


Seminars given by prestigious professionals to university students: student assessment and critical aspects for educational success

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Abstract

Within the initiative of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) promoted by the UN within the global project "Agenda 2030", one of the elements in which the University has a direct impact is the Objective number 4 of "Quality Education". Providing university students not only with theories and knowledge, but also giving them tools and references that help them face their professional future with the commitment to work for a sustainable world is one of the most commendable tasks of the Universities.

In line with this way of seeing teaching, an action plan has been developed, in one of the subjects for which the authors are responsible, focused on a third of the teaching activity being delivered by prestigious professionals, external to the University, with a link to the object and content of the subject clearly defined by the responsible professor. This collaboration has been reflected through three online seminars, and a recapitulation work by the students of a subject.

The results show a very positive reception from the students, as well as a very interesting critical spirit about which are the points of improvement for the next academic years. Based on this experience, the teaching guide for the subject of the next course will be built.

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Keywords: *organizational behavior and change management; Sustainable Development Goals; University subject; seminars; external professionals.*

Introduction

The work presented in this research is part of the framework of a teaching initiative directed by a group of university professors attached to the Polytechnic University of Valencia (UPV), more specifically within a Teaching Innovation and Improvement Project (PIME), that is linked to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) of the 2030 Agenda promoted by the UN (ONU, 2020a). The main objective of this PIME is to improve the degree of awareness and knowledge regarding the SDGs by university students (Oltra-Badenes et al. 2022a). To achieve this objective, a series of planned actions and a research protocol are proposed that will allow reaching the stated goal (Oltra-Badenes 2022b). In relation to this global objective of the PIME, in the communication presented here, an attempt has been made to implement a series of actions aimed at reinforcing SDG number 4 defined as "Quality Education" (UN, 2020b).

Specifically, it is intended that, consistently with the planning of theoretical and practical classes to be delivered in the subject, the subject responsible may plan relevant seminars delivered by external professionals and with recognized prestige in their professional fields. These seminars must be a complement to the theoretical and practical sessions, with content and timing consistent with the course planning, and must provide a real and realistic view of the practical and pragmatic perspective of the theoretical content of the subject. With this, it is intended that the students have, not only the personal vision of the professor of the subject, but also that they have a complementary vision of high value due to the professional prestige of the person who teaches each seminar.

With the aim of evaluating the impact and adaptation of this initiative to the expectations of the students, the delivery of 3 seminars in one University subject has been planned, and the students have been asked to evaluate:

- the adequacy of the seminar content
- the adequacy of the temporal planning of the seminar
- the suitability of the professional chosen to teach the seminar
- the impact on the student of having attended the seminar
- improvement advice from unmet expectations

The following sections show the framework chosen, as well as the development of the initiative, the results and the conclusions obtained from the feedback of the students.

Sustainable Development Goals (SDG)

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) are a set of goals that the United Nations Organization (UN) has put on the table as desirable to achieve a more friendly and sustainable world (Eisenmenger et al., 2020). It is a call to action to all citizens of the planet, without whose joint action it cannot be successful (UN, 2020c).

Justice and social ethics are the principles that drive these SDGs. Within the 17 SDGs proposed by the UN within the 2030 Agenda, number 4 refers to Quality Education (UN, 2020b), focused on reaching all citizens of the planet with inclusive and quality education, and key in the achievement of social equity. The activity whose results are presented in this study is dedicated to the development of this SDG number 4, in line with the efforts to provide students with valuable initiatives in their academic and training path towards their professional future.

Organizational Behavior and Management of Change” University subject

This university subject, from the last year of the Degree in Computer Engineering, taught at the Higher Polytechnic School of Alcoy (EPSA), has been chosen to launch this initiative. It is a subject framed in an eminently technological study plan, but whose study plan has endowed it with a humanistic training that complements the technological one.

Organizational Behavior (OB) is the field of study of behavior and psychological processes in contexts related to work. Individual, group and organizational variables are part of the global scenario that may lead to improve performance (Robbins et al., 2013; Kotter et al., 2021). What people do in an organization in order to facilitate the understanding of the complexity of the interpersonal relationships and people interactions, is the base to construct hypothesis about how that behavior affects the performance of the organization. It covers individual variables (perception, learning and change of attitudes, motivation and satisfaction, design and stress at work), group variables (group work, group communication, leadership and conflict), and organizational variables (politics, climate and culture and organizational change)

The choice of this subject has been made taking into account:

its temporary location in the last courses of the university degree, which puts students in the position of paying special attention to all those experiences that recognized professionals in the market can provide them

the theoretical content referring to aspects such as personality, motivation, diversity management, and all the emotional and rational aspects that can move individuals to commit to a cause (exactly what the SDGs intend)

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From these characteristics of the subject, it could be assumed that the development of training pills in seminar format, delivered by professionals of recognized prestige, and with a high link with motivational aspects and personnel management from the point of view of digital humanism, could add value to the students.

However, in a scientific field, these questions cannot be assumed without supporting data, and this assumption must be corroborated with data.

Therefore, the main objective of the work presented is to investigate the degree of acceptance by students of seminars taught by professionals, as well as the impact that these seminars have on the development of the SDG number 4, in line with the efforts to provide students with valuable initiatives in their academic and training path towards their professional future.

In this way, if the results show that through this type of activities, it is possible to improve the development of students and specifically, the development of SDG 4, action plans can be proposed to achieve this development in different subjects and university degrees.

1.Methodology

1.1.Choice of the professionals and delivery format.

Considering the general objective of the subject (the study of organizational behavior, the aspects of personality that guide it, and the management of diversity and intra-organizational motivation), and the technological framework in which it was developed (the Degree in Computer Engineering), three professional profiles have been selected:

Professional 1: a support engineer in a multinational information technology company, without team management responsibilities, but with a high dependency on other colleagues of different races, cultures, countries, etc.

Professional 2: a digital marketing manager of a computer consulting company, with a dozen people in his charge, a high degree of presence in social networks, and high public recognition for his campaigns and awards received

Professional 3: the head of Human Resources of a multinational technology company, to whom the Human Resources departments around the world report, with experience in both Spain and the USA

What has been asked of each of them is that, in a dynamic and interactive way, they present in no more than one hour what their way of seeing is (from the practical and experiential point of view in their companies) organizational behavior, as well as the motivational aspects of the staff and the management of diversity among employees. The remaining time up to two hours has been dedicated to direct questions from the students.

1.2.Content of the seminars.

After the election of three professionals, all of them linked to successful technology companies, and with recognized prestige, the delivery of three seminars linked to the content of the subject has been planned:

It is important to highlight that the three sessions are held online due to the different geographical location of the speakers, and that the three are made aware that they are art of an initiative linked to SDG number 4 (Quality Education).

Delivery	Content
Professional 1	Motivation. From the point of view of a basic employee, without responsibilities, but with extensive experience in the company, the professional is asked to express in a structured and concise manner what are the aspects and benefits (not just salary) that his company offers him. He is asked to assess which of these motivational aspects he perceives as the most valuable, as well as his perception of how his closest collaborators think of him.
Professional 2	Digital Humanism. Taking advantage of his management responsibility in the company, and his academic profile as an Associate Professor at a Public University, this professional analyzes the humanistic trends in the management of technological teams today, from its theoretical foundations to the more pragmatic aspects that it can contribute from their personal experiences.
Professional 3	Diversity Management. The professional 3, taking advantage of his responsibility for recruitment management and team management in a technological multinational, is asked to show in a clear and applied way what are the springs and tools that his company uses to integrate multidisciplinary teams, with members from different backgrounds. backgrounds and expectations, taking care that all team members respect the principles of organizational behavior that are part of the company's idiosyncrasies.

Table 1. List of seminars

1.3.Final evaluation of impact.

In order to be able to measure the impact and evaluate the adequacy of the initiative launched, students are offered the possibility of submitting a summary dossier with their learning, the conclusions obtained, and the evaluative aspects of the impact on them.

2.Results

Of the 18 students enrolled in the subject, an average of 11 have attended the delivered seminars, with a high degree of interactivity and student participation. With the aim of favoring the obtaining of feedback on their part, students have been offered the possibility of improving their overall grade for the subject by completing an evaluative dossier on the seminars, having obtained 8 responses from the students.

In general, the students show their pleasure and gratitude for the initiative, showing the following comments linked to the initial objectives of the study:

the adequacy of the seminar content: for the most part, the students show that the content delivered has been coherent and adequate, considering the theoretical content of the subject

the adequacy of the temporal planning of the seminar: the evaluation of the students is also positive, since each seminar has been delivered on time and in a coordinated manner with the progress of the theoretical and practical classes of the subject

the suitability of the professional chosen to teach the seminar: the chosen professionals have been to the liking of the students, some of the students having aroused a high interest, not only because of the theme of the seminar, but also because of other relevant aspects of the professional activity of the speakers

the impact on the student of having attended the seminar: the students show their conviction that the fact that not only the professor of the subject speaks to them, but also that people from outside the university tell them about their experiences, improves the quality of learning and makes them value what they have learned to a greater extent

Regarding improvement advice from unmet expectations, students refer to the following comments:

it would be interesting if some of the speakers had more traditional opinions and less favorable to the management of organizational behavior based on motivation and acceptance of diversity, to be able to compare

They request that one of the speakers give an extra session on employability and the use of tools such as social networks to improve their visibility and acceptability in the professional world.

they ask that similar acts be carried out in other subjects, since they provide them with alternative and different perspectives of the same topics, which makes them debate and reach their own conclusions

From these results, highly positive feedback is inferred, and very interesting lines of improvement.

Conclusions

From the results obtained, a high degree of acceptance is inferred and a good acceptance by the students in this way of complementing the theoretical-practical classes with seminars delivered by external professionals of recognized prestige.

The students show that, although it deals with the same contents, and even the same approach, listening to different people who speak in a pragmatic way about their own experiences, helps them to value each of the contents of the course to a greater degree, for what they evaluate very positively the initiative.

On the other hand, and as an area for improvement, students show their interest in listening to versions from different areas, which shows a very interesting critical spirit appropriate to their age and position in the university environment that can be used in debates and discussions. very productive.

Therefore, it can be concluded that the results obtained in the research presented show that through this type of activity, the seminars taught by professionals, it is possible to improve the development of the students and, specifically, their development and awareness regarding SDG 4. Therefore, based on the data obtained, action plans can be proposed to achieve this development in different subjects and university degrees.

However, it must be said that the results obtained are limited to a specific subject, of a specific degree and University, and may not be extrapolated to other environments.

For this reason, as future work, it is proposed to export this experience to other subjects and academic courses, taking into account the improvement proposals of the students.

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