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Quality of Training of the Communicator in Times of Pandemic

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Abstract: Communication media were introduced in the school to collaborate in the educational process. In the beginning, it was sought to cross the walls of the classroom to take students to the encounter of astronomical realities such as space, or the invisible to the human eyes such as cells. But, there were other educational uses of Media in the experience of Latin America. Media had been used in training peasants, miners, and grassroots organizations. They were used since the middle of the twentieth century and, after that the development of technology allowed traditional media to be present in cyberspace, to meet on the internet, facilitating the education of children and young people, as part of the infrastructure that ensures minimum quality standards in our educational systems. Today, students of Social Communication at San Marcos University are prepared to produce content for different media, because as a journalist they are going to broadcast news in print, audiovisual, and electronic environments as well as produce content for institutional materials and manage institutional communications. To prepare them for this type of Job, students during Educational Communication interact with different populations at a national level, in the remote modality of communication because of the pandemic of COVID-19, to know about their problems of communication and share with them how to solve their problems through analyzed strategies of communication.

Keywords: Communication Strategies, Educational Communication, Virtual Communication, Interactive Communication, Print, Audiovisual and Electronic Materials Production

1. Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic has caused a series of negative consequences in the world, particularly in the universities of the Latin American region where the consequences allow us to identify for the moment, three elements in the understanding of the scenario: a loss of learning that borders on 15% of loss of skills, a loss of students in the range from 3% to 10% in the region, and a loss of equity [3].

The conditions of confinement and the performance of work activities remotely have also affected the academic activities of basic education and higher or tertiary education that includes universities. The quality criteria of some careers, such as those of Social Communication, require that students apply the knowledge acquired in field practice before professional practice [13]. In this context, the student tests the usefulness of the knowledge learned to solve problems [14], as well as live a socialization process where he identifies the presence of cultural and intercultural factors [15], for example, before entering active life in the labour market. The exercise of these practices that tests the quality of academic training are those that have been affected by the conditions of isolation due to the pandemic.

It is a priority for students of Organizational Communication at the Universidad Nacional Mayor de San Marcos (UNMSM, because of the Spanish acronym) to interact with populations to facilitate the comprehension of an organization's function and development, as well as understand the impact of people's participation into these positively or negatively, whether grassroots, popular, institutional, business, or corporate. The purpose of these meetings, as in the case of the Educational Communication course, is to take the population's pulse based on the knowledge -the product of the research as part of the student's project- and propose strategies of communication

that help the organization to achieve its objectives.

In 2020, the first year of the pandemic, classes were remote. The uncertainty and fear of failing the course's objectives gave the intelligence and perspicacity of the San Marcos youth to face the challenge. As the classes were remote, so were the interventions made by the students. The aim of this article is to analyse the results of their interventions to propose improvements.

2. How Do We Understand Communication

Mario Kaplún [4] differentiates in "The popular communicator", dominant communication from democratic communication, having as reference the socio-political situation of the Latin-American region in the second half of the 20th century. With this vision, the men and women of Latin America felt the need to make their voices heard, participate and be the actors in the construction of a more democratic society. It was important to access the mass media. At that time, the communication model of the mass media was synonymous with the transmission of messages and nothing more.

The rural and indigenous populations of Latin America and, on the other hand, the organizations of peasants and miners began to organize themselves to generate their own informative radio content, unlike the proposal of communication in support of development promoted by Wilbur Schramm with the help of UNESCO. The experience of the radio station network supported by the Latin American Association of Radio Schools, (ERBOL), and the participation of minorities was enough for Luis Ramiro Beltran [1] to make the following definition: "Communication is the process of democratic social interaction based on the exchange of symbols made by human beings, that voluntarily share under free and equal access conditions, dialogue and participation" (p. 65).

The more appropriate definition for the course according to the participation of the students was proposed by the same author after he made the definition quoted in the previous paragraph:

Alternative communication for democratic development is the expansion and balance in the access of people to the communication process and their participation in it using the media, interpersonal and mixed to ensure, in addition to technological progress and material welfare, social justice, freedom for all, and majority rule. (Beltran, 2006, p. 66).

In this understanding of communication, recognized organizations have been working in the region such as the Latin American Association of Radio Schools (ALER), the Latin American Association of Communication Researchers (ALAIC), the International Center for Higher Communication Studies for Latin America (CIESPAL), the Latin American Federation of Faculties of Communication (FELAFACS), the Institute for Latin America IPAL, and many others.

The irruption of technologies and the digitization of communication have led to the concentration of the media in very few hands and, an absence of public radio and television in the region, mainly in Peru. Very few countries in the region have public stations or networks. The Mexican experience has an Educational Television Satellite Network (EDUSAT), which is a compressed digital signal system that broadcasts 16 television channels daily: nine of them are managed by Educational Television, seven of them have their own programming (11, 12, 14, 17, 21, 24 and 27) and one for special broadcasts (26); the Latin American Institute of Educational Communication (ILCE) is in charge of channels 13, 15, 16 and 18; channel 23 is assigned to the National Council for Culture and Arts (CONACULTA) and channels 25 and 28 to the Congress Channel and TV UNAM respectively. (SID, Integrated Documentation System, 2021).

In other countries, it is common to have the services of a public television channel for education. In other cases, as in Peru as well, there is only one government or state radio station and another for television. On the other hand, information in new environments and in traditional media is discussed as a "market fact" and not as "a cultural and social fact". (Beltrán, 2006, 73). The world´s population stood at 7.83 billion at the start of 2021, more than 4.66 billion of them are Internet users, and 3.17 billion remain offline. They represent "more than 40% of the world's population" [2]. Of all internet users, the population living in northern and western Europe and North America have the largest number of connected people: 96%, 93%, and 90%, respectively (p. 26).

The criticism from the Latin American schools of Social Communication goes through making more valid the position of not giving up against the status quo characterized by the ascription to mercantilism and technology of a predominantly neoliberal and globalizing economic and social system. Democratizing communication is a necessity, being aware.

3. What Is Educational Communication

Although many authors identify educational communication or *educomunicacion* as educational actions that are carried out within educational facilities, in the teaching-learning relationships established between teacher and student. However, this activity does not necessarily have to be developed within the school world. Before the pandemic, students of communication made visits to human settlements, schools, grassroots organizations, etc., to carry out the practical part of the course: Learn about the organization, analyse it, and discuss it from the field of communication and recommend strategies for its solution.

Is there a possibility of fulfilling these objectives and carrying out the same activities in the new media environments? Experience has shown that it is but in limited cases. The exercise requires all participants involved have access to a PC or some intelligent communication mechanism and internet access that allows them to be "online". That is not possible nationwide. The pandemic was

in charge to show that it was not possible, that it is not possible, and for that reason, many children and adolescents did not complete or drop out 2020 school year.

Universities in the Latin American region could not escape this reality where the pandemic has influenced students, professors, and non-teaching staff and "has slowed down research and extension activities" [11], the continuation of academic life in virtual environments has facilitated to carry out "field activities" in these same virtual environments, which has quickly led students to develop digital skills so that, on the one hand, they plan and produce materials for educational purposes; and on the other hand, accompany and support local organizations with communication strategies to improve their common objectives. Experts call the production of media materials for educational purposes the technological version of Educational Communication, and the support of local organizations with communication strategies such as *educomunicacion* [9].

The use of the media to strengthen the achievement of educational objectives occurs in different cases: the illustrative printed bulletin that a young woman receives at the time she leaves a medical consultation about how to detect early breast cancer, the booklet that a young mother receives with information about how to keep her hands clean and prepare food for her baby, as well as the videos that users of public offices watch while they are waiting for their turn and others, through these messages, organizations give information about processes, timing, and costs, among others. The objective of these materials is fundamental for their users; however, more important for students of Communication is to know what to produce, what to say, and how to say it.

The integral and humanistic education of the Social Communication student has allowed them to establish relationships of mutual benefit with the different populations with whom they have been working through projects within the framework of their field trips: primary and secondary schools, mothers, recyclers, residents of human settlements, teenage mothers, popular dining room, migrants, etc. With all of them, students have worked on a diagnosis to find out specific and similar needs. It allows them to develop their proposals. All the process is carried out with the direct participation of the population. This work has enabled the students to understand that it is necessary "to base the teaching/learning process on the active participation of students" [5]. To plan their proposals, students must: coordinate, manage, and mobilize the participation of experts and produce tools and materials where people who participate in the educational activities are active subjects of education. They participate in the construction and recreation of knowledge.

In this context, the teaching-learning action becomes a dialogue where those who assume the role of learners contribute with their previous experiences to enrich the dialogue. According to Vygotsky, the result of this praxis confirms that learning is a social product where "We learn from others and with others" [6]. Then the role of the students is not only "learning" it is also exchanging information and sharing experiences. The older ones "teach" the younger ones, and the younger "facilitate" the understanding of new terms to the older ones or help them to "operate" the equipment with great skill and ability.

The different cases in which Educational Communication is more than the application of auxiliary and instrumental materials have allowed the students of Educational Communication to delve into the knowledge of the cultural and social diversity of the inhabitants of Lima. These relationships have facilitated to develop of skills for dialogue, the understanding of different approaches to the city's problems, among others, and most importantly, the possibility of presenting through proposals, discussed with the community, ways of solution for problems of the community with communication strategies planned and organized. The intergenerational, multicultural, educational, social, and economic differences among the many that separate people disappear to facilitate the communion of ideas to solve problems.

4. Application Environments

Until 2019, the students of Educational Communication worked on their projects in different districts of Lima, the capital city of Peru. They consulted data from the National Institute of Statistics and Informatics (INEI) to have information that provides sustainability to their findings, as well as different surveys of the ministries and civil society organizations. According to the tenth urban report of perceptions on the quality of life in the city, prepared by Lima Como Vamos [7], there were:

1) 37.5% of people who live in the capital are satisfied to live in, 21.7% are dissatisfied, and 40.8% are in the middle.
2) Among the main concerns of the common citizen, 82.2% of people feel that citizenship insecurity, and it affects the quality of life in the city, 46.2% consider public transportation as the second biggest problem and, 38.6% consider the corruption of officials or public servants is the third major problem in the city.
3) The issue of the environmental situation worries Limenians or those who live in Lima. Thus, the environment is affected by contamination made by vehicles in 72.3%, the lack of trees and maintenance of green areas in 40.8%, and the garbage collection system in 35.8%.
4) In relation to satisfaction with the public space available in the city, 30.7% consider that they are dissatisfied, 23.8% feel satisfied and 45.4% are regular.
5) Regarding the offers of recreational and cultural activities in Lima, 40.2% feel dissatisfied, 35.7% are neither satisfied nor dissatisfied and 22.8% satisfied.

Students have information about the population of Lima, which had suffered a strong internal migration process since the '80s of the 20th century. Migrants had incorporated their culture and traditional cultural aspects, but with an incidence

in the lack of jobs, particularly those who came from rural areas, and had settled on the hills or in slums working as street vendors and flea markets, recycling garbage, or working in informal factories.

The pandemic outbreak in 2020 provided an opportunity for students to open to the knowledge of populations from different parts of the country with different needs and problems. They learned about living conditions of students who attend a public school in the town of Chachapoyas, in the department of Amazonas, or those who attend a school in the Simón Bolívar human settlement in the department of Arequipa, or the residents from the populated center of San Francisco, in Querocotillo, in the department of Piura, among others. The pandemic made it possible to discover the immense possibilities of digitizing communication for conducting surveys, interviews, training activities, and much more. The students understood that it is possible to do it but to achieve access to cyberspace is a fundamental condition.

5. Communicators in Action

Students of Educational Communication are dedicated to inquiring among the various organizations that exist in their localities or nearby the possibilities of accessing the inhabitants to carry out research work that culminates with a proposal for a communication strategy in which the benefit is for researchers and researched. Once they are accepted, the students begin the situational analysis work and delimit the internal environments, microenvironments, and macro environments of communication in the organization. To do this, they ask the members of the community or association to be very serious about the data they are going to get because the success of their participation will depend on it. Normally, this is done using a letter of introduction from the University to give the study guarantees.

Subsequently, there is the research process that culminates with the realization of the diagnosis that also includes the proposal of communication strategies and objectives, the elaboration of messages and communicative-informational and educational materials, as well as the possibility of carrying out knowledge transfer activities (intra contextual or trans contextual) [12] to provide feedback to the population. The process ends with a general evaluation of the population's participation. Throughout the entire semester, the student's responsibility to the population demonstrated weekly is recognized and valued even after the completion of the project.

In the knowledge transfer process, due to the fact that some detected and selected problems with the population from different areas of communication, students see the urgent need to carry out advocacy and coordination tasks to manage with other Professional Schools of the University, professional help that allows them access to timely information, have the participation of experts and often, the realization of health campaigns, such as those achieved in previous years with the Faculties of Human Medicine, Dentistry, Pharmacy and Biochemistry, Veterinary Medicine,

Psychology or the Tropical Medicine Unit, among others, and also the possibility of having the intervention and support of some companies and industries and, public and private organizations.

Once students reach this stage, redouble efforts to produce educational-informative-communicational materials according to user needs, among many aspects they must take care of. Each student tries to:

1) That their messages enjoy legitimacy for this, communication students are obliged to know the issues that the experts are going to develop with the population, which requires further explanation.
2) That their messages are competent, the possibility of accessing informative material provided by expert staff to produce dissemination materials makes it easier for their messages to be considered. The competence of the message results from the technical validation of the material to be delivered to the participants.
3) That their messages are persuasive, in addition to providing information, the materials produced by the students mobilize emotions or invite to transform an attitude.
4) That their messages are appropriate, not only because of the content of the material, other factors that come into play are the dimensions, the colours, the size of the letters, the presentation, the use that is going to be given to it, etc. [10].

All the processes developed during the intervention project are developed with the participation of the involved population. Weekly, students appeal to different didactic strategies that facilitate the active participation of the attendees so they can build and rebuild their knowledge, skills, and attitudes. Among the didactic strategies, most used in these activities, students have found problem-based learning (PBL), role-play, practical work, successful experiences, workshops, and viewings, among others that due to the organization and rigid planning ensure the validity of his intervention [8].

According to Kimberly and Nentley cited in Niño [10] to face the future, citizens must develop six basic skills that derive from creativity:

1) Ability to manage information, which consists of the ability of people to select, assess, organize, and apply the information within the framework of the profuse amount of information to which human beings are exposed.
2) Ability for self-organization necessary to define goals, plan activities over time, assume responsibilities, determine resources, and apply the best strategies for knowledge.
3) Capacity for interdisciplinarity. It is necessary to face knowledge and the same problem solution from different points of view, knowledge, and disciplines.
4) Personal and interpersonal skills, it is necessary for the person to know themselves deeply, have the motivation and be able to manage good interpersonal relationships.
5) Ability for reflection, evaluation, and self-evaluation;

this requires, among others, the ability to observe, analyse, assess, make balanced judgments, weigh options, make decisions, and adjust to reality, depending on the context.

6) Assuming risk, management risks vary from one person to another, from one society to another, and from one context to another. In addition, the risks occur at very different levels: in knowledge, behaviours, and procedures, personal life (greeting, employment), social performance, etc. [10].

6. Who Are the Beneficiaries

6.1. Teaching How to Produce Multimedia Materials

A review of the projects gives an account of the topics developed, their objectives, and the activities carried out by future social communicators:

Creation of communication strategies to produce educational material aimed at pupils of 4th grade, secondary level, of the Emblematic Educational Institution "San Juan de la Libertad" of Chachapoyas.

San Marcos students joined efforts to contribute to learning management and reduce educational gaps due to the impact of COVID-19. In this context, they produced multimedia materials aimed at pupils to reinforce what was provided in the "Aprendo en Casa" (I learn at home) TV program and added training actions aimed at teachers to improve the quality of the teaching-learning process and the use of digital tools.

Pupils (15 men and 17 women) who benefited from the intervention of the group of San Marcos students were those of the 4th. grade from classroom 26 "Abraham Valdelomar" of the Emblematic Educational Institution "San Juan de la Libertad", in Chachapoyas, Amazonas region. Of the total number of students, 25 live in urban areas and 7 in rural areas.

Throughout the twelve (12) weeks of the project, communicational educational materials were produced, within the framework of the contents of the national curriculum, which were characterized by having a formal and dynamic tone, simple wording, understandable vocabulary, and no complicated. In a similar way, they proceeded to prepare the audio materials.

6.2. Digital Citizenship

Discover that in many schools in the country teachers do not know about the use of ICT in their classes via the Internet, and in many cases, they are not motivated to send materials on different topics to their pupils encouraged the students of Educational Communication to consider the project on Digital Citizenship to be developed in the Educational Institution 40175 Gran Libertador Simón Bolívar located in the Simón Bolívar human settlement of the José Luis Bustamante y Rivero district of the department of Arequipa.

Since the beginning of classes, teachers sent publications on WhatsApp and received messages from their students. As a result of conducting a survey, the need for students to access knowledge about the History of Peru, Citizenship and Geographic Space, Society, and Economy was determined.

The Educational Communication project aimed at pupils of the 5th. "A" was made up of 24 female students and 10 male students. Of this total, only 24 students have access to the Aprendo en Casa TV program, and 10 do not. As a result of the questionnaires applied to diagnose the reality of the students, the following communication objectives were established: to improve knowledge about the values and functions of government institutions such as the Ministry of Economy and Finance, the Ministry of the Environment and, the Ministry of Culture, raising awareness about the importance of citizen participation and how it enables change within society, among others.

In their strategy of rapprochement and approaching the issues, the students of Social Communication contacted the pupils through a call for the "Digital Citizenship" contest that facilitated their participation in the classroom. Orientation Guides for using the portals of the Ministries, mentioned above, were produced for the project. Students produced podcasts, and infographics to arouse pupils' interest to investigate different repositories and platforms on the web.

Improving the use and management of ICTs in the teaching-learning process of the Personal Development, Citizenship and Civics course.

6.3. ICT for a Better Teaching Performance

Within the framework of the confinement due to the pandemic caused by COVID-19, the Educational Communication students contacted the teacher of the Personal Development, Citizenship, and Civic course of the "José Carlos Mariátegui" School, to promote and train a teacher in the use and application of ICT as a complement in the teaching-learning process of the students of the 5th. "E". In this context and according to the coordination, the project purpose was to train the teacher so that with a better performance in the knowledge and application of technologies, she can achieve a better performance teaching her subject. Pupils were experiencing the possibility to lose the academic year because they did not receive classes from their teacher but just fewer materials that could serve as a reference for the development of the course.

Considering the benefits of the training for better use of ICT in planning and organizing lessons, and seeing the benefits for pupils, students of Educational Communication proceeded to establish the educational objectives of the intervention, as well as the organization of activities to be carried out with the teacher, using WhatsApp and email as a means of communication.

Within the framework of the materials produced to train the teacher, there is a Canva video tutorial, training videos for feedback, an infographic, and presentations to capture pupils' attention. During the twelve (12) weeks of interaction with the teacher, the message was consolidated: "ICTs do not make an excellent teacher, but an excellent teacher does use ICTs well." The final evaluation showed the achievement of the teacher.

6.4. Learning How to Manage Digital Tools

Improvement of teaching strategies and learning opportunities using technological resources and pedagogical tools in the classroom of the 5th. D of the School 3037 Republic of Canada.

The purpose of the students of Educational Communication through this project was to improve the teacher's abilities in the teaching-learning process during the Art class for pupils of the 5th. "D" grade in the Republic of Canada School, in the district of Comas. The Sanmarquino students provided strategies to facilitate pedagogical interaction, promote innovation and creativity in communication with the elaboration of effective materials using ICT, and contribute to optimal, and interactive classes.

Students designed two strategies, one for the teacher to have a repository of her pupils' works, and better use of digital tools such as Google Drive, Google Meet, Canva, and others. The other one was for pupils to manage stressful situations. Students sought to improve the interactivity between the teacher and pupils in class and make better use of technological tools for making artistic designs. Students of Social communication sought to increase the interactivity between the teacher and pupils. Students train the teacher to create an educational audio spot to facilitate the understanding of concepts and basic notions of audio software. The purpose of this training was to develop the teacher's skills to provide feedback to her pupils among the previous knowledge and make better performance in front of her pupils.

For the 29 pupils, the students of communication prepared the workshop "I breathe in peace, I breathe out stress". The purpose of this activity was that pupils can manage stressful situations with techniques in their daily lives, internalize Jacobson's progressive relaxation technique and recognize the activities that help them to manage their time.

6.5. Lomas, a Better Future for All

The purpose of the project was to inform on the environmental sustainability of Lomas El Mirador in the district of San Juan de Lurigancho, the consequences of negative environmental impact caused by the different activities of the surrounding population, and the need to generate a positive impact to the place. Actions were addressed to women and housewives dedicated to caring for their home, aged between 30 and 44 years in the New Peru human settlement and the surroundings of the Lomas El Mirador. The project included students' visits to the area to carry out the diagnosis and determine the knowledge that housewives had concerning Lomas El Mirador.

Throughout ten (10) weeks in remote mode, the Educational Communication students organized an information campaign aimed at housewives inviting them to take part in the training course and shared materials to reinforce the communication objectives. Students wrote a song for the campaign and produced and disseminated multimedia materials.

Students carried out the corresponding monitoring for the fulfilment of the communication objectives of the project using evaluation forms designed by themselves.

6.6. Salt of My Land/Sal de Mi Tierra

Sal de mi Tierra: Awareness project on the negative impact of salinization on the agricultural activity carried out for the secondary level of the San Francisco de Chocán school, district Querecotillo, Valley of Chira.

The purpose was to inform, make visible and raise awareness about the salinization problem and the role of human activity in this issue to pupils of secondary education at the San Francisco de Chocán School in the district of Querecotillo.

Updated information about the causes of salinization, the situation of salinization in the district of Querecotillo, as well as methods to combat salinity, and designing and producing informative audio-visual materials, were among the secondary goals of the Social Communication students.

The project consists of developing an educational-informative campaign to teach pupils the concept of salinization and how this problem affects the land in the district of Querecotillo with negative repercussions and consequences on the economic and productive activities of the population. Students used the social network WhatsApp, Facebook, and Soundcloud to disseminate messages with pupils during the campaign.

7. Ensuring the Quality of the Training of Communicators

The development of this project contributes to the achievement of the seventh quality objective of this House of Studies, which aims to strengthen the university-society relationship "based on the exchange of knowledge and experiences for the integral development, responding and anticipating the needs of the society" (Universidad Nacional Mayor de San Marcos UNMSM, 2020). The relationship between students and the diversity of populations in the country breaks with the individual and limited reflection of society, facilitates communication, and intercultural dialogue, and introduces them to a holistic understanding of the world, preparing them for a relevant and ethical professional performance, and make them aware on the future to promote spaces for democratic and intercultural dialogue.

The education of young social communicators is given under the understanding that education is a right but also; quality education is a right [13]. According to General Education Law (LGE), N° 28044 which defines educational quality is "the optimal level of education that people must achieve to face the challenges of human development, exercise their citizenship, and still learn throughout their lives". In this understanding, young people, whose work is highlighted in this article, are carrying out "the coherence of being and doing with the duty to being institutional in the integral and permanent development of the mission, vision,

and functions of the university, with ethics and relevance to respond to the needs of society" (UNMSM, 2020, 21). The preparation of young communicators take place in the classroom and in the exercise of what will be their professional tasks, developing skills and abilities that model their ethical, scientific, and technical competencies, capable of leading ways to solve the problems of the country [14].

8. Conclusion

In many academic spaces where people reflect on the conditions in which classes take place today, it is heard that technologies are here to stay. But not all students are in a position to receive in optimal conditions, online classes. Technologies have changed the teaching work, ways of coordination, organization of contents, and ways and times to share with the students. Technologies changed ways of evaluation, working groups, etc. Using these technologies demand good internet quality but students share computers at home and wait their turn, lose the connection when they receive a phone call, etc. Despite all the efforts, they cannot escape from factors such as the lack of electricity and many others that put at risk the achievement of their educational goals that cannot be avoided.

Because of what has been advanced so far, some considerations are planned that could help to propose urgent solutions:

1) Increase the number of laboratories for the design and production of multimedia materials.
2) Implementation of exclusive laboratories to carry out academic research with analysis programs.
3) Involvement of the Social Responsibility Offices of the University to monitor the projects carried out by the students.
4) Making agreements with civil society organizations that facilitate student access to carry out their communication projects.

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