From Intent to Action: an Iterative Engineering Process

De l'intention à la maturité : une ingénierie itérative

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Synopsis

Quite by chance, and over the course of a few haphazard meetings, a Master's degree in *E-learning Design* gradually developed in a Faculty of Economics. Its original and evolving design was the result of an iterative process carried out, not by a single Instructional Designer (ID), but by a full ID team. Over the last 10 years it has been successfully delivered by focusing on its strengths: the tutorial system, synchronous-mode online learning, collaborative work, and the supervision of professional projects. However, its success has led to new issues such as larger groups of enrolled students, program diversification, and internationalization.

Keywords: Design, synchronous distance learning, iterative process, tutoring, collaboration, professional projects

Background

The Atlantic University is a big European University with a student body of 30,000 in various disciplines (Science, Economics, Law, etc.). The following scene takes place within a Master's degree program, which prepares students to become IDs. The demographics of the student body reveal that a minority (10 %) of students are from the typical 18-25 year range, 60% are full-time or part-time workers and 30% are undergoing career changes and/or are looking for a job. It may seem strange that a Master's degree in e-learning was developed in a Faculty of Economics, but it is explained by a unique story, which started in the late 1990s.

Main actors at Atlantic University

- Dr. Patrick Bélier: Faculty member in Management, in charge of the Master's program.
- Vincent Lagifle: Project Director at *Hyperlearning* and Project Manager of the Master's degree; also an Instructional Designer at AU.
- Jo Balance: Consultant specializing in tutoring; an adjunct instructor in the Master's program and also an Instructional Designer.

Other participants

- Dr. Paul Jeunot: A young faculty member in Economics.
- Albert Acier: Consultant specializing in Web 2.0, an adjunct instructor in the Master's program and in charge of expanding the program.
- Karim Skolaou: A graduate student hired as a peer tutor.
- Jean Moneypenny: In charge of Continuing Education at Atlantic University.
- Nicolas Sakho: Dean of the Faculty of Economics at AU.

A project built by chances

One day in April in the 1990s: 10 seconds that changed everything

John Moneypenny, a.k.a. "Mr. Minus 10 %[1]-off-anything-that-happens-in-his-Department," called Dr. Nicolas Sakho, the Dean of the Faculty of Economics: "*As the university spokesman for the European Distance Education Teaching Center, I've learned there are funds available for innovative programs but our university has never submitted any proposals. That's a pity, isn't it? Would you have a project among your faculty that we could*

[1] At the time, the Continuing Education Department collected 10 % of any revenue generated by training programs offered in order to cover its management costs. The percentage is much higher today.

submit?" Not really knowing how to respond, Dr. Sakho turned to one of his young faculty members, Dr. Patrick Bélier, and asked: "*Any ideas, Patrick?*" There were 10 seconds of silence and just before the discussion went on to another subject, Patrick, who was in charge of preparing students for their teaching exams[2], suggested*: "We could offer an online learning program."* John Moneypenny encouraged him to do so, saying, "*OK, just send me a page on what you'd like to do".*

"What shall we do with 30,000 euros?"

Patrick Bélier, who had no experience in online learning, wrote up half a page and sent it off to John Moneypenny. One month later, the amount of 30,000 € (minus 10%, of course) was granted.

Patrick and his young, newly-hired colleague, Dr. Paul Jeunot, could not believe their luck:

> "*That we got that grant was truly amazing!*"

Paul Jeunot asked: *"So, now, what exactly shall we do with the 30,000 €?"*

Patrick Bélier: *"I don't quite know yet but we are going to use it, that's for sure. This is really good news and there's nothing to lose. And I'm convinced there is a demand to be met since there's almost no more face-to-face preparation for the national exams and besides, getting people who are interested to come on campus is almost impossible."*

Paul Jeunot: *"OK, but what shall we do? We don't know a thing about online learning!"*

Patrick Bélier: *"Don't worry, we'll get by. We'll create a web site where students will find all of the necessary resources. Of course we'll need a project team but we already have a team in charge of the face-to-face preparation for exams as well as a large network of collaborators. I'm sure they'll be interested in joining us for such an innovative project. It will provide them with a change from everyday life and their usual students".*

Paul Jeunot: *"And how do we set up the web site?"*

[2] In France, teachers have to take a national exam to get a new job or to change careers. Many of them prepare for their exams while they are working.

Patrick Bélier: "We'll go and see that colleague of ours who is nuts about IT and we'll also pay a visit to the IT department. I'm sure we can glean a few tips from them".

A few days later at the IT Resource Centre

Patrick: *"They really complicate things here: Java, HTML, JavaScript … it's like we need a Master's Degree in IT before we even start!! And they see red as soon as the word "Microsoft" is uttered".*

Paul, who was also in charge of badminton at the University, called out to the Manager of the IT Resource Center: "*Hey boss, do you want to play badminton tonight?*"

The Manager of the IT Resource Centre replied: *"No, I can't. I have to develop a program. But I may have someone who could help you with your online program. Last week, I met a young conscientious objector. He was looking for a long-term internship to avoid doing his military service. He is definitely skilled, but I can't hire him".*

Patrick: *"OK, thanks! We'll ask Dean Sakho. I'm sure he knows the ins and outs of hiring and it'll be settled in a couple of minutes".*

Paul: *"As for* JavaScript, *my Romanian neighbour is preparing an advanced degree in IT. I'll see what she can do for us."*

So the project was launched! Two inexperienced but motivated faculty members, a good network of responsive colleagues, a conscientious objector who was a computer graphics designer, and a Romanian neighbour were enough to get the ball rolling...

Eight months later, the first design of the program emerged: instructional resources were added to a static, *Frontpage*-based site (also available on CD-ROM), together with a distribution list, homework sent by mail and two, one-week classroom meetings per year. The Year 1 cohort had 40 students; Year 2 had 115. And the numbers kept increasing, year-to-year, up to 180, and then 250 students in the early 2000's (who, by the way, were preparing for 100 available jobs).

In the end, it had been quite a success, but the instructional design was quite rudimentary, looking a lot like a correspondence course. It also appeared that it was necessary to create a Master's Degree for students who had failed this difficult exam.

A few years later, a Master's Degree is created

Patrick: *"Paul, do you know what worries me? We have a large number of good students who work for two years, and even more sometimes, and when they fail the exam, they have nothing at the end: they've failed the national exam and they have no diploma. We should create a Master's Degree just for them."*

Paul asked: *"And how would we do that?"*

Patrick: *"We're in the middle of the certification exams. Let's go see Dean Sakho. He's still in office for a couple more months. It's a good opportunity. He's always appreciated our success and I'm convinced he's going to support us."*

Paul: *"But a Master's Degree to prepare exams can't possibly be legal; besides, the trade unions are drastically opposed to it."*

Patrick: *"You're right … but, if we added something to the preparation exams, such as a professional certification that would enable those who failed the national exam several times to change careers... for instance, it could be a program on e-learning. That is a hot field right now."*

Paul: *"OK… but what do we put in the program description?"*

Patrick: *"We'll see. First, we should ask the e-learning professionals. But most of the content will still be about preparing for the exams."*

Paul: *"And what shall we call it?"*

Patrick: *"The Master's degree in professional training. That sounds good and professional."*

Paul: *"And who is going to teach this program? There's no one skilled here to do it. Both of us have some knowledge but not that much. We have learned by doing, made a few slideshows with soundtracks as well as put up some online quizzes, but even that does not make us experts in e-learning. We don't know the terminology, we're not even in Education and, moreover, I have enough responsibilities as it is."*

Patrick: *"Well, let's start looking for e-learning contractors or consultants. They should be interested in coming to teach Master's students at our university. Don't worry about it. I'll take care of that. I have a couple of contacts."*

Two years later, Patrick makes a call to *Hyperlearning*

Patrick: *"Hello! My name is Dr. Bélier from the Atlantic University. We bought your online quiz-making software and we are looking for someone to teach our Master's students E-learning tools and Web-based Instructional Design."*

The sales assistant replied: *"I think one of our deputy directors, Mr Lagifle, might be interested. He would like to diversify his activities."*

And so, the Master's Degree was launched! Vincent Lagifle joined the team. The first cohort included only students who were preparing for the national exams. But, very soon after, requests for a more comprehensive program on e-learning arose, but without any mention of preparation for exams. To respond to this need, the team had to be strengthened.

In a restaurant, one June evening

Patrick: *"Good evening, Vincent! I'm pleased to meet you. I intend to create a comprehensive program to train e-learning designers. We need to draw up a programme and to recruit other trainers."*

Vincent: *"That's a great idea! Let's do it!"*

And so, the "E-training Design" program was created. A first version was offered and then gradually enriched over the course of key meetings with experts and experienced consultants.

A project that had evolved by means of an iterative design process

When Patrick and Vincent designed the first version of the program, they took the following elements into account:

- The goal of the Master's degree was to train students in project management and in distance education, self-paced, or blended learning programs
- Most of the students worked full-time in a variety of professional occupations

- Students came from all over France, including some overseas departments and territories (French West Indies, Reunion, New Caledonia, etc.)
- Students were expected to obtain their diplomas within one year of enrolment.

Vincent: *"Our students need to have an overview of the various aspects of online learning. To do so, we need to tackle numerous topics…I listed 12 of them. There are aspects that deal with designing curricula, with instructional design models and methods, with production, tutoring, and social networks. But I think we should also include broader fields of study that are connected to projects such as marketing, legal aspects, and new business models."*

Patrick: *"OK, we will need to find experts in each of these sub-fields. I also think we'll have to reduce the travel to and from campus. So any on-campus classes should be scheduled for weekends so that employees can more easily attend."*

Vincent: *"It's the same for the synchronous classes; there should be one virtual class per week in order to maintain student engagement and lower the risk of drop-outs and withdrawals. We should schedule them for when employees can attend, say from 9:00 PM to 11:00 PM."*

Patrick: *"I agree. As for the length of the program, we should stick to that which is normal for our other Master's degrees, which is one year. If it were to take two years to complete, I'm afraid more students might quit."*

Based on these considerations, they designed a template for classroom and virtual meetings in the Master's degree (Table 1).

Table 1 **Template for the "E-learning Design" Master's Degree**

	Face-to-face classes	**Online classes**
Synchronous	A two-day seminar during one of the 7/year, face-to-face classes (Friday and Saturday)	Three, 2-hour virtual classes (9:00-11:00 PM)
Asynchronous		• 15 hours of individual work • Self-paced resources provided • Production of a case study. This assignment is the basis for student assessment in the course.

The uncertainties of the project

Patrick knew that this project was far from being a sure thing. The current students were preparing themselves for the program despite their day jobs. Was it going to be the same for the next cohort of students?

The new program required that trainers produce a significant number of self-paced resources. How were they going to carry out this task? Furthermore, compensating tenured faculty for tasks other than teaching or research was always complex.

Moreover, Patrick had doubts about the time slot for virtual classes, that is, from 9 to 11 pm. It was quite unusual for faculty to teach that late. Were they going to accept to do so?

During the summer, the trainers were recruited and the Master's program started in October, as planned.

A few months later, at an e-learning forum, a meeting between Albert Acier and Jo Balance…

The Master's Degree design team presented a paper at an annual e-Learning Forum.

Jo Balance passed by the AU stand: *"I read through your program but I've not seen anything on tutoring. I think we'd both agree that it is an essential element in blended learning. Would you like me to draw up a proposal for a segment on tutoring?"*

Patrick*: "Good idea! Go right ahead. I look forward to hearing what you have to say. But beyond your proposal, I'd also like you to conduct a critical analysis on how tutoring is currently organized in our program and produce a proposal."*

A few minutes later…

Albert Acier passed by the stand: *"You know, you should include a Web 2.0 dimension in your Master's degree. Your students have to know that social networks are changing their relationship to knowledge, and somewhere this has to be addressed in your program."*

At the start of the following university year, Jo and Albert joined the team.

The integration of e-learning professionals into the team was not only going to enrich the program, but would also cause it to evolve by integrating virtual classes, a Moodle platform, a tutorial system, the recording of conferences, podcasting, live conference webcasting, and so on.

A discussion before the start of the university year

Jo: *"Hello Patrick! As agreed, I've prepared a module on online tutoring. Basically, there are two parts. The first part introduces students to what tutoring is and its importance to e-learning. The second part provides a methodology to design tutoring services, which I call tutorial engineering."*

Patrick: *"That sounds very interesting and relevant."*

Jo: *"The only problem is that we can't really say that our Master's degree sets the right example. The tutor profiles have not yet been determined and tutorial practices are poorly stated. The website presentation on tutoring should be reviewed because it is too general and does not provide enough details. It might also be useful to train faculty in online tutoring."*

Patrick: *"I'll see how we can improve our website information but the question of training my colleagues may be more complicated."*

Jo: *"OK. I also wanted to tell you that I've planned a learning activity with our students so as to have them analyse the tutoring services they benefit from within our Master's degree program. It will probably result in a lot of flak but I'll be sure to ask them to provide constructive feedback."*

Patrick: *"That'll work! When you get some feedback from them, just send it along to me."*

The Master's degree program was finally finding its feet. The team was working well. The students were investing heavily in the program but were also quite demanding.

The end-of-year meeting

In June, a review meeting took place.

Jo: *"Here is the summary of the analyses I conducted regarding the Master's program. Students provided us with many ideas on how to improve our tutorial services. The first thing they've asked for is to identify the tutors and to have their functions clearly stated. They feel that they are a little bit lost and they don't know who to contact when they need help. To put it in a nutshell, they are asking for a tutorial agreement. They would also like to have an accurate course calendar stating the work to be handed in.*

Basically, they want a study guide. Finally, they also want more information on the internship report that is expected, the number of pages, content, etc. So, basically, they are asking for a methodological guide for the internship report."

Patrick: *"Well, that's a long list… but they are right. We need to improve student support and producing these documents is a good way to improve the overall program."*

Jo: *"We could take advantage of the summer to write up these documents. We could divide it up among ourselves but it also would be interesting to ask one of our former students to take part in it. As a matter of fact, Karim expressed interested in contributing."*

Patrick: *"OK then. Let's work together using Google Doc!"*

The study guide and the tutoring agreement were written up by Patrick, Jo, and Karim and were presented during the first days of class for the incoming cohort. Vincent and Karim wrote the methodology guide for internship report.

Reflection on tutoring

Jo thinks that the institution is responsible for proving tutorial services. That does not mean that all of the required tutoring should come under the responsibility of a "one-tutor band" but rather, should be broken down into separate tutorial services based on the profiles of tutors having complementary skills. This would allow the tutorial services to meet a wider variety of student learning needs without becoming dependent on any one tutor, especially since tutors may not be the best people to identify these needs. Although the literature on online tutoring does provide some guidance on which services to provide, it is nonetheless worthwhile to ask the actual recipients of these services to say what counts most for them. These data could be collected when the program is being assessed or by integrating one or two students into the design phase of the tutorial system. The design of the tutorial services, just like any other design, has to undergo in-the-field testing. That is why the Master's tutorial system comes under the scrutiny of the Master's students every year: in order to improve it.

Various types of tutorial support were implemented (Table 2).

Table 2 **The Tutorial Agreement**

Various kinds of tutorial support					
PROGRAM	**ADMINISTRATIVE**	**TECHNICAL**	**STUDIES**	**PROJECT**	**GRADUATES**
The Program Tutor is in charge of curricular issues. He/She is the intermediary between tutors, students, and administration and technical departments.	*The Administrative Tutor informs and guides students with regard to administrative issues: obtaining student passes, attendance certificates, dealing with financial aspects.*	*The Technical Tutor handles first-level technical support (access to the Moodle platform and the VIA virtual classes, troubleshooting of Moodle or VIA, supplying temporary licenses for authoring tools).*	*The Studies Tutors (or Teaching Tutor) are also part of the course design team. They are in charge of their entire module. They are also in charge of enabling students, guiding them, regulating pacing, assessing and motivating them.*	*The end-of-program Student Project, which involves designing and producing an e-learning module, constitutes a major element of the Master's degree. Each student must hand in a pre-project to the Project Coordinator and is supervised by a Project Tutor who is either one of the Study or peer tutors.*	*Any former student of the Master's degree may become, according to his/her skills, a Graduate Tutor for other students.*

A system for assessing the program was implemented. It included a detailed appraisal of each course, as well as the assessment of across-the-board items such as tutoring, pacing, logistics, further developments, and so on. These enable the Master's program team to better steer the developments in the future.

The tutorial system was successfully implemented, especially after the introduction of the *Graduate Tutors*, who established close relationships with the students. The tutors brought a lot to the table, by helping students focus on the essentials for success.

Why using Graduate Tutors works

Vincent was convinced that the Graduate Tutors arrived just in time in the program. Indeed, their arrival coincided with the increasing number of enrolments. A larger student population was naturally more difficult to manage at a distance. These graduate tutors were recruited from among earlier cohorts of the Master's program who wanted to continue to play an active role in the program even after they had obtained their degrees. It also allowed them to keep in touch with training in the field. As student profiles were becoming more and more diverse, expectations were also growing more and more diverse. Some of the professionals in the training sector were increasingly aware of the need for new technologies, which resulted in additional demand for the online program, which could be taken while working full-time., Furthermore, Vincent was convinced that the training and new technologies sectors created opportunities for the unemployed who wanted to change careers. This sub-population had been increasing in the program over the years. As a result, the team had to face a new challenge: that of offering a more individualized program to an increasing number of students. In this regard, the incrementally-structured tutorial system proved to be very efficient.

A late-night Skype conversation

Karim: *"Good evening, Vincent! Sorry for calling you so late but I knew you'd just finished your virtual class. I'm getting a lot of messages from students who are complaining they have too many cases to study over the next month. Do you think it would be possible to extend the deadlines or to postpone some of the case studies?"*

Vincent: *"OK, I'll check with the faculty involved to see what they can do. But, by the same token, we should also remind students that time management is a key element in online learning."*

Karim: *"Yes, I've told them that but they feel they need more time to perfect their work."*

Vincent*: "OK, say we organize a remedial virtual class during which time these points can be raised. Meanwhile, I'll extend the deadlines for my case studies in order to take some of the pressure off."*

The number of enrolments continued to rise. The team decided to deal with assessment issues, which were becoming tricky as there were now more than 30 students in the cohort.

A debrief meeting in a virtual class in June

Karim: *"This year, the program ran smoothly but there were several misfires with regard to assessment. The timeframe for providing students with feedback in some courses was considered too long. And sometimes the quality of the feedback provided was deemed insufficient."*

Vincent: *"I agree. That is also what the yearly student program appraisal shows."*

Albert: *"Well, it is normal for the timeframe to be longer since there are more students. And they also put much more than required into their assignments. Thus, it takes us more time to give them feedback."*

Jo: *"The solution may be to encourage more group work. It would reduce the number of individual assignments to be corrected while providing students with the opportunity to practice online collaborative work, a skill which is highly valued in the workplace."*

The following decision was made: half of the assignments would be team-based. Vincent got in touch with the program team to coordinate writing up new instructions and setting new deadlines for assignments.

First results

After having thought over the assessment issues, Vincent realized that, throughout the development of the Master's program, he had had to find answers to the following major practical questions:

- How should the high degree of diversity among the student population be handled?
    - Address the issue during the recruitment phase
    - Promote team work
    - Adjust the tutorial system
- How should larger groups be handled at a distance?
    - Improve student on-boarding and the program study guide
    - Implement a system of collective mediation (regular virtual classes aimed at talking about how the program is organised)
    - Reinforce the tutorial system
    - Reinforce project supervision (student term projects were becoming more and more detailed and individual in nature. Supervision needed to become more structured. To this end, a *Supervisor's Guide* was written. A procedure for accepting projects and assigning supervisors was set up. A system for sharing information on projects helped students share information more easily.)
- How can we build a program that self-adapts to changes in the e-learning sector?
    - Ongoing program assessment
    - Promoting student involvement (feedback on their experiences, creation of a post–Master's online community of practice)
    - Promoting relationships with outside stakeholders (participation in trade shows, reports, organization of conferences, web communications, etc.)
    - Changing courses (modification of existing courses, recruitment of new trainers)
    - Implementing a monitoring system (changes in jobs and sectors of activity, job offers, and internships) and professional help (assistance in job placement, CV-

writing, preparing for job interviews, developing a portfolio, corporate relations, etc…)

The Master's program achieves full development

The course structure for all 16 courses followed the same basic model (Figure 1).

Figure 1 **The typical course structure in the Master's program**

An ever-evolving project

The Graduate Tutors were very much appreciated by students and were a key element in their success. Their role evolved over time. Indeed, once students had completed the university program, the community of practice they established became part of their professional environment. It actually took on several forms such as informal and ongoing training after the Master's, that is, an extension of the cohort community. It also consisted of helping students who were new to the field find a job or for those who were changing careers.

A Skype conversation in March

Karim: *"Hello, Vincent! I'd like to talk to you about Mélanie. She's looking for an internship at an e-learning company. I emailed you the details of the internship. What do you think? Have you ever heard of this company? Do you think it would be a worthwhile experience for her when she starts looking for a job?"*

Vincent: *"Yes, I know the company but the internship being offered doesn't seem to offer much in the way of in-the-field experience. We should talk to them about a more attractive framework or maybe we should just look for another internship."*

Karim: *"OK, I agree. I'll call them tomorrow morning and I'll let you know. And there's also Laurent who is preparing for his job interview at SuperTraining. We've rehearsed all week and we tweaked his portfolio. I think he's ready."*

Vincent: *"Wonderful! I prepped him too yesterday. So let's keep our fingers crossed!"*

The design resources that were used to create and develop the Master's degree were mainly iterative in nature. In addition to instructional design[3], course design[4] and tutoring design[5], the resources provided the means for ongoing adjustments of the program, specifically address the following needs:

- Diversity of audience: the student population became more diverse (geographically, educational level, professional background, expectations, etc.)
- Larger number of students: from easily-handled small groups to more cumbersome larger groups, it was important to identify a methodology that remained feasible for large numbers of students, while not losing sight of a made-to-measure program…
- Changes in the world of e-learning: technical and functional changes and new audiences.

[3] Our definition of *instructional design* is one that consists of designing the program globally. It includes the material organization (enrollment, supervision, scheduling) and also defining objectives, selecting course content and instructors, establishing a means of communication, and setting assessment criteria.
[4] In our view, *course design* consists of designing learning activities that constitute the course, creating learning tools and resources, organizing guides and assessment activities.
[5] *Tutoring design* consists of designing the structure that is going to guide and support students in terms of learning: socio-affective, motivational, and metacognitive perspectives (Rodet, 2010).

A debrief for the Master's team in June including professors and lecturers, instructional manager, peer tutors

Vincent: *"As every year, I've invited you here today to review the year's activities and to understand the needs for next year. This year, students were overall satisfied with the program but the rate of "*very satisfied students*" has gone down. We had a large cohort this year: 56 students. There was also a wider range of comments. Some students thought there were too many face-to-face classes while others thought there were too few. Some students liked group work, others didn't, etc."*

Jo: *"What is remarkable this year is that we have seen new issues arising that are linked to the larger size of the group, especially more demands regarding content and the organization of the program."*

Albert: *"I agree and this leads me to the question of whether we should limit the number of students we accept into the Master's program and if so, how?"*

Vincent: *"Theoretically, we have not set any limit. We have continued to reinforce the recruitment process over the years through a long and systematic interview of all candidates, based on an assessment of their academic records, their experiences, and their levels of motivation. If candidates meet the required criteria, they are in. We based this logic on the flourishing job market in this sector, which required us to increase rather than limit the number of students enrolled. Yet, it must be noted that we'll have to make a choice: either to adjust our program to accept more students or to limit enrolments. No one has the answer to this question but we do have a few months to think it over."*

A review and prospects meeting one evening in June

As the years went by, it was possible to conduct a detailed review of what had been undertaken thanks to the involvement of all of the stakeholders and to the yearly formal assessments from our students. The following is an exchange between our three instructional designers.

Vincent: "*Based on the initial recruitments, I was afraid we'd have difficulty handling a very **diverse audience**, especially at a distance. I remember how anxious I felt when we started accepting students between 24 and 58 years old with quite different life experiences! But now that I've taken a step back, it has been fantastic. True, it has required some additional tutoring but I'm certain that it is what has created such a great team spirit, enabling students to hang in there and obtain their diploma."*

Jo: *"You're right! We should all remember that it is thanks to the way we structured the tutoring system that the groups have remained **motivated**. And more precisely, I think the role of graduate tutors has been significant in our program."*

Patrick: *"As far as I'm concerned, I think the **regular synchronous activities** have also been a major element in motivation. The massive use of virtual classes in this Master's program (50 per year, i.e. two or three per week) has allowed us to create and to maintain a permanent link between the students and between the students and the teaching team. It shows students that the opposite of presence is not distance, but absence."*

Jo: *"Good point! I have also observed better group dynamics after we introduced the **distant collaborative work**. It allows students, very early in the program, to experiment with distance group communication, which favours mutual help and fights off isolation."*

Patrick: *"Yes, indeed. The **assessments** programmed throughout the program - with clear deliverables - combined with the high degree of **responsiveness** from faculty and lecturers to students who get help when they need it has also been a big part of student engagement. So these are important aspects of our program that we need to maintain."*

Vincent: *"And all of this rests on the **motivation of the training and instructional team**. From this point of view, we are happy to have had a team which has fully understood the stakes at play in terms of availability and responsiveness to specific learner characteristics, especially compared to traditional courses offered by the University. These have been some of the key factors to our success. As such, we must continue to assure that the program remains clear, practical, and well explained and that student performance is properly assessed."*

After this review, the discussion went onto perspectives…

Vincent: *"This review has been very encouraging but how are we going to make the required program changes in order to meet emerging trends in the e-learning sector?"*

Patrick: *"As we all know, the e-learning market is in full growth but France is behind the trend. New jobs are being developed and specialization tracks are appearing (m-learning, serious gaming, MOOCs, etc.). The Master's program has to document these changes in terms of content and the way our students integrate them into their professional activities."*

Jo: *"Yes, indeed. There are new fields of expertise emerging. Behaviours and usage patterns are changing. It will probably lead the Master's towards offering more options to students so that they may choose specific courses in combination with a common core of compulsory courses."*

Vincent: *"…which is going to require we hire more lecturers. So we will have to think about the best strategies to absorb a greater number of students. This in turn will have consequences on team sizes, on the organization of the Master's, on the recruitment process and on the tutorial system."*

Jo: *"We are getting more and more applications from abroad, from French-speaking countries. We'll need to consider partnerships with other programs in other universities."*

Vincent: *"We will also need to deal with keeping up the team's strength. After a few years, the initial strong motivation we all felt about the innovative character of this program has encouraged some of our team members to move on to other professional activities. That is perfectly natural. But, from now on, recruiting new trainers is taking place within the environment of an existing and fully-developed program. So we have to think about how we can get new team members on board and to make the most of their fresh perspectives which will lead to future innovations."*

Patrick: *"We also need to quickly incorporate m-learning into our program. Our students are requesting it. The Master's has not yet added this dimension to its approach. We have to think about implementing mobile technology (smart phones, tablets) into the current program. We will have to continue the actions undertaken this year."*

The team was still as enthusiastic as ever. There were of course many challenges to be met.

The continuation of the adventure will likely be as fascinating as its beginnings…

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