

Chapter 8

A Multidisciplinary Project Integrating Marketing Research, Art and Spanish Language for Social Sciences

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In the framework of a collaboration agreement between the University of Valencia (UV) and the London School of Economics (LSE), students from both universities have had an opportunity to take part in an interdisciplinary project based on a real decision making process in the context of cultural management.

In this chapter we describe this interdisciplinary project focusing on the contribution in the teaching-learning process of students at the University of Valencia, in the context of the subject Marketing Research. Specifically, a series of photographs is selected in order to organize an exhibition in London and, to ensure the success of the exhibition, students of the subject Marketing Research have combined sources of secondary and primary data, and have become familiar with databases of business information from the Library of the University of Valencia as well as with the commonly used software for data processing. In general, students have very much appreciated this activity as a facilitator of learning in the field.

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ORGANIZATION BACKGROUND

An important trend in education in the last decades is a movement of the focus from that of teaching to that of learning (e.g. Bates, 1995; Oliver & Omari, 1999). An evidence of this change is the wide use of problem-based learning, an instructional learner-centered approach that empowers learners to conduct research, integrate theory and practice, and apply knowledge and skills to develop a viable solution to a defined problem (Savery, 2006). The learning effectiveness and the transfer of skills of problem-based learning requires activities valued in the real world (Bransford, Brown & Cocking, 2000).

In the present chapter, we assess the outcomes of a problem-based activity in a Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) program. It is a project based on a multicultural, interdisciplinary and bilingual collaboration developed between two European universities, i.e. the University of Valencia (Spain) and the London School of Economics and Political Science (United Kingdom)

In this project, students have worked on linguistic aspects, economic and managerial contents as well as other social competences. In particular, the activity was held for LSE students taking an optional course such as Spanish Language and Society, which is oriented to non-Spanish-speaking students, and for students at UV taking a core course of the Business Administration degree (i.e. Marketing Research) in English, which is not the native language for most students. Students had to do several tasks in groups related to Business and Society (qualitative and quantitative research, including a survey, data collection and statistical analysis, and written reports). Language used by LSE students was Spanish, while UV students had to communicate in English.

A pinhole exhibition was proposed as a source of inspiration for multidisciplinary activities in Higher Education studies at the University of Valencia and the London School of Economics.

What is a pinhole photography? It is a photograph which is cooked inside a metal without lens, viewfinder and even without a shutter. The light enters through a tiny hole forming the image on a photosensitive paper. fotolateras.com

Thanks to a previous bilateral interuniversity agreement in force since 2006, the Marketing Department of University of Valencia (Spain) and the Spanish Section of the Language Centre in London School of Economics (UK), with the help of the photography artists Fotolateras.com¹, decided to implement several teaching-learning activities related to the subject of marketing research (for University of Valencia students) and Spanish language (for the London School of Economics students).

In order to assess the outcomes of this activity, both qualitative and quantitative approaches have been considered. Regarding the qualitative assessment, results have allowed us to conclude that this collaboration project enables students to obtain and to process information on other realities and to improve their language skills through a motivating online learning environment. In general, students' involvement and feedback seem to confirm the positive contribution of this problem-based, interdisciplinary and bilingual activity to the teaching-learning process.

Concerning quantitative analysis, a survey to measure the student assessment of this activity was performed among participants. In particular, the survey measured student assessment on the interest of this activity for the teaching-learning process, motivation, group interaction and use of technological tools. We also considered data about student participation in this activity and final grades. After statistical processing of student assessment, participation and grades, as well as the qualitative feedback obtained from students' comments, we obtained evidence supporting the relevance of this project in the teaching-learning process and its positive implication in students' results. Notwithstanding, the project failed at

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