

A CASE-BASED LEARNING APPROACH TO COMMERCIAL BANKING EDUCATION: EVALUATING STUDENT OUTCOMES IN FINANCIAL PRODUCT PITCHING AND MARKETING STRATEGIES

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Article history

Received date : 11-9-2026

Revised date : 12-9-2026

Accepted date : 18-10-2026

Published date : 22-10-2026

To cite this document:

Sahrim, A., Ali, A., Musa, A. H., Mohd Zaid, N. A., Mohd Nasir, H., & Mohd-Aris, A. (2026). A case-based learning approach to commercial banking education: Evaluating student outcomes in financial product pitching and marketing strategies. *International Journal of Accounting, Finance and Business (IJAFB)*, 11 (69), 230 - 236.

Abstract: *This study evaluates the effectiveness of a Case-Based Learning (CBL) approach in enhancing student learning outcomes within a Commercial Banking course (FIN370). Utilizing an authentic assessment framework, student performance (N=17 groups, equivalent to 85 students) was evaluated across five core domains: Entrepreneurial Idea (5%), Value-Driven Decision Making (5%), Communication of Ideas (10%), Marketing Strategy (6%), and Understanding of Financial Product Context (4%). The empirical findings indicate robust overall academic achievement (Mean=26.04/30.00, SD=2.05, 86.8%). Students demonstrated the highest proficiency in Understanding of Financial Product Context (89.0%) and Value-Driven Decision Making (88.2%). Further analysis highlights that persuasive communication skills and strategic marketing execution serve as critical bridges that convert technical banking knowledge into practical, industry-aligned financial pitching. This research offers valuable pedagogical insights for educators seeking to bridge theoretical finance concepts with experiential, industry-ready application.*

Keywords: *Case-Based Learning, Commercial Banking Education, Financial Product Pitching, Marketing Strategy, Value-Driven Decision Making.*

Introduction

The global commercial banking sector is undergoing a profound paradigm shift, accelerated by rapid technological advancements, dynamic regulatory shifts, and an increased emphasis on sustainable, value-based financial intermediation (Azevedo et al., 2023). Consequently, contemporary financial institutions require graduates who possess not only a firm grasp of traditional financial theory but also applied competencies. These essential competencies encompass critical thinking, persuasive presentation of complex financial instruments, and strategic, customer-centric marketing capabilities (Schoemaker & Tetlock, 2024).

Despite these evolving demands, traditional lecture-based instructional methodologies frequently perpetuate a gap between static classroom learning and the fluid demands of the financial services industry (Bhattacharya & Higgins, 2022). To address this pedagogical disconnect, higher education institutions have increasingly adopted Case-Based Learning (CBL) as an authentic learning framework (Doyle et al., 2021). CBL immerses students in real-world market scenarios, challenging them to analyse complex financial problems, synthesize market intelligence, incorporate ethical value frameworks, and formulate persuasive product proposals.

Within the context of the Commercial Banking course (FIN370), an authentic assessment module was implemented to measure student performance in financial product pitching and marketing strategies. The primary objective of this study is to empirically evaluate the learning outcomes of students subjected to this CBL framework. Specifically, this paper aims to: 1) Evaluate student performance across five target domains: Entrepreneurial Idea (5%), Value-Driven Decision Making (5%), Communication of Ideas (10%), Marketing Strategy (6%), and Understanding of Financial Product Context (4%). 2) Analyse the pedagogical efficacy of integrating ethical frameworks and interactive pitching assessments into commercial banking curricula.

Literature Review

Case-Based Learning (CBL) and Experiential Learning Frameworks in Finance Education

Case-Based Learning (CBL) is an inquiry-driven pedagogical model that anchors theoretical finance concepts to practical, real-world application (Herreid et al., 2020). Grounded in Experiential Learning Theory (Kolb, 1984), CBL engages learners in an active cycle of concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation. In financial education—where executive decision-making carries substantial economic and ethical consequences—CBL provides a risk-free environment for students to simulate corporate financial management and commercial banking operations (Mustafa et al., 2023). Immersing students in dynamic, real-world banking scenarios enhances long-term knowledge retention and cultivates Higher-Order Thinking Skills (HOTS) essential for modern commercial banking careers (Hmelo-Silver, 2019; Schoemaker & Tetlock, 2024).

Authentic Assessment, Constructive Alignment, and Employability Competencies

Addressing the persistent disconnect between academic instruction and banking industry expectations requires higher education institutions to implement authentic assessment frameworks (Bhattacharya & Higgins, 2022). Authentic assessment evaluates student mastery through real-world, industry-aligned performance tasks (Mueller, 2005). According to Biggs' (1996) model of Constructive Alignment, effective curriculum design ensures that intended learning outcomes (ILOs), experiential teaching methods, and assessment tasks are systematically aligned. In commercial banking education, authentic pitching assessments challenge students to synthesize core financial theory with critical employability skills, including strategic financial planning, collaborative problem-solving, and professional report writing (Cull, 2024; Hiemstra, 2001; Smouse, 2018). Furthermore, executing collaborative pitching assignments in student groups fosters positive emotional engagement, peer interaction, and sustained academic motivation (Denovan et al., 2020).

Assessment Rubrics, Measurement Validity, and Reliability

Evaluating complex student performances, such as oral financial product pitches and strategic marketing proposals, requires rigorous, objective assessment instruments. Scoring rubrics serve as crucial evaluation tools that operationalize complex performance standards, minimize evaluative subjectivity, and deliver meaningful formative feedback (Jonsson & Svingby, 2007; Panadero & Jonsson, 2013). Well-designed analytic rubrics reduce scoring ambiguity in higher education and foster self-regulated learning among business students (Reddy & Andrade, 2010). To ensure the empirical integrity of rubric-based evaluations, assessment instruments must demonstrate strong construct validity and measurement reliability (Kimberlin & Winterstein, 2008). In accordance with Messick's (1994) unified framework of validity, performance rubrics must comprehensively represent the targeted domain while suppressing construct-irrelevant variance and evaluator bias, thereby ensuring valid inferences regarding student competence (Creswell & Creswell, 2017).

Value-Driven Decision Making and Value-Based Intermediation (VBI)

Aligned with global sustainable finance initiatives and Bank Negara Malaysia's Value-Based Intermediation (VBI) framework, modern commercial banking prioritizes ethical governance, risk management, and broader societal value alongside financial profitability (Bank Negara Malaysia, 2018; Hassan et al., 2022). Finance curricula must therefore transcend conventional profit-maximization paradigms by integrating environmental, social, and governance (ESG) criteria into core learning objectives (Tan & Rahman, 2024). Requiring finance students to incorporate value-driven decision-making metrics into product pitches mandates that they justify financial innovations against multi-stakeholder ethical standards.

Strategic Marketing (4Ps), Student Pitching, and Oral Communication Competencies

The hyper-competitive nature of modern financial services requires commercial banks to leverage strategic marketing for effective product positioning (Zeithaml et al., 2021). Mastery of the traditional 4Ps marketing mix (Product, Price, Place, Promotion) empowers finance students to design tailored banking products for distinct client segments (Kotler & Keller, 2022). Furthermore, oral presentation competence serves as a critical bridge converting technical financial analysis into persuasive commercial proposals (Baker & Hart, 2023). Developing student presentation and pitching competence is paramount in business education, requiring executive posture, linguistic precision, and the ability to defend financial proposals during interactive Q&A defenses (van Ginkel, 2019; Zulkipli & Rahman, 2023).

Methodology and Measurement

This study utilized a quantitative, rubric-based evaluation approach to assess student outcomes following the implementation of a CBL module in the FIN370 Commercial Banking course. The study sample comprised 17 student groups (N=17), representing a total cohort of 85 undergraduate finance students.

Rubric Structure and Domain Weights

In alignment with authentic assessment principles (Mueller, 2005; Jonsson & Svingby, 2007), a comprehensive analytic rubric was structured across five core evaluation domains totalling 30 marks:

- Entrepreneurial Idea (5% / 5 Marks): Assesses creative commercial strategy, initiative, and conceptual innovation.
- Value-Driven Decision Making (5% / 5 Marks): Evaluates the integration of ethical banking frameworks, stakeholder impact, and VBI principles.
- Communication of Ideas (10% / 10 Marks): Measures verbal clarity, technical precision, persuasive delivery, non-verbal cues, and Q&A defence.
- Marketing Strategy (6% / 6 Marks): Evaluates the strategic application of the 4Ps marketing mix, target market segmentation, and positioning.
- Understanding of Financial Product Context (4% / 4 Marks): Measures depth of technical financial knowledge, contextual accuracy, and product alignment.

Assessment of Validity, Reliability, and Constructive Alignment

To establish content and construct validity (Messick, 1994; Kimberlin & Winterstein, 2008), the assessment rubric was expert-validated by a panel of senior academic specialists in finance education (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). Constructive alignment (Biggs, 1996) was maintained by directly linking rubric domains to the intended Course Learning Outcomes (CLOs) of FIN370. To maximize measurement reliability and minimize inter-rater variance, evaluations were conducted using standardized rubric descriptors and benchmark exemplars (Jonsson & Svingby, 2007). Descriptive statistical metrics (mean scores, standard deviations, percentage achievement rates) were processed to analyse domain performance.

Results and Discussion

The empirical findings of the assessment are summarized in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics of Student Performance in FIN370 Assessment (N = 17)

Evaluation Domain	Weightage (%)	Mean Score	Std. Deviation (SD)	Achievement Rate (%)
Entrepreneurial Idea	5.00	4.38	0.53	87.6%
Value-Driven Decision Making	5.00	4.41	0.49	88.2%
Communication of Ideas	10.00	8.54	0.78	85.4%
Marketing Strategy	6.00	5.14	0.58	85.7%
Understanding of Financial Product Context	4.00	3.56	0.39	89.0%
Overall Total Score	30.00	26.04	2.05	86.8%

Source: Compiled from FIN370 Performance Data (2026)

As detailed in Table 1, overall student performance was exceptionally high, attaining an overall mean score of 26.04/30.00 (86.8%).

Analysis

Highest Domain Mastery: The highest performance levels were observed in Understanding of Financial Product Context (89.0%) and Value-Driven Decision Making (88.2%). This demonstrates that the case-based learning approach effectively equipped students with technical financial literacy while instilling a strong framework for ethical decision-making in commercial banking scenarios.

Performance Variance in Pitching: Conversely, Communication of Ideas yielded an achievement rate of 85.4% (Mean=8.54/10, SD=0.78). While still indicating high overall proficiency, the larger standard deviation highlights that non-verbal delivery, executive posture, and spontaneous Q&A defences remain the domains with the highest performance variability among students.

Overall, synthesizing technical financial modelling with strategic marketing and oral presentation produces a comprehensive pedagogical model for modern banking education.

Conclusion

This study confirms that embedding a Case-Based Learning (CBL) framework in commercial banking education significantly elevates student learning outcomes. By integrating quantitative financial concepts with strategic marketing mix planning, ethical decision-making, and verbal presentation skills, students demonstrate strong competency in applying theory to real-world commercial banking challenges. Higher education institutions are encouraged to expand interactive, industry-aligned pitching evaluations across finance curricula to better equip graduates for modern workforce expectations.

Acknowledgements

The authors express their gratitude to Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM) Cawangan Negeri Sembilan for providing institutional support and resources to conduct this research study.

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