

# MENDIVE



## REVISTA DE EDUCACIÓN

*Translated from the original in Spanish*

### Leading article

## **Edu communication with the help of ICT as a Cuban strategy in university training processes during the COVID-19 pandemic**

**La educocomunicación con la ayuda de las TIC como estrategia cubana en los procesos de formación universitaria durante la pandemia de COVID-19**

**A educocomunicação com a ajuda das TIC como estratégia cubana nos processos de formação universitária durante a pandemia de COVID-19**

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The Edu communicative processes have gained special importance in the light of the events that the world has experienced during the last two years. Education transformed its paradigm, somewhat improvised, to the distance mode. Neither the students nor the teachers were really prepared for it, so each one did the best they could to meet the expectations, especially the university students, who are expected to train professional skills to enter the world of work, but that they lost the face-to-face models and had to replace them with tutorials and videos, in the best of cases. The conference will analyze how Cuba has worked so that Edu communication fulfills the role of mediator in the self-management of knowledge in education in general and in Higher Education in particular.

We will start with a news item that will help the audience to put themselves in context:

On September 7, 2021, the Minister of Higher Education (MES), José Ramón Saborido Loidi and part of the Board of Directors of the organization, held a working meeting by videoconference with the Rectors of the Universities, the General Directors of the Entities of Science, Technologies and Innovation (ECTI) and the Business Group (GEMES), in which members of the National University Student Federation were present.

At the meeting, the continuity process of the academic year 2021 in each of the MES institutions was evaluated. The health status of teachers and students was analyzed, as well as the evolution of the vaccination process. In particular, the projection towards the new normal was reviewed with the universities that function as isolation centers or field hospitals. The Minister reflected on the need for constant work from strategic communication with each of the MES audiences to guarantee the success of the

current course (taken from the official site of the MES of the Republic of Cuba).

The reality is much richer than any theatrical setting: hospitals in universities, extreme epidemiological care, but above all computerization and communication as essential elements.

Latin America already knew of movements related to Edu communication in Brazil, Argentina and Chile, where concepts associated with critical reading of the media, active reception, audience education, education in or for communication, education and new information and communication technologies stood out (Aparici, s / f; Torrent, 2009; Zurita, 2009).

In light of what happened with the COVID-19 pandemic, the term Edu communication became vitally important: the quality of training depends on its efficient use, without a delay of at least two years, on the qualified force required by our economies to face the challenges that have been imposed on us.

It is important to point out that we agree with Balderrama (2007) that Edu communication is not limited to the use of new Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) in the educational process; These function only as channels and tools that help to promote feedback, participation and a certain type of interaction between agents to share and build knowledge, in no way constitute the essence of the Edu communication process.

But how has this process been conceived in the Cuban reality? We will try to share our experiences in the conference that we will present to you.

The training processes of university professionals require several work edges. In Cuba, there is talk of macro-areas or substantive processes and four are assumed in our pedagogy:

- Academic training
- Job training
- Investigative training
- Extension training

Each of them has clear and well-defined objectives that lead to the achievement of a graduate who meets the standards of competence to enter the modern world in a flexible, creative and successful way. Hundreds of Cuban professionals have worked and are working around the world validating our training strategy.

However, the new scenario created by the pandemic was a serious challenge to the traditional ways of doing things in the field of education. Edu communication was not unexplored terrain for us. Cuba was the creator of the Yes I Can Literacy Method, extended to more than 20 countries and with which it was possible to literate more than 25 million illiterates around the world. This method, supported by radio and television, was a clear example of this.

Our country permanently has two television channels dedicated to supporting education with regular programming at the service of the corresponding ministries: the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Higher Education. Thus, starting an Edu communicative exercise with the support of teachers, the family and educational institutions was, from the government's point of view, the best way to achieve the social isolation required by the pandemic, while continuing to attend to the training of the young generation.

In this way, it is feasible to approach Edu communication as an interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary field of study that addresses, at the same time, the theoretical-practical dimensions of two historically separate disciplines: education and communication. It is also known as communication education, media didactics,

educational communication, media literacy or communication pedagogy (Sánchez and Gionanny, 2019, p. 14).

It is clear to us that it is not only a matter of using the media as a learning resource, but that "(...) aspires to equip everyone with the essential expressive skills for their normal communicative development and for the development of their creativity. Likewise, offer the tools to: understand the social production of communication, know how to assess how power structures work, what are the techniques and expressive elements that the media handle and be able to appreciate the messages with sufficient critical distance, minimizing the risks of manipulation "(García Matilla in Aparici, 2003: 111).

With the use of Edu communication, the achievement of an intelligently guided self-management of knowledge is required because "(...) counterarguments, gaps, weaknesses and contradictions of ideas and notions that until then appeared to be coherent and solid appear; and the formulation of one's own thought is gradually reached, which would unlikely be reached without interlocutors, present or distant "(Kaplún, 1998: 214).

Hence, the use of television as support and the use of the Moodle platform were not enough to supply the presence in Cuban Higher Education when on March 20, 2020 it was decided that students should not return to university campuses, but instead remain isolated in their homes.

At the government level, some facilities were created such as free access to the University's Moodle platform from anywhere in the country and internet access, paid for by the University, through the Nauta-Hogar platform, for the cloisters. But this was not enough either.

A different work strategy was necessary that would involve the university cloisters and cover all the macro areas of training. To do this, at the University of Pinar del Río "Hermanos Saíz Montes de Oca" we worked in order to prioritize the forums of the Moodle platform as a space for socialization and collective construction of knowledge.

This process finds its end in a deep level of understanding of the text, which is reached when the reader creatively uses the new meanings acquired and produced by it, assumes an independent attitude, makes decisions, relates them to other contexts and recreates them (inter textuality and hyper textuality).

The culture of debate includes adequate preparation in the topic to be debated, for which the reading that is done offers arguments to defend the position that is assumed, listen to the reasons of others, think about them and consider them, because they can be another way of approaching the subject, which is positively influenced by the asynchronous nature of the forum, since it enables participants to prepare more, make better contributions and have the time necessary to form a valuable, deep and flexible criterion of the subject.

Consistent with this moment, valuable aspects are configured to take into account, among them: the analysis of basic knowledge about communication in digital contexts, the characteristics of textuality in analogue and digital format, reading and comprehension strategies in digital format, cognitive and metacognitive actions to guide learning in online forums, the study of documentary sources, resulting from research associated with the subject, as well as the incidence of the pedagogical group.

Also important is the treatment of the functions inherent to the professional in the training-performance space, their qualities

and values, the characterization of the context of professional performance, as well as the link between the object of the profession and the mode of professional performance that they typify to the professional of each career and that are linked with the use of ICT to the training process.

For this, it is necessary that, from the moment the student is in the first year of the grade, they can appropriate the necessary tools that allow them to communicate efficiently in online forums, specifically in the academic ones that are planned from the interactive Moodle platform; It is an essential premise to know how to do and achieve metacognitive reflection about their learning process, in which they make aware how they appropriate communication skills in this context and evaluate their transit through the process.

Second, the assessment of the professional problem, which is conceived as a comprehensive analysis of the same in all its edges, part of the comprehensive diagnosis of the context of professional action to determine its causes, which will allow to identify the possibilities and limitations to implement possible ways solution, framing the work in those that are possible to propose from the sphere of the profession, in order to undertake its study in depth.

To do this, it starts with the diagnosis of the context of action through the use of specific research methods and techniques, the socialization of the results of the diagnosis in the pedagogical groups and the group of students, the determination of the causes, possibilities and limitations for the implementation of ways to solve the problem.

Third, the design of solution proposals to the professional problem, which is considered as the moment in which the ways of solving the

problem are modeled and directed, from the basic tasks of the future professional, where the alternative solutions are implemented. The students are trained to fulfill professional design and planning tasks, as well as in the direction of the activity, depending on the solution of this professional problem.

It is important to declare that this professional problem must be solved during the student's transit through the entire career, but the need for it to be from the first year, in which the opportunities offered by the curriculum subjects are taken advantage of, is particularly highlighted. The new normal to which we will return in the post-pandemic stage should promote the use of Edu communication resources in a good part of our processes. We cannot wait for the next pandemic to start from scratch again.

The strategy was conceived from achieving the articulation of the four organizational components (academic, labor, research and extension), and inter disciplinarily, which is specified in the academic year group.

Training as a substantive process has the objective of fully preparing the student for the selected university career. It must be characterized by being dynamic, creative and innovative, in which the academic, labor and research organizational components are integrated.

The academic component provides basic knowledge about the object of the profession, to which everything concerning the location of valid and truthful information, digital text comprehension strategies and the working method for participation in various forums in line, as well as the knowledge of the textuality criteria in digital format and the sequence of cognitive and metacognitive actions for the communication of results. The work with the specific professional skills must be developed in relation to the

aforementioned contents and the application, in turn, in the various curricular and extracurricular activities.

From the labor component, students must apply in practice the knowledge acquired from professional training, which serve as references for the development of convictions, based on the experiences of real situations in the world of work and the performance of tasks professionals, where they can systematize the contents in correspondence with the modes of action of the professional career.

Likewise, in the performance of their professional practice they must be a linguistic and civic model, because their adequate communication will depend, to a large extent, the success of the processes that will direct from the exercise of their profession. This can be modeled from Edu communication through simulated cases, and although contact with reality will inevitably be necessary, it can be much less traumatic if the experience has been previously "lived" with the use of 3D videos and simulators.

In the investigative component, students must be encouraged from their investigative activity to confront contradictions that arise between the theories they master and their professional practice, so that these are the driving forces behind the investigative process, the search for new knowledge and scientific solutions to professional problems, which can be modeled through discussions in online forums, from research tasks as a form of final evaluation of some curriculum subjects and, later, from coursework and diploma as a culmination exercise .

The investigative skills that are developed from this component lead to the student, from the first year of the career, to carry out a more meaningful communication in online forums, by establishing the link between theory and practice, which also materializes

in the conduction of this process in pedagogical practice by the university faculty.

No less important is the university extension as a macro-area or substantive process. During the training of the professional of any career, their participation in the development and preservation of the local, national and universal culture in its broadest concept should be enhanced, which will allow them to act responsibly and consistently as a citizen of the world, promoting that culture in their student, work and community environment, from communicative activity and collaborative work, which enables the application of the knowledge acquired in the transformation of the social environment.

Cyberspace and its responsible use is an essential part of the new cultural scene in which we live, hence the proper Edu communication training is essential, because it enables the discernment of where the ethically correct is, beyond petty economic or other interests.

The student will be prepared to transform the social reality manifested in the few and inadequate communication practices raised in online forums by young people. Students are then invited to participate in social forums in which they will put into practice the knowledge, skills, values and attitudes they have appropriated, not only from the academic component, but from the other components.

Promoting the combination of academic, work, research and university extension activities based on professional training mediated by Edu communication, makes possible the articulation between these components. This is achieved in coordination with the academic year group, from where the methodological work is directed in terms of designing specific actions for systematic

communication with students and among them, in correspondence with the training objectives of the academic year, for the development of the educational teaching process and taking into account its contribution to the general objectives of the career, for which a planned process must be conceived in which it is defined what the Educational Channel will transmit, what will be offered in methodological guidelines from the discipline, the subject in the Moodle platform and how and for what discussion forums will be convened in it, as well as which teachers will have the role of moderators in said forum each day.

From the educational strategy of the academic year group, the use of curricular strategies should be prioritized and for this, online methodological activities should be planned, aimed at preparing teachers so that, from each of their subjects, they can give output to them, particularly, those referring to the use of ICT and the use of the mother tongue, so as to contribute to participation in online forums.

In this sense, the establishment of interdisciplinary relationships that materialize in the subjects from the determination of the interdisciplinary articulation nodes, which demarcate the contribution of each one of them to the Edu communicative process with which the training takes place, is also pertinent; they include knowledge, skills and values.

It seems like an overwhelming job, but if it is planned properly, I assure you that it leads to a very effective educational process and we have achieved it with some limitations that will be smoothed out over time. On November 15, we will resume the new normal, after completing the vaccination of 100% of the Cuban population between 2 and 120 years of age. Our process will no longer be exclusively face-to-face with the support of ICT as before. COVID-19 showed us that you don't study or work more

because you sit for eight hours at a desk or office desk; what counts are the results.

Small and medium-sized Cuban private capital companies have multiplied in this stage and require properly trained personnel to be efficient, as well as the most independent and strengthened socialist state enterprise, so that education in general, and Higher Education in particular must be prepared to train those human resources.

The comprehensive training of professionals who graduate from universities has in Edu communication a resource of extraordinary importance, which goes through critical reading from the in-depth study of the topics of debate, in order to be able to discern the criteria of value that promote the construction of meaningful knowledge. This work must be undertaken by the university cloisters in a collective and interdisciplinary manner, modeling the processes from the methodological work of the academic year.

The integration of macro areas of training or substantive processes: academic, labor, research and extension, from Edu communication, mediated by the use of educational television and Moodle for undergraduate and graduate degrees, with the academic forum as a fundamental teaching task, have as a result a successful work strategy at the "Hermanos Saíz Montes de Oca" University, in Pinar del Río, Cuba.

From this perspective, it is necessary to conceive actions aimed at students communicating efficiently in online forums, starting from achieving an adequate articulation between the educational strategy, the organizational components, the university extension process, interdisciplinary and the influence of the collective academic year.

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