Chapter 15
Pedagogical Strategies to Develop Business Graduate Competences

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ABSTRACT

This chapter provides examples of pedagogical strategies to business schools and business faculty to promote and develop specific competences in business education graduates. In so doing, the chapter recommends understanding the adult learning theory of Knowles, Holton, and Swanson (2011), which emphasizes the role of teachers and adult needs for learning. Teachers should facilitate the learning process and system and must engage students in a process of mutual inquiry. Even though there are different pedagogical strategies available for academic institutions to pursue in order to develop competences of different levels and types in students, it is concluded that in the learning process the learner must take center stage. Academic institutions and faculty should be creative in designing learning and teaching activities as well as diverse and implementable pedagogical strategies.

INTRODUCTION

Generic competencies are important for business professionals. These can be divided into four categories of competencies: individual, interpersonal, organizational and contextual. Even that there is a consensus on the importance of competences and their considerations for the curriculum design, little has been said on how to develop them in practice. For the AACSB (2011) the learning goals are focused on broad educational expectations from a university degree program. These learning goals specify the intellectual and behavioral competencies a program is intended to instill both in generic and managerial skills. Generally, faculty members are invited to define learning goals and to measure the level of success in accomplishing them but again not much has been said about how to develop these competences through teaching. It is clearly understood in the academia that teaching is a dynamic process and system and the teacher should use a flexible, adaptive, self-regulated and reflective activity to promote and achieve the

meaningful learning experience in students. Therefore, it is important to design effective pedagogical strategies to promote and develop generic competencies identified in the business education curriculum.

PEDAGOGICAL STRATEGIES TO DEVELOP INDIVIDUAL COMPETENCES

Generally speaking, in order to design pedagogical strategies to develop competencies in students of higher education programs, it is recommended to consider the adult learning theory of Knowles, Holton and Swanson (2011):

- Adults are motivated to learn as they experience needs and interests that learning will satisfy.
- Adult orientation to learning is life-centered; therefore, the appropriate units for organizing adult learning are life situations.
- Experience is the richest resource for adult learning; therefore the core methodology is the analysis of experience.
- Adults have needs to be self-directing; therefore, the role of the teacher is to engage in a process of mutual inquiry.

In order to develop individual competences, the professor should become a facilitator of the learning process and provoke thinking in the student individually. Having said it is also possible to design pedagogical strategies to develop individual competencies by allowing students to work collaborative projects inside and outside of the classroom. Collaborative projects (teamwork) help students to solve problems or make decisions considering different perspectives- individual as well as group. The best learning method is learning by doing. Though it depends on many institutional factors, however, it is doable to dedicate a full course (subject) in a particular study plan to promote and develop particular individual competences. For example, general education courses of academic programs of almost of all disciplines are designed to promote critical thinking, ethical behavior and information literacy skills in students. It is desirable to dedicate some of the disciplinary or core courses of business academic programs to promote and develop individual competences. Specific pedagogical method such as problem-based learning is considered extremely helpful in building individual competences in students.

Critical Thinking

There are different opinions on pedagogical strategies to develop critical thinking competency in students. Ennis (1992) believes that there are four ways to teach critical thinking: general, infusion, immersion and mixed. The *general* strategy refers to using specific courses or modules within a newly designed course to teach critical thinking skill. The *infusion* process is about incorporating specific objectives and activities to promote critical thinking skills into a course that already exists. The *immersion* process invites students to reflect and make judgments on any disciplinary courses, and finally, the mixed method is a combination of the general principles of the infusion and immersion processes. Abrami, Bernard and Borokho (2008) find that the mixed method has the greatest effects on critical thinking skills of students and therefore, they suggest that the development of such competences has to be incorporated into the design of courses or the academic program intentionally and explicitly. McPeck (1981) recommends the immersion method only for students of middle schools, arguing that critical thinking is possible only

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