



## Learning by doing: a reflection on trade fairs as spaces for interdisciplinary professional training

Aprender haciendo: una reflexión sobre las ferias de negocios como espacios de formación profesional interdisciplinaria

Aprender fazendo: uma reflexão sobre feiras de negócios como espaços de formação profissional interdisciplinar

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**Received:** July 1, 2025

**Accepted:** October 24, 2025

**DOI:** <https://doi.org/10.22267/rtend.262701.294>

**How to cite this article:** Albarracín, R. & Cantillo, I. (2026). Learning by doing: A reflection on trade fairs as spaces for interdisciplinary professional training. *Tendencias*, 27(1), 259-281. <https://doi.org/10.22267/rtend.262701.294>

### Abstract

**Introduction:** University business fairs have established themselves as educational settings for experimental learning, promoting the integration of theory and practice in the training of future professionals. **Objective:** To reflect on the impact of the fairs organized by the Department of Business Administration, National Unified Corporation for Higher Education (Corporación Unificada Nacional de Educación Superior, CUN) between 2022 and 2024, investigating how they contribute to the development of business and socio-emotional skills. **Methodology:** A mixed approach was adopted, including document review, student and teacher surveys, semi-structured interviews, and indirect observation on fair records. **Reflection:** Significant progress was found in negotiation, entrepreneurship, and teamwork skills, as well as challenges in logistics management and evaluative systematization. **Conclusions:** The fairs strengthen student motivation and autonomy, although they require greater planning, teacher support, and formalization of evaluation processes. In addition, their potential transfer to other academic programs as an innovative teaching-learning model is proposed, contributing to future research on active methodologies in higher education.

**Keywords:** educational management; university laboratory; business; pedagogical guidance; educational technology.

**JEL:** I2; M1; M2; M3.



## Resumen

**Introducción:** Las ferias de negocios universitarias se han consolidado como escenarios pedagógicos para el aprendizaje experiencial, favoreciendo la integración entre teoría y práctica en la formación de futuros profesionales. **Objetivo:** Reflexionar sobre el impacto de las ferias organizadas por la Dirección de Negocios de la Corporación Unificada Nacional de Educación Superior (CUN) entre 2022 y 2024, indagando cómo contribuyen al desarrollo de competencias empresariales y socioemocionales. **Metodología:** Se adoptó un enfoque mixto que incluyó revisión documental, encuestas a estudiantes y docentes, entrevistas semiestructuradas y observación indirecta de registros de las ferias. **Reflexión:** Se encontraron avances significativos en competencias de negociación, emprendimiento y trabajo en equipo, así como retos en gestión logística y sistematización evaluativa. **Conclusiones:** Las ferias fortalecen la motivación y la autonomía estudiantil, aunque requieren mayor planeación, acompañamiento docente y formalización de procesos de evaluación. Además, se plantea su potencial transferencia a otros programas académicos como modelo innovador de enseñanza-aprendizaje, contribuyendo a investigaciones futuras sobre metodologías activas en educación superior.

**Palabras clave:** gestión educacional; laboratorio universitario; negocio; orientación pedagógica; tecnología educacional.

**JEL:** I2; M1; M2; M3.

## Resumo

**Introdução:** As feiras de negócios universitárias consolidaram-se como cenários pedagógicos para a aprendizagem experiencial, favorecendo a integração entre teoria e prática na formação de futuros profissionais. **Objetivo:** Refletir sobre o impacto das feiras organizadas pela Direção de Negócios da Corporação Nacional Unificada de Educação Superior (CUN) entre 2022 e 2024, investigando como elas contribuem para o desenvolvimento de competências empresariais e socioemocionais. **Metodologia:** Foi adotada uma abordagem mista que inclui revisão documental, inquéritos a estudantes e professores, entrevistas semiestructuradas e observação indireta dos registros das feiras. **Reflexão:** Foram encontrados avanços significativos nas competências de negociação, empreendedorismo e trabalho em equipa, bem como desafios na gestão logística e sistematização avaliativa. **Conclusões:** As feiras fortalecem a motivação e a autonomia dos alunos, embora exijam maior planeamento, acompanhamento docente e formalização dos processos de avaliação. Além disso, é proposta a sua potencial transferência para outros programas académicos como modelo inovador de ensino-aprendizagem, contribuindo para futuras investigações sobre metodologias ativas no ensino superior.

**Palavras-chave:** gestão educacional; laboratório universitário; negócios; orientação pedagógica; tecnologia educacional.

**JEL:** I2; M1; M2; M3.

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## Introduction

In contemporary higher education, pedagogical innovation has become imperative in order to address the challenges posed by globalization, digital transformation, and the employability demands of professionals. In this context, it is necessary to move beyond teaching models centered on the transmission of information toward methodologies that foster active participation, situated learning, and the integration of knowledge.

National Unified Corporation of Higher Education (Corporación Unificada Nacional de Educación Superior, CUN) is a private, non-profit higher education institution with more than 40 years of experience in the Colombian education sector. It focuses on social transformation, promoting creativity and using Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) in its academic programs, which are offered under a model of preparatory, technical, technological, and professional cycles in face-to-face, distance, and virtual modalities. In this context, the business fairs organized by the CUN Business Department between 2022 and 2024 at its campuses in Bogotá, Colombia, are presented as privileged settings for interdisciplinary training, understood as an educational process that integrates knowledge from different disciplines to strengthen skills, drive innovation, and address complex problems in a comprehensive manner. This allows students to face real or simulated challenges, integrate knowledge from different areas, and develop both technical and socio-emotional skills. Business fairs are academic and commercial spaces where students apply knowledge, present projects, and develop skills through interaction with market scenarios. These fairs also offer the opportunity to analyze the relevance of project-based methodologies and experiential learning in early professional qualification.

In line with the above, this study is justified by the need to understand the educational value of university business fairs as active learning experiences that go beyond the classroom. By analyzing those organized by CUN between 2022 and 2024, the study seeks to demonstrate how these initiatives strengthen the entrepreneurial and socio-emotional competencies of the students, while also revealing challenges in their management and evaluation. In doing so, we contribute to academic reflection on innovative methodologies applicable in higher education.

The question guiding this research is: How do university business fairs contribute to interdisciplinary training and the development of professional skills in students enrolled in the International Business program at CUN?

To address this question, the study set three main objectives: (1) to assess the competencies acquired by students through their participation in fairs, (2) to analyze the perceptions of students, faculty members, and administrators regarding their pedagogical effectiveness, and (3) to propose improvement strategies to optimize their planning, execution, and evaluation. The reflection presented here is framed within the approaches of experiential learning, communities of practice, and problem-based learning, which underscore the importance of redefining business fairs as environments for active and collaborative learning.

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## Methodology

The reflection in this article was developed using a mixed-methods approach, combining qualitative and quantitative methodologies to ensure a comprehensive understanding of the impact of business fairs on the interdisciplinary education of students. This approach is particularly relevant when seeking to integrate objective and subjective perspectives on an educational phenomenon, favoring methodological triangulation (Creswell & Clark, 2017). We reviewed institutional documents, analyzed photographic records and student work, and administered structured surveys to students and faculty members, following contextual validation (Flick, 2015).

The surveys were administered to a purposive sample of 69 students and 17 faculty members who participated in the business fairs held between 2022 and 2024, allowing for the selection of key informants with direct experience in the activities studied, which is appropriate in reflective and evaluative research (Patton, 2015). These instruments made it possible to measure perceptions of the development of entrepreneurial competencies, motivation, organizational performance, and pedagogical effectiveness of the activity, using a five-point Likert scale, a technique widely used to capture attitudes and assessments in educational contexts (Matas, 2018).

In addition, indirect observation was conducted through the analysis of audiovisual records and planning and evaluation documents, which made it possible to identify good practices, areas for improvement, and collaborative dynamics between students and faculty. This qualitative information was analyzed through thematic categorization, supported by both inductive and deductive coding, and triangulated with theoretical references to substantiate the conclusions (Gavira & Osuna, 2015). Descriptive statistics (mean, frequency, and standard deviation) were used to analyze the quantitative data, a useful technique for summarizing and interpreting trends in the perceptions recorded (Hernández & Mendoza, 2020).

This study generated valuable inputs for the continuous improvement of CUN's business fairs, ensuring that they contribute effectively to the development of key competencies in the business field and to strengthening students' abilities to face the challenges of the professional world. The integration of data from multiple sources and methods reinforces the validity of the findings, which is essential in pedagogical reflection studies aimed at promoting institutional excellence (McKenney & Reeves, 2014).

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## Reflection

Professional training in International Business currently faces the challenge of responding to business contexts characterized by globalization, digital transformation, and the growing demand for interdisciplinary competencies (Lake et al., 2022). In this context, academic business fairs emerge as pedagogical settings where theoretical knowledge is integrated with professional practice, fostering meaningful and collaborative learning processes (Kumar & Bhandarker, 2017). This section addresses the conceptual foundations that underpin reflection on these educational experiences, with an emphasis on experiential learning theories, Project-Based Learning (PBL), and contemporary approaches to interdisciplinary in higher education.

Table 1 below presents approaches according to some authors consulted for their contributions as pedagogical foundations.

**Table 1**

*Theoretical approaches applied to interdisciplinary learning at trade fairs.*

<b>Theory /Approach Type</b>	<b>Authors/Year</b>	<b>Main Theoretical Contributions</b>
Experiential Learning	Dewey (1938); Kolb (1984); Kolb and Kolb (2009); Zaman and Mozammel (2017).	Learning cycle based on concrete experience conceptualization and active experimentation between theory and practice.
Problem-Based Learning (PBL) and practical Environments	Harfitt (2019); Lárez and Jiménez (2019); Miner et al. (2019); Savery (2006).	Student-centered approach; integration of theory and practice; development of critical thinking, and problem-solving skills in real world contexts.
Communities of Practice and Business Fairs	Boacă and Savescu (2018); Hindi et al. (2022); Sánchez and Rodríguez (2021); Wenger (1998).	Situated learning: legitimate peripheral participation; development of competencies in collaborative, real, and multidisciplinary contexts such as academic fairs.
Contemporary Professional Training Theories	Fania et al. (2024); Hasan et al. (2023); Hulaikah et al. (2020); Ibrahim and Storey (2025); Wheelahan (2015).	Relevance of practical and experiential training for employability; need to integrate theoretical and practical knowledge to avoid educational and labor exclusion.

*Source:* Own elaboration

## **Experiential learning pedagogical foundations**

Experiential learning is based on the premise that students learn most effectively through direct experience and reflection on that experience, in contrast to traditional methods focused on the passive transmission of information (Dewey, 1938; Kolb, 1984). In the context of business schools, this approach has gained relevance due to its ability to develop practical skills, critical thinking, and problem-solving abilities, which are essential in the contemporary business environment (Gollwitzer et al., 2017; Leal & Albort, 2019; Motta & Galina, 2023).

Kolb's experiential learning model (1984) is one of the most influential theoretical frameworks, describing knowledge as a cyclical process of construction that integrates four interdependent phases: concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation (Bell & Bell, 2020). This cycle enables the connection between theory and practice, facilitating the transfer of knowledge to real-world contexts (Syam et al., 2024; Tate et al., 2019; Udeozor & Smith, 2020). From a constructivist perspective, understanding is actively constructed through the interaction between the subject and their

environment, as proposed by Piaget (1970) and Vygotsky (1978), who emphasize the role of social mediation in learning. Similarly, transformative learning theory (Mezirow, 2015) complements this approach by highlighting critical reflection as a means of reconfiguring frames of reference and adapting knowledge to new situations (López et al., 2022).

In business schools, these theoretical foundations support the adoption of experiential methodologies such as business simulations, problem-based projects, professional internships, and service-learning initiatives (González et al., 2024). These strategies promote active participation, collaborative work, and the development of cross-cutting competencies, in line with international educational quality standards (AACSB) (Coyer et al., 2019; Efendi, 2024; Girvan et al., 2016). Models such as SPARRING, based on deliberate practice, offer structured guidelines for effectively implementing experiential learning within the curriculum (Giraud et al., 2021).

Empirical evidence supports the idea that participation in experiential methodologies enhances academic performance, understanding of theoretical concepts, and the development of professional skills (Kozlinska et al., 2020). However, their implementation faces challenges, such as the need for specific teacher training and adaptation to large classroom settings (Mountford & Moran, 2023). Consequently, the literature emphasizes the importance of strengthening pedagogical competence of teachers, and design solid theoretical frameworks to guide educational practice (Nzembayie et al., 2024).

In applied contexts, such as trade shows, the experiential learning model becomes particularly relevant by enabling students to experience authentic professional roles (concrete experience), analyze business strategies (reflective observation), integrate management theories (abstract conceptualization), and prototype business solutions (active experimentation). This process brings together the principles of experiential and constructivist learning by promoting a meaningful and contextualized understanding of knowledge.

### **Problem-Based Learning (PBL) and its articulation with practical environments**

According to Hermann et al. (2021), PBL identifies academic fairs as an ideal setting for its implementation through authentic challenges in designing stands that address the needs of real customers; interdisciplinary collaboration through the integration of marketing, finance, and design skills; and immediate feedback through interaction with specialized juries and the attending public.



A study by Guo et al. (2020) demonstrates that this approach increases knowledge retention compared to traditional methods, especially when integrated with immersive technologies (augmented reality, business simulators).

### **Contemporary theories of vocational training**

The evolution towards hybrid educational models, such as blended learning analyzed by Kolb et al. (2014), redefines the design of business fairs through: Digital spaces: integration of virtual platforms with face-to-face experiences; business microlearning: learning stations focused on specific skills; and strategic gamification: digital badge systems to recognize interdisciplinary achievements.

### **Contributions from Wenger-Trayner's Theory of Communities of Practice**

The Theory of Communities of Practice (TCoP), proposed by Wenger and later developed together with Trayner, represents a relevant theoretical framework for understanding social learning approaches that emerge in collective and situated contexts, such as university job fairs. From this perspective, learning is understood as a social practice that occurs through active participation in communities of practice where individuals negotiate meanings, share knowledge repertoires, and commit to common goals (Wenger, 2001).

In the context of interdisciplinary business fairs promoted by the CUN International Business Program, students not only apply academic content, but also integrate into temporary communities of practice that simulate real organization environments. These communities are formed on the basis of a mutual commitment to the preparation, presentation, and marketing of business proposals, a joint venture represented in the shared objectives of raising the profile of academic ventures, and a constant negotiation of meanings, derived from interaction with teachers, peers from other disciplines, and the attending public.

According to Wenger (2001), practice is “doing something in a historical and social context that gives structure and meaning to what we do” (p. 71). In this sense, trade fairs function as practice environments where students negotiate and reframe the knowledge acquired in the classroom, based on experiential learning and interaction with simulated professional contexts. As suggested by the relationship between practice and the negotiation of meaning, the commercial, discursive, and organizational strategies that students develop in



these spaces are shaped by a reciprocal process of active participation and objectification, that is, the production of resources, discourses, and actions that materialize their experience and enable its social interpretation (Farnsworth et al., 2016).

Likewise, business fairs reveal connections with what Wenger calls boundary objects and brokerage. On the one hand, students bring to this context knowledge, resources, and agreements from other academic settings (courses, workshops, mentoring) which, as in the mathematics teaching practice analyzed by Miranda and Gómez (2018), act as boundary objects by articulating different communities of practice: classroom, fair, teachers, and the productive sector. On the other hand, each student assumes the role of broker, translating, adapting, and negotiating these experiences to incorporate them into the dynamics of the fair, mobilizing disciplinary knowledge and cross-cutting skills such as leadership, communication, and resource management.

Finally, the concept of a joint venture proposed by Wenger takes the form of the collective development of business proposals and shared responsibility for achieving visible results during the fair. This collaborative construction, in turn, allows for the strengthening of a shared repertoire of knowledge, strategies, and narratives that are consolidated into academic and professional capital, transcending the fair space and influencing the comprehensive training of CUN International Business students.

In summary, from the perspective of TCoP, trade fairs are understood as situated communities of practice, where social interaction, meaning negotiation, and active participation create unique opportunities for interdisciplinary learning and early professionalization. These theoretical contributions allow us to reframe events beyond their role as expository platforms, recognizing them as socially situated learning environments that articulate academic knowledge and professional experiences in construction.

For the purposes of this research, the pedagogical approaches examined not only provide a robust conceptual basis but also justify their relevance for implementation within the university context of business fairs. The combination of experiential learning, grounded in problem-based approaches and communities of practice, provides an integrative framework that allows these events to be redefined as spaces for situated, interdisciplinary, and socially mediated learning. Consequently, the need to incorporate active methodologies and simulated

scenarios into academic programs is confirmed, not only as complementary activities, but also as articulating axes of contextualized, relevant professional training aimed at solving real problems.

### **Trade fairs at CUN: a reflective account based on practical experience**

Based on field observations, experiential elements, and interaction with students and teachers, part of the mixed-method approach of this research was established, in which indirect field observations were conducted, supported by the analysis of photographic records, institutional documents, student work, and perceptions gathered throughout the process. This strategy provided insight into key experiential elements that were complemented by information derived from surveys and interviews, contributing to a richer and more contextualized view of the pedagogical experience.

The analysis of photographic and documentary records enables the identification of the extent of student engagement and participation in the different phases of the business fair. A significant level of creativity was observed in the presentation of the stands, the design of advertising material, and the production of content, as well as a proactive attitude in interacting with attendees. These aspects reflect the progress of participants in practical, communication, and collaborative skills.

In this regard, the evaluation process applied to the participating booths during the fair is also noteworthy, as evidenced by the records available in the shared folders. This process considered variables such as the innovation of the product or service presented, the clarity of the communicated value proposition, the visual and functional quality of the booth, the sales pitch teamwork, and the personal presentation of the exhibitors. These criteria allowed for a comprehensive assessment of the performance of groups and generated key inputs for academic feedback.

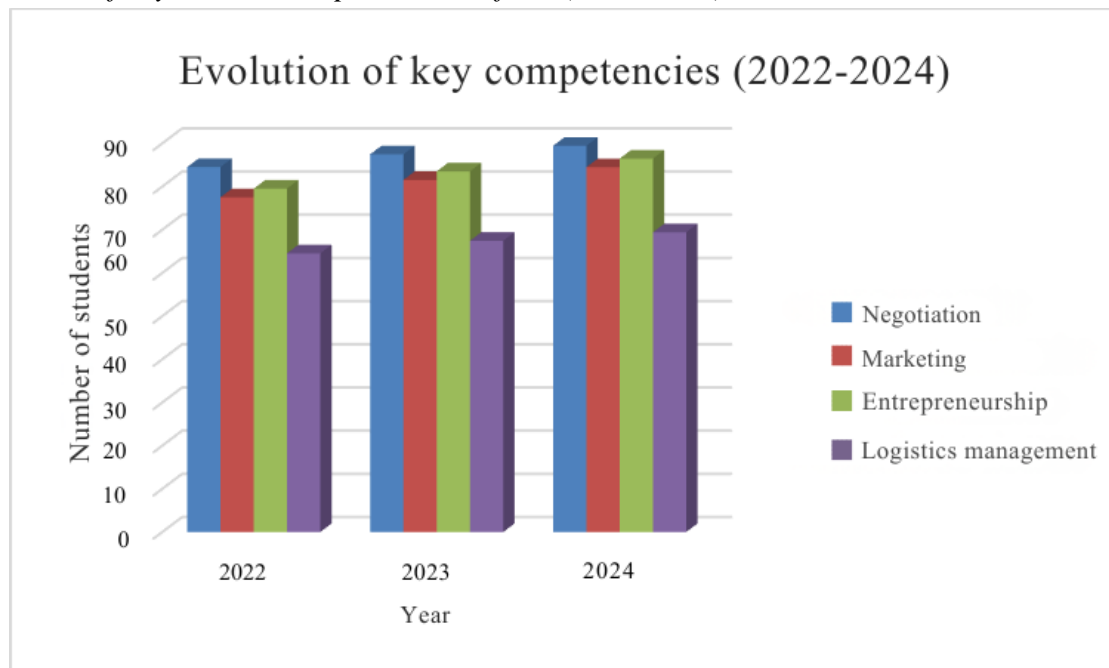
The perceptions gathered by the research team, as well as informal testimonials from teachers and students, provided insights into how participants experienced the program. Among the most notable essential elements were enthusiasm, a sense of personal achievement, strengthened collaboration, and the ability to solve unexpected situations, all of which demonstrate an experiential learning process with high educational value.

Likewise, the interaction observed between teachers and students revealed constant pedagogical support, in which teachers assumed the role of guides and facilitators, providing timely feedback and promoting critical reflection on the decisions made in the execution of the projects. This close relationship contributed to creating an atmosphere of trust and collaboration, conducive to active learning.

The surveys and interviews conducted demonstrate an evolution in skills and competencies, as well the perceptions of those involved, which are illustrated in Figures 1, 2, and 3 below:

**Figure 1**

*Evolution of key skills developed at trade fairs (2022-2024)*

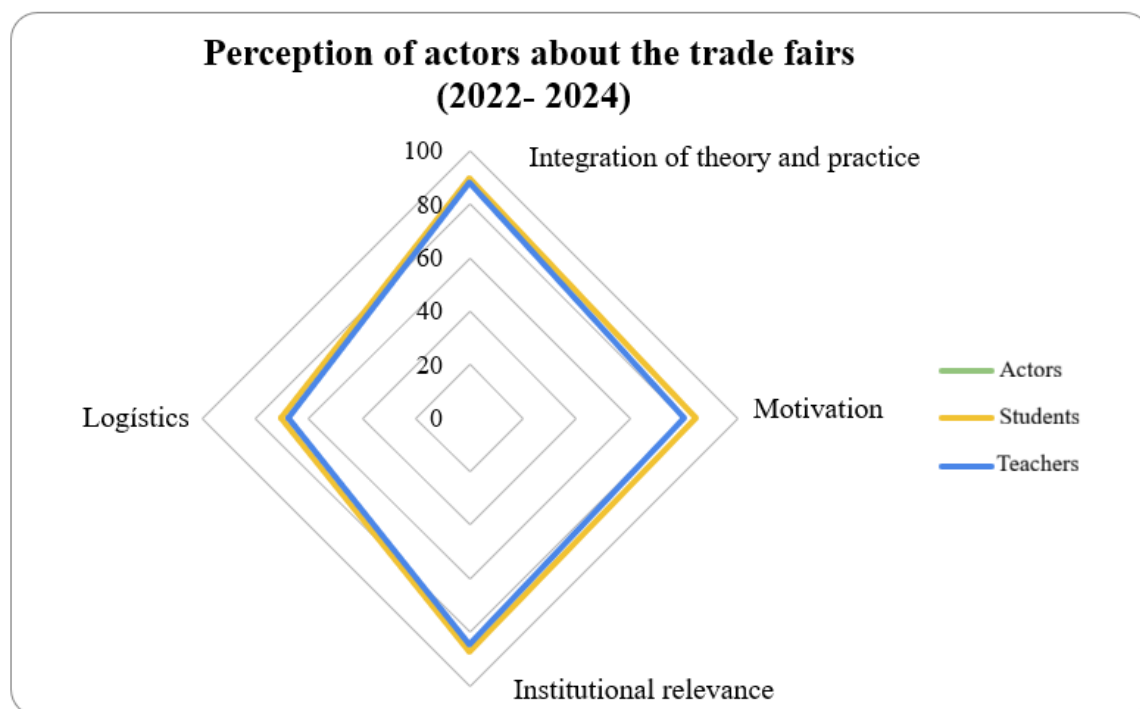


*Source:* Own elaboration based on surveys administered to CUN students, 2022-2024.

Figure 1 shows the evolution of the skills most highly valued by students in the three cohorts analyzed. There has been sustained growth in the perception of negotiation skills (85% in 2022 compared to 90% in 2024), confirming that repeated practice in real-life interaction scenarios strengthens this cross-cutting skill. Likewise, marketing and entrepreneurship maintain positive trends, with a significant increase in the confidence of the students at the moment of present and defend their own projects. In contrast, logistics management shows slower progress (65% in 2022 compared to 70% in 2024), reflecting the need for greater teacher support and specific methodologies to strengthen this area.

**Figure 2**

*Perceptions of students, teachers, and administrators regarding business fairs (2022-2024)*

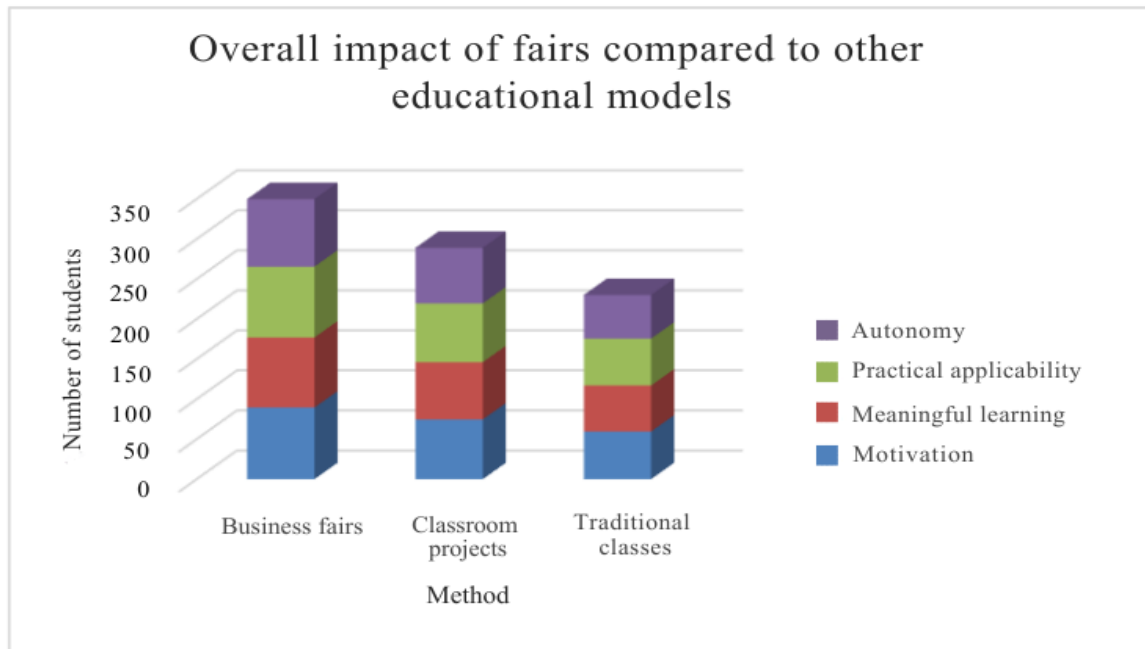


*Source:* Own elaboration based on interviews and surveys at CUN fairs, 2022-2024.

Figure 2 summarizes the evaluation of the three stakeholders involved. Students emphasize the fairs as space for motivation and applied learning (more than 85% consider them superior to traditional classes). Teachers particularly value the integration of theory and practice, although they note the heterogeneity of academic levels as a challenge. Administrators highlight the institutional relevance and connection with the productive sector, but stress the need to improve logistics and interdepartmental coordination. The comparison reveals that, while there is consensus on the pedagogical value of the fairs, each stakeholder identifies particular challenges that must be addressed in future editions.

**Figure 3**

*Impact of trade fairs compared to other educational models*



*Source:* Own elaboration based on the comparison of surveys and focus groups, 2022-2024.

Figure 3 compares the perceived effectiveness of fairs with traditional methods and classroom projects. Ninety percent of students believe that fairs provide learning experiences that are “difficult to replicate” in a traditional classroom, while 85% say that these experiences strengthen motivation and autonomy to a greater extent than isolated academic projects. This difference reinforces the idea that fairs are a privileged setting for interdisciplinary training and meaningful learning, integrating cognitive, practical, and socioemotional dimensions into a single event.

Finally, the longitudinal comparison for 2022-2024 shows that trade fairs have not only preserved their educational relevance, but have also evolved into spaces with an increased impact on motivation and the development of strategic skills. However, this progress has been uneven: while skills such as negotiation and entrepreneurship have seen significant progress, others, such as logistics require further systematization and teacher support.

When observing the perceptions of students, teachers, and administrators, a consensus emerges regarding the educational value of fairs, along with shared challenges in logistics, preparation, and evaluation. These tensions indicate that fairs should not be viewed merely as

academic events, but rather as comprehensive teaching-learning strategies, where pedagogical design, institutional coordination, and subsequent critical reflection are key to consolidating lasting learning.

### **Pedagogical contributions and challenges of trade fairs**

The business fairs, organized by the CUN Business Department between 2022 and 2024, have become established as experiential learning spaces that transcend the classroom and allow students to engage with simulated or real-world business contexts. The results show that these fairs significantly boost the motivation of the students toward their educational process by giving them the opportunity to apply their knowledge, take on active roles, and make decisions in practical scenarios.

From the perspective of the students, participating in these fairs has clearly strengthened skills such as entrepreneurship, negotiation, logistics, management, marketing, and teamwork. The opportunity to work on real simulated projects, interact with customers, negotiate prices, and resolve logistical challenges has been valued as a formative experience that contributes to their autonomy and professional confidence. This is reflected in the high ratings that students gave the activity in terms of motivation and skill development, exceeding an average of 4.3 out of 5 in most cases.

Similarly, participating teachers have emphasized that these fairs stimulate social-emotional skills such as leadership, assertive communication, and adaptability, which are essential in the business environment today. This type of situated learning fosters interdisciplinary integration and enables students to see themselves as active participants in their educational process.

### **Impact on the development of cross-cutting skills**

In addition to technical and business-specific skills, the trade fairs promoted the development of cross-cutting skills that are essential for the comprehensive qualification of students. The testimonials gathered and field observations revealed significant progress in leadership, communication skills, problem solving, time management, and adaptability.

Collaborative work, decision-making under pressure, and resource management in simulated environments helped strengthen these social-emotional skills, which are crucial for professional practice in dynamic and multidisciplinary work contexts. This finding is in line with the findings of Lake et al. (2022), who highlight the importance of collaborative and situated experiences for the development of comprehensive skills in higher education.

### **Logistical and methodological challenges**

Although fairs make a significant contribution, organizing them poses major challenges that affect their educational effectiveness. One of the most important challenges recognized is related to logistics, specifically in terms of the suitability of venues, availability of resources, and allocation of time. Limited infrastructure and setbacks in logistical planning have sometimes affected the normal development of activities, reducing the quality of the experience for participants.

From a methodological perspective, another recurring challenge is the need to strengthen prior preparation of students. Teachers agree that, although the fair is an ideal space for integrating theory and practice, students require more training in areas such as customer service, commercial strategy design, inventory management, and promotion of goods or services. Similarly, there is a lack of rigorous systematization in the evaluation processes, which limits the possibility of objectively measuring the impact of the activity and establishing evidence-based improvement paths.

These challenges open up the opportunity to rethink the planning and support processes, incorporating active methodologies, prior training, and the use of technologies to optimize both the organization and the recording and analysis of results.

### **Critical reflection on the role of the teacher**

The development of business fairs requires teachers to transform their traditional role as transmitters of information into mediators and facilitators of learning experiences. This change involves not only designing academic activities, but also guiding, motivating, and accompanying students in environments that, although academic, simulate the complex and competitive dynamics of the business world.



Research conducted at CUN leads to the conclusion that the pedagogical success of these fairs is closely linked to teacher support before, during, and after the event. Teachers who took on an active role as mentors produced more confident, autonomous, and motivated students. However, it was also found that some teachers maintained traditional positions of control and supervision, limiting the ability of students to make decisions and take risks in protected settings.

This finding reveals the importance of encouraging teachers to take on the role of educational mediators, capable of designing meaningful experiences based on real challenges, guiding the process without stifling student initiative, and encouraging critical reflection on the results obtained. Beyond simply transmitting content, teachers must become learning managers, creating spaces where students can make mistakes, correct them, and build knowledge collaboratively.

Likewise, it is essential that teachers participate in continuous training processes aimed at systematizing experiences, using active methodologies, and formative assessment. Only then will it be possible to consolidate business fairs as a relevant and sustainable pedagogical strategy, aligned with the demands of a contextualized, flexible, and meaningful learning-oriented higher education.

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## Conclusions

University business fairs have established themselves as an effective educational strategy for linking theory and practice, strengthening motivation, and enhancing professional and socio-emotional skills. The experience developed between 2022 and 2024 at CUN showed notable progress in negotiation, entrepreneurship, and teamwork, although limitations remain in logistics, prior preparation, and systematic evaluation.

Among the main general conclusions, it is highlighted that fairs promote student autonomy and leadership, constituting meaningful learning environments. Teacher support, when exercised from a mediating role rather than a mere supervisory one, is crucial to the success of the experience. Logistical and methodological processes need to be strengthened to ensure the quality of the strategy.

Among the challenges identified, the need to consolidate prior training programs, formalize assessment tools with clear rubrics, and ensure adequate logistical conditions stands out. These proposals for improvement seek to optimize the sustainability and relevance of the model.

A critical contribution of this study is the possibility of transferring the fair model to other academic programs, provided that they are adapted to the particularities of each discipline and integrated with active training curricular processes. The CUN experience shows that fairs can become an institutional benchmark for pedagogical innovation with the potential for replication in diverse contexts.

In addition to practical findings, the study contributes to the theoretical discussion by showing how trade fairs are configured as a setting that articulates different approaches to interdisciplinary learning. From the perspective of experiential learning, it highlights how students go through a cycle that combines reflection and action; in line with PBL, critical skills are consolidated when facing authentic challenges; in light of communities of practice, the collective construction of knowledge is strengthened in a collaborative environment; and finally, from the perspective of contemporary theories of professional training, their potential to improve the employability and social relevance of higher education is confirmed. This intersection of conceptual frameworks gives greater depth to the analysis and confirms the relevance of fairs as an innovative pedagogical strategy.

As a limitation of the study, it is recognized that the time frame (2022-2024) restricts the possibility of observing the long-term evolution of the model, and that the data are partially based on self-reported perceptions of students and teachers, which may imply self-reported biases. These conditions suggest the need to expand the sample and diversify the sources of information in future research.

As for future projections, it is suggested to move toward longitudinal studies that evaluate the impact of job fairs on the labor market insertion of graduates, as well as to explore the incorporation of digital tools to enhance the monitoring, evaluation, and systematization of the experience. It is also pertinent to analyze the viability of the model in non-business programs, in order to consolidate an institutional strategy of cross-cutting experiential learning.

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## Ethical considerations

This study was conducted in accordance with ethical principles of educational research, guaranteeing the dignity, autonomy, and voluntary participation of the participants. The surveys and interviews were conducted with informed consent, ensuring the confidentiality and anonymity of the information provided by students and teachers. No interventions were made that compromised the physical or psychological well-being of the participants, nor were any animal experiments or environmental impacts involved. Likewise, the data collected was used exclusively for academic and institutional purposes, in accordance with the data protection policies and good practices of the National Unified Corporation for Higher Education (CUN).

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## Conflict of interest

All authors made significant contributions to the document and declare that there is no conflict of interest related to this article.

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## Author contribution statement

**Ricardo Javier Albarracín Vanoy:** Methodology, Software, Formal analysis, Data curation, Resources, Original draft, Writing: review and editing, Visualization; Project management, Fund acquisition.

**Iris María Cantillo Velásquez:** Conceptualization, Validation, Research, Resources, Writing - Original Draft, Writing: Review and Editing, Visualization, Supervision, Project Management, Fund acquisition.

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## Source of funding

Article funded by the National Unified Corporation for Higher Education (CUN), endorsed by the document INV-ART-NI-BOG-GR04-PROY2025-35.

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