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Subjects in the blended learning model design. Theoretical-methodological elements

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Abstract

Curriculum design at different levels explains the intentions of an educational project in its particular context. The subjects design is specified in micro planning, and orients didactics around the questions of the teaching and learning process in the classroom. This research was conducted in order to determine theoretical-methodological elements for the design of courses following the blended learning model. As point of departure, two questions were considered: How others do it? And what do we count on to be able to perform subjects based on this model?

The method used was based on the case study, from a hermeneutic-phenomenological approach. Quantitative and qualitative techniques were also used such as surveys, interviews, and documentary analysis. Results are specified in a proposal that integrates three dimensions: intentions and principles, scope and development, and assessment.

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1. Introduction

Subjects design is a teacher’s task, following Bernal’s proposal (2006:8), it comprises the following elements: “context - students, institution, courses, and competences; objectives and skills; contents; methodology - activities, resources, space-, and assessment.”

The above components can be classified as operational and conceptual units. According to Escudero, Area, Bolivar, Gonzalez, Guarro, Moreno & Santana (1999) and Moreira (2009), those components are reflected in the entire training project. Thus, the models which incorporate ICT by themselves are not learning motivating. In that sense, the blended

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learning model that consists on a mixture of face-to- face sessions and online ones, and the active and participatory processes contribute to the change and innovation; hence, the importance of a coherent and complete planning as the result of theoretical and practical principles that orients teaching.

Along these line, there are diverse studies in university contexts oriented toward pedagogical knowledge and dynamics in virtual environments and blended learning, as well as the challenges involving teachers and students. Among the works, the following have been noted down: Bartolomé (2008), Ferreres (2011), and Gonzalez & Ospina (2013).

The objective of this research is to identify and analyze didactic-organizational elements that underlie the blended learning courses practice, together with the material conditions and teachers, students' and authorities' perspectives, in the context of the Faculty of Social Sciences of the Universidad Nacional de Costa Rica, which allows to determine theoretical-methodological elements for the design of semi face-to- face blended learning courses.

2. Material and method

This case study was carried out based on a hermeneutic-phenomenon conception in order to explore and to analyze the participants 'conditions, procedures, and subjectivities in their own socio-educational reality with a practical purpose and possibilities of generating ideographic interpretations. Qualitative methods are emphasized together with quantitative techniques, starting from a case study taxonomy, descriptive and explanatory: Colás & Buendía (1994), Latorre Del Rincón & Arnal (1996), and Perez (2004).

The object of study is formed by blended learning degree, at public universities, prior to the offer analysis and the scope of the researcher's team, the sample was selected as described in table 1.

Table 1. Informants by research stages

| | |
|---|---|
| I Phase: Analysis of experiences in blended degrees (1) | |
| Qualification (assigned code) | Area of Knowledge |
| Cases in Spain: C-01-1, C-02-1, C-03-1, C-04-1, C-05-1 (2) | Business Studies, Anthropology and Human Evolution, Information and Documentation |
| Cases in Costa Rica: C-06-1 (3) | Pedagogy |
| II Phase: Material conditions diagnosis and teachers' perspectives, students and authorities. | |
| C-01D Faculty of Social Sciences of the Universidad de Costa Rica (4) | Social Sciences |

Notes: (1) All qualifications are regulated by responsible bodies for the management of the University quality in the respective contexts; (2) Mayor coordinators; (3) Administrative authorities, teachers, students; (4) Deanship authoritative School principals, teachers and students.

Structured interviews, surveys, and documentary review were carried out, through data matrix instruments, interview guides, and questionnaires, truly validated by judgement of experts and application to study units, according to rigorous scientific criteria. According to such criteria, the quantitative aspects gathered in the survey were calculated with the Cronbach's coefficient alpha resulting these values: 0.714 for students and 0.719 for teachers. This level of reliability fits within the range of consistent good quality according to related studies. The data collection and systematization was made through electronic systems, quantitative data using spreadsheet functions, frequencies and percentages, opinions with Atlas TI to establish semantic networks, coding and conceptualization, among other primary documents that enable to determine the structural categories.

3. Results

Results were organized according to the process carried out in two stages. In the first one, the practice underlying the implementation of blended learning model experiences was observed. In the second, contextual conditions and teachers, students and authorities' perspectives were described and analyzed with the possibility of designing courses using his model.

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