

## The MBA startup clinic: An experiential team-teaching approach for entrepreneurial leadership

Taller MBA de startups: Un enfoque experiencial de enseñanza en equipo para el liderazgo emprendedor

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## ABSTRACT

This paper presents the teaching methodology applied in the “Global Context” course within the Junior MBA program at EDEM University. This intensive three-day course, delivered in English as part of the “Innovation and Strategy” module, comprises five hours of instruction per day. It aims to develop entrepreneurial leadership skills by encouraging students to shift from conventional, linear problem-solving to more agile and adaptive framework. A critical shift for future leaders in today’s

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volatile and uncertain global business environment. The course applies active learning techniques, including interactive lectures, open discussions, start-up case analysis, and team-based assessments, with primary emphasis on a collaborative team-teaching model. This approach is integrated with the MBA Startup Clinic, a hands-on project designed to bridge theoretical foundations with practical application. Course effectiveness was evaluated through structured surveys that gathered qualitative feedback from students. Results indicate a significant improvement in students' ability to tackle complex challenges. Notably, 82% reported feeling better prepared for real-world business environments. However, a minority, 18%, expressed some discomfort with the interactive dynamics of team-teaching, particularly when instructors engaged in spontaneous dialogue that occasionally diverged from their expectations of a more conventional lecture structure.

**Keywords.** Team-teaching, collaborative learning, entrepreneurial leadership, cognitive ambidexterity, global business environment, MBA education, learning dynamics

## RESUMEN

*Este artículo presenta la metodología docente aplicada en el curso “Global Context” del programa Junior MBA de EDEM University. Este curso intensivo de tres días, impartido en inglés dentro del módulo de “Innovación y Estrategia”, comprende cinco horas diarias de instrucción. Su objetivo es desarrollar competencias de liderazgo emprendedor, promoviendo que los estudiantes pasen de enfoques lineales y convencionales de resolución de problemas a marcos más ágiles y adaptativos, un cambio crucial para futuros líderes en un entorno empresarial global volátil e incierto. El curso aplica técnicas de aprendizaje activo, incluyendo clases interactivas, debates abiertos, análisis de casos de start-ups y evaluaciones en equipo, con un énfasis principal en un modelo colaborativo de enseñanza en equipo. Esta metodología se integra con el MBA Startup Clinic, un proyecto práctico diseñado para conectar la teoría con la aplicación real. La efectividad del curso fue evaluada mediante encuestas estructuradas que recopilaban comentarios cualitativos del estudiantado. Los resultados indican una mejora significativa en la capacidad de los estudiantes para afrontar retos complejos. En concreto, un 82% afirmó sentirse mejor preparado para entornos empresariales reales. Una minoría, un 18%, expresó cierta incomodidad con las dinámicas interactivas de la enseñanza en equipo, especialmente ante diálogos espontáneos que a veces se apartaban de un formato más convencional.*

**Palabras clave.** Enseñanza en equipo, aprendizaje colaborativo, liderazgo emprendedor, ambidestreza cognitiva, entorno empresarial global, educación MBA, dinámicas de aprendizaje

## INTRODUCTION

The knowledge (e.g., accounting, strategy, marketing) and capabilities (e.g., resilience, creativity, teamwork) that students are expected to acquire and develop during an MBA program are explicitly articulated by educational institutions (Gao & Huber, 2024). These definitions not only guide the design of curricula but also extend to the selection of teaching methodologies (such as project-based learning, problem-based learning, or challenge-based learning) as well as to the development of assessment methods.

However, the complexities of modern work and society have heightened the demand for graduates to develop an even more diverse set of skills and competencies to succeed in their careers (Barrie, 2006; Ananiadou & Claro, 2009). This aligns with the broader discussion on graduate attributes, which emphasizes not only the acquisition of subject-specific skills but also the

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development of individual capability to adapt and thrive in diverse contexts (Cairns & Malloch, 2017). According to them, meeting the multifaceted demands of the 21st century requires a more integrated and holistic perspective, for example, integrating a mindset of environmental sustainability among employees within a firm (Delmas and Sparks, 2024) or keeping pace with technological innovation in a company (Govindarajan and Venkatraman, 2022).

In this context, business schools have broadened the scope of these attributes to include leadership, strategic thinking, and entrepreneurial capabilities. Skills essential for thriving in today's competitive and uncertain business environments (Avolio et al., 2019; Greenberg et al., 2011). This approach underscores the role of business education in cultivating adaptable, socially conscious professionals who can thrive in dynamic, evolving contexts.

This shift is particularly relevant in an era where the purpose of business is increasingly moving away from profit maximization and shareholder value capture (Porter & Kramer, 2018). Instead, the mission and existence of businesses are aligning with a growing recognition of broader responsibilities toward diverse stakeholders, including employees, customers, suppliers, and the community, beyond just their shareholders (Henisz, 2023; Harrison et al., 2010).

In response to these shifting expectations and institutional transformations, the primary objective of the perspective presented in this paper is to educate students so that they gain the skills and mindset necessary to drive significant change in organizations and society. These graduates are expected to be able to apply academic knowledge with analytical rigor, engage in critical and constructive dialogue with diverse stakeholders, and address complex challenges by balancing ethical reasoning with strategic vision (Gao and Huber, 2024). As noted by Mascarenhas et al. (2024), this kind of paradigm shift is urgently needed in MBA education, which has been widely criticized for its inadequacy in preparing students to deal with unstructured or "wicked" problems, and for its lack of ethical and entrepreneurial depth. Their proposed redesign of the MBA, grounded in critical thinking and anchored around themes such as sustainability and innovation, reinforces the idea that business education must move beyond traditional frameworks to equip students for the real-world complexity they will inevitably face.

Through the theoretical lens of entrepreneurial leadership (Greenberg et al., 2011) this paper explores how students can better understand themselves and the context in which they will operate. In doing so, it builds on the premise that entrepreneurial leadership entails a dynamic process of opportunity recognition and resource mobilization under uncertainty, which aligns with today's organizational challenges.

This pedagogical argument is examined through the implementation of an educational model that integrates theoretical rigor with experiential learning, placing entrepreneurial leadership at the core of business education. The "Global Context" course, as implemented in EDEM University's Junior MBA, serves as a case study to examine how team-teaching, real-world projects, and interdisciplinary content can foster the development of adaptive, ethically grounded, and strategically minded professionals.

To enhance clarity and coherence, the following sections are structured as follows: the Literature Review section presents the theoretical underpinnings of the course, focusing on the principles of entrepreneurial leadership and the cognitive frameworks that support it. This section also examines the contextual content covered in the course, including geopolitics, macroeconomic uncertainty, technological disruption, and climate change. Together, these elements emphasize the importance of integrating adaptability, ethical reasoning, and strategic thinking into management education to develop "citizen scholars" (Arvanitakis & Hornsby, 2016) who will be civically engaged, socially responsible and involved in their communities. In parallel, recent literature on pedagogical innovation (particularly in the areas of Challenge-Based Learning and team teaching) offers valuable frameworks for connecting these goals to classroom practice.

Next, the Methodology section details the structure and pedagogical approach of the course, with special emphasis on the team-teaching model and the MBA Startup Clinic. The Results section

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that follows presents the outcomes of student evaluations, offering insights into the impact of the course on learners' competencies and perceptions. Finally, the Discussion section provides a synthesis of the findings and offers suggestions for future research and pedagogical development.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### The Theoretical Framework: Core Principles of Entrepreneurial Leadership

In August 2019, the Business Roundtable issued a revised Statement on the Purpose of a Corporation (Business Roundtable, 2019). Endorsed by 181 CEOs, this declaration marked a shift from the traditional principle of shareholder primacy to a broader commitment to serving all stakeholders, including customers, employees, suppliers, communities, and shareholders. By redefining the purpose of a corporation, the Business Roundtable emphasized the vital role of businesses in driving innovation, job creation, and economic growth while addressing pressing social, environmental, and economic challenges. This new approach emphasizes the importance of promoting inclusion, sustainability, and ethical practices to ensure long-term benefits for society.

Given this evolving paradigm, management education must adapt to prepare future leaders to embrace and advance these goals. As noted by Mintzberg (2004) MBA programs often concentrate heavily on theoretical frameworks and analytical techniques, sometimes neglecting practical applications. This misalignment between curricula and required managerial competencies has been highlighted by Rubin and Dierdorff (2009). In addition, Datar et al. (2011) explain that critical management and leadership skills are not taught effectively in MBAs. So, it is necessary to develop alternative approaches to inspiring, influencing, and guiding others. Therefore, this course aims to cultivate entrepreneurial leadership capabilities in MBA students, enabling them to adopt a more innovative approach to decision-making through three foundational principles outlined by Greenberg et al. (2011).

To address this challenge, the course seeks to develop entrepreneurial leadership capabilities among MBA students, enabling them to adopt innovative, principle-driven approaches to decision-making, as articulated by Greenberg et al. (2011). Firstly, entrepreneurial leaders often encounter uncharted or complex scenarios (i.e., covid 19 or the war in Ukraine) where traditional predictive models fall short due to unclear cause-and-effect dynamics. In such situations, relying on historical data or trends for predictions proves ineffective. Instead, they must adopt an alternative mindset grounded in action, experimentation, and innovation, referred to as "creation logic." Developing entrepreneurial leadership requires mastering the ability to transition seamlessly between traditional predictive reasoning and this creation-oriented perspective, a dual-thinking approach termed "cognitive ambidexterity."

Secondly, leaders must recognize that generating long-term value involves addressing social, environmental, and economic priorities concurrently rather than sequentially. This principle is summarized by the SEERS framework (Social, Environmental, Economic Responsibility and Sustainability), which encourages leaders to integrate sustainability and responsibility into business strategy. Managing diverse stakeholder interests, rights, and influences will often generate synergies but can also create tensions, which leaders must handle effectively.

Finally, entrepreneurial leaders need to cultivate both self and social awareness (SSA: Self and Social Awareness). SSA highlights the importance of understanding both personal values and the broader societal context. This involves gaining a deep understanding of their own values and the societal context in which they operate. Leaders who comprehend cultural and ethical environments are better equipped to engage stakeholders and foster conditions conducive to achieving positive outcomes.

By rooting the course in these principles, we aim not only to transfer knowledge but to foster a leadership mindset grounded in ethical commitment, adaptability, and strategic clarity. An essential

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foundation for critically engaging with the complex geopolitical, economic, technological, and environmental forces shaping today's business landscape.

### **Geopolitics: the “Polycrisis” concept and the Rise of “National Interest Economics”**

MBA students aiming to become future business leaders must understand that the nature of the global marketplace is permanently evolving, as it is molded by institutional instability and uncertainty. Here, we adopt the definition of institutions from the field of institutional economics, considering institutions as the structure of rules and norms that shape and constrain social behaviors (North, 1990). A perspective that views markets as a result of the interaction among individuals, companies and states in multiple levels (Menard, 2005).

So, it is essential for our MBA students to recognize the critical role of geopolitics and its interconnection with traditional business risks, as companies operate within intricate political and economic systems. As noted by Lee and Glosserman (2022), companies are “very much political actors, in many situations, with a national identity, and as such they need to understand what shapes their identity as well as those of the companies they interact with” (*under “Accept that politics are inescapable” section, para. 1*). This means that companies do not operate in a political vacuum, as they possess their own political identity, and it is perceived by the society.

However, companies have long resisted acknowledging their political identity, considering geopolitical aspects as peripheral to business. This vision is exemplified by the famous remark from Christophe de Margerie, former CEO of the French energy giant Total: “We are involved in business; we are not involved in politics” (Thomas, 2022), delivered in the wake of Russia's 2014 annexation of Crimea. This sentiment was echoed by other Western oil corporations, such as BP, which signed a contract with the Russian state-owned oil company Rosneft just weeks after the annexation in 2014 (Farchy, 2014). However, in stark contrast to this earlier approach, BP's decision in February 2022 to divest its \$14 billion investment in Rosneft represents a turning point in corporate responses to geopolitical crises. BP's chairman, Helge Lund, condemned Russia's invasion of Ukraine as an “act of aggression,” leading the board to conclude that ongoing involvement with Rosneft was no longer viable. This decisive shift by BP serves as a powerful reminder of the fallacy in believing that private enterprises can remain detached from political realities and the broader geopolitical landscape. Certainly, there is an increasing pressure on companies to align their actions with broader geopolitical and ethical consideration (El Ghouli et al., 2024). A trend that has been termed “stakeholder geopolitics” (Brende, 2023) where companies and investors face growing public expectations to act responsibly as they exert increasing influence on global governance.

In a permanent evolving international scenario, businesses face a world where political and economic disruptions are deeply interconnected. The 2019 coronavirus pandemic exemplified this reality, severely disrupting the global economy, causing supply chain bottlenecks, and fueling inflation (Gopinath, 2020). Besides, government recovery efforts heightened these inflationary pressures, further intensified by the energy crisis linked to Russia's invasion of Ukraine. At the same time, this war at Europe's doorstep marks a critical shift from a unipolar world led by the U.S. to a more complex, multipolar global order (Haass, 2023). Meanwhile, the current climate change introduces an additional layer of urgency, exacerbating existing challenges such as rising populism and escalating tensions between China and the U.S.

This situation of interconnected crises has been described as a “polycrisis,” a concept introduced by complexity theorists Edgar Morin and Anne Brigitte Kern (Morin & Kern, 1999). A “polycrisis” refers to a condition where multiple, interconnected crises (such as economic, political, environmental, and social disruptions) converge and interact, amplifying each other's effects and resulting in a predicament that is more severe and difficult to resolve than any single crisis alone. Unlike isolated crises, a “polycrisis” is defined by the way these overlapping challenges are causally entangled, often producing harms greater than the sum of their individual parts. For example, the



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COVID-19 pandemic, climate change, geopolitical conflicts, and economic instability have recently combined to create a global situation in which each crisis exacerbates the others, making effective responses more complex. This framework highlights how multiple overlapping crises, rather than any single threat, define current global instability (Klyver & McMullen, 2025). The term gained prominence among political leaders like EU Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker to describe simultaneous challenges such as Brexit, financial instability, and migration, noting that these problems “feed each other, creating a sense of doubt and uncertainty” (Juncker, 2016).

Understanding the “polycrisis” concept is essential for MBA students because it illustrates the need for leaders to develop systems thinking and the ability to respond to complex, rapidly evolving scenarios. Skills that are central to the course’s objectives.

In parallel, the rise of “homeland economics” (also called “national interest economics”) is briefly defined and contextualized here. “Homeland economics” is a novel economic paradigm based in the idea that countries opt for a protectionist response to globalization. It refers to the resurgence of economic policies that prioritize national interests, such as reshoring supply chains or protecting strategic industries, often in response to geopolitical tensions or global disruptions (Williams, 2023; Fontanelli, 2025).

This approach is driven by four primary factors: economic volatility, intensifying geopolitical rivalries, energy insecurity, and apprehensions about artificial intelligence’s impact on employment markets. Homeland economics aims to preserve the advantages of global economic integration while mitigating its associated uncertainties and disparities. This evolving economic philosophy represents a shift from unfettered globalization towards a more nuanced approach that emphasizes geo-strategic considerations and aligns economic policies with national security imperatives. This perspective has gained traction among global leaders across various nations and institutions. For instance, Jake Sullivan, the United States National Security Advisor, articulated the possibility of balancing national security interests with healthy economic competition (Sullivan, 2024). Similarly, Janet Yellen, the United States Secretary of the Treasury, reaffirmed America’s economic dynamism while emphasizing the importance of safeguarding national values and security (Yellen, 2024). In the European context, Ursula von der Leyen, President of the European Commission, highlighted the European Union’s pioneering role in formulating a comprehensive economic security strategy (von der Leyen, 2024). Meanwhile, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi emphasized the pursuit of self-reliance as a pathway to national prosperity and global influence in the 21st century (Modi, 2024).

Finally, the Sino-American rivalry is going to shape the 21st century (Sánchez-Coll, 2023). This relationship has undergone substantial transformation over five decades, with recent years marked by intensified tensions under both Trump and Biden administrations. These tensions stem from trade conflicts, geopolitical issues concerning Taiwan, and strict technological export controls. Concurrently, China under Xi Jinping’s leadership grapples with a series of economic challenges. These include a demographic decline, insufficient domestic consumption, a struggling real estate sector, and rising youth unemployment rates (Leahy et al., 2023). Indeed, the U.S.-China rivalry represents a major geopolitical tension, but it transcends a simple democracy versus authoritarianism narrative. The world is increasingly multipolar, with countries like Turkey, India, and Brazil emerging as key players. These “intermediate powers” demonstrate distinct strategic interests and are reluctant to be drawn into binary global conflicts (Borrell, 2023; Stuenkel, 2021).

For MBA students, understanding these trends is essential, as they shape the global competitive landscape and guide strategic decision-making in multinational firms.

### **Interpreting the macroeconomic environment**

For MBA students, understanding the dynamics of macroeconomy is essential, as they directly impact corporate financial strategies, investments, and overall market behavior. The ability to interpret central bank actions and their deep effects prepare them to anticipate risks, seize

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opportunities, and make informed strategic decisions. This block also draws attention to the importance of monitoring and interpreting reports issued by the European Commission, the European Central Bank, and the International Monetary Fund, as valuable and available sources of information for students and academics.

Therefore, this section is opened introducing Robert Shiller's concept of "narrative economics" (Shiller, 2019) as a valuable framework for interpreting market dynamics. Shiller argues that widely shared narratives, stories that capture public attention, shape economic expectations and influence both individual and collective financial behavior. For instance, this perspective helps explain how financial crises can spread rapidly, much like contagious diseases. When new market information supports an existing narrative, it reinforces and sustains that belief among consumers and investors. Conversely, contradictory data can weaken prevailing narratives, paving the way for alternative perspectives to emerge (Beunza & Garud, 2007).

In the case of the 2023-24 academic year, in October 2023, financial markets faced an unusual dilemma: the absence of a dominant, cohesive narrative (Harrison, 2023). The economic outlook for major economies had shifted significantly over time. In the latter half of 2022, fears of a "hard landing"—marked by deep recession and persistent inflation—prevailed. By early 2023, this view relaxed into expectations of a "soft landing," characterized by milder economic contraction and easing inflation. By mid-2023, however, the discourse evolved into a "no landing" scenario, where economic growth continued at a moderate pace despite sustained inflation (International Monetary Fund, 2023). This shifting landscape generated uncertainty, with markets receiving conflicting signals, such as persistently high inflation alongside strong labor market performance (European Commission, 2023). All these points were comprehensively addressed in class.

A key topic in the course was the sharp rise in inflation, which triggered a conventional response from central banks: an aggressive cycle of interest rate hikes. On September 14, 2023, the European Central Bank (ECB) raised its key rate by 25 basis points to 4 percent, the tenth consecutive increase, setting a record-high deposit rate. This tightening of monetary policy in Europe led to a contraction in lending activity, as evidenced by data released by the Euro System in October 2023 (European Central Bank, 2023).

The situation revealed a crucial economic reality and an essential lesson for our students: rising borrowing costs makes debt refinancing more challenging for businesses, illustrating the broader implications of a restrictive monetary policy.

### **The Transformative Impact of Artificial Intelligence and Cryptocurrencies**

Artificial Intelligence (AI) and cryptocurrencies exemplify the profound influence of technological advancements on modern economies. The rapid evolution and widespread adoption of generative AI, particularly following the public launch of ChatGPT in November 2022, illustrate this transformative potential. Within just five days, ChatGPT reached 1 million users, and by January 2023, its user base had surged to 100 million, solidifying its status as a groundbreaking technological innovation.

The perspective used in the course is that AI represents a powerful tool that extends human capabilities rather than completely replacing human labor. The complexity and multifaceted nature of certain roles significantly reduce their automation risk, particularly in professions requiring nuanced decision-making, emotional intelligence, and contextual understanding (Hui et al., 2024). While AI excels at processing data and performing repetitive tasks, it currently remains fundamentally limited and prone to errors. Therefore, AI-generated outputs should always be critically verified, similar to how one would review an assistant's work. The most effective approach is to view AI as a collaborative partner that enhances human productivity, not as an autonomous replacement, with human oversight and critical evaluation remaining essential to ensuring accurate and ethical outcomes (Dell'Acqua et al., 2023; Noy & Zhang, 2023).

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A particularly meaningful example of this paradigm shift can be seen in how leading business schools are reimagining their curricula. As noted by Ryan (2025), Harvard Business School recently launched the course *Data Science and AI for Leaders (DSAIL)* to equip future MBAs with hands-on experience using AI tools. As Professor Karim Lakhani aptly put it, "If the 20th century was defined by the MBA wielding Excel, this century will be defined by MBAs working hand-in-hand with AI agents, reimagining organizations, business models, and operating models from the ground up." This analogy captures the profound shift in managerial competencies, from spreadsheet-based analysis to real-time, AI-assisted decision-making. The integration of tools such as AI tutorbots and natural-language data analysis platforms (e.g., Julius.ai) reflects the growing institutional commitment to preparing students for a world in which AI is not a peripheral support, but a central partner in business operations and strategic thinking.

Cryptocurrencies, led by Bitcoin, emerged from a pioneering white paper published by Satoshi Nakamoto on October 31, 2008 (Sakamoto, 2008). This proposal introduced a decentralized electronic payment system, eliminating the need for intermediaries and resolving the double-spending problem. Bitcoin's inception marked the beginning of a new financial paradigm, leveraging blockchain technology to support a digital asset market that surpassed \$1.1 trillion by October 2023. Blockchain's key attributes (immutability, transparency, and security) have positioned it as a foundational technology, not only for cryptocurrencies but also for broader financial applications. The success of Bitcoin has driven central banks to explore blockchain's potential, leading to the development of Central Bank Digital Currencies (CBDCs), envisioned as a means to enhance the functionality of the monetary system (Bank of International Settlements, 2022).

Technological progress fosters innovation, creating new products, services, and markets. However, the successful integration of these advancements into society requires robust regulatory oversight. To ensure students grasp this balance between innovation and governance we recommend introducing the framework of "The New Chicago School," developed by Lawrence Lessig (2008). This perspective offers a structured approach to analyzing how four key forces (technology, market dynamics, societal norms, and regulatory policies) interact to shape economic and social behaviors.

### **Climate Change and its Influence on Business**

First, MBA students need to understand that climate change exerts significant influence across various economic dimensions, including agricultural productivity, labor efficiency, energy markets, and public health. These impacts are increasingly recognized as critical factors shaping macroeconomic stability and inflationary dynamics (Kotz et al., 2023).

Secondly, there is a legal agenda created by the European Union that is currently shaping the present business situation and, consequently, their future professional careers. Basically, because the European Union has set a firm course toward climate neutrality by 2050 as it is established in the European Green Deal, the overarching framework. This initiative provides the policy context for various sustainability measures, such as the EU's New Circular Economy Action Plan and the Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive (CSRD).

So, our MBA students must understand the concept of circular economy, which implies moving away from the traditional "take-make-dispose" economic model toward an approach that prioritizes extending the lifespan of products and materials throughout the production cycle. They also must learn that from January 5, 2023, with the introduction of the CSRD, it is mandatory for large companies and firms listed on regulated markets to disclose sustainability information for the first time in the 2024 financial year, with reports due in 2025. These regulations will ensure that investors and other stakeholders have access to crucial sustainability data, allowing them to assess businesses' social and environmental impact more effectively.

Therefore, a key lesson for our students is that the assumption of the European Green Deal implies an energy transition. It means having to pay for a resource (a stable climate) that previously



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had no cost. Stabilizing the climate requires reaching net zero emissions. This entails investing 2-3% of GDP over a period of 10 to 25 years to transform the energy generation system (Pisani-Ferry & Posen, 2024).

Additionally, we know that this climate change perspective faces resistance from some sectors of society. So, to offer a compelling counternarrative we recommend reading "Cheaper Faster Better: How We'll Win the Climate War" by the climate investor and activist Tom Steyer (Steyer, 2024). An inspiring book for students and business leaders, which defends the thesis that capitalism (when aligned with sustainability) can drive transformative societal outcomes and restore climate stability

### **Challenge-Based Learning and Team Teaching in Business Education**

Recent literature highlights the value of Challenge-Based Learning (CBL) as a pedagogical model for bridging academic knowledge and real-world application. As described by Gómez Sota et al. (2024), CBL involves engaging students with open-ended, authentic challenges that require active inquiry, collaboration with stakeholders, and actionable outcomes. It builds on and extends earlier forms of experiential learning such as project-based or problem-based learning by placing students in contexts where the problem is not predefined and must be co-constructed. Donaldson (2025) emphasizes that these contexts generate powerful learning moments, though they also expose students to emotional tension, ambiguity, and feedback that mirrors real professional environments. Complementing this active learning model, team-teaching practices may serve as a strategy to foster transdisciplinary thinking. When instructors bring diverse academic backgrounds and cultural perspectives into the classroom, they offer students multiple professional role models and perspectives that can deepen learning, engagement, and critical thinking. Roberts, Bissett, and Wilding (2023) found that team teaching boosts instructors' confidence in translating theory into practice, describing it as more energizing and engaging than teaching alone. Similarly, Gono and De Moraes (2023) show that collaborative team-teaching fosters student motivation, clearer communication, and richer engagement through exposure to diverse viewpoints and constructivist teaching strategies. Together, CBL and team teaching offer a framework for designing courses that develop both critical thinking and adaptability in future business professionals.

## **METHODOLOGY**

The "Global Context" course, an introductory component of the pre-experience MBA Junior program at EDEM Centro Universitario for the 2023/2024 academic year, offers a comprehensive exploration of global business dynamics. Embedded within the broader "Innovation and Strategy" module, this intensive course is taught in English and unfolds over three consecutive Fridays, each comprising five hours of instruction, commencing on October 27, 2023.

The delivery methodology of the course mixes several techniques, but it is primarily anchored in a collaborative team-teaching approach (Baeten & Simons, 2014; Planck, 2023), which according to literature promotes dialogue, increases participation and improves evaluation and feedback (Anderson & Speck, 1998).

To enrich the methodological dimension of this pedagogical approach, we now provide a more detailed account of the team-teaching model, emphasizing the roles, academic profiles, and complementary contributions of both instructors. The course is jointly designed and delivered by the Head of the Accounting and Finance Department and the Head of the Entrepreneurship Department at the business school. The former is a Spanish national who holds a PhD in Applied Economics and brings over two decades of professional experience in financial markets, including positions at the Spanish Stock Exchange and in private banking. His teaching emphasizes institutional economic frameworks, macro-financial analysis, and the influence of regulatory and geopolitical forces. The latter, originally from Northern Ireland, holds a PhD in Business

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Administration and a background in international business education, with a pedagogical focus on entrepreneurial behavior, challenge-based learning, and open innovation.

This disciplinary and cultural heterogeneity enriches the learning experience by exposing students to distinct epistemological perspectives: one rooted in structured financial analysis, the other in creative, opportunity-driven problem-solving. In classroom practice, this diversity translates into a dual-dialogue model in which one instructor typically introduces macroeconomic or institutional framing, while the other adds entrepreneurial and strategic insights. Their interactions (at times contrasting, at times complementary) offer students a live demonstration of multidisciplinary reasoning and constructive professional disagreement. Over three consecutive years of collaboration, the instructors have developed a high degree of pedagogical cohesion, enabling spontaneous and responsive exchanges that foster continuous engagement. This dynamic, co-instructed format ensures a balanced distribution of responsibilities and generates a vibrant classroom environment, where theoretical concepts are consistently linked to practical application through rich, student-centered dialogue.

The course structure is designed to maximize engagement and learning outcomes. Each session begins with an interactive lecture lasting 30-35 minutes, during which the professors present key concepts and theories. This is followed by a 10-15 minute open discussion where students are encouraged to reflect on main lessons and consider their practical applications. The discussions revolve around two central questions: What are the primary insights? And how can these insights be implemented in real-world contexts?

The student cohort comprises 40 individuals with an average age of 23.5 years, featuring a gender distribution of 57.5% male and 42.5% female. The academic backgrounds of the students are notably diverse: 50% have studied Business disciplines (such as Administration, Management, Law, or International Trade), 18% have pursued Engineering or Mathematics (including Aerospace, Chemical, and Industrial Engineering), and another 18% have specialized in fields like Biotechnology, Food Science, or Nutrition. This diversity played a crucial role in how the MBA teachers structured teams, dividing the students into eight groups of five. Geographically, most students (85%) originate from the Valencian Community, while 10% come from other regions of Spain, and 5% are international students. This demographic composition contributes to a dynamic learning environment, blending local and global perspectives. The diverse student body enhances the richness of classroom discussions and group projects, fostering a multidisciplinary understanding of global business challenges.

### **The MBA Startup Clinic**

The MBA Startup Clinic is structured as a Challenge-Based Learning (CBL) experience anchored in real-world complexity. As emphasized by Donaldson (2025), open innovation challenges stimulate learning through exposure to unfiltered feedback and performance pressure. These dynamics were also present in our course and were intentionally reinforced through scaffolding mechanisms that support both cognitive apprenticeship and resilience. Faculty members provided students with a Startup Analysis worksheet (see Figure 1) to guide their early diagnosis and interviews with entrepreneurs. Additional support came through interactive discussions and presentation sessions where students received direct feedback from faculty and startup representatives. These mechanisms acted as cognitive anchors, enabling students to manage ambiguity while developing autonomy and reflective problem-solving skills.

As we have explained, the structure of the course encompasses a three-day framework scheduled in three consecutive Fridays. In the first two Fridays, the contents described in the Literature review section are taught. But, also on the first day a startup project (the MBA Startup Clinic) is described. This project involves students analyzing a real startup for two weeks and offering strategic recommendations by the third Friday.

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To do this, we take advantage of the entrepreneurial ecosystem in which the University is embedded. Within this ecosystem lies a startup incubator (called "Lanzadera") and an investment vehicle (called "ANGELS") which funds the most promising startups emerging from the incubator. So, the 40 MBA students are divided into 8 groups of 5 members, each assigned randomly to collaborate with a startup .

This assignment is designed with dual objectives. The main one is providing students with hands-on experience, translating course concepts into actionable strategies. The second objective is offering startups tailored proposals to navigate their current hurdles, as MBA students are going to act as a sort of external consulting company for the startup. The instructions provided for the students were the following:

- a) Research and background study: Students must research the history of the assigned startup. Then, identify challenges faced during their inception, growth phases, and if applicable, pivoting moments. After, they must try to relate these challenges to content covered in class. And finally argue whether these challenges support, differ or weren't covered by the course discussions.
- b) Interview and Needs Analysis: Students must schedule and conduct an interview with representatives from the assigned startup (emails of these representatives were provided by the teachers of the course). Students were expected to follow the provided Startup Analysis Sheet (see Figure 1), to guide their needs analysis and frame their interview questions.
- c) Diagnosis of Current Challenges: At this point, and with the information obtained, students should be able to determine the primary and current challenges the startup is currently facing.
- d) Possible and Recommended Solutions: This is a key question, because they must think of, and evaluate, strategic alternatives for the startup to solve their current problems, as well as point potential consequences (intended and unintended). Here, students must describe why these are the most optimal solutions and propose the metrics of success that the startup should be looking for.

**Figure 1.** Startup Analysis Sheet as provided to the students (EDEM MBA course 2023/2024)

<p><b>Needs Analysis</b></p> <p>Startup name:</p> <p>Team size:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Co-founders</li><li>• Team Evolution</li></ul> <p>Startup's Vision and Mission:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• What is the startup's core vision and mission?</li><li>• Where did the idea originate?</li><li>• Has this evolved since its inception?</li></ul> <p>Product/Service Overview:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• What are the primary products/services offered?</li><li>• What differentiates them in the market?</li><li>• Target Market and Customer Persona:</li></ul> <p>Who are the startup's primary customers?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Who were/are their early adopters</li><li>• What problem is the start-up solving</li><li>• Are there secondary or tertiary markets being served or considered?</li></ul> <p>Competitive Landscape:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Who are the startup's main competitors?</li><li>• What is the startup's unique selling point (USP) against these competitors?</li></ul> <p>Operational Challenges:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• What are the operational bottlenecks the startup faces?</li><li>• Are there specific areas where efficiency can be improved?</li></ul>
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- e) Report Submission and Class Presentation: A concise report (maximum 20 pages) and a 15-minute presentation summarizing findings, with Q&A, were required. Reports must be uploaded to the university campus by the end of session 3. Later, they were checked and delivered by professors to startups. Besides, startups participating in this project were invited by the teachers to the class presentation. Presentations were delivered in session 3 and were uploaded to the virtual campus before. Each group had 15 minutes to present their findings (see Figure 2).
- f) The assessment criteria were focused on the precision with which the firm's challenges were described and the pragmatic feasibility of the proposed strategic solutions. Both the written reports and class presentations were evaluated using structured rubrics aligned with the course's learning objectives, each contributing 50% to the final project grade. The report assessment was based on four equally weighted dimensions: Research (25%), Information Obtained from Interviews (25%), Diagnosis of Current Challenges (25%), and Proposed Solutions (25%). Presentations were evaluated according to the following criteria: Information and Content (40%), Presentation Delivery (25%), Materials Used (10%), and Defense of Questions (25%). These rubrics were shared with students in advance to ensure clarity and transparency.

**Figure 2:** Startups involved in the MBA Startup Clinic (EDEM MBA course 2023/2024)

<b>Company/ Foundation year</b>	<b>Background</b>	<b>Current challenge</b>	<b>Proposed solution</b>
Flamingueo <i>flamingueo.com</i> 2016	It is a digital-native brand creating and selling decor products and accessories for Generation Z.	Purchasing management needs improvement to speed up product delivery from China to Spain.	Opening a small office and warehouse in China to simplify the supply chain.
GrowPro <i>growproexperience.com/</i> 2014	GrowPro is a free platform offering support to international students wishing to study and work abroad.	Could Dubai be a potential destination?	Option 1: Discard the idea of opening in Dubai. Option 2: Fully commit to Dubai, becoming pioneers in the market. Option 3: Launch GrowPro Business, providing work experiences with academic training for individuals aged 23-35 looking to enter the UAE market.
Miluz <i>miluz.io</i> 2020	It optimizes industrial energy costs with "Miluz Pro" and "Miluz Basic" through smart IoT solutions and easy-to-use interfaces.	Tight margins and funding availability.	Solution 1: Assess the company's financial health. Solution 2: Explore government incentives and funding options for energy efficiency initiatives.
Play off Nations <i>playoffnations.com</i> 2019	It's a top-tech company linking brands with new generations via unconventional media.	It faces challenges with cultural differences affecting deal closures internationally.	Hiring local personnel to ease deal-making in foreign markets.
Timpers <i>timpersbrand.com</i> 2019	Timpers designs and sells sneakers online, focusing on social impact by involving blind individuals in the design process and ensuring product accessibility.	1. Shifting production to China. 2. Expansion into the sweatshirt segment.	Solution 1: Timpers should set clear payment terms, uphold quality standards, and use technology for real-time tracking and efficiency. Solution 2: Stick to core values and conduct thorough testing before launching.
Uphint <i>uphint.com</i> 2021	It enables users to convert any digital workflow into an instant step-by-step guide	It faces challenges shifting from a freemium model to a paid approach.	Solution 1: Focus on company integration. Solution 2: Streamline processes in universities to improve student experience.
Wabi Home <i>wabihome.com</i> 2019	An e-commerce with quality furniture and timeless style	Which European country is the best for this company's expansion?	The Netherlands seems ideal, as its residents are likely to value Wabi Home furniture
Xnova <i>xnovainternational.com</i> 2021	The software analyzes global transactions, offering insights into potential importers and competitors' clients.	Expanding into European markets like Italy, France, and Germany.	Research the specific needs of European countries and evaluate Spain's influence on them.

In addition, at the conclusion of the MBA Startup Clinic, both instructors selected the two best projects, corresponding to the startups Flamingueo<sup>1</sup> and Uphint<sup>2</sup>. These two projects received the highest overall grades based on the evaluation criteria described above. Then, the groups

<sup>1</sup> "El Viaje de Flamingueo". Retrieved from: <https://edem.eu/el-viaje-de-flamingueo/>

<sup>2</sup> "Uphint: navegando hacia el éxito a través de la innovación y la adaptabilidad". Retrieved from: <https://edem.eu/uphint-navegando-hacia-el-exito-a-traves-de-la-innovacion-y-la-adaptabilidad/>



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responsible for these projects were rewarded with the opportunity to publish a post in the university blog, which was subsequently distributed through the institution's social media channels. Finally, to assess the effectiveness of the teaching model and student learning outcomes, structured surveys gathering qualitative feedback were administered at the end of the course.

## RESULTS

Student feedback was collected through an open-response online survey distributed at the end of the course. The questionnaire included six qualitative questions, prompting students to reflect on key learnings, the relevance of the course for real-world business environments, their experience working with startups, and their perceptions of the team-teaching format. Participation was voluntary and anonymous, and responses were self-selected, which may introduce potential bias and limit the representativeness of the data. While the responses offer valuable insight into student perceptions and learning impact, we acknowledge that the qualitative analysis followed an informal thematic grouping rather than a formal coding process. Recurring themes were identified inductively by the teaching team (e.g., application of theory to practice, the value of dual perspectives, real-world readiness), and representative excerpts have been paraphrased or quoted to illustrate these patterns. Although the analysis is narrative in nature, it has been guided by the course's intended learning outcomes (particularly the development of entrepreneurial leadership and cognitive ambidexterity) to maintain analytical coherence and relevance.

### Key Learnings from a Global Perspective

One of the most frequently mentioned takeaways was the interconnectedness of global markets and the need for business leaders to monitor and adapt to international dynamics. Students reported an increased awareness of how geopolitical, financial, and environmental factors shape economic activity worldwide. Many highlighted the importance of interpreting macroeconomic data, analysing country strategies, and remaining open to change and innovation, citing concepts such as “pivoting” and “adaptability” as essential tools in an uncertain global landscape. Specific topics that resonated with students included the role of China in the global economy, the evolution of cryptocurrencies, and the implications of climate change. This learning aligned closely with the course's emphasis on entrepreneurial leadership and cognitive ambidexterity.

### Readiness for Real-World Challenges

Approximately 82% of students indicated that the course helped them feel more prepared to face professional challenges in globalized business environments. They described gaining a broader understanding of financial and geopolitical contexts, which allowed them to engage more confidently with current events affecting their industries. One student working in export sales valued being able to interpret geopolitical risks; another mentioned applying course concepts during an internship; and a third, employed at BP, recognized the course's relevance to understanding global forces that shape large multinationals. Several students stated that working on real case studies helped them develop analytical thinking and strategic problem-solving skills, although one student acknowledged struggling to retain concepts due to the course's pace and technical depth.

### Perceptions of the Team-Teaching Approach

Student feedback on the team-teaching format was mixed but generally positive. Many respondents valued the complementary expertise of the instructors (one from entrepreneurship and the other from finance) highlighting the dynamic exchange of perspectives and the “dialogue” that emerged in the classroom. Some students described the experience as “learning two subjects in one” and appreciated the depth that came from combining different viewpoints. Others found the format occasionally disorienting, especially when both instructors spoke simultaneously or

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approached a topic from divergent angles. About 18% expressed a preference for a single instructor, suggesting that dual delivery can hinder clarity if not carefully coordinated.

In terms of content delivery, some students felt overwhelmed by the volume and complexity of the material, particularly those without a strong background in business or economics. The use of technical vocabulary and assumptions of prior knowledge made it difficult for some to follow. While the course was taught entirely in English, several students proposed using occasional clarifications in Spanish to improve comprehension, especially for those less confident in the subject area or language.

### **Learning from Startups vs. Established Companies**

Students widely recognized the experiential value of working directly with startups as part of the MBA Startup Clinic. Many highlighted the greater proximity to founders, which enabled them to witness real-time decision-making, entrepreneurial passion, and the everyday challenges faced by early-stage ventures. Startups were described as more agile and informal, allowing students to observe business processes up close and apply classroom knowledge to dynamic, real-world problems.

Several students contrasted this experience with larger, more structured firms, where internal communication and rigid procedures can hinder responsiveness. One student noted, “In a company with more than 300 employees, interdepartmental communication is much harder... In a startup, teamwork flows much more naturally.” Others remarked that startup collaboration demanded a higher level of initiative and adaptability, as roles were fluid and often required “knowing a little about everything.”

A few logistical difficulties were mentioned, particularly related to scheduling and availability of startup teams. Despite this, the majority of students found the experience highly enriching and relevant to their future careers, noting that it fostered a deeper understanding of entrepreneurial ecosystems and strategic problem-solving.

## **DISCUSSION**

This study examines the implementation of a team-teaching approach in the *Global Context* course within the Junior MBA program at EDEM University. The findings suggest that this methodology, combined with practical elements such as the MBA Startup Clinic, enhances students’ ability to analyze complex global challenges and develop entrepreneurial leadership skills in dynamic business environments.

A direct benefit of this approach is that students gain exposure to multiple perspectives, as two instructors contribute different viewpoints, philosophies, experiences, values, and sources of information. This aligns with Anderson and Speck (1998), who emphasize that team-teaching promotes dialogue, encourages critical thinking, and enhances student engagement. Students in the course echoed this view, describing the co-teaching model as “dynamic,” “stimulating,” and “like learning two subjects in one.” Several mentioned the instructors’ synergy and complementarity as one of the most enriching aspects of the course, though some also found the format “overwhelming at times,” particularly when the discussion moved quickly between different perspectives. Furthermore, exposure to diverse perspectives fosters an environment where students recognize that constructive debate and disagreement can coexist with mutual respect (Baeten & Simons, 2014). As a result, they develop a more flexible and open-minded approach to problem-solving, which is essential in today’s rapidly changing global landscape.

The study also reiterates the importance of multidisciplinary teaching teams, which provide broader analytical frameworks and enhance students’ ability to approach business challenges from multiple angles. This aligns with research highlighting the value of cognitive ambidexterity, the ability to switch between predictive and creative reasoning in decision-making (Greenberg et al.,

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2011). The course's ability to challenge students with a high volume of advanced concepts, as reported in the feedback, contributed to the development of this dual capacity, despite requiring a high level of concentration and previous knowledge. The interactive and dynamic nature of team-teaching was generally well received by students, though some found it challenging at times, particularly when adjusting to the fast-paced discussions and spontaneous exchanges between instructors.

Another key takeaway is the necessity for continuous content updates. Given the evolving nature of economic, geopolitical, and technological forces, instructors must remain actively engaged in research—reviewing academic literature, industry reports, and policy developments—to ensure course materials reflect current realities. This connects directly to student feedback highlighting the importance of understanding macroeconomic indicators, international interdependence, and emerging topics such as the role of China, cryptocurrency, or climate change. This relates to Mintzberg's (2004) critique of MBA education, which calls for a stronger emphasis on adaptability and real-world application rather than static theoretical frameworks. The course's incorporation of geopolitical awareness and the concept of "*polycrisis*" (Morin & Kern, 1999; Klyver & McMullen, 2025) equips students with a broader understanding of interconnected global challenges, reinforcing the need for an ever-evolving curriculum.

The study further illustrates the value of integrating real-world business exposure into the curriculum. The MBA Startup Clinic provided students with direct interaction with entrepreneurs and real business challenges, bridging the gap between theory and practice. This is consistent with calls for experiential learning in business education (Datar et al., 2011), which emphasizes hands-on problem-solving as a key driver of leadership development. Students emphasized the value of working with startups, describing the experience as "more personal," "agile," and "flexible," compared to structured corporations. They appreciated seeing "the passion of founders" and learning in real time how ventures adapt, communicate, and make decisions under uncertainty.

This study contributes to both pedagogical practice and academic research by presenting a concrete model that integrates team-teaching, experiential learning, and global awareness within a single course structure. Its originality stems from the simultaneous use of a co-teaching approach combined with direct engagement with startups, while also accounting for geopolitical and macroeconomic dynamics. From a pedagogical standpoint, the course offers a replicable framework for fostering cognitive ambidexterity, global awareness, and an entrepreneurial mindset. Academically, the study advances interdisciplinary business education by bridging effective teaching methods, the development of students' complex thinking abilities, and the practical challenges of managing businesses in international contexts.

### **Limitations and Future Research**

Several limitations must be acknowledged. First, the study is based on a single academic year within one institution, which may limit the generalizability of its findings. Second, as a primarily qualitative and descriptive case study, it does not offer longitudinal or quantitative data to assess learning outcomes over time. Future research could extend this work by applying mixed methods across multiple institutions and course iterations, assessing how team-teaching and startup-based learning environments affect long-term student development, career readiness, and leadership capacity.

### **Conclusion**

This study reveals the transformative power of collaborative teaching, interdisciplinary approaches, and immersive real-world engagement in shaping the future of management education. By combining these elements, business schools can prepare students not only with knowledge but also with the adaptability, strategic insight, and leadership vision needed to succeed in today's complex and rapidly changing global business environment. Elevating course design to

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meet student needs and global challenges will be key to advancing excellence and innovation in business education.

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