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экономика взаимного доверия**

Материалы
X Евразийского экономического форума молодежи

(Екатеринбург, 16–19 апреля 2019 г.)

Том 2

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Настоящее издание освещает широкий круг проблем современного мироустройства на пространстве Евразийского и Африканского континентов и Латинской Америки, креативные пути решения которых предложены молодыми учеными и студентами разных стран. Уже десять лет Евразийский экономический форум молодежи является площадкой для налаживания международных коммуникаций.

Материалы X ЕЭФМ представлены в трех томах: том 1 — приветственные слова участникам Форума и тезисы работ финалистов Конгресса экономистов; том 2 — открытые лекции экспертов и тезисы работ финалистов Конгресса инноваторов; том 3 — тезисы работ финалистов Конгресса финансистов и Конгресса сервисных технологий.

Для студентов, участвующих в научно-исследовательской работе, магистрантов и аспирантов.

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Learning international marketing in multicultural teams: the experience from UniTrento-USUE joint programme Trento Marketing Challenge

Abstract. The paper reviews educational activities that form the “Trento marketing challenge” international competition for students. The author identifies the aim and the main principles of the complex programme which combines elements and corresponding benefits of problem-based learning, practice-oriented internship, distributed teamwork, teleworking, cross-cultural collaboration, competitive environment, and professional assessment of the results. All the various peculiarities contribute to the ultimate goal of increasing the students’ competence in international marketing and consultancy.

Keywords: Problem Based Learning; teamwork; virtual teams; Higher Education international collaboration; international marketing.

The Trento Marketing Challenge was developed with the aim of connecting the students of the Master courses in International marketing with mostly small- and medium-sized companies that are exploring the possibility to enter some foreign market, specifically — at the start — in the Russian market. The main idea is to increase the competence of the students, by offering them the opportunity to work as a consultancy group. At the same time the firms can have “on tap” for four months a group of master students – supervised by their teachers – to carry out a targeted research on a foreign market of their interest.

From the didactic point of view, this project applies two correlated techniques that are a useful complement to the frontal lecture: the work in groups and the Problem Based Learning¹.

¹ See, among the many works on this subject [6; 7].

Problem-Based Learning (PBL) is a teaching method that puts students in contact with real situations. The analysis of real world problem and the search of a solution for them are the basis of a process of acquiring new knowledge.

Although PBL is often seen as alternative to ‘boring old lectures’¹, this author believes that it is best employed as a complement to the same ‘boring old lectures’, which are still the most solid way to transmit the basis of knowledge in any subject. Nevertheless, PBL is an important tool in teachers’ panoply, particularly when it is coupled, as most often happens, with working in groups.

In fact, arranging the students in workgroups to tackle learning tasks is a valuable system to facilitate and enhance the learning process. Moreover, teamwork as a teaching modality allows the development of diverse skills that are ever more important in the education and training of managers as well as any professional person.

PBL is a teaching technique whereby students learn through cooperative work done in groups (work meant to solve real problems). In this way, their critical and analytical thinking is encouraged as well as their ability to search for the required information and deepen it as necessary for the resolution of the case.

Great relevance for the students and the development of their operational competence is the fact that this method implies most often that the case on which the students work is a ‘real life’ case, because the groups have to accomplish tasks that are given them by real firms, setting real operative objectives. Moreover, this technique promotes the collaboration and participation of all the members of the team in the resolution of their practical case.

By working in groups — always guided by the teacher — the students must (learn to) collaborate with each other. They have to join in a common effort, they learn to express their opinions in a clear way, to debate them with others, who may have different ones, and reach together a solution to the task assigned to them. In this way, they not only acquire the knowledge that is at the basis of the learning process (this is a necessary — and prior — requirement), but also develop competences and attitudes that are summed up in the term soft skills.

¹ A widespread definition of PBL says that it “promotes student learning (emphasis in original) of concepts and principles *as opposed* (my emphasis) to direct presentation of facts and concepts”.

The Trento Marketing Challenge (TMC) is the (partial) application of this methodology to the teaching of the International Marketing subject in the Master in International Management of the University of Trento¹.

The first edition was successful and from then on TMC became a fixture in that course, being officially integrated in the syllabus. However, it was felt that something was still missing to give the students. The aim of an International Marketing course is, obviously, to ensure that the students learn how to apply the knowledge of marketing previously acquired the basic Marketing course to the specific context of the international markets. The students should gain knowledge of the peculiarities of marketing in the international dimension — and be able to demonstrate it by analysing foreign markets and by developing and evaluating marketing plans in that context. This is what a course structured as mentioned above attains. It integrates both the theory and the application of international marketing, and shows — by asking the students to do so — how marketing practices needs to be adapted to the different environments of the various international markets.

However, despite some recent tensions and slowing down in international trade (the neologism “slowbalisation” has been minted to describe the present situation), the economies of almost all countries operate at a fully integrated global level. But precisely because of this integration, being global does not just mean extending to the whole world the *geographic reach* of the firm. If it were so, learning how to analyse foreign markets and how to operate in them would be sufficient for preparing highly effective international managers. Being global also means expanding one’s own *cultural reach*, having the capacity to connect with people of different background and develop the capacity of working with them despite the differences. To be able to expand one’s own cultural reach requires expanding one’s own *intellectual reach*, by developing a global mindset [5]. A global mindset is based on the ability to develop and adopt criteria defining personal behaviour and business performance that do not depend on the peculiar beliefs, rules and assumptions of a specific country, culture or context.

¹ PBL was developed in some American medical school, where initial years’ students were overwhelmed by the mass of knowledge they had to acquire, which they found boring and pointless. It was then adapted for primary education, where the problem of keeping the pupils interested and receptive was heightened by their still limited attention span and learning capability due to their young age. It was then extended to other level of instruction and fields of study. This author is strongly convinced that PBL should not be the only component of a teaching programme, also because the efficacy of PBL in comparison with other teaching methods has been seriously questioned [8]. Therefore, the TMC constitutes half of the programme of the course, the other half being a more traditional mix of lectures and seminars by business people and visiting teachers.

These 'universal' criteria should be applied appropriately in the different countries, cultures and contexts where the individual (manager in this case) operates¹.

To attain the aim of helping the students of International Marketing acquire these traits and have a global reach, the initial format of the TMC was not sufficient. They would learn how to expand their geographical reach, but not acquire the skills necessary to achieve cultural reach and intellectual reach, as defined above. Of course, it is possible to impart knowledge of cultural diversities through lectures and other teaching methods [2]. Also the knowledge of methods and pitfalls of cultural interaction can be taught in this way. Indeed this is what is normally done in courses on International Marketing and International Management. However, to achieve this global reach knowledge is not sufficient if not accompanied by the development of skills that allow the students to use that knowledge to acquire it.

These skills are multifarious, ranging from accepting differences without *a priori* value judgements to being willing to communicate across linguistic and cultural divides, from adapting to different thought processes to understanding and empathising with the others. These skills can be understood but can never be acquired in a theoretical way. Only direct experience of the contact with different cultures, of interaction with persons of a different background can lead to their acquisition. Therefore, a multicultural environment should be provided for a more effective teaching and learning of international management and international marketing subjects. This can be attained by having in the class students of different nationalities that provide the culturally mixed environment where these skills can naturally develop. When joint programmes between universities of different countries create the necessary precondition, an additional method can be adopted: having groups composed of students of the different universities taking part to the programme.

This was the idea that, almost from the beginning, pushed for the enlargement of the TMC to some partner university. The first such partner was USUE and this partnership helped focusing the early editions of the TMC to the analysis of the Russian market. From an experimental participation of its students to the second edition of TMC, USUE found that the format of this programme was useful for its students, who appeared to be stimulated by the perspective of working in these mixed groups and indeed acquired enhanced

¹ It must be emphasised that for attaining such cultural reach and intellectual reach, it is not necessary to forget one's own culture and country to become a 'global citizen'. To the contrary: only maintaining one's own culture and nurturing one's own roots it is possible to really understand the importance of the peculiarities of each country, culture and context, the significance they have for the people living in each and the mistakes that can be made by ignoring them.

capabilities to interact and operate in international contexts. From the third edition the presence of USUE students became a fixture of the TMC. This interaction with USUE was further enhanced by the decision of USUE to include TMC in the contests within the EEYF forum. In the following five editions, other universities participated with their students¹, the most regular of them being the NCFU of Stavropol that has also become a fixed participant to TMC.

TMC is, then a complex programme that puts the students through a different learning process. This process is intellectually demanding and it challenges the students to exert additional and unusual effort. Learning in a multicultural environment means doing so in a diverse environment, where people of different origins and backgrounds mix together [1]. Learning in such a multicultural environment by means of group work not only further develops the intellectual teamwork skills of the students but also re-shapes them, because in a teamwork the role played by emotions is as important as that played by intellect [3]. The multicultural environment magnifies emotions such as excitement, enthusiasm, frustration, even demotivation, and makes it more complex dealing with them. However, if the intellectual complexity increases when working in multicultural teams, the necessity to handle considerations looking at problems from different viewpoints enhances the intellectual flexibility of the people involved [4].

The assessment of this experience is that to the acquisition of the knowledge of processes and instruments necessary to the management of business in an international environment, the TMC format — with working groups composed of students from different universities in different countries — allows the students to develop competences, attitudes and values that seldom can be developed with more traditional teaching methods.

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¹ The RUDN of Moscow and the CEU Cardenal Herrera of Valencia (Spain) in addition to the NCFU mentioned in the text.