



PROFILE  
CEDEP

## Neither fish nor fowl

Cedep is a strange fish. It is neither business school, nor corporate university, neither corporate club, nor consortium. It is, however, one of the executive education world's best kept secrets.

Cedep (the Centre for Executive Development) was founded in its own building on the Insead campus, just outside Paris, in 1971 by five companies, including L'Oréal, Aventis and Bekaert - all still members today.

The aim, at a time when business schools offered far fewer short courses than they do now, was to provide open enrolment and customised programmes to a group of member corporations using faculty from traditional business schools, notably Insead.

Thirty-two years later Cedep has 27 partner organisations, from Gillette and Bristol-Myers Squibb in the US to HSBC and Imperial Tobacco in the UK and Tata Steel in India. It has an annual turnover of €10m, which is split almost equally between open enrolment and customised programmes.

Cedep policy means the organisation can only teach courses to these member companies, and it intends to cap the number of corporations to 30, according to Claude Michaud, director general. The aim is to maintain the quality of the corporate group in order to attract the best faculty from the business school world, he says.

Cedep has no permanent staff of its own but has 62

affiliate faculty who are either full-time at other business schools or are independent consultants.

"We attract professors because they want direct dialogue with these companies," says Prof Michaud. "We select people who like teaching executives."

Such is the attraction to visiting faculty. For the corporations involved, one of the biggest attractions is the price. One member company estimates that Cedep courses cost just one quarter of those at traditional business schools.

This is largely achieved because Cedep has no need to pay extensive overheads nor to invest in the research that costs traditional business schools so much - when it cherry-picks faculty it acquires the research history for free. Moreover, Cedep has no marketing or advertising costs.

A further advantage for the participating companies is that Cedep can react very quickly to what is happening in the business world. "We can turn on a sixpence. If we want to do something we can do it tomorrow," says Prof Michaud.

This means Cedep can run different types of courses, or focus on different topics by cherry-picking different faculty from different schools (although about half Cedep's faculty still come from Insead). These changes of direction or content are agreed by the companies and Cedep on the basis of feedback from course participants. The advisory

committee of partner companies meets four times a year to discuss governance and education.

Recently the organisation has employed more staff who can look at issues such as anthropology and sociology - Robin Hogarth, former deputy dean at the University of Chicago is a recent recruit, for example. And it is looking into fashionable subjects such as using music or theatre to teach executives.

All of which has met with approval with corporations involved in Cedep, such as life assurance specialist Aviva, headquartered in London. "What is interesting with Cedep is that they are prepared to experiment," says Tony Wyand, group executive director. He cites the example of online learning as a complement to face-to-face learning.

François Vachey, vice-president of Human Resources at L'Oréal, and now president of Cedep, takes a similar point of view and praises the institution for its "independence of mind, conceptual precision and non-conformism".

Mr Wyand also believes that the Cedep policy of allocating each company its own staff member and tutor is valuable, and that the campus is superb. He particularly likes the restaurant and the wine cellar.

Although the 27 participating companies pay no membership fee, they are required to send a specified number of participants on Cedep's open enrolment programmes every year. The three core general management programmes are the operational management programme, the general management programme and the senior executive programme, which between them cater for 250 participants a year.

All of which goes to show that you do not have to be particularly well-known in order to be successful.

**Della Bradshaw**