails and websites, meetings by the commercial team with important clients... The norm is, since the early 2000s, a mutation from paper communication to electronic communication, with a better targeting thanks to profiled databases allowing the precise definition of what to send to whom. This business to business marketing of adult training is following the global economy towards online marketing and massive data treatment. The databases being either constituted throughout experience or bought to specialised firms. Online social networks websites are used like in other sector of activity in order to do the market surveys (what are the training needs and trends?) but also keep up with important clients and generate buzz around events related to the trainings (by the constitution of groups and diffusion of news on specific topics).

There are other cases of bigger education industries than the highly specialized professional education for adults companies. In these cases, such as the second fieldwork one conducted in a public distance education institution, marketing of training is formal and is condensed in administrative spreadsheets to be filled in by curriculum designers. These documents list fundamental questions that any training engineer, whatever his/her didactical speciality is, has to answer before proposing to invest. The questions deal with the number of potential client, the amount of money they are likely to spend in a training, but also qualitative data about their standard of living and the type of training they consume. Age, professional activity or even gender is questioned in order to determine the nature of the targeted market and its consumers. The final questions are about a

potential price for the training, taking into account the profile of consumers but also potential competitive products on the market. This constitutes the core of the market survey and is condensed in a single page to be transferred to the hierarchy in order to take the decisions of investment.

This decision of investment depends also on the *product life expectancy*. The theory of *product life cycle* that appeared in the 1980s in management sciences is applied to training products at the moment of their conception and development. The aim is to anticipate costs and benefits at each stage of the product's life. When the product is *launched* it necessitates more investments and is not yet profitable, whereas once *grown up* and *mature* the profit is more certain. Last come the time of *decline* when it is time to retire it from the market or replace it by a more profitable product. Both of the studied education organizations were encouraging their executive to engineer trainings with a high life expectancy, that is to say profitable on the long run. So that they would constitute *cash cows* (to reproduce the Boston Consulting Group vocabulary and metaphors, taught in French elitist *grandes écoles* and used on field by the workers) since the students classes accumulate and the financial expectancy rises.

On field, either in public or in private sector, the use of the "4P" marketing tool is common. The curriculum designers are bound to think with the notions of *Price, Promotion, Product and Place* as we described them. How much will be sold the training? through what communication channel? What are going to be the characteristics of the curriculum (teacher, program, pedagogical objectives, timing)? Where is it going to take place? This marketing logic is developed in a rhetoric on *branding*. The brand of the product is multiple and entails different communication actions. Clients buy a training title: this title is often developed into pedagogical objectives with competences to reach in order to incorporate it. The competencies are described on the program, just below the title, with action verbs. They are the target for the learner. But this title is also inserted within a training catalogue of an education organization with its own branding. The French state-controlled finance of professional training (by OPCA operating on sectors of activity) leads to recognize the value of certain education organizations within a sector of activity. It is therefore important to work on the brand of the organization with prominent products and adapted pedagogical methods. Last but not least, the trainer who is going to deliver the training has also his own brand or signature: he is the one that the learners are going to meet and has therefore an uppermost importance. Hence, education organizations are often associated financially in groups with professional editors, reviews and events organization. So that they can put forward the quality of individuals that teach their program, edit books or articles in magazines and are awarded during events organized by sister-societies. It appears that a complex hierarchy and multiplicity of brands exist on the training catalogue and are taken into accounts by the curriculum designers when they conceive their product: they deal and

jiggle with these valuable brands and the local constraints of schedule and space within the advertisement service.

Brands have a first rank impact in professional training: the client is investing money and time, whereas he/she has no precise vision of the product. Therefore each line on the product description has its place and importance, is valuable as a brand (name of the training organization, name of the training, name of the teacher) which has to be managed in order to take advantage of it. The bias is that excellent curriculum designers only manipulate these brands to generate a purchase but do not assure a good product. As a consequence the learners are sometimes deceived during the consumption – with a limited drop out since the products are short and there are not necessarily the clients. An important bargaining of the program appears at the beginning of each session: the trainer being different from the curriculum designer, he/she often proposes to negotiate the pedagogical objectives in order to meet exactly the demand of the learners. This adaptation is not always well seen by the clients but learners appreciate it and it generates good appreciations at the end of the training.

A pure marketing training perspective as one described it meets some juridical limitations. The free market explored by market surveys is regulated, if not ruled, by the law. On the one hand juridical news can constitute a training need (for example to be trained to a new legislation in HR) but on the other hand the law is mostly a framework for marketing trainers. In France, for example, the law of 1971 opens up professional trainings and the national markets where operate most of the education organizations. The rule of the law is even stronger when it comes to prescriptions. In the public education institution one has studied, it appeared that the marketing spreadsheet to qualify the needs let an open space for imperative prescriptions of training by public authorities. A unilateral act of public authority, from the ministry of higher education for example, could determine an out-of-price and out-of-market special training that would mobilize a huge task force within the education organization. In that case, by-law compulsory curricula would escape from marketing and accounting: even not-profitable trainings would be launched to answer to a public demand.

These legal constraints are variable from a country to another and France is a specific case since it has a strong social legislation with intervention of the State in education. The economical model is therefore half public and half private, money and market deciding for ordinary adult education investments, law and public authority determining imperative objectives to meet. The development of a European Higher Education Area and its regional insertion into a worldwide market of education leads to questions about this model due to fairness with contenders and local constraints for education providers. Underneath, lays the economical question to determine whether education is a public or a private good. If it is certainly part of the common good, states have answered differently to that question concerning higher education. In France the

movement in higher education seems to point at a model of privatization – at least for the institution we observed on field in distance education (Author, 2014 ; it is not necessarily the case for universities).

## **Production value of a training: accounting costs**

Curriculum designers one studied in public distance education are provided with management tools allowing a cost accounting. These employees are rather central within their education organization since they are in charge of filling in spreadsheet files detailing the costs of every dimensions of the planned training. This lead them to communicate with all services involved in production and commercialization of a training and entails a better harmonization of the practices. There is therefore not only a possibility to control their activity with economical criteria: if it first of all a tool to measure the value of training (the costs of its production) it is also, as a side effect, a good practice allowing better cooperation within the company.

The construction of such management tools involved many people within the education organization. It had been hard work to find a common language between the eight geographical locations; each one specialized in different types of training. The determination of a measurement unit led to many discussions: should it be counted in days of work? In units produced? Even the names of single document would change during the making process and differ from one location to another: a *text* would become a *leaflet* and finally a *course* once fully engineered. But it had to be called with a single name within the spreadsheet file.

As Rabardel (1995) showed it, this technical tool has been instrumented by humans manipulating it. Out of all the possibilities the management device would allow, a few where used by the curriculum designers, often serving their career interest (figuring out the lowest costs possible) or department interest (using such or such unit of accounting that would value the work of their colleagues). If the management tool allowed economical supervision and better communication, helping the organization at the right moment, it also created discussions and dissensions around its practical construction and utilization. The education organization appeared to be constituted of different organs or services, ready to defend different interests as “clients” to each other within the same whole, trying to improve their own interest.

In order to estimate the economical value of a training, the curriculum designers were using a three spreadsheets file that one will now present and discuss. On the first page were gathered the marketing value including the potential sales revenues estimated in number of clients multiplied by the price of the product, during a life expectancy. The second page accounts costs (*cf.* figure 2) and distinguishes investment costs and operating costs. Last, the third page that one

will analyze latter is a financial analysis linking the first two pages and figuring out profitability thresholds, margin rate, depreciation, etc.

After the marketing approach, comes the time of costs evaluation. The aim of the curriculum designer is most of all to determine whether the planned training is going to be profitable. He/she has therefore to look at the revenue and costs to determine whether it is a good investment with a positive return. Here a discussion can rise since the tool is sometimes a mere indicator and is not strictly followed: certain investments are made on not profitable training, qualified as “strategic” (because there is a public demand, because the education organization deciders want to be present on an emerging marketing and allow a compensation between the different sectors of activities; and so forth). The formal operation of costs accounting is therefore more a good practice facilitating the curriculum designers’ activity control than a strict rule to be obeyed.

The different costs to be checked out are listed in the figure below:

<b>Investment costs</b>	<i>Depreciable costs during the operating time</i>
	Days of work of a curriculum designer Days of work of a project coordinator Purchase of pedagogical contents (courses, assignments) Text formatting by production service
Re-investment in a re-engineering	Website production Updating of pedagogical contents due to new national programs, need for new assignments, etc.
<b>Operating costs</b>	<i>Variable costs according to the number of clients each year</i>
	Days of work for training coordination
	Communication and selling by sales department
	Impression of pedagogical contents by production department
	Mailing of courses (paper/electronic)
	Assignments correction
	Learners registration by sales department
	Animation of online or in-class trainings
Renting of an assessment center	
Website maintenance	

Figure 2: estimating the costs of a training

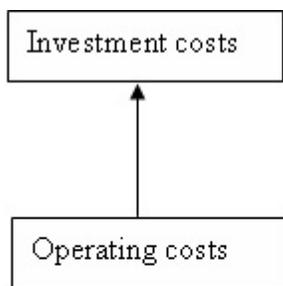
The curriculum designers have this spreadsheet to fill in, listing all the costs with their unit of measure. One hasn’t reproduced the unit of measure since it is likely to be very variable from one organization to another and is not general enough to be of scientific interest.

One will notice that on the upper part of the list appear the investment costs that are fixed at the beginning of the conception phase, before the first learner is registered into the training. These costs are constituted of days of work of

conception and coordination but also the purchase of pedagogical contents to authors, their shaping by the production service in order to be ready to print it or to insert it within the website of the training. The operating costs, in the lower part of the figure, are variable according to the number of clients and are repeated every year. They are constituted of days of work to manage the training, sales and communication costs by the commercial department, registration costs for every students, printing of course material by the production service, mailing of this material to every students, correction of assignments by teachers, online or in-class animation by teachers, renting of examination centres, website maintenance.

On this spreadsheet one hasn't reproduced the *overheads costs*: sum of the HR cost, law department cost, innovation service cost, etc. In the original document, these were estimated to 15% added as a cost to any training. Arbitration was therefore made between a global vision that allows coherence and eases strategic decisions and a more local and precise vision to details the costs, measure them precisely and allows change towards optimization. This document was used by curriculum designers, there was no point determining precisely the overheads costs for their mission and needed however a clear vision on their own activity centred on the curriculum production. This explains why certain costs were not detailed.

As one explained it, the upper part of the spreadsheet is a fixed investment cost (purchase of the pedagogical content) whereas the lower part of the spreadsheet is a variable cost, that increases according to the number of learners (impression of the courses, correction of assignments...) and that is repeated every year. Therefore the curriculum designers where asked to maximize the investment cost and minimize the operating costs in order to be more profitable – as shown in figure 3.



*Figure 3: a more profitable curriculum maximizes investment costs and minimizes operating costs*

An example of this process can be found in the automatization of assignment marking. The use of multiple choice question marks, to be computer processed, is an investment cost (buying of the software and the assignments in the proper format) that is saving operating cost (year after year, whatever the number of learner is, there is no need for human intervention in the marking process).

Therefore this kind of investment was encouraged by the strategic decision makers and its profitability was measured with the management tool allowing it to figure it out precisely (there was a threshold in the number of planned learners from which on it was interesting to invest in such a device).

On the other hand, the trend of *hybrid training*, blending presence and distance, was increasing the operating costs since certain investment in pedagogical contents (printable at a low cost for each student once bought) were replaced by operating costs in teachers time (highly variable with the number of learners). This was much discussed since there was a double bind between the injunction to be profitable and maximize investment cost on the one hand; and follow the pedagogical trends and offer blended learning on the other hand. Here a professional ethics of quality was confronted to harsh economical constraints commending to manage value on accounting basis. It shows that the management tool was incomplete and could not encompass all the data handled by the curriculum designers.

Another example to circumvent the constraints has been observed on field: curriculum designers were tempted to fake with the accounting tool and to put operating costs as investment costs in order to compute a more profitable training. This was observed on field with a group of curriculum designers who collectively imposed a new line on the spreadsheet (reproduced on figure 2) named “re-engineering”. They took for granted that a yearly update of the pedagogical content was not an operating cost but an investment cost – and had the whole management tool modified to admit so.

This manoeuvring with the management tools is well known in management sciences (Friedberg, 1996) whatever the field of application is (Grevin, 2010), here it has been observed in curriculum management. The type of training was a one year preparation to a French examination to become a secondary education teacher (“agrégation” and “Capes” civil servants competitions). The distance education structure had made a cash cow of these preparations that mobilized about eight training engineers who were mostly doing management of a well stabilized educational device. Clients were renewed each year and only the national programs necessitated adapted new course contents. On this operating site, the team invented the term “re-engineering” to characterize their activity and had it recognized with its specificity of yearly renewal. They took advantage of the uncertainty to describe it as a yearly investment operation and therefore have it valorised within the organization and its management constraints.

## Financial analysis: thresholds values and their limits

The last spreadsheet of the management tool is built upon the two first ones: it compares the expected sales (number of clients, number of years, price of a unit) to the expected costs (investment costs and variable running costs). This is done automatically by the file in order to determine the profitability of the designed curriculum. It allows forecasting *thresholds* such as the minimal number of clients to become profitable, the minimum number of years of exploitation, or else the minimum price at which to sell it in order to be profitable. Even if the final price of the curriculum is signed by a *price analyst*, specialized in this task due to the division of labour within this industry of knowledge, the curriculum designer can propose a price and play with it within the spreadsheet in order to figure out and adjust the best option possible.

This last document is therefore structured as follows:

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4
Expected sales				
Expected costs				
Profitability				
Threshold of participants				
Threshold of price				

Figure 4: Thresholds for profitability of a training

Therefore the curriculum designers formally speak about their *training portfolio* not only in number of learners but also in *total sales revenues*, if not with its *profit margin*. This profit margin is required by the strategic management to be between forty and seventy percent. This policy is to be approved if one wants to climb up the hierarchy of the educative organization: it is a criteria of a yearly judgment by the hierarchy and the human resources during the annual performance review.

However, one showed how laws or decisions from the public authorities could force the education organization and its curriculum designer to invest in not-profitable markets or trainings. In the organization one studied, a gigantic website for teaching English to secondary pupils was set up in a year and a half. This website had huge costs and low profits (only half of the training were actually sold, the other halves being given for free to French civil society) but it served an objective of the ministry of higher education. In this case the management tool was transformed to be adapted to this specific reality. The point was to have the right tool at the right moment in order to have a good vision of the accounts at any time.

In this case the profitability objective of the organization was submitted to a higher value of *common good* for civil society. The education organization was not necessarily losing money on that mission: it had a special funding from the ministry dedicated to it (less precisely quantified than for usual business due to the lack of time to prepare the measuring instruments) and its very *brand image* was enhanced by a not-for-profit goal. It was present on the markets, for learners, as the organization serving common good – which is a sign of prestige and reliability within the French context.

Further on, certain innovations are not necessarily profitable as such: adding a program as a test is sometimes energy and money consuming. But it gives the positive image of an innovative administration operating both in public and private sector. This is therefore another asset for the brand of the education organization, difficult to account with a simple management tool such as the one described. The brand impact was studied by a private consulting company for the education organization and reports were given to employees twice a semester. The impact of innovations was looked up through qualitative comments on forums or interviews with clients: this measure was using sociology tools and not accounting management tools such as the one described above. Figuring out the value of a training is more complex than a simple computing of revenues and costs. This is what will be discussed now.

## **A QUESTION OF VALUES: DISCUSSION ON PROFESSIONALIZATION OF CURRICULUM DESIGNERS**

The presentation of a management tool to account the value of a curriculum when designing it revealed a few difficulties: part of the value of the training is linked to the qualitative brand of the education organization and the very engineers working on it question the economical approach, arguing with their professional values. The value of a training seems to them irreducible to a quantitative number and is better described by qualitative considerations.

One will leave here the sociological description of management practices within an education organization to enter the field of education sciences and the recent debates on *professionalization* (Wittorksi, 2007). This technical scientific term, hardly heard on field by the professional, accounts for a double reality that one observed: first of all the constitution of a profession (curriculum designers) around practices and know-how but also rules, values and norms. Second the individual movements of workers becoming professional, that is to say learning this know-how and practices and endorsing the values, norms and rules of the profession as a social group. In their attempt to be *recognized* (Jorro, 2007) by their colleagues, they claim the values of the profession and reinforce the

constitution of their professional social group. The human resources department of the institution one studied was using this as a tool to influence the individual: they had an injunction to be *professional*, often by acting or talking in a way useful for the organization more than the overall profession. A competitive authority was the union position also expecting workers to be professionals, may be in a broader way than within the organizational education – though no proper union exists for this specific profession in France.

One of the most vivid debates dealing with the ethics of the profession within the organization was around the value of the training for the learner. Karl Marx (2008 – this is one’s translation) wrote in his *Capital*, at the chapter “Merchandise and money”: “the utility of a thing makes its value in use” and further: “the value in use is fully realized during the consumption act”. Therefore, besides the marketing value and the accounting of the costs by the curriculum designer, one has to take into account the value for the learner, that is to say the consumer. That is precisely what the Bologna process wants education organizations to implement in Europe: a model where the learner is at the centre and trainings are measured in a credit transfer system where the learner’s time is accounted when his or her learning outputs are validated.

Within the education organization one observed, there were on the one hand curriculum designers who had a professional ethics arguing for a better learning experience and learner’s value; and on the other hand strategic deciders pushing them to account the value of the training for the organization as one described in the first part of the chapter. The institution was split between two ways of making value: by selling either method (course structures, learning paths on media such as books, video or LMS) or pedagogy (guidance and educational support by phone, forum, paper correction...). The product was discussed as a service in this later case, where the pedagogy puts the learner at the centre of the learning process: the teacher goes to pick him up at his or her initial position of knowledge and takes him by the hand to guide him on the learning path.

As one can see, a lot of value estimation depends on who is estimating what. Is it the learner investing time, efforts and money in his *human capital* (Becker, 1984) in order to enhance his value on the job market? In this case the learning experience, lowering the efforts and making the time pleasant to him, is important. Is it the organization through the curriculum designer eyes which is maximizing its profit? In this case there seems to be different ways to be profitable, either by increasing the investment costs in regards to running cost, or by choosing between selling either method or pedagogy. Last, is it the client organization which is trying to improve its force task? In this case the value of training is computed for the learner, but within the scope of his company’s interests. There is no long term development and the aim of the company is merely adapting its task force to the jobs to be done on the short run.

An important discussion within the profession deals with time. Time is crucial in value measuring (how long is the project going to last and be profitable?) but

also in project management like the example of the national website for teaching English to secondary schools. There is a strategic pressure for more productivity, contested by the training managers invoking the lack of quality when working in a hurry. This is a classical debate in unions, but times interferes in a special way when it comes to education. One presented a tool where the value of a training was anticipated with the future benefits it will bring. As any investment, one pays now to profit later – within a reasonable time. But in the case of education, there is a transformation of the values throughout time: when the learner anticipates the future benefits, he/she figures it out within a set of values allowing him/her to expect a higher position in regards to these values. For example, he/she will expect a better job position within the same craft or sector of activity, he/she will anticipate a better social gratification by his/her colleagues and friends. But one observes that, on the long run, a curriculum deeply modifies the system of values of the one who is going through it. Once trained, the trainee adopts the value of the training and modifies his/her vision of the world. This change of paradigm leads him/her to other work expectations, a change in his/her social relations and so forth. Therefore the training self-legitimizes itself by changing the mind of the trainee. Hence, it is hard for the learner to anticipate the value of training – even economically – due to this self-valuation effect.

Taking into consideration this self-valuation effect is part of the professional ethics of the curriculum designers: aware of it, they can better communicate about the training they are engineering. By setting the values of the planned training, they can anticipate the deep change in the learner's mind and help him/her to figure out how he/she is going to value his work and social world once trained. This is part of the “promises” of a training that the curriculum designer and the education organization are selling: if the learner gets fully involved in the learning process, if he/she endorse his/her role, then he/she will be deeply transformed and access to another world. The qualitative gap between before and after the training is hard to quantify and is more about images and descriptions than about measure with numbers of an economical value – and this is part of the marketing function of the curriculum designers.

Hence there is a conflict between monetary values, common to all sectors of activities and the professional values of the curriculum designers and the education organizations. Whereas the regular organizations are looking for profits on the short run, the education organizations are targeting the long run and a deep change in society as well as in learners' mind. This is why, historically, education has been a religious and, after the French revolution, a public domain. It is but recently, during the second halves of the 20st century, that the French model opened education to private sector, though cautiously State controlled and regulated. One believe that this French model, with its specific historical evolution (Author, 2014), will be a field for future research

directions. One will present the main axis of these researchers, dealing with the “paradox of meritocracy” and solved by the notion of valuation.

## **FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS: A FRENCH MODEL**

The international handbook of research about quality and value management leads us to anticipate researches about *a French model of education*, out of our perspective on curriculum designer management tools and professional ethics. French education history is fundamentally shaped by the 1789-1799 Revolution, developing the system of *grandes écoles* (Ecole normale supérieure, Conservatoire national des arts et métiers, École Polytechnique...) to serve the new born first Republic. Education is viewed as a mean to provide the State with well-trained civil-servants, qualified for administrative jobs. The rise of the bourgeoisie and the decline of old aristocratic privileges is the moment chosen to implement meritocracy (best jobs to the best students, whatever their social condition was when they were born) and three values are proclaimed: liberty, equality, and fraternity.

There is an apparent *paradox of meritocracy*. If any one is free to invest in a training to take advantage of it later, and if it is justice that someone who studied hard should benefit of it, then equality can be contradicted. Indeed, if everyone had an equal access to education at the first moment, the hard work of the best students place them above the rest of the population at the second moment. They are winning privileges leading to a paradox: if liberty of study legitimates it, equality towards education contests it. This is not a mere speculation since it is well know, in France, that the best trained students increase they access to better studies, since they follow the best educative tracks, enter the *grandes écoles* (sometimes like did their own parents, as if one generation could inherit from the hard school work from the previous one), and have a better access to professional education during all their life long learning process (since their mind is pre-trained, value-shaped and they have more money to invest in these late trainings). Due to return on investment, a new training benefits to the already best trained and equality towards education fades away.

This paradox of meritocracy confronts a synchronic justice in a social space supposedly flat and equal on the one hand; to an individual diachronic justice due to the right to level up one's position on the other hand. How are supposed to react the profession of curriculum designers to this paradox? Equality and Liberty are two values apparently incompatible in education. At a political level, there are reforms to open up the boundaries and facilitate the passages

from one level to the other, giving more freedom to study, at any age, in order to permanently reinforce equality. This implies an open design of curricula, always welcoming non-typical students who are chosen to follow the course on the base of their recent learning efforts.

A remarkable initiative is done by a not-for-profit French association “Frateli” aiming at encouraging solidarity and Fraternity between successful students from low social background and another student (“godchild”) coming from the same background and doing, ten years after, the same kind of studies. Here there is a redistribution of learning power from the ones who acquired it freely by their hard work towards younger ones trying to imitate them. This helps to find back the balance of equality thanks to a system of Fraternity. It would be a way to solve the paradox of meritocracy of the French model.

A broader view on the issue can be taken with the concept of *valuation*. One knows that this concept has been introduced in philosophy of education by Nietzsche and developed by Dewey (1969). The whole idea is to stop evaluating according to dead values and, instead, to encourage power and valuation. Life is fostered by this evaluation: the ones who impose their own values are let free to transform the world according to their affirmations. They are not restricted by a frame coming from the past to limit their action. This philosophical view on education and valuation goes towards the same direction than the Fraternity solution of the political paradox of meritocracy: the free ones who were successful in their studies pay off by giving back to the next generation they choose at their image and maintain, by doing so, a form of equality. This is an important direction of research for the professional ethics and value management of curriculum designers.

## **CONCLUSION**

As a conclusion, one will track backwards the movement of the chapter, starting by a narrow sociological description of value management practices of curriculum designers within an education organization, towards a broader perspective of professionalization and the rise of specific ethics of this social group. Among the values of this new born profession, that came to life thanks to the division of labour within education industry, raises a *French model* with a paradox of meritocracy. The tension between liberty and equality is partly solved by the valuation through fraternity.

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## KEY TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

**BRANDING OF AN EDUCATION ORGANIZATION:** tools to enhance the image of an education organization on markets and to learners eyes. This can rely on innovation, quality of service, management efficiency and looking for both profitability and common good.

**CURRICULUM DESIGN:** the process of designing a curriculum includes a training engineering phase (economical approach, project management) and a pedagogy engineering phase (designing the contents, objectives, pedagogical methods and evaluation), the whole being sometimes also called didactical engineering.

**DISTANCE EDUCATION:** education where teachers and learners communicate through the medium of paper/electronic document/LMS. The mega-universities specialized in distance education appeared in the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century : Cned in France (1939), Open Universities (such as the English one created in the 1970'), Uned in Spain...

**PARADOX OF MERITOCRACY:** the contradiction between liberty to have one's study pay off in return and equality of access to education at any time is partly solved by the valuation process of fraternity.

**PROFESSIONAL ETHICS OF CURRICULUM DESIGNERS:** rules, norms and values of the training engineers, expressed in vernacular expressions such as "equality of treatment", "quality of service to learners", "freedom to learn".

**PROFITABILITY OF AN EDUCATION ORGANIZATION:** profits of all the training portfolios such as computed by management tools taking into account sales revenues and costs (both of investment and operating costs) during the period. This profitability can be modified by public authorities subventions of requirements.

**PROFESSIONALIZATION:** both the constitution of a profession around values, norms, rules and traditions, and the socialization to this profession by an individual adopting its ethics.

**VALUE(S):** one will study “what counts” for the social actors involved in curriculum design, both as what is economically accountable (the value of a training) and as what is relevant to their professional ethics (the relevance to their values)

**VOCATIONAL EDUCATION:** lifelong learning in Europe fosters vocational education for adults who want to develop their professional competences. This education has led to a new market for private education companies but also universities investing in that field as a second activity