



## **GOOD PRACTICES IN STUDENT ENGAGEMENT WITH SOCIETY**

### **ICADE'S CORPORATE SOCIAL CONSULTANCY** Economics and Business at the Service of the People

Fostering Student Engagement through AI-driven Qualitative Quality Assurance Practices  
*A Project Developed by:*



UNIVERSITY  
OF TWENTE.



MCAST



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**Project:** Fostering Student Engagement through AI-driven Qualitative Quality Assurance Practices

### **Consortium Partners**

Riga Technical University

University of Twente

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## GENERAL INFORMATION

**Title:** ICADE's Corporate Social Consultancy: Economics and Business at the Service of the People

**Organization:** ICADE School of Business and Economics, Comillas Pontifical University.

**One liner – essence of the case study:** This is a project for developing professional university volunteering by combining community commitment, social training, collective reflection, and implementation of student's knowledge in projects.

**Country:** Spain

**Main contact:** Carlos Ballesteros García, Head of the Corporate Social Consultancy.

**Summary:** The Corporate Social Consultancy of ICADE (Catholic Institute of Business Administration) is a project for developing professional university volunteering combining social commitment, social training, collective reflection, and implementation of students' knowledge in projects. The aim of the initiative is to take the economy out of academia and place it at the service of society. The objective of the Corporate Social Consultancy is to educate socially responsible business students, ethically prepared professionals for the contemporary social contexts, and individuals capable of integrating social and environmental aspects into their managerial, interpersonal, and leadership skills.

**About the Qual-AI-ty case studies:** This case study is part of a Compendium of Good Practices in student engagement with society. The cases provide an overview of inspiring initiatives, projects, and programmes that higher education institutions are undertaking in Europe and that offer opportunities for students to engage with their local context while addressing societal challenges. The aim of the compendium is to collect information about the current conditions of university student engagement with society through various voluntary and non-voluntary activities which are creating betterment of the societies in Europe.

## OVERVIEW

### 1. Introduction

The Corporate Social Consultancy or Consultoría Social Empresarial (CSE) is an initiative promoted by ICADE School of Business and Economics at Comillas Pontifical University, within its Chair of Economic and Business Ethics and the Service-Learning program's framework. It is promoted by the institutional program Service for the Commitment to Solidarity and Development Cooperation, also known by its short name Solidary Comillas. This institutional program offers co-curricular workshops, seminars and experiences, voluntary work opportunities (with civil society or at the university), voluntary interchanges, social responsibility awards, and service learning.

CSE could be described as a proposal for professional university volunteering that combines social commitment, social training, collective reflection, and the implementation of the student's knowledge in social projects. It places engineering, technology, and management at the service of people and groups in social disadvantage.

### 2. Background Information:

CSE responds to one of the major needs identified in ICADE, the necessity for students to develop skills and competencies that could be useful in their professional future. This need was addressed with the contact with different social problems, to promote student awareness, commitment, and implementation of knowledge in the real world. CSE was designed to provide students with spaces where they could see social problems beyond the classroom, to understand the world by engaging with their local challenges.

ICADE's CSE seek to develop understanding of the current social problems, of the necessity to act in the social field, of the causes and consequences of the socio-political and economic current situations, and of the impact of the environment changes on people's lives. It raises the premise that it is essential to create new ways to contribute social valuable interventions. On this basis, the initiative aims that the projects in which students work have an innovative component and involve creation of solutions with social value.

### 3. Aims and Motivations:

The general objective of CSE is to train socially responsible business students, ethically prepared, and integrate social and environmental aspects into their managerial and relational skills.

The aim of the service is to contribute to the awareness of the university community with the multidimensional problems of local and global society, promoting the participation of the university community in the construction of a fairer world.

It is intended that the participants' activities make a useful contribution to the project. Each student develops skills and competencies that will be useful in their professional future and come into contact with different social problems, thereby increasing their sensitivity and commitment.

### 4. Stakeholders:

- a) Main target group: All students enrolled in a business studies degree, or with a background in business, and postgraduate students in any business-related course taught at Comillas Pontifical University.
- b) University professors: professors can engage in the initiative by providing their expertise through mentoring and supporting students in the process of elaboration and development of the projects.
- c) Middle management (deans, directors of centres): university management included the initiative as part of the institutional commitment, becoming part of the management and assessment processes, which institutionalized the project.
- d) Population in condition of vulnerability: CSE work with people in situation of vulnerability from minority groups in which students provide their volunteer services and contribute their knowledge to carry out workshops. For example, the “Finances for young people with a first job in a situation of vulnerability. Economics for your autonomy seminar” and “Workshop for low-income families in Usera and Villaverde,” was carried out between 2019 and 2020.
- e) External organizations: CSE work with external organizations in which students provide their volunteer services and contribute their knowledge to carry out various projects according to the needs of each organization. The profiles of some organizations are:
  - **Tomillo Foundation:** works for the development of the individuals and for the social integration of the most vulnerable people and groups through

education, improvement of employability, strengthening of social networks, analysis and innovation.

- **EntreParéntesis Organization:** Initiative of the Society of Jesus, with the mission of generating a space for dialogue and encounter with the cultures and religions of our time, through reflection and debate, the promotion of justice that springs from the Christian faith and public advocacy for social transformation.
- **Provivienda NGO:** this association works to improve the social and residential reality since 1989. They seek to promote the right to decent and adequate housing and having helped more than 100,000 people to achieve it. In particular, they contribute to achieving the residential inclusion of the most socially vulnerable people.
- **Social Sector of the Company of Jesus in Spain:** this organization works with insertion communities, promotes professional organizations working on favour of justice. At present, the social sector of the Jesuits in Spain is made up of more than 20 entities with more than 50 headquarters distributed throughout the country.
- **Geranium Space Coworking:** A place of work, learning and meeting for generating creative solutions to social problems by promoting justice, sustainable economy, and social economy oriented to the common good.
- **Entreculturas ONGD:** this non-governmental organization for the development belongs to the Society of Jesus and works as a network of transformation for social change through education.
- **Amoverse Insertion Company:** Foundation of the Society of Jesus whose aims are the attention to non-formal education, support integration and service to the neighbourhood from the concern for the weakest.
- **Friends of Nyumbani ONGD:** This international NGOD was created as an active response to the growing number of children affected by the AIDS epidemic. Its vocation is to fight the disease, hunger, and physical suffering that threaten helpless men, women, and children.

## IMPLEMENTATION

### 1. Innovative Inputs

CSE offers two types of projects (in this case, could be consider as Inputs), in which students can participate, putting their knowledge at the service of those most in need:

- a) Organizational management applied to social organizations with projects in developing countries, mainly related to project management, organizational sustainability, and loyalty of large donors.
- b) Consultancy for companies and social organizations that work with socially disadvantaged people in projects in which employability is a fundamental tool.

### 2. Strategies and Activities

CSE plays a fundamental role in providing support to the students, from initial step with training, to the sharing of ideas at the end of the volunteer program.

The training seminar is a mandatory course that aims to link students' academic learning with the voluntary action they are going to develop. It consists of three sessions to be held at the ICADE, at the beginning of the academic year. This training course offers the basic notions of the work of economics in the services offered by CSE for the development of society.

Activities:

- The students are trained beforehand, participating in a seminar and in specific training sessions at the university.
- The students then volunteer with companies and social organizations, putting the knowledge acquired during study at the service of those most in need.
- Students can participate in reflection meetings to share the results of their learning.

#### **Benefits of the CSE for students.**

This image summarizes some of the characteristics and benefits students can get form participating in CSE:

### 3. Coordination with the Target Groups

The following process is carried out to contribute to the coordination with the main target groups:

- a) Training of the student with the participation in a seminar and in specific training sessions at the university.
- b) Volunteering with companies and social organizations in which students will put the knowledge acquired during their courses, at the service of those who need it the most.
- c) The students participate in reflection meetings to share the results of their learning.

### 4. Deliverable Outputs:

Up to date, several projects have been executed successfully with the allied organizations, among which we can mention:

- **Friends of Nyumbani:** Study of the strategy in social networks (Facebook, Twitter, etc.) to generate traffic, get better SEO/SEM positioning in search engines and, ultimately, achieve the optimization of the objectives of raising awareness of the Spanish population about child HIV in Africa and attracting new partners.
- **Geranium Space Coworking:** Design and implementation of three practical workshops related to self-employment for people living in situations of risk of exclusion.
- **The Ecomarca:** Development of the marketing plan and dissemination materials together with an active search of parishes and dynamization of new groups of consumption.
- **Amoverse Insertion Company:** Elaboration of a marketing plan for the insertion company dedicated to the maintenance of buildings and reforms.
- **Restaurant El Mandela:** Diagnosis of the weak points, development of the marketing plan for El Mandela Restaurant and elaboration of dissemination materials.
- **Direct Africa diverse projects:** groups of students play different roles in the projects at the same time and develop diverse projects such as:



1. Study and design of a financial optimization plan. Legacies and inheritances as a source of financing.
  2. Launching of Tumaini, a social enterprise for the commercialization of photoprotectors for black albino skins.
  3. Communication projects on the web and social networks.
  4. Launching of Water Rain, a social enterprise for water harvesting in arid areas.
  5. Study of the best investment alternatives for cash flow peaks considering the idiosyncrasy and identity of an NGO (offered as Final Project).
- **Radio Ecce:** Design and production of a radio program that helps literacy and economic empowerment of vulnerable groups.
  - **Integra-e:** Creation of a business model to consolidate the activity as a social entity, development of the business idea that enables self-financing to young people at risk of social exclusion previously trained by the entity in communication technologies and ICT information. And conducting of a market and opportunities study in the neighborhood of Tetuán.
  - **Sé De:** A mobile economy project, initiative of CSE, aiming to provide solutions (through talks, workshops...) to the economic literacy of vulnerable groups. Talks and workshops have already been arranged with: a) La Rueca Association, b) Radio Ecce, c) Rais Foundation and, Pardo Valcarcel Foundation.

## 5. Intangible Outputs:

The students have had really enriching experiences since they have found the opportunity to put into practice what they have learned at the university in real cases of organizations, as well as giving a social focus to their careers, providing social service. They have had the opportunity to live experiences outside the classroom and engage with the needs of the local society through organizations that already have the experience in the field.

At the same time, the organizations have benefited from the advice and work of the students. Furthermore, many organizations have been able to develop large projects thanks to the help of the student volunteer work.



## EVALUATION AND MONITORING

### 1. Strategical Initiatives for Evaluation & Monitoring

CSE have created some initiatives to monitor and evaluate the process, that include participation in working groups to try to respond to the needs demanded by insertion companies and social organizations. These working groups of volunteers are tutored by a professor or professional who organizes the work and help to advance and resolve doubts. Besides, the workgroups are formed so that the experiences and knowledge are balanced so that all together can achieve the objectives set.

On the other hand, a maximum of 6 ECTS credits per academic year are awarded to students who participate in the course, those ECTS appear in the European Diploma Supplement. These credits are awarded in recognition of social volunteering activities.

### 2. Analysing the Impacts of the Outputs

Stakeholders have experienced positive changes and students have had positive experiences. Students see in these spaces the opportunity to experience other realities, to put into practice their knowledge for solving contemporary social challenges.

On the other hand, the organizations where the projects are carried out that have been advised by the students claim that the students are motivated and have helped them to successfully undertake projects within the organization.

According to an interview with an active student, she stated that this is a win-win exchange. The experience has represented a positive experience for her, that it has been an all-inclusive project. (Link of video below, on references)

### 3. Defining Major Success Factors:

In 2014, CSE was created as an initiative to channel and catalyse the social commitment of students and faculty through service learning. In the 8 years of existence, the initiative has consolidated, the number of organizations that want to take part has increased, and the number of participating students has grown every year. To date, more than 30 projects have been supported.

### 4. Lessons Learned



One of the biggest lessons learned, and in which there is still opportunities for improvement, is that it is necessary to ensure that all projects in which students are involved generate impact on both the students and the external participants. For example, in the part, students were involved in a specific project, students were expected to help with the planning of a business model and marketing strategies for a restaurant for a female head of a household. It was noted students were not that interested they did not participate in such a committed way. As a result, each year, the available projects are published beforehand, and students have the opportunity to sign up for the one they are interested in.

## SUPPORTIVE AND INFLUENCING ASPECTS

### 1. Major Strengths and Weaknesses

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CSE is academically recognized and is converted into academic credits for the students.</li> <li>• Currently, more than 16 projects have been executed between students and organizations.</li> <li>• Students volunteer in a motivated and committed manner.</li> <li>• CSE provides constant monitoring and support throughout the process.</li> <li>• There is no cost, participation in the CSE is free of fees.</li> <li>• The project has online presence through a website and communication on social media platforms (LinkedIn, Twitter, YouTube, and Facebook).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Only students from ICADE can participate, preventing the participation of students from other areas and schools who can also contribute their knowledge. Although students from other faculties cannot participate in the CSE, they can participate in other activities known as: Volunteer Service Learning. <a href="https://www.comillas.edu/es/voluntariado-universitario">https://www.comillas.edu/es/voluntariado-universitario</a></li> <li>• The number of places per semester is limited, it depends on each project. In any case, each year several dozen places are offered in each of them.</li> <li>• The current pandemic situation has forced CSE to make some changes both in the way of participating in the activities, either on place or online, as well as in their programming.</li> </ul>

### 2. Further Challenges:

This initiative only covers students of the faculty of economics. Therefore, one of the biggest challenges is to expand the initiative for offering the opportunity for students to participate regardless of their major. Escalating this initiative implies identifying the transferability and success factors that could be implemented in other faculties, overcoming the differences of the academic disciplines. It also implies to look for organizational models and sustainability strategies at an institutional level that could guarantee this possible growth across the institution.

Another challenge is enhancing the participation basis to broader the number of students participating. Currently, the initiative enrolls about 40 students each semester. So, it is necessary to look for strategies to enhance this basis and to integrate strategies that allow more students participating without doubling the coordination efforts

## MORE INFORMATION

### 1. Sustainability Factors

There are two key elements for the sustainability of the initiative related to the engagement of the students and the organizational role in the institution:

- a) Mentoring/training program for the students before they start the project with the organization. This allows a holistic experience that integrates academic and real-world practice for students and reassure them in the development of their activities.
- b) The initiative is attached to the university as part of the faculty of economics. So, the initiative has the institutional recognition and support, which creates legitimacy for students and for the external participants. Also, the fact that the initiative can offer transferable ECTS guarantees it is offering added values for the students.

### 2. Transferability

CSE has a high potential to consolidate as an example of student engagement with society. Its aim of training socially responsible students, ethically prepared professionals, and individuals capable of integrating social and environmental aspects into their managerial and interpersonal skills make it a high impact initiative. These elements are welcomed by economics students and all the academic community, since social service is something that applies to all professional careers. Therefore, it can be transferred to other academic programmes and even other universities, regardless of the country. At the same time, many foundations, companies or organizations need support in various talent aspects, so there is a great field of possibilities for its transferability.

### 3. Awards and Recognition

The project has not received any awards, but the university where it is being carried out has.

## 4. Links

**Corporate Social Consultancy (English):** <https://www.comillas.edu/en/comillas-university-icai-icade/collaborate-with-us/517-investigacion/institutos-y-catedras/catedra-de-etica-economica-y-empresarial>

**Consultoría Social Empresarial (Spanish):**  
<https://www.icade.comillas.edu/es/social-icade>

## 5. Contact Persons

Carlos Ballesteros García, Head of the Corporate Social Consultancy.

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## 6. Social media

**Twitter:** @Social\_ICADE

**LinkedIn:** Consultoría Social Empresarial – ICADE

<https://www.linkedin.com/company/consultoriasocialempresarial/>



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