

Pedagogical Innovation:

Examples of Best Practices from Selected Major Business Schools Around the World

The Need for Change

To address current management challenges, it has been argued that traditional executive education models fall short in their ability to enable individuals and organizations to apply newly acquired skills and concepts to the practice of leadership within their actual work environments. Given this concern, there has been attention by university-based executive education programs to explore the proposition and to determine the need and the best methods for change.

Many university-based executive education departments, particularly the larger ones, have put in place units dedicated to “pedagogical innovation,” which often includes exploring areas of content, design, and delivery. These units have become increasingly important both strategically and tactically to the ExecEd departments and to the business schools in general following dramatic shifts in the marketplace and in customer needs and expectations.

As society is transforming and customer needs and expectations change, university-based executive education programs must in the same way adapt their design and delivery systems if they are to remain relevant. New curricula need to be created; new programs designed; new teaching methodologies implemented including disruptive technologies and multimedia to engage the learner and thereby enhance the learning experience. And most critically, the faculty need to be encouraged and supported to adjust to this new reality.

The Research with Some Major Business Schools

To examine best pedagogy innovation in major business schools around the world, a group of researchers from Fundação Dom Cabral (FDC), Brazil, designed and implemented a study under the sponsorship of UNICON (The international University Consortium for Executive Education), a global consortium of leading university-based executive education organizations. The study focused on a select group of 11 UNICON member schools. Inquiries were directed to those responsible for Pedagogy Innovation: for example, the Pedagogy Department (PD), the Executive Director, the Dean, or similar position of responsibility. Primary data were gathered in 2018/2019 by qualitative research (organized in two phases), via videoconference interviews with the following schools:

- Babson College (USA/North America);
- Cheung Kong Graduate School of Business - CKGSB (China/Asia);
- China Europe International Business School - Ceibs (China/Asia);
- Fundação Dom Cabral – FDC (Brazil/South America);
- IESE Business School (Spain/Europe);
- IMD (Switzerland/Europe);
- INCAE Business School (Costa Rica/Central America);
- INSPER (Brazil/South America);
- ITAM (Mexico/North America);
- Kellogg School of Management (USA/North America); and
- University of Michigan – Ross School of Business (USA/North America).

The Six Dimension of Pedagogical Innovation

To structure pedagogical innovation topics for meaningful analysis and discussion, a conceptual framework was designed, considering six dimensions by which pedagogical innovation topics best might be examined:

- a) Faculty Development;
- b) Learning Innovation (innovation in teaching tools, methodologies and techniques, innovation in educational products/programs/curriculums);
- c) Learning Design;
- d) Digital Culture;
- e) Executive Mapping Education Trends;
- f) Overall Participant Experience.

The study results showed that different practices of **faculty development**, especially in the area of **learning design** favor pedagogical innovation. Furthermore, it became evident that **learning innovation** is promoted by the creation of new curricula, products and services and the connection between the Business School and companies (clients) for the continuing exchange of experiences and learning expectations. Using **learning design** methods created by the PDs often contain specific features, which are embedded with unique pedagogical innovation that in turn reflects the school's 'DNA' in the participant learning experience. The main practices adopted are related to the curricular principles of the institution (i.e. student-centered learning, autonomy, active and collaborative learning) and improving the developed programs based on feedback from the institution, students and teachers. **Digital culture** is also promoted by the production of content for online and blended programs and by training faculty and course managers to use available and new digital technology. The practices related to **mapping trends** are centered on primary research and studies with current clients, potential clients, non-clients, educators, companies and other higher learning institutions, and participating in meetings with disruptors, opinion-makers and visionaries among others. Finally, PDs are evaluating the program proposal by mapping **participant experience** on whether participants would recommend the program to others and evaluating participant satisfaction of the learning experience at the end of the program.

Pedagogical Innovation's Best Practices

The findings revealed that:

- The PD has yet to become a consolidated department in most major Business Schools, and requires professionals with a senior profile;
- We expected to find more innovative practices in terms of Teaching and Learning in the investigated cases;
- The two main challenges faced by the PD were innovation and scope. In addition, PDs needed to address a great variety of second needs. In some Business Schools there is resistance by the faculty to pedagogical innovation and to the PD in general. The culture of innovation is still a formidable challenge for many School in the sample.
- Few Business Schools have evolved regarding personalized learning (flexible learning - each participant chooses his/her own learning journey, taking into account individual characteristics and interests). By the same token most focused on stimulating ways to learn and on improving the overall participant experience.
- There is a lack of clarity about the concept of innovation in Education;
- While some Business Schools are eager for change and attentive to trends (active position), others are content to remain in their comfort zone, waiting for their participants to demand changes (passive position).

The full version of this survey can be found on the UNICON website.