

TOWARDS A HAPPY, CREATIVE AND SOCIAL HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTION: THE CASE OF NON-PROFIT MARKETING AND BUSINESS CREATION SUBJECTS AT THE UNIVERSITY OF CADIZ

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ABSTRACT

One of the social responsibilities university professors of a Marketing class should have is to provide their students basic knowledge about the history of companies, marketing, etc. Therefore, some professors from the University of Cádiz who taught Non-Profit Marketing and Business Creation during the first semester of the 2017 academic period created a collaborative teaching approach based on historical debates related to these two classes. The election of this pedagogical tool is justified since it is widely used by prestigious universities such as Oxford and Harvard to promote happiness and creativity in students by developing reflective thought, oratory, teamwork, emotional intelligence and Aristotelian dialogue. The obtained results are expected to encourage the implementation of historical debates in other Spanish faculties.

Keywords: Historical Debate, Happiness, Teaching Innovation Strategy, Collaborative Learning.

INTRODUCTION

The current context in which people move is continuously evolving and changes are not only the result of advancements in technology (these can be considered positive changes) but also the result of difficult economic situations (negative changes) and a more globalized environment (changes at an international level). The implementation of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) is the consequence of universities adapting to current contexts (Masjuan & Troiano, 2009).

Another positive aspect to highlight in the new educational paradigm associated with the implementation of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) is the acquisition of competences. It is based on principles of quality, mobility, diversity and competitiveness. It is about responding to the challenge of providing teaching that is adapted to knowledge society and promoting active, creative, reflective and critical learning, with the collaboration between professors and students (Margalef et al., 2006; Margalef & Pareja, 2008; Núñez Barriopedro, 2006).

The adaptation to this new university system requires changing the traditional teaching and learning dynamics based on a teacher's master class, where students had passive participation by only listening and taking notes, to one where students have a more active role so

that they acquire responsibilities and are the real protagonists of their own learning (Whitehead, 2008).

Thus, future graduates will be able to develop skills that will allow them to work in a more efficient and productive way in a changing, innovative, competitive and complex work environment once they leave the university. Therefore, it is necessary that professors stimulate students' skills and competencies through the implementation of collaborative teaching which considers aspects such as teamwork and a positive environment in the classroom that encourages happiness and creativity in students (Hunt et al., 2004; Ramirez & Fuentes, 2013).

Currently, these two aspects are not present in the conventional expository method taught in Spanish educational institutions (Canzer, 1997; Exley & Dennick, 2007; Nuñez Barriopedro, 2010). This is mainly because of the existence of passive learning, which makes it difficult for students to acquire transversal skills such as leadership or teamwork (Wright et al., 1994; Adrian & Palmer, 1999). This situation and other multiple reasons make it necessary that in XXI century universities in our country implement a learning model based on cultivating basically happiness and creativity, so classrooms become true laboratories of innovation, reflection and Aristotelian debates (following the guidelines of the first inter school academic debate that took place in the year 1400 at the University of Oxford). The use of this didactic tool will facilitate students' cognitive and individual development as well as learning of transversal competences, for example, knowing how to communicate dialogue, solve problems, and interact among equals or empathize with others (Lee, 2011).

At this point of the introduction, it is necessary to point out that in the digital era higher education institutions must provide integral education that places students at the center of the educational process. This approach makes classes not only more participatory but also the teacher-student relationship is more enriching. From this perspective, academic debates can be a very useful collaborative learning technique since it encourages discussion, content analysis, critical tolerance, internalization of concepts, dialectical exchange or controversy (Ramirez & Piña, 2005; Brenifier, 2005; Rodriguez, 2012; Prieto & Sanchez, 2017; Johnson & Roger, 1985; Cirlin, 1999).

Bearing in mind that the work of professors in higher education institutions is currently carried out in an environment of constant political, technical and economic changes; debates make a very attractive educational tool to attract students' attention to the discipline of history (provided that its content is directly connected to the subjects of students' university degree) in a creative way. In a constructive and positivist manner, this teaching approach can give future graduates a critical and reflective thought that, when in the job market, will provide them greater awareness of social and professional relevance; knowledge acquired in classrooms throughout their academic career (Bengtsen & Barnett, 2018).

Based on this guiding principle, several professors from the Marketing and Market Research courses of the University of Cádiz decided to apply the methodology of debates in the subjects of Business Creation and Non Profit Marketing during the first semester of the 2017 academic period in order to explain the basic knowledge about the history of economic and social origin of non-profit organizations and startups in the last century in an entertaining way. It is worth noting that today there is no teaching innovation project in this university that has used academic debates as a pedagogical resource destined to jointly promote happiness, communicative development and student creativity. On the other hand, in the universities of Oxford and Cambridge most of their programs have subjects of debate or oratory, as well as important classes of academic debate (Murniati, 2018; Mercer & Howe, 2012).

It should be noted that the limited use of debates in classes of Spanish higher education institutions may be due, on the one hand, to the existence of a large number of professors who do not have basic training in the implementation of this collaborative learning technique and on the other hand, to a certain degree of apathy of the university community in cultivating happy and creative human beings in this digital society, where students take an active role in the construction of knowledge in their teaching-learning process (Galiano Coronil & Ravina Ripoll, 2017).

Before concluding this introduction, it is important to point out that a large number of Spanish professors think-like the authors of this paper, that if there is to be a more dynamic and innovative university in the 21st century, it is necessary to establish, among other things, collaborative learning strategies oriented to proactively stimulating imagination, subjective well-being, criticism, creative thinking, divergence or dialogue of future graduates through the implementation of disruptive didactics such as academic debates. We will now generally describe the objectives set in the teaching innovation project carried out at the University of Cádiz-which was used to write this work, entitled: Approach to the reality of NGOs and social movements: Active learning of debate techniques for the improvement of transversal and communicative competences.

OBJECTIVES

The dissemination of this scientific research is intended to provide basically three things, the first is to point out that academic debates can be applied transversally and empathically in the subjects of Non-Profit Marketing and Business Creation. The second is to show that this educational tool can also be extended to other subjects as well as to other disciplines that are taught in different programs in different campuses of the University of Cádiz, especially those related to social sciences (as we have already stated above, this case is focused on teaching learners the history of economic and social origin of non-profit institutions and startups).

And the third, that the use of this interesting pedagogical technique accompanied by collaborative, creative and happy learning allows students to increase: argumentative competence, verbal and nonverbal language, criticism, reflective thinking, oratory, interpersonal relationships, assertiveness, self-esteem, personal responsibility, motivation, emotional intelligence or positive interdependence (Oros, 2007; Molinatti et al., 2010; Kennedy, 2009; Zare & Othman, 2013; Pujolas, 2009).

It is not possible to continue this paper without recalling that for debates to be carried out successfully it is necessary to have educators with a pedagogical style based on didactic constructivism and the implementation of the virtuous circle of happiness inside the classroom.

In this regard, professors will look for ways to turn students into the main protagonists of classes, that they have absolute freedom to promote their creativity as well as to understand that the future of having a more advanced, and sustainable society is up to them. That is, enjoying an ecosystem based on the common good, solidarity, entrepreneurship, social justice and continuous knowledge transfer between companies and universities. Perhaps, this will make it possible to enjoy a 21st century university educational model based on proactively invigorating disruptive thinking, innovation, creative talent, collective happiness and of course academic debate as an instrument of teaching innovation that enhances the scientific dialogue of students under the principles of equality, dialogue, tolerance and communicative reflection (Keller et al., 2001; Bonorino Ramirez, 2016; Kanovich, 2008; Tur & Marin, 2015; Borrasca, 2014).

The professor promotes problematic situations that allow the knowledge learned by the student to be developed in terms of comprehension, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation. The

classroom is arranged with spaces for students to locate basic knowledge and, through knowledge-sharing with peers, leads to innovative answers to the problem that has been set; this even allows the linearity of answering to be broken, as an ideal situation may be to ask students to deduct possible statements, method and calculations (Pesantez-Aviles & Tobar-Pesantez, 2016).

The following section describes the methodology used to fulfil the objectives of this work. One of these objectives is to promote the widespread use of academic debates in teaching that takes place within the University of Cádiz; since it is one of the collaborative learning techniques that provides students an interesting opportunity to express themselves orally in public with confidence, fluency, empathy, etc. as long as the cognitive spirit of the future graduates is instilled with the meaning of Isaac Newton's famous phrase: "*What we know is a drop of water; what we ignore is the ocean*".

METHODOLOGY

The present paper is an exploratory and correlational study that attempts to examine the extent to which the use of historical debates can significantly contribute to improve the teaching of Non-Profit Marketing and Business Creation courses taught in the Marketing and Market Research courses at the University of Cádiz during the 2017/2018 academic year. From our point of view, this study may shed some light on whether the use of this particular collaborative learning technique holistically enriches competences and social skills of learners. Thus, a total of ten debates of historical, economic and sociocultural nature were carried out (seven in the subject of Non-Profit Marketing and the rest in the subject of Business Creation), as well as twenty-five interviews to students, with a duration of about forty-five minutes. Throughout the interviews students stated that the different historical debates that were held in the subjects that make up this teaching innovation project enabled them to significantly improve their communication and expression skills based on the principles of plurality, diversity of opinions, respect, inclusive assessment and pluralism.

Apart from these two activities, at the end of the semester students were given a questionnaire of transversal and integral competences, which was completed by 168 students (85.72% of enrolled students), which is demonstrated in the following table (Table 1).

Unit of analysis	Non profit marketing and Business Creation students from the University of Cádiz
Geographical scope	Cádiz
Universe	196 students enrolled in the 2017/2018 course in the aforementioned subjects
Type of sampling	Convenience
Sample size	168 students (85.17%)
Error/confidence level	2.12% (95%) $p=q=0.5$
Date carried out	September 2017 to February 2018

Source: Authors calculation.

The next section will describe the most relevant results obtained in this research. To carry out it out, the Dyane (Design and Analysis of Surveys) 4.0 version software for social and market research was used (Santesmases, 2009).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The main objective of this appealing teaching innovation approach is to know if the implementation of historical debates-understood as a social process based on the action of academic projects-can positively contribute to two didactic aspects that are fundamental in the correct implementation of a system of collaborative learning in higher education institutions. The first is to actively promote the interaction between students from the Marketing and Market Research programs at the University of Cádiz and their professors of Business Creation and Non-Profit Marketing. The second is to provide students in this digital age with critical and reflective thinking through the use of historical debates. To our humble understanding, the latter will favor students in achieving continuous improvement in the performance of their transversal competences, as long as the professor has used a constructive pedagogy inside the classroom basically aimed at: having an open mind, encouraging teamwork, internalize knowledge, stimulate self-learning, encourage social interaction among students, enhance happiness and creativity and encourage teaching based on cognitive evidence and reflection (Guzman Silva, 2008, Nuñez-López et al., 2017, Castellanos Ramirez & Niño, 2018).

In accordance with everything presented in this section, the "*F-distribution*" test was applied to numerically quantify the impact that the use of the didactic tool of historical debates has on the acquisition of transversal competences that are presented in the following table (Table 2).

Variable No	Denomination	Total sample	F-distribution
1	Teamwork	3.4828	F (3.154)=0.4799
		n=168	p=0.6976
2	Critical thinking	4.2241	F (3.154)=1.5404
		n=168	p=0.2146
3	Emotional intelligence	4.0000	F (3.154)=0.4865
		n=168	p=0.6931
4	Self learning	3.7414	F (3.154)=1.5205
		n=168	p=0.2196
5	Happiness and creativity	4.2414	F (3.154)=0.6375
		n=168	p=0.5941
6	Dialogue	4.0862	F (3.154)=0.5957
		n=168	p=0.6205
7	Constructive reflection	4.0172	F (3.154)=0.8406
		n=168	p=0.4776
8	Active commitment	4.0690	F (3.154)=1.2654
		n=168	p=0.2955
9	Social interaction	3.9310	F (3.154)=1.3681
		n=168	p=0.2623
10	Oral communication	4.2759	F (3.154)=1.0308
		n=168	p=0.3863

Source: Authors calculation.

The previous illustration shows that the most positively valued competences by the target population of our study are oral communication, happiness and creativity and critical thinking. This demonstrates the great willingness of students to carry out academic debates, perhaps because it is a learning tool that implies continuous evaluation and constant and direct communication with the teaching staff, unlike master classes which are not very attractive. Hence, it is not unusual to say that debates feed a collaborative pedagogy where the main agents of learning are students themselves and this will enhance their active participation in the classroom. It is worth noting that students' grades in general were quite better than those of the previous academic year.

CONCLUSION

Throughout the use of this teaching activity, the academic debates, there were a significant number of interviews carried out to students of the University of Cádiz during the first semester of the 2017/2018 academic year. In the interviews students from the subjects of Non-Profit Marketing and Business Creation pointed out, in a generalized manner, that the implementation of this attractive and innovative collaborative learning technique created a happy and creative environment inside the classroom, especially when opinions were intellectually contradicted. They also said that this practice had been very useful and effective to improve their oral communication, disruptive thinking and emotional intelligence. All these facts were clearly shown in the lively dialogues that took place during the ten historical debates that took place in these two subjects.

Likewise, all students were asked to freely participate in the innovation project called "*Approach to the reality of a NGO and social movements: Active learning of debate techniques as improvement of transversal and communicative skills*", and asked to anonymously write their experiences of the debates that took place during the present study. For this, they were given a survey of transversal competences-which was designed by the authors of this work-, in order to make clear the multiple pedagogical advantages that the implementation of this collaborative learning technique in higher education institutions of Spain will have.

The results obtained from Dyane 4.0 statistically show two fundamental things. The first is that this didactic instrument influenced a greater participation of students in class as well as a high academic interest for the subjects of Non-profit Marketing and Business Creation. And second, the historical debates significantly increased their argumentative abilities along with their social skills linked to tolerance, critical thinking, empathy or self-learning. According to the abovementioned information, it is worth noting that this research presents some scientific limitations. On the one hand, the sample that was used is very limited, as well as its temporary framework. On the other hand, there is a lack of didactic literature to explore the use of this innovative tool in knowledge society in the context of Spanish universities. This paper will enable future research on the topic and can be applied in other subjects and universities.

To conclude, our point of view is that a pedagogy focused on academic debates can exponentially increase the interest of university students to learn and listen, as long as professors aim at holistically promoting critical abilities of future graduates. Let us not forget the words of Walter Isaacson, the competitive advantage of a society will not come from how good a school taught multiplication and periodic tables, but how well it was able to stimulate imagination and creativity. This premise perfectly coincides with one of the main missions that higher education professors in the XXI century should have, which is to open doors towards collaborative learning models that promote, on the one hand, cognitive and interpersonal skills of students, and on the

other, foster a warm environment of happiness and creativity in classrooms, as in the lyceums of Ancient Greece.

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