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Lenses on the post-oil economy: integrating entrepreneurship into sustainability education through problem-based learning

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1 **Lenses on the post-oil economy: Integrating entrepreneurship into**  
2 **sustainability education through problem-based learning**

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## Abstract

In the context of enormous global challenges such as climate change, poverty, and the unequal distribution of wealth, sustainability education within higher education has gained momentum as a tool to train a new generation of change agents. In practice, previous research has examined the relationship between sustainability education and entrepreneurship education. Both educational domains share similar teaching and learning frameworks as they both seek to train action-oriented professionals. Yet despite these similarities, there is a knowledge gap regarding course development strategies that can integrate entrepreneurship competencies into sustainability education. Following a classroom action research (AR) approach, we developed a three-week graduate course aimed at an interdisciplinary cohort of students in the social sciences from partner universities in Brazil and Norway. The course integrated a problem-based learning (PBL) framework. As part of the methodology, teachers introduced real-world challenges in the context of a post-extractive economic transition. Working in groups of four to five members, the students provided business solutions framed in a post-oil development context. The results indicate tension points in the integration of the learning principles of PBL along the different phases of PBL, namely during the group formation and problem analysis phases. To tackle these tensions, we propose that this type of course should facilitate early group formation and integrate formative feedback and progressive problem analysis. Our framework contributes to the debate on competence-based frameworks within the sustainability education literature. The framework can also serve as an inspiration for course designers in higher education.

Keywords: sustainability education; entrepreneurship education; problem-based learning; action research; higher education; interdisciplinarity

Word count: 11685

49 **Introduction**

50 The United Nations Environment Program (UNEP) Stockholm Conference in 1972  
51 named universities as key actors in the promotion of sustainable development (Wals  
52 2014). Multiple experiences show that the challenges linked to sustainable development  
53 are inherently complex because they require multi-stakeholder solutions and  
54 interdisciplinarity, necessitating the adoption of sustainable development principles in  
55 day-to-day activities and across study programs (Lozano et al. 2013). In recent years,  
56 the literature has focused on the links between sustainability education and  
57 entrepreneurship education (Mindt and Rieckmann 2017). A traditional narrative  
58 linking entrepreneurship education to sustainability is training students to identify and  
59 exploit opportunities that can trigger new businesses, products or commercial services  
60 while also tackling sustainability challenges. The literature supporting this narrative  
61 defines the relationship between sustainability and entrepreneurship education by  
62 highlighting the role entrepreneurs play in developing solutions (product/services) that  
63 contribute to sustainable development (Moon 2015; Karlusch, Sachsenhofer, and  
64 Reinsberger 2018). In contrast to this traditional narrative, new research tries to develop  
65 more over-reaching relationships between sustainability and entrepreneurship  
66 education. One such emergent view is competence-based teaching frameworks for  
67 sustainability-driven entrepreneurship (Lans, Blok, and Wesselink 2014). The focus of  
68 entrepreneurship education is the development of key competences, such as opportunity  
69 identification; social, business, and industry-specific competences; and entrepreneurial  
70 self-efficacy (Lans, Blok, and Wesselink 2014). Entrepreneurship education programs  
71 should evolve to educate sustainability-minded students, highlighting, e.g. new  
72 competences such as system-thinking and interdisciplinarity (Mindt and Rieckmann  
73 2017). This requires new ways in which curricula can be enhanced to match

74 sustainability education within entrepreneurship education (Wyness, Jones, and Klapper  
75 2015). The main issue is where "sustainability" should fit into the curriculum.  
76 Sustainability remains a niche topic within the overall entrepreneurial literature. Social  
77 entrepreneurship is considered part of sustainability. To tackle this compartmentalized  
78 view on sustainability within entrepreneurship education, another emerging perspective  
79 calls for the holistic integration of entrepreneurship skills within sustainability  
80 education through a teaching framework focused on active-learning approaches,  
81 external collaboration, and themes such as innovation-design, entrepreneurship  
82 ecosystem support and corporate organizational culture (Hermann and Bossle 2020).

83 Sustainability challenges are 'wicked' problems, which call for 'off-the-shelf'  
84 solutions (Lans, Blok, and Wesselink 2014). In this regard, problem-based learning  
85 (PBL), an active-learning approach, is a good fit with sustainability education because it  
86 facilitates a process of problematization, investigation and critical reflection.  
87 Throughout this process, students can work towards feasible solutions to the wicked  
88 problems under consideration (MacVaugh and Norton 2012). PBL is relevant for  
89 entrepreneurship education programs as it creates a learning environment that allows  
90 students to tackle real entrepreneurship problems; mirrors learning in the workplace;  
91 engages students' previous knowledge and complements it with emerging interests; and  
92 sets a learning arena where collaboration and sharing enhance responsibility (Wee  
93 2004). Extant research identifies some commonalities in programs leading to  
94 sustainability and entrepreneurship learning objectives. These commonalities include  
95 active-learning and real-world oriented learning approaches, both of which characterize  
96 PBL. From a pedagogical point of view, then, PBL has the potential to develop  
97 students' competences to grasp the complexity of sustainability challenges while  
98 enhancing creativity grounded in local needs (Mindt and Rieckmann 2017). Despite this

99 potential, studies lack detail on how to develop a higher education curriculum that  
100 applies active learning approaches in a real-world oriented setting. This paper responds  
101 to calls for a better understanding of curriculum design that incorporates sustainability  
102 and entrepreneurship competence development in multiple disciplines in a higher  
103 education setting (Wyness, Jones, and Klapper 2015; Mindt and Rieckmann 2017) and  
104 thus tackles the research question: *How is active learning best integrated into a higher*  
105 *education curriculum with entrepreneurship and sustainability learning objectives?*

106 To answer this question, this article proposes the integration of PBL (Hung  
107 2011). We first conceptualize entrepreneurship and sustainability education, then  
108 analyze the key pedagogical characteristics of PBL within this sphere. We then present  
109 the results of our work, in which we relied on action research (AR) as the inquiry  
110 strategy along the PBL framework in order to design and teach a five-credit course at  
111 the masters level in Norway and Brazil. Considering that PBL is not integrated into the  
112 partner institutions' routines, AR fits well with the purpose of inspiring institutional  
113 reflection at an organizational level (Elo 2016). Classroom action research (Kemmis  
114 and McTaggart 2005), in particular, fits well with these objectives as it allows students  
115 and teachers to critically analyze their practices for the purpose of improvement.

116 This research contributes to the emerging literature of sustainability education,  
117 which inquires about the integration of sustainability with entrepreneurship by arguing  
118 that PBL is an approach where students can disentangle their learning. In practice,  
119 teachers in higher education can draw inspiration from the PBL method presented here  
120 to create heuristic tools to organize their own courses.

121 The paper is organized as follows: in the next section, the literature review  
122 examines previous research on the use of PBL in entrepreneurship and sustainability  
123 education, while the third section presents the materials and methods. The fourth section

124 summarizes the findings, and it is followed by the discussion, conclusion and  
125 suggestions for further research.

## 126 **Literature review**

### 127 *Problem-based learning as a pedagogical approach*

128 Universities across the world are increasingly adopting PBL in different disciplines. An  
129 overview by Kolmos (2013) summarizes different PBL models in engineering,  
130 medicine, and architecture, among others, in countries like Australia, Brazil, Malaysia,  
131 Denmark, Portugal and the USA. The Journal of Problem Based Learning has also been  
132 compiling a variety of teaching experiences across geographies and disciplines since  
133 2013 (Ryberg and Nørgaard 2013). PBL originated in the 1960s in the medical school at  
134 McMaster University (Canada). It was influenced by existing pedagogical currents,  
135 particularly by Dewey's ideas about intrinsic interest, Bruner's "learning by discovery"  
136 and the case-based learning of Harvard Business School (Schmidt 2012).

137         Initially, PBL integrated a rather rigid methodology that had students work in  
138 small groups to examine a problem-scenario and engage in their own learning to  
139 identify knowledge gaps (Savin-Baden and Major 2004). This methodology highlights  
140 one central component of PBL, which is the relationship between learning and the  
141 'problem'. Some authors widely define a problem as a collection of phenomena and  
142 events (Schmidt 2012). A problem is also defined as an unsettled issue that is not  
143 necessarily negative but that needs to be resolved (Maudsley 1999), and in that sense it  
144 can be considered in relation to students' own knowledge production. Here, the focus is  
145 on how the student applies a logical analytical process in order to disentangle the setting  
146 of the core problem. What makes PBL special in terms of student learning, in addition  
147 to differentiating PBL from other approaches, is the so-called "theory before

148 application” discussion, or the question of whether pre-existing knowledge is required  
149 for a student to meaningfully engage with the approach. PBL does not require a sound  
150 theoretical base before application (Maudsley 1999).

151         The adoption of PBL by different higher education programs goes along with  
152 the inclusion of some of the key principles of learning as a constructive process,  
153 learning as a self-directed process, and learning as a contextual process (Moust, Berkel,  
154 and Schmidt 2005). First, problems are introduced as a stimulus for learning and so  
155 learning is constructive, implemented through forms of elaboration including  
156 discussion, note taking and answering questions. Second, problems stimulate the  
157 students’ prior knowledge and help them to engage in the sense-making process with  
158 their peers. This requires students to take ownership of the knowledge building process.  
159 In order to solve a given problem, students need to plan, monitor, and evaluate their  
160 own learning, and learning is therefore self-directed. Lastly, a PBL setting provides  
161 context by integrating previous knowledge as a benchmark against which to measure  
162 learning goals and by building a social framework in which students collaborate and  
163 come to share common goals or responsibilities. PBL settings also provide a context for  
164 learning, since one goal of PBL is for students to identify situations in which their new  
165 knowledge can be used (Dolmans et al. 2005).

166         Programs that share these design characteristics tend to have a strong focus on  
167 the learner’s experience, students who take responsibility for their own learning, a close  
168 relationship between theory and practice, interdisciplinarity, a strong focus on the  
169 learning process, instructors who act as facilitators rather than experts, and students who  
170 are capable of self-assessment (Savin-Baden and Major 2004; Dochy et al. 2003).



171 *Problem-based learning in sustainability education and entrepreneurship*  
172 *education*

173 PBL is increasingly integrated in the teaching of sustainability and entrepreneurship. An  
174 argument for this integration is that education in both fields is increasingly training  
175 students to be agents of change, to be able to work in teams, and to produce relevant  
176 knowledge in context.

177         The definition of sustainability education is often scoped within the context of  
178 the education program, and its goal is framed as the integration of sustainable  
179 development principles holistically across educational programs (Leal Filho et al.  
180 2017). PBL and sustainability education promote principles of interdisciplinary and  
181 collaborative learning, and both promote a meaningful experience through providing  
182 ample context (Guerra 2017). PBL is integrated into sustainability education at the  
183 graduate and undergraduate levels. At the undergraduate level, some of the best-known  
184 experiences include the program of environmental studies at the University of Arizona  
185 that has 82 PBL courses (Wiek et al. 2014). Teaching experiences in accounting  
186 education at a university in south-west England used to enhance students' knowledge  
187 about sustainability and teamwork (Wyness and Dalton 2018). Engineering programs  
188 are offered at Aalborg University in Denmark (Holgaard et al. 2016) and at RMIT  
189 University in Australia (Thomas and Depasquale 2016). At the graduate level, Ban et al.  
190 (2015) sketch several cases in which PBL is integrated into education for sustainability.  
191 The scope of courses inspired by a PBL framework vary. For example, the  
192 undergraduate program at the University of Arizona organizes PBL-inspired courses,  
193 workshops, student-focused projects with foundations, and PBL-inspired theses  
194 (Brundiens and Wiek 2013).

195         PBL has also been discussed in the literature of entrepreneurship education, and  
196 in this way it shifts the conceptualization of entrepreneurship. Entrepreneurship is

197 commonly understood as the process of starting an organization from scratch (Wee  
198 2004). In relation to this perspective on entrepreneurship, researchers have argued that  
199 entrepreneurship education should train students with competences to recognize  
200 opportunities that others have overlooked (San Tan and Ng 2006). In this light,  
201 entrepreneurship education is increasingly relevant to fulfilling a set of objectives such  
202 as developing skills to adapt to change and learn in an ever-changing context. This is  
203 achieved through a pedagogy where the learning is partly carried out in collaboration  
204 with stakeholders beyond the classroom and through learning by doing, which manifests  
205 in internships and new ventures developed during entrepreneurship courses (San Tan  
206 and Ng 2006). In entrepreneurship programs, including those that use PBL as a learning  
207 approach, problems are structured with the aim of giving students greater freedom to  
208 self-direct their knowledge development process. Similarly, problems are authentic,  
209 which intensifies learners' inspiration to search for knowledge gaps. Students are thus in  
210 close contact with businesses and their problems (Rossano et al. 2016). In  
211 entrepreneurship education, the literature primarily discusses PBL's integration at the  
212 undergraduate level. In Singapore, Temasek Polytechnic introduced the "Practice of  
213 entrepreneurship" course, delivered through the philosophy of "the problem comes  
214 first", which entails the problem acting as a catalyst to incentivize further knowledge  
215 gathering. The "developing enterprise" course has a curriculum that includes 16  
216 problems divided over the 16-week semester (San Tan and Ng 2006). In a large German  
217 university of applied sciences, PBL is integrated into a UBC (University-Business  
218 Collaborative) and involves a consultancy project involving both undergraduate and  
219 graduate students. Within this UBC, before starting their project in a company, students  
220 take learning modules to develop a theoretical base in marketing and management  
221 (Rossano et al. 2016). Leeds Business School in the UK has adapted problem-based

222 learning and project-based learning to develop its own pedagogical approach, termed  
223 entrepreneurial voluntary-based learning. The course they run is aimed at enhancing  
224 students' understanding of applied ethics in the context of local community businesses  
225 (Clarke and Underwood 2011).

226 *How PBL-inspired courses are best conducted for sustainability and*  
227 *entrepreneurship education*

228 Despite already being integrated in a variety of educational programs in different  
229 countries, the principles of PBL still inspire the learning process, and we can summarize  
230 four general phases in sustainability and entrepreneurship courses: problem design and  
231 presentation, group formation and planning, problem solving, and assessment.

232         During the first stage, problem design and presentation, those responsible for the  
233 course often take the time to prepare or set the learning conditions for the relevant  
234 problems. Problems are grounded in real-world issues and are to a large degree  
235 unstructured. Course organizers need close collaboration with local stakeholders to  
236 identify problems with the right characteristics. In such cases, the lecturers are the initial  
237 contacts with stakeholders as a result of other ongoing collaborations (Rossano et al.  
238 2016). Problems or challenges can also be inspired by news sites, newspapers, or  
239 magazines (San Tan and Ng 2006). In other courses, problem preparation runs in  
240 parallel with student training on the pedagogical tenets of PBL, including project  
241 management skills (Kolmos et al. 2008). During this initial phase, the facilitator  
242 introduces the students to the real-life problem. This allows them to activate previous  
243 knowledge but also inspires them to identify knowledge gaps and pursue new objectives  
244 (Wee 2004).

245           During the second stage, groups are organized and a plan is made in terms of the  
246 required hours for group activities. Program requirements depend on the institution. In  
247 some programs, right after the problem is introduced, the instructor and students hold a  
248 first session focusing on problem analysis. The idea is to identify issues about which the  
249 students would like to become more knowledgeable (San Tan and Ng 2006). Later  
250 planning involves a 35-minute brainstorming meeting where students form teams and  
251 complete a PBL worksheet to create a work plan, which they can then discuss with the  
252 tutor (Wee 2004). Various institutions suggest different group sizes. In the  
253 environmental studies programs at Arizona State University the size of the group varies,  
254 from one group/ one project including 2-6 students to larger groups (Brundiers and  
255 Wiek 2013). In the engineering program at Aalborg University, PBL is combined with  
256 courses at a 50/50 rate, and groups comprise up to eight members (Holgaard et al.  
257 2016).

258           The third phase is problem-solving. Institutions provide different resources to  
259 facilitate group work in such a way that students apply peer learning, teamwork and  
260 self-direction in their learning process (Wiek et al. 2014). At Aalborg, each group is  
261 provided with resources including group rooms and a supervisor who will tutor them  
262 throughout the project (Guerra 2017). Increasingly, IT solutions such as  
263 videoconferencing or virtual boards are used as resources in PBL environments.  
264 Blended learning is understood here as the combination of face-to-face traditional  
265 teaching modules and remote and e-learning tools (Dohn, Thorsen, and Larsen 2015,  
266 305). Blended learning is also adapted to PBL teaching in sustainability programs along  
267 with case studies solved partly through e-learning and partly using face-to-face  
268 workshops (Coppens et al. 2020). Virtual learning environments and remote supervision  
269 are increasingly part of PBL integration in entrepreneurship courses (Clarke and

270 Underwood 2011). In sustainability programs, much of a group's time is spent  
271 analyzing the problem. Hence, students brainstorm possible solution scenarios based on  
272 their existing knowledge (Holgaard et al. 2016). By the end of this phase, groups  
273 present preliminary findings, clarify gaps in knowledge, and identify potential solutions  
274 for the problem (San Tan and Ng 2006).

275         The final phase is the assessment of the group work. Among researchers and  
276 educators who use PBL principles, there is increasing agreement about using formative  
277 assessment (Peart, Fairhead, and Stamp 2018; Grob, Holmeier, and Labudde 2017;  
278 Kelley et al. 2019). The purpose of the assessment is thus giving feedback and  
279 facilitating the students' improvement of their learning during the course, not only at the  
280 end of the course. Often it is the tutor who provides feedback throughout the PBL  
281 process (Kolmos et al. 2008). In a course on entrepreneurship education, assessment is  
282 largely driven by student reflections as opposed to an end project/product (Clarke and  
283 Underwood 2011). However, most courses require students to prepare a report. In one  
284 course with a focus on water management in communities, a team's final project was to  
285 propose an intervention plan that would ultimately help the community face the  
286 challenge presented in the study. In one case, real community intervention was inspired  
287 by the students' projects (Wiek et al. 2014).

## 288 **Methodology**

### 289 ***Research design***

290 This paper followed an AR approach, which has been applied in similar experiences of  
291 competence development such as sustainability education (Jensen 2016) and  
292 entrepreneurship education (Winkler 2014; Elo 2016). Adopting an AR approach  
293 implies that the researcher takes a participant observer role (Bryman 2012). In

294 educational development projects, AR is often applied following the incremental  
295 curricular steps of curricular design, intervention and analysis. Subsequently, the cycle  
296 starts again, and once the intervention is analyzed, a new intervention is carried out  
297 based on this reflection (Jensen 2016; Elo 2016).

298         In combination with the AR approach, we collected and analyzed empirical  
299 materials through qualitative inquiry. The choice of qualitative methods lies in the  
300 possibility of engaging the empirical materials with a narrative, and we thus adhere to  
301 Denzin and Lincoln's (2018) understanding of qualitative research as a process that  
302 begins with the researcher's involvement in the study's setting, i.e. collecting materials,  
303 interpreting them, and translating them for the final reader.

304         In this section, we report the context of the study; secondly, we discuss our data  
305 collection methods (participant observer, document analysis and interviews); finally, we  
306 discuss our choices in the presentation of the results.

### 307 *Context for developing the new course*

308 The course was part of an educational project involving four partner higher education  
309 institutions (HEIs) (Table 1). The cooperation must be seen through the lens of the  
310 commercial and political importance of Norwegian-Brazilian relations. After the EU  
311 and the USA, Brazil attracts Norway's next largest foreign investment, and over  
312 100 Norwegian companies are established in the country (Norway 2020). Sustainable  
313 development is a paramount principle in bilateral relations. Norway is the largest donor  
314 to the Amazon Fund, an initiative that champions an international effort to mitigate  
315 climate change through REDD+ (Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest  
316 Degradation) and also encourages the sustainable management of forests and the  
317 conservation and enhancement of forest carbon stocks (Correa, van der Hoff, and Rajão

318 2019). Despite the green profile of the Norwegian discourse towards Brazil, investments  
319 in extractive industries, such as oil, gas and mining, are predominant (Norway 2020).

320

321 [Table 1 near here]

322

323 The contrasting visions of ‘post-oil’ economies embedded in narratives of  
324 ‘economic restructuring’ (Norway) and ‘post-extractivism’ (Brazil/South America)  
325 offered an opportunity to discuss sustainability issues within a business development  
326 setting.

327 The partnership was funded through a grant from the Norwegian Agency for  
328 Internationalization of Education (DIKU) as part of the Partnership programme  
329 *UTFORSK* (Exploration) (DIKU 2020b). The primary goal of the partnership is to  
330 formalize cooperation among the four partner HEIs, and to then develop a top-rate, real-  
331 world-oriented course on sustainability and entrepreneurship that would train graduate  
332 students in social sciences (business, political sciences and public management) (DIKU  
333 2020a).

### 334 *Course design*

335 The course’s intended target audience was an interdisciplinary cohort of graduate  
336 students in management, public administration, and political sciences. The course  
337 organizers considered the nature of the participant profiles and the challenges embedded  
338 within the thematic domain, taking inspiration from Vygotsky’s sociocultural theories  
339 of learning (Jarvis, Holford, and Griffin 2004) and experiential learning (Kolb and Kolb  
340 2005). The combination of these learning theories is framed by a PBL framework  
341 (Graaf and Kolmos 2003).

342 Principles of sociocultural learning theories were embedded in the course  
343 characteristics, including teamwork, guidance and coaching (Jarvis, Holford, and  
344 Griffin 2004). One benefit of this approach is facilitating the interaction among  
345 participants, i.e. more experienced students within teams can share their knowledge  
346 with novice students. We also applied independent learning process rather than  
347 memorizing through the so-called “scaffolding” skill, which is another principle from  
348 Vygotsky. This implies not directly providing the students with a solution to challenges  
349 put forward during the lectures but rather proposing challenging questions so that  
350 students themselves find answers to the problems (Aubrey and Riley 2016).

351         The complex characteristics of sustainability challenges that necessitate  
352 entrepreneurial action are also fertile ground for the integration of Kolb’s experiential  
353 learning principles (Kolb and Kolb 2005). We aimed to foster a learning cycle where  
354 the students engaged in a concrete experience, participated in a reflective observation by  
355 reviewing the experience, and then made an abstract conceptualization that allowed  
356 them to conclude and learn from the experience (Kolb and Kolb 2005).

357         Following previous efforts to integrate sustainability into entrepreneurship  
358 education (Karlusch, Sachsenhofer, and Reinsberger 2018), our course’s  
359 interdisciplinary approach could face criticism when compared to a disciplinary  
360 approach. In order to mitigate this, we present the course learning outcomes next.

### 361 *Learning outcomes*

362 We designed the learning outcomes (ILO) of the course according to the constructively  
363 aligned outcomes-based teaching and learning framework, structuring the ILO within  
364 knowledge, skills and competence (Biggs and Tang 2015). The principle of constructive  
365 alignment (CA) implies a close relationship between the intended learning outcomes,  
366 the teaching learning activities, and the assessment (Biggs and Tang 2015). As



367 summarized in Figure 1, when designing the ILO, we paid attention to finding a balance  
368 between declarative and functioning learning outcomes. Specifically, given the graduate  
369 level of the course, we balanced enumerative, descriptive, and relational verbs of the  
370 structure of the observed learning outcome (SOLO) taxonomy (Biggs and Tang 2015).

371

372 [Insert Figure 1 near here]

373

374           The knowledge dimension of learning outcomes is dominated by a multi-  
375 structural level of understanding with a focus on gaining understanding. We included  
376 current discussions within political ecology on extractivism (Brand, Boos, and Brad  
377 2017) to provide the students with an understanding of the extractive economy's  
378 transformation, with a focus on the dynamics of innovation and evolutionary change on  
379 a regional scale. We also included the concept of smart specialization, and how it can be  
380 used to identify relevant development pathways for regions affected by extractivist  
381 downturns in the international commodity market (Mariussen, Nguyen, and Løvland  
382 2018). We also integrated the post-oil economic transformation that takes into  
383 consideration discussions on innovation systems, with an emphasis on the triple helix  
384 framework (Carayannis, Barth, and Campbell 2012). These macro-level components  
385 must also be linked to the practical implications for firms and individuals looking to  
386 innovate. In reflecting on the suitability of certain new products, processes or business  
387 models to succeed in the economy's transformation, students also become acquainted  
388 with theories and methods that can help them understand the entrepreneurship process  
389 (Brush, Greene, and Hart 2001), business model generation (Osterwalder and Pigneur  
390 2010), how to handle uncertainties, and how to generate entrepreneurial ideas  
391 (Sarasvathy 2001).

392           The skills ILO reflects a relational level of understanding by combining  
393 elements from the different concepts and relating them to each other as a framework for  
394 solutions in this case. Thus, students gained skills that allowed them to identify whether  
395 an innovation system is suited for post-extractivism and whether specific  
396 entrepreneurial ideas are suited for pathway diversification in the context of post-oil  
397 development.

398           The competence ILO reflects the importance of embedding the course into  
399 active-learning approaches like socio-cultural learning theory, experiential learning and  
400 PBL. Specifically, these competencies enhance students teamwork abilities, reflect on  
401 complex problem analysis, stimulate intercultural learning, and improve oral  
402 communication.

#### 403 *Empirical materials*

##### 404 *Participant observation*

405 As authors, we were also involved throughout the AR process. In addition, we  
406 developed the course program, recruited students, and administered the project vis-à-vis  
407 the HEI management. A participant observer differ from a structured observer in that  
408 they take an active role in the setting being studied, thus interacting with the students,  
409 while the latter takes a distanced approach (Patton 2002). Following Patton (2002), we  
410 highlight some choices in the participant-observer method: role as full participant and  
411 insider (memic) perspective. In addition, even though the course involved several  
412 faculty staff (see the results section for further details), the team of researchers was  
413 limited to the three authors. Furthermore, our research intentions were fully disclosed  
414 to students and colleagues. The students were asked to sign a participant consent form

415 previously approved by the Norwegian Data Protection Agency (NSD). The observation  
416 period took place throughout the course duration.

417 As participant observers, our main empirical materials were field notes, defined as  
418 summaries of events, behaviors, and researcher reflections (Bryman 2012) that were  
419 made by the end of each day throughout the course. Each note included critical  
420 information, such as the date, location, name of course and lecture, participants  
421 involved, course setting, and what prompted the exchange. Whenever possible we also  
422 included direct quotations from the events. We included personal notes that reflected on  
423 strengths and pitfalls of the experience after finishing the teaching session. We also held  
424 short team meetings at the end of the daily sessions to summarize key observations such  
425 as when students gave oral presentations and received peer recommendations and  
426 comments from teachers.

427 As participant observers, we had access to other documents produced in the context of  
428 the course, including:

- 429 • Course documentation that comprised the learning objectives and course schedule  
430 as well as a lecture plan and reading list (see Appendix 2). It was mainly  
431 developed by the authors, but also included input from lectures.
- 432 • Students' essays of motivation that they wrote when applying for the course.
- 433 • Student work samples. Annotations in preliminary reports (week 1) and the final  
434 report (week 3), which included student reflections about the group collaboration.
- 435 • Faculty reflections on how they connected their lecture with the PBL module that  
436 were requested after the sessions. We received six reflections.

#### 437 *Interviewing student participants*

438 After the course, we carried out in-depth interviews of nine students; each interview

439 was 25-120 minutes long (for a total of 450 minutes of recordings; see Table 2). The  
440 purpose of these interviews was to assess the elements of the problem-based module  
441 and the combination of the seven sessions (Appendix 1).

442

443 [Table 2 near here]

444

445 The authors transcribed the interviews verbatim and coded them in two iterative  
446 cycles (Saldaña 2009). The first coding cycle entailed in vivo coding of students’  
447 experiences. This inductive approach resulted in 88 items. Subsequently, through axial  
448 coding (Saldaña 2009), these codes were grouped into main categories, largely inspired  
449 by the competence framework but also related to other issues mentioned by the  
450 interviewees that we found relevant for assessment. Seventeen main categories were  
451 identified. These categories were subsequently reduced to five main themes (Table 3).

452

453 [Table 3 near here]

454 The analysis of the interview data reveals that most of the students’ reflections  
455 focused on the way learning approaches were taught. The second most discussed themes  
456 related to the course’s topics. The external collaboration with industry and companies,  
457 along with the educational focus, were marginal themes throughout the interviews. The  
458 comprehensive data structure and coding scheme can be found in Appendix 2.

### 459 *Synthesizing and presenting the findings*

460 The empirical materials collected through participant observation and interviews with  
461 the participants were organized according to the phases in the AR process (Figure 2).

462 The results respond to the research question by structuring the AR phases of “action,”  
463 “observation,” and “reflection.” When presenting the results, we used a retrospective

464 and confessional tale, meaning we integrate our critical reflections with evidence  
465 (quotes from interviews) or other empirical materials (Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña  
466 2014).

467

468 [Figure 2 near here]

469

470 In the interview materials, we were particularly interested in assessing how the  
471 students perceived PBL in combination with the sessions and with the other elements of  
472 the course (intercultural learning, post-oil). Therefore, we report in the results section  
473 the students' reflections in relation to the PBL framework. As a result, even though the  
474 interviews provided reflections on multiple issues, we coded them using the PBL  
475 categories. We grouped the students' reflections according to the PBL phases of  
476 problem analysis, problem formulation and problem solving (Lund and Jensen 2013).  
477 The students' reflections are thus integrated as part of the section on course delivery.

## 478 **Results**

479 The course was organized as a summer program for the Norwegian partner institution,  
480 and thus as an elective course for the participants from HHN. The summer program  
481 involved a trip to Brazil to participate in the module 1 course activities. A call for  
482 participants was announced seven months before the start of the program, and the final  
483 selection of participants was based on criteria such as a motivation letter and academic  
484 background. A total of 18 Norwegian and Brazilian students participated in the three-  
485 week summer school. Twelve students received a mobility scholarship to visit the  
486 partner university in Norway or Brazil. Six students participated in all academic  
487 activities, including group work, but did not attend the third module lectures in Norway.  
488 The background of the students was diverse: four students were from management, two

489 students were from sociology (HHN), one was a graduate student in economics (UFRJ),  
490 seven students were in public administration (UFF), and three students were in a  
491 masters of education and engineering management (IFRS) program. The participants  
492 also had a diverse age range and varied professional experience.

493         The three-week course was conducted in three modules, as outlined in Figure 3.  
494 The three modules represented the ILO approved for the course and have been  
495 previously presented. The course also integrated the platform Moodle for sharing  
496 practical information, shared reading lists for course preparation, participant forums and  
497 assignments delivery. Most lectures within module 1 were given by staff from the  
498 partner universities and took place in Rio de Janeiro (Appendix 2). Module 2 took place  
499 in Bodø (Norway) and was facilitated by staff from the local partner university in  
500 Norway. Modules 1 and 2 were closely linked to the PBL organization of the course  
501 (module 3).

502         [Figure 3 near here]

503

504         Considering the experience of integrating PBL into course work, we combined  
505 the lectures of sessions 1 to 7 with activities directly related to module 3. As much as  
506 possible, this combination took place within each session (Figure 3). Session 1, besides  
507 introducing the summer course, allowed each participant to introduce themselves (day  
508 1). Session 1 also included socio-cultural learning, providing contextualized learning to  
509 visiting students as it overviewed the Brazilian economic context. In connection with  
510 the PBL module, students introduced themselves in terms of where and what they were  
511 studying but also their motivation for taking the course. Given the students'  
512 heterogeneous background, we believed that getting to know each other and sharing  
513 joint interests would facilitate group formation amid cultural differences.

514 ***Group formation***

515 Session 2 was a key session because it introduced the overall thematic area of post-oil  
516 economic development trajectories, linking it with the themes of innovation and  
517 entrepreneurship. During the second day of the course, the students formed groups by  
518 identifying common interests through a “café dialogue” group dynamic. The purpose  
519 was to create diverse and interdisciplinary groups with members from different  
520 universities, programs and countries. The dynamic involved setting four tables, each  
521 with a different title (“eco-innovation”, electric cars, societal transition, education), and  
522 every five minutes students had the opportunity to join a table and discuss the  
523 designated topic with others. After three rounds, students decided which table to join,  
524 forming groups of four to five students. Our observation of the café dialogue dynamic  
525 showed that this allowed the participants to engage in enthusiastic discussions and  
526 sharing of ideas, even though they came from diverse academic and cultural  
527 backgrounds.

528         Students appreciated the café dialogue approach to forming groups (Int. 7).

529 Similarly, students liked the idea of comparing themes and meeting other students who  
530 had some shared interest:

531         So, I was moving in all four groups, at first there were like four different headings. I  
532         participated in all four groups with an open mind, considering that if there’s some new  
533         possibilities, I will join them. (Int. 6)

534         Previous knowledge played a role in students’ selection of the theme and  
535 ultimately of the group they worked with. The café dialogue took place before any  
536 lectures:

537         I think everybody had an idea of what eco-innovation was, if we want to work with this  
538         concept because it is intriguing, it’s interesting and is also something that is future related.  
539         (Int. 7)

540 Even after students chose a table theme, what this meant in practice was not  
541 always evident. Therefore, discussions and negotiations about the project focus also  
542 took place at this initial stage:

543 When I was talking to student E. P. and A. I got an idea about eco-innovation. Later,  
544 together with E., I discussed having a focus on entrepreneurship instead. We ended up  
545 doing that anyway, talking about policies and the role of the government and other things.  
546 (Int. 6)  
547

548 When students reflected on the group formation phase, they also observed that in  
549 addition to shared interest in a theme, mixing experienced and novice students helped to  
550 improve the group:

551 It is true, in our group, all having a common language helped us to create affinity, better  
552 exchange our points of view. However, the most important thing was to have a good  
553 blend of experienced and non-experienced student s. (Int. 3)

554

### 555 ***Problem analysis***

556 The problem analysis phase extended from part of session 1 to session 4 (Figure 3).  
557 During sessions 1 and 2, students had the opportunity to develop small group  
558 assignments and discussions as part of the associated lectures. The lectures presented  
559 experiences from industry sectors representing the “post-oil” economy in Brazil, and the  
560 teachers set aside time for group discussions. They were careful to link how the lecture  
561 content could relate with a problem definition (stage 2 of the PBL process).

562 The third session included elements of experience-learning as students had the  
563 opportunity to attend lectures in the largest science park in Rio de Janeiro (UFRJ  
564 campus). For students, being on the ground with several industries from the “post-oil”  
565 economy sparked inspiration in framing the problem area. During the visit, students  
566 heard accounts from companies within the creative economy, biosciences and  
567 renewable energy.



568           Session 3 took place at the Volta Redonda campus of UFF. Volta Redonda is a  
569 city well-known for its steel industry and is at the core of the car-manufacturing  
570 industry cluster. Session 3 included guest lectures from a car manufacturing company  
571 and a visit to an outpost in the steel industry valley. The visit and the experience of  
572 learning about factors driving car manufacturers to consider electrical vehicles were part  
573 of the group discussions and question-and-answer sessions with teachers.

574           During the fourth and fifth days, students worked in groups to define a research  
575 question for their project, drawing inspiration from sessions 1 to 3 as they framed the  
576 problem area. The first week concluded with group presentations. Four initial project  
577 ideas and initial problem formulations were presented that took into consideration key  
578 challenges facing the transition towards a post-oil economy in Norway and Brazil. The  
579 problem frameworks dealt with issues such as electric car technologies, the role of  
580 educational programs, policies for dealing with plastics in the oceans, and framing  
581 ecological thoughts. As part of the seminar, students received peer feedback and  
582 delivered a PowerPoint presentation with reflections on their experience with group  
583 dynamics. The reflections and the comments during the peer feedback session indicated  
584 some challenges had been felt when trying to define a relevant research question.  
585 Students appreciated the feedback they received by the end of the session that allowed  
586 them to improve their research frameworks.

587           When asked about their experience during the problem analysis phase,  
588 interviewees highlighted experience as the determinant factor used to focus the group  
589 discussions and filter ideas:

590           Students without much experience are often looking to stand over the others; those with  
591 more experience are more mature, they don't have that need. Instead they focus their energy  
592 to help the group progress in their tasks. (Int. 5)

593

594           During the initial phases of problem analysis, experience played a key role in  
595 problem formulation and in choosing a post-oil perspective to develop the projects.

596 More experienced students often built the problem analysis on issues they dealt with  
597 every day as part of their jobs:

598           At some point we were unsure how to proceed methodologically. Then student D. picked  
599 up the idea of working with MOOCs, which later we built our paper on. All materials are  
600 available online. (Int. 5)

601 This student claimed that he had worked 22 years in the administration of a Brazilian  
602 university and before that he was an IT entrepreneur (Int. 5); therefore, his contextual  
603 knowledge obviously helped him to guide the group choices at this initial stage. Besides  
604 experience, students also highlighted complementary skills as something that moved the  
605 groups forward during initial discussions and framing:

606           I felt like my understanding of how things work came from my social sciences perspective.  
607 I was the only social science scientist in my group. [Student G.] is a philosopher and the  
608 two others are from the business school. We came from different perspectives, so I really  
609 think I brought something to the table when I, when we discussed ideas, discussing where  
610 we are going and so forth. (Int. 7)

611

612           In addition to the interdisciplinary combination of group members, the students  
613 highlighted the problem analysis tools as a great support in identifying their key issue  
614 (Int. 5). As the course progressed, group discussions provided a good arena to reflect on  
615 the theories learned during the lectures. An example is a theory used to understand the  
616 agency of universities in societal change, namely the triple helix, which is related to  
617 socio-ecological issues relevant to post-oil and the students' own experiences:

618           After the lectures, I was having a debate with [Student E.] regarding the triple helix because  
619 we had different opinions about the meaning of triple helix and its different parts. So,  
620 talking about that, I told him that I have an interest in the ecological relevance of the model  
621 for Norway because I also studied plastic pollution. (Int. 6)

623 Some students argued that the initial problem analysis was difficult because the groups  
624 were large and most of their ideas were therefore too unfocused:

625 At the outset I had difficulties collaborating and contributing to the discussions. In group  
626 work, the person who speaks the most can impose his/her ideas with ease; the others, as  
627 result, fall behind. I prefer that tasks are fairly distributed from the outset. In Rio, when  
628 we were five in the group, we did not manage to identify a focus FOR our project. In  
629 Bodø, working closely together with [Student D.], we made better progress. (Int. 5)

### 630 *Problem solving*

631 The third week of the course started with session 4, the last part of module 1 that  
632 also contextualized the thematic importance of module 2. In the PBL context, module 2  
633 lectures aimed to inspire students to identify solutions to the problems they had  
634 previously identified through module 1. Session 4 supported the groups' projects by  
635 introducing the topic of "smart specialization" and was organized as a workshop.  
636 Students worked in groups to discuss how this concept could be used in their projects.  
637 Students then presented their results and received further feedback. During session 5,  
638 students had the opportunity to begin developing possible solutions to their post-oil  
639 transition problem through entrepreneurial solutions. How session 5 was delivered  
640 facilitated this task. It integrated experiential learning as students had the opportunity to  
641 visit the science park in Bodø, where start-ups presented some of their products. The  
642 discussion between startups and students allowed them to receive feedback on their  
643 project's ideas and products while taking into account market conditions. Subsequently,  
644 with the support of the Engage centre at HHN, session 5 involved a workshop focused  
645 on creativity.

646 Session 6 was took the form of a business modeling workshop that used tangible  
647 objects to spur discussion on the students' projects (Buur and Mitchell 2011). The  
648 workshop introduced the business model canvas to students through a case study of the  
649 mobility as a service (MAAS) business model. After watching a video, students had to  
650 discuss various potential MAAS business model scenarios depending on future post-oil

651 trends. The discussions during the workshop provided some reflections about the  
652 inclusion of the concept of a business model in students' projects.

653 The last session (7) was an opportunity for students to extend their knowledge of  
654 sustainability and social entrepreneurship experiences in Brazil and Norway. The  
655 session was organized as a panel discussion, where teachers discussed case studies in  
656 both countries and allowed students to reflect on how their projects could integrate these  
657 solutions.

658 All students had previously worked in groups during their various educational  
659 programs; however, for many of them integrating ideas from other disciplines was  
660 something new. This interdisciplinary integration proved to be a challenge when  
661 developing a project on post-oil:

662 [Student E.] proposed focusing on something with development policies. [Student P.] and  
663 I were mostly interested in the ecological implications of the ecological theme for Norway,  
664 plastic pollution, because it helps both of our studies. P. is also working on climate change,  
665 an issue affecting everything. (Int. 6)

666 Other groups, facing similar situations, framed the project around an idea  
667 inspired by one of the members with more experience:

668 Personally, I had certain interest in including some elements of cross-analysis [of MOOC  
669 education]. I was afraid it could jeopardize our work at the time. Hence, I refrained from  
670 mentioning it. I'm indeed convinced we made the right choice and we are preparing a good  
671 report. (Int. 3)

672 Students often highlighted how communication and exchanges of ideas emerged  
673 during the group work. In an intercultural learning context, it is interesting to note how  
674 Brazilian students assessed the Norwegian students as posing critical questions; at the  
675 same time, language barriers prevented a full sharing of critical ideas in relation to other  
676 opportunities:

677 Yes, we had this [Norwegian student], who was always teasing us, in the good sense; she  
678 was provocative, asking the critical questions: "This must improve, right?" I found it  
679 superb, very positive. Sometimes [Brazilian student] was quite reserved, afraid of not  
680 finding the right English term. Even if my English is not perfect, I share my ideas, no

681 problem if I make mistakes. At the end [Brazilian student] also managed to share his  
682 ideas. (Int. 4)  
683

684 A number of factors played a role in helping the group integrate previous  
685 knowledge with new knowledge delivered through the lectures. Among the factors  
686 mentioned by students are critical interactions through questioning but also leadership  
687 through previously matured ideas (Int. 4).

688 Students faced some challenges during the problem analysis process, such as moving  
689 from brainstorming to actually writing the project. As interviewee 5 put it:

690 One difficulty we passed through was transitioning from the stage of internal debate and  
691 brainstorming to the actual project writing. It was extremely difficult for our group. At  
692 some point, it was like all the members tried to convince the others to integrate their own  
693 ideas. Getting approval from the others and moving ahead was time consuming. (Int. 5)

694  
695 Another challenge was fitting the PBL framework into a short summer course  
696 timeframe. The limited time allocated to developing the project had consequences for  
697 how students budgeted their time and planned the scope of their projects. As  
698 interviewee 7 highlighted:

699 I think we were pretty set on our idea, it's just that it was too huge for just a two-week  
700 assignment. We weren't narrowing it down to a manageable substance for a manageable  
701 timescale, and that was the problem because I recognized when we had the lecture with  
702 the PhD candidate that suddenly my idea is worthy of a PhD proposal and that is way too  
703 much for two weeks. (Int. 7)

704  
705

## 706 **Discussion**

707 The purpose of this article was to understand how entrepreneurship and sustainability  
708 learning objectives can be integrated into a higher education course. It was hoped that a  
709 PBL framework would provide students with the contextualized learning needed to  
710 creatively solve complex problems. A clear societal challenge was used as the  
711 discursive context. Given the socio-political importance, the organizers named this  
712 discursive context the “post-oil” economic transition.

713 Relying on classroom AR methodology (Jennings et al. 2015; Johnson-Burel,  
714 Drame, and Frattura 2014), this research used qualitative inquiry. The empirical  
715 materials were built from participant observation, student work samples, course  
716 documentation, and in-depth interviews with nine student participants. The material was  
717 organized following the AR process: course planning, course delivery, assessment and  
718 reflection. The guiding research question was: How is active learning best integrated  
719 into a higher education curriculum with entrepreneurship and sustainability learning  
720 objectives?

721 In the course structure we used in our study, PBL pedagogy was integrated as a  
722 group-based project that was also used to assess the course. Our framework sheds light  
723 on the relationship between the key principles of PBL and the thematic balance of  
724 sustainability and entrepreneurship education in the curriculum, on the process of  
725 integrating PBL into course design, on related tension points, and on strategies to tackle  
726 those tensions.

727 In the results section, we reported on our course delivery experience. The  
728 narrative also engaged interview results with a focus on the PBL aspects of the students'  
729 experience within the course. Figure 4 summarizes our interpretation of the course  
730 delivery process through a PBL framework.

731

732 [Figure 4 near here]

733 After conducting the course, we identified tension points along the PBL process.  
734 The first tension, which we call “timing” (Figure 4), emerged early in the group  
735 formation phase. In the context of our short courses integrating PBL at the graduate  
736 level, it is often common to have diverse groups (in terms of discipline, experience, and  
737 cultural background). This study also included a highly diverse group of students who

738 were from different countries and study programs, as highlighted in the results. Thus, it  
739 was difficult to avoid having students from similar backgrounds join the same groups  
740 (e.g. those from the same university or program). Meanwhile, during the group  
741 formation stage, we set up a framework to align students' diverse interests and maintain  
742 self-directed learning principles. We achieved this through the café dialogue dynamic,  
743 which allowed a relatively quick alignment of interests and the identification of group  
744 leaders who were experienced in one of the themes. As the students mentioned, the  
745 initial ideas evolved during the three-week period of the course. These changes in the  
746 problem analysis also indicate the importance of the lectures during the later phases of  
747 the PBL process.

748         A second tension was the quality of the problems that students can develop and  
749 subsequently 'solve' in connection with the course's learning objectives. Here is one  
750 aspect in which PBL differs from the case study teaching method, namely the relative  
751 freedom students have to structure their own problems (Graaf and Kolmos 2003). The  
752 background of this tension is often portrayed in the PBL literature as a wide difference  
753 of problem integration approaches across programs and disciplines. We framed the  
754 initial problem within a broad theme and subsequently allow students to scope it with  
755 relative autonomy and freedom from teachers' influence; this contrasts with other  
756 course designs in sustainability and entrepreneurship education, where the teacher's role  
757 is more important (Ban et al. 2015). Yet this can introduce tension as students formulate  
758 and scope the problem. To tackle this tension, we allowed students relative flexibility in  
759 problem formulation during the course. An initial problem analysis was carried out by  
760 the end of the first week, and subsequently, students modified this problem formulation  
761 according to inputs they received during modules 1 and 2.

762           A third tension emerged in relation to the two broad themes of the course: on  
763 one hand, it encompassed sustainability as a societal transformation interlinked with  
764 regional planning aspects of extractive economic development, and on the other hand, it  
765 referred to micro-economic issues linked to entrepreneurship (new business  
766 development, creativity, start-ups, technology). The students' overall feedback about  
767 how both themes were combined in modules 1 and 2 indicated that while the scope of  
768 the themes can be broad enough, it is extremely important to have a common thread that  
769 aligns the PBL principles. In our course, the common thread that helped to focus these  
770 discussions was the discussions about phasing out an oil-dependent economy. Engaging  
771 this theme also allowed us to maintain a balance between the two educational areas  
772 sustainability and entrepreneurship education, which have both generated associated  
773 research and education experiences with PBL. From this perspective, our approach also  
774 differs from previous graduate courses that adopt PBL as the guiding pedagogical  
775 approach but focus overwhelmingly on one of the two issues (either environmental  
776 planning or new business creation) but do not combine them into single PBL projects;  
777 examples of these experiences at the graduate level are listed in Ban et al. (2015) and  
778 Rossano et al. (2016). To address the third tension we provided formative feedback to  
779 students during the learning process and not after, with the intent of ensuring that any  
780 student mistakes that affected their assignments was caught on time and that reflection  
781 would be integrated into their work (Biggs and Tang 2015). Inspired by other  
782 experiences of formative feedback in PBL contexts (i.e. Spliid and Qvist 2013), we used  
783 multiple types in our course: reflections during group work, oral presentations where  
784 students received peer recommendations and comments from teachers, meetings with  
785 tutors during group work, and self-assessments where students had the opportunity to  
786 critically explain their group collaboration.



787 ***Reflections on action research as a methodological framework***

788           One inspiration for this study came in the form in which sustainability is taught  
789 in higher education. It is still considered to be “modular,” seemingly disconnected from  
790 more core aspects related to economic development and management. AR allowed us to  
791 first allowed us to reflect on our institutions primarily through academic debate on new  
792 ways to blend sustainability education with core management subjects like  
793 entrepreneurship. We connected this reflection with earlier publications that link AR  
794 with sustainability education and identified some of the benefits of AR such as coping  
795 with practical situations, developing professional competences and creating a sphere in  
796 which professional and practical discussions on education can occur (Posch, 1993). The  
797 ultimate aim of this research is to create a change in the way environmental education is  
798 perceived, shifting it from being at the margins to making it a more central part of the  
799 school curriculum (Posch, 1993). AR was thus beneficial to our project since a related  
800 goal was to bring sustainability education into the mainstream through the development  
801 of new teaching methods.

802           The revision phase in the AR cycle also seeks to reflect on changes to the  
803 original plan. Our experience throughout the different phases of the AR legitimized our  
804 contribution to pedagogical developments in the study programmes as we collaborated  
805 with the institutions participating in the AR project. In concrete terms, we manage to  
806 portray sustainability, PBL, and internationalization as integral parts of a new course  
807 (called Leadership in Practice and organized by the Norwegian partner HHN, involving  
808 the same partner institutions). The AR process also gave the Brazilian partners the  
809 freedom to modify the practical elements of their pedagogical planning, including the  
810 adaptation of didactical elements tested through the course (i.e., gamification, flipped  
811 classroom, etc.). Combining AR and the PBL methodology also allowed the Brazilian

812 partners to propose new solutions to issues that arose amid the context of the COVID-  
813 19 and subsequent extended campus closures. Worldwide, there is a need to interface  
814 new teaching practices with online learning methods. The project partners are thus  
815 building on PBL and AR in order to learn about graduate students' professional  
816 experience in combination with online learning. Students attending these courses  
817 combine work with studies, and thus bring their real-world experiences into the  
818 classroom.

819         On a micro-level, we also experienced the “second order” action research, or the  
820 reflection of our role as AR facilitators (Magyar & Mayer, 1998). As facilitators we  
821 experienced some dilemmas as producers of knowledge, a role the project funders  
822 required we take on. We were also embedded within organizational structures with  
823 divergent priorities. AR allowed us to “test-in” new collaborations and teaching  
824 methods and to develop new course offerings by setting aside longer-term  
825 administrative concerns, such as budget and academic credit recognition from  
826 international universities. As previously highlighted by Townsend and Thomson (2015),  
827 AR can go beyond a utilitarian approach of identifying problems and seeking solutions,  
828 to actually creating educational experiments that can be sustained in the long term.

## 829 **Conclusion**

830 As entrepreneurship education gains momentum across higher education institutions  
831 worldwide, it is key to think critically about its contribution to training the next  
832 generation of entrepreneurs who will create value for stakeholders and the environment  
833 – not just shareholders. In addition, discourses across the private and public spectrum  
834 seem to converge to provide new potential roles for entrepreneurs, such as those  
835 working towards sustainable development goals or tackling market externalities.

836           This paper engages in this discussion and contributes to a better understanding  
837 of how sustainability can be combined with entrepreneurship education. We developed  
838 a conceptual framework for making sustainability education more entrepreneurially  
839 oriented in higher education; this was achieved through a problem-based learning  
840 process. This framework was further tested through a course designed in the context of  
841 a summer program, while students' evaluation of the program offered ways to improve  
842 the course design in the future.

843           This paper also has practical implications, including a framework that can be  
844 used to design new educational programs combining sustainability and entrepreneurship  
845 objectives in graduate programs. Since the framework was developed in collaboration  
846 with partner programs in Norway and Brazil, we also provide a detailed overview of  
847 three potential tensions that course designers might face and ways to address those  
848 tensions right from the start.

849           As with other studies following a classroom action research approach, this  
850 research has limitations in terms of external validity. The transferability of our results  
851 and analysis can be evaluated by comparing our original context to that in which the  
852 study is to be replicated. To facilitate transferability, we provide a thick description of  
853 our setting. Further contributions could enhance our framework by analyzing in greater  
854 detail the role of formative feedback during the different phases of the PBL process, as  
855 this seemed to be our key strategy for addressing tensions at the group level and finding  
856 a balance between entrepreneurship and sustainability issues. Quasi-experimental  
857 designs could be particularly useful in this research.

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869

## 870 **Disclosure statement**

871 No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

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- 1096

1097 **APPENDIX 1 – QUALITATIVE INTERVIEW GUIDE**

- 1098 - Part I: Student background
- 1099     ○ Field of study/work experience
- 1100     ○ Business experience
- 1101     ○ Sustainability experience
- 1102 - Part II: Content and structure
- 1103     ○ Combination of activities
- 1104     ○ Structure
- 1105 - Part III: Interpersonal interaction
- 1106     ○ Social
- 1107     ○ Group work
- 1108         ▪ Report an issue
- 1109         ▪ Report a good thing going on in your group
- 1110 - Part IV: Self-assessment
- 1111     ○ What have you brought from your previous experience and how has it
- 1112         helped you further progress in the course?
- 1113     ○ How did you contribute to the whole project?
- 1114 - Part V:
- 1115     ○ Perception/knowledge before vs. now about this topic
- 1116     ○ Did attending the summer program make you think about different plans
- 1117         for the future?
- 1118

1119 **APPENDIX 2- DETAILED COURSE PLAN AND CODING OF INTERVIEWS**

1120 The detailed course plan and comprehensive thematic coding of the interviews is  
1121 available as open data through the following link. The interview data information has  
1122 been anonymized to comply with the Norwegian Data protection requirements (NSD):  
1123 <https://dataverse.no/privateurl.xhtml?token=1e52238e-b6f2-4614-8c6d-aca2b597ca91>  
1124

1125 Table 1: Norwegian-Brazilian cooperation in higher education for sustainability and  
 1126 entrepreneurship education, partner universities  
 1127

<b>University</b>	<b>Institutional Profile</b>	<b>Academic Unit involved in the project</b>	<b>Relevant assets to the thematic area of cooperation</b>
Nord University, Norway	Public HEI; 12,000 students; 1,200 faculty staff	Nord University Business School (HHN)	Third largest business school and the largest provider of MBA programmes in Norway. <i>Engage</i> (Centre for Engaged Education through Entrepreneurship)
Fluminense Federal University (UFF), Brazil	Public HEI; 65,000 students; 3,500 faculty staff	Institute of Human and Social Sciences	Masters Programme in Administration (PPGA)
Federal University of Rio de Janeiro (UFRJ), Brazil	Public HEI; 60,000 students	Institute of Economics	Masters and Doctoral programmes in Economics; Public Policy and Development
Federal Institute of Rio Grande do Sul (IFRS), Brazil	Public, technical education, 19,000 students across 17 campuses	Vice-Provost of Research	“Close-to the community” HEI, through a diverse range of service-oriented learning activities. Sustainability education (Eco-Viamão project)

1128

1129



1130 Table 2 List of interviews

<b>Interview ID</b>	<b>HEI's country</b>	<b>Study program</b>
1	Brazil	Management
2	Brazil	Economics
3	Brazil	Management
4	Brazil	Economics
5	Brazil	Management
6	Norway	Management
7	Norway	Sociology
8	Norway	Sociology
9	Brazil	Engineering

1131

1132

1133 Table 3 Data structure of the empirical materials (the number of codes linked to a  
 1134 particular category are given in parentheses)

Categories	Themes
Real-world oriented (6) Problem-based learning (23)* IT in pedagogics (1) Improving the course (8) Course structure (4) Course implementation (1) Course impact (5) Active-learning approaches (9)	Teaching learning approaches
Post-oil discussion (10) Innovation design (2) Entrepreneurship ecosystem support (1) Sustainability literacy (1) Social entrepreneurship (1)	Main themes tackled by the course
Practice (5) External collaboration (1)	External collaboration
Faculty training (3)	Educational focus

1135 \*Focus of the analysis

1136

1137

1138 Figure 1 Intended learning outcomes of the course

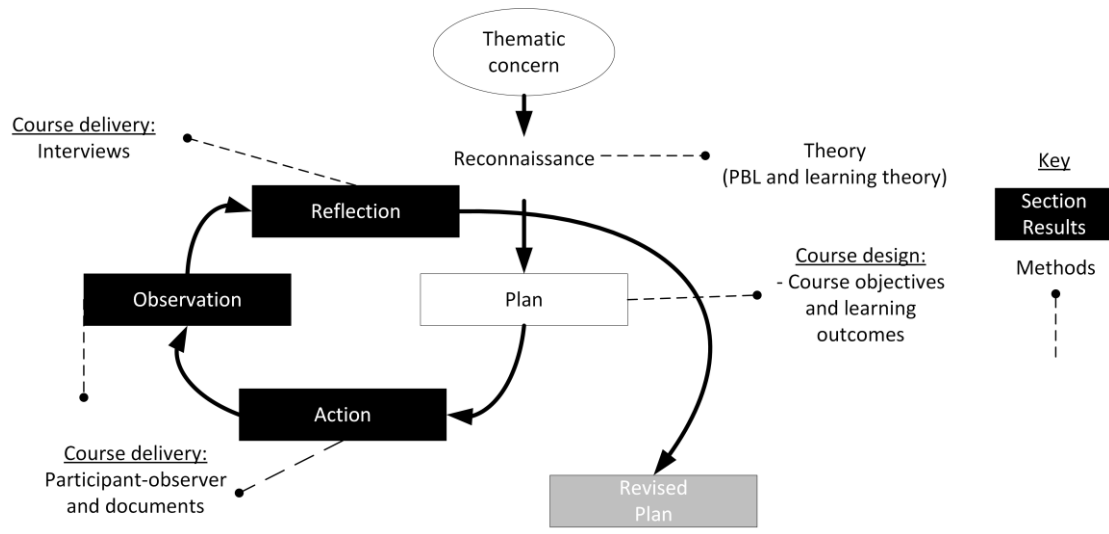
<p><b>Knowledge</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Gain an understanding of the hegemonic and counter-hegemonic discourses about extractivism and post-extractivism in the context of Norway and Brazil.</li><li>• Gain an understanding of the main theoretical approaches to understand innovation dynamics at a societal level with emphasis on triple helix and innovation systems.</li><li>• Gain an understanding of the concept of smart specialization and how it can generate windows of opportunities in Norway and Brazil.</li><li>• Gain an understanding of the entrepreneurial process, with an emphasis on entrepreneurial opportunity identification and exploitation.</li><li>• Gain an understanding of business model concepts and explore how entrepreneurs and innovators can use them as a tool.</li><li>• Become familiar with the main aspects of design thinking, new product development, and new venture creation; the elements of what it takes to be an entrepreneur.</li></ul>
<p><b>Skills</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Be able to analyze the main components of innovation systems at a national and regional level. Will be asked to answer questions such as: What can predict whether or not an innovation system is suited to post-extractivism?</li><li>• Critically outline the consequences of development pathways focused on extractivism at national and regional levels. Explore the implications of smart specialization as a pathway diversification strategy.</li><li>• Identify the conditions necessary for certain entrepreneurial ideas to contribute to path diversification and the conditions necessary to exploit the market opportunities around these entrepreneurial ideas.</li><li>• Be able to use tools, such as the business model canvas, to plan for business ideas in the context of new products, services, or processes developed in the context of post-extractivism.</li></ul>
<p><b>Competencies</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Increase their ability to analyze complex problems and frame them as a research questions.</li><li>• Gained competence in collaborating in team work with intercultural groups and using digital learning tools.</li><li>• Increased their ability to reflect on and consider theoretical problems in a general sense in research.</li><li>• Increased their ability to communicate problems, analyses, and results to colleagues both orally and in writing, including by contributing to academic debates.</li></ul>

1139

1140

1141 Figure 2 Links among the AR process, methods and the results

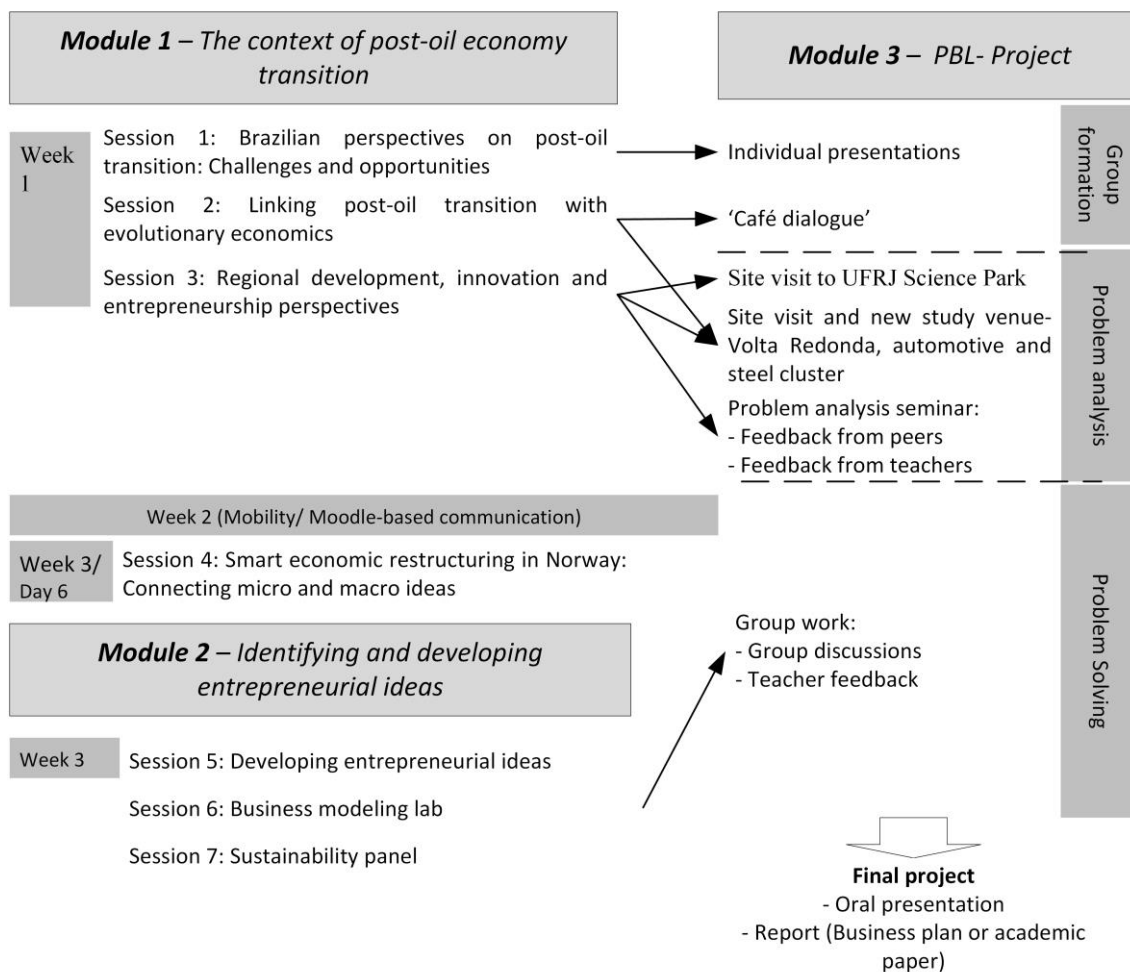
1142



1143

1144

1145 Figure 3 Course structure in three modules and seven sessions. Relation between the  
 1146 modules and the PBL process and activities  
 1147

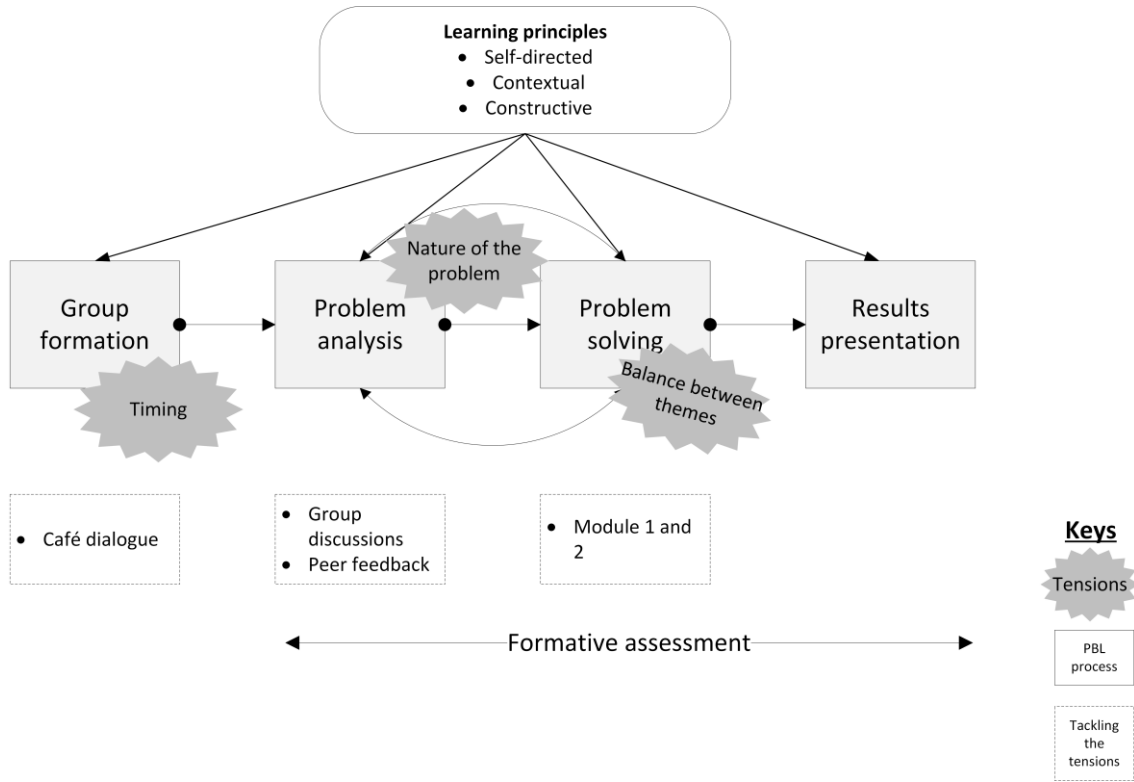


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1151 Figure 4 PBL process framework, tension points and strategies to address the tensions  
 1152 in the course program  
 1153  
 1154



1155