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From Cases to Cartoons: Building Sustainability Competencies through the 4C Pedagogy

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Abstract

This paper presents the 4C Pedagogy (Context, Content, Case, Cartoon), an innovative visual case framework designed to enhance student engagement, understanding, and applied decision-making in accounting education. While case-based learning is widely recognised for developing critical thinking, traditional text-heavy cases can limit participation, particularly in culturally and linguistically diverse classrooms. The 4C Pedagogy addresses this challenge by integrating authentic business contexts, financial analysis, and decision-focused cases with cartoon-based visual storytelling. Grounded in Dual Coding Theory and Authentic Learning principles, the framework uses real company data, financial statements, and sustainability dilemmas to create immersive learning experiences. Cartoons, developed using simple digital and AI-assisted tools, are often co-created with students, strengthening engagement and ownership of learning. The approach has been implemented across undergraduate and postgraduate modules at the University of Birmingham (UK, Singapore, and Dubai). Findings indicate improved engagement, participation, and conceptual understanding, with students reporting stronger retention and confidence in applying accounting concepts. The 4C Pedagogy offers a practical, scalable, and inclusive approach to case-based teaching.

Keywords: Sustainability Competencies, Innovative Pedagogy, Cartoon Based Cases, Real Life Cases, Engagement