



Faced with the societal challenges of tomorrow, innovation in education is emerging as a crucial challenge for the SBS-EM. The goal? To provide students with a relevant learning experience.

## Reinventing Pedagogy

# We can do better!

**T**he world is changing at a rapid pace, driven in particular by technological progress. At the same time, significant environmental, social and economic challenges are becoming more prevalent. "A study by Professor Luc Van Liedekerke shows quite clearly what the general trend in the evolution of our civilizations over the last decades is," explains Philip Vergauwen, Dean of the SBS-EM. "Our world is becoming a more open, diverse place where every human being has more individual freedoms, stronger rights and more room to express themselves. Positive 'individualisation', not to be confused with individualism. These are the fruits of the progress of democracy, diversity, education, etc." Is the university, in this context, still fulfilling its role? Has it adapted its methods to reflect today's society? Is it creating citizens who are capable of building a better world? "What do I think? We can do better!"

### Greater focus on soft skills

Do better? That means, among other things, helping students to develop new skills: the ability to express their opinion, collaborate with others, assert their identity, etc. "Even though it has become more democratic, we have been using the same teaching model for the last 50 years," continues the Dean. "Conservative, even archaic, learning methods have struggled to keep up with societal changes and the associated needs. We have a duty to do better than the current system of 'natural selection', without erasing the past."

“ **THOSE WHO ARE ABLE TO DEVELOP THEIR CRITICAL THINKING OR REASONING SKILLS WILL GO ON TO PLAY AN IMPORTANT ROLE IN SOCIETY** ”

## THINK BIG, Act Small

All over the world, universities and colleges are grappling with the issue and rethinking the concept of pedagogy.

The SBS-EM is no exception. "Every school and university is trying to find answers," says Philip Vergauwen. "But there isn't a handy list of things they need to do. We need to be creative, pragmatic, take account of the context and obstacles, fight against the lack of resources and conservatism, and move forward step by step. It's a process and the main goal is that we move forward! If we do not evolve of our own accord, we will be forced to do so, driven in particular by the students themselves. We will run the risk of losing our most talented and gifted students to more 'advanced' horizons." Anxious to avoid falling into the realms of idealism, the Dean wants to be both pragmatic and ambitious: "Will everything be perfect tomorrow? Absolutely not! But the adventure will have begun..."

Mastering technical knowledge will always be important, but cross-disciplinary skills will definitely have to take on a bigger role. "Even our brightest students will not be able to compete with computational power or the efficiency of artificial intelligence. The added value of human beings lies in the use of these technologies, thinking about their impact, etc. In addition to his technical knowledge, tomorrow's social entrepreneur will need interpersonal skills, a good dose of creativity and a sharp critical mind."

### Rethinking the role of the professor

We are not questioning or debating the quality of knowledge, but rather the way of learning. A large auditorium, several hundred students, lecture-based courses? That method is obsolete! "It is no coincidence that some of our students choose to avoid the auditoriums. Thanks to new technologies, they no longer need professors to acquire knowledge. On the other hand, the professor can make the difference elsewhere, by challenging them, giving feedback, initiating debates, stimulating competition or analysing case studies." We face two challenges: to emphasise the added value of the professor and to make the classroom a place of exchange. "Education has become over-industrialised. We need to move towards more personalised learning models." Fewer hours in the classroom, but richer, more vibrant and more interactive learning experiences. "We do not have sufficient resources to organise classes of 40 students. Nonetheless, we can create a supportive environment in which students can interact with the whole community, from professors and students to business networks."

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Dean SBS-EM:  
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### Better learning assessments

Another of Philip Vergauwen's favourite topics is the way in which we assess students. "At present, we often limit ourselves to examining their technical skills or how well they can reproduce course content: can the student prove that he attended the course and that he has studied the material covered? That's not enough! Too little is done to assess their critical thinking, their reasoning skills and their ability to help their fellow students improve. It is often even prohibited. But those who are able to develop these skills will go on to play an important role in society." The goal is not to switch to group work whatever the cost, but to properly assess the acquisition of soft skills that students will need to have mastered in order to overcome future challenges throughout their professional career. "That's the paradox! We ask our students to solve problems in conditions that are disconnected from reality: no contact with others, no books, no personal notes, no computers, etc. A few months later, at their first job, the reality is quite different." ■



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