

First Day Of Class Activities implemented at La Salle URL in line with the *New Learning Context*

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Abstract—This document presents the impact that the first session of class of a subject may have on students, in line with the objectives of the New Learning Context (NLC) implemented at La Salle Universitat Ramon Llull (La Salle-URL). As a result of a research work undertaken on the Technology Enhanced Learning Research Group (GRETEL), diverse practical activities were implemented within the context of diverse management subjects taught in ICTs Engineering Programs in order to achieve specific objectives in each subject. Findings show that the activities carried out during the first session of class were highly valued by both, the instructors, and the students, according to the feedback given once they experienced the activities.

Keywords—ICTs Engineering Programs, First Day of Class, Management Subjects, New Learning Context, Teaching Innovation.

I. INTRODUCTION

This work presents different experiences that were implemented during the first session of class of diverse management subjects at La Salle Campus Barcelona, Universitat Ramon Llull (La Salle-URL) with the goal of engaging students in these subjects. The performed activities were based on the findings highlighted in diverse empirical works [1]–[4]. According to the latter academic contributions, students prefer doing certain class activities during the first session of class, while other ones are undesired. Besides, specific activities can be designed ex ante by the instructors in order to reach explicit objectives [5]–[8], once analyzed previously both, the subject itself and the cohort of students that are going to attend classes in a precise academic year.

The New Learning Context (NLC) deployed at La Salle-URL has become a framework applied to all the disciplines taught at La Salle Campus Barcelona [3]. When applying NLC, the first session of class is explicitly designed as an essential key point. So, carefully planning the different activities to be performed during that session is likely to shape and conditionate the whole subject.

The aim of this writing is to present the diverse approaches and designs of the first session of class in different subjects that were implemented. The specific content of each session was designed depending on the specific nature of each single subject and the desired objectives to achieve.

II. MOTIVATION AND BACKGROUND

A. New Learning Context at La Salle-URL

The NLC has been deployed at La Salle-URL during the last three years to take advantage, on one hand in technology, and on the other hand in teaching and learning techniques. Most of the new entrants at the university are familiar somehow in Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs). When referencing to La Salle-URL undergraduates, it can be assumed that almost all of them are quite skilled in ICTs. Why? Because all the different undergraduate programs offered at the center (ICT Engineering; Animation; Digital Arts; Business and Management; Architecture) have a core orientation on leveraging the specific knowledge and required skills of each specific ambit by using Information Technology (IT).

Briefly synthesized, NLC is based on five pedagogical principals (Interiority; Mind, Body & Movement; Thought Construction; Self-Regulated Behavior; Social Dimension of Learning) which result in five learning environments (Welcoming; Seminar; Workshop; Project; Closure), as shown in [3]. All the activities carried out during the first session of a subject, according our design, configured the whole Welcoming learning environment.

B. First Day of Class Activities

Activities carried out during the first session of class have been studied in diverse research works [1]–[4]. The referenced research works were focused on identifying what students would like to do ('likes') or not ('dislikes') during the first session.

A complementary line of research works related with the first day of class activities are oriented to check the outputs that are obtained once a specific activity is carried out in that session. Depending on the activities done, different goals may be pursued. A synthetic list of objectives is presented in [3] and it

can include: just presenting the syllabus; introducing the subject; introducing the instructor; creating positive or negative experiences to the attending students; establishing a climate of the class sessions (e.g., trying to stimulate students' participation by means of dynamic sessions of class where interaction was appreciated,...); or some other specific activities to cope with a specific issue according to the instructors' perceptions. Despite is out of the scope of this writing, different activities can be done in the classroom (e.g., presenting and discussing the syllabus, level tests, a standard class session that includes subject content, reciprocal interview activities, icebreakers...).

III. ACTIVITIES AND RESULTS

Different surveys and activities were done during the first sessions of class of diverse management subjects in the context of the seven ICT engineering undergraduates programs taught at La Salle-URL. All activities were designed with the main goal of enhancing students' engagement in management subjects.

A. 2020-2021 Academic Course. 'Value Chain and Financial Economics'.

This is an annual 2nd year subject imparted to all the students of the 7 ICTS engineering programs. Both semesters are quite different in terms of content. When undergraduates start this subject, not all the students have met in the classroom altogether during the previous course. During the first session of the first term (Financial Economics), two class activities were carried out were participated in each one of the sessions all the team of instructor that taught classes in the different classroom groups [3]. The activities are succinctly described next:

- A survey to get undergraduates feedback about their 'likes' and 'dislikes' to collect data about their preferences.
- A briefly explanation of the syllabus of the subject was carried out, followed by a Reciprocal interview Activity. Secondary goals: meet students in reduced groups when preparing the interview; introducing the instructors; foment a class climate that stimulate students' participation.

During the first session of the second term (Value Chain), a discussion between the undergraduates and the instructor was started about the initial ideas and concepts that students had on Marketing topics. Apparent paradoxes were presented by the instructor to incentive the dialogue and the debate.

B. 2020-2021 Academic Course. 'Information Systems'.

This is a first-term 4th year subject imparted exclusively to undergraduates of the degree in engineering in ICT Management. A survey to get feedback about 'likes' and 'dislikes' to get data about their preferences [4].

C. 2020-2021 Academic Course. 'Entrepreneurship and Innovation', a 2nd term 4th year subject; and 'Organisational Management', a 2nd term 3rd year subject.

In both subjects a Reciprocal Interview activity was carried out to introduce the instructors and to create a participatory climate in the classroom.

D. 2021-2022 Academic Course. 'Business and Engineering', an annual 1st year subject; 'Value Chain and Financial Economics'; 'Entrepreneurship and Innovation' and 'Organisational Management'.

The experience about developing different forecasted First Day of Class activities has been planned oriented to the primary goal of enhance undergraduates' engagement, while focusing on additional aims if possible, in some subjects. Specifically, in the case of the 'Business and Engineering' subject, the Reciprocal Interview activity was conducted by the instructor of the course and the program coordinator who oversees the subject. The goal was, on one hand to talk about the subject itself, and on the other hand to give an integrated view of all the diverse management subjects that were going to be studied during the degree.

All the reciprocal interview activities were assessed by the students, receiving a very positive assessment. Additionally, instructors that participated in the activity were very satisfied with the dynamic. A complete study on the activities and findings presented in A and B are detailed in [3], [4].

CONCLUSIONS

This contribution tries to shed light about different activities that can be performed by the instructors during the first session of class of a subject. Once we had to implement the NLC in the different subjects, we reviewed different research works to implement the Welcome learning environment. We saw that studies on the First Day of Class activities were very interesting and we decided to design activities with the goal of enhancing engagement in engineering students. The findings that we have get once analyzed the feedback given by students after completing the activities can be considered very positives. Besides, instructors' perceptions once the activities were carried out were also considered very valuables and useful.

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