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Pilot Scheme of Assessment in E-learning

Dra. Estela Núñez Barriopedro
Profesora Área Comercialización e Investigación de Mercados

Dr. Pedro Cuesta Valiño
Profesor Área Comercialización e Investigación de Mercados

Dra. Azucena Penelas Leguía
Profesor Área Comercialización e Investigación de Mercados
Universidad de Alcalá
Spain

Athens Institute for Education and Research
8 Valaoritou Street, Kolonaki, 10671 Athens, Greece
Tel: + 30 210 3634210 Fax: + 30 210 3634209
Email: info@atiner.gr URL: www.atiner.gr
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Pilot scheme of assessment in e-learning

Dra. Estela Núñez Barriopedro
Profesora Área Comercialización e Investigación de Mercados
Universidad de Alcalá
España

Pedro Cuesta Valiño
Profesor Área Comercialización e Investigación de Mercados
Universidad de Alcalá
España

Azucena Penelas Leguía
Profesor Área Comercialización e Investigación de Mercados
Universidad de Alcalá
España

Abstract

This paper builds on pilot research into Alcalá University in the area of marketing and market research of the degree of Management Business Administration. The aim of this paper is to analyze how we can make the most benefit of virtual platform in the continuous assessment by matter of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA). We try to contribute to the progression of a culture based on teamwork and cooperation to facilitate the coordination of education and the new technologies help to improve. It try to make the most of opportunities are offered by this tool. We can assert that the virtual platform can be applied as attendance learning as e-learning. It is a great tool that improves the learning process and helps the continuous assessment. This tool allows motivation for the student to work inside and outside the classroom.

Keywords: Didactical Innovation. Didactical virtual platform. eLearning. Assessment. Didactical teamwork. ICT.
Acknowledgements:
Contact Information of Corresponding author: estela.nunezb@uah.es

The new educational paradigm associated with the implementation of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA), it had been signed in Bologna on 1999, is the acquisition of skills. It is based on principles of quality, mobility, diversity and competitiveness. To achieve these principles, a convergence process has been designed for educational structures, eliminating existing barriers (Gómez, Puig, Quirós, y Viaño, 2004). In Spain, this convergence process has been realized by means of a university system improvement plan, parting from three key principles:

- Redesigning degrees according to professional profiles, considering the needs of the job market.
- Transferring the program of contents and goals to the competences program based on leaning achievements.
- Developing the traditional teaching methods towards a teaching scheme based on learning, in which the student learns how to lean and the teacher teaches the student how to learn.

The ECTS credits system introduced some changes in ways to approach teaching in comparison to the traditional system.

Classrooms out-site work is part of student work, who must perform more tasks and assignments under the guidance of their teacher. In turn, this implies that continuous evaluation will be promoted; therefore the grade on the exam will only be a part of the final grade.

On the other hand, our current technological environment is in constant evolution. We even have commonly known and accepted terms of research and teaching as “Information and Communication Technologies (ICT)”, “Web 3.0” and “E-learning”.

The main purpose of ICTs in the schoolroom is to facilitate learning (Núñez , 2010). They are a means to improve the teaching/learning process and they help improve the communication process, whether on-site or not.

Web 3.0 is the most common name for Internet since its evolution allowed the dynamization of Web sites in which the user's position changes from a passive to an active position and thus actively contributes to the construction of virtual spaces (Núñez, & Vaca, 2012).

E-Learning (Cabero, 2006) refers to the tuition system used on-line as the information distribution technology, which can be open (Internet) or closed (Intranet). It is also known as Web learning, tele-education, virtual learning, etc.

Meanwhile, b-Learning is the pedagogical paradigm that tries to combine on-site education and e-learning or a virtual teaching method, benefiting from both teaching opportunities that could arise from any didactic resource available on the Internet. This way we could obtain a combined system by which the advantages of both formats, on-site and telematic, are exploited (Bartolomé, 2004).

This technological evolution forces the faculty to develop a constant update and recycling process, since the students usually control this sort of tools, which offer numerous advantages in terms of communication, teaching and research.

As the UNESCO (2008) states, Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) can help students develop the necessary competences to become:

- capable of using information technologies;
- information finders, analyzers and evaluators;
- problem-solvers and decision makers;
- creative and efficient users of productivity tools;
- communicators, collaborators, publishers and producers; and

- informed, responsible citizens that are capable of contributing to society at large.

Being competent means having a successful performance in the workplace and in everyday life, given that powers are given by skills, behaviors, knowledge, capacity and attitudes that support the proper performance of our duties in all areas (Criado and Moreno, 2009).

Le Boterf (2000) and Cano (2008) remind us that the center of competence is the subject-learner who builds competence from the sequence of learning activities that mobilize multiple expertise knowledge; thus, evaluation is an opportunity to promote learning.

The adaptation to this new university system forces a change on the traditional teaching and learning dynamics, based on a lecture delivered by the professor in which the students have a passive participation, simply limited to listening and taking notes. This is replaced by a system in which students have an increasingly active role, assuming responsibilities and becoming the true protagonists of their own learning (Whitehead, 2008), thus becoming prepared for the technological, social and professional changes required by the job market, as pointed out by numerous authors (De Juan, González, Parra, Kanther, & Sarabia, 2008). This way, they will develop competences that will help them cope with a changing, competitive and complex job environment (Hunt, Eagle, & Kitchen, 2004).

2 Objetives

In this new educational paradigm is convenient to find ways for coordinating and innovating in e-assessment to:

- The use of the Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) that can help and complement the lectures, attendance learning and e-learning.
- Encourage students to work inside and outside the classroom.
- Give students proper directions on how to carry out their assignments.
- Provide teachers with reliable continuous evaluation mechanisms.

3 Methodology

This paper is a pilot research of the methodology and teaching innovation resources by means of ICT applied to the Marketing Strategies class during the 2011/2012 year at the University of Alcalá. This class is part of the curricula of the third course of the Degree in Business Administration. This teaching innovation project has been applied for the first time to this group and in the aforementioned subject to conduct a "pilot experience" to gradually test (in this first phase - year) the effectiveness of the use of these new tools, like virtual platforms, and, more specifically, the Blackboard which will be explained in depth in the next section.

4 Results & discussion.

Below, we have performed a descriptive analysis on how we can exploit the advantages offered by these new technologies in the teaching and learning process, including continuous assessment by means of the use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) specifically on-line platforms, as the "Blackboard", "Moodle" or others.

One of the greatest advantages of virtual platforms is that they allow the optimization of the work of the university community without having to be physically in one specific place, as we will see in our pilot experience.

Virtual platforms offer the possibility of providing any document that the faculty deems necessary for the development of the subject on-line, such as the teaching guide, the list of assignments, templates on procedures in the development of the practicum, presentations, etc. Figure 1 shows an example of the class materials that can be made available to the students through the platform.

The projects, activities, practicum and the forums in which the students participate do not require to be worked on at an individual level, since they can now present them collaboratively along with the rest of their colleagues.

These platforms offer the possibility of proposing differing types of practice, enabling the distinction between obligatory and recommended assignments, the former would count towards the grade and the latter would not, but would be appropriate for students who voluntarily want to deepen their knowledge on the subject. Both result in an increase of knowledge.

By means of the assessment criteria we can show the students what aspects will be valued in the teaching/learning process and what percentage of their final grade corresponds to each of the assignments (reading, forums, cases, exercises, tests). All of which provides the following advantages:

- Transparency in the assessment of our students, because the students know beforehand the value of each of their assignments in their continuous assessment and how things should be worked on to obtain the necessary competences for the class.
- Student self-assessment and self-learning management.

It is essential to establish a schedule at the beginning of the class, which should be visible to all students through the platform. This schedule should indicate the relation of the contents, organized by topics, and the dates in which these issues will be taught and the deadlines for the delivery of the assignments, practice, forums, which the student must complete during their continuous assessment.

The schedule allows professors and students alike to organize their teaching/learning process in a completely responsible manner and promotes the students' self-assessment in the process.

Feedback is essential for students to become aware if they are working correctly and in what areas the students should improve in, which is why it's important for the assessment to go beyond simple grading, providing arguments for the grade. The idea is to consider the assessment as part of the learning process which allows for the emancipation of the students by means of an autonomous and collaborative learning that stimulates improvement processes.

These platforms, and specifically the adobeconnect resource, enable us to implement virtual tutoring sessions with our students. The date and time is set via e-mail and the only tool required would be a Webcam if we want to have visual contact with the student or if we want the student to see us to make the most of non-verbal communication. Verbal communication through this resource can be performed

orally, with headphones and a microphone, or in writing through the chat included in this platform.

Now that we have analyzed the opportunities offered by this eLearning tool, we will analyze how to make the most of it in b-learning:

- Before on-site classes:

The material that we publish on the platform can be used to prepare on-site sessions. At the beginning of a subject, the teaching guide can be provided along with the detail of the competences, contents, schedule, assessment criteria and bibliography that will be used throughout the subject's classes.

Throughout the year and before the beginning of a class, we can upload videos and documentation that must be studied before beginning the classes. We can also propose activities or the students' participation in a forum.

- During on-site classes:

As a supplement to lectures it is especially useful to pose doubts which can be discussed on the forums or the articles proposed by the professor. It can also be used to make exams and/or exercises during teaching hours, although in this case it would be necessary for each student to have access to a computer.

- After on-site classes:

It allows the possibility of performing self-assessment activities, the development of exercises and to deepen the knowledge of our subject by reading the proposed articles. It can also be used to pass class notes to the students, presentations or videos for those students seeking to strengthen their learning experience or deepen their knowledge on the matter.

We can innovate asking our students to self-assess their learning of certain contents; we can ask them to reflect and to make some sort of co-assessment on a team activity that has been developed collaboratively. These practices promote critical and reflexive learning.

These platforms even offer the possibility of making telematic exams, by means of a questionnaire manager which allows us to take exams through our Web site. This function offers a range of possibilities allowing us to select the one we want for each exam. For example, we can establish a global time for the exam or for each question, we can allow them to repeat the exam a certain number of times or as many as the students want, we can pose test or essay questions - the former would allow for an immediate grading -, we can insert tables, graphs, videos, etc. in the exams and in the responses, we can decide for the exam to begin at a given time and end whenever we choose.

These virtual exams do not intend to replace on-site exams, but they may serve as a supplement and provide students with the possibility of making practice exams that can be done at home or at the university's IT room. As we have seen above, the possibilities are endless and students are enthusiastic about taking exams at home.

5 Conclusions

The use of these new didactic resources offered by Web 3.0 give us the opportunity of improving our teaching activity within and outside our classes, through telematic services and virtual platforms. If we add this new range of possibilities to the increasing interest for new technologies and cyberspace in our

youth, the reasons why we should be interested in the support offered by these resources multiply.

Moreover, the professors need to develop new competences too in order to adapt to the changes in the teaching environment and to develop the new functions of the educational worlds and what society demands of them. Among which we highlight:

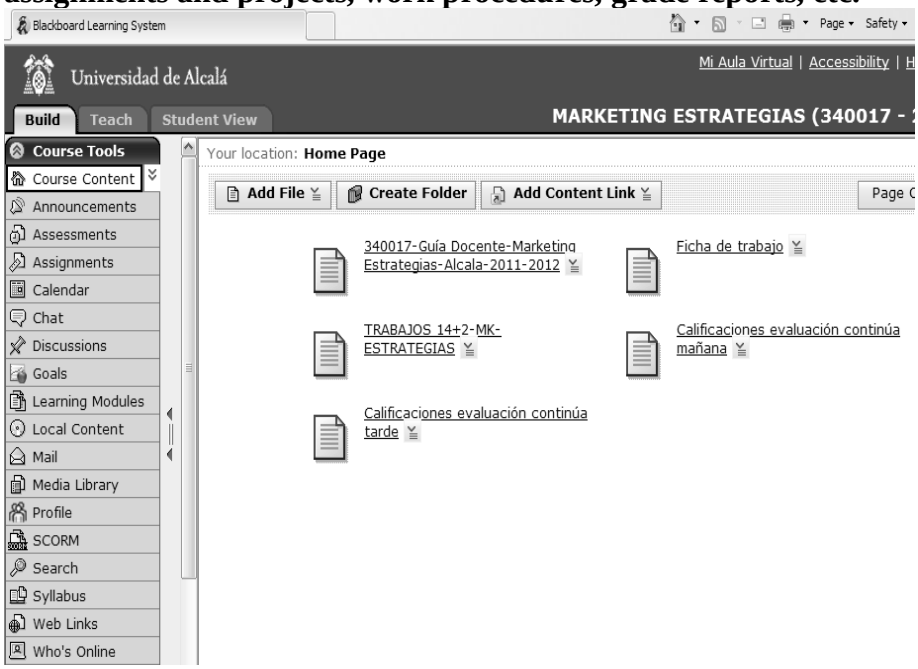
- ICT instrumental competences to use software and hardware.
- Didactic technological competences for the integration of ICTs in the classroom.
- Competences for virtual teaching.
- Socio-cultural competences so that the students are educated for the contemporary society.
- Communication competences through ICTs in virtual spaces and networks.

Therefore, both professors and students must change their traditional roles. (Carrasco, 2004).

The shift of the educational paradigm implies a profound change in many of the tools, elements and concepts that make up the system (Criado, 2010).

It is essential for the universities to become aware of the need to adapt their teaching profiles, designing new teaching methodologies, and to know and apply new teaching resources or even new learning strategies. The use of all this teaching innovation should be appropriately coordinated at the universities to guarantee their efficiency in the different disciplines and at different educational levels.

Figure 1. The UAH platform as a tool to provide the teaching guide, the list of assignments and projects, work procedures, grade reports, etc.



Source: Own elaboration.

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