

## **Report 2010 about ASFOR Associates' offer to Public Authorities**

Since 2001 ASFOR, the Italian Association for Management Education Development, carries out an annual inquire about Associates' offer to Public Authorities. At a time where Governments are asked to rein in public expenditure it is worth considering the relation between Public Administrations (PAs) and Business Schools (BSs) and its possible evolution. Challenges that BSs are facing pose some threats but opportunities too, the ASFOR inquire could actually help to spot relevant issues and help decision makers and Schools' responsible to provide effective responses.

Twenty-six ASFOR Associates participated to the survey were asked about their 2009 activity, they represent 2200 faculty member, 40% of whom are female, 2389 courses corresponding to 11755 teaching days with more than 56000 people involved.

The survey shows that the faculty's role is well articulated and that it goes far beyond teaching. Of course teaching represents faculty's core activity, reaching on average 50% of personal workload, but professors play also an active role in terms of coordinating activities, product development and, although limited so far, market development.

The Italian market of management education aimed at PAs, according to ASFOR analysis, is highly polarised: on one side there are big players that operate at a national level, they detain the majority of market of management education both in terms of users and earnings, on the other side there is a network of local suppliers who build their offer upon the close relation they enjoy with the territory that allows them to provide an effective answer to the needs of their clients.

ASFOR Associates' offer has been aimed primarily to personnel of Regions (40% of the total) and State Administrations (25% of the total), Local Authorities stand for 25% of total participants. The three main field of knowledge of 2009, accounting for 60% of the classes, were marketing and communication, legal and human resources management.

The educational offer, as shown by the survey, is based on the active dialogue during all the phases of the activities: from the preliminary phase of assessment of learning needs, through design and implementation and at the end with the evaluation of learning outcomes. This dialogue follows formalized procedures in the majority of cases. Learning methods are still traditional: programmes are mostly provided (70% of the total time) through formal learning, the other methodologies, e.g. e-learning, outdoor, coaching, learning on the job, are designed as reinforcement of the former.

2009 has seen mixed results: globally earnings were down 10% from the previous year, whereas participants were up, although slightly (3% compared to 2008). The fall in revenues is explained by the contraction of activities tied to public tenders (minus 30% from 2008), a diminution that has not been completely offset by the increase in custom and open-market programmes. However this has not been a homogeneous trend, even if answers from respondents seem to suggest that those schools, which have a balanced mix of revenues, have faced better the contraction in demand. Asked about their future intentions, two-third of respondents have in fact expressed an intention to diversify their offer developing their product range in terms of contents, format, target, focusing even more on innovation.

The survey seems to suggest that there is an increasing awareness in ASFOR Associates that in order to compete effectively in a complex and articulated market, as the management education for public sector, it is necessary to achieve an adequate volume of activity in order to capitalise knowledge, develop a specific approach to Public Administrations and reach a sort of specialisation break-even. It is no longer possible, actually, to simply translate to the



public sector methods and instruments of the private. Schools must, at the contrary, build a public-specific framework of knowledge.