

# ACTIVE LEARNING INNOVATIONS IN THE CONTEXT OF BUSINESS ORGANISATION

**A. Mengual-Recuerda, D. Juárez-Varón, B. Andrés, R. de la Torre**

*Universitat Politècnica de València (SPAIN)*

## Abstract

Active learning in the context of business organization consists of a series of educational innovations aimed at engaging students more effectively in their learning process. The main objectives are to actively involve students in their learning and provide them with practical and relevant experience in the field of business organization. To achieve these objectives, various pedagogical strategies and approaches are employed.

A fundamental aspect is the use of case studies. These cases present relevant problems and challenges in the field of business organization, and students must analyse them, identify potential solutions, and make informed decisions. This enables them to develop critical thinking skills and acquire a deeper understanding of theoretical concepts through practical application.

This article is the result of a project that focuses on creating a repository of case studies addressing relevant issues in the field of business organization. This repository serves as a resource for teachers and students, offering a wide range of cases that represent real and challenging situations in the business environment. The case studies can be used both in the classroom and individually, allowing students to learn autonomously and develop their analytical and decision-making skills.

Keywords: active learning, emotional learning, case study, Business Organisation, learning innovation.

## 1 INTRODUCTION

The students acquire a large amount of theoretical knowledge but lack practical experience. They learn quickly but also forget easily. They struggle to apply what they have learned in the classroom, resulting in their inability to relate real-world problems to the theoretical solutions they have studied at university.

Currently, companies increasingly demand not only a set of knowledge and/or experience but also require a range of social and management skills, as well as a proactive and flexible attitude. Therefore, it is the responsibility of universities to take on this challenge and commitment in order to ensure that students are trained in these types of skills. Thanks to the tools provided by active learning methodologies, the new demands of the work environment, which promote collaboration and cooperation, can be addressed [1].

Many subjects in the field of business organization, unlike other more technical subjects, require greater interaction from students in terms of experiencing and observing the strategic and operational aspects of how companies plan and organize. These types of subjects provide concepts and learning experiences that differ from more numerical or technical subjects studied. Without putting into practice the content covered in these subjects, it becomes more challenging to visualize and internalize [2].

Therefore, in order to meet this growing need, new approaches that embrace more student-centered active methodologies should be introduced into classrooms, abandoning other more traditional teacher-centered methodologies [3].

## 2 METHODOLOGY

Through the educational innovation and improvement project (PIME), the aim is to promote dynamic learning activities that stimulate deep and enduring learning over time. Deep learning is achieved when educators design engaging, critical, and analytical learning experiences, also encompassing a holistic perspective [4].

In order to achieve this deep learning, the teacher employs systemic thinking, driving a transformation in students' previous approaches and incorporating all integral aspects of their being into the learning process. The goal is to build an educational experience closely linked to students' personal experiences, actively engaging their emotions [5].

To accomplish this, various active learning methodologies are reviewed, such as case-based learning, flipped classroom, authentic learning, or sustainable development goals, ultimately deciding to implement the case study methodology.

A case study is characterized as a segment of a broader reality that can be presented in various forms, whether through narratives such as texts, publications, editorials, news, or advertisements, as well as through images or recordings such as paintings, photographs, films, videos, or performances. Thus, the case study becomes a resource that enables the presentation of a situation posing a significant problem, aligned with the learning objectives of the subject. Its purpose is for students to examine this situation, propose solutions, and, in this way, develop a deeper and more comprehensive understanding of the discipline [6].

The implementation of the case study strategy in the coursework allows students to cultivate analytical, critical thinking, and decision-making skills when confronted with problematic situations that simulate reality. Through this method, students have the opportunity to apply their theoretical knowledge to practical situations, thereby fostering deeper and more applicable learning in diverse contexts [7].

By promoting self-instruction and self-discovery, the goal is to strengthen the autonomy of the student, who plays an active role in their own learning process. When faced with challenging problems and cases, they are provided with the opportunity to investigate, analyze various perspectives, and find solutions independently or collaboratively [8].

Up to now, students have applied concepts to specific problems, albeit simplified and with all the data provided in the statement, limiting their scope of action. However, they have not yet addressed case studies according to the previous definition. The current objective is for them to confront the reality of the business world and organizational complexity, independently applying the concepts learned in this system. It is expected that they will be able to identify problems, understand the "why" and "for what" of what they have learned, and, most crucially, comprehend the "how" it is applied in a real business context [9].

With this project, various activities can be designed and carried out, aiming to apply each of the concepts as realistically as possible to the field of business organization. This will enhance the teaching-learning process and strengthen the acquired knowledge.

### 3 RESULTS

The introduction of case studies in the university classroom is a valuable pedagogical strategy that brings various benefits to students. These include the practical application of knowledge (facilitating the transfer of theory to practice and helping students understand how to apply concepts in specific contexts), the development of analytical skills (analyzing information, identifying problems, proposing solutions, and making decisions), the stimulation of critical thinking (reflection, questioning, and evaluation of different perspectives), the promotion of teamwork (collaboration and exchange of ideas among students), preparation for the professional environment (exposing students to situations similar to those they may face in their future careers), the contextualization of learning (making abstract concepts more understandable and meaningful to students, improving knowledge retention), and the encouragement of engagement and participation (arousing interest and active participation, contributing to a more dynamic and participatory learning environment). In summary, the implementation of incorporating case studies in the university classroom has evolved into an effective pedagogical strategy that has enriched the learning experience by providing students with meaningful opportunities to apply, analyze, and reflect on academic concepts in real-world contexts.

It is worth highlighting the importance of having valid cases for various subjects, as it can yield several benefits in the educational realm. This includes increasing efficiency in course planning (utilizing shared resources and optimizing preparation time), carrying out curricular integration (integrating approaches and concepts from different disciplines into a single case, promoting a more holistic and contextualized understanding of topics for students), fostering interdisciplinary collaboration (involving professors from different departments or disciplines, providing a common ground for discussion and interdisciplinary teaching), developing cross-cutting skills (such as critical thinking, problem-solving, and decision-making, which are applicable in various areas), flexibilizing the pedagogical approach (according to the specific needs and goals of courses, providing flexibility in implementation), leveraging resources (useful in institutions with resource limitations), and stimulating interdisciplinary thinking (encouraging students to think in an interdisciplinary manner and recognize connections between different areas of knowledge). It is important to note that, although the versatility of cases can be beneficial, it is also crucial to ensure

that cases maintain the necessary depth and relevance for each specific discipline. Additionally, continuous feedback and adaptability are essential to ensure that cases meet the learning objectives of each course.

### **3.1 Aim and objectives**

An overall objective has been defined, which is further divided into 3 specific objectives:

General Objective (GO): Increase the student's autonomous and deep learning through case studies, enabling students to communicate their ideas effectively, analyze problems more critically, develop their ability to make informed decisions, spark interest in learning, and enhance respect for the opinions and beliefs of other students.

Specific Objective (SO1): Engage the student in the learning process by reviewing basic concepts and applying them through a case study.

Specific Objective (SO2): Develop a repository of case studies that present relevant problems in the field of business organization following the six criteria to provide meaningful learning and the ability to reflect through self-analysis and self-critique in each case.

Specific Objective (SO3): Foster commitment and teamwork through collaborative and cooperative work to achieve team synergy.

### **3.2 Workplan**

Three main activities have been designed, aiming to achieve the specific objectives outlined in section 3.1:

#### *3.2.1 Activity 1.1: Application and practical thinking in the context of business organization*

The students show little interest in academic activities, adopting a passive attitude during classes and limiting themselves to completing the minimum required tasks. The lack of engagement is reflected in minimal participation in discussions, a lack of initiative to ask questions or seek additional information, and an overall apathetic attitude toward learning. This problem negatively impacts the teaching-learning process as it restricts opportunities for interaction, the development of critical skills, and a deep understanding of the content. It is essential to address this issue to promote a more active, motivating, and enriching educational environment for the students.

Furthermore, in the professional world, students must be prepared to face situations and problems where the resolution is not sufficient by simply applying formulas or recipes, and where decisions made must be reasoned and adapted to the available resources.

#### *3.2.2 Activity 1.2: Case studies in the area of business organization*

Many students perceive the organization of companies as an abstract topic distant from their reality, diminishing their interest and commitment to learning. Furthermore, the lack of encouragement for self-analysis and self-critique restricts their ability to reflect on their own skills, knowledge, and areas for improvement. Consequently, the opportunity to harness the potential for individual and collective growth arising from self-discovery and self-reflection is lost. It is crucial to address this issue to spark students' interest, encourage their active participation, and foster an environment where they feel empowered to identify their strengths and weaknesses. This knowledge can then serve as a starting point for their personal improvement and development.

#### *3.2.3 Activity 1.3: Teamwork in the subject of business organization*

It is very common for teamwork to be based solely on task allocation, which is then integrated into a report, without truly helping them learn how to work as a team. Encouraging a sense of teamwork and active student participation through collaborative and cooperative work will enable them to manage teams and achieve team synergy.

## **4 CONCLUSIONS**

This article represents an initial version of an innovation and educational improvement project focused on the development and implementation of dynamic activities in the classroom within the context of subjects in the field of business organization. These subjects include Strategic Planning, Business

Organization, Production and Operations Management, Introduction to Business Administration, or Business Organization and Productive Systems.

The educational methodology of case analysis is examined, and a description of the objectives of active learning innovation in the proposed business organization context is provided. Additionally, in order to achieve these objectives, three activities to be carried out in the work plan are proposed and succinctly presented.

The future lines of the article aim to develop each of the activities and create the necessary materials. For doing that, a two years educational innovation and improvement project is ongoing, entitled "Innovaciones de Aprendizaje activo en el Contexto de Organización de empresas (A-CEO)" PIME/23-25/363. Proyecto de innovación y mejora educativa (PIME) Instituto de Ciencias de la Educación. Universitat Politècnica de València.

To ensure that the cases worked on in the classroom are applicable and beneficial across various subjects, it is important to consider the flexibility and adaptability of the case, thematic breadth, general contextualization (enabling the application of concepts from multiple disciplines), interdisciplinarity (encouraging collaboration among professors from different disciplines to develop and assess interdisciplinary cases - inviting experts from various fields to participate in case development or discussion), a focus on key skills (applicable in various disciplines, such as problem-solving, decision-making, and effective communication), debate and discussion, and the development of cross-cutting competencies (such as critical thinking, problem-solving, and ethical decision-making). Providing feedback (collecting feedback from teachers and students after using the case in different subjects) and continuous improvement (adjusting the case as needed to enhance its applicability and usefulness in different contexts) are crucial. By adhering to these principles, it is possible to create cases that are versatile and beneficial across various subjects, promoting a more integrated and enriching approach to university teaching.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Universitat Politècnica de València , with the support of the Comisión de Evaluación y Seguimiento de Proyectos de Innovación (CESPIME) and the Instituto de Ciencias de la Educación (ICE), has financed the following Proyectos de Innovación y Mejora Educativa: PIME/23-24/366 Activities to work on Creativity, Entrepreneurship and Innovation in the classroom (ACEI); PIME/22-23/358 Enchufes S.A.: simulation of a plug manufacturing company in the area of business organization; and PIME/23-24/363 Active Learning Innovations in the Context of Business Organization (A-CEO). This work has also been supported by the European Commission under the Erasmus+ Programme within the frame of CONTINUITY Project: Business Continuity Managers Training Platform with Reference No. 2021-1-IT01-KA220-VET-000033287.

## REFERENCES

- [1] Andres, B.; Sempere-Ripoll, Francisca; Esteso, Ana; Torre-Martínez, María Rocío de la (2022). Active Learning Methodologies At The University Classroom. EN 14th International Conference on Education and New Learning Technologies (EDULEARN 2022). (2927 - 2935). Palma de Mallorca, Spain: IATED.
- [2] Tokuhama-Espinosa, T. (2010). The new science of teaching and learning: using the best of mind, brain, and education science in the classroom. Columbia University Teachers College Press, New York.
- [3] B. Andres, F. Sempere-Ripoll (2023). Simulation of a manufacturing company for the application of methods and tools in the area of industrial engineering. INTED2023 Proceedings. IATED, 2023.
- [4] Hermes, J., & Rimanoczy, I. (2018). Deep learning for a sustainability mindset. The International Journal of Management Education, 16(3), 460-467.
- [5] Kassel, K., Rimanoczy, I., & Mitchell, S. F. (2016). The sustainable mindset: Connecting being, thinking, and doing in management education. In *Academy of management proceedings* (Vol. 2016, No. 1, p. 16659). Briarcliff Manor, NY 10510: Academy of Management.
- [6] Collis, David J. "The Case Study as an Academic Methodology." *Strategy Science* (forthcoming). Harvard Business School

[7] De Miguel Díaz, M., Alfaro Rocher, I., Apodaca Urquijo, P., Arias Blanco, J., García Jiménez, E., & Lobato Fraile, C. (2006). Metodologías de enseñanza y aprendizaje para el desarrollo de competencias: orientaciones para el profesorado universitario ante el Espacio Europeo de Educación Superior (p. 18). Madrid: Alianza editorial.

[8] ARGANDONA GOMEZ, Fabiola Andrea; PERSICO JIMENEZ, María Cecilia; VISIC MATULIC, Ana María and BOUFFANAIS CUEVAS, Jacqueline Ivonne (2018). Estudio de Casos: Una metodología de enseñanza en la educación superior para la adquisición de competencias integradoras y emprendedoras. Tec Empre. [online]., vol.12, n.3, pp.7-16. ISSN 1659-3359. <http://dx.doi.org/10.18845/te.v12i3.3934>.

[9] Boehrer, J., M. Linsky (1990). "Teaching with Cases: Learning to Question", en Svinicki, M.D. (ed.), The Changing Face of College Teaching. New Directions for Teaching and Learning, no. 42. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.