TEACHING METHODS: STUDY AND RESULTS IN SEVERAL MODULES OF BUSINESS STUDIES

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Abstract

This work was carried out throughout three academic years (2006/07, 2007/08, and 2008/09) within the context of assessment of teaching methods, following the implementation of new Module Guides in several modules representative of the programme in Business Studies of the University of Alicante. The aim of this study was to analyse the results obtained after the implementation, and later amendment, of these Guides. The results were contrasting: they were highly promising, with high and growing success rates in some modules, whereas other modules showed the opposite tendency. Instructors applied a range of teaching methods. We draw attention to the fact that methods focused on the students seem to help them to learn better, they bring about a higher level of significant learning, and are more adequate to encourage memorisation and transfer of knowledge than teaching methods focused on the instructors.

The transfer of experience of several modules (core, compulsory, and optional) in the three years of the programme in Business Studies gained through this study has proved that the level of students' commitment to their own learning process has increased significantly, which has allowed their conceptual, procedural, and attitudinal skills to improve. With respect to the results, firstly, we found a group of modules in the first and second year (we called this group G1), which students must take to obtain their degree, where classes were large, there were several classes, and it was not possible to apply the methodology equally in all of them. The results showed a certain improvement regarding the previous academic year. Secondly, it is worth mentioning a year 3 module (group G2) that, although it was compulsory, had a small class, and obtained considerably better results: 100% of the students that sat the examination in the January exams period passed the module. Thirdly, another group of modules (group G3) included optional year 3 modules, whose results are not easily interpreted. Particularly, the adaptation of the modules to the number of registered students, and the workload, consequence of the varied teaching methods applied during the academic year 2007/08, brought about worse-than-expected results.

Finally, we observed that teaching in the field of Business Studies is based on a combination of activities that use diverse typologies of methods appropriate to each type of module. The core teaching methods are didactic (lectures, directed reading, practical classes, keynote speeches, and seminars) complemented with case studies, problem-solving exercises, and individual or group independent research.

Keywords: Assessment, teaching methods, module guide, Business Studies.

1 INTRODUCTION

The European Higher Education Area (EHEA) in which we are immersed means that instructors and students are rethinking the learning process to face future challenges, both in the classroom and outside of it, that is, in the professional world that the students, whom we are now teaching, will be facing. Learning is a change of behaviour brought about by the assimilation of experiences, knowledge, and new stimuli. Learning is also the development of the students' individual capabilities, i.e., their aptitudes and attitudes. However, learning is not something static, but a factor that develops throughout the students' lives, and changes as they mature, consolidate their knowledge, and find out how it can be used. At a time of change such as the current one, learning through the above-mentioned change of behaviour means, as well as assimilating knowledge, adapting to the new pedagogical procedures that most of the instructors are already introducing in their modules. We

should also bear in mind that the life cycle of the knowledge acquired in universities is changing, which results in a 'knowledge gap' that several authors have pointed out ([1], [2], [3], [4], [5], among others). Companies are also concerned about this phenomenon, and wonder whether future executives will manage their companies with concepts and techniques that may quickly become obsolete. Thus, students' learning should not refer exclusively to the knowledge that instructors impart, but also to their attitudes, and the approach they choose for their subject. In short, the objective is to get students involved in the continuous learning process demanded by companies and society. Furthermore, learning well demands clear objectives, coherent language, carefully chosen content presented in an adequate sequence, positive attitudes towards students, and of course, suitable teaching methods.

2   THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study was carried out during the period of implementation of Module Guides in several modules of the three-year programme in Business Studies offered by the University of Alicante Business School (*Escuela Universitaria de Ciencias Empresariales*, EUCE, in Spanish). The Module Guides were designed, implemented and amended as part of the work performed by the Teaching Network of the Programme in Business Studies (known in Spanish as *Red EUCE*) within the Project of Training and Research in Teaching – Type II: Research Networks in Higher Education Teaching within EHEA, organised by the Institute of Education Sciences (*Instituto de Ciencias de la Educación*) of the University of Alicante in the academic years 2006/07, 2007/08 and 2008/09. Higher education teaching has traditionally attached more importance to content, and has underestimated the relevance of teaching methods in learning outcomes. Content is obviously an essential aspect, but teaching methods should not be overlooked, and should be paid enough attention. They have developed constantly in relation to pedagogical needs. Brown and Atkins' [6] classification of the different teaching methods places them on a continuum. At one extreme is lecturing, where the participation and control of the students is minimal. At the other extreme is autonomous learning, where instructors generally have lower control and participation. Between these two extremes we find tutorials, laboratory work, seminars, individual research, or project supervision. It is no easy to classify these teaching methods. Each of them also comprises a range of teaching methods with varying degrees of instructor and student participation.

The aim of pedagogical procedures is to teach. Therefore, they are related to the content of the different disciplines. The effectiveness of the pedagogical procedure used by the instructor will, to a large extent, determine the knowledge that students acquire, and the development of their intellectual capacity. Instructors must try to find and use appropriate teaching and assessment methods. Educational and teaching methods offer different types of procedures that, according to their inner coherence, produce specific educational effects. A traditional classification distinguishes between [7]: (a) Didactic method. Also known as 'directive or autocratic style', is based on logocentrism and an instructor-centred approach. It revolves around the instructor, who explains the logical and quantitative aspects of the subject matter; (b) Dialectic method. Students do not merely listen, but they also engage in dialogue about the issues presented by the instructor, and both parts ask and answer alternately; (c) Heuristic or research method. This method makes students the protagonists of their learning process, since they must find, guided by the instructor, and through research and experimentation, the solutions to the problems. From the mentioned methods, we could draw the conclusion that more initiative on the part of the student (dialectic and heuristic methods) may diminish scientific intensity. On the contrary, this intensity can increase by using the didactic method. However, students have a passive role in this method, so they do not externalise the questions that the topics explained by the instructor bring to their minds, and that may reduce the effectiveness of the teaching-learning process. As a matter of fact, it is difficult to point out the superiority of one of these methods over the others, since the benefits of using one particular method or another depends, to a large extent, on the teaching objectives, the scientific knowledge of the students, and the circumstances in which the process takes place.

With respect to teaching methods, the most relevant aspects have to do with, on the one hand, how learning is influenced by the method applied, and on the other hand, the characteristics of each method regarding the basic teaching objectives and the type of learning. The first aspect tries to relate teaching strategies to the type of learning in which the student is involved. Using Novak and Gowin's work [8], we have classified the different teaching strategies (Fig. 1). We see how learning outcomes will be different according to the teaching strategy used by instructors. Lecturing contributes to receptive learning, with varying degrees of significance, while keynote speeches or seminars have a larger load of significant content. On the other hand, the case method does not foster receptive

(passive) learning, but an active one (discovery guided by the instructor), and writing essays allows students to learn autonomously, apart from the initial briefing by the instructor.
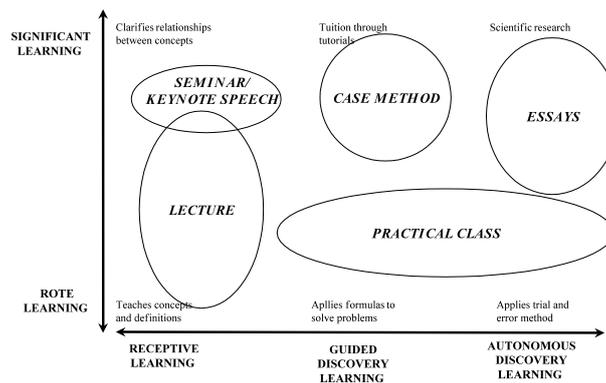

Figure 1. Position map of teaching methods according to the intended type of learning

Source: Sarabia [9], based on Novak and Gowin's work [8]

The second of the above-mentioned aspects refers to the degree to which each method allows to achieve the intended educational aims, or to propose teaching and learning actions. The characteristics of each method enable it to achieve the teaching objectives with very different degrees of success, as table 1 shows. Thus, we have come to the previously suggested conclusion: there is not a better method, and consequently, we must think of a combination of them. We must know which methods can be used and which cannot, which one is the suitable combination, and whether the same combination of methods must be applied in all modules. Based on the work of Ferrández, Sarramona and Tarín [10], we propose a valid typology of teaching methods, although certain methods may be included in several categories: (1) Didactic teaching, that is, those strategies for unidirectional transmission of knowledge. This category includes methods such as lectures, directed reading, practical classes, and keynote speeches; (2) Socialised teaching allows the participation of the students. It comprises participatory education, group dynamics (debates, seminars, and workshops, Phillips 66, visits to companies, discussion of articles), simulation (case method, mini-case, role-playing, business games, and expert systems), and working in groups to write essays, projects, etc; (3) Individual teaching includes mainly tutorial activities and the individual supervision of research projects.

Table 1. Assessment of the most common teaching methods

EDUCATIONAL AIMS			
Teaching methods	Transmission of knowledge	Understanding of facts and theories	Capacity to apply concepts	Formation of attitudes
Lecture	Excellent	Very good	Average	Average
Discussion of text	Very good	Average	Poor	Very good
Practical class	Average	Good	Good	Poor
Essay	Good	Very good	Good	Poor
Case method	Poor	Good	Very good	Good
Simulation	Poor	Very good	Very good	Poor
Seminar	Good	Very good	Good	Average
Keynote speech	Very good	Very good	Average	Average
Tutorial	Good	Very good	Good	Average
Visits to companies	Average	Very poor	Poor	Very good
ELEMENTS RELATED TO LEARNING			
Teaching methods	Involvement of the student	Interaction instructor-student	Significance of learning	Main type of learning
Lecture	Very low	Very low	Variable	Receptive
Practical class	Average	Baja/regular	High/mean	Receptive
Discussion of text	Good	Good	High/mean	Guided
Essay	Excellent	Low	Variable	Autonomous
Case method	Very good	Good	Very high	Guided

Table 1. Assessment of the most common teaching methods

EDUCATIONAL AIMS				
Simulation	Very good	Very low	Mean/low	Autonomous
Seminars	Average	Good	Very high	Receptive
Keynote speech	Poor	Very low	Very high	Receptive
Tutorial	Average	Very high	Very high	Receptive
Visits to companies	Very high	Very low	Mean	Guided

Sources: Authors' elaboration based on Rodríguez-del Bosque [11] for 'educational aims', and Sarabia [9] for 'elements related to learning'.

Based on the work of Ferrández, Sarramona and Tarín [10], we propose a valid typology of teaching methods, although certain methods may be included in several categories: (1) Didactic teaching, that is, those strategies for unidirectional transmission of knowledge. This category includes methods such as lectures, directed reading, practical classes, and keynote speeches; (2) Socialised teaching allows the participation of the students. It comprises participatory education, group dynamics (debates, seminars, and workshops, Phillips 66, visits to companies, discussion of articles), simulation (case method, mini-case, role-playing, business games, and expert systems), and working in groups to write essays, projects, etc. (3) Individual teaching includes mainly tutorial activities and the individual supervision of research projects.

3   OBJECTIVES

The methodologies to be designed must answer three basic questions: how the students' learning will be organised, how this learning will develop, and how it will be assessed. Teaching methods entail different ways of organising and implementing academic activities, as well as different roles for instructors and students. The role and tasks that instructors must perform when they use a presentation style are different to those required when they plan an activity around case studies. Similarly, the degree of student participation, and the work that students will be asked to carry out vary according to the teaching method applied by the instructor. Thus, the decision-making as regards the method to be used in the teaching-learning process does not end when a particular method is chosen. In order to achieve a methodological change (a paradigm change in the teaching-learning process) is essential to specify the tasks that students must perform, since the aim is to make students the protagonists of their own learning process.

Generally speaking, our experience suggests that today's students do not quite comply with the profile that the Bologna Process advocates, which it also seems to be the profile demanded by the labour market. Consequently, we put forward the following research questions: *What are the results of the teaching methods introduced by the new Module Guides? Can instructors apply the wide range of new methods designed by their Module Guides in the new context of the EHEA? And if so, can they apply them in the same conditions in which they have been teaching their modules? And finally, is there a teaching method more suitable than the rest for the programmes in Business Studies?*

To give an answer to these questions, our **main objective** is to assess the most suitable methods to teach several modules in Business Studies. These modules have different characteristics and content, number of students, and their learning resources. Our **secondary objectives** are to assess the results obtained after the implementation of the new Module Guides, and to observe whether it is possible to use all the proposed methods if the current teaching conditions (large classes, time spent by instructors on follow-up, etc.) are maintained.

4   METHODOLOGY AND RESEARCH PROCESS

Red EUCE (Teaching Network of the Programme in Business Studies) has become, since its creation, an essential vehicle for instructors to communicate relevant information about the different modules, representative of the programme in Business Studies (see table 2), that they teach, and the teaching methods they apply. The Guides of the modules taught by instructors that are members of the network were designed during the academic year 2006/07, and implemented over the academic year 2007/08, as they had been previously designed. During the academic year 2008/09, the members of Red EUCE made the necessary adjustments to deal with the shortcomings identified during the implementation of the Module Guides. This facilitated the exchanging of information, and above all, it allowed us to

compare different types of modules (core or optional, and year in which they are taught), the methods applied, and the results obtained in each module through the Module Guides. Thus, the process of adaptation to the situation defined by the Bologna Process, and the gathering of information to carry out this study took three academic years. We performed a comparative analysis of the teaching methods used in the modules included in Red EUCE throughout the above-mentioned years. Likewise, we compared the results obtained in those modules after the implementation of these methodological changes.

Our decision to work with the marks obtained by the students in their first examination period (January for first semester modules, June for second semester modules) is based on the idea that such marks show more reliably the impact of the teaching methods included in the Guide of each module within Red EUCE, and implemented during the corresponding semester. This is due to the fact that teaching and assessment periods take place one right after the other. Another aspect is that this first examination period is the time when 100% of the students can sit the exams, which can provide very significant results. As a matter of fact, we decided to rule out students' marks from July's resit examination period. On the one hand, the results of resit exams show the marks of those students that either failed the module at the first examination period, or decided not to sit the exams then, which means these results in no case correspond to 100% of the students. On the other hand, up to several months can go by between the teaching and the assessment periods, which may influence the correlation between teaching methods and learning outcomes.

Table 2. Module Guides designed and implemented in the programme in Business Studies. Academic years 2007/08 and 2008/09

Module	Code	Type/Year	Semester	Spanish credits (ECTS*)	Students registered 07/08	Students registered 08/09
Statistics I	7226	C/1st	Second	4.5 (6)	752	709
Mathematics	7262	C/1st	First	9 (11,25)	1066	1057
Cost accounting	7196	C/2nd	First	4.5 (6)	272	211
Commercial law	7204	C/2nd	Second	4.5 (6)	800	538
World economic history	7247	CC/2nd	First	4.5 (6)	266	259
Foreign trade: European Union	7194	O/3rd	First	4.5 (6)	89	79
Company law	7208	O/3rd	Second	4.5 (6)	115	60
Commercial distribution	7217	O/3rd	First	4.5 (6)	136	111
Financial planning and control	7272	CC/3rd	First	4.5 (6)	40	55
Business organisation and administration I	7270	T/1st	First	7.5 (6)	757	668

C= Core; CC= Compulsory; O= Optional; * European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System

5   RESULTS

The implementation of new Module Guides in the modules within Red EUCE during the academic year 2007/08, following the guidelines set out by the Bologna Process, and the adjustments made during the academic year 2008/09, showed that the new methods increase the participation and involvement of the students. This is due to the implementation of more active methodologies. The main teaching method is still the interactive lecture, complemented with more participatory methods such as presentations, online and face-to-face tutorials to follow up students' learning, the use of tests throughout the course for continuous assessment, visits to companies, and the use of the learning contract in several modules (see tables 3 and 4).

Table 3. List of teaching methods applied to teaching in Business Studies during academic years 2007/08 and 2008/09

TEACHING METHODS			MODULES																			
			7226		7262		7196		7204		7247		7194		7208		7217		7272		7270	
(Piaget 1979)	(Ferrández, Sarramona y Tarín, 1984)	Rodríguez del Bosque (1993) and Sarabia (1995)	A	B	A	B	A	B	A	B	A	B	A	B	A	B	A	B	A	B	A	B
Didactic (autocratic)	Didactic teaching	Lecture	X		X	X	X	X	X				X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X
Dialectic (dialogue) and heuristic	Didactic teaching	Interactive and participatory lecture		X						X	X	X					X					
Dialectic (dialogue) and heuristic	Didactic teaching	Practical class	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X		X	X	X	X	X		X	X
Heuristic	Socialised teaching	Compulsory essays							X	X			X	X			X					
Heuristic	Socialised teaching	Optional essays	X	X				X		X	X	X									X	
Dialectic	Socialised teaching	Case method													X	X				X	X	X
Dialectic	Socialised teaching	Mini-case															X	X				
Dialectic	Socialised teaching	Discussion	X	X							X		X								X	
Dialectic		Online discussion															X					
Dialectic	Individual teaching	Face-to-face tutorial			X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X
Dialectic	Individual teaching	Online tutorial			X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Dialectic	Socialised teaching	Role-playing															X					
Dialectic	Socialised teaching	Visits to companies															X			X		

A: applied during academic year 2007/08; B: applied during academic year 2008/09

Table 4. List of teaching tools applied to teaching in Business Studies during the academic years 2007/08 and 2008/09

TEACHING TOOLS	MODULES																			
	7226		7262		7196		7204		7247		7194		7208		7217		7272		7270	
	A	B	A	B	A	B	A	B	A	B	A	B	A	B	A	B	A	B	A	B
Ad hoc preparation of materials (mock exams, notes)	X	X	X	X													X	X	X	X
Tests to record attendance and encourage regular study				X																
Diary of activities																				
Qualifying tests					X									X			X	X		
Internet searching											X						X			
Learning contract					X		X	X												

A: applied during academic year 2007/08; B: applied during academic year 2008/09

However, the implementation of the above-mentioned teaching methods, according to the objectives of this study, showed that the academic results achieved in the different modules were not homogeneous. This is partly due to the fact that each of the three groups of modules had very different characteristics. The first group comprised year 1 and year 2 modules (we called this group G1, which included modules 7226, 7262, 7270, 7196, 7204, and 7247); modules that students must take to obtain their degree, where classes were large, there were several classes, and it was not possible to apply the methodology equally in all of them. The results showed a certain improvement regarding the previous academic year. The second group (G2) was made up of a year 3 module (7272) that, although it was compulsory, had a small class, and obtained considerably better results:

100% of the students that sat the examination in the January exams period passed the module. Finally, the third group of modules (G3, with modules 7194, 7217, and 7208) included optional year 3 modules, whose results are not easily interpreted. The adaptation of the modules to the number of registered students, and the workload, consequence of the varied teaching methods applied during the academic year 2007/08, brought about worse-than-expected results.

Particularly, module 7226 showed the typical problems of modules with a large number of students, as well as being a year 1 module with a ratio students/ instructor too high. This makes it more difficult to apply the underlying principles of the Bologna Process, since it multiplies exponentially the instructor's duties: number of online and face-to-face tutorials, participation in debates, etc. The experience in the module 7247 showed a major obstacle to using new teaching methods: again, the large number of registered students. An adequate follow-up of the students' progress entails an important weekly overload of work, which means an insurmountable obstacle under the present circumstances. Case studies and a visit to a company tried to provide a transversal approach to module 7272. The case studies focused on innovation management, drawing attention to this topical subject, related to the module but not included in the syllabus. The visit was organised together with the Employment Initiatives Office (*Gabinete de Iniciativas para el Empleo*) of the University of Alicante, and students from different programmes took part in it. 'Corporate social responsibility' was the central theme that provided a multidisciplinary approach to the company. Such an approach is of great importance in financial planning. As regards module 7262, this had the typical problems explained (large number of students and year 1). Another difficulty lay in the fact that students joined the class they wished, regardless of the one they had been assigned to (some students even joined different classes on different days). This made it difficult to assess (and compare) the benefits of the new methods. Nevertheless, students expressed a reasonably high level of satisfaction, which encourages us, the subject being mathematics, to keep on working along these lines. With respect to module 7270 we find again the typical problems. Module 7196 also had a large number of students. This was the main reason to dispense with certain methods included in the new Module Guide, mainly those involving regular study by the students and its follow-up. A learning contract for distance learners was implemented during the academic year 2007/08. It entailed a workload difficult to take on together with the rest of the instructor's teaching duties. The feasibility of implementing this Module Guide requires a substantial reduction of class sizes. Regarding module 7204, and also the group (G1) in general, one possible solution would be to reduce the influence of two of the shortcomings observed during the academic year 2007/08. On the one hand, many students had difficulty in relating the subject matter of commercial law to the problems that trade poses to business activity. On the other hand, providing the students with outlines of the lessons that refer them to handbooks may prevent them from feeling lost in their studies. In the continuous assessment group, we were able to confirm the excellence of the "learning contract" when it comes to the students' commitment to their own learning process. Despite the increase in the number of students, the results were very good. However, as we expected, the workload of instructors increased a great deal. If continuous assessment had been implemented in all the modules in this group, the situation would have certainly become unmanageable.

Module 7217 had the typical problems of optional modules that, although having smaller class sizes than core and compulsory modules, still have a number of students that is too high to allow the rigorous implementation of continuous assessment. Online tutorials during the academic year 2007/08 overwhelmed the instructor, since they had increased by over 600% in comparison to the previous year. The number of weekly face-to-face tutorials to address questions regarding the students' independent research, or issues among group's members, the participation in debates and its follow-up, etc. also grew. The feasibility of implementing this Module requires a substantial reduction of class sizes. We observed an intense lack of motivation among the students. Students are eager to finish their studies, so learning (in any possible way) becomes a secondary issue. Passing the module is the most important thing; the easier it is for the student to pass, the better. As regards module 7208, we observed in students a certain difficulty in reconciling work and study activities. This problem also affected the instructor, who had to conduct face-to-face tutorials almost as if they were private lessons. There are still some shortcomings to be addressed, and problems to adapt the teaching methods currently used to the EHEA must also be identified. Finally, module 7194 also had a large number of students. In general, the feasibility of implementing the Module Guide requires a substantial reduction of class sizes. Different criteria may be used to analyse the results of our study. One of them is the proportion of students that sat the examination to the total number of students registered in the module. This is a very important ratio, since the teaching methods intended to be introduced (to a larger or smaller extent, depending on class size and number of classes per module) involve regular study by the student, and a more direct interaction between students and instructors, and this should

imply that students, being more motivated, will study and take the exam. Another criterion is the percentage of registered students who passed the module. The following graphics show the evolution of these two ratios over the last three academic years in each module within Red EUCE. The graphics allow us to observe and search for explanations. We have performed an aggregate analysis in the three groups above described.

Module 7196

Module 7226

Module 7247

Module 7262

Module 7270

Module 7204
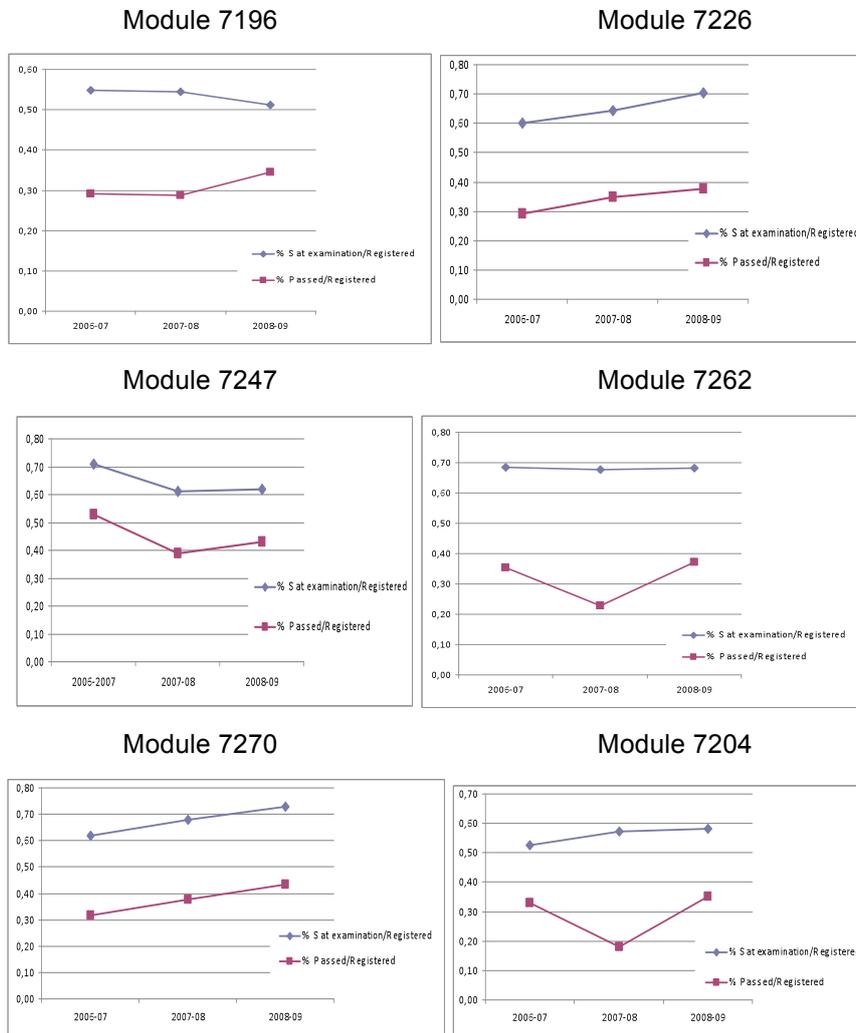
Graphic 1. Evolution of ratios 'students sitting exam/students registered' and students 'passing examination/students registered' in core and compulsory modules of year 1 and year 2 of the programme.
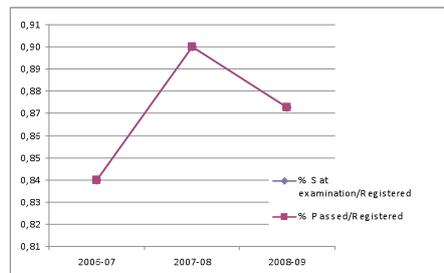
Graphic 2. Evolution of ratios 'students sitting exam/students registered' and students 'passing examination/students registered' in compulsory year 3 module 7272. Note: The results are the same in both cases.

Module 7217	Module 7194	Module 7208
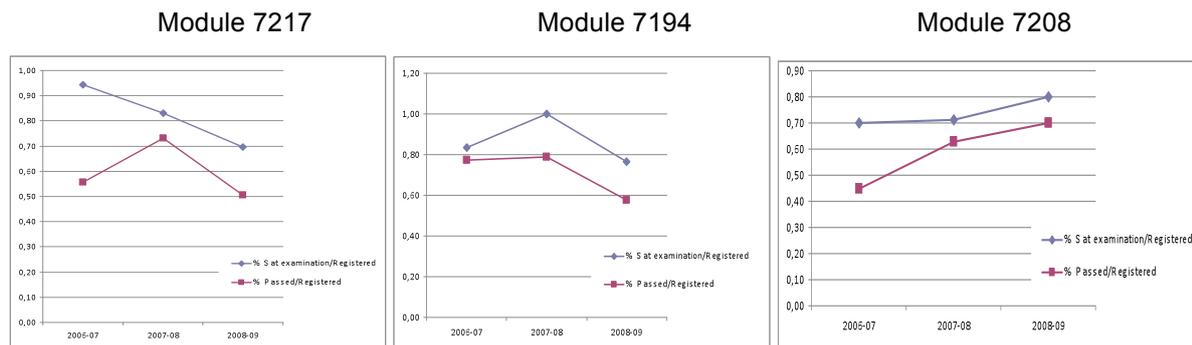
Graphic 3. Evolution of ratios 'students sitting exam/students registered' and students 'passing examination/students registered' in optional year 3 modules

Results do not show any remarkable improvement with regard to the modules in G1. As we have already mentioned, class size tends to be very large, so it is not easy for instructors to interact with the students, and sometimes it is not even possible. It is also worth noting that certain methods of continuous assessment, or optional essays or projects, were only implemented in one or two of the classes of certain modules that had up to eight different classes. Regarding the one module in G2, we would like to mention that results were highly gratifying, since 100% of the students who sat the examination passed it. The introduction of new technologies in the module (many sessions took place in the computer lab) allowed students to assimilate its content in a continuous and immediate way, which had an effect on these excellent results. This has led to a substantial increase in the number of students taking the module (25 students in 2006/07, 40 students in 2007/08, and 55 students in 2008/09). Since this is a compulsory module, it is not easy to interpret this increase in the number of registered students. The explanation may have to do precisely with the implementation of new methods that make the module more appealing to students, so they do not wait until the last year to take the module, but instead they do it as soon as they have the option. Finally, the modules included in G3 are optional and very heterogeneous; their subject matter goes from law to trade. Nevertheless, it should be noted that the results we obtained were not in any way good. First of all, the number of students has decreased, but this seems to be a consequence of the introduction of new teaching methods stemming from the Bologna Process. The implementation of these methods requires regular study from the students, which sometimes they are not willing to do. If we take into account that other optional modules do not demand that commitment, students have an incentive to take modules that require less effort, although they will learn less from them, since they see how near their graduation is, and with that, their access to the labour market. With respect to the results (students passing the module), there is a similar explanation: students that register on these modules, and are not willing to apply themselves to learning the subject, tend to not sit the examination (or they do without proper preparation), knowing that the following year they can choose a module that does not require a continuous assessment.

6   CONCLUSIONS

The transfer of experience of several modules (core, compulsory, and optional) in the three years of the programme in Business Studies gained through Red EUCE has proved that the level of students' commitment to their own learning process has increased significantly, which has allowed their conceptual, procedural, and attitudinal skills to improve. In the field of Business Studies, teaching is carried out through a combination of activities based on different teaching methods. The core teaching methods are didactic (lectures, directed reading, practical classes, keynote speeches, and seminars), and they all try to encourage students' participation. These methods are complemented with case studies, problem-solving exercises, as well as individual or group independent research. The use of new technologies to present module content is also promoted. Students are provided with the usual printed references (handbooks, specialised texts, exercise books, articles, data sources) and new audiovisual materials (transparencies and presentations with projectors and DVD), as well as teaching materials related to computer-assisted learning. The guidelines set forth by the EHEA state that, once the skills (learning outcomes) have been set out, planning a module requires a detailed description of teaching and learning methods more adequate to acquire those skills, and the criteria and assessment

methods to be used to check if the students have really acquired them. Thus, the challenge is to design work methods for students and instructors that will help the former to acquire the skills set out as learning outcomes. When choosing the methods to be used in each case, we must bear in mind the discipline to which the module belongs, and the organisational context of the institution where it is taught, all the while focusing on the skills that students must acquire. The academic results obtained after adapting the modules to the EHEA are contrasting. While some modules show highly promising results, with high and growing success rates, other modules show the opposite tendency. A varied ranged of teaching method has been applied to teaching in Business Studies, and we draw attention to the fact that methods focused on the students seem to help them to learn better, they bring about a higher level of significant learning, and are more adequate to encourage memorisation and transfer of knowledge than teaching methods focused on the instructors. We have not identified whether certain methods are better or worse than others for the acquisition of content in different modules. Each of the methods applied performs certain functions more effectively than others in the teaching-learning process. This leads us to the conclusion that the best method is in fact a combination of methods. That was the strategy applied by the instructors of the different modules within Red EUCE during the academic years 2007/08 and 2008/09. However, given the large number of students that currently make up the different classes of each module, this new system is not feasible, as we ascertained when we amended the Module Guides over the year 2008/09. Continuous assessment demands an endeavour on the part of instructors that they are not capable of assuming due to the existing high ratios students to instructor. Therefore, during the academic year 2009/10 instructors have removed some of the teaching methods included in the Module Guides. The feasibility of implementing these Module Guides in the modules within Red EUCE requires a substantial reduction of class sizes. This explains why didactic methods (although in an interactive and participative way) are still predominant in all the modules in Red EUCE, although each instructor applies the most convenient methods according to the characteristics of the module to facilitate the learning process of the students.

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