A GUIDEBOOK FOR SELF-DIRECTED LEARNING

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Abstract

This paper proposes a didactic guidebook that favours the development of the teaching-learning process in the self-directed learning modality. It is a printed material that facilitates communication between the student and the teacher. It represents the not physically present teacher; it allows the student to focus its attention on the most important elements of the information they need to know. That is why the didactic guidebook must be written in a clear and simple way so that it replaces the professor’s explanation at a certain moment of self study of the student. The field to implement this research is the Foreign Language Teaching. In the investigation the researchers used empirical and theoretical methods and techniques, which allowed them to analyse the different tendencies in the development of the foreign language teaching-learning process and the current situation according to their experiences. The theoretical framework takes into account, is related to the learning styles, self-directed learning modality, teaching by modules and the intercourse work.

Keywords: integrated package, mediator elements and self-directed learning modality of study.

1 INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, Higher Education has a big challenge to prepare the new generation for the life style of this century. People need new abilities, knowledge and values to face up the globalization, the fast development of the scientific and technical advances, the international competences in the human resources market, the political differences, and the environmental pollution, among other issues. That is why a new way of learning is needed in the 21rst century.

The autonomy in the students’ learning process is the base for them to develop all the competences demanded in this new era. To learn to learn is an ability the teachers have to develop in their lessons, teaching the students how to learn. There are different modalities of study that need the students learn to learn, such as: self-directed learning and Blended Learning (B-Learning)

Despite that the self-directed learning has been implemented for many times, at the current time it has taken more importance, due to the fast development of the Information and Communication Technology, the mass access to the university programs, the necessity of the professionals to work and study at the same time, the dispersion and distance of the sceneries to have access to different specialties.

The B-Learning is the combination of two modalities: face to face and through mediating medias. In this modality the cognitive independence and the self preparation of the students are very significant. This proposal is equally useful for self-directed learning and B-Learning.

In these two modalities, above mentioned, the mediating character is essential because of the need to optimize the teaching-learning process due to its flexible nature where teachers and students don’t have face to face contact or only at certain moments with the time usually limited. It requires teachers to reconsider all the aspects involved, but specifically the mediator elements, among which there are the information and communication technology. To elaborate a new curriculum that answers to the new demands of the teaching-learning process is a necessity.

This research emerged as a response to some of the dissatisfactions, given from the implementation of a curriculum base on the B-Learning. Such as: lack of mediator elements or the indiscriminate use of the existing ones, time limited, and lack of motivation of students by the self study. Other reasons are that in some areas the students are not interested in being a professional and there is a high rate of noncompletion. This project proposes to establish an integrated training package, headed by a didactic guidebook, which will allow the student to move through the mediator items in an organized way, without abusing on the use of them, or being boring.
However, the access to knowledge depends on the way people can learn. Taking into consideration the students necessities, interest, aspiration, and learning stiles, the educationists have to teach them what is the best modality and method to learn, for them to employ in their private study.

This guidebook has been design for the students to transit for all the media they have in order to have access to knowledge. It means that the students have different media to have access to knowledge, but they do not know how to organize them, which one they have to use first or better for a given content, when they have to do an activity to check their understanding, how to evaluate themselves, etc. without the teacher. The guidebook is the teacher voice that will guide the students through the whole content of the course.

2 METHODOLOGY

2.1 Theoretical framework

The guidebook takes its bases from the self-directed learning, and the B-Learning, because it is not totally self directed by the students, they will have regular meetings with the teachers. It is guided using the ICT, text-books, work-books and any written material or literature. In these modalities there are some aspects that can be controlled by the students such as: scenery, time, learning style, etc.

E-Learning, "which combines face-to-face and virtual teaching" (Coaten, 2003; Marsh 2003 quoted by A.B. Pina, 2004) is very similar to self-directed learning. Because Self-directed Learning does not necessarily mean all learning will take place in isolation from other students and teachers. It can involve various activities and resources, such as self-guided reading, participation in study groups, among others. Effective roles for teachers are also possible like: dialogues with learners, evaluating outcomes, promoting critical thinking, etc. (R. Hiemstra, 1994) (translated by the authors)

B-Learning and Self-directed Learning make that the students be the self-managers of their knowledge; they must acquire their knowledge and develop their skills independently, only with the guidance of the teacher or tutor through mediator elements. The teacher has to be prepared to deal with the diversity, taking into consideration that each student goes through the content and acquires skills and abilities at their own pace as their individual cognitive requirements demand. The teaching media are very important in this modality; but the main role is played the by teacher; who has to find out how to provide a good teaching-learning process under these new conditions.

There are some classic tools the students have for learning like: books, pencils, papers, boards, rulers, calculators, etc. At present there are also the media that the new digital technologies offer. Nowadays the students have access to different modalities, as the written literature and the multimedia one, which can be consulted by internet and are equipped by excellent sound, photographic, and film elements. As there are so many available resources, it is important to select the right pedagogic method and didactic media to achieve the final outcome, (C. Scott, 2015) (translated by the authors)

L.S. Vygotsky (1982) used the term mediation to designate the function of everything that permits to establish a relationship between two persons or with the outside world. The Pedagogical mediation must be a mutual exchange between the student and the teacher that will raise the quality of the teaching-learning process. The mediator elements must be available and of interest for the students. That is why it must be varied, so that the student can select the one they like, depending on their learning style, if it possible under the teacher’s guide. The mediator elements are the ones that permit the students to manage their knowledge. That is why, in order they do a correct use of those elements, the teacher must orient the learners on how and when they are going to use each item.

All the items available for mediation between students and teachers play an important role in the communication, particularly those that are part of the Information and Communication Technology. The ICT allow great interactivity, but by themselves do not constitute the most appropriate means for the acquisition of knowledge and the development of skills. They should be integrated into a teaching-learning context.

For the modalities, the guidebook is fostering, the students need to combine all the media already mentioned, because the conditions not always favour the teacher-student face to face contact. This proposal is a way for pedagogical communication between teachers and students. This is a guidebook structured in such a way that it is similar to the work performed by the teacher in the classroom. It simulates a kind of guided conversation between the teacher and the student. It is organized
according to the different moments of the learning process. It also permits that the students advance at their own pace.

3 RESULTS
For the implementation of the guidebook, first of all, the teachers have to determine all the media available for the students to perform their learning process, in order to create an Integrated Didactic Package,

The Integrated Didactic Package consists on:

- Printed media: workbooks, text books, books or supplementary materials, guides.
- Audio-visual media: videos, audio tape.
- Telematic media: Multimedia of the subject, virtual laboratories, CD with situations, the Web of the platform, etc.

The guidebook of the subject is structured by topics, which is composed by didactic units that respond to objectives of learning well delimited, according to the activities they have to carry out.

The didactic unit is a curricular structure that favours a learning object. Each unit should be logically structured and has the purpose to guide the students for the generalization and integration of knowledge and the development of skills for their professional life. It permits the students to consolidate, expand, integrate and synthesize the contents to enable them the development of useful skills for applying their knowledge independently.

There are some elements to take into consideration in order for the guidebook to be successful.

1. Language: it must be clear, simple, fluid; to use verbs of action, if possible in present tense; the spelling rules, syntactic and the writing style appropriate to the students’ intellectual and psychological level; the writer should put their emotions, its emphasis, as if the guidebook expresses the words of the teacher, with a didactic language; a friendly conversation which favours the personal relationship, to motivate and the interest for the object of study.

2. The internal structure of the contents must have a continuity and clear sequence, since the guidebook must be an ordered set of elements.

3. Inserted questions: to motivate, attract attention and activate prior knowledge.

4. Typography and layout: to provide visual signals that favour the understanding and retention of content; CAPITAL LETTER, bold, italic, underline, font size, framed, shading, margin notes, etc.

5. Illustrations: any graphical means that allows the transmission of visual information; photos, drawings, diagrams. These break the monotony and stimulate the reader.

6. Examples and analogies: these promote understanding to activate the known elements, integrate the new information in a pre-existing framework, and facilitate the assimilation.

7. Conceptual maps: It is a graphical representation of the information; it provides the fast viewing in a hierarchical memory, and provides a fast recognition of key concepts; it serves as a model for the student to develop their own maps, and allows them to explore knowledge and to incorporate the new information.

The didactic unit must have a certain structure in the didactic guidebook:

Objectives: The objectives must express what the students should be able to know, to do, and to perform at the end of the didactic unit; it allows the students to focus their attention on the most important elements that will be the reference criteria for their self-evaluation.

Prerequisites: the previous contents that should have the students to receive the new ones.

Introduction: It should highlight the importance of the teaching unit, the credibility of the information, the relationship of this unit with the rest, the external support that will be required and the limitations. In addition the sections of the unit that are recommended like: self-access centre, textbooks and notebooks Multimedia, Web page, MOODLE platform and other literature that the teacher suggests, because they are related to the content or the specialty. The students should have easy access to all of them.
Contents: to determine it, there is to take into account the objectives, the time, and the basic contents. The didactic unit constitutes a special space to guide the student though the other components of the training package.

Activities: They are interrelated within the content and allow students to apply the contents to the professional reality; therefore, they constitute a way to promote the investigative component. It is important that the activities promote the interdisciplinary component too.

The activities should be:

- Significant: favouring the development of logical thinking, the capacity for analysis and deduction;
- Variety: in terms of the type of problems and forms of presentation;
- Made within contexts close to students;
- Suggestive, so that the students may arise questions;
- Carriers of problems that offer various solution strategies and motivate new requests.

Summary: This is a short version of learning content, presenting the key concepts of the topic.

Self-evaluation exercises: They allow students to check the quality of their learning, to develop their critical spirit and self-critical and measure their progress since the moment they began to study.

The final independent activity: at the end of each unit there is an activity that integrates all the contents received.

Information about the next topic: This moment is very important because it motivates the student towards the new content that will be addressed in the next didactic unit.

Glossary: The glossary should contain all the most important concepts and categories that have been defined along the unit.

References: It should include all the literature used in the preparation of the teaching unit.

Bibliography: It specifies the readings that are recommended, as well as those complementary bibliographies that can help the student to reinforce their knowledge.

Solutions to the self assessment exercises: in this way the students verify the solutions given by them. The inclusions of answers or explanatory solutions to all exercises are also suggested. Finally, they are going to evaluate themselves and they can repeat the didactic unit until they get a satisfactory result in their self-evaluation.

Support materials: software, Internet resources, etc.

4 CONCLUSIONS

This guidebook is only a proposal that is considered the centre of all mediator items between the teacher and students. Through this media the teacher can communicate with the student even if they are not in the same scenery.

This guidebook constitutes a tool for the students' transit through the whole Integrate Package that allows them to manage their own knowledge. At the same time it makes possible that the students use the right media to learn to learn, without discriminating any of them.

REFERENCES


