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# THE BLOG: FACILITATOR TOOL FOR ENGLISH TEACHER CREATORS

## EL BLOG: HERRAMIENTA FACILITADORA DEL PROFESOR DE INGLÉS COMO CREADOR

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### ABSTRACT

Current world conditions require a teacher who is in permanent connectivity with the environment,

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due to their need to interact and communicate, and particularly to be listened to in the knowledge context, which includes their educational skills. In this article, we will deal with blogs in particular, because they enable connectivity, establishing relationships between teachers involved in a discussion group

This article tried to determine the effectiveness of the use of the blog with pedagogical purposes in this group, as it is an alternative that contributed to their condition of creators, giving answers to the multiple situations that were presented in a school context, especially when they were immersed in the school. The information presented in this research was collected by a discussion group organized in a blog, where their opinion and academic argument in teaching practice was expressed, as well as several

scientific articles written by the researcher related to the issue of English teacher training.

The results obtained in these narratives demonstrate the effectiveness of using a blog, when it becomes a vehicle to promote interaction between colleagues, giving the opportunity for discussion around daily problems, which, as new teachers, raise their interest, concern and attention. (150-200 words).

**KEYWORDS:** *blog, new teacher, creator, interaction*

## RESUMEN

Las condiciones del mundo actual exigen de un docente que esté en permanente conectividad con el mundo que lo circunda. Esto obedece a la necesidad de este de interactuar y comunicarse, y ante todo, de ser escuchado en el contexto del conocimiento, del cual hace parte su saber pedagógico. En este artículo se tratará de manera particular los blogs, por ser facilitadores de la conectividad, permitiendo establecer relaciones entre unos docentes practicantes intervinientes, en un grupo de discusión. El artículo indaga la efectividad del uso del blog con carácter pedagógico dentro de este grupo, siendo una alternativa que contribuyera a su condición de ser creadores, por dar respuestas a las múltiples situaciones que se les presentaron en el contexto escolar, especialmente cuando se encontraban inmersos en la escuela.

Los datos presentados en esta investigación fueron recolectados mediante un grupo de discusión organizado en un blog, donde quedaron plasmadas sus opiniones y sus argumentaciones académicas sobre la práctica docente, así como alrededor de diversos artículos científicos escritos por el investigador

relacionados con la temática de la formación de profesores de inglés.

Los resultados obtenidos en estas narrativas demuestran la eficacia del uso del blog cuando se convierte en un vehículo promotor de la interacción entre compañeros, dando la oportunidad a la discusión alrededor de los problemas diarios, que, como profesores novatos, despiertan su interés, preocupación y atención.

**Palabras clave:** blog, profesor novato, creador, interacción

## INTRODUCTION

The scientific and technological advances of the 21st century require the novice teacher to be involved in several technological tools to facilitate access to knowledge. In the case developed in this article, we will talk about the blog, because it is a tool that facilitates spaces for interaction within a group of teaching practice.

A full explanation about this tool Barrios (2003) argues that: (...) *“the blog has become an online media that promotes other forms of interrelationship, allowing also the intervention of all students.”* (p. 75).

Thus, it may be deduced that blogs provide other methods of exchanging ideas where future teachers can also learn from one another, based on a permanent dialogue that offers the possibility to present at the same time, different points of view on issues of interest which, in this case, is mainly related to the initial training process of English teachers, as well as situations experienced when they are in contact with the school, that is, when they are doing their teaching practice.

This article will explore some conditions that may be helpful in finding other ways of appropriating this pedagogical knowledge according to the present century, until they become part of the reality, lived in the classroom by future English teachers, when they are involved in their educational experience.

### **THE BLOGS AND TRAINING PROCESSES IN THE TEACHING PRACTICE OF FUTURE ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHERS.**

Changes germinated from the evolution of technology have formulated new communication dynamics, fostered by the access, and ease of meetings offered by the creation of digital tools that have created other kinds of opinion and gatherings among individuals.

In addition, the impact of these changes in the field of education, up to the point that it is impossible for any teacher to be indifferent about the use of these tools in the classroom, especially due to the need to have a permanent contact with the students involved.

Accepted the influence of technology in the educative field, it is necessary to mention that blogs arise since 1998, and only from 1999 were offered free of charge, it is pertinent to add that even today, has a great growth and acceptance (Blood, 2002). The tool is gradually being developed in other fields such as journalism, business and education.

Regarding this, it should be said that the blog is easy to access, and even allows comments to be promoted to facilitate the exchange of views among participants, and also promotes interaction (Johnson, 2004). But few teachers dare to explore the creation, management and disposition of this tool, to develop their classes.

Here, it can be perceived that the blog, although it is a user-friendly instrument for teachers in training, facilitating permanent interactivity between those who are part of a particular group which, in this case, is connected to a specific academic activity, framed within the teaching practice, it is also evident that even in university contexts, there is little awareness-raising among future teachers about the pedagogical use that can be given by the use of this tool.

Notice that in spite of everything, it is pertinent to contemplate the opinion of the Literacy Association United Kingdom who has demonstrated the popularity and importance of the blog in educational institutions because it offers a user-friendly access, usually not requiring a previous instruction of those who are going to use it, in this aspect, it is said that: -(...) "Blogs have become a well-established, and widely recognized method of digital communication, and this by itself suggests that they should be taken seriously in educational institutions" (Davies, 2009), in other words, blog groups are widely useful in educational institutions because their access is simple and allows unrestricted use over time, and also provides the opportunity to reply comments made by other users, on the issues raised here, enriching the training of future teachers, for example.

In this perspective, not only would they provide information, but they would allow the generation of a debate about the topics posted, among participants, seeking to strengthen the knowledge that users have about certain subjects, expanding their knowledge with the new information included here; that is, the blogs have become quite meaningful, in the context of teacher training.

Some newspapers, such as the New York Times, Magazine and the Herald (2005), have carried out studies about the number of people who use

them, determining that currently exists a very large number of users of this medium, based on figures such as the following: (...) “ over 32 million Americans read blogs, used in Japan by more than 16 million Japanese, the number of bloggers reached 3,350,000 per month”, these figures demonstrate the scope of blogs in society worldwide.

Accordingly, the importance of blogs can be appreciated, as their rise and acceptance by thousands of people around the globe is confirmed, so that, their approval breaks the boundaries of distance, time, place, age and social stratum, making it possible to overcome bonds of union and exchange, causing enriching tensions in the learning process, among different audiences, including future language teachers.

It is therefore, an issue defined in many cases by the shared topics, which must awake interest in those who are reading the blog, thus, at the same time, they are willing to share this information with other people, therefore, there is a wide possibility of communicating in network, simultaneously allowing it to be quickly transmitted.

In this line agrees, the blog helps a community to access technology by easily meeting their needs (Wenger, 2009), it means, it enables direct communication between different members of a group, widely contributing to their interests, a feature that also enables their integration and interaction.

This recognizes the invaluable effect produced by the blog to the members of the community, however, in the present case, it allows the academic staff in training to have a permanent feedback and support, based on the registered views of all its members, including the practice director, a favorable fact for the use of this space.

The blog can also be used to reflect, describe or argue a case, as well as other things. This perspective distances itself from the traditional role of the users of any blog, once, in the academic community the teacher can give a different sense to this space, to open it up to become a researcher and an innovator of its educational activity, which is inherent to its condition of amateur teacher, who makes an attempt to use this tool with a scientific intention.

Regarding this observation, traditional teachers believe that teaching and assessment is about marking and correcting student work. This type of practice does not involve learners in interactive processes that require them to talk about their work and ideas (Glogowski, 2009). This leads us to affirm the need to use tools such as blogs to foster the active participation of educators in training, generating more interesting, striking, and innovative work dynamics for them.

The most important thing here is to emphasize that this exercise indirectly led by the research route to the observed (teachers in training), enriching aspect of their profession by realizing that somehow were co participating in the strategy used in this study, and we are sure that they will dynamize the use of this tool in the classroom in their condition of future teachers.

In view of this consideration, we highlight how this type of tool promotes decision making, the deliberation of what and how to learn, always with the guidance of the practice teacher director, thus promoting a participatory subject of their own development of knowledge and self-criticism of their learning process, strengthening their condition of resilience, against the comments made by others (Ramirez et al., 2018).

To conclude, it can be highlighted the use and possibilities offered by this tool aimed at the educational field are impactful for teachers in

training who, throughout this study, were able to appreciate the scope and value of this tool in the implementation of a research process, It has been demonstrated that the scientific accuracy of blog comments, which must be directed not only by the Practice Director but also provide the possibility of highlighting the contributions of students, blog users, also showing that it can be used not only for recording banal and superfluous comments on the topics posted.

## **METHODOLOGY**

In this section, some elements related to the methodology used to reach this proposal are presented.

## **RESEARCH AND PARTICIPANTS**

Qualitative research of the exploratory-descriptive type was applied to address this study.

From the wide range of instruments that facilitate the collection of information the choice was made to choose the discussion group, which is now presented in detail.

A total of twenty-four (24) participants, distributed in two groups, took part in the exhibition. First, there was a group of practice students in the morning, and the second, in the afternoon shift. Participants participated in the study voluntarily,

Of this group, eighteen (18) were men and six (6) were women, their ages ranged between 19 to 22 years, all of them were in their sixth and seventh semester studying an English degree program, for one year.

## **DATA COLLECTION METHOD**

A blog was used to collect the information, whereby the participants established a discussion group, focusing on different topics

of interest related to teaching practice, so that, every one made contributions, to express their points of view on the topics mentioned, in the group.

Sometimes, the practice director teacher who acts as a researcher posted articles on the blog about English teachers in the classroom, beginners' English teachers, globalization and English teaching training, and so on, to be discussed.

This qualitative research technique, collects the opinions of its members, enabled participants to put forward different perspectives on the issues proposed, and subsequently facilitated solutions that aimed to solve problems raised in the different sessions, developed by teaching practice and confronted with real situations in the school context, often generating tensions leading to search for alternatives from scientific perspectives.

## **DATA ANALYSIS**

In this study, the group discussion is considered as a qualitative technique due to its concern for understanding particular social problems, which is developed in a group, and it is based on dialogue, between people (Castro, 2010). This is evidenced when the group's opinions were taken in relation to their problems and opinions, as a result of the experiences lived, during the practice development.

In particular, it is explained how the topics discussed in this research were developed around the common problems detected by the participants during the interventions registered in the blog.

To catch the participants' interest, to define the issues to be considered by the group, a first round was carried out, where the moderator, in this case the researcher, introduced the highest impact scenarios for the participants, based on their interventions in the blog.

Afterwards, the members made observations related to the topics suggested, to select the most significant and interesting for the participants. Based on this criterion, the discussion topic was defined for posterior analysis, and, at the same time, this exercise allowed a democratic participation space for the blog's users, who were, in this case, English teachers in the training process. Finally, after the topic had been chosen, the participants discussed it.

It is worth mentioning that this discussion group, as a qualitative technique, allowed us to gather information based on important academic contributions to teacher training from the participants in this study, through their opinions, reactions, explanations, and perspectives on the suggested topics within the group, which were evidenced by their contributions to the blog.

## FINDINGS

Now, the findings corresponding to the analysis of the information registered by the participants in the blog will be illustrated. First, a reading of all the comments registered by the teachers was done in order to set up some categories that would allow their interpretation, then, an analysis of the information was practiced, identifying similar characteristics, in the comments and opinions registered in the blog, which revolved around the training process of the novice teacher.

One of the categories identified states that this English teacher in a training process is a creator, now this hierarchy is detailed.

## TEACHER AS A CREATOR OF PEDAGOGICAL ENVIRONMENTS

This category relates to the creation of pedagogical environments that promote pleasant learning environments, which allow the improvement of teaching processes. According to the researcher (Del Campo, 2012), this category is related to the autonomy and creativity of teachers when they generate knowledge, based on their reflections about the ways of teaching and learning English. This idea is supported by (Fandiño, 2017) who presents the status of teachers as creators of pedagogical strategies, which allow them to produce materials that respond to the reality of the particular situations in which the practicing English teacher teaches. Therefore, both authors emphasize the importance of creativity on the part of the practicing teacher, especially in the teaching situations taught, which must be in accordance with the context where the novice teachers develop their pedagogical exercise, as this is a basic action of their classroom activities.

This category has the following subcategories, illustrated in the following chart.

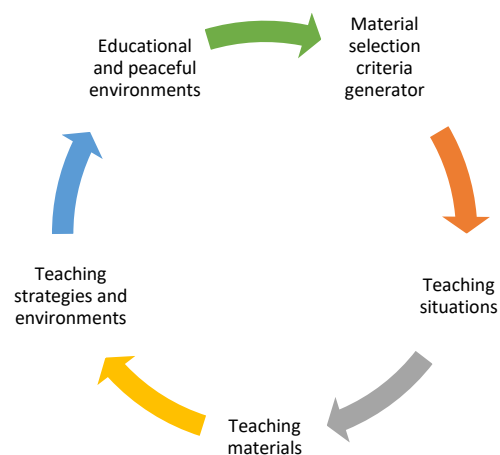


Figure 1. Creator category and subcategories.

Source: Author

In summary, Figure 1, “**creative teacher**”, **highlights** each subcategory.



Figure 2. Creative English teacher. Source: Author

Reviewing this information, it was reiterated that Preservice English teachers must become the creators of the learning environment, thereby leading to a transformation of the educational environment so that they can implement other teaching strategies.

The researcher Madrid, (2004), points out that practicing teachers should be trained to act in different scenarios, in such a way that they are offered multiple pedagogical possibilities that enrich their professional work, in order to be facilitators of children's learning, thus allowing them to develop and improve their teaching skills.

On the other hand, the material used by the teacher is analyzed, especially that related to technology applied to language teaching, taking advantage of the elements provided by the environment (Koçoğlu, 2009), the practitioner then, will be a creator of strategies and environments that lead the student to capture

the dimension of the impact of handling a foreign language in the global context, which is a source of communication and connection with other parts of the world.

## DISCUSSION

It is essential to recognize, that teachers in training must have the capacity for innovation and change taking into account children's learning styles, which are being renewed quite rapidly and often challenging teachers in training to innovate their teaching practice (Villa, 2013). In fact, Dussel (2010), points out that, in the global context, the teacher must consider the individual condition of students considering their interests and needs, by creating situations that enable the appropriation of knowledge based on values and commitment of the different actors in the educational process.

Regarding this, practitioner 2 commented in the blog: "I walk around the room so all children

can see and ask; who is he? And so on... After a while the kids tend to lose interest, so I finish quickly and proceed to the next activity... I ask the kids to draw their family, placing the English name above each drawing, i.e., father”.

To ensure that the student learns, in this particular case, the trainee teacher had to use different teaching strategies to get the students to carry out the suggested activity.

The MEN (2004), suggested that novice teachers must guarantee effective teaching, for which they will use different ways of teaching, which guarantee assertive learning, hence the need to define different ways of teaching, once they interact with reality, which will be connected to some theoretical principles, which will support their actions (Soute, 1999). In other words, global teachers will be propositional according to reality by generating changes in the forms and modes of imparting knowledge, surrounded by the uncertainty of the society that integrates it, serving as a motor for major transformations (Perrenoud, 2004), which lead to think that no educational process is finished and on the contrary, is in permanent reconstruction.

Likewise, Villa (1999), determines that intervention in the school context allows for changes in the teacher's actions, making the corresponding adjustments that make it possible to rethink the strategies implemented. On the other hand, we find that this practitioner will also be a promoter of values in the students, through the implementation of activities that generate a better coexistence among them (Tyler, 1993), this explains the need of being explicit about with the learners regarding the type of skills and values that the teacher proposes to achieve.

Referring to this idea, the 24th contributor says in the blog: “In every activity we develop as

teachers we encourage values; children often make jokes as they do not believe that this has an effect, they do it just for fun; it is for this reason that we have to make them aware all the time of how do we deal with each other and also how everything we do has consequences. This becomes more important than teaching any science. Therefore, it is necessary to promote a comprehensive education, which is derived from the practice of the Preservice English teachers' behavior, their attitude and work in the classroom will strengthen the values, so that novice teachers will unconsciously integrate them into the current students.

This comment highlights the need to implement values through pedagogical action of teachers in practice, by proposing activities that involve implementation of these values, which promotes an attitude of resilience among students.

## CONCLUSION

After working with this group of students, it became evident -through the blog- that the processes of interaction can be improved, as it is a facilitating tool for participation by the members of a community, who could generate different discussions, showing us their viewpoints and opinions on the detected topics, nourished with interventions made by participants.

Technology facilitates connectivity within a community; however, it is necessary to fully define the issues around which group discussions will be held.

Using the blog allowed us to break time and space limitations for participants who, as training teachers, often find it hard to gather together to study and analyze different issues that affect them in their daily lives as student teachers. In this



sense, this tool allowed us to generate a space for discussion and debate around challenges detected by teachers, especially when they were working on their teaching practice.

Finally, it is worth highlighting how important the blog is as a key tool that allows teachers to become active participants in every situation presented in the classroom and, in general, at the school environment, so that their opinion is taken into account as a central element in the educational process. It also enables teachers to have responsibility for making decisions regarding implementation of teaching strategies based on their reflections in context, in the context of their teaching practice, and through an effective pedagogical exercise for students.

In addition, this kind of tool promotes autonomous learning of students, by having the possibility to get involved in a discussion of their interest, the students often took part multiple times, overcoming minimum entries on the blog, every day.

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