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Original article

## Didactic conception of the process of curricular flexibility through educational multimodalities: main scientific ideas

Concepción didáctica del proceso de flexibilización curricular mediante multimodalidades educativas: ideas científicas principales

Concepção didática do processo de flexibilização curricular por meio de multimodalidades educacionais: principais ideias científicas

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### ABSTRACT

The contradiction between curricular rigidity and flexibility is one of those challenges that today acquires new nuances in light of the complexities of the current context, particularly given the mission of the Universidad Nacional Abierta y a Distancia in Colombia. The objective of this article was to provide the basis for a didactic conception based on multimodalities to make curricula more flexible in Higher Education. The research was developed within the qualitative design because it belongs to the social sciences or of the spirit and is developed from a hermeneutic approach, which allowed to place the subject of the research in other positions that allowed to start from their experience and the experience of others. For this, a group of articles derived from research published in indexed journals, master's theses, undergraduate theses and doctoral theses were selected, thus completing and being able to carry out a process of understanding, interpretation and synthesis of this reading, which is called PRACCIS, the acronym for the stages that support it (Prejudices, Reflection, Analysis, Comparison, Comprehension, Interpretation and Synthesis). The main results reemerged in the identification of the scientific ideas that make up the didactic conception of the process, which made it possible to interpret curricular flexibilization from an innovative and creative theoretical perspective based on the dynamic and coherent use of multimodalities.

**Keywords:** didactic conception; curricular flexibilization; multimodalities.

## RESUMEN

La contradicción entre rigidez y flexibilidad curricular es uno de esos retos que hoy por hoy adquiere nuevos matices a la luz de las complejidades del contexto actual, en particular dada la misión de la Universidad Nacional Abierta y a Distancia en Colombia. Constituyó el objetivo de este artículo: Fundamentar una concepción didáctica basada en las multimodalidades para flexibilizar los currículos en la Educación Superior. La investigación se desarrolló dentro del diseño cualitativo, debido a que pertenece a las ciencias sociales o del espíritu y se desarrolla desde un enfoque hermenéutico; lo que permitió situar al sujeto de la investigación en otras posiciones y permitió partir de su experiencia y de la experiencia de los otros. Para ello, se seleccionó un grupo de artículos derivados de investigaciones publicados en revistas indexadas, tesis de maestría, tesis de pregrado y tesis de doctorado y así poder llevar a cabo un proceso de comprensión, interpretación y síntesis de esta lectura, lo que se denomina PRACCIS, el acrónimo de las etapas que lo sustentan (Prejuicios, Reflexión, Análisis, Comparación, Comprensión, Interpretación y Síntesis). Los resultados principales se concretaron en la determinación de las ideas científicas que conforman la concepción didáctica del proceso, lo que permitió interpretar la flexibilización curricular desde una perspectiva teórica innovadora y creativa basada en el empleo dinámico y coherente de las multimodalidades.

**Palabras claves:** concepción didáctica; flexibilización curricular; multimodalidades.

## RESUMO

A contradição entre rigidez e flexibilidade curriculares é um desses desafios que hoje adquire novas nuances diante das complexidades do contexto atual, especialmente dada a missão da Universidade Nacional Aberta e a Distância na Colômbia. Constituiu o objetivo deste artigo: Embasar uma concepção didática baseada em multimodalidades para flexibilizar os currículos no Ensino Superior. A pesquisa desenvolveu-se dentro do delineamento qualitativo, por pertencer às ciências sociais ou espirituais e se desenvolver a partir de uma abordagem hermenêutica; o que possibilitou colocar o sujeito da pesquisa em outras posições e possibilitou partir de sua experiência e da experiência dos outros. Para isso, selecionou-se um conjunto de artigos oriundos de pesquisas publicadas em periódicos indexados, dissertações de mestrado, teses de graduação e teses de doutorado, a fim de realizar um processo de compreensão, interpretação e síntese dessa leitura, que se denomina PRACCIS, sigla para as etapas que a sustentam (Preconceito, Reflexão, Análise, Comparação, Compreensão, Interpretação e Síntese). Os principais resultados materializaram-se na determinação das ideias científicas que compõem a concepção didática do processo, que permitiram interpretar a flexibilidade curricular a partir de uma perspectiva teórica inovadora e criativa baseada na utilização dinâmica e coerente de multimodalidades.

**Palavras-chave:** concepção didática; flexibilidade curricular; multimodalidades.

## INTRODUCTION

The university, in order to achieve its social mandate and keep up with the dizzying social change, must face challenges such as technical limitations, connection difficulties, high material and equipment costs that reduce access to low-income people, little preparation, both of teachers and students, in digital skills or putting aside one-way communication.

Pedroza (2018) points out that the university in the knowledge society must reinvent itself so as not to be limited and to be able to respond to the needs and challenges of the present dynamics. Precisely, given current scenarios of society such as globalization, the appearance of new labor sectors, information saturation, the need to 'learn to learn' and 'learn for life', the rapid change in technology applied in every sphere of life, is not enough to have a critical reflection.

For his part, Cabero (2007) points out guidelines for educational institutions to transform at all levels, taking into account that they should not focus their efforts on exclusively satisfying business and economic demands, nor neglect the development of the society of autonomous and critical way, in addition to respecting new values such as personal development, justice and social inclusion, democratic participation; They must also understand that educational institutions are not the only ways of training citizens because the informal and non-formal are becoming increasingly important in society.

Currently, society is going through drastic changes in different areas such as politics, the economy, health, work and, obviously, education is no stranger to the accelerated transformations that, without a doubt, have impacted the way of life. . In addition, the effect that the COVID-19 pandemic has had

on humanity has revealed situations that, depending on how they are looked at or analyzed, can be considered as disadvantages or opportunities.

Some authors call the current transformation a "social historical mutation", similar to the one experienced by the human being approximately twelve thousand years ago at the beginning of agriculture, with all the repercussions it had. And it is that the change that humanity has had in recent years has modified life in all its orders, so it can be affirmed that now knowledge is more accelerated and that it permeates from the most complex to the simple daily life of each individual. who lives on the planet.

Bauman (2003) presents challenges facing educators today: "We have simply never been in a situation like this before. We have yet to learn the art of living in a world oversaturated with information. And we must also learn the even more difficult art of prepare the next generations to live in such a world" (p. 46). In addition, it analyzes the challenge regarding the perception of time, known as the "impatience syndrome" because at present any delay, wait or procrastination has become a sign of inferiority, an aspect that could affect the permanence of students in five-year career studies versus short preparatory courses.

Challenges that according to the Polish sociologist "are hitting hard at the very essence of the idea of education as it was conceived on the threshold of the long history of civilization" (p. 27).

These accelerated changes, added to the consequences of the pandemic, have had an effect that challenges the authorities to attend to the population in general and not allow more inequality and social inequity to occur. And it is precisely the young population that finds itself in a situation of

multiple opportunities to progress or, on the contrary, to further widen the gap of social inequality.

Several questions then arise. Could it be that we are witnessing the disappearance of the university as we know it? as stated by Levine & Van (2021) referring to Harvard professor Clayton Christensen, who stated that the changes will be of such magnitude that they will disturb Higher Education, as we know it, rendering the model obsolete and bankrupting most universities. Could it be that the university is prepared to assume the social task of conserving, developing and promoting culture in the face of the challenge imposed by the rapid incursion of new technologies? Could it be that the university has the capacity to reinvent itself, evolve, participate in solving current challenges in new fields of knowledge such as nanotechnology, artificial intelligence, superconductors, robotics, among others, and respond to its social mandate to train for work, research, critical thinking, ethics to understand these changes in society, respond to new jobs and the disappearance of many, including a large number of those currently forming?

With respect to education in Colombia, this is taught especially in the face-to-face educational modality, the distance educational modality and the virtual educational modality; without forgetting that, in the current regulations, according to the Modalities Guidance Note of the Ministry of National Education (MEN, 2022), the dual educational modality and the possible combinations that arise between them are also included, but that its application is still very incipient. The first three modalities have aspects in favor and accommodate a majority of the population; however, as can be seen, there are many young people in the country who do not have access to Higher Education, because their needs are not part of the offer of stable curricula in one

educational modality or another. However, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO, 2017) reiterates that education is an essential right, since it facilitates the enjoyment of civil, cultural, economic, social and political rights and people can exercise them better if they have received a minimum education. From the foregoing derives the need to conceive and interpret the training programs for professionals and the curriculum of the Universities, far from all rigidity and stagnation; Therefore, to validate the efforts to facilitate curricular flexibility becomes a necessity and an urgent challenge for Higher Education Institutions, in the particular context of Colombia.

Despite these statements in favor of access to education and particularly at the university level, it is surprising that many people still do not have the possibility of studying in Higher Education, despite the various modalities that exist today to access the educational system. and be more likely to progress.

Experiences, not only in Latin America but worldwide, helped the government of President Belisario Betancur in Colombia in 1981 to create the National Open and Distance University (UNAD), to exclusively offer Distance Higher Education as a response to the needs of the population that, due to their residence, economic, labor or previous training conditions, lacked the possibility of accessing this educational level; In addition, its creation was considered a historic opportunity to modernize the Colombian educational system.

The authors of this work, by assuming the teaching functions of Higher Education in conventional contexts of face-to-face and other modalities, have been able to live with the problem of Colombian youth at the university level, where the number of young

people who are left without the possibility access to Higher Education is enormous and, paradoxically, a large percentage of those who enter, drop out and do not successfully complete their academic training. Such is the case at UNAD, where a very high percentage of those who access educational programs drop out, as described in the study by Facundo (2009), which shows dropout rates in some cohorts of 65.46%, or other years of 59% or 62%, high figures according to data from the Vice Ministry of Higher Education in the Project called "Strategies to reduce desertion in Higher Education." The desertion occurs for economic, academic or methodological reasons; The latter is of special importance for the research, since it is intended to investigate why students do not engage in task-based learning, the methodology of collaborative participation in forums, the techno-pedagogical use of learning environments, the use of virtual tools, the social environment of the student and his biographical condition, among other aspects.

When understanding and interpreting the problem of access to university and the high dropout rates, it is important to review the regulations that have framed Higher Education in Colombia, mainly Law 30 of 1992, which classifies Higher Education as a service public inherent to the purpose of the Colombian state and that guarantees access and quality. In its articles it is recognized that Higher Education in Colombia is a permanent process that facilitates the development of the human being, it is a cultural public service that safeguards quality and tends towards accessibility. In addition, it defends university autonomy, enshrined in the Political Constitution of Colombia, so that Higher Education Institutions are the ones that modify their statutes and design their academic programs according to social transformations. In this regard, the rigid structure of the educational system and the modification it has had to try to respond to

these social transformations and adopt positions that make the stagnant structure that lasted for a long time more flexible, only with the academic offer through the educational modality. face-to-face Changes that were presented at the basic and secondary levels and that some were later adapted at the university level, such as: offering night programs, introducing new careers and postgraduate level; in secondary, create alternatives to the classical baccalaureate and allow other options such as industrial or commercial, create inter-institutional and intersectoral links, allow the possibility of studying under other modalities that do not require the presence and simultaneity of meetings in the same place, and open new university careers.

Decree 1330 of 2019 of the Ministry of National Education (2020) and Agreement 02 of the Higher Education Council adopt important conceptual references such as the modality in which academic programs are offered and present a conceptualization that responds to current circumstances; therefore, he defines it as:

...way in which a set of organizational and/or curricular options are integrated that seek to respond to specific requirements of the level of training and attend to conceptual characteristics that facilitate access to students, in diverse conditions of time and space. The modalities through which the training process can be deployed are: face-to-face, distance, virtual, dual or other developments that combine and integrate the above (p. 6).

They also present the conceptualization of some factors and characteristics such as flexibility, relevance, communication, curricular adjustment and transcendental elements, in that desire to adapt the rigid structure of the educational system and manage to serve a greater number of students and also prevent them from dropping out.

Due to all of the above, the objective of this article is defined as: to base a didactic conception based on multimodalities to make the curricula in Higher Education more flexible.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

The research was developed within the qualitative design, because it belongs to the social sciences. According to Maturrano (2020), qualitative research is based on the understanding of phenomena and can focus on perceptions, concepts, meanings, thoughts, experiences, or feelings. Through qualitative design, how or why a phenomenon occurs is examined.

In the case of this research, it was intended to address a social reality that consisted of reviewing the teaching and learning processes where a didactic conception based on multimodalities is to be founded to make the curricula in Higher Education more flexible.

The field of action is university didactics, as a scientific discipline that studies teaching-learning processes in Higher Education and the setting was UNAD, which as a university entity fulfills the social mandate of promoting the training of upright professionals.

The approach assumed in the investigation was the hermeneutic one. For Planella (2005), hermeneutics allows the subject of the investigation to be placed in other positions that may allow them to start from their experience and from the experience of others. That is why it starts from a personal experience, as indicated by Duque and González (2020). It starts from within, from the interior and from the experience of the being that investigates; that is, from the feelings, attitudes and visions of the parties involved, which are mostly teachers and students and are not taken only as isolated events.

For this, 20 articles derived from research, published in indexed journals, a master's thesis, two undergraduate theses and three doctoral theses were selected, thus completing 26 sources of reading and analysis and being able to carry out a process of understanding, interpretation and synthesis of this reading, which González (2011) calls PRACCIS, a didactic strategy for the interpretation of texts that makes up this acronym for the stages that support it (Prejudice, Reflection, Analysis, Comparison, Comprehension, Interpretation and Synthesis) <sup>1</sup>.

The main results are specified in the scientific ideas that make up the didactic conception of the process that is studied, which allowed interpreting curricular flexibility from an innovative and creative theoretical perspective, based on the dynamic and coherent use of multimodalities, which undoubtedly generated new possibilities from the didactics currently in use at UNAD and in other Higher Education institutions in the country.

## RESULTS

The application of the hermeneutic approach to the reading of the selected texts allowed us to obtain the following results that, materialized through scientific ideas, model a didactic conception of the process of curricular flexibility through educational multimodalities, which supposes an innovative and creative interpretation in comparison with the traditional ways in which it has been developed at UNAD:

- The conceptions are considered scientific results, as long as they are contributions that constitute products of the investigative activity, in which scientific procedures and methods have been used that allow solving problems of practice or theory.
  - The conceptions as scientific results are constructions of a new type that contribute to the theory, through a system of ideas, categories, principles and relationships that allow us to interpret the process that is studied from a new perspective.
  - The didactic conceptions are considered as scientific results that constitute contributions to the didactic theory, since they are feasible, applicable, generalizable, pertinent, novel, original and valid.
  - Curricular flexibility has been investigated from various fields and perspectives and constitutes a priority and a need for Higher Education today; however, the flexibility of the curricula through didactic conceptions is an alternative that has not been sufficiently investigated.
  - Assuming that the curriculum materializes in didactics and becomes the starting point for interpreting curricular flexibility.
- The process of curricular flexibility is aimed at guaranteeing inclusive, equitable and quality professional training.
  - The rigid use of educational modalities limits the possibilities for access, permanence and graduation of comprehensive professionals with a broad profile; For this reason, making the curricula more flexible through a didactic conception based on the use of educational multimodalities is an alternative to this rigidity.
  - It is assumed as a didactic conception of the process of curricular flexibility through educational multimodalities the system of scientific ideas, categories and relationships, which allow interpreting the curriculum as a global educational project, of a historical and cultural nature, which is materialized through didactics, which is understood as a complex system that guarantees the training of professionals with a broad profile, based on facilitating with the dynamic and flexible use of multiple modalities, a multiplicity of opportunities for students, for comprehensive and quality professional training, taking local, territorial and national socio-economic needs as a starting point.

The following are defined as scientific ideas of the didactic conception of the process of curricular flexibility through educational multimodalities:

- **Scientific idea 1.** The process of curricular flexibility through educational multimodalities is characterized by having a contextual, professionalized and developer nature.
- **Scientific idea 2.** The process of curricular flexibility through educational multimodalities is resized

from the changes in the roles of teachers, students and other actors.

- **Scientific idea 3.** The process of curricular flexibility through educational multimodalities contributes to guaranteeing a pertinent, comprehensive and interdisciplinary professional training process.

## DISCUSSION

The dilemma surrounding the problem of curricular flexibility is a complex issue, but it is not new. However, the extraordinary post-pandemic conditions in which the world lives, and in particular Colombia, give it a priority that requires joining efforts, so that solutions to this problem can be found from educational research. Decisions about what, how and when to make the curricula more flexible through the use of multimodalities from didactics cannot be far from the significance that this has for the integral formation of the student.

It agrees with Upegui (2008), who states that:

Flexibility in education appears as a consequence of economic and cultural changes that, with the help of information and communication technologies, have transformed society. Today flexibility appears associated with various scenarios such as: labor, where the concept of flexible work arises; the economic one, with the concepts of flexible company, flexible production and economy; and the educational one, with the

principle of curricular flexibility, flexible training and flexible education (p. 1).

Contributing results from the Educational Sciences calls for the need to interpret, in an innovative way, the process of curricular flexibility. After the evaluative analysis previously exposed in a synthetic way, it coincides with the postulates of Breijo (2019) to interpret the conceptions as scientific results, which constitute a theoretical construction, of a new type, the result of the development of the new conceptions of the training of the educational professional and are interpreted in the light of philosophy, psychology and science. pedagogy.

This same author contributes a series of distinctive elements of the conceptions, which are coherently adjusted to the didactic conception that is provided as a contribution to the theory, in this research:

- "They arise and develop determined by social problems derived from the practical educational activity.
- They are obtained as a product of a theoretical activity.
- They are an expression of the researcher's educational philosophy.
- They tend to manifest the procedures for the desired transformation, or discover the laws, principles to which the transformation obeys.
- They are linked and contribute to solving the problems of practical activity" (Breijo, 2019, p. 2).

It coincides with Fabé (2015), who provides a Didactic Conception of the Teaching-Learning Process of Medieval History, when he emphasizes and justifies the role of the use of technological means, which undoubtedly impacts significantly as one of the ways to make university curricula more flexible.



At present we have university students who increasingly demand the incorporation of New Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) to the Teaching-Learning Processes, they need the acquisition of intellectual skills, the search for information to interact with it, understand it, convert it into knowledge and transfer it to the new situations that are presented to them; Therefore, the time has come for teachers to stop considering teaching as a matter of "giving the themes" and to see it as the process of cooperation with students so that they learn and teach with the use of ICT. These technologies bring new training needs from the university itself and its application as an instrument of didactic innovation. However, face-to-face teacher-student relationships still predominate, through the Forms of Teaching Organization, which is why face-to-face universities continue to be preferred" (Fabé, 2015, p. 2).

Similarly, Breijo *et al.* (2016), in his article, provides essential elements of a didactic conception for the development of critical thinking of the medical professional. In this, priority is given to medical education; however, it is applied as an element of great relevance and relevance in the current university. It is also considered essential in the proposal to improve the process of curricular flexibility, designing strategies from the professionalization process so that teachers and students are prepared to assume critical, decision-making and independent positions in professional training.

Critical thinking is channeled to a fixed operation, and the purpose of exercising it is not merely enthusiastic, but has a purpose or a decision, not only implying the rationality of scientific knowledge, this being the main source of reference for the knowledge that can be founding a decision, but not necessarily the only or most important, is also the reflection that allows considering the

variety of paths, perspectives and decisions and their consequences (Breijo *et al.*, 2016, p. 6).

By way of conclusion, it can be affirmed that the conception proposal that is based on this article is of great value and responds to the current need to perfect and overcome the traditional conceptions and practices developed in this process, since there are no found referents of conceptions. didactics on the process of curricular flexibility through educational multimodalities, particularly in the context of Colombia and UNAD.

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<sup>1</sup> We read from our *prejudices*, from the effects of tradition on our being, beliefs, emotions, feelings, Gadamer would say. From there *we reflect*, Heidegger would say, we go to meet something else, to avoid misunderstanding and to be able to climb, transparently, to the circle of understanding; we read, we enter the text from the superficial, we decode it to go to its depths, to what it says or does not say, *we analyze*, Aristotle would say. What it does not say, what it insinuates, is a riddle, we have to guess it,

Schleiermacher would say, and for this we can only *compare*, discover one thing from another, then *we understand*, we participate in the present of the text until we reach realization. of the unitary sense of what was said as Gadamer would say, but it must be expanded with the *interpretation*; it is putting understanding into practice, it is to know what is already known, Droysen would say, it is to bring what is other than we know to broaden understanding and provoke a synthesis, to create on what has already been said, which would *provoke* other new readings in others and so on. successively. Here is the PRACCIS to read the texts (González and Duque, 2020, p. 139).

**Conflict of interests:**

The authors declare not to have any interest conflicts.

**Contribution of the authors:**

The authors participated in the design and writing of the work, and analysis of the documents.

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