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***23rd ICDE World Conference on Open and Distance Learning including the 2009 EADTU Annual Conference, Maastricht, Netherlands, 7-10 juin 2009.***

**Summary of the full paper**

Double diploma is a means for distance learning to set up international cooperation which 1) are economic (out of money and time) for students 2) respectful partner institution 3) without risk for partner institution. European higher education area constitutes the legal framework and helpful structure for recognising training periods (credits).

Two schemes were chiefly explored and implemented by Distance learning department of economics Faculty (ESE). The two principal models are:

double symmetrical diploma out of complete cursus: for one year study, each institution validates 30 credits of partner's institution the result is only one cursus delivers two diplomas

double asymmetrical diploma (access in last year of local studies): ESE recognizes the formation followed in economics formation in the partner university (several conventions in Russia, in particular) for a certain amount of credits and the students follow, during their last local year, the missing French credits in EAD.

Indeed, the international mobility of the students does not only require to regulate the problems of organisation (also crucial they are) but also to define the methods of mutual recognition of the appropriations obtained in the same field.

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# **Distance learning education as substitute to student's motilities**

## **Introduction**

International student's motilities are one of the most important features involved into the high education European space. Realisation of such a goal is in general a delicate activity sometimes a tricky business in two ways: administration one and academic one. Lot of actual difficulties explain why there are so few exchanges in high education space. Institutions have to solve a lot of problems for the two flows for those leaving and those arriving. It will provide relevant information on the universities, and local accommodations conditions. It will proceed recognizing studies' period in the host institution and in the home institution without saying to regulate the amount of students, without caution seminars could be open fast only for foreign students. The tuitions in French university are somehow very low (around 200 euros), it is difficult to explain why we have to subsidize from other countries. We want to say nothing about requiring understanding different bureaucratic rules. Last but not least and above all students may have languages competences in French. Universities have mobility services that are efficient and professional but they could only manage with a number of files.

This first organisational aspect is not the most important, the very precise problem laid in the contents and the recognition of the period of formation. The mobility permits an enlargement of the thinking mind but if it would be efficient it does not split study's continuity. Credits obtain in the host university have to be accumulated in the home university. As we know, this is not always the more usual circumstance. Distance learning provides some solutions for making easier student's motilities if associated with institution's agreements. On the basis of our principles, which we describe in the first part of the paper we can offer the possibility for abroad students obtaining a double diploma, in their country and in France.

## **General assumptions**

Student's mobility is now considered as part of a good educational progression. European commission promotes two disposals for helping the mobility: ERASMUS and European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS) for students. This two devices offer large possibilities for remain largely unused due to practical difficulties. In our faculty we have decided since many years to endorse credits from abroad institutions.

### **Credits and transfers**

Indeed, the international mobility of the students does not only require to regulate the problems of organization (also crucial they are) but also to define the methods of mutual recognition of the appropriations obtained in the same field.

Acquiring an automatically recognition for abroad credits, the actors would accept without checking the results obtained in an other university. We know that this allegation depicts a purely theoretical view. It would only be possible if in each university we would have the same contents in each course and at the same level of quality. This is not the exact state of the art. Information is available on a lot of supports on paper, on Internet and so on, but nobody wants to look over this amount of facts. People think, that there are different kinds in the university some are better than other in general and in some branch of knowledge the ranking is different. The more accustomed organisation remain bi-lateral agreements (Erasmus contract) with very few commitments.

In Grenoble's economics faculty we have for a long time an approach founded more on the level of competences acquired in the host university than for the precise teaching syllabus. We think that the most important for the student is to obtain proficiency. We have that way a long tradition recognising the abilities of our student in exchange, as Erasmus or others. We validate the credits obtained in other European or others abroad universities in the same way as our students. They obtain the French diploma without have for a semester or a year a single course in our university. It is possible because we have contracts with these institutions. For each student that is involved in a mobility we have an agreement with that indicates the exact courses, which he follows. We fully recognize the period of study abroad without counter part from our partner; it is our unilateral commitment with the students. For individual student, after checking their

files, we validate some credits. The principle is based on the recognition of part of the abilities, competences, accreditations obtained in another HEI or in the professional life

Nevertheless, the result is few moves for students far less than 10 %, distance learning and TIC could constitute an feasible answer to develop the academic exchanges.

With the extend of the ECTS process (supplement diploma), it will be more and more convenient to develop this system. We do not use son equivalence to obtain standard marks, just acceptance of the results in the HEI. But, the Erasmus system does not allow to obtain a full diploma for the students, some of them want to obtain this. Some universities wish for co-diploma which is a tricky enterprise. Organizing co-diploma, for which there are asking, is very difficult, it exists for master level the Erasmus-Mundus action 1 European project to deal with. At the bachelor level there very few opportunities to develop such projects. We are facing demands for French bachelor diploma in general in the aim to candidate at a master degree. Answering to these individual and institutional demands we decided to propose some arrangement facilitating the accreditation for our bachelor diploma (licence in French).

Indeed there is a difficulty with language for many students who do not understand or not too much know French language. Just now, we propose some arrangements for students from the institutions, with which we have an agreement not for individual students.

### **Linguistic arrangements**

As globalization speaks more often English than French, the pedagogical question includes besides a linguistic size. For a foreign student (Russian or Chinese for example) who in his home university attending his last year in economics and studying simultaneously our French diploma. Economics courses in distance learning and these at his university have different contents, another didactic methods or point of view. If the student must first at all be quite fluent in French to take advantage of courses and pass the exams, we would have so few candidates that the program would not make its expenses. In many countries like China or Peru, to say students with good knowledge in French language attend literary studies and have no training in economics and no aspiration starting economics studies. Unlike of those students in economics have a thorough knowledge in English language but none or very little education in French language. Undoubtedly, studying economics in a language in a language that is been

learning in the same moment is the best way to succeed. Answering to this difficulty, two methods are possible: first the classical one, second an innovative one. The classical method consists before the admittance to our program for the students to have a year of intensive training in French language organized by their home university and then students begin the actual economics distance learning studies. The pre-accept students have to prove their ability in French language at this moment they will allowed taking part in our program improving their French language skill. It is possible only if students begin their language studies during their secondary school. In recent times, we have put another scheme, which can be described as innovative. We have though dissociating the training in economics and in language. At a moment students have only one problem first economics' one and second language's one. We have experienced, at first with our Petersburg's partner. We offer our distance learning courses in English, which allows students to learn economics in a language they are familiar with, while learning alongside the French. Obviously, getting into a master degree, students have to obtain an attested level (B2) in French language.

With recognizing credits as acquired abilities more than focusing on the actual contents of the lectures and accepting that French diploma could be obtain by using English language, make possible setting original offers in double diploma in distance learning.

### **Double diploma**

The very idea of our disposal is founded to offer double diploma on distance learning for students of higher education institution without moving. Double diploma is a means for distance learning to set up international cooperation which 1) are economic (out of money and time) for students 2) respectful partner institution 3) without risk for partner institution. European higher education area constitutes the legal framework and helpful structure for recognizing training periods (credits). We use the credit's system for recognition part of the results of involved students. In all case this double diploma needs an agreement between our university and another high education institution. In this paper we only explain how students may obtain the French bachelor degree (Licence) and the diploma of their home university.

A manner is commonly used and implemented by Distance learning department of economics Faculty (ESE) for double diploma: recognising part of the former credits and

obtaining some of our own credits. We proposed two variants: bilateral double diploma or unilateral double diploma.

### **Bilateral double diploma**

We initiated this original conception in response to a demand from our one Swiss partner the FS-CH (University's distance learning Switzerland). This cooperation needs to put together the cursus of the diploma. The two institutions may have a lot of meetings to decide which institution has the responsibility of each unit and how many credits for each. After that, we have to split the units between the institutions. Obviously, we have some standard units offered in our distant learning department; we cannot have different units for each partner. For each year the students will obtain 30 credits from each institutions. Such a program requires an absolute confidence between the partners. That is possible only with a very closed cooperation and a high level of quality insurance. The French jury examine the marks for the courses followed in the French part of the diploma according to the French standards and endorses the decision of the Swiss jury in accordance with Swiss rules. The marks and the rules are evidently different. The result is for the student to follow just only one cursus that delivers two diplomas: the French licence and the Swiss Bachelor. Student obtains 180 credits, 90 from the Swiss side, 90 from the French side.

Bilateral double diploma

Years	Semesters	Units	UPMF Credits	Abroad Credits*	Total
1 <sup>st</sup> year L1	1	Economics Principles	15	15	60
	2	Management Principles	15	15	
2 <sup>d</sup> year L2	3	Money and finances	15	15	60
	4	Economics Analysis	15	15	
3 <sup>d</sup> year L3	5	Industrial Economics	15	15	60
	6	International Economics	15	15	
			90	90	180

\* Validated par our partner

Student obtains the French diploma under two conditions

Arithmetic mean of the UPMF marks above 10/20

Validated credits by the jury of the partner's institution

This configuration seems until now unusual, but it seems interested some European university with which we have Erasmus' agreement. The more general organization is the self-determined decisions from ours.

### **Unilateral double diploma**

The pattern is somehow different from the last one and it is not the same as<sup>1</sup> if it concerns individual students or the partnership with an HEI.

For foreign students we examine two items: the former scholarship, the experiences. In the field of the former academic study, we consider the results and the programs in accordance with our criteria when we have no information about agreements (very few) between France and other countries. Added to this we take care of the knowledge or skill acquired in practical activities or profession. Indeed, in the framework of our distant learning centre, we use, for individual student, a French mechanism based on the recognition of professional experiences and academic accreditations.

For high educational institution we propose another arrangement in which students may obtain a double diploma. We named this as master's preparation or better specific licence's year. In that case our faculty recognizes part of the formation followed in economics formation in the partner university for a certain amount of credits. It depends on the agreement with the abroad university, the main plane either 135 credits or 120 credits, and the students follow, during their last local year, the missing French credits in EAD. We, economics faculty of Grenoble, accept credits from university where the student comes from, without asking for reciprocal attitude. We just want that student pass their home exams. This explains why we speak about unilateral accreditation. The foreign credits are subject of a global recognition as credits. We do not investigate precisely the different contents of the courses but the results obtained do not have dealing for obtaining the French diploma. To obtain this, student has to obtain the average according to the French rules. In our thought, it is better to organize exams abroad when it is possible, for restricting the expenses. Students take their exams in the abroad university with which we work or in Grenoble when students live in France for students that have obtained their diploma abroad and have to stay in France for obtaining the recognition of the French diploma in their country, like in China. In addition student must obtain a language accreditation level B2 or so.

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<sup>1</sup>



Licence: specific year

Year	Units	UPMF Credits	Abroad Credits	Total
3 <sup>d</sup> year Licence	Money and finances	15		

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Licence: specific year

Year	Units	UPMF Credits	Abroad Credits	Total
3 <sup>d</sup> year Licence	Money and finances	15		
	Industrial Economics	15		
	International Economics	15		
		45	135	180
Language certification				

Student obtains the French diploma under two conditions

- Arithmetic mean of the UPMF marks above 10/20
- Success in the foreign diploma (before or during this special
- Language Certification B2

For the two kind of double diploma, the resources are in French but in some cases in English, as we explain above, in very few situation the language certification could be in English.

### Conclusion

Virtual mobility increases the chances for a student to obtain double-diploma et we hope co-diploma. What we do with countries outside European union might be possible with European universities. Commonly, European students do not wish for double diploma they have no interest to obtain another which do not improve their potential to find a job. But many of them involved in Erasmus program or bilateral agreements aspire getting co-diploma, which indicate their abilities using two languages and their capacities working in different cultural settings.

Virtual mobility avoids, partly, the brain drain to promote the brain gain. Indeed, foreign students may obtain European diploma staying in their country. If they want to come in Europe for a master, their stay will last two years at high level that diminish the brain drain risk. Obviously, it is possible to obtain a master by distance learning as the bachelor.