EXPERIENCIA SIGNIFICATIVA: ESCRITURA ACADÉMICA Y TRABAJO COLABORATIVO EN LA MAESTRÍA EN EDUCACIÓN

SIGNIFICANT EXPERIENCE: ACADEMIC WRITING AND COLLABORATIVE WORK IN MASTER OF EDUCATION

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RESUMEN

En el siguiente texto se narra las experiencias en torno a la escritura académica mediante el trabajo colaborativo en el grupo de trabajo

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conformado por Isabel Aristizabal, Mauricio Santa y Claudia Mesa con la dirección de la docente Mercedes Vallejo, integrante del grupo de investigación EAV (Educación en Ambientes Virtuales), en torno a la tesis de grado de la maestría en educación con énfasis en ambientes de aprendizaje mediados por TIC (Tecnologías de información y de la comunicación)" de la Universidad Pontificia Bolivariana de Medellín-Colombia, la cual se denomina "Efectos en las prácticas pedagógicas de los docentes que han desarrollado experiencias significativas con inclusión digital postuladas al Premio ciudad de

Medellín a la calidad de la educación 2010-2013.
Palabras clave: Experiencia Significativa, Trabajo Colaborativo, Tecnologías de la Información y la Comunicación, Entornos Virtuales para la Educación, Escritura Académica.

ABSTRACT

The following text narrates the academic writing experience of the collaboration of an academic team work, composed of Isabel Aristizabal, Mauricio Santa and Claudia Mesa as directed by Mercedes Vallejo, membership researcher in Virtual Environments for Education (VEE) Research Group, about the degree thesis of the "Master in Education, with focus in learning environments mediated by ICT" in Pontifical Bolivarian University of Medellin-Colombia, which is called "Effects on teacher's pedagogical practice that have developed significant experience with digital inclusion after receiving the award "Premio Ciudad de Medellín a la calidad de la Educación 2010-2013."

KEY WORDS: Significant Experience, collaborative Work, Information and Communication Technologies, Virtual Environments for Education, Academic Writing.

DESCRIPTION

The time period addressed in the thesis is from January, 2014 through February, 2016. The objective is to understand the effects of the award on the quality, improvement and transformation of actions and pedagogic issues in the context of teachers and teaching directors in the formulation of educational public policies. It also serves as an input for the inter-institutional macro-project "Experiences and quality on the pedagogical practices and educational issues in context of teachers and teaching directors postulated to the award "Premio Ciudad de Medellín a la Calidad de la Educación 2010-

2013." It studies different populations according to the specific areas for which advisor Mercedes Vallejo and her colleagues are responsible.

That's why, below is the dynamics of collaborative work chronologically in the thesis, that fit in the qualitative methodological processes. The population investigated are teachers and teaching directors in the employment of educational institutions nominated for the award "Ciudad de Medellin a la Calidad de la Educación". The units of analysis for the case study are each application to the award, that describes a particularly significant experience.

CONTEXTUALIZATION

In the Second Semester of 2013 the University of Antioquia, EAFIT University, San Buenaventura University, Colombia National University and Pontifical Bolivarian University contacted candidates for the Master's Programs in Education. The Pontifical Bolivarian University has two emphases: Teacher thinking-training and learning environments mediated by ICT. The authors of this experience presented their application through a preliminary draft and before the end of 2013, they were chosen for the Program and informed via e-mail.

PROGRAM INITIATIONS

In January 2014, the research project began " through the seminar of investigation course " under the instructor Mercedes Vallejo. The preliminary goal was oriented to the needs of the respective educational institutions' working circles in each students' respective areas: Claudia in the field of chemistry, Isabel in the area of computer science, and Mauricio in the area of physical education. However, the instructor of the course suggested that it was not pertinent to start with the project due to the scope, impact, and viability. Therefore, these students plus a fourth student were advised to opt for alternative

blueprints that were generated within the VEE Research Group.

The team discussed their willingness to postpone their initial thesis proposals during the following week to identify the weaknesses, opportunities, strengths, advantages, and disadvantages of the new project direction as well as personal availability to actively collaborate in a thesis. The fourth partner decided to work individually, while the others chose to collaborate as a team.

The academic team determined the research question, objectives and it agreed face-to-face periodical meetings within the facilities of the UPB, on Fridays before to classes and on Saturdays after classes in the afternoon. The students and the thesis director agreed to meet once every two weeks, to present highlights of their work in the macro-project; later they made respective record. It allowed the advancement of the Problem Statement presented on the first socialization of the thesis in the research seminar course. The team members began to clear their conceptual and contextual doubts; Claudia also facilitated the issue understanding to her partners, because she participated for the award previously.

The students continued with the activities in the program courses, they attempted to mainstream the activities assignments to nourish the Theoretical Framework; bibliographical search also began while they examined documentary information to add it to the research.

On July 12th, 2014, the academic team work presented the advances of the thesis in the research seminar. It, also, identified that, along with the other problematic axes of the program, the academic load increased exponentially. The students' extra class meetings were based on the thesis and other subjects. However, these products did not remain isolated, but were included in the report.

During the activity, it was identified that this type of research had a qualitative methodological conception, as it made special emphasis on the valuation of the subjective and the experiential and on the interaction between research subjects (Galeano, 2004, p. 18). The research method was the case study that implied an exercise of inquiry which was characterized by the systematic examination of the nominations to the prize. This research created interpretation through the instruments of data collection.

In this phase, individual qualities were identified for each team member in respect to their academic writing. Each student was responsible for their own submissions. Inaccuracies were noted with regard to grammar and argument; strengths were identified with respect to the operational development of the thesis. Isabel was a specialist in the search for information, Mauricio dominated the design of formats and APA style and Claudia was skilled in triangulation and the design of tables. Adding to the communication system was face-to-face meetings and phone calls, along with the incorporation of email and social networks, especially WhatsApp and Facebook. The latter, allowed communication with other Masters students, the work teams and teachers.

On November 8th, 2014 the team had the first extra-class socialization at the University of San Buenaventura. The aim was to expose the advances of the thesis within the context of the macro-project. They were fed by issues that contributed to the thesis and strategies for future presentations. The thesis director was responsible for the inter-institutional macro-project, also he participated in the awarding of the prizes for the quality of education. This occurred on November 12th, 2014 in Medellin Metropolitan Theater and initiated the collection of the archives, which the education secretary forwarded to Mauricio. Next, he organized the database into their respective categories and distributed the updated information to

the academic team work. These files became the population universe with a total of 484 applications between the years 2010 and 2013.

THE KNOT OF RESEARCH

In the second part of this experience, the preparation, application, systematization and documentary research stages regarding the Data Collection Instruments were started, specifically: documentary analysis, survey research, interviews and focus group research. Together the students designed tables to compare the information gathered using a Microsoft Office Excel spreadsheet, although they had differing levels of intensity in their work schedules. On September 13th 2014, the reading of applications, 484 in total, began as well as their interpretation through documentary analysis.

The sample selection was made through a non-probability sampling technique when reading the applications, to identify the required categories of research. There were 347 applications selected in total, the students developed the activity in that moment easily. The second step was the descriptors tracing through the segmented reading of the filtered files wherein 42 applications were obtained. The level of demand in reading was significant, it was for that reason students met high concentration in one of their residences during two days; the sample selection was reduced further to 33 applications. Four more applications, however, were filtered out as they had not the characteristics for this study after the debate, the positions became more evident and difference discussed in the project interests. For all this, the applications in dispute finally totaled 29 and it had likewise strengthened the thesis domain.

The initial contact with teachers (29 teachers) to participate in this research is done via a letter. A team member is assigned to send and receive the information via email. Then, another member is accountable for the participation and confirmation via telephone. In addition, a third member will be looking for data storage devices such as camcorders, voice recorders, and printed materials among other things.

After discussing the meeting's programming with the teacher's colleague and filling out printed surveys, on November 13th, 2014 interviews began.

The interviews followed an unstructured model and therefore questions were designed and formulated to create a fluid environment, so that the interviewee expressed himself or herself freely. Interviewees determined the meeting conditions, while Interviewers were mobilized themselves to the educational institutions. To potentiate coverage, they established their areas according to the institution's location; for example, Isabel conducted the interviews in the north of the city, Mauricio did them in the south, Claudia in the west, and Mercedes in the east and downtown Medellin. The students traveled together during several interviews, due to distance, conditions and social issues in some Medellin neighborhoods, such as the so-called invisible borders where visitors could not pass across some city areas for the common crimes and robberies.

On November 15th, 2014, the academic team had the second exhibition of the thesis advances in the research seminar, also, they discussed the progress of the project and shared fieldwork strategies and logistics recommendations to their classmates; until that moment, it was the only project in that phase.

During holiday season, the thesis work intensity diminished. Students attended family, social and personal activities; however, the exercise around the thesis was constant and communication through social networks and mail continued. At the end of holiday season,

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they resumed activities and participated again in the weekly meetings to update, contextualized and started the remaining interviews. This period was an intense time for the team, because they needed to collect information. At the conclusion of the exercise, it was found that a total of 22 surveys with their respective interviews; this corresponded to the fourth and last criteria of sample selection: willingness to volunteer.

After adjusting the fieldwork result of the thesis, the students displayed it on March 21, 2015 in the research seminar. The objective of the meeting was to demonstrate the progress of gathering information. The team had a temporary advantage over their colleagues and shared with other students their progress of the information analysis.

The team and the thesis director decided to build an academic article and a PowerPoint presentation about the research macro-project. They were presented at the "Jornadas del Maestro Investigador XIV Jornadas y II Congreso Internacional del Maestro Investigador." The application was approved and the exposition was shown on March 28th, 2015, at the Pontifical Bolivarian University in Medellín. The article was subsequently published as a chapter of memory (Vallejo, Santa, Mesa & Zuluaga, 2015).

Students analyzed the surveys to make a characterization of nominated teachers for the award, through a matrix diagram for survey analysis. The team members distributed and transcribed the interviews of audio files in Microsoft Office Word format, an exercise simple in practice but demanding in theory. They took advantage of the school and work recess of the holy week and met in one of their homes to continue the analysis of interviews, through a matrix diagram for interview analysis.

The reading of interviews became extensive but direct. Since there were new and unknown issues, it fulfilled what Kabalen (1998) calls the "levels of reading", conformed by literal reading; inferential reading and analog reading. This allowed to deepen the analysis.

The last Data Collection Instrument applied to validate the data obtained from the previous instruments, was the focus group. After the survey and interview, the sample selection of teachers selected were invited by email to participate in the meeting on May 23th, 2015. Again, students assumed the logistics tasks.

During the mid-year vacation season in 2015, students increased their participation in the development of the thesis. The operative work decreased, the conclusions and results were constructed and the thesis writing was refined. This became a period of intense consultation, although in the last semester of the program, the only course was the research seminar. This however did not mean less work...meetings and consultations with the thesis director increased, but the illusion of obtaining the academic title promptly encouraged the work team.

THE PROLOGUE OF THE EXPERIENCE

At the conclusion of the thesis writing, the text was sent to the APA style format expert for correction and verification. A week after that phase was completed, the text was given to the thesis director who endorsed it and gave the it the approval for the next stage, the evaluators. Finally, the thesis was sent on November 6, 2015, to the coordinator of the Masters in Education, with focus in learning environments mediated by ICT. He was in charge of looking for internal and external evaluators. The same day in Pontifical Bolivarian University, the thesis director shared the results of her thesis with respect to the macro-project with her team of co-researchers. Evaluators returned the corrections of the thesis to the students, first, the external evaluator did it on November 30, 2015, after, the internal evaluator on December 10, 2015; during December, the academic work team met to apply

the recommendations of the evaluators, and the text is delivered directly to the coordinator of the master's degree program, and the thesis support process began. It was summoned for on January 22, 2016.

Finally, before the thesis defense, the students met again in one of their homes and rehearsed the presentation repeatedly. Although, by that date they had learned the subject with conviction, it remained necessary to refine subjects regarding the presentation protocol. During the thesis defense, the nervousness in the students became evident. Nevertheless, it was successfully delivered, and herein the importance of collaborative work was showcased. According to Kezar & Lester (2009), shared effort allows a thesis project to be carried out in an efficient way. The recommendations of the jury are welcome and are considered for the next publications of the thesis in book, scientific article, and academic article format. Graduation takes place on February 26th, 2016, in the facilities of the UPB. It was shown that it was possible. It was done!

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