

Chapter 5

Corporate Simulation and the Articulation of the Problem-Based Learning Methodology With the Continuous Assessment Model

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ABSTRACT

Academic success is a priority, and according to the literature review, it is associated with the application of problem-based learning methodologies or the continuous assessment model. The case study performed was based on the course unit Corporate Simulation (CS), part of the Accounting and Finance course academic curriculum. After describing the functioning process, objectives, and assessment model of CS, it was shown that from 2014/15 to 2019/20, the level of approval of CS was 94.8%. Also, from the results of the survey conducted with the students who completed CS, from 2007/08 to 2018/19, on a scale of 1 to 5, in options 4 and 5 (good and very good), the objectives weigh on average, 85.3%, and that, in the academic year 2019/20, the specific characteristics of functioning, as a consequence of COVID 19, did not cause changes in the trends of assessment and approval in CS.

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INTRODUCTION

One of the current concerns regarding education in Portugal, namely in higher education, is academic underachievement and abandonment, deserving as such urgent measures to be taken. In this sense, and in opposition, academic success, when it exists, must be publicized and its origin made aware. From this perspective, it is intended, in this study, to detail and deepen the functioning of a successful course unit, which, in the teaching of Accounting and Finance, associates with the continuous assessment model, the problem-based learning methodology (Silva, Aleixo & Teixeira, 2016).

Simultaneously, higher education is currently facing another major challenge: to train graduates who respond to effective organizational needs. Etxeberria and Pike (2011) state that future accounting professionals, in addition to the technical and scientific knowledge necessary for a good performance, must acquire other skills, namely, critical thinking and analysis, the ability to work in a team, to communicate, and to have a strong sense of responsibility and ethical commitment. Referring to learning needs, Serra (2004) mentions that they should include, among others, those that allow self-learning, group learning, and the use of technologies. According to Arbrecht and Sack (2000) and Jones (2010), regarding accounting education, there has been a greater approximation between the training provided by educational institutions and employers in the last decades.

Several authors associate the success of teaching with the use of various teaching methodologies, favoring the association of traditional methods where the teacher plays a crucial role in the learning process, with the problem-based methodology, where the student is the main responsible for learning. The articulation of these methodologies points to the use of traditional methodologies at the beginning of the course and, and when the curricular structure develops, and there is the need to articulate and consolidate knowledge, the use of the problem-based learning methodology (Teixeira, Silva, Aleixo, & Mata, 2015).

Alves, Moutinho, Pires and Ribeiro (2013) report that when students attend courses in which teaching is focused on learning, they feel much more motivated and are more likely to succeed. Castillo and Abad (2003) emphasize the importance of student and teacher involvement in the teaching/learning process.

Nevertheless, the application of new teaching methodologies, driving academic success and the preparation of graduates who respond to the current needs of organizations and the systematic changes in society, has consequently posed significant challenges to educational institutions, both in adjusting the curriculum structure, as well as in the teacher's performance and the accountability of students' acquisition of learning competencies. Then, it is to be expected to articulate current and differentiating curriculum structures with the behavioral change of teachers and students and a new approach in training/teaching, with practical effects on the results and quality of education.

Thus, this study, in addition to the introduction, is organized into four sections. Section one develops the theme of successful teaching, addressing the teaching methodology problem-based learning and the continuous assessment model. Section two is dedicated to the methodology applied in the study, and section three, to the case study. The case study begins with the description of the Corporate Simulation Course Unit in the curriculum structure of the Accounting and Finance Course, where the following topics are presented: the role of the teacher/tutor and the continuous assessment model of the Corporate Simulation Course Unit, followed by different perspectives of analysis of the course unit in the period from 2014/2015 to 2019/2020. In this section dedicated to the case study, specificities arising from the impact of the COVID 19 pandemic on teaching were also highlighted, namely in the academic year

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