

Learning Creativity and Innovation: A Case Study in Tourism Degree

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Abstract

Do not rely on a thought that has been drawn when sitting. This principle inspired by Nietzsche refers to the need for movement for richer and more creative cognitive and artistic elaborations. Creativity is today a way of responding to competition, a way to manage new challenges and, in an organizational context, aims to promote interpersonal relationships. Creativity and innovation are central to the development and sustainability of the most creative projects and companies. In a society framed by rules and norms, but also by a syndrome of leaders and followers, and where the school / learning context follows traditional, mostly theoretical molds and models, where is the space for creativity? Our research consists on the analysis of a case study and aims to know the students' perceptions and feedback about practical methodologies applied in the curricular unit of creation of products and touristic experiences, in the degree of tourism. We will present the contents of the curricular unit, the dynamics and activities proposed, outdoor classes, resources created and the projects of the students. We will also analyze students' feedback through qualitative and quantitative methodology, perceptions and opinions about using these methods and the benefits for their learning path, as well about the knowing, understanding and identifying soft skills as keys for success. The results show immediately higher attendance at class, greater satisfaction and involvement in the activities during the semester.

Keywords: Creativity, education, innovation, tourism, practical methodologies;

1. Creativity and innovation: how we think, how we learn

All the transformations that industrial development has brought to societies, we can see in the classroom. The homogenization of behaviors, ideas and consumptions, happen in a context oriented to an increasingly individualized productivity, with weak group consciousness. Hypermodernity and its liquid character (Bauman, 2006) puts the individual in a whirlwind of feelings of insecurity about himself, his condition, and related to a light and thin society (Lipovetsky, 2016) reflecting this individuation (Bourdieu, 2007). At the same time, with the mechanization of tasks and work, impatience grows, an accelerated society is affirmed, with no time to lose, no time for connection, sense, feeling, relationship. Given the speed and instantaneousness at the vertiginous pace of the production and consumption, the market needs to reinvent itself frequently to respond to the constant and new needs of society. Neuroscience has identified the existence of a relationship between emotions and the way the brain learns, having found that the presence of feelings of stress and anxiety hinder the learning process, while feelings of happiness and relaxation contribute to the brain process information in a more efficient way (Damásio, 2012), something for which also competes the movement, by the increase of levels of oxygen in the bloodstream.

Research in teaching and learning has identified some factors that become determinant for the success of learning. One of these factors concerns soft-skills. The concept has been used in very diverse contexts and with very different uses. The entire of the experience process of students attending higher education involves an increase of skills in the intellectual areas, but is not limited to the mobilization of knowledge, but also contributes to the development of manual and interpersonal physical skills (Chickering and Reisser, 1993), understood as the capacity to respond to the challenges that are presented.

At the moment in which society is currently living, educational institutions must urgently take a new look at the teaching-learning process and, consequently, adapt the technical and personal skills (soft-skills) to the demands of the market of the 21st century. The best way to prepare potential employees for the job market through education is to develop not only the technical skills assimilated in the context of the academy with innovative teaching methods, but also, and at the same time, those of a



personal and relational nature. It is also necessary a connection / relationship between students and the world, making what they study has a practical application in their daily life, in their present or future, that it is possible to verify a need in a given knowledge or enrich others. Curiosity and interest in the subject and discipline must be balanced with the definition of measurable and achievable objectives and results to be able to manage levels of frustration and stress. All this context requires action and movement, an active learning, that is what allows to reach a long term knowledge, an appropriation of the learning with a conscience, consistency and critical capacity and reflection, promoting skills also in the problem solving domain, conflict and decision-making.

2. Innovation teaching methods: case study

The curricular unit of "Creation of tourism products and experiences" is part of the study plan of the 2nd year of the degree in tourism, at the Higher Institute of Administration and Management - European Business School (ISAG-EBS), located in the city of Porto. Its main objective is to provide students with knowledge and skills in creativity and innovation in the field of tourism. The program explores the themes of creativity, its potential in tourism (in tourism experiences and in the process of co-creation), in organizations, using techniques of practical mastery. The evaluation is composed of two moments of evaluation by written tests, an individual work (portfolio) and a group work (of practical and experience component). All classes were presented with theoretical content and dynamic activities or pedagogical games of application of the contents and techniques of creativity, namely: 1) brainstorming, with the objective of represent schematically and associate ideas and concepts expressed by words or images; 2) Chest of objects, to promote new brain connections, from the identification of relationship between two random objects; 3) Brainwriting / diary, to promote individual expression and creativity; 4) music and movement, as an inducer of inspiration and creative stimulation by the sound of different styles and intensities; 5) activities with LEGO, whose goal is to train the improvised response, simulation, storytelling, cooperation in construction, among others. This activities have proved to be essential and valuable for the learning process according to the students' feedback, and it will be more explicit below. To bet on the development of the students' competences is, therefore, a task of paramount importance in the curricular unit under study. Students are producers and bearers of skills and competences that are more easily identified and measured in the use of activities and tasks of a practical nature, and which should be taken into account in the teaching-learning process (Le Boterf, 2004). Competence pre-exists, strengthens itself in action and, therefore, requires resources and means to mobilize them.

For the study of students' perceptions and feedback regarding the teaching methodologies applied in this curricular unit, we used a non-probabilistic type of sampling, for convenience. The sample size is 31 students ($n = 31$), of the 41 students enrolled in the course unit. Data were collected through the application of a questionnaire survey made available online after the end of the classes and evaluation period (April and May 2019).

In a brief characterization of the sample, we found that they are, in the majority of females, 64.5% ($n = 20$). Regarding the ages of the respondents, we find that they vary between 18 and 36 years, presenting an average of 21.4 years, with a standard deviation of 3.49 years.

In the qualitative analysis of the individual / portfolio works, it was very evident a satisfaction with the methodologies chosen, with special reference to happiness issues (*"I enjoyed a sense of accomplishment and happiness in class"*, *"I felt we can be happy in class"*), Sense of belonging in the group (*"contribution to better relations with the class"*, *"connection between class members"*), learning by the senses (*"feeling"*, *"experience"*, *"movement"*, *"senses"*). The use of the work carried out by the students in the curricular unit allowed the extraction of unique data on autonomy, cognitive complexity and creativity, as well as a broad vision in terms of the competences required of students. In other words, the importance and influence that a safe environment has for the development of the individual's learning process, where he feels free to express knowledge and difficulties, is verified. There is also a greater success in learning when new information related to areas of student interest is promoted, preferably related to previous knowledge and experiences, so that conditions for "cognitive conflict" can be created and translated at a moment of reflection on the issues presented. Another evidence is the contribution that the promotion of the autonomy of the individuals to suggest associated subjects and to make choices has in the increase of the sense of self-esteem and of power over the own process of learning, as it was possible to measure in the study of quantitative methodology.

With regard to the results of the questionnaire survey (using a Likert scale), we asked to indicate the level of satisfaction with the curricular unit, in terms of content interest, content relevance, teaching



method, interest in the dynamics and activities proposed, the spaces where the classes took place, and the pertinence of the evaluation works (see table 1).

Level of satisfaction	Average value
Content interest	4,23
Content relevance	4,13
Teaching method	4,45
Activities and dynamics interest	4,58
Spaces where classes took place	4,29
Relevance of the evaluation	4,32

Table 1 - Level of satisfaction

Similarly, we questioned the extent to which the proposals influenced or contributed to attendance and punctuality, interest, motivation, autonomy, decision making, application of knowledge, self-esteem, practical application of knowledge, active learning, critical ability, creative expression, group / class feeling and results (see table 2).

Influence or contribution of activities	Average value
Assiduity and punctuality	4
Interest	4,35
Motivation	4,42
Promotion of autonomy	4,32
Promotion of decision-making	4,256
Knowledge application	4,19
Self esteem	4,06
Knowledge practical application	4,23
Active learning	4,45
Critical capacity	4,39
Creative Expression	4,42
Feeling of belonging in group/class	4,42
Obtained results	4,13

Table 2 - Influence or contribution of activities

Finally, we asked them to indicate how the proposed activities had influenced or contributed to the development of soft skills, namely communication, leadership, interpersonal skills, time management, teamwork, conflict management, responsibility, proactivity and creativity (see table 3).

Contribution to the development of soft skills	Average value
Communication	4,16
Leadership	3,94
Interpersonal skills	3,97
Time management	4,10
Team work	4,42
Conflict management	4,26
Responsability	4,48
Proactivity	4,45
Creativity	4,58

Table 3 - Contribution to soft-skills

We found that in general the answers are quite positive, since their totality presents an average of 4.29. Regarding the degree of satisfaction of the students with respect to the curricular unit, we

verified that the best-rated variables are the teaching method, with an average of 4.45, and interest in activities and dynamics, with an average of 4.58 points. Regarding the influence or contribution of the proposed activities and dynamics, we found a significant contribution to the motivation, presenting an average of 4.42 points for active learning, with a mean of 4.45 points for the development of the critical capacity and reflection, in an average of 4.39, and the contribution to the feeling of belonging to the group / class, with 4.42 points. Finally, with regard to the contribution to the development of soft-skills, we found a very significant expression in terms of teamwork, with 4.42 points, for the development of responsibility, with 4.48 points, proactivity, with 4.45 points and creativity, with 4.58 points. In this way, we consider that these results are expressive in relation to the clear contribution that these methodologies had for the group under study.

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