

A Reinvented Education in Business and Accounting using a GBL Approach for Soft Skills

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Abstract: The vulnerable, dynamic and digitalizing working environments of the 2020s obviously propose new types of 'newcomer' skills. The character of these 'soft skills' is inherent, whereby their learning forms a challenge for educators. Researchers around the world are on the same question: how to make the learning tools and rebuilt the classroom (virtual and face-to-face) in order to cope with this digital generation? This change needs to incorporate new Skills; these skills, called Core Skills, are changing the way to teach and to learn. Motivation is the essential key to have in mind. Creating mind-sets under a strong cognitive engagement is education for the future of professionals. Gamification, Game-Based Learning (GBL), Simulations, Virtual classrooms, digital platforms with contents and many other methods are in use all around the world to change, with motivation, the perspective of students towards their own learning path. The VUCA (volatility, uncertainty, complexity and ambiguity) world brought Higher Education Institutions the discussion of the future for an education of excellence. This article intends to present a case study as a solution to combine Simulation and GBL to promote the Core Skills that students and teachers need to achieve success on the process of teaching and learning. The solution is innovative due to the main scope: the perfect connection of humanity and empathy through the use of Simulation-GBL in higher educational institutions.

Keywords: game-based learning, core skills, personalized learning, accounting education

1. Introduction

Several researches (Mourshed et al., 2014; WEF 2016; Bughan et al., 2018) indicate that the skills of graduates do not fully match with the needs of organizations and employers. This phenomena, known as 'skills mismatch' (OECD, 2016) or 'skills gap' (Mourshed et al., 2014), causes problems both for the organizations as well as graduates and young employees. For organizations, it means a deficit in organizational competence, which may deteriorate business success or customer relationships, whereas for graduates lack of skills may cause problems in their employability and career development.

In a study covering eight European countries (Spain, France, Italy, Germany, Portugal, Sweden, Netherlands and Greece) of McKinsey (Mourshed et al., 2014), over 3000 employers and managers were asked to rate skills that would probably be needed by employees by the year 2030, whereby they were also asked to assess the biggest gaps in existing skills by graduates and young professionals. According to the results, the most notable skills gaps were in soft skills (problem-solving, oral presentation, team working and creativity). These skills relate especially to the levels 4 and 6 in the EQF classification, and to the transversal skills defined in the European ESCO classification, elaborated during 2013-20.

Soft skills are non-domain-specific skills that are reported to improve interactions, work performance, critical thinking and career prospects (Heckmann and Kautz, 2012; Anthony and Garner, 2016). As education should be able to equip graduates and employees with the needed skills, the skills shift has created a challenge also for educational institutions and HR experts. The right skills and competencies should be taught and learned at educational institutions. Regarding soft skills specifically, it seems that their role has not fully been acknowledged in curricula (García-Aracil and van der Velden, 2008; Tedesco, Opertti and Amadio, 2014).

The present work is based on the research made in CoSki21- Core Skills for 21th-Century Professionals, in all the multiplier events and in the practice of two curricular units in Portugal and Finland. In Portugal 18 years after the launch of the Management Simulation (MS) on the 3rd year of the Accounting and Administration Course at IPP-ISCAP (Polytechnic of Porto) 9 of research, on the innovative approach of MS as a methodology to teach and