

Comprehensive Risk Management Strategy for Developing Proactive Skills in University Students

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ABSTRACT

This current work looks at the effect of a comprehensive approach to risk management on the growth of proactive skills in children studying Business Administration at a teaching location in La Concordia, Ecuador, in 2024. Using a qualitative method along with phenomenological planning and methods such as structured media talks, focus groups, and how-to; they sought to understand how students think, feel, and learn when faced with real-life problems. The results show that using active approaches and locations to learn helped a lot in bringing out skills such as decision-making, freedom, ability to change, thinking well, and confidence. Furthermore, a way of thinking about preventing things within the school was able to be strengthened through student participation, teacher teaching, and working together. It is said that a comprehensive approach to risk management, together with active teaching, not only meets the needs of today's work but also creates training for work that is changing, strong, and supports a sustainable society.

Keywords: risk control, advanced skills, university, new techniques, on-the-job learning, preventive culture.

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Introduction

Risk management has become very important in supporting the continued growth of schools because it allows us to see, calculate, and reduce the hazards that can harm the place where we study and learn (Villafuerte et al., 2021). However, its approach in university courses, especially in administrative areas, is still often more theoretical. Furthermore, it is poorly connected to reality. This causes problems when developing proactive skills or competencies among students, who have difficulty seeing risks and making good decisions in changing situations. Thus, in Ecuador, in the Faculty of Administration at a higher education school in La Concordia, there were shortcomings in practical training on hazard management. In this sense, students feel that the teaching method they receive places more emphasis on theory, neglecting active methods that help develop skills such as independence, making good decisions, solving problems, and adapting. Therefore, this disconnect between what is learned and what the job demands directly affects the professional preparation and confidence of future graduates.

This problem at the national level is evident in several studies (Paucar et al., 2022; Ortiz et al.,

2024). These studies indicate that Ecuadorian universities have not yet begun to implement effective teaching methods that combine active learning with risk management. This has hindered the development of essential skills in students to face difficult challenges in their professional and social lives. Meanwhile, at the global level, the problem has become evident in research conducted in Peru, Nicaragua, Costa Rica, and Brazil (Córdova et al., 2024; Mercado, 2024; Granados, 2024; Boas et al., 2024, respectively), which shows that the problem is not confined to one location and responds to a global need to change the way risk management is taught with more comprehensive and practical ideas. Although there have been isolated actions, there is still a large gap between what is required at work and what is learned in university classrooms.

Given this situation, the following research question arises: What effect does a comprehensive strategy have on the ability of students in the Faculty of Business Administration at a higher education institution in Ecuador, in 2024, to put risk management knowledge into practice in real-life cases?

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In this topic, the main objective proposed in the study is:

To understand how the comprehensive risk management strategy supports the development of proactive skills in Business Administration students at a university in La Concordia, Ecuador, during 2024. This research seeks to offer a new vision of workplace learning, fostering active forms, connections with the world, and more realistic, useful, and transformative teaching. Among these, the development of proactive skills and risk management emerge as key components for university students to face uncertain, complex, and changing contexts effectively, critically, and responsibly.

The current dynamics of society, the economy, and the environment around the world place new demands on education systems, especially at the higher education level. Therefore, education needs to respond with learning methods that help build basic human skills for working and civic life. Among these, developing proactive skills and managing new dangers are important elements for young people in college to face uncertain, difficult and changing situations in a good, critical and responsible manner.

In this sense, this research stems from an urgent need to connect risk management with building active competencies in university students, especially in the Faculty of Business Administration at a higher education institution in La Concordia. This urgency is seen within a "constructivist and practical" vision, which alienates students' active work in acquiring useful and specific knowledge. In this sense, Vargas and Lara (2023) mention that teaching students skills to prevent challenges, solve problems independently, and make wise choices is key to their personal and professional success.

In the national context, several studies support the usefulness of active and participatory approaches in university learning. For example, Chiriguayo et al. (2024) found positive results from learning by doing in biology students, improving their enthusiasm, commitment, understanding of ideas, and proactive skills. Additionally, Crespo (2019) proposed a new module for the process of obtaining a doctorate degree, highlighting the importance of including proactivity as a common skill in education. Also, Duque and Puebla (2023) looked at ways to manage risks in education after the pandemic; underscoring the role of mixed education and the need to strengthen skills to adjust to change.

At the global level, Holguín and Rodríguez (2020) in Peru showed that there is a strong connection between risk management and being active among young people who work while studying, demonstrating the educational value of addressing real-life situations. Boas et al. (2024) also emphasized the importance of active learning to curb school dropout rates and improve academic performance. In Costa Rica, Fernández et al. (2021) found that problem-management instruction is insufficient and focuses more on reacting than preventing, while in Colombia, Ramos-García et al. (2024) proposed combining knowledge to create a culture of caring and group support in schools. Likewise, in Venezuela, Cedeño et al. (2024) highlighted the need to have risk management in the formal planning of universities, as a way to increase the sustainability of their programs. Also, studies such as that of Boas et al. (2024) in Brazil suggest using fuzzy logic to improve educational processes that deal with risk management in places where there is teaching about the environment. At the European level, Aetdinova and Nikolaeva (2019) pointed out that it is important to set fixed rules for managing risks in universities, finding different sources of problems that must be managed in an organized and effective manner.

Regarding the theoretical basis, this research is based on the concept of risk control (Tamayo et al., 2020), which considers this act as an orderly and interdisciplinary step to find, assess, lower, and use possible dangers. This idea recognizes that fear is not only a threat, but also an opportunity. Also, Kolb's (1984) experiential learning was used, which values knowledge through direct experience, and Piaget's (1954) constructivism, which emphasizes the student's activity in building their knowledge in conversation with their social and cultural area. Furthermore, Bandura's (1986) social cognitive theory presents an idea of knowing as a result of observation, self-efficacy, and self-regulation.

In relation to philosophical support, this search is based on Kolb's experiential learning (1984), which gives importance to learning from one's own experience, and Piaget's constructivism (1954), which highlights the student's active role in creating knowledge with their social and cultural environment. Furthermore, the work is based on approaches such as the total approach (Franco, 2022), which supports a complete way of looking at risk control, and the skills approach (Zarco and Lloréns, 2022), which encourages the learning of mental, emotional, and social skills to face modern

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challenges. Also, an orderly method by Andrade-Arenas et al., 2020, is used, which suggests understanding educational events as part of a linked union.

The review noted important subgroups around two major areas: hazard management and active skills. Within the former, the following stand out: active ways (Villalobos-López, 2023), practical training (Kalantidou and Brennan, 2024), things to teach (García et al., 2024), assessment and meditation (Mejía-Rodríguez and Mejía-Leguía, 2021), and community engagement (Rosales-Veitia and Marcano-Montilla, 2024). Regarding active skills, topics such as learning independently (Csizér and Albert, 2024), making choices and solving problems (Solissa et al., 2024), managing time (Valle et al., 2020), adapting to new situations (Gavín et al., 2020) and self-consistency (Correa-Rojas et al., 2024) are discussed.

In summary, the literature review conducted shows an urgent need to include comprehensive risk management strategies as a means of improving active skills in university students. This cooperation between ideas, action, and the social environment not only helps students learn better but also makes future workers more prepared to respond on their own, with care, and in ways that positively change the challenges of their place of residence, their country, or the world.

Materials and methods

Current research uses a practical method, seeking to provide clear solutions to the issue of hazard control in schools by improving the active skills of higher education students. This group of studies, as indicated by Hernández Sampieri et al. (2018), requires working in real-life situations, allowing the creation and use of plans that cover special needs. Meanwhile, the analysis method is qualitative because it thoroughly studies the experiences, ideas, and meanings of students and teachers regarding risk management. This method allows the collection of varied and adaptable data, given the complexity of learning (Cohen and Gómez, 2019).

From the research design, there is a "phenomenological design," focused on seeing how students feel and experience the topic of risks in their academic space. This method seeks to find the main part of the issue through the personal experiences of the participants, following the stages given by Husserl (1998): description of the issue, collection of experiences, analysis of forms and meanings, not allowing prejudices to affect, and final interpretation.

For its part, the scope of the research is explanatory since it seeks to understand the reasons and connections of the event from the point of view of the people affected. Also, it is a study that analyzes a phenomenon at two different times before and after using a detailed plan to manage risks.

In this research, the analysis categories are divided into two basic parts. The first is about problem management, which is divided into several subcategories such as active methods, learning and support, using tools to teach, review and correction, and group work, according to Tamayo et al. (2020). The other part deals with proactive skills understood through the perspective of Zarco and Lloréns (2022) and formed with elements such as the freedom to learn, making good decisions, problem solving, time management, adaptability, and self-confidence. Meanwhile, a deliberately chosen sample will be used to select the participants, as students with significant knowledge of the subject studied were needed.

Thus, we worked with 31 students in a group from the Business Administration program at a university in the La Concordia canton, which conforms to the principles of the phenomenological design used in the study. Regarding data collection methods, semi-structured interviews were used to learn more about the participants' personal stories. Groups also made comparisons and created meanings together on the topic. Finally, a direct observation was conducted, the results of which were recorded in field diaries to identify actions and methods related to how hazards are handled in a school setting.

Data analysis used free, axial, and selective coding, which allowed for the discovery of new groups and forms of meaning. The discussions and focus groups were recorded and transcribed to ensure accurate thematic analysis, while qualitative codes were used in the observations to perform triangulations that provided a complete view of the findings. Internal validity was ensured through various techniques, active support from participants in verifying findings, and a clear explanation of the study's steps. This allowed for reliability, ensuring complete documentation of the process, a logical relationship with previous analysis, and the possibility of applying it to similar situations.

In the ethical field, the rules of known permission, privacy, respect for participants' decisions, use of data only for learning, and clarity in the analysis were applied. The research will be conducted under strict ethical standards, following the guidelines

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proposed by Espinoza and Calva (2020), ensuring that the findings remain clear.

Results

The implementation of a comprehensive risk management approach in the Faculty of Business Administration at a university in La Concordia demonstrated its ability to foster the growth of proactive skills in students. This method, based on active approaches and ongoing faculty training, not only encouraged students to use their knowledge in real-life situations but also to improve skills such as identifying risks, making decisions, communicating well, and leading in different situations. Furthermore, it was clear that a preventive culture must become part of the system, using technology, campaigns to educate students, and collaborative approaches to create professionals who are independent, resilient, and dedicated to addressing risks sensibly.

Thus, the study of interviews and new types revealed vital skills that students value, such as independent learning, adaptability and self-confidence, choice-making, problem-solving, and time management. These skills are connected to the ability to self-regulate, think critically, and have self-confidence when facing uncertain situations.

Figure 1 Characterization of active methodologies applicable to risk management



Note: Prepared based on the results of field diaries and interviews.

From Figure 1, other skills were noted as acting and interconnected with each other: thinking new ideas, managing feelings, analyzing problems well, being resilient in the face of difficulties, and knowing how to act before things happen. The list of important skills showed eight key things: noticing dangers, reacting to problems, leading a team, communicating effectively, using technology, managing mood, acting on one's own initiative, and thinking critically. These actions, although they are about how to do things, are mixed with attitudes that

make them fundamental for responsible behavior within school contexts.

The study identified a series of active approaches to risk management. These include: the study of real-life situations, role-playing games, debates, learning through problems, group projects, workshops with all participants, and the use of new technology. These approaches not only enhance learning but also strengthen independence, good thinking, community work, and the ability to react in real-life or action-related situations. Furthermore, it was observed that these approaches promote active participation, creativity, speaking with others, and problem-solving. They also make it easier to maintain a safe environment in an institution. Therefore, it is suggested that they always be included in the curriculum and that teachers receive extensive training to ensure their proper and long-term use.

The focus group study showed that both students and teachers know the importance of being active in the face of risks, but they also see major problems, such as few supplies, lack of ongoing training, and a weak school environment for prevention.



Figure 2 Exploring the perceptions, experiences, and needs of students and educators

Note: Data obtained from focus groups at the Ecuadorian educational institution.

The complementary word cloud revealed a strong interest in learning tools, digital formats, and ways of working together. Things like combining active skills in lessons, always creating open spaces for teaching, engaging the educational community in an organized manner, and valuing the actions taken were seen as important.

Likewise, the most frequently mentioned competencies include: special classes, student involvement in groups and drills, adding topics about dangers to what is taught, and campaigns to raise awareness among those involved. Also noted was the need to create spaces where young leaders

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can take action, use technology to monitor and discuss risks.

Discussion

The study carried out regarding the implementation of a comprehensive strategy for risk management in the growth of active skills in business students has similarities and novelties compared to previous studies. In terms of methods, it shows that active methods such as simulated exercises and situation analysis, cited by Chiriguayo et al. (2024), work well, but extends their use to the area of risk management. Unlike Boas et al., (2024), who related these methods to minimizing student dropouts and considered that by strengthening real skills and moving away from the comprehensive models that Duque and Puebla (2023) defended through immersive face-to-face actions.

Regarding self-directed skills, the study provides new data, such as the freedom to learn and the ability to change safely, which improve the ideas proposed by Holguín and Rodríguez (2020) on resilience and acting on their own. Furthermore, the data contradict what was stated by Ramos-García et al. (2024) by showing that several of the Ecuadorian students already think that decision-making is a useful skill, which suggests a change in the entire region compared to places like Colombia where the aforementioned authors conducted their research.

Regarding the organizational aspect, the ideas from the study by Cedeño et al. (2024) on linking the way they manage risks with the strategic plan are taken, but an emphasis is added on ongoing teacher training as an important source of improvement. However, the work shows difficulties similar to those noted by Fernández et al. (2021), such as a lack of official courses on problem prevention in one in every twenty institutions reviewed. From an epistemological perspective, the study initiates a paradigm shift by rejecting rapid or solely numerical approaches (such as those of Aetdinova and Nikolaeva, 2019), adding qualitative methods in imaginary places that improve the link between theory and real work. This comprehensive approach contributes to the total development of students by uniting technical growth with evaluative and attitudinal components.

Regarding the educational effect, the findings prove the connection between the use of active methods and an increase in the ability to respond to crises, reducing the feeling of being vulnerable to problems. However, there is a lack of advanced technology, as also mentioned by Boas et al. (2024),

but this work presents real ideas such as educational campaigns, site guides, and greater technological inclusion to strengthen the preventive culture. Finally, the study presents an action plan based on three supports: teacher training, system improvement, and user experience in real-life situations. This idea goes beyond the constraints of a fixed method like the one used by Crespo (2019) and shows real progress when compared to previous work in Europe and Latin America by planning an example that varies by location, adapts, and is based on real data.

Conclusions

Regarding the identification of important proactive skills, the analysis data determined that, according to the students' perspective, proactivity is the most highly valued skill, followed by flexibility, self-confidence, decision-making, problem-solving, and time management.

These skills are vital for meeting the challenges of today's workplace because they give people the opportunity to see what's coming next, act confidently, and prioritize well. Furthermore, supporting these skills requires effective methods that focus on increasing study independence, critical thinking, and being able to adapt to new challenges. Regarding strengthening the institution's culture of prevention, it is said that the method used has greatly helped to create a form of organization where dangers are well controlled. Likewise, the constant teaching of the teaching staff, together with the use of values such as empathy, calm and responsibility has been key to creating a school environment based on trust, cooperation and active prevention.

Furthermore, student participation in awareness-raising activities and real-life exercises has promoted prevention as a common and global concern among all members of the university. Regarding the effect of the comprehensive method on teaching work, it was seen that using a clear risk management plan, within an active vision and in conjunction with instruction from professors, had positive results in the students' professional growth. Specifically, there were significant advances in the ability to foresee and manage problems, as well as in the development of skills for leading teams and making fact-based decisions. Furthermore, the comprehensive method used not only meets the demands of today's work environment but also prepares future employees to lead changes in complicated and rapid situations. In short, the comprehensive risk management plan implemented

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in the School of Business Administration helped improve active skills, build a forward-looking work culture, and provide stronger and more realistic professional development.

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