

How can higher education prepare students for market challenges? Extending the learning experience in events education

Rationale

Nowadays' market requires greater ability to adapt to emerging and ever-changing realities, demanding events' higher education to be structured in ways that enable students to develop the necessary skills to face these challenges. Therefore, methodologies that understand learning as a process focused on learners and on real situations, such as Problem Based Learning (PBL), will guide students to develop projects that bear in mind all challenges, both from a conceptual perspective and in line with real-life situations, putting transdisciplinarity into practice (Bernstein, 2015).

- 3rd year undergraduate students
- Leisure Management and Tourism Entertainment degree
- Estoril Higher Institute for Tourism and Hotel Studies (ESHTE), Portugal

4 Curricular Units (CUs)

- Events Management
- Marketing
- Tourism Entertainment and Local Development
- Cultural Programming and Management

Transdisciplinarity

Problem Based Learning (PBL) task for Event Development Learning Model (EDLM):

CREATION OF A CULTURAL EVENT PROMOTING LOCAL DEVELOPMENT

Stages of the EDML:

1. Idea Camp
2. Project Camp
3. Written Assignment

Project Delivery/Implementation
(2nd semester)

1. Idea Camp (17th October 2016, 17h00-22h00)

Preparation by lecturers

- Intense collaborative work among all lecturers involved:
 - To organise the project's guidelines for students
 - To prepare each stage of the project
 - To fine-tune aspects of assessment
 - To restructure the contents taught in each Curricular Unit to facilitate complementarity
 - To reorganise classes' schedules
 - Regular tutorial sessions with students

Resources used

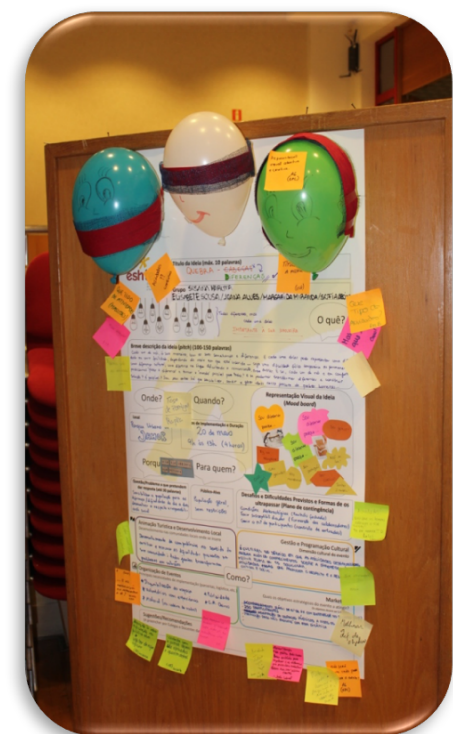
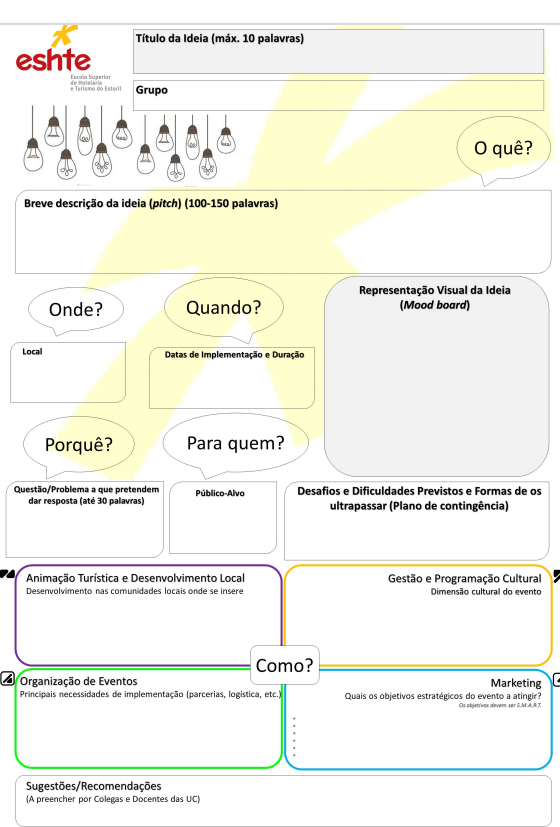
- Large and comfortable meeting room (islands setup) | Audiovisuals
- Powerpoint with guidelines and schedule of activities
- Specific music to identify the change of tasks
- Inspiration posters on the walls

Disney Creativity Strategy (Dilts, 1994)

- Listing as many ideas as possible (minimum number of 5)
- Definition of 5 criteria for idea assessment
- Clockwise exchange of ideas between groups » assessing the 3 best ideas of the previous group » new exchange between groups » assessing the best idea according to the criteria

2015 European Cultural Foundation Idea Camp

- Filling in a poster with pre-given topics
- Poster display and feedback on post-its from participants



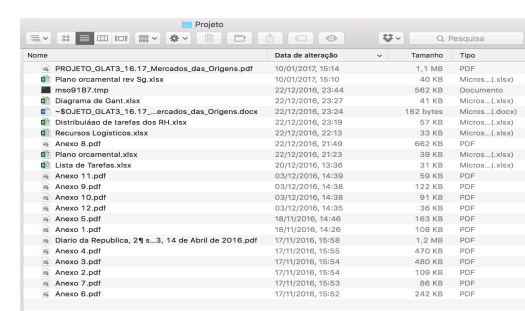
2. Project Camps (28th November 2016, 15h00-18h00 & 19h00-22h00)

- Meeting room in a half moon setup
- 10-min. group pitch of the project + 15-min. Q&A
- Guests
 - Invited lecturers from other Curricular Units (e.g. tourism, management, entrepreneurship, marketing)
 - Alumni (now events professionals – companies and public institutions)
 - Trade specialists
- Display of posters for each idea, designed by each group and feedback on post-its from all participants



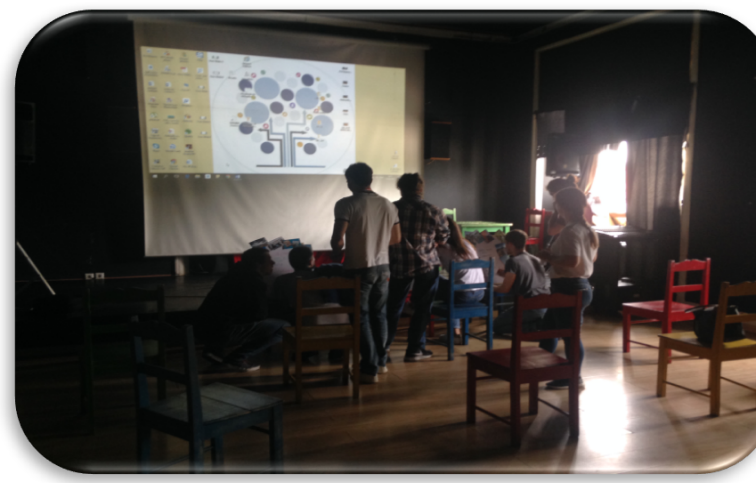
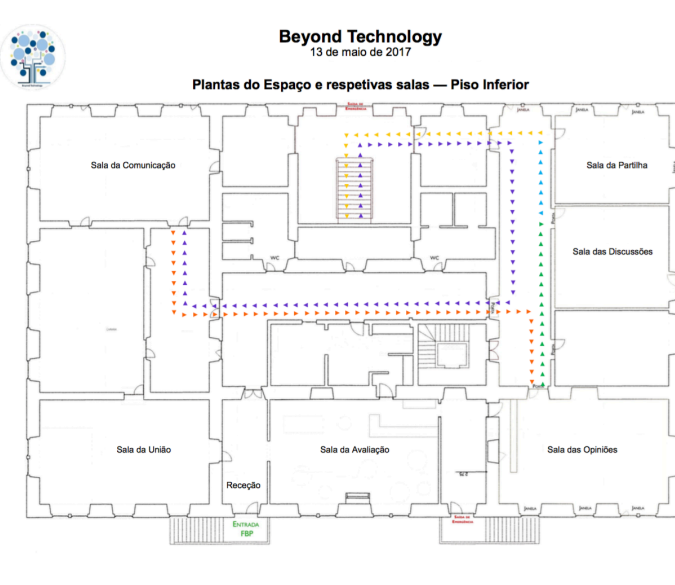
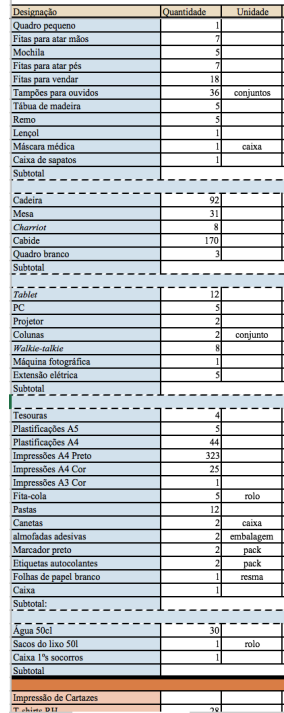
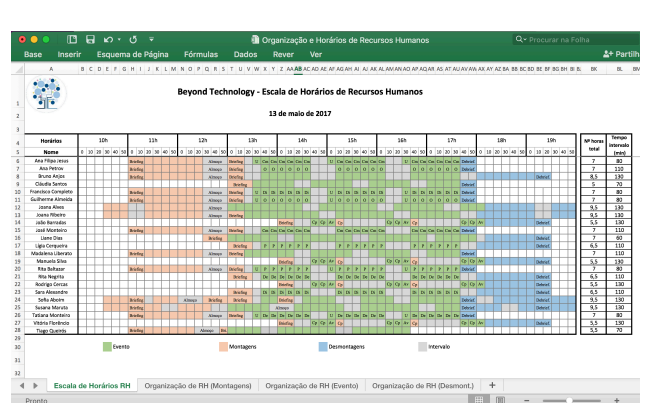
3. Written Assignment (December 2016)

- 40-60-page written assignment containing common topics for all Curricular Units
 - event's framework
 - strategic and production planning
 - specific aspects requested by each lecturer/Curricular Units



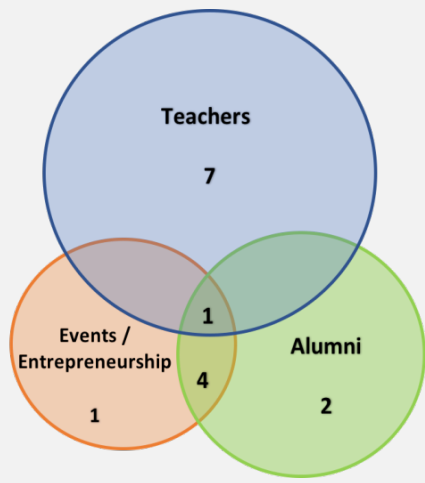
Project Delivery / Implementation (May-June 2017)

- With two lecturers in the Curricular Unit of Planning and Management in Tourism Entertainment
- E.g. Beyond Technology - May 13th 2017 - Fábrica Braço de Prata, Lisbon, Portugal



Monitoring tools

- i) 37 questionnaires to students following the Idea Camp + 33 questionnaires following the Project Camps
- ii) 15 interviews with Project Camp guests
- iii) Informal interviews with the groups at the end of the process
- iv) Idea and Project camps registered in photography and video
- v) Feedback from the 5 lecturers involved



Findings and results

1. The **Event Development Learning Model (EDLM)** helps to understand the real market needs in a controlled environment.
2. Holistic approach to challenges and solutions allows content and knowledge complementarity and deepening.
 - Students consider that EDLM is important for a better understanding of theoretical contents (62% at Idea Camp, 58% at Project Camp)
3. Practical learning gives experience and develops not only hard but also soft skills.
 - Students feel more prepared for teamwork and idea discussion (84% at Idea Camp, 94% at Project Camp).
 - Project Camp guests reinforce this topic, identifying soft skills as important tools for event managers.
4. Integration of external inputs in the Project Camp are considered a top feature of the process.
5. As a different teaching/learning methodology, students reveal more motivation and involvement, stepping out of their comfort zone.

Conclusions and reflections for the future

- The **Event Development Learning Model** is a time-consuming and demanding process both for students and lecturers.
- As a pilot experience, the **Event Development Learning Model** should be repeated and monitored in upcoming academic years to understand if results are consistent and to identify which topics could be improved and how.
- Knowledge scaffolding – lecturers facilitating knowledge building along the **Event Development Learning Model**.
- Bridging theory and practice – a more realistic approach to the events’ market needs.
- Transdisciplinary and holistic approach – enabling students to think across different disciplines/areas and needs.

References

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