Entrepreneurship and Starting-up among zombies

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Abstract— **To promote creative ways to solve problems, to evaluate ideas from multiple perspectives while understanding and learning from others, a fictitious case study was proposed for secondary school students to use known theoretical concepts and to design an innovative project in a practical way.**

Keywords— business, design thinking, entrepreneurship, innovation, learning activity, problem solving, role playing, start up, summer school, zombies.

I. INTRODUCTION

This case study explains the experience of the author of this document with a group of pre-university students in the context of the 2022 Summer School at Campus La Salle Barcelona. The activity was called Next Business Generation and lasted two weeks. The idea was to present and deal with the topics following a practical-theoretical approach as opposed to the more traditional theoretical-methodological one. To this end, it was decided to propose a fictitious (not real) work topic, unknown to the participants, on which to apply a series of known (real) theoretical concepts. The aim of this activity was to encourage students' creativity by defining an innovative value proposition that would characterize a new business model.

II. DESIGN OF THE ACTIVITY: PREVIOUS CONSIDERATIONS

This activity's design considered the duration established by the university and a series of competences that secondary school students developed during this stage of their education. Skills such as teamwork (to develop social skills and learn to work with people from different backgrounds and personalities), decision-making (to develop critical thinking, planning and responsibility for their actions) and public presentation (to help them present their ideas clearly and persuasively, develop self-confidence and overcome stage fright) were considered.
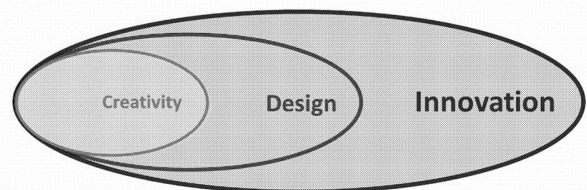
To apply a practical approach, it was decided to implement an educational activity whose elements are typical of a game:

creation of an alternative world, space and time limits, interaction rules, use of artefacts and final objectives (Gray et al, 2010). Considering that the profile of the international students was not known in detail, but their common interest in the academic area of Business was known, it was considered that this would facilitate the definition of a terminology easy to understand for secondary school students, which would allow them to work on new concepts associated with the development of projects.

III. CLASS DYNAMICS

Creativity is considered a highly valuable competence (Anderson, 2020) and is defined as the ability to create new ideas and exploit their opportunities. The aim is to turn ideas into new products or services through a decision-making process (Design) and finally to successfully implement them (Innovation) (Ibáñez, 2019).

Fig. 1. Design extending to Innovation, with Crativity at its core (Lokku et al, 2019).

A fictitious theme was presented to ensure that the starting point is similar for all participants. In this case the (non-real) Zombie theme would serve as a starting idea for the development of a (real) project concept. To guide the development of the activity, concepts and tools widely used in the Business knowledge area were applied, allowing an orderly

and progressive approach to the area of study in question. In this case, the Business Model Canvas became the basic template to design the value proposition and a specific user profile.

Considering the above about how a game is organized, several reliable sources and databases were established so that the students could inform themselves about the topic. In this way, a useful brainstorming session was held afterwards. The professor supported the students' decision-making process, familiarizing them with the concepts of "desirable, feasible and viable", which are typical of the methodology of Design Thinking.

Although it was necessary to provide theoretical explanations, the work sessions were held in an environment that facilitated dynamism: teamwork, brainstorming sessions, role-playing and user data collection, definition of project functions, design of solutions and presentation of final proposals. To gather information from potential users, a role-play activity was developed to recreate a fictitious situation on campus. The different groups of students helped each other: some were the interviewers and others became Zombies to influence the responses of potential users.

Fig. 2. Example of the role play activity involving students on campus.

All these activities were intended to enhance the possibility of finding creative ways to solve problems, to evaluate ideas from multiple perspectives while understanding and learning from others, characteristics that link creativity and divergent thinking.

IV. CONCLUSIONS

The usual lack of knowledge on a fictitious topic, prevents working with preconceived notions and serves to prove that creativity implies knowledge, being enthusiastic and having motivation.

Since people tend to ignore design that ignores people, the concept of "desirable" (in relation to Design Thinking) is emphasized to highlight the importance of considering the creation of (new) experiences that improve existing ones.

With the use of familiar tools and methods, and the guidance of the educator, the students understand that ideas developed on a fictitious topic (Zombies) can be used as a basis and adapted to real situations.

In addition to the positive feelings of the teaching staff after this educational experience, the two communications received (one from a participant and the other from a direct relative of another student) should be considered as a positive evaluation of the teaching work carried out. Bearing in mind that both the competences already acquired and the individual interests of a group of secondary school students coming from different countries can differ widely, it makes sense to hold a new edition of this program to verify the satisfaction of the participants.

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