



Research Paper

Diagnosis for the improvement of the management of a small family business through a case study

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ABSTRACT

Family businesses account for 80-90% of the world's business fabric and around 90% are SMEs. Having skilled managers to manage them is therefore essential. However, higher education training tends to be generic and aimed at large companies. This study presents a case study aimed at specific training to manage SME family businesses. The case study considers the evolution of a small family business. Students must apply their knowledge to analyse the situations and decisions of its manager and propose actions to improve its management. They thus acquire significant knowledge and develop the main soft skills –teamwork, analysis and synthesis, fluent communication – demanded by today's companies. The result is a group of adequately trained professionals to take up the reins of this type of company and with a high degree of satisfaction with the training received.

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INTRODUCTION

In a global world where uncertainty reigns, SMEs need highly qualified managers who can lead learning organisations (Senge, 2017), as they have to work in a society in which knowledge is considered one of the main keys to competitiveness and sustainability (Council-European, 2000). Therefore, companies demand professionals with integrity who transmit trust and respect their team, their work and their time, and who are able to communicate effectively and efficiently, plan their time and share their knowledge, while being able to make decisions in situations of risk and uncertainty and to manage pressure (Senge, 2017). This task becomes even more complex when it comes to family businesses, given their specific characteristics. In fact, between 70 and 90% of global GDP and more than 67% of employment is generated by family businesses, which can be said to underpin most of the global economy (Deloitte Development LLC., 2019). If the fact that around 90% of companies are SMEs is then

added, approximately the same percentage of family businesses (pillars of the economy) can be said to also be SMEs. However, very few business management degrees are oriented towards this type of company, which means people who become CEO of an SME family business have to undertake a great deal of self-training. Family businesses have a particular idiosyncrasy that complicates their management. That is particularly so when those positions are held by people from outside the family, as they have to deal with partners who are also employees under their charge, family conflicts, decisions made by the family without taking into account strategic objectives, etc. Even so, qualitative research reveals that adapting to a constantly changing environment forces those companies to adopt new values (Reay et al., 2015) and management practices (Parada et al., 2010). However, the existence of a culture and values specific to each family and directly associated with the management of the company means

that the management of value conflicts to uphold entrepreneurship in the long term remains an unknown (Hoy and Sharma, 2010; Jaskiewicz et al., 2015; Raitis et al., 2020; Reay et al., 2015; Zahra, 2018).

Consequently, a greater and better approach from university education to the reality of those organisations is necessary so that they can face in a more competent way the complexity of their management (Raisch et al., 2018). They can thus redirect resources to adapt the structures of the organisation to the new circumstances in order to generate opportunities and minimise threats (Teece, 2012). This better knowledge of the family business together with the generic knowledge acquired during the degree will lead to better change management in those organisations (Heyden et al., 2017), since over time, they are forced to incorporate external values and norms that may conflict with family values and culture. Understanding both fields will facilitate those adaptations and enable greater and better business growth. In fact, higher education has to ensure that its graduates acquire the necessary skills for the proper development of their profession (Khare, 2014; Plewa et al., 2015) by means of adequately designing its curricula. The inclusion of those skills in the curricula must be accompanied by a teaching methodology that brings students closer to the reality of those organisations to make them reflect, make decisions for improvement, evaluate situations (Borah et al., 2021). This methodology is none other than the Case Study. The Case Study is "a method that uses multiple data sources to develop a contextualised understanding of the phenomenon with the intention of confronting theory by comparing it with empirical data" (Hoorani et al., 2019, pp. 286-287). This makes it one of the most appropriate for conveying reality in studies related to business management and organisation, where complex causal relationships need to be understood and interpreted (Yin, Case study research, design and methods, 2014); by examining processes of change (Eisenhardt, 1989); proposing practical solutions using a holistic perspective of the event or situation under study (Gummesson, 1999); understanding the environment in which the issue to be analysed actually occurs and, in short, studying "a phenomenon that is, in essence, complex, ambiguous and uncertain" (Villarreal, 2011, p. 5).

However, all of the above will hardly be relevant if the business and academic contexts involved in the teaching-learning process are not taken into account, since both are part of the object of study (Tamayo-Orbegozo et al., 2017). Therefore, this work is aimed at building bridges between these spheres and its objective is to bring, as far as possible, the training of future CEOs of that type of companies closer to the reality of those companies, by means of the case study of a real family SME from its origin to its disappearance. Therefore, the main objective of this study is to identify how and why the Case Study improves learning. The situation is presented of a real family SME

over time, where the students will have to identify and understand how, when and why the strengths, weaknesses, errors, advantages, etc. appear in this type of company. This will allow them to reflect on how to improve their management in order to avoid the errors and weaknesses detected. The contributions of this article to the literature are essentially threefold. Firstly, it provides an analytical understanding of how the design of the applicable methodology and the context of the study affect the results of the teaching-learning process, through the presentation of a Case Study and its impact on the students. Secondly, an empirical investigation of the quantitative and qualitative impact of a Case Study on students is given, as it provides empirical evidence on the relationship between the Case Study and the improvement to the teaching-learning process. Finally, this contribution sets out the guidelines for developing and validating programmes that include experiential learning methodologies, which can serve as a guide for those in charge of their design in business degrees. To this end, this introduction is followed by a theoretical framework -theoretical approach- on the case study, questions and objectives of the case that is presented; the case to be studied -empirical approach- is then presented by the students, whose unit of analysis is a real family SME; the article concludes with the most relevant results obtained from the application of this methodology in the Degree in Business Management of the Elcano Faculty of Economics and Business of the University of the Basque Country- Spain over several years, from which the discussion and conclusions of this study are derived.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING

In higher education, the cases studied have not usually been similar to those that will be encountered in working life. The reality is much more complex, unstructured, with contradictory objectives and very different ways of appearing (Yadav et al., 2010). This results in a significant gap between the training received and the work scenario in which the professional career is to be developed. In an attempt to reduce this gap, and following the establishment of the European Higher Education Area, the focus of teaching has shifted from being solely oriented towards the transmission of specific knowledge – based on the teacher – to being student-oriented (Kember, 1997). This implies a need for a transformation of teaching methodologies from performance grade orientation – passive methodologies – to learner-centred learning orientation – active methodologies. In short, it is essential to implement methodologies focused on their active participation with experiential learning being an example of this. Experiential learning is a process through which participants will give meaning to a lived experience, by adopting strategies,

making decisions, etc. (Yeo and Marquardt, 2015) as the result of a reflective process centred on one's own beliefs and personal work, developed in an environment of peer support and collation that allows for frequent integration of clarifications (Corriveau, 2020). Thus, experience will be transformed into learning through the experience-reflect-think-act cycle (Kolb and Kolb, 2017). For this to happen, the experience and the context in which it takes place must challenge the learner in order to analyse their management from another perspective (Byrne et al., 2018). In this way, tacit knowledge becomes explicit through individual and group questioning and reflection by the learner (Corriveau, 2020). Furthermore, learning is more meaningful when those involved cooperate and receive feedback from group members, have close and meaningful contact with the teacher and actively participate in the teaching-learning process (Whetten, 2007).

Ultimately, the effectiveness of experiential learning is based on the combination of causal events and introspection tasks. These characteristics mean that it is a methodology that helps higher management students to develop their management and leadership skills (Awaysheh and Bonfiglio, 2017) by enhancing the acquisition of self-discipline, independence, intellectual curiosity and creativity (Tippin et al., 2012). One of the most relevant tools of experiential learning is the Case Study, particularly when working on management and leadership training. This is because a business case study reflects a real situation that captures one or several issues important to the business context and provides all the information necessary for reflection, decision-making and subsequent conclusions; although the conclusions drawn are never definitive (Ellet, 2007). Students read and analyse what happened in the case, and then present, debate, defend, discuss and critique their analysis with the teacher and other students in the group (Burgoyne and Mumford, 2001). Positive effects of the application of the Case Study include: improved higher order thinking skills (Bergland et al., 2006), deeper learning (Boyce et al., 2001), learning basic skills (Weil et al., 2004), improved oral communication (Noblitt et al., 2010), motivation to interpret information and generate knowledge and apply acquired knowledge (Böcker, 1987), ability to question and diagnose situations, as well as to integrate theory and practice and make decisions (Burgoyne and Mumford, 2001). Bayona and Castañeda (2017) likewise show that this method is not only effective in improving the results of the teaching-learning process in students in the final part of their degree, but it is also effective and highly recommended from the first year onwards; as in addition to their knowledge, it improves their analysis and synthesis and communication skills right from the early stages of their university education. However, despite the case study having started out in the university environment, it lacks a specific theory-orientation and its development has been

mainly intuitive and research on its direct effects on students is scarce (Burgoyne and Mumford, 2001). This article provides academia with knowledge on its effects that have been barely studied.

METHOD

In order to achieve the twofold objective of this work (the case study's positive impacts on learning and how and why that occurs) a holistic case design (Gustafsson, 2017) is used, given this is a longitudinal study. Participant observation was chosen, as specified in 3.1, from among the six types of data sources (Yin, 2014). The methodology used by Loon et al. (2015) was followed, given that the aim is to explore the whys and wherefores of the improvement. A questionnaire (Likert scale 1 to 5) was therefore designed for students in which the levels of satisfaction with the methodology and the reasons for it are recorded and semi-structured interviews were conducted throughout the course. We identified and reviewed work that helps to explain how the case study contributes to learning (Miles and Huberman, 1994) in order to check the results against pre-existing theories. Student learning was measured by both teacher assessment and peer assessment within the group. The study was conducted in an optional subject of the last year of the Bachelor's Degree at the Elcano Economics and Business Faculty of the University of the Basque Country, which is taught over 15 weeks of a four-month period. It was carried out longitudinally over 5 academic years, 2015/16 to 2019/20, to confirm the results.

The case

The following case is based on participatory observation, since it was an organisation in which the teacher worked for over 20 years and whose history she knows from its earliest days to its demise. The standard questions were: If you were in the position of José Luis Sabi Amets and, subsequently, of JR, what would be your analysis of the situation described? and What course of action would you take and why? As complementary tasks to indicate the level of assimilation of the subject, the following questions have to be answered throughout the report: To what extent is it a family business? What are its strengths, weaknesses and mistakes? Is there any real family business planning and management control? The company in question is ASESORIA SABI, founded by José Luis Sabi Amets in 1960. He had started working at the age of 9, but as he was very intelligent and hard-working, he studied at the School of Commerce (now the University School of Business Studies of the UPV / EHU) after work. In 1960, he rented an office on Calle Príncipe de Bilbao and embarked on his

professional career as a consultant. During the first two years, he carried out both the consultancy and administrative work. As the business steadily grew, in the third year he contracted a secretary, Karmele Gorostiza, a 16-year-old daughter of a friend of José Luis, who wanted to leave school and start working. Karmele had to carry out the administrative and accounting work, but she was not trained for the latter and it was still handled by José Luis himself. This took up time visiting the tax office, the company's clients and Social Security Institute. Therefore, in 1964, he hired a 14-year-old boy (Natalio Segura, the son of an acquaintance who did not want to continue studying) to deal with the paper work or minor formalities with the tax and social security authorities. Karmele was very satisfied in her post, but Natalio was a hard worker and eager to get on. Over the years he trained on his own until he stopped running errands and was involved in the administration, especially in managing the accounts of the consultancy and its clients. During that period, the consultancy had expanded and new consultants, who were self-employed, had started working under José Luis. Thus, in 1984 there were 4 consultants, in addition to José Luis, and 4 administrative workers. That marked the start of transformation of the office and the business.

José Luis had married by then and had 4 children. Xabier the eldest, was a hippy and lived in a commune in Lakabe but everything he needed was paid for by his father. JR, the second, was an economist and worked at his father's consultancy. He was always arguing with his father because José Luis paid all the expenses of his older brother and JR regarded that as depleting his future assets. The third son, Pernan, was studying to become an official French and Russian translator and had lived on his own for 4 years. Ane, the youngest of the children and the only girl, and who also had very delicate health, did exactly what she wanted: studied or dropped out, learned the piano or stopped in the middle, moved out and then moved back home, etc. On the other hand, the consultancy had grown significantly and, in addition to the aforementioned Bilbao office in the Albia building, it had two other offices, one in Portugalete and the other in Madrid. In Bilbao there were 4 economists, in addition to José Luis, Karmele (management secretary), Natalio (in charge of accounting), Ana (JR's sister-in-law and in charge of consulting and client payroll), Garazi (administrative assistant who was about to finish her business degree at Sarriko) and Edorta (the boy who ran errands to the tax office, social security, taking things to clients ...). There were two consultant economists and two administrative assistants in the Portugalete office, and the same in Madrid. The situation had completely changed from when the company started out. However, the organisational structure was the same and José Luis thought it was time to change. His proposal was to establish a limited company in which all the consultants would have a stake. He would put up all the capital and keep 60% of the shares. Everyone

would thus be included in the risk and decision making. 40% would be distributed among the consultants as they saw fit and they would be required to return the shares if they left the company. The Bilbao and Madrid consultants agreed, but those in Portugalete did not, and they therefore paid the Goodwill and set up their own independent company. However, they continued to maintain a good relationship with José Luis and their other colleagues. Consequently, in 1984 ASESORÍA SABI, S.L. and its partners were: SASORDARE, S.L. (a company established by José Luis in which he, his wife and all their children were partners and in which all the family assets were invested) with 60%; Mario Solaguren 10% (the oldest consultant, from Bilbao, and who had the largest client share); JR SABI 5% (the son of José Luis); Agustin Vitoria 5% (son of a client of the consultancy firm and consultant in Bilbao); Manuel Heremu 5% (consultant in Bilbao and selected by personal interview); Jerónimo Maspaderne 5% (son of a friend and consultant in Madrid) and Carlos Riguez 5% (consultant in Madrid and who had studied with Jerónimo). That structure continued despite subsequent significant changes.

There was no Board of Directors and José Luis was the sole director as well as the executive director and leader, and that would continue to be the case until he retired. He made all the decisions (salaries, dividends, work organization, etc.) and then informed the others (partners and workers) of the decisions he had made regarding any of the areas of the organization. That was not always to everyone's liking, particularly the partners, but since José Luis held 60%, he always had the last say. In addition, the ordinary general meeting was not duly convened, but rather José Luis would call his partners when it suited him and showed them the financial statements and the decisions he had made. Consequently, numerous awkward and unpleasant situations would often arise. On the other hand, José Luis had a very strong character and great leadership skills. The activities and attitudes he showed in his leadership were:

1. In his opinion, the only incentive for any worker was money. That belief underpinned all his decisions, whether it was to encourage people to work harder, to implement new activities or to work on bank holidays. In addition, the salaries, not including incentives, were very high at least twice the market average.
2. Training was not very important. He believed that basic studies were enough and he would be in charge of teaching the workers what they had to do. Obviously, the consultants had to be economists, but their past performances were not taken into account when hiring them, only their desire to work and the ability to defer to José Luis.
3. Innovation and above all technological innovation were very important and necessary. He was always looking for tools to improve the quality of work and shorten lead times. His was first consultancy firm in Bilbao to have personal

computers and that was also the case with nearly all other similar tools.

4. He always required excellence in work.

If a worker was good and intelligent, they would be incentivized with money, but no help with training was offered. For example, Garazi, the office clerk, was about to finish a Business Degree and the only facility provided was that she could leave work half an hour early to go to Sarriko and so only miss two hours of class instead of three. None of her tuition fees were paid or was she given time off to prepare for the exams. She began her degree in 1980 and worked every Saturday in May and June so she could leave work on time and complete it as scheduled:

1. When he did not like a worker, he would be on their case and highlight their mistakes. His attitudes towards them became totally negative and he began to make their life impossible until the employee decided to leave the company.
2. He took his personal problems to work and it was best to keep out of his way otherwise he would be sure to pick a row.
3. On the other hand, when he was happy, he was always willing and eager to treat his workers.
4. If any of the people needed a day off for anything they could take it without having to use a day's holiday or lose a day's wages, as long as the work was properly completed.
5. If workers had to go in on Saturdays and/or a bank holiday, he would be the first there and would help.

In general, the workers were happy because the working conditions were similar to those of other consultancy firms, but the salaries were much better. Karmele and Natalio's degree of satisfaction was greatly conditioned by their relationship with Jose Luis, as they had started working with him at such a young age, and was high as they had experienced the whole development and expansion process of the firm. Ana's was low as she was not happy with José Luis's arrogance, particularly when talking to someone who was not an economist; even so, she needed to work and always strived for excellence. Garazi was satisfied but not excessively so, as even though José Luis was generous with her salary, he did not seem to recognise her work. What Garazi wanted was more responsibility and for it to be easier to finish her degree and even though she asked José Luis for that every year, the only thing she got was a salary rise. Edorta was very satisfied because he had a very good salary and he was very young and did not have any study aspirations (he had not even finished school).

The level of satisfaction among the consultants was not very high as there were many unfounded differences. Thus, Agustín was very dissatisfied, as even though he had the same seniority as JP and worked better, his salary and level of recognition were much lower. Despite everything, as the

salaries were very good, they all had enough to pay their loans and live comfortably. They also loved their work and therefore continued strive to do an excellent job. No training was provided and when a new regulation came out, it was discussed among all the consultants and they drew their conclusions. The only person to attend training courses was José Luis, who then gathered the consultants and passed on what had been discussed. A chain of transmission and generation of knowledge were thus created. There was no specific training for the workers, just what was the necessary and was provided by technicians to learn to use new technological tools (typewriter, computer, photocopier, computer applications etc). However, things began to change after 1985. To begin with, Garazi was an economist and wanted to be a consultant; José Luis gave her a series of small clients so that she could gain experience, but she had neither an office nor a computer and she had to work in the library, which was less than ideal. In June, Agustín met with José Luis to discuss his working conditions, as he was very angry about the totally unjustified differences between him and JR. José Luis refused to take them into account and Agustín left the consultancy on 31 July and opened his own office, taking his own clients with him. Thus, as of September, Garazi took charge of the clients that Agustín had left, in addition to those that José Luis had already allocated to her. She took over the office that Agustín had vacated, meaning she had her own office and ICTs. Garazi was very good at organizing anything and also at her consultancy work and her number of clients steadily grew and they were very satisfied. Some clients wanted to change consultants (especially from JR) and asked to work with Garazi. JR became jealous and the atmosphere unpleasant as José Luis used Garazi as an example which JR found unbearable and he refused to accept he could do better.

In addition, Garazi was friends with Ana (JR's sister-in-law) and JR took against her as he thought she was turning his wife (Ana's sister) against him. Thus, an administrative assistant was needed in the consultancy firm to fill the position that Garazi had vacated, and in 1986 Inés (Natalio's wife) took up that post. In 1988, JR's wife (Ana's sister) filed for divorce and went to live with her new partner. José Luis was angry and began to pick on Ana, but she knew him very well and put up with his behaviour and continued to work with the same quality until July. One day in July, José Luis threw Ana out after a huge row as he could no longer bear her presence. However, someone was needed to do Ana's work, as it was very specific (payroll). There was nobody with the necessary skills as there was no custom of transmitting knowledge among the clerks and so there was nobody to pass on that expertise in the organisation. In September, a nephew of José Luis took up that post, but he was not trained and he left the job in January 1989. An acquaintance of Garazi was hired, but it had not been with the approval of Manu Heremua and the

new employee left after two months. The same happened with two other people hired by placement agencies. In other words, three people were hired for Ana's position and left in 1989 and the fundamental reason was the teaching-learning relationship with Manuel Heremua, head of the Labour Department. José Luis was angry with Manuel, but he had to make a decision and what occurred to him was to promote Edorta to fill the position and hire a new errand boy. However, his condition was that Edorta had to graduate from school. Edorta accepted despite not finding studying easy, but he managed to work and study with the help of Garazi. Consequently, Félix Abetxuko entered the consultancy as an errand boy in January 1990. In 1990, the commercial legislation changed to bring it into line with European guidelines and companies found they had new obligations to meet. José Luis saw a new business opportunity to offer small and medium-sized companies the option of the consultancy firm also doing their accounting. New investments were not necessary because the accounting program used by the consultancy firm was multi-user and multi-company. Initially, it could be used by administrative interns until it was seen if the idea had taken hold. In addition, it was a very good opportunity for the trainees because they could carry out and experience the accounting of a real company first-hand. However, many meetings had to be held between the consultants in order to fully understand the new legislation and the arguments and quarrels between José Luis and JR became more and more frequent. All the issues became personal between the two. This was not only costly in terms of wasted time, but also very unpleasant for the others, as they then had to meet to study the issues which should have been dealt with in the meeting. The rows could be heard throughout the office and the atmosphere was getting increasingly tense, particularly as the employees were not at all comfortable with JR and with his attitude towards his father. However, yet again, the salary was still very, very good and everyone had also always worked in consultancy. So, they continued to work there, even though they became less and less motivated.

José Luis had begun to pick on Manuel Hermua. In December 1991, Hermua left without saying anything and two months later they learned that he had opened his own office. Manuel did not have many clients and their level of satisfaction was not very high as Manuel was rather laid back and the clients did not consider he paid them the attention they deserved. Thus, most clients were transferred to Garazi's portfolio and she was also put in charge of the Labour Department as she was the only one trained to do so. In turn, the rows between father and son were more frequent as the level of satisfaction of JR's clients had been falling for a long time. The truth was that JR did not like his job at all, he was quite lazy and he wanted to work in a bank, but his father forced him to work in the consultancy firm to ensure its continuity in the future.

Garazi was steadily burning out as she did many different jobs without receiving any kind of recognition, because her work was becoming more mechanical and she had no opportunities to make suggestions or apply her creativity. She had always liked teaching and decided to work towards that. In September 1992 she started to study doctorate courses in order to be able to start her PhD thesis and decided to start working at the UPV / EHU. José Luis was not very happy with Garazi's decision, but she continued to do her work with the same quality and her clients were the most satisfied. Garazi was also highly regarded among the other employees because she was always willing to help them and she always did her training outside of working hours. Meanwhile, the accounting service had been very successful and Inma Seco (an acquaintance of Garazi) was hired in February 1992, even though she had no accounting training, as José Luis had not changed his approach (if someone wants to work and needs the money, I will show them what they need to know). In November of that year, Garazi was taken on for a part-time substitute post at the UPV/EHU, where she combined her consultancy work with her job at the university. J.R. was increasingly envious and jealous of Garazi's success, but there was nothing he could do as José Luis was delighted with Garazi's attitude and good results.

In 1993, Xabier (José Luis' eldest son) wanted to buy a tower house in Balmaseda to turn it into an agrotourism hotel. Of course, he had no money and he turned to his father for help. His father again agreed and SARDORE, S.L. (the company which held all the family assets) bought the tower house and began to refurbish it and convert it into a hotel. JR was very angry because his inheritance was at risk and his brother, without doing anything, was achieving more than him. Rows between the father and son were by then nearly a daily occurrence in the office; JR's attitude towards the workers was getting worse and, logically, the level of satisfaction of the employees was low. There were no longer invitations or activities for everyone, only among the workers who Mario and Garazi would sometimes join. All the money for the work on the tower house came from the consultancy firm and the costs continue to steadily rise as new problems or new ideas appeared every day. José Luis could not really refuse or he would have lost all the money he had put in so far. The consultancy firm was performing well, but money had to legally be paid out of dividends and there were less funds available. Then José Luis embarked on strict cost control and harshly reprimanded everyone for the smallest thing. Thus, as of 1994, his usual people were going to work because it was their obligation and not because it was something they enjoyed and their motivation had completely disappeared. That same year José Luis retired, but only to collect his retirement, as he continued to go to work every day and continued to oversee everything. José Luis had become a totally authoritarian and controlling person, which could be

explained by his age, but was mainly down to money (the tower house was not finished and costs were skyrocketing), while JR's attitude towards his father was threatening and totally disrespectful. José Luis continued to pressurise both consultants and workers. In September, the Madrid office, said that they would either buy the business and become independent or leave the consultancy firm. José Luis could not get over it as he had never imagined such things would ever happen to him and as he seem to be unaware of his recent changes in attitude. In the end, he collected the Goodwill from the Madrid office and they set up their own company and continued on their way.

At the same time, in June 1994, Mario's son (Marito) finished his career as an economist and Mario asked José Luis to give Marito the opportunity to start an internship in consulting starting in September. José Luis agreed and from September onwards Marito helped his father with the accounting and preparing the tax returns. He did not receive a salary or was registered with the social security system. In December, José Luis gave him some money, but no one knew how much or on what criteria the payment was based. From January onwards, he was paid as half-day assistant clerk, but not registered with the social security system, despite the fact that he was getting better at his job and he was doing a master's degree in finance and human resources at Sarriko. It was by now 1995, a new turning point when the downturn in consultancy work doubled/tripled. The rows and attitudes between José Luis and JR were getting worse and several clients had moved to other consultancy firms as they were unhappy with JR. That led to a drop in income and José Luis was exerting even greater control every month. His best option was Garazi, but she wanted to continue with her thesis and at university and not to only be working 12 hours a day at the consultancy firm. José Luis then decided to give her an "ultimatum" at the end of July, either the university and the thesis or her consultancy work, and gave her the month of August to think about it. Garazi was very clear about what her answer would be and spent August searching for and found an office and set up the ICTs. She then notified clients of what had happened and that she would be opening her own office with her cousin, who was in the 4th year of a business degree, in October. At the beginning of September, José Luis asked Garazi what her decision was and when she told him, he could not believe it and spent five hours trying to convince her to change her mind. In the end, he had to admit that he had been wrong about Garazi. He remembered that Garazi had always told him that she did not work for money but because she liked her job and that when it no longer satisfied her, she would try to find a more motivating one. However, José Luis never took that onboard and thought that, just like the others, Garazi's only incentive was money. However, Garazi was true to herself and her real passion was to do what she really liked and not to get rich. Finally, she left the consultancy on 30 September.

The following year, Mario requested that his son be made a consultant as he was already doing the work and furthermore, because his clients was very satisfied and of course much more so than JR's but José Luis refused the request as he needed money to finish the work on the tower house and because, perhaps due to his age, he had become a very selfish and stingy person. Mario was very angry and in July he decided that he would leave the firm and start on his own. He took the three best consultancy workers and all his clients (approximately 75% of the total turnover of SABI, SL). José Luis did not give credit to everything that was happening and that his empire was collapsing around him He had never imagined it would happen to him and it was all about his children and his relationship with them. In September 1996, there were José Luis, JR, Karmele, Inma and Félix at SABI. The problems and rows between father and son were unbearable and one day JR threw his father out of the firm and forbade him to set foot in the office. Karmele then asked to be laid off but making sure she would be entitled to unemployment so as to be able to retire later. Most of the remaining clients went to other consultancy firms and, within a year, Inma and Félix also went to work at other firms. Thus, JR was carrying out all the work alone, just as his father had started out, but with the difference that the company performed very badly between 1995 and 1999, and was barely covering expenses by 1999. In 2002, he found himself facing bankruptcy and closed the firm.

RESULTS

The number of students taking part in the survey was 125 - 25 students per academic year, the maximum allowed and their average age was 21. The gender distribution was fairly even, with a slightly higher number of women, so the results define any student, male or female. The interviews were conducted with all students, given the number of students per year, and were carried out during classroom hours, while their group was engaged in a group self-study activity. With regard to work experience, all of them stated that they had some work experience, either as employees or on the compulsory work experience for the degree. The results of the application of the case study were therefore more significant when analysing the development of their professional skills and how close they had come to the reality of what they had studied. Likewise, the grades followed a normal distribution with more than 45% of students with grade of "B" or "C", nearly 51% with a pass grade and the rest no-shows. The Pearson correlation showed that learning through case study has a significant positive correlation ($r = 0.56, p < .01$), while the use of other active methodologies for the acquisition of knowledge has a slightly lower significant positive correlation ($r = 0.47, p < .01$), with the lowest result ($r =$

Table 1: Stepwise multiple regression analysis on learning outcomes

Variables	Model A				Model B			
	B	SE B	β	t	B	SE B	β	t
Aprendizaje con estudio de caso	0.13	0.44	0.56	4.3	0.12	0.03	0.52	4.13
Other active methodologies					0.15	0.07	0.47	4.01
Mastery					0.19	0.44	0.31	3.55



Figure 1: Student satisfaction with case study

0.31, $p < .01$) for lectures that lay the foundations of knowledge. In view of the results, a stepwise multiple regression analysis was performed to determine whether learning with the case study is a better predictor of learning in terms of achievement of learning outcomes than learning through other active methodologies on the one hand and lecturing and solving non-interdependent practical exercises, on the other. The results (see Table 1) show that the case study is the best predictor of the achievement of learning outcomes ($\beta = 0.48, p < .01$).

Regarding the students' perception of the usefulness of the case study method (see Figure 1), the students stated that: it developed the skills necessary for their professional practice, management of family SMEs in a very satisfactory manner; they faithfully involved in their teaching-learning process; they found it very satisfactory to make decisions about a real situation, as well as to examine real situations of professional practice; their interest and motivation for the subject significantly increased and their overall perception was that that they had been able to relate theory and practice from a totally integrated point of view. The semi-structured interviews show that the methodology had

been an attractive way for them to learn to work in a team and acquire knowledge in a more autonomous and dynamic way; that they are better prepared professionally; that they have learned to appreciate the need and usefulness of knowledge for professional practice; and that they would have liked the rest of the subjects to have also followed this methodology. In short, it can be said that the students perceived that the case study helped them to improve their capacity for analysis and reflection, as well as to make their learning meaningful rather than rote learning, which has led to an improvement in their ability to make reasoned decisions. The awareness of their acquisition of skills and of working with reality increases their motivation and interest not only in the subject but also in the management tasks and their control in a family SME, where they will most probably develop their professional career. Finally, around one third of the students were reported to have acquired or improved their leadership skills and generated a higher level of confidence in themselves and in their effectiveness and efficiency. In terms of soft skills, students perceived significant improvements in their ability to work in teams, oral and written communication, active listening, reading

comprehension, conflict resolution, critical thinking, decision making and improved employability prospects.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The results obtained are in line with the case study literature, which proves that it is an effective method to achieve learning outcomes and meaningful learning (Burgoyne and Mumford, 2001), as well as increasing student motivation in the subject, as it brings them closer to reality in an area as imprecise as business management (Knowles et al., 2014). This is corroborated by the quantification of the effect of different methodologies on learning outcomes which show that the case study is the best predictor of the achievement of learning outcomes, as also demonstrated by the study conducted by Loon et al. (2015). Examining real-life situations of professional practice is perceived by students as a tool that helps them to develop their ability to manage a family SME very successfully (Corriveau, 2020; Yeo and Marquardt, 2015). This leads to better acquisition of management and leadership skills (Awaysheh and Bonfiglio, 2017), which is pointed out by 1/3 of the students, as both are closely linked to the management of this type of enterprises. Furthermore, working holistically with the subject matter in a real-life situation, helps them to relate theory to practice and to work on improving the skills of self-discipline, independence, intellectual curiosity and creativity (Tippin et al., 2012). Furthermore, having to analyse and reflect on reality, based on the knowledge base, has improved their capacity for analysis and reflection (Ellet, 2007), leading to more meaningful learning (Kolb and Kolb, 2017; Whetten, 2007). In fact, they appreciate the need and usefulness of prior knowledge for the development of professional practice and intuitively recognise that knowledge has emerged that is not explicit in the teaching material (Corriveau, 2020) through their individual and group questioning and reflection (Burgoyne and Mumford, 2001).

Finally, students have seen significant improvements in soft skills such as their ability to work in teams, their oral and written communication (Noblitt et al., 2010), active listening and reading comprehension (Weil et al., 2004), conflict resolution (Böcker, 1987), critical thinking (Bergland et al., 2006) and decision-making (Burgoyne and Mumford, 2001). In short, they feel a significant improvement to their employability prospects. In conclusion, this study demonstrates that the application of the Case Study, in the training of managers of SME family businesses, achieves the positive effects in the teaching-learning process of the students that the literature points out (Bergland et al., 2006; Böcker, 1987; Boyce et al., 2001; Burgoyne and Mumford, 2001; Noblitt et al., 2010; Weil et al., 2004). These results are confirmed both by the learning

outcomes obtained in the teacher evaluation process and by the statements made by students in the surveys and semi-structured interviews conducted. In addition, a quantitative analysis is carried out comparing the application of different teaching methodologies with the same students, which concludes that the Case Study is the method with the greatest predictive capacity for the achievement of the learning outcomes. Results are in line with previous studies referenced. The transversality of the study stands out as the most important contribution. The measurements were carried out over 5 academic years, with homogeneous results during each one. This indicates that the students' perception is maintained over time, which corroborates the effectiveness of this methodology in business management studies. The repeated declarations by students that they would like this methodology to be used in the rest of the subjects in order to be better prepared professionally and as they have assimilated the importance of theoretical knowledge for professional practice leads to the assumption that the Case Study can be successfully applied from earlier years in business management studies. The main limitation of this study is that the results correspond to five years of teaching by the same teacher. As a line of future research, it is proposed to carry out a similar study for subjects in earlier years in which the Case Study has been implemented and which are taught by different teachers, since the level of effectiveness also depends on the personality of the teacher.

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