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THE MODALITIES OF DISTANCE EDUCATION: ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES

LAS MODALIDADES DE EDUCACIÓN A DISTANCIA: VENTAJAS Y DESVENTAJAS

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ABSTRACT

The modality of distance studies has been developing in the entire world with diverse results. It constitutes a form of achieving a bigger access, very massive and also allow that so much young as adults that cannot attend present classes of superior studies and other overcoming forms for its labor linking, can continue; however it is required certain condition from the technical point of view as of attitudes and aptitudes on the part of those that are welcomed especially to this study form.

Keywords:

Distance education, virtuality, virtual classrooms.

RESUMEN

La modalidad de estudios a distancia se ha venido desarrollando en todo el mundo con diversos resultados, constituye una forma de lograr una mayor masividad de acceso y también para permitir que tanto jóvenes como adultos que por su vinculación laboral no puedan asistir a clases presenciales puedan continuar estudios superiores y otras formas de superación; sin embargo se requiere determinadas condiciones tanto desde el punto de vista técnico como de actitudes y aptitudes por parte de los que se acogen a esta forma de estudio en especial en la forma virtual.

Palabras clave:

Educación a distancia, virtualidad, aulas virtuales.

INTRODUCTION

The pandemic of Coronavirus that affects the world, of which Ecuador is not exempt, forces people to the distancing for not being exposed to the infection and much less to participate in massive activities, what caused the paralization of the present classes, giving place to that the institutions of superior education (IES) had to appeal to the process of teaching learning in which was not necessary the physical presence of educational and students in the university facilities and this way to contribute to avoid the massive infection.

The solution was centered in the application of the virtual education or also on-line call, which is based on the development of formation programs that have as teaching scenario and learning the ciberespase, without an encounter, is given face to face between the professor and the student". (Colombia. Ministry of National Education, 2009)

The change of the present modality to the virtual, given the speed of the propagation of the pandemic, didn't allow to the Ecuadorian IES, to carry out an elaboration process and application of a strategy with enough time like to create all the necessary conditions for it. On the contrary most had to take quick steps for the change of modality.

Some IES like it is the case of the Autonomous Regional University of The Andes (UNIANDÉS) that reacted immediately and they began to develop training courses to penetrate so much to educational as to students in the virtual modality. To the first, the topics were directed to dominate the different tools like they are the Microsoft Teams, Zoom, among others; as well as to deepen in the use of the virtual studies of learning (EVA), the one that one already came using for the realization of frequent evaluations and other educational activities.

The creation of the virtual classrooms and to guarantee the technological support to be able to carry out the virtual classes, it was a challenge that had to assume the University, what caused some difficulties and demotivation; nevertheless, they continued advancing and giving innovative answers to be able to eliminate the reefs that were presented.

The specialized literature without stopping to recognize the advantages of the virtual education, alerts of the inconveniences that has for the population's segments, as well as of the demands that has this modality for the students, the one that claims of a great responsibility on the part of these before the activities to those that is summoned, the overcoming; as well as the acquisition of methods of studies.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The investigation leaves of the analysis and synthesis of the existent bibliography on the virtual education or to distance, the technologies of the information and the communications in those that it is sustained and the digital tools more used in this type of education modality.

On the other hand, the results of the surveys were valued carried out the students of the Headquarters UNIANDÉS Babahoyo on their participation in the virtual classrooms and the most effective pedagogic and didactic methods.

The fundamental tasks developed during the investigation were the following ones:

1. analysis of the specialized literature on the education employment at distance or virtual in the superior education to conform a theoretical general mark of this study modality.
2. study diagnosis, by means of interviews and surveys, of the application of the virtual education in the superior education.
3. identify the advantages and disadvantages of the modality of virtual education and the possible actions to perfect the methods used in the teaching-learning process.

The theoretical generals methods used in the investigation were the logical-historical analysis, the induction and the deduction, the analysis and the synthesis. As for the empiric methods we use the focus of systems, the documental analysis and monographic, and the interview, applying different statisticians for the collection, analysis and interpretation of the information.

The author considers that, as carried out scientific investigation, the topic is of vital importance in the current and future moment, once overcome the pandemic for the Ecuadorian IES. Their boarding and advance instrumental, they will cooperate to improve the development of the classes in the virtualidad.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The antecedents of the education from distance or virtual, go back at the times in that it was guided to the interested in studying a discipline by means of the traditional mail, in that way, they were facilitated the themes and contents to apprehend; as well as the questionnaires to respond to demonstrate the acquired knowledge, that undertook people and institutions in Europe and United States starting from 1840" (Yong, et to the., 2017, p. 87). However, previous to that date, an announcement of a calligraphy professor appears in the Gazette of Boston (Caleb Philipps), proposing a course through the reading of texts

and the realization of what today would call tutorships for correspondence.

Nevertheless, in function of the definition that today one has from education from distance, it is considered that it was South Africa, in 1940, the first one in orchestrating the education from distance, with the creation of one university with that study modality.

With posteriority in diverse countries of Europe, among them England, the television was used like massive mean of communication for the teaching. By the middle of the XX century, it begins to be developed a new form that it will evolve with different shades: the education from distance. In the consideration of Yong & Bedoya (2016), soon after the arrival of the technological revolution -and with it, the new technologies-, the education from distance evolved and brought new forms of teaching and learning. It arose the term then 'virtual education' whose pedagogic conception leans on in the TIC". (p. 2)

With posteriority, universities will arise completely dedicated to the virtual modality in all the regions of the world.

In the Republic of the Ecuador, the education from distance begins starting from 1962, by initiative of the Catholic Church, the one that believes Popular Radiophonic Schools of the Ecuador (ERPE)" (Álvarez, 2005, p.28) and with posteriority in 1976 by initiative of the Siblings Maristas the University of Loja, Open Modality, is believed to assist in the profesionalization of the educational ones in service"; to those that will continue the initiatives of the Ecuadorian State and of the private sector. In the case of the State, an important point in the development of the education from distance was the creation in 1989 of the National Council of Development (CONADE) to guarantee the access of people in the mark of the popular education.

On the other hand, the Autonomous Regional University of the Andes (UNIANDES) develops starting from 1998 their conception on the Education from distance, developing the semipresential modality on the weekends, starting from the employment of a great variety of means and technologies of advanced" (Álvarez, 2005, p.36), among them the denominated platform Half-closes Virtual of Learning (EVA), the one that became extensive with posteriority to the present classes (from Monday to Friday), to stimulate the learning of the students, to carry out for these learning tasks and the frequent evaluations.

Expressions of the education from distance and its conceptualization

There is a substantial difference among the manifestations from the education from distance, in function of the

pedagogic modalities: the semipresential, the free one and the virtual one.

The semipresential is that in the one the students have sporadic contacts (weekly, biweekly; etc.) with their educational ones in the classroom, to receive the orientations that they should study starting from noticing the invariants of the knowledge, the essential aspects to apprehend in the guided bibliography and to clear up the doubts and restlessness on that studied in an autonomous way. In some universities surrenders study guides with a synthesis of the knowledge and the bibliography and paginated of this to deepen in the knowledge of each topic.

In general, it is developed in a self taught way, the student doesn't have contact with the educational ones during the development from the previous period to the evaluations. They carries out an initial contact in which receives an initial orientation, it is given a study guide where the bibliography appears and paginated to consult and the evaluation dates. Only it is presented again to carry out the evaluations in the classrooms of the institution of superior education. In most of the cases there is not obligatory of registering all the subjects of an academic period, as neither pressure as for conquering them at one certain time; what is a total flexibility in the studies and the freedom of determining the time of termination of these for the student. This study method requires of a lot of discipline, organization and zeal, since the absence of an interaction with the educational ones can cause, before not overcome doubts or frustrations, the abandonment of the career.

Those that assume this study modality, in general are mature people that, for their work, the distances of their housing or personal problems were not able to neither they can participate in other educational offers; but they are people with responsibility towards their life and their cultural development. In general, it is not very accepted for young and much less by those that present difficulties and lagoons in their academic formation that possess little reasoning level, they don't have study methods and little interest to learn.

As for the virtual education, as their name it indicates it, the whole process is given through the technologies of the information and the communications (TIC), especially using the internet and the tools that allow as much the sound as the video in a synchronous way (Microsoft Teams, Zoom, etc.) and asynchronous as the call virtual space of learning (EVA); the cloud (OneDrive) and others online. It demands it of a high dose of responsibility as for the selfstudy and, of discipline as for the pursuit to the organization of the process.

The selection of an or another responds more to the disposition of time with which is counted to study and to certain inclination of the students unless responsible for their overcoming that for reasons that they have to do with the pedagogic method of study.

For Saints (2018), the virtual education is considered as a teaching model and learning online in which all the processes are made starting from the available technological resources, among them Internet and the different virtual tools that facilitate the transmission of contents”.

Carrera (2019), called it as Virtual Communities of Learning, he considers the virtual education with base in technological tools, it facilitates the exchange of knowledge with the support of the educational one and through a virtual platform where it is shared approaches and contributions, propitiating the colaborative work”.

Falcon Villaverde (2003), precise that this new modality has like sustenance a technological system of bidirectional communication that substitutes the personal interaction in professor's student classroom like preferable mean of teaching, for the systematic and combined action of diverse didactic resources and the support of a tutorial organization that propitiate the student's autonomous learning”. (p. 56)

For Carrera (2020), it is an inclusive educational system to favor the responsible, free character and colaborative of the student's learning”. Referring to the virtual education, Foundation Universia (2017), refers that this modality is secured mainly in the internet tools. It supposes the use and exchange of information among educational and students in a virtual way, either by mail electronic or platforms, specially created for such thing. Through this platforms, the students can revise and to discharge the class materials, to go up works or assignments and even to work in a colaborative way with their class partners. The main characteristic of this formation type is that one works in an asynchronous way; that is to say, the student should not coincide in time neither virtual space with the educational one or partners for the development of his activities”.

In later paragraphs the own precise UNIVERSIA that in the case of the education online this taking like base the virtual education, but he/she adds him an ingredient: the real time. Through this element, the student is able to attend live classes or study meetings where it coincides with his class partners. To achieve this, the educational institution should have some technological platform that allows its educational and students to carry out all these tasks.”

Referring to the education from distance characteristics Bournissen (2017), points out that the open learning refers

to the opening as for that the taking of decisions on the learning relapses in the same student, being the responsible one and, consequently, affecting to all the aspects of the learning. The professor becomes a mediator that regulates the teaching process and the interaction, establishing the goals and regulating the contents. He favors the cooperation of the group, and consequently, the understanding, that which sensitizes the process a lot, diminishing any degree of anxiety considerably”. (p. 26)

“The formation proposal at precise distance of a complex administrative structure that negotiates and control the activity of the whole system” (Álvarez, 2005, p.67) The virtuality has different applications, the most general is that in the one that the student consents to the educational platform in the moment that estimates this way and the times in the week that can make it, implies that the system in general and, mainly in the relative thing to the evaluations, has a great flexibility so that the students can advance to the rhythm that each one determines.

Other virtual models establish sessions of classes in fixed schedules of the platform, those which, although they are recorded, even with the later interventions to the dissertation of the educational, so much of the students as the answers or the own professor's explanations; they force the students to be adjusted to this schedule to be able to participate in the debates that take place in this sessions. Of course that besides the synchronous activities, the student that didn't attend the original class has the possibility to clarify her doubts in the asynchronous activities that take place for what has been given in calling virtual environment of learning (EVA).

As a result of the investigative process developed by the author, we can say that opposing positions exist as for existent consideration on the education from distance, in all their modalities. From positions in against, going to see some advantages; until those that consider that more than the future is already the ideal modality in the formation of the students.

In the approach of Meneses (2017), to make the decision of studying virtual or present, it requires of a sensible reflection, to identify the abilities, defects and each person's habits. If you are a venturesome, creative person, of a high pleasure for the technology and that wants to take their studies and work on the whole, the virtual study can be the most suitable thing”. Pointing out the own author in the following paragraph: “If on the contrary, you enjoy to create emotional bonds, you don't usually concentrate in front of a computer with a single topic, you like to share opinions and to open space for debates in a student

atmosphere, the best thing will be to take the present education”.

When referring to the education from distance or virtual, Álvarez Sparrow hawks (2005), points out it requires of a more rigorous educational management, what is identified with the quality of the century, in those that prevail the self-management, the individual's selfdevelopment and of their environment”. (p.18)

The education from distance brings harnessed actions that traditionally are not carried out in the present teaching, when remaining separate physically of the students, the educational ones have the additional task of increasing the connection and the dialogue with them, as well as of constantly strengthening the feeling of ownership to an academic community”. (León, 2020)

The above-mentioned implies a bigger attention to the students for what the educational will have schedules in those that they will assist (in a supervised environment) and to have other resources that reinforce the learning and complementary tools of support for the student” (León, 2020).

They are countless the roads that has to use the educational, in such a sense, the communication channels with the students could be chosen and authorized by each educational, but only the institution of interaction type (to dialogue and turn with their students through a platform) will facilitate that the teachers identify emotions and difficulties in the learning”. (León, 2020)

Álvarez Gavilánez (2005), besides considering that the education from distance has legitimated its space in the contemporary tendencies of the education world” (p. 55) y therefore necessary its development in its diverse variants, considered that it is guided in its majority to mature people and the permanent education, that is to say that they are the economically active population's part and they complete a productive function” (p.13), specifying later on, in a page, who participate, they make because they want and they feel the necessity to be formed and to learn with responsibility” (p.53) With the development of the TIC and of the tools created to the effect, its peak has continued growing.

In occasions it is to make comparisons between the traditional pattern and the education from distance as for the level of effectiveness of the learning on the part of the students and the general problem of the process, as well as the aspects related with the bias and preparation that has the students, the preparation of the educational ones and the technological support; for what such an analysis requires of valuing the different positions in this respect.

Carrera is among those that consider as positive the education from distance (2020), the one that, starting from the experiences transmitted by managers, it considers that the professionals that have studied a career in modality at distance develop several abilities and qualities that are valued by the recruiters of personal of national and international companies”.

Álvarez Gavilánez (2005) points out that from a perspective of the institutional process, that modality allows to transmit information of cognitive character and formative messages, by means of non traditional means and not bounded to a specific enclosure. The technology of advanced relaxes in that aspect” (p. 5). Sexton (2006), expressed that the biggest benefit that provides the education from distance, is having the possibility to use the technology of the calculation and the communications for, in an efficient form, to be able to educate and to put to the service of the common of people the great heap of information that today exists and to make comparisons, to precise followed line that the traditional education of present character has the obvious limitation that should be adjusted to the moment when who emits the message and who receives it, are in the same place”. The education from distance, when using media, efficiently it can obviate this limitation by means of the employment of means that facilitate the communication when involved people are in places and different times.

Falcon Villaverde (2013), reinforces the idea that the education from distance when using the TIC puts to disposition a great quantity of information that can be consulted from any place and in any moment”. (p. 53)

On the other hand, Álvarez Gavilánez (2005), adds that the education from distance conditions that the learning is really a personal act, clerk of the effort, will and zeal of each participant fortifier of its selfevaluation and of its selfdevelopment”. (p. 13)

Those that don't come in the education from distance negative aspects as it is the case of the educational Humanantes, Fernández & Jiménez (2019), they consider that the use of the institutional virtual classrooms is in some cases, to be an imposed task and not necessarily elected for the students”.

Juca (2016), alerts that, without a knowledge on the means in the teaching like technical characteristics, the languages and forms of representation of the information, the available software, the use and curricular integration of these means, the faculty is not under conditions of developing practical pedagogic of quality with these technologies”.

Although it is said that the virtual education allows to arrive to the most remote places, of difficult access and even to less favored segments, it is not in an absolute way, since in those remote places in general don't have internet covering and in occasions neither phone, on the other hand, all the people of the referred populational segments not possess given computers the cost that its acquisition and internet payment implies.

Saints (2018), values as negative the educational organization and the time that it implies for the student. "One of the big challenges faced by the students when they choose the education from distance it is the one of completing the lective load of the course online. As it is possible to study the day and the hour that each one wants, many people leave everything for the final one and they don't study".

Another of the difficulties that present the education programs from distance, is given by lack of pedagogic preparation and didactics of the educational ones in the form of taking the teaching-learning process in each one of them. In certain measure, the use of the NTIC like an end in itself and as means of the student's development has given place to experiences of application of these technologies sustained in the traditional pedagogy, those that have been very not very effective". (Falcon Villaverde, 2013, p. 61)

On the other hand, the traditional formation that is payee the educational and the non realization of courses that locate it, so much from the technological point of view as academic in the education from distance, in the new virtual modality, it affects the quality of the process of teaching learning" (García, 2014). That which is increased more if the educational one acted in the present education.

It is for it that the author considers very important the valuation that in this respect ago the Dr. Gustavo Álvarez Gavilánez (2005), in this respect, he refers that it is indispensable that the technological innovation is accompanied of pedagogic innovation for that which is necessary to incorporate the strictly technical changes in the mark of designed projects and based from the field of knowledge of the education and with the competition of the actors of the processes, especially the educational body" (pp. 128-129). Pointing out next, that what demands plans didactic concretes supported in technological supports that promote the unfolding of the reflection beyond the speech, the analysis, the proposition and the execution like processes for the significance of the learning."

But so that the virtual education can really fasten in the youths coming from the educational system that it precedes to the University, it is necessary that levels have taken

a teaching-learning process that has like base the reasoning, where they acquire the domain of study methods, as well as the control of the learning.

They are the educational ones those that make reality the possibility to use the technology in function of the processes of teaching-learning, that which takes to the necessity of forming them, so much in the domain of the TIC and of the whole range of virtual tools, as well as the pedagogic and didactic methods that requires this study modality. In function of it, UNIANDES began the pass process to the system of virtual education creating the organizational conditions and of sensitization about the necessity of assuming the education from distance in its virtual modality; for then to proceed to the realization of courses and trainings to the professors on the programs, platforms and tools that would be used once the virtual classrooms were created.

Although the virtual education takes advantage of the whole existent flow of knowledge in internet, with independence of the existence of material antiscientific and anti-academic, as well as the call virtual libraries, the problem is that the students, in general, they are not given to the reading of texts and books, for that much less they will read the materials to those that you can consent by means of the computer.

All the subjects demand of the student, the dedication in the study, many of them also require a bigger analysis level and understanding for their learning, what implies the necessity of the explanation of the students' doubts with their educational ones, question that one cannot always make, either for the little readiness of time on the part of the student or because the professor-tutor doesn't neither have it; amen that becomes very difficult to make it mainly in the virtual classes when the virtual classroom bill with 60 or more students. For it is then, the use of electronic mail, the EVA and other feasible communication ways of using.

The necessity of texts and support materials in the autopreparation of the students of the virtual education are indispensable so that they can advance in the studies and mainly for the autopreparation activities. Inside these materials, they are the study guides on the objective and content of each subject, as well as system of questions, of reasoning that allows to reinforce the acquired knowledge. Lastly, the evaluation system and their chronogram.

An important aspect that allows some electronic tools, like it is the case of the Microsoft Teams, it is the possibility to record the classes developed in videoconference, that which allows the student the power to consent if the day in that it was imparted could not participate and, on the

other hand, the possibility to consent to her so many times considers necessary, until being able to understand and to assimilate the contents imparted by the educational one. But it also favors the feedback to the educational one on that imparted, the questions and the students' doubts, that which allows to deepen in the following class in the aspects that require it or to refer to an aspect that don't develop for involuntary forgetfulness.

Achieving the preparation of the students by means of leveling courses as regards, the virtual tools to use, will help to the best acting from the students when beginning the academic calendar.

Aspects that should keep in mind by the student:

"To plan the schedules for the classes and the overcoming, in this last one to select the hour with bigger concentration level and more productivity.

"To select the space that allows to be isolated.

"Not to have any connected audiovisual team, neither anything that can distract their attention to the class or other virtual activities.

Work of the educational in the virtual class:

"To record the class before presenting it in the virtual classroom.

"To begin explaining the development of the class and that they should take notes of the doubts to clarify them when concluding it.

"To guide to turn off the microphones.

CONCLUSIONS

It is certain that in the case of the presence of Coronavirus, the virtual education constituted a decisive alternative to be able to maintain the development of the classes in the superior education, as much in Ecuador as in the world.

To achieve better results in the application from the education from distance and especially the virtual one, is necessary to continue preparing the educational in the application of the most appropriate pedagogic and didactic methods for this educational modality and in the use of varied virtual tools; the creation of electronic supports with wide of enough band; the elaboration of study guides for subject that even allow the independent study when we cannot consent to the internet and; how many other measures help to guarantee the teaching-learning process.

Finally to point out that, in spite of the lapsed years, that expressed by Álvarez Gavilanes (2005), it still maintains the validity as for that the institutions need to adapt their organizational structures and their managerial and

academic processes to this new reality, to be able to fulfill the current demands of the society". (p. 13)

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