

MARK'IT – PROJECT BASED LEARNING IN ACTION

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ABSTRACT

The Bologna Process led higher institutions to rethink their teaching methodologies. Indeed, the Bologna process drove higher institutions to inventive changes in teaching in order to assure their competitiveness and effectiveness (Piro, 2016). European Higher Education Institutions have been restructuring curricula to be more student-centred and to enhance the quality of teaching (Reichert & Tauch, 2005). It was in this spirit that the Marketing Bachelor Degree at the Polytechnic Institute of Viseu restructured its curriculum in the academic year of 2012/2013, incorporating the main principles of project based learning. One of the main principles incorporated in this new curriculum was an interdisciplinary approach to learning starting in the second year. The philosophy of this new curriculum was to provide students with the basics of marketing in their first year, so that in their second year they could apply the theoretical concepts in a more practical and interdisciplinary setting. It is in the second year that the project based learning begins: every year a theme is chosen and each team of second year students develops, according to this theme, a product from the design phase until it is placed on the market, working on several aspects: product design, market strategy, communication, advertising, branding, distribution, among others. At the end of the second year the students have gone through all the marketing dimensions necessary to launch a product in the market. This process leads students to integrate knowledge from multiple areas, in which the final result largely exceeds the simple sum of the learning outcomes of the curricular units considered individually. Students gain thinking and action autonomy, by experiencing problem solving situations. The competences they acquire are fundamental for their future professional careers. For this to be achieved, a different approach to teaching was implemented. The lecturer - one of the main players in this project-based learning – must be a motivator, a facilitator, a technical specialist and an evaluator. The lecturer encourages a learning environment where curiosity, creativity and students' effort will determine the final results. This project based learning with a strong focus not only on an interdisciplinary approach, but also on different teaching methodologies, was coined with the term "Mark'it". Since it was implemented, students have demonstrated a greater autonomy and acquisition of skills, observable, for instance, in their internships. Recently, Mark'it has taken on a new challenge by involving other Bachelor Degrees, moving from an interdisciplinary approach to a transdisciplinary approach.

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