DYNAMIZATION OF THE CLASSES OF INTERNATIONAL MARKETING USING PRACTICAL CASES IN COLLABORATION WITH COMPANIES AND WITH GROUPS OF DIFFERENT INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITIES

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Abstract

The methodologies presented at this paper have been implemented throughout this academic year the International Marketing courses, in Business Management Degree and Marketing Degree, at the University Cardenal Herrera CEU in Spain, University of Trento in Italy, North Caucasus Federal University in Russia, People's Friendship University in Russia and Ural State University of Economics in Russia.

In sight of previous experiences of the teachers imparting both theoretical and practical courses in the area of international marketing, it was observed that involving students in projects as close as possible to what they will find in professional practice, increased their motivation and interest in the subject.

In order to bring students closer to real cases, we introduce the realization of a practical case of international marketing in which the students interact and work in multicultural groups, integrated by students of different nationalities. In addition, the work to be carried out will be related to collaborating companies that will ask the groups to work and solve the real problems which these companies have in different countries when carrying out their internationalization.

The objective of this project is to enable students to be able to work in a professional environment and with colleagues from different nationalities, developing aspects related to international marketing in function of the goals established by real companies.

The didactic proposal is based on the active participation of the student in multicultural work groups, with students of different nationalities and tutored by professors and by professionals in the field of international marketing from the collaborating companies for which they must carry out their projects.

The companies that participated in the project during this academic year have been: From Spain: Casa Vigar and Circuit Valencia and from Italy: IMPA, Rothoblaas, San Marco and Deltamax. The CMO Chief Marketing Officer of the company present a briefing with specific needs and give the students the information about their internationalization goals. After different work sessions, the students make a partial delivery of the project for the supervision of faculties and at the end of the semester they make a final presentation to the companies CMO.

In general, the motivation of the students has been increased, as well as the interest in international marketing. In addition, they have acquired professional decision-making skills, having to make them in accordance with the rest of the team's components and adapting to the specific needs of companies. At the individual level, there has been an improvement in the ability of critical thinking and communicative skills, both in the native language and in English mainly used to communicate with the rest of the group. The skills of teamwork, collaboration and the ability to delegate and assume responsibilities within the group have also been improved.

Keywords: International marketing, multicultural group, study case, case method.

1 INTRODUCTION

Rodríguez and Díaz (2015) point out that "teamwork as a teaching modality that allows the development of a series of transversal skills, fundamental for the training of future professionals" [1].

For this reason, in order to effectively promote active participation, the student must take a leading role in decision-making. The teacher will observe the evolution of work teams that are formed in the classroom to promote the collaboration and participation of all students in the resolution of the practical cases. These situations are completely real, as the different teams will work to give solutions
to real problems raised by companies that they will have to solve. Their conclusions, will be presented to the professors, as well as to those responsible for marketing of the collaborating companies that have set their real objectives. All this, in a multinational environment, since the team work are composed of students of different nationalities.

1.1 Problem-based learning

Problem-based learning is a teaching method that allows students to learn through cooperative group work, through which they are intended to solve real problems. With these situations it is intended to awaken the student's initiative in order to learn the subject. This method of learning encourages critical and analytical thinking and the search for adequate sources of information [2].

The situations in which an individual can participate, express opinions and counteract them with others, is much more effective for learning and for changing attitudes than that situation in which the subject remains passive and in a position of listener.

Problem-based learning involves raising a problem to students so that they identify their learning needs. In a second moment the student will have to look for and deepen in the information necessary for the resolution of the case. Finally, they will make their solution proposal for the problem.

Problem-based learning implies the students in real, complicated and overcoming challenges. In addition, these cases must be reviewed by the teacher to meet the necessary requirements that help to achieve the learning objectives set out in the subject.

Cooperative work is the ideal medium to foster competency-based learning that incorporates tasks geared not only to training professionals but also to people who are able to respond to the needs of our society [3].

Problem-based learning follows a time line during which students will actively work in groups, which will mean that they have to collaborate with each other, always guided by the teacher. This will allow to acquire the expected knowledge, but also develop skills, attitudes and values, which differentiates it from more traditional teaching methods such as lectures. In this case, this will be reinforced by the fact that the working groups will be composed of students from different universities in different countries, that is, they will work in a multicultural environment that would hardly be achieved in other type of learning.

Higher education aims at developing attitudes, skills and establishing the basis of a fundamental knowledge that prepares students to effectively address the problems they will encounter in their professions [4].

The development of a work in multinational teams highlights the cultural dimensions and allows students to integrate in an environment where these differences are nothing more than a framework to help evaluation in a particular culture and, thus, better guide the decisions making within the group. [5]

1.2 International Marketing Course

This subject aims to allow the student to apply the marketing knowledge acquired so far in the Marketing degree to the specific context of international markets. In this way, the student must be able to demonstrate knowledge of the particularities of marketing activity in the international area, and analyze and value marketing planning in this context.

At present we are immersed in an economic world that operates at a totally global level. This course integrates both theory and application of international marketing, offering examples and international case studies and showing how business practices should be adjusted to the current market realities.

Throughout the course, the operations carried out by companies, both local and national as well as multinational, are developed from the beginning to reach maturity, taking into account the formation of international alliances. It also examines the growing interaction between business and government, e-commerce, technology and the digital revolution, social and demographic diversity, environmental, ethical and economic transformation aspects. With this, the student is expected to obtain solid knowledge about international marketing and its scope, so that, through the mastery of its contents and methodologies, it successfully establishes, executes and controls marketing, commercialization and sales strategies at an international level.

In view of the previous experience of teachers imparting both theoretical and practical classes in the area of international marketing, it was observed that involving students in projects as similar as
possible to what they will find in professional practice, increased their motivation and interest in the subject. That is why, in order to bring students closer to real cases, the possibility of introducing the realization of a practical case of international marketing in which the students interact and work in multicultural groups, integrated by students of different nationalities, is proposed. In addition, the work to be carried out will be related to collaborating companies that will ask the groups to work and solve the real problems with which these companies are in different countries when carrying out their internationalization.

2 METHODOLOGY

2.1 Objective of the project

From the previous experience of the professors who sign this work teaching classes of theory and practice in the subject of international marketing, it was concluded that the learning process of the students and their comprehension of the matter worked, are improved when the student's involvement in the topics covered is achieved, thus increasing his attention and motivation towards the subject.

Regarding the mentioned improvement of the performance, the possibility of seeking the involvement of the students through, not only of the working groups, but also of the multiculturalism of the same ones. For this, it was decided to form groups of students composed each of them by students from different universities. More specifically, twelve working groups were formed by six students each one, from the Cardenal Herrera CEU University in Spain, the Università degli studi di Trento, the North Caucasus Federal University (Russia), the People's Friendship University of Russia (Russia) and the Ural State University of Economics (Russia), which should work on real cases raised by the partner companies collaborating in this project.

With this, it was intended that the students take advantage of the practical aspect of the subject, integrating into a team of international characteristics, as this would be the most appropriate for a subject such as international marketing.

2.2 Methodology

The proposal presented here is based on the student's active participation techniques. As has been pointed out, the student joins a multicultural work group that must respond to a real practical case about international marketing raised for the occasion by one of the partner companies.

2.2.1 Phases

A. Previous programming by professors

At first, the professors structured the practices to be carried out in a coordinated way with the companies participating in the project. These were Casa Vigar and the Circuit Ricardo Tormo of Valencia, in Spain and the Italian companies: IMPA, Rothoblaas, San Marco and Deltamax. The Chief Marketing Officers of each of these companies proposed a series of international projects that would later be assigned to the different groups, a different project for each group, presenting the problem to be analyzed, the timeframes for its accomplishment and the objectives to achieve.

B. Formation of groups and assignment of cases

At the beginning of the course, a session was held through videoconference with all the students in different universities, in which the CMOs of the companies presented the company, give a briefing and explained the different projects that they proposed for their realization, with the collaboration of professors. At the same session, the work teams were composed, as has already been said, by students from different universities.

Subsequently, the projects were assigned to the different groups and from that moment the groups began to work, holding meetings by videoconferences with the CMO's of the companies to better specify the objectives, as well as the information necessary to carry out the work and other details so that you can start working immediately.

C. Work developed throughout the course

During all the course each group was working on the project that had been assigned to it. The way of working was through email, video conference and WhatsApp. In addition to the group meetings, the
teams also held periodic meetings with the marketing teams of the partner companies, as well as with
the professors of the subject who were at all times tutoring the work of the groups.

In a first phase, all groups had to present an internal analysis of the company that had been assigned
to them, a general analysis of their environment and a SWOT analysis. This first part was presented a
for its evaluation.

After the review of this first part by the professors of each university, each work team had to focus on
the concrete project that had requested by the company, that is, in the international marketing work
that had been commissioned. For the rest of the course, about ten weeks, students worked in the
international marketing to present before the course concluded.

D. Students evaluation

During the course, the professors had different meetings with all the teams in each university as
several meetings and Send emails between them to make sure the teams were working in the correct
direction.

At the end of the course, In a videoconference session all the groups made the presentation of their
works that had previously been sent to the professors and to the CMOs of the partners companies for
their evaluation.

Thus, for the evaluation of the work was taken into account, the previous report with the SWOT
analysis and both the final report drafted by the groups as the oral presentation. All the teams were
graded with an evaluation rubric that considered different criteria as organization and content, delivery,
media presentation, questions and answers and the goals set by the company. For the evaluation, the
opinion of the CMOs of the companies was taken into account.

3 RESULTS

The results obtained by the groups were generally quite satisfactory. While practically all of them were
able to offer quality jobs, there were clear differences between those groups whose members were in
contact more fluidly and were able to organize their tasks by assigning responsible and compliance
times and those other groups to which it was more costly to organize and distribute tasks, either
because of greater difficulty with the language used to communicate or because of the lack of clear
leaders who took responsibility for taking the group forward when tasks accumulated or difficulties
appeared.

In all the cases the objectives determined by the syllabus of the course were fulfilled and therefore the
method used demonstrates its validity as a learning methodology

For the partner companies the results were very satisfactory, in all cases, the analysis and advice
offered by the students have been taken into consideration for the development of their international
marketing strategies.

4 CONCLUSIONS

In general, it can be said that the team work composed of members of different nationalities and
based on real cases, has fulfilled the expected expectations. The students have worked in
multicultural environments and have had to work to coordinate with each other, overcoming different
barriers, such as language, physical distance, cultural difference or even time differences that in some
cases were up to four hours.

In addition, each of the groups has performed a similar work to the one they would develop in the case
of dedicating themselves professionally to international marketing. Its work has developed not only
under the academic supervision of the teachers, but also under the parameters indicated by the
companies, with certain objectives to be achieved within their corresponding deadlines and with the
control of the CMOs of the companies.

It is possible to conclude that the students have strengthened their theoretical knowledge in the field of
marketing and at the same time have developed different competences, such as applying this
knowledge to a real work, defending a project with arguments and solving problems raised in an
international business environment.
One of the most important competencies was the ability to identify and solve problems by applying professional criteria, understanding the organization for which they were developing the project and identifying their strengths and weaknesses. They have also worked on their ability to perform critical analyzes in qualitative and qualitative terms, including data analysis, their interpretation and the application to the concrete business reality presented to them.

On the other hand, working with colleagues from different nationalities has strengthened their ability to collect and interpret data from diverse sources and sometimes in a language other than their own, as well as the capacity for self-criticism and sensitivity to the diversity of people, cultures and businesses.

Finally, it is noteworthy that participation in this project has increased the ability of students to design an international marketing plan, using tools and variables related to marketing mix, following a process of research, planning, execution and control of strategic decisions Adapted to both the environment and the organization.

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