TOWARDS THE EUROPEAN
HIGHER EDUCATION AREA (EHEA)

Innovative teaching experiences at the UAB in social sciencies and humanities

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IDES
Unitat d'Innovació Docent
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Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona

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Faculty of Education

Faculty of Philosophy and Arts

Prologue

In 1999 the ministries of education from 29 European countries signed the Bologna Declaration, which aspired to create a coherent and cohesive European Higher Education Area (EHEA) by 2012. It was the beginning of a process which aimed to achieve a system of easily readable and transferrable qualifications, the establishment of a common system of credits, the promotion of mobility with Europe without administrative or legal obstacles, and European cooperation for quality assurance. The process would continue with the meetings in Prague (2001), Berlin (2003), Bergen (2005) and London (2007). In short, the whole process aimed to promote a European dimension to higher education.

It therefore consisted of trying to enable the integration of university-qualified people in a unified European labour market and to achieve greater competitiveness for Europe on an international scale. These objectives required a consideration of the different educational systems and the redesigning of their curriculums in terms of skills and learning results.

Within the process different challenges were proposed according to the different systems and traditions in the university cultures of the different countries. In Spain, this meant changing the architecture of higher education qualifications towards a more modular, three-phase structure on the one hand (undergraduate degree, Master, Doctorate), and an opportunity to rethink the teaching activity and methodology within a student-centred model on the other.

In terms of changing the architecture of the qualifications, the first major point to stress is the abandonment of the classic type of credit awarded to date, and the introduction of a new type of credit, the *ECTS* credit, which is a measure of the total work carried out by the student, including both group and individual work, whether supervised or unsupervised, as well as the evaluation activities. Within the European framework an academic year is equivalent to 60 credits, with a quantitative estimate of between 25 and 30 hours per credit. Therefore an academic year involves between 1500 and 1800 hours of work by the student.

In the new European framework, higher education is structured in three phases or cycles: the first cycle counts for between 180 and 240 credits (three or four years) and leads to a *Bachelor's degree*, a second cycle of between 60 and 120 credits (one or two years) leads to a *Master*, and a third cycle of variable duration (around three years) leads to the *Doctorate* qualification.

In the spirit of this cyclical or modular structure there are two important aspects: one is flexibility, or the possibility of reorientating the learning experience from one area to another on moving from one cycle to the next. The other is employability, or the willingness to achieve certain levels of knowledge, skills and abilities within each cycle that will enable the qualified person to enter different areas of the labour market.

In terms of the first two cycles, Bachelor's degree *and Master*, most European countries have adopted a 3+2 structure consisting of a three-year undergraduate degree worth 180 credits and a two-year Master worth 120. This structure provides a basic, general education at degree level and more specialised training at Masters level, and it means that a large number of graduates continue onto the second cycle. However, it should be pointed out that although the 3+2 structure has been adopted by the majority, it is not unanimous.

The Catalan government initially opted for a 3+2 structure and in 2004 it initiated a number of pilot plans for the adaptation of degree qualifications to the EHEA. The Spanish government initially opted for a framework that left a variable margin of flexibility in terms of the duration of the undergraduate courses (Decree on undergraduate and postgraduate degrees 2004) and later (Decree 2007) it changed to the 4+1 option which, as we have mentioned, is a minority option in Europe.

The UAB had opted for the 3+2 structure from the start – and not always in line with the other Spanish universities. This structure is compatible with the models being adopted by most other universities in Europe, are competitive in terms of the courses on offered in Europe, offering a real possibility for the mobility of university students and staff and integration into the labour market. Notwithstanding, predicting that this would not be the final structure to be adopted by the Spanish government, the UAB prepared its own model consisting of synthesis of the 3+2 structure (the majority structure in Europe and the one preferred by this university) and the 4+1 structure (finally adopted by the Spanish government). Within this model the official four-year undergraduate degree would be structured as a three-year degree, containing the basic nucleus of the undergraduate degree plus a fourth year which would be variable and which students could take according to their own interests: either as a natural continuation of the previous three years, or as a *minor* in a different area of knowledge, as a practicum, a mobility year or as the first year of a *Master*. The last of these options would facilitate mobility in the opposite direction, meaning that foreign students with undergraduate degrees worth 180 credits could come to the UAB for the second cycle (Master). As mentioned above, apart from these changes in the architecture of higher education qualifications, the process of integration in to the EHEA also implies an opportunity to reconsider teaching activities. But first, we need ask ourselves whether our teaching activity needs to be changed.

Teaching, like any other activity, can always be improved and it is a fact that those who teach are not always satisfied with the results of their labour. It is often the case that teachers think their students could learn more or could learn better. The reasons for this are diverse and complex, and some will almost certainly be found beyond the

strictly academic field. However, it is also true that within teaching activities there is a margin for action and creativity.

During the learning process, whatever the methodology used, individual effort by students is indispensable and cannot be substituted. This could lead to the impression that no great changes are necessary because the onus to work is on the student. However, this is not the case. Learning requires effort on the part of the person who wants to learn, and also on the part of the person who wants to teach them. It requires a reflection on content and an adequate design of the activities that are connected to real situations, those that flag up relevant questions and are not restricted to the simple application of algorithms. In short, they need to respond to the question *what do the students need to know how to do?* Rather than *what do they need to do?* This is particularly true in a context like ours where teaching often abuses the purely expositive activity, the simple transfer of concepts, which does not encourage the activity of the learner – in fact quite the opposite.

Reducing expositive activity while planning a correctly balanced activity for students, offering tools for learning, is in general terms, the great challenge for our teaching staff. It is not a simple task and it certainly implied effort on the part of the teachers.

This concern has led to many teachers recognising the need to reflect on their own teaching, to confirm their strong points, explore alternatives and use up all room for manoeuvre – which is often greater than it would appear at first sight – in the teaching activity itself with a view to making it more efficient. This kind of enthusiastic and innovative teacher has taken advantage of the opportunity to go further than structural changes and has sought obvious factors in the teaching task which have enabled improvements in student learning.

This innovative effort has been supported by the Higher Education Teaching Innovation (IDES) unit of the UAB, which has helped to turn a teacher's initiative into a project and in developing the action to make it a quality product. These two volumes bring together the results of this innovative effort carried out over a period of four years. Many of the experiences presented here have received the support of the MQD (Teaching Quality Improvement) programme and AGAUR and the rest have benefitted from the University's own programmes.

A process of change of this kind is always long and complicated. It generates support and enthusiasm at the same time as scepticism and resistance. It requires complicity within the university community and the teaching staff who present their experiences here have therefore provided the germ that has enabled change to grow, and the muscle that bears the collective effort of starting this process of change in our university.

The UAB is very grateful to all of them.

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Presentation

For the first time, the IDES is publishing a text that has been directed with criteria, care and dedication by Dr. Elena Añaños, head of the area of innovation. I would like to extend to her my gratitude for the effort involved in carrying out this task and for her clear-sighted contribution, which has made it possible for us to understand and describe the project presented here.

This text, which covers *innovations in the classroom* and is aimed at university teaching staff, aims to contribute new information and knowledge to help other teachers design their own innovations in the context of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) and to encourage them to share the experiences that have clearly obtained quality results.

For several years, the need to adapt our study plans to the European system has led teaching staff, both directly and indirectly, to reflect on their own activity and to experience new or different ways of looking at the teaching-learning environment. In some cases, the teachers have evaluated their own way of working based on their own considerable experience, collecting evidence of clear results and redefining the teaching environment to adapt it to the new situation. In others, they have created different materials and have used information and communication technology (ICT) to ensure that students are able to receive materials that are difficult to work with directly, and in yet others, innovation and creativity have been manifestly reflected in some truly original experiences.

Only a selection of these innovative experiences are reflected in this text, and we have used as selection criteria those that have been recognised and received support for their production from the Generalitat de Catalunya's Agency for Management of University and Research Grants (AGAUR) or from the Vice Rector's Office for Academic Studies and Quality Assurance for the funding of teaching quality improvement between 2004 and 2007. For each completed project, conclusions are presented and these can be considered starting points for understanding what innovation is and how it is applied to the daily teaching and learning tasks in the university setting. All of them provide a basis for subsequent developments, in which the role of the environment is fundamental, and for that reason we have chosen to differentiate production in two different settings, defined by the specific contexts: innovation for experiences in experimental science and technology and health sciences, and innovative experiences in social and humanities.

Although this is simply a range of different innovative experiences (a total of forty – twenty in each volume) they correspond to 32% of all projects in receipt of grant support. The others are not presented here, not because the teachers in question do not want to see them published, but because, in some cases, it was considered that the project had not reached a point of completion where conclusive results could be presented.

Behind these experiences are groups of teachers carrying out research into their own teaching. This process has not been easy, since it starts with the designing of the project and sometimes with a joint reflection by the teachers of different subjects or groups on the possibilities for creating an innovative design. And the work does not end there. Once the grant has been awarded, and disregarding day-to-day difficulties such as changes in groups, different timetables or different numbers of students per group, the project is launched involving coordination, any revision which has been made and any unplanned changes that need to be implemented. Data is collected, the results are checked and new changes are often introduced for later projects. This group task, which defines the aims, the individual responsibility in the application and the complementary nature of the analysis of the results, is not reflected is this work. However, we are aware that without this shared, group effort, it would not have been possible. The experiences presented here are the result of the work and the effort of 189 teachers. They represent approximately 7% of the total teaching staff of the university, and this is a clear reflection of the concern shared by the teaching staff to build a European Higher Education Area that is relevant to their own needs, analysed from the point of view of learning efficiency and effectiveness, which demonstrates a clear endorsement of quality teaching.

Before I finish this introduction, I would like to mention two points that should be taken into account as a result of their relationship to the subject we are dealing with: internal communication and external projection.

The experiences and products presented have not been conceived for use in a single classroom. The fact that the authors have made the materials in DVD format available to other members both within and off the campus implies that the current time should be seen as a period of challenges in which we have to offer the knowledge that can help them to share, to work together and "generate new knowledge" (an example is the generosity of all the authors in displaying their own understanding of the educational area and its construction). On the other hand, understanding the current situation is an opportunity – and not a threat – for our universities to make a clear pledge for quality.

In terms of exterior projection, the work will be disseminated not only in our own language – Catalan – but also in Spanish and English editions, bearing in mind the fact that both project and innovation can be shared by the university community of the EHEA. This will facilitate real contact between university teachers and colleagues from outside our immediate field who are also carrying out innovations in the classroom.

To conclude, then, through this book and together with the Vice rector's office for Academic Studies and Quality Assurance, and the Academic Planning Office, we have

tried to offer elements of knowledge and reflection on one of the defining themes of our future in the European Higher Education Area: innovation.

We believe that quality is a question that affects everyone, but that it is something that goes beyond our individual capacities and therefore, in our opinion, needs to be worked at jointly, through shared and overlapping experiences. If after reading the projects presented here, doubts, new projects and dialogues emerge, then we will have reached our target. This is a good time for opportunities, and it is also therefore a time for risks, the greatest of which would be inactivity or obstinacy in not wanting to see the path that leads us to work together.

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The production of this book has been made possible thanks to the great efforts and participation by different units and professionals. To try to mention all of them here would carry the risk of forgetting those who have also made this task possible from a position of anonymity. Our greatest thanks go to all those who feel part of this publication. We would especially like to thank the Agency for Management of University and Research Grants of the Generalitat de Catalunya and the Vice rector's Office for Academic Studies and Quality Assurance at the UAB, that have provided the grant support that has made it the innovative teaching experiences presented here possible. Also, well aware of the work carried out by the Publications Service of the UAB in producing this book, we would like to offer special thanks to the head of the service, Joan Carles Marset, and also to Pep Sansó and Jaume Brey.

We have received continual support from the Teaching Innovation in Higher Education Unit (IDES). We would particularly like to thank Gisela Rodríguez for her work in organising the content and who, along with Jordi Grau, produced the CD-ROM.

Our biggest thank, however, does to the teachers who have participated in each of the experiences presented here. Their dedication to innovation in university teaching is an example of how innovative, quality teaching can be achieved from the subjects themselves, thereby facilitating the process of adaptation towards the European higher Education Area.

Many thanks to you alls!

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School of Tourism and Hotel Management

Fostering creativity and the entrepreneurial spirit in the context of the ECTS

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Abstract

The main goal of this project was to foster creativity and the entrepreneurial spirit among students in their first year of the Diploma in Tourism at the UAB within the context of the ECTS (European credits). We started from the assumption that greater individual initiative as well as a higher capacity to seek solutions to problem creatively are basic factors in students' personal and professional development. At the same time, the training of more entrepreneurial people will have positive repercussions in society over the long term, bringing economic and social value to the tourism industry.

The methodology used in this project was based on conducting a variety of actions targeted at both the professors and the students. By the end of the academic year we could see that the students had more individual initiative, autonomy and independence, along with a more entrepreneurial spirit favourable to the creation of companies.

General area of interest of this innovation

The innovation presented in this article is related to fostering students' individual initiative as well as their ability to seek solutions to problems creatively and in different ways. Therefore, this article describes a series of actions aimed at developing the transversal skills related to the students' «individual initiative, autonomy and independence», the «capacity for decision-making" and "responsibility, the skill of self-management and self-control».

1. Objectives

The main goal of this teaching innovation project is to develop a teaching methodology in the context of the ECTS (European credits), which fosters the entrepreneurial

spirit and creativity among students in their first year of the Diploma course in Tourism (EUTDH) at the UAB.

With regard to the goals, we distinguished between general and specific goals, and they are divided into two levels, those for the students and those for the professors:

1. Objectives for the students:
    *   Overall goal: To change students' way of seeing and understanding the teaching-learning process. The goal is to transform students' passive role, getting them to participate more and be more involved in all the academic activities.
    *   Specific goals:
        –   To foster the importance of teamwork
        –   To encourage creativity
        –   To develop the ability to resolve problems and take decisions
        –   To prepare for independent learning
        –   To foster a constructive critical attitude and the relativisation of contents.
2. Objectives for the professors:
    *   Overall goal: To exchange the traditional teaching methodology for one in which the professors at times are in the background so the students can take centre stage. As a result, the professors will serve as guides in the students' teaching-learning process.
    *   Specific objectives:
        –   To foster teamwork among the professors
        –   To encourage the faculty to adopt new teaching methods that focus on team-work and developing creativity, the ability to resolve problems and take decisions, independent learning and students' critical attitudes.
        –   To facilitate the training and continuous education of the faculty.
        –   To prepare and predispose the faculty to adapt to the constant changes in the university setting and students' new needs.

2. Description of the project

The teaching methodology that was generally used in the Diploma in Tourism until academic year 2004-05 consisted mainly of holding teacher-led theoretical and/or practical classes.

Since academic year 2005-06, this Diploma has become part of the pilot plan to adapt to the European Higher Education Area (EHEA), which has involved some of the degree programmes at the UAB. Given this, we had to adapt to the new ECTS methodology.

This project starts from the assumption that any application of a new methodology means changes in the agents involved, both formal and informal. The purely formal changes (rules with regard to European credits, curriculum of courses, etc.) are relatively simpler to accomplish than informal changes, that is, shifts in attitudes,

behaviours and ways of doing things. Therefore, this project particularly emphasised specific actions aimed at fostering these informal changes.

Likewise, the tourism sector, as one of the most important engines of Catalonia's economy, requires well-trained professionals in order to be able to adapt to a market characterised by uncertainty and constant changes, as well as entrepreneurial people with the preparation and predisposition to create new companies. Therefore, it is very important to design a teaching-learning model based on multidisciplinarity and targeted at fostering individual initiative and students' ability to take decisions, while remaining clearly focused on the needs of the job market.

Fostering the entrepreneurial spirit and creativity in the context of the tourism industry means developing skills among the future workers that can help the Catalan and Spanish tourism industries keep a leading position worldwide. With this purpose in mind, from the start EUTDH has aimed to respond to the needs for innovation in the tourism and hotel industries, in keeping with the motivation and policy of improving quality.

Therefore, this is the context and the motivations that spurred this teaching innovation project, with the backdrop of not just making the formal changes but even more so the informal changes. As mentioned above, these changes entail generating more favourable attitudes towards entrepreneurial activities in general, and specifically towards creating new companies, and the project involved both the students and the professors, as well as the managerial team at the EUTDH.

3. Methodology

With the purpose of achieving the goals set forth, the actions described below were organised according to which group they were addressed at:

Actions aimed at changing students' way of viewing and understanding teaching:

1. Fostering independent learning classes and tutorials through the use of the new technologies.

    Terms of the timetable of the different courses in the first year, we included several hours of *out-of-classroom* teaching. In these classes, students were asked to do a given activity using the time they would have used to attend class. There are several types of activities, such as: doing an online activity supervised directly by the professor, visiting different institutions, holding an interview, gathering information, etc. What is more, the activities could be designed to be done either individually or in a group.

    The main goal of this type of *out-of-classroom* teaching is for students to learn to manage their own time, to take on the responsibility for their own learning and, in the case of group activities, to work on a team without direct supervision by the professors.

    In addition to these *out-of-classroom* teaching hours, compulsory online tutorials were also scheduled in either groups or individuals, which basically served to follow up on students' work or the tutored activities.

2. Production of digital teaching resources that help students become more independent in their learning process.

     This action is directly related to the previous one (Action 1) and consisted of creating a variety of digital resources so that students could have a guide when engaging in their independent learning classes or could expand on the knowledge they had acquired in the classroom.

3. Fostering the use of the virtual platform, improving the quality of the virtual resources and investing in ICT.

     We fostered the use of the UAB's virtual platform, which not only provides a virtual learning environment to support students but also enables them to have a space for doing *distance tutorials* and for the professors to track their projects and activities. A major investment was made in teaching support equipment (ICT) in order to facilitate the use of this platform.

4. A range of simulation exercises for solving problems and taking decisions. A range of independent learning and self-evaluated exercises.

     The range of simulation exercises and/or practical case studies to be solved in-class, preferably in groups, was substantially bolstered for all the courses. In this way, more and more weight was given to more practical teaching with higher involvement by the students as opposed to traditional teacher-led classes.

     Also, a project was included on the syllabus in some courses. Doing these projects meant that the students had to work regularly throughout the entire term, helping them learn to distribute their time, and therefore fostering independent learning. Later presenting the project in front of the class and having it evaluated by their classmates helped students to develop their critical attitude towards both their own and others' projects.

     The changes in the classroom activities also led to changes in the way students were evaluated. Gradually, the traditional tests have been replaced by other methods of evaluation, such as projects that students later present and discuss in front of the group, which have an increasingly important weight within students' final marks. This is coupled with resolving the simulation exercises and/or practical case studies.

     Therefore, including this type of activity is the cornerstone for fostering the entrepreneurial spirit among students.

5. A range of specific training actions involving creativity and creating companies.

     Different supplementary activities were developed along the lines of this innovative teaching project, including a symposium entitled «Creating Companies and the Entrepreneurial Spirit in the Tourism Industry». At this symposium, both the faculty and students could attend a variety of lectures related to this topic. The most important aspects dealt with were:

a) Creating and expanding a hotel chain.

b) The process of creating companies in the tourist industry.

c) Factors for success in an innovative tourism company.

d) The development model to promote tourism companies in Barcelona.

e) The institutional framework of measures to support the creation of companies in Catalonia.

Likewise, in the course entitled «Project: Implementation of a tourism product or company» in which students have to draw up a business plan, contents related to generating business ideas and creativity were gradually introduced.

6. A range of activities to supplement the contents of the diploma course.

We promoted a range of supplementary activities related to the different courses, such as going to see plays, visiting museums, going to the cinema, etc.

Activities aimed at changing the faculty's traditional methodology:

a) Offering courses for the faculty on adapting to the new teaching methodology:

In conjunction with the Unit of Teaching Innovation in Higher Education (IDES), we offered general courses related to the ECTS as well as a specific course directly related to fostering the entrepreneurial spirit: «Strategies for stimulating creativity and the entrepreneurial spirit among students in the Diploma in Tourism and Higher Degree in Hotel Management». This training action was extremely successful among the staff of the EUTDH, as most of the faculty attended it.

b) Fostering teamwork:

In order to foster teamwork among the faculty, the number of meetings with professors and students rose. Specifically, different types of meetings were held:

– Collective meetings with the professors (start of the academic year, end of the first term, end of the second term).

– Individual meetings with the professors.

– Meetings with students (both collective – to present the teaching methodology at the start of the academic year – and individual).

– Meetings with the management and coordinators of the EUTDH (approximately every month).

4. Results

In order to assess the degree to which the goals were reached, a variety of methodological instruments were used, both qualitative (*satisfaction and motivation surveys, entrepreneurship surveys* and *information on students' academic results*) and quantitative (*personal interviews* and *discussion groups*).

With regard to the results of the student satisfaction surveys, we should say that the ratings of the courses improved after applying this new methodology. Gener-

ally speaking, the students believe that the methodology is «ideal for expressing their creativity», «fun», and «participatory», and it makes them «learn things that are much more applicable to the working world», specifically to the tourism industry.

The Survey on Entrepreneurship (see Appendix 1) was administered at the start and finish of the course, and it included questions like if students thought *that creating a company of their own was desirable* and if they had *seriously considered creating a company of their own*. In general terms, the results showed a substantial improvement in students' entrepreneurial attitudes, despite the fact that we would needed a longer period of time to extract more solid conclusions. Therefore, the percentage of students who responded positively to the first question rose slightly (we should disclose that it was very high at the start of the course, around 70 %), while the percentage of students who responded positively to the second question rose almost six percentage points (from 52 % to 57.8 %).

With regard to the faculty, the surveys on the working climate also showed that their degree of satisfaction and motivation with their teaching duties had risen.

With regard to students' academic results, they rose slightly after applying this new methodology.

Finally, by personal interviews and group meetings we revealed a very positive rating of this project in general, by both the teaching team and the students.

5. Conclusions

Generally speaking, after this initial experience the satisfaction surveys showed that both the students and the professors were more motivated to learn and teach, respectively. Likewise, based on the results of the survey on entrepreneurship administered to students before and after applying this project, we can glean that students showed a higher entrepreneurial spirit, that is, that they identified more with statements like «adaptability to change», «curiosity» and «creativity», and that they had a more positive attitudes towards creating companies. That is, not only did they claim that they had seriously thought about creating a company, rather the timeframe in which they planned to create it was shorter. We should also mention that the overall academic performance in the courses improved slightly compared to previous years.

During the monitoring and self-evaluation process conducted at meetings with the faculty, students and the managerial team of the EUTDH, a proposal emerged to draw up a list of good methodological practices with the goal of assembling a variety of teaching innovation activities that are being used in the different courses, highlighting their strong and weak points as well as the direct results of applying them. Likewise, we also detected that the instrument for measuring the evolution in students' entrepreneurial spirit needed improvement. As a result, the future actions proposed including extending this project to all the courses in the Diploma in Tourism, as well

as drawing up a list of innovative good methodological practices within the context of the ECTS.

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Keywords

Entrepreneurial spirit, ECTS, business creation, creativity, teaching innovation, EUTDH.

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Presentation of the working group

The working team on this project is made up of the professors teaching the courses in the first year of the Diploma in Tourism along with the managers and coordinators of the EUTDH. Therefore, it is an interdisciplinary working group that includes educators from different areas and departments from the UAB who have different responsibilities within the EUTDH.

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Abstract

In general, studying different trials and trial institutions is a dynamic and complex affair, which makes it difficult for anyone facing it for the first time to theoretically comprehend. For this reason, as part of this project the students doing outside practices in law offices get an overall grasp of the process of a trial and are able to convey these contents by using the multimedia resources and knowledge with which they are provided.

The students generate a teaching resource based on their experience at the court and develop new activities: choosing the case with the aid of the mentor and the support of the professor, studying the trial institution chosen, preparing and handling the necessary materials, using the new technologies and drawing up the public oral presentation of the results.

Unlike in traditional classes, in this learning model the students themselves are the one who create an original, unpublished, transversal teaching resource with multimedia support that can be disseminated online.

General area of interest of this innovation

This project has a broad area of interest as it could be applied to all external practices that are conducted in the different degree programmes offered at the UAB, and it helps to combine the use of ICT, cooperative work and skills-based training while also developing new, transversal teaching resources.

1. Objectives

1. To foster group work in the students participating together in the practices at the same court.
2. To take advantage of the possibilities offered by the new technologies in learning and creating teaching resources.
3. To make students more familiar with Law as legal operators of the new technologies as necessary instruments in the world of law.
4. To interconnect areas of learning such as trial law and the use of multimedia resources when implementing the European credits.
5. To make better use of the academic resources and to make the most from the teaching materials developed by the students by using them in other courses.

2. Description of the project

The teaching innovation project presented in this article was part of the practicum course that is coordinated by the Trial Law area. These practices consist of a stint in a court where, under the supervision of a mentor (the judge or the clerk of the court), a group of four students track the activities taking place there. Once the practice is over, the students have to write a report outlining the conclusions they have reached. At the same time, the mentor evaluates the degree to which each student profited from the experience, and the professor coordinating the practices determines the final mark. The individual written report is an outstanding means of evaluation in the sense that the students who have undergone a given experience in a court are empowered to generate creative, original, unpublished material that leads to better academic performance for not just the student who wrote the materials but also the other classmates, who can use this material in their own education.

3. Methodology

The feasibility of a project like the one we are presenting means that you must have both the technical equipment needed to create a multimedia product and institutional cooperation. The first requirement was met by cooperation with the Multimedia Lab headquartered in the UAB's Faculty of Law. The second requirement was met via a cooperation and practices agreement between the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona and the Higher Court of Justice of Catalonia.

3.1. Selecting the trial

Once the court has been assigned, the trial that students will work on is chosen with the advice of the mentor. In this phase, the group holds several meetings with the coordinating professor in order to set forth the contents of the initial proposal, plan the work and set each student's goals.

3.2. Gathering the material

When dealing with a civil trial, the judge him- or herself provides the students with a DVD copy of the oral statements that the students have sat in on, as well as the most important written statements. When dealing with criminal trials, the trials must be recorded.

3.3. Preparing the final product

Once the students have studied and understood the case, they have to decide which contents they want to use in their multimedia presentation and draw up a working plan for the sessions they will hold in the Multimedia Lab.

3.4. Editing the multimedia presentation

In the editing phase, students assemble the recorded material.

3.5. Public presentations

Una vegada acabats i avaluats els projectes, els estudiants fan una presentació pública del seu treball.

4. Results

The students have acquired noteworthy skills in different areas: they have had to choose a topic or case in a group with the help of the mentor and coordinating professors; they have had to learn to use different computer programmes for video editing, image processing and multimedia presentations; and finally they have had to make a public, oral presentation of their project.

During the first two years the students of this project, have produced enough high quality teaching material that for the next year we plan to basically focus on using and disseminating this teaching material within the educational and institutional framework of the UAB Faculty of Law.

This year the goals are as follows:

1. To keep producing more high quality teaching material with the students. This will be accomplished following the methodology that has been used in the past two years (RIBA TREPAT et al, 2007).
2. To use these materials: the multimedia presentations of trials can be used as a teaching resource in the classes taught by the professors in the Trial Law area.
3. Restricted dissemination: the presentations are housed in a dedicated space in the Multimedia Lab on the website of the Institute of Law and Technology (http://idt.uab.es).

The protocol for accessing the multimedia presentations of trials made by the students is as follows:

Step 1:
- Enter: http://idt.uab.es
- Then check the section of the Multimedia Lab (IDT LAB): http://idt.uab.es/idtlab/idtlab.htm

Step 2:
Enter the IDT Lab section and check: MQD2006-2007. You will be asked to enter a user name and password, as mentioned above. Enter them to access the teaching material.

Step 3:

You are ready to see the material available. The presentations are organised chronologically, and you can open them by clicking on the file twice.

Step 4:

By placing the cursor over the title of the different presentations, you can see a brief summary of each one. The authorship by the students is visible, as is the site on the external practices and the students' mentor.

Query on multimedia presentations submitted in 2006:

Query of material drawn up in 2007:

Step 5:

Finally, if you want to see one of the presentations, click on it and its contents come onto the screen.

5. Conclusions

This task of dissemination underway is a work in progress, meaning that over the course of this academic year changes will be made in how the contents are presented (we are in the first phase now). We also want to measure the use and experience of using this material by the professors accredited to do so. This evaluation be either quantitative (we will measure the use statistically) or qualitative (by means of semi-structured interviews with users, either professors or students), which will give us useful information for assessing this experience.

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Interesting link
- http://idt.uab.es/ [2008]

Keywords
Multimedia presentations, civil and criminal trials.

Financing
This project was financed by the AGAUR programme on Improving the Teaching Quality at Catalan Universities (MQD) for 2006 (identification number: 2006 MQD 00196).

Supplementary materials on the CD-ROM
Demonstration of the contents of three presentations on the subject of gender violence.

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Political Institutions in Catalonia

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Abstract

The subject of this study is Catalonia's 2006 Charter of Self-Government from a legal perspective, which fundamentally corresponds to the course "Political Institutions in Catalonia» from the fourth year of the Bachelor's degree in Law at the UAB.

Materials were drawn up using a template, each of which contains a summary of each topic, schemes, graphs, synopses tables, bibliographic resources, laws and jurisprudence. Questionnaires, debate issues, tests, audiovisual materials and online links are also reproduced.

The material was uploaded onto the website http://www.institucionspolitiques.com with the aim for it to be interactive, to foster creativity and cooperative work among students, to give teachers a more active role and to facilitate the adaptation of our teaching methods to the European Higher Education Area. The experience was rounded off with the use of a twofold method – the UAB's virtual campus – with student visits to public institutions and periodic attendance at television studios to see programmes with contents related to this subject in the audience.

General area of interest of this innovation

This teaching innovation could be useful for faculty and students in the social sciences in general, and in law in particular. It might also be interesting for anyone who wants to access information on the characteristics and the legal problems posed by Catalonia's 2006 Charter of Self-Government quickly, easily and interactively. This project takes advantage of the need to adapt law studies to the European Higher Education Area, with the corresponding change in the relationship between professors and students. It is a teaching experience that takes into account knowledge, procedures and attitudes, and that fosters students' motivation and participation both inside and outside the classroom,

contributing to consolidating the use of the new technologies in university teaching and to foster the twofold teaching method.

1. Objectives

The project makes it possible for students to play a more active role in their learning and work more independently outside the classroom. Likewise, the concern with improving the teaching quality, both in the classroom and at a distance by applying the twofold methodology, has led teaching materials to be developed with a heavy conceptual load. The teaching innovation affects the study of public law in Catalonia – which corresponds to the course on Political Institutions in Catalonia – in a clear, understandable, structured, comprehensive and rigorous way. The project led to the production of digital materials that can be accessed quickly and easily; the holding of dynamic, interactive classroom sessions; the reinforcement of the role of the faculty in the tutorials in order to make them more useful; the university's connection with society by means of practical activities and trips to institutions; the development of cooperative work among students; and finally, civic or aware attitudes in the county of such a sensitive topic as this one.

2. Description of the project

The teaching materials were drawn up by the team members based on a template. The content is Catalonia's new 2006 Charter of Self-Government (CSG).

Below is a description of the *template of the different topics in the programme*:

1. Writing the topic (20-25 pages at most). This must include an initial summary of the different sections and sub-sections into which the explanation is organised, trying to use non-sexist language by seeking gender-neutral formulas (such as Presidency, holder of the Councillorship, etc.) or by reproducing the formulas used by the new CSG (congressman or congresswoman), improving if possible on its omissions and incoherencies.
2. Visual outline of concepts: synopsis tables, scheme, graphs (5-6 pages at most).
3. Basic bibliography on the subject:
   a) Recommended reading (a book or article)
   b) Basic bibliography (3-4 books, book chapters or articles).
4. Laws and jurisprudence:
   a) Laws (the main regulations about the issue).
   b) Jurisprudence (selection of the legal underpinnings of up to ten relevant rulings).
5. Text reproduced: 1-2 pages of a book or article, ruling or opinion.
6. Questions: 5 questions about the contents of the subject explained or of the reading.
7. Debate: Issues that allow you to legally argue the most debatable/political issues of the issue and/or allow them to be related to previous issues.

8. Test:
   a) Up to 20 multiple choice questions for students to evaluate their progress.
   b) Answer key to the test.
9. Complementary audiovisual materials.
10. Useful web links.
    The contents of the subjects organised according to the template are part of the contents of the website with the following summary, which includes:
    a) Introduction.
    b) Members of the team
    c) Syllabus (*once opened you can find the contents of each subject on the syllabus according to the template mentioned above*)
    d) Bibliography
    e) Documents
    f) Nationals symbols
    g) Links
    h) Contact info
    i) Visits to institution (with photographs of the trips already made)
    On the website there is also a section called News and a link to the UAB's virtual campus.

The product of all the work of drawing up the teaching materials and the experience itself were conditioned by the topic being studied, because of the provisional nature of the new Charter because of the different appeals claiming that it is unconstitutional, as well as by the development and adaptation of the regulations prior to this charter to the new legal regulations. In this context, students were asked to identify potential problems with unconstitutionality (pros and cons), to prepare in a team several subjects from the programme in order to determine the real content of the current legal system, and to examine some problematic aspects today by assessing whether the new charter might resolve them.

The potential of the virtual campus were used for both uploading materials and facilitating communication between the faculty and the students for the sake of continuous assessment, with a variety of exercises (at most five) during the course. However, not all the professors who participated in the experience used continuous assessment entirely, although they did at least begin to use a mixed evaluation system as part of the overall mark, instead of just the final exam. During the first academic year, the website was being built and special attention was paid to videos from the «Parliament Channel», which deals with subjects related to the course. A new bibliography was tracked down and public institutions were visited. Periodic meetings were held with the professors involved in the project in order to coordinate the materials development and touch base on how the teaching experience was faring. During the second year that the project was underway, specifically during the second term of academic year 2007-08 (February to May 2008), efforts were made to finish all the materials, and some points, such as the schemas or synopsis tables, could be developed or finished in conjunction with the students. In fact, the final content of the materials must have the students' approval in the sense that they must validate their usefulness,

interactivity and the degree to which they illustrate the points covered. For this reason, we surveyed students' satisfaction, which was positive overall, and at the end of the project we conducted a survey of the results and asked the experts in teaching innovation for their help in analysing the results.

3. Methodology

The teaching materials were developed by the team members, and external cooperation from colleagues was requested in order to produce materials on issues related to managing religious pluralism and multiculturalism. We also had the support of the computer expert in the department and the advice of a graphic design professional.

Periodic working and coordination meetings were held to discuss the materials developed, to standardise the criteria, to troubleshoot problems and, especially during the first year the project was underway, to assess the strong and weak points of the actions done, bearing in mind the conditions that affected the subject being studied, as mentioned above. The different lessons in the programme were written by teams with the intention of making them as clear, schematic and well-organised as possible, as were with the emerging bibliography, the visual resources (videos from the «Parliament Channel»), links to websites related to the subject, schemas, and PowerPoint presentations in order to later include them in the project. We also organised several trips to public institutions, such as the Parliament of Catalonia, the Ombudsman's Office and the Palace of the Generalitat, the seat of the Catalan regional government. Different groups of students – accompanied by a professor – sat in the audience of the «espai public» programme broadcast on BTV.

Likewise, the computer was always used in the classroom, and each professor projected materials in order to help students visualise the concepts. On this point we should point out that the members of the project believe that this visual aspect still needs some improvement, not just to facilitate access to knowledge of the contents covered in the course but also as a tool that is not always taken into account in university law degrees, and that the new generations appreciate because they have been raised in a visual culture.

The baseline goal was to augment the interactivity between professors and students, by using a type of teaching that links theory with practice, and that in a broader reflection would make it possible for the university to connect with the society around it, parameters that we have tried to apply in this teaching experience.

4. Results

As a result of the actions carried out, a useful, interactive teaching tool adapted to the European Higher Education Area was consolidated, related to the course on «Political Institutions in Catalonia». This course is currently taught in the fourth year of the Bachelor's degree in Law, but the project can be extrapolated totally or partially to other

subjects or studies within the field of the social sciences. The teaching resources developed could be applied to other groups as well, such as civil servants, and in general they could be used by anyone interested in learning more about the new features of Catalonia's 2006 Charter of Self-Government.

Based on the teaching experience explained in this article, new strategies for improving students' Bachelor's degree and graduate studies in the field of law were used.

Student satisfaction was quite high. The first results obtained are satisfactory compared to other academic years (according to the surveys and questionnaires administered by the faculty) in terms of both contents and procedures. We should also point out that students participated more in the classroom, on the virtual campus and on the website (Table 3) in the tutorials, as well as in the trips to institutions, and that the proportion of students passing the course was higher.

For example, the preliminary results show an increase in class attendance (20%), a rise in the use of continuous assessment (27%) and an overall improvement in marks.

The results refer to an average from each group that participated this project during academic years 2006-07 and 2007-08, over a total of 85 students per year on average.

Table 1. Student degree of satisfaction (%)
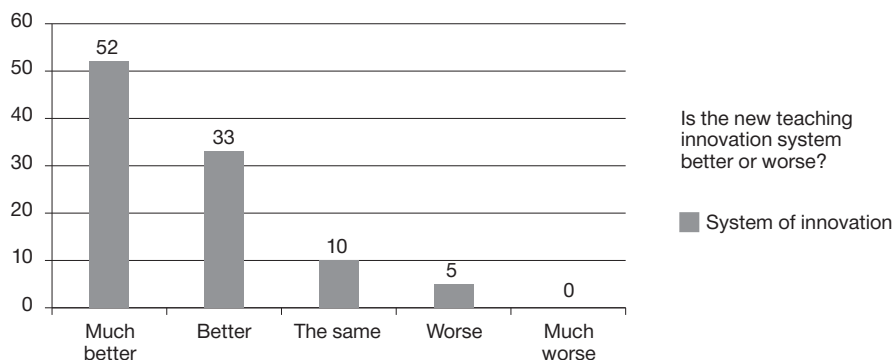
Table 2. Use of continuous assessment
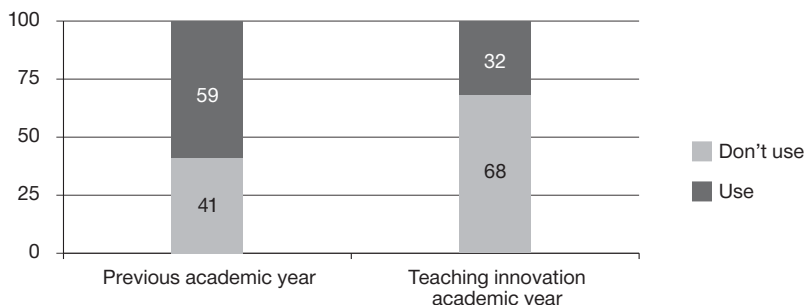
Table 3. Number of student accesses to the project's website

Activity per week (from the start of the project)	Pages seen	Visitors
week 41 2007	22	9
week 42 2007	65	28
week43 2007	57	26
week 44 2007	63	26
week 45 2007	279	34
week 46 2007	116	34
week 47 2007	121	35
week 48 2007	168	34
week 49 2007	57	17
week 50 2007	217	34
week51 2007	85	23
week 52 2007	21	5
week 1 2008	16	7
week 2 2008	51	17
week 3 2008	27	13
week 4 2008	5	2
week 5 2008	111	18
week 6 2008	76	20
week 7 2008	195	38
week 8 2008 (start of academic year)	1,402	132
week 9 2008	1,111	133
week 10 2008	1,440	180
week 11 2008	785	116
week 12 2008 (Easter week)	198	41
week 13 2008	320	74
week 14 2008	602	138
week 15 2008	402	95
Total	**8,012**	**1,329**

Figure 1. Homepage of the website of the teaching innovation project
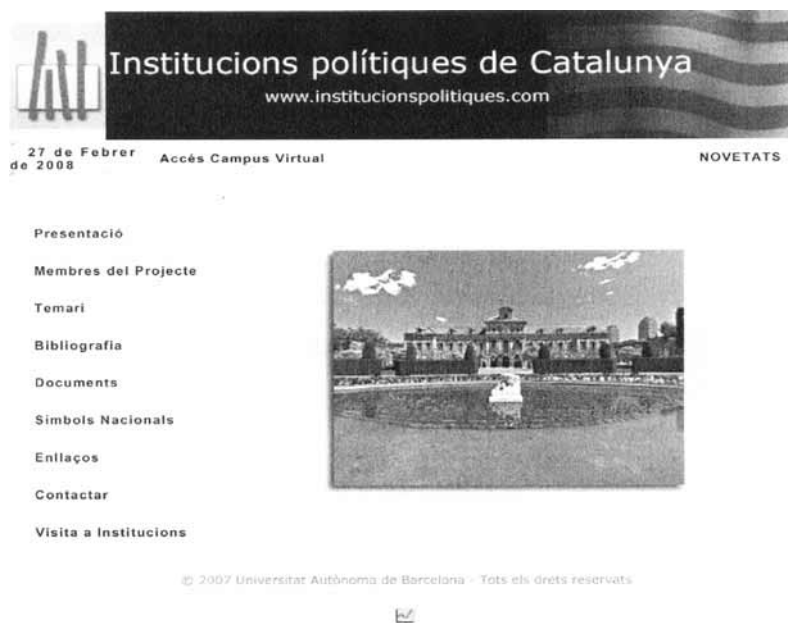
5. Conclusions

The pilot test of the new teaching tools led to a reinforcement of students' autonomy in the learning process, in gaining knowledge, and in procedures and attitudes. We should point out that this project was suffused with a concept of teaching in which the connection to the socio-political reality of the institutions being analysed is central, meaning that work outside the classroom is crucial. What is more, it fosters an active model of student who is trained in the procedures and tools of cooperative work and who has a sound emotional relationship with the faculty. The results lead us to continue and improve on the website, with the expansion and inclusion of new elements and contents.

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Interesting links

- Website of the project: http://www.institucionspolitiques.com [2008]
- Information on the Generalitat de Catalunya and its different departments: http://www.gencat.cat [2008]
- Parliament of Catalonia: http://www.parlament.cat [2008]
- IDES: http://www.uab.es/ides [2008]
- UAB virtual campus: https://cv2008.uab.cat/ [2008]

Keywords

Catalonia, autonomy, visualisation of concepts, twofold method, EHEA.

Financing

Supplementary materials on the CD-ROM

Demonstration of the website.

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Presentation of the project leader

Joan Lluís Pérez Francesch (Barcelona, 1959) holds a doctorate in Law and is a full professor of constitutional law. He has served on the union of the Faculty of Law at the UAB, and is currently the secretary of this faculty, a member of the Language Policy Committee delegated by the Governing Council, and president of the Commission on Language Promotion in the Faculty of Law. He is the main person in charge of this teaching innovation project. He has also participated in other projects such as the development of the mock courtroom in the Faculty of Law and drawing up materials on citizenship and human rights.

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World politics online

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Abstract

Innovation has become the main challenge facing today's societies (Gopalakrishnan, S., Damanpour, F., 1997). Contemporary societies are enmeshed in constant transformation (technological revolution, globalised economy, internationalisation of the main social problems), and universities' adaptation to this changing world requires changes in their main functions: research and teaching.

This study is devoted to a teaching innovation implemented in two different courses in the field of the social sciences related to comparative politics and assessing public management. Both cases follow the same logic, and this is why they are being presented jointly. First the application for the course on Comparative Politics in the Faculty of Communications Studies was developed. After regarding it as a success, the decision was taken to pursue the same strategy with a course in the Public Management speciality taught in the Faculty of Political Sciences and Sociology.

Logically, this teaching innovation is not a radical novelty (Osborne, 1998). Nothing new has been invented, nor can we even claim that using a digital platform is a technological innovation. However, there is an idea that has been put into practice and a new product has indeed been created that can even be considered a service to society, and this product has been drawn up by students. Therefore, there is innovation in that the generation of the idea and the development or adaptation of a known technology has become a tangible reality that any citizen can use. In doing this, students' behaviour changed as they saw the new possibilities and learning opportunities of this tool.

Following the model proposed by the coordinators of this book, this text presents the main goals of the project, the work the students had to do, the methodology used to turn the project into a reality and its main results.

General area of interest of this innovation

The creation of a digital platform that can be seen from the outside is an effective tool for stimulating students' motivation, as the work that they do themselves is disseminated and they provide society with highly useful knowledge.

1. Objectives

1. The first goal of the innovation project presented in this article was to create an instrument that would become the applied part of the course in a collective project that would be useful for society and would exist on Internet beyond the duration of the course. In professional life, one learns by doing, and through these projects the students had the opportunity to make and produce materials that we hope are useful. In the case of "Comparative Politics", any journalist or citizen who needs to check reliable information and analysis on the politics of a country will find elements of interest, while in the case of "Assessing Public Management", any citizen who wonders to what extent our governments "are doing well" or "need improvement" in their management of public services will also find relevant information as well as a sort of classification and analysis of this information.

2. We pursued the second goal of this project by creating a useful, externally visible project via Internet: motivating and getting students involved and avoiding the passivity and complacency of traditional teaching approaches in which the professors explains things to students and the students take notes and show on the exams that they are capable of parroting what the professor said in class. University students often complain about the fact that either the teaching they receive is overly theoretical or when they do an applied project, it is irrelevant, artificial or far removed from the real problems that they will find after graduating. By defining a product that was to be created by all of them and that had to be shown to the world, the participants in the course had to activate and – to a greater or lesser extent – participate in a project that was always perceived as real and at least potentially relevant.

3. The third goal was change. The purpose is clearly not change for change's sake, but we did want students to have the perception that they were taking a course that had a different kind of contents and approaches. In fact, in the first session of the course on «Comparative Politics», students were warned that they could change groups and sit in on other professors who were pursuing a more traditional approach and in fact were teaching outstanding classes on the politics of three or four different European countries. Those students who remained in the group, however, had to pledge to work on the politics of the different countries from different regions in the world that they were assigned. Along the same lines, the students in «Assessing Public Management» took on one realm of public services – healthcare, education, immigration, development cooperation, etc. – which they were responsible for and about which they had to furnish the documents and analyses solicited.

Finally, the project sought to transcend the academic or technical nature of the course to turn it into a social activity. In this sense, at least originally, there was an attempt to influence students' behaviour, to prompt a series of interactions among them and draw some impact on the small-scale social sub-system involved in taking a course. This goal is related to the motivation and satisfaction of both students and professors, but it also went a bit further, taking advantage of the fact that the groups were relatively small and contained students who were finishing their degrees and were aware that they had to get the most from their last terms at the university, or at least, from their Bachelor's degree programme.

2. Description of the project

In this section we shall describe the project that the students did, while in the following section on Methodology we shall give a brief description of how the professors managed the project. Given the fact that ultimately two digital platforms were created, the work asked of the students in both courses will be described separately.

The «Comparative Politics» project asked each student to tackle the contents and political and economic analysis of one country in each of the five regions into which this course was divided: Africa, Asia, the Americas (North, Central and South), Europe and the Middle East. The classroom discussion was conducted by regions so that the different students could make their contributions to the discussions on specific subjects based on their knowledge of a country.

For example, when examining the democratic development of the Middle East – a region that is characterised by the absence of democratic regimes, with the exception of Lebanon – the approach consisted of discussing the politics and absence of democracy in neo-traditional systems like the one in Saudi Arabia, in repressive technocratic systems like in Libya and Syria, and in mobilising clerical regimes like Iran, so that the students could perceive the differences with other regions, in addition to testing certain theories on democratic development using real cases.

The information that each student was asked to provide consisted of five files per country that had to precisely fit within the number of characters agreed to for each section:
1. A file on basic information, the same points for all the cases.
2. A summary of the history of the country.
3. A brief description of the main political parties and a commentary on the past five presidents of the country.
4. A brief political analysis.
5. A brief economic analysis.

It was understood that for the first three files, students had to search for information and present it within the established format, while for the last two files the students had to demonstrate the knowledge they had acquired during the course and play with the concepts presented at the theoretical lectures by the professors by applying them to each specific case.

In the project «Assessing Public Management», groups of two students were asked to take on a realm of public services (healthcare, education, immigration, culture, research and universities, development cooperation). The goal of the project was to provide empirical evidence on the progress (or backsliding, if applicable) of Catalan / Spanish healthcare with regard to the main goals of each sector. For example, in the case of healthcare, the main goals ultimately included were related to high quality clinical practice, access to healthcare services, the efficiency of the spending, the improvements in the health of the population and the guarantee of patients' rights.

For each realm, three different products had to be produced:

1. A table of the main goals and the indicators for each main goal;
2. A list of documents evaluating the realm, trying to include international, European, Spanish and Catalan documents;
3. An analysis of the degree to which these documents provided objective or subjective (perceptions) information related to the main goals and the indicators identified in the first product.

Each group had to give a mark from 0 to 10 indicating to what extent the indicators of the main goals in the realm were covered by public or private documents and reports that are accessible to any citizen who sets out to find this information.

In this case, then, there was theoretical and consensus work with the other participants in the class about the main goals of each realm, a research project seeking technical information, and a more analytical project about the quantity and quality of the information included in the set of reports that each group had found. A look at the website shows how some groups did an excellent research in terms of finding and analysing documents from the international, supranational, state-wide, Catalan and local spheres.

3. Methodology

A team of four people worked on this project which produced the two applications mentioned above: two professors and two IT specialists. The relationships with the students were forged via the professors, who gave students all the support they could by responding to their questions, seeking information and acting as a sounding board for their proposals.

Initially we had thought about creating a mixed committee of students and professors to monitor the quality of the materials that were produced, but ultimately the professors took on this role. The IT specialists played a key role in designing and operating the platform, and their proposals modified the initial plan. The platform consists of a website that includes the database which can be modified by any authorised student or professor. During the academic year, the platform enabled any student to check their colleagues' projects, and at the end of the course, once all the materials had been reviewed by the professors, the website was made visible to the outside world.

The main stages in developing the product were:

3.1. Developing the project

In this stage, the students discussed the proposal with the professors in charge of the courses chosen. Basically we evaluated the information available and determined to what extent what we were setting out to do already existed on Internet. We also determined the technical knowledge needed and the different possible options of final products. Finally, the decision was made to implement a project that dovetailed considerably with what was ultimately produced.

3.2. Implementation

The implementation of the project began one term before the students took the course, as we had to design and launch the digital platform. In this second term, the platforms were designed, and we became convinced of the need to combine short texts, tables and images in the more visible part of the website with downloadable reports that could be as long as needed. This strategy was used with the «Assessing Public Management» platform, as the «Comparative Politics» platform was constructed over a database that determined where texts could or could not be included and how long they could be.

The next step was to present the project to the students as part of the courses, both of which were elective. From the start of the course the students were explained the main features of the project, and they were given a calendar of activities in order to reach the end of the term with a finished product that they themselves could show to their families and friends. The calendar was followed, and both the professors and IT specialists made an effort to have the materials ready to go and the platform up and running before the term was over.

During the term, approximately half of the classroom sessions were used to train students in instrumental aspects and to discuss their progress in gathering and analysing the information they were assigned. Therefore, the course was both a combination of 14-15 theoretical lectures, which the professors pledged would not be more than this in order to set aside enough time for the discussion session. In these sessions, each project was discussed in an orderly fashion by presenting the functioning of the platform and discussing the students' contributions by region in one case, and realms of public service in the other.

One of the main bottlenecks in the project was revising the texts to ensure the veracity of the information, the acceptability of the style and in general to make sure they fit within minimum standards of quality. In the revision process, we detected major errors that could discredit the project as a whole. In this phase, the intention was for the students themselves to be the ones who adjusted their contributions, but given the fact that we only had one term, the revision process could only be conducted once.

3.3. Dissemination of the experience and expansion of the web platform with new categories

One of the advantages of using a digital platform is that it can be quickly disseminated by Internet. Although the experience is quite recent as this article is being written and our website does not yet have links to other websites, we hope that more and more people gradually discover it, use it and link it to other platforms.

Once the initial goals were reached based on co-production with students, we believe that these instruments we have created can be further disseminated if we encourage professors – not just the ones who have participated in this experience – and experts to make qualitatively significant contributions. In this sense, we have included a new field on «Comparative Politics» that we call «The Expert's Opinion», and we have invited specialists in sectorial politics to write brief analytical reports based on the information and the reports that the students in the course wrote.

4. Results and conclusions

Innovation only exists when a result has been produced, and in our case this result does exist and it can be seen on Internet. Of our four main goals, we think that they have largely been reached in terms of creating a socially useful product that resulted from a collective effort with the aim of remaining in place after the academic term is over. Students' benefits were also quite positive in terms of their motivation and satisfaction with the courses, the teamwork, and their perception of change compared to what their most common university experience had been.

Interestingly, when posing the question of innovation in teaching, it is often framed in terms of difficulties, obstacles and barriers, despite the objective need for innovation perceived by most of the stakeholders in order to improve their performance, meet students' needs and strengthen the legitimacy of the university as an institution. Our experience did not come upon major hurdles, which confirms to us the idea that it is possible to introduce changes and try new experiences in university teaching. We only had the sensation that the point of departure was not so favourable inasmuch as some of the students did not seem very motivated. Yet ultimately even the most reluctant ones ended up getting involved and producing relatively high quality materials.

In terms of this quality, we obviously found contributions that were very well constructed alongside others that needed complete overhauls. We believe that in part the excessive attention to the formal aspects might have run in detriment to the content. In this sense, the product is not characterised by depth but by breadth and by the fact that it facilitates access to resources in terms that did not exist before. The doubt does not lie so much in whether the product is useful – it is – as in whether the students might have learnt more using a more traditional approach in which they had to do more research work in the library and preparing an academic paper. In theory, however,

there are enough courses that pursue this course, and we believe that our approach is closer to a real work experience outside the university.

With regard to the platforms created, one of the unresolved question is the language. For the time being, «Comparative Politics» is a website primarily in Catalan, while «Assessing Public Management» aims to offer its contents in both Catalan and Spanish. In fact, some Erasmus students prepared contents in English, which we have not yet been able to include. However, the main challenge, now that the foundations are laid, is to extend the project even further and provide not just information and resources but also high quality analyses, something that universities should excel at and yet that is difficult to find.

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Keywords

Digital, web, politics, compare, assessment, public management

Financing

Supplementary materials on the CD-ROM

Demonstration of virtual content for the subject.

Faculty of Communications Studies

Virtual dynamic academic-workplace community in advertising creativity

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Abstract

The project to create a DYNAMIC VIRTUAL COMMUNITY (DVC) aims to make it easier for students in Advertising and Public Relations to adapt to the working world as the culmination of their education by linking up these two audiences: students, and alumni who are already working. This initiative was prompted by the absence of a technological tool today that links academia and the professional world.

This project is currently under construction using freeware (*Joomla!*) that is specially designed to create virtual communities. The design of this community is enabling us to create professional and skill profiles that dovetail with the profiles that the degree programme aims to produce. At the same time, telemarketing actions have been conducted to generate and expand the database of alumni from up to 24 different graduating classes in able for them to later join the community.

The functionalities of the virtual environment of students and alumni encompasses the possibility of viewing the personal and professional profiles of the other members (such as their CVs), getting in touch with them, registering for and checking job offers in the sector, conveying personal news to your chosen contact and also finding out the latest news and activities related to the faculty.

General area of interest of this innovation

This project could be interesting for academic managers and educators who wish to create alumni networks that relate the university with the profession.

1. Objectives

The purposes of the project area:

1. To foster the integration between theory (the university, where students are in their last year) and professional practice (where the graduates are).

2. To get students in their last year of the Bachelor's Degree in Advertising and Public Relations in touch with alumni who are already working.
3. To enable us to create a website for the interaction of students in the Bachelor's Degree in Advertising and Public Relations – especially those falling within the profile of «Creativity, design and management of production». This website will enable students to manage their own virtual CV and serve as a network of contacts.
4. To get alumni to keep up their ties with the UAB after earning their degree so they can always remain linked to the university.

2. Description of the project

Currently, the Faculty of Communications Studies is implementing a pilot DURSI/EHEA project which leads to the UAB's own Social Sciences degree (Advertising and Public Relation). The first diploma class graduated in 2007, and the first students slated to earn their Bachelor's degree will do so in 2008. The DYNAMIC VIRTUAL COMMUNITY will become an essential tool to achieve the maximum workplace integration of these students.

The degree programme defines five different professional profiles:
1. Strategist. Consultant in commercial communication and public relations.
2. Creativity, design and management of production in advertising and public relations.
3. Account manager in advertising and public relations.
4. Media planner.
5. Consumer and market researcher.

The initial approach to this project aimed to centre on the profile of Creativity, design and management of production (profile 2). Here is where we saw the fewest job placements, and where the traditional way of creating jobs (job boards, newspaper ads, etc.) does not work to help new creatives join the business and social fabric. A this project has been developed, ultimately all the profiles have be included.

For this type of project, we needed an internal contributor from the department, an alumnus from the Bachelor's degree programme who provided the legal advice needed. This legal advice is required since all databases on Internet must comply with Spanish laws on the protection of personal information (LOPD) and the law on services in the information society (LSSI).

The project also included the signing of a sponsorship agreement with an external company, ADQA (www.adqa.com), which makes possible «the hosting of up to 100 megabytes, renewable each year».

3. Methodology

The project is divided into four main avenues of action or phases:
1. Preparation: drawing up the databases.
2. Technical development of the website of the virtual community.

3. Dissemination: spreading the word about the new community to alumni, companies and the media.
4. Consolidation: joining by alumni, researching other avenues of financing to ensure the continuity of the project, transfer of experience.

3.1. Preparation: drawing up the databases

First of all, all the files of the students in the course on Creativity in the Bachelor's Degree in Advertising and Public Relations were gathered together. As the data in the files was released to the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona with the consent of the students, we were free to use them. Once we had the entire list of names and telephone numbers digitalised, the telemarketing stage began in which the project technicians tried to get in touch with each of the alumni in the database. The initial database was implemented using Excel, and it was organised into the following contents: surname(s); name(s); email; telephone 1; telephone 2; comments on the contact (such as landline and wrong email; call after 7 pm; lives in New York, etc.); current company (such as Young&Rubicam, Vitrubio Leo Burnett, Barcelona County Council, Encofrado Made, Flaix FM, not working, etc); details (freelance, company-staff conciliation services, own design studio, etc.); and other comments.

As was predictable, much of this information was obsolete, and for this reason we had to try to trace the person and the methodology.

3.2. Technical development of the website of the virtual community

This was divided into two stages:
1. Research and analysis of experiences involving virtual communities.
2. Computer programming (technological aspects) and web design (graphic aspects).

After analysing a good number of virtual communities that are currently on the Internet, and after having participated in some of them as users, we were able to get a fairly broad idea of the services, structures and operation of this type of service, which is so in vogue these days.

The research was based on online communities in a variety of fields and of differing kinds which somehow could serve as a model for our project because of either their contents (advertising or communication, like publircidad.com), their nature (professional or student groups) or their way of operating and managing millions of users (general or personal contact communities, such as meetic.com, match.com and hi5.com).

Neurona.com and Xing.com are the best-organised, most interesting communities that offer a very comprehensive service; they are extremely popular among professionals. They were therefore taken as the model for creating the UAB community. Neurona.com is already the leader in Spain, with more than 700,000 users today, and Xing works Europe-wide. Econozco, Eacademy, Joined-in and Publircidad are other examples, yet they have certain weak points (poor design, high prices, not very popular, etc.).

However, it should be borne in mind that the alumni community from Advertising and Public Relation at the UAB is designed to be a more restricted site, in theory, and that there will be added emotional content: everyone will be graduates of the same university. In this vein, we have also analysed some of the numerous communities and websites devoted to both universities (universia.es) and those specialising in finding former classmates (quefuede.com). The overall assessment of these websites is quite negative, as often they are solely based on this goal, they are poorly organised, they lack complementary services and end up being «failures» in terms of participation. We should bear in mind that in a more informal, interactive sense, there is already a general website where UAB alumni can interact, patatabrava.com, although the idea behind our virtual community is different.

The technical development of the community was done through different sub-stages:

a) First of all we had to join all the parts and packages in the freeware programme *Joomla!* This programme is made up of different packages developed separately over a common base, which when joined together offer the functionalities needed for the UAB community. This part of the project was developed with the help of a UAB computer science student.

b) The second phase in this stage was to make all the adjustments. We had to construct the sections of contents, how the user profiles would appear, how users would communicate with each other, which menus would be visible, and even how a user would register for the community. This part was quite lengthy since new adjustments to make kept arising. Even today, we are aware in the launch phase that fine-tuning is still needed.

c) Finally, the last phase in the production process was based on giving the community design and colour. For this job, a design expert adjusted the templates that came with the freeware to the corporate image. Within the limitations give by the programme, we had to do our utmost to make it as attractive as possible.

3.3. Dissemination: spreading the word about the new community to alumni, companies and the media

As this article was being written, preparations were underway to disseminate the community to alumni. This dissemination will consist of sending an email to inform alumni that the community is now up and running and that they may join it. Once there are enough alumni in the community, we will then advertise in companies and the specialised media.

3.4. Consolidation: joining by alumni, researching other avenues of financing to ensure the continuity of the project, transfer of experience

This stage will be conducted as of summer 2008. We should mention the support of the Office of the Vice Rector of Students and Culture of the UAB to implement the philosophy of this project in other degree programmes on campus.

4. Results

4.1. The database

The efforts to generate the database were one of the most difficult in this project. Despite the fact that it is toilsome, we have managed to reach almost 700 alumni who graduated between 1977 and 2007.

The table below summarises the results of almost one year of data gathering:

Figure 1. Effective contact with alumni in the virtual community (www.uabcom.net) as of the 3rd of March 2007. PN indicates the new academic curriculum started in 1992.

Graduating class	Contacts	%	Graduating class	Contacts	%	Graduating class	Contacts	%
1977-82	12	27.9	1985-90	13	7.9	1996-00 PN	47	40.5
1979-84	3	5.8	1986-91	27	14.1	1997-01 PN	50	51.0
1980-85	8	10.3	1987-92	6	3.8	1998-02 PN	64	64.6
1981-86	9	9.0	1988-93	17	11.9	1999-03 PN	90	84.9
1982-87	14	10.0	1989-94	1	0.8	2000-04 PN	96	93.2
1983-88	19	14.9	1990-95	0	0	2001-05 PN	56	52.3
1984-89	21	16.1	1992-96 PN	3	3.1	2002-06 PN	42	44.6
			1993-97 PN	15	14.1	**Total 1997-2006**	**674**	**25.4**
			1994-98 PN	53	50.4			
			1995-99 PN	8	6.8			

Of the approximately 2,635 students who have graduated from the Bachelor's Degree in Advertising and Public Relations at the UAB, a total of 663 students were located, representing around 25% of the total.

4.2. The website: The virtual community

Bearing in the mind purpose this community should have for students in their last year and for alumni, an environment was created with different areas. The areas were arranged into two groups: the user's personal menu and the common menu among all the community members. Below is an outline of the features of each of these parts (personal menu and general menu).

PERSONAL MENU: «El teu menu» (Your menu)
- *Start (Figure 2)*.
- *Profile*. This is the section that allows users to edit their personal information, that is, the information through which the other members of the community can get to know them. With this purpose in mind, this is one of the most highly personalised sections, and it allows users to upload a photograph, enter personal data and attach their own CV and professional data.

Figure 2. Homepage of the virtual community (www.uabcom.net)

· *Post your news*. As if it were a personal blog, the community offers this section for posting news. This is the easiest way to share the latest professional news with ever-yone who visits your personal profile. When you post a news item, an editing box appears where you can write whatever you want. However, whatever users write is related solely to their personal profile, so it can only be seen when another member of the community visits that profile.
· *Members*. This is the tool for getting to know the rest of the community. In this section of the personal menu, there is a list of all the members in the community today. These members can be sorted by alphabetical order, by graduating class, by user name… This is how users can easily find the new members from their graduating class or other alumni by sharing and knowing their user names. Once found on the list, users can to go the personal profile page of the members selected from the community list.
· *Forum*. This section is the meeting point and debate forum for all the members of the community. Instead of being aimed at getting in touch with specific members, this forum for public debate in the community is used to comment on and discuss issues with a broader scope than more direct conversations among acquaintances in the community. Plus, it is one of the tools that should bring the community closer and foster the feel of a community as it deals with issues that might affect all the members.
· *ComCom** record. The latest events and news about the degree in advertising and public relations at the UAB will be the content of this section. With its archive of news items that are, for example, related to the faculty or other more general events,

it is suitable for serving as a point of re-encounter between the university and its alumni who come back to be informed about what's happening there.

- *Contact us*. This is the section where users can get in touch with the organisers of the community, to propose improvements or recommendations, lodge complaints or report on technical glitches that arise. It is also a way for users to feel helped by the community's experience.

The goal of the merger between the theoretical world of the university and the practical world of advertising and public relations becomes a reality in the:

GENERAL MENU: «El troba-feina» (The Job-Finder)

- *Job vacancies*. As if it were a news section, the section contains all the notifications so that alumni and companies participating in the project may post the different job offers they have. The offers are classified by profiles, so that users can find the offers that are more closely related to their personal and professional profile. This section is fed by direct links with the job offers from the part of the menu called «Post an 'available to work'».
- *Available to work*. Following the lines of the previous section, in this section students can offer themselves for jobs. In this way, companies looking for students and alumni can go directly to this section to find work. This section is also classified by professional profiles to make it easier to search, and it also requires students to define what type of position they are seeking.

Figure 3. Internal page of the virtual community (www.uabcom.net)

- *Post an 'available to work'* and *post an offer*. These menus are for publishing the news that goes in the previous sections, «Job Vacancies» and «Available to work». Here, in addition to classifying the jobs by professional categories – as mentioned above – users may also enter a title and a text. The ability to attach images to the news item is still under development, as beforehand we must study the capacity and limitations of the server.

5. Conclusions

After one year of work we can state the following:

1. We have achieved the initial level of the first version of the community (CVD 1.0) with the following basic sections.
    a) Your Menu
    b) The Job-Finder
2. We are trying to «flush out» certain IT limitations related to:
    a) Authenticating members. We finally decided to authenticate them via their national ID number (DNI).
    b) Minor errors in certain processes when posting a job offer.
3. We have designed an interface that is user-friendly.
4. Of the approximately 2,635 alumni that have graduated from the Bachelor's Degree in Advertising and Public Relations at the UAB, we have located approximately 663, accounting for around 25 % of the total.

The future holds four main challenges:

- Keeping up our efforts to locate alumni by either telephone or post.
- Correcting the technical errors that might arise in the community.
- Making the community more dynamic.
- Finding a stable method to finance the project via membership fees or other avenues.

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Interesting links

· Innovation website: http://www.uabcom.net [2008]

The webgrafia proposed for the pilot study on the communities analysed includes
an analysis of model virtual communities (consultations carried out in 2007)
http://www.neurona.com; http://www.econozco.com; http://www.universia.net;
http://www.meetic.com; http://www.xing.com; http://www.ecademy.com; http://www.publir-
cidad.com; http://www.hi5.com.

Keywords

Virtual community, alumni network, advertising and public relations.

Financing

Agency to Manage University and Research Aid (AGAUR) convocation: aid to improve
teaching quality at Catalan universities for 2006 (MDQ). Identification number: 2006
MQD 00136.

Aid from the Rector's Office of the UAB-2007 to optimise the web platform and
its dissemination.

Supplementary materials on the CD-ROM

Demonstration of the VIRTUAL COMMUNITY OF ADVERTISING AND PUBLIC
RELATIONS ALUMNI website and example of a new user registration.

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Presentation of the working group

Using the abbreviation GRP, a group of advertising and public relations professors from
the UAB gathers together to offer research and training services in addition to their teach-
ing duties within the university.

The core group is made up of professors from the Advertising and Public Relations
Unit who teach in the Bachelor's Degree in Advertising and Public Relations and in the

doctoral programme on «Advertising and Public Relations: Branding and audience strate-gies». Unlike other groups, GRP is open and its membership changes depending on the type of research or assignment. This enables doctoral students to join the group. Thanks to this dynamic, the young researchers receive backing and advice in developing projects.

To date, research has been conducted that is financed by a variety of companies and private institutions: Bayer S.A., Lloreda S.A. (KH7), El Gremi de Publicitat, and a vari-ety of MQD-AGAUR teaching innovation projects and teaching innovation projects with the support of the UAB's IDES.

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Use of virtual BREVIA collections for studying Advertising and Public Relations

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Abstract

This article presents the construction of a digital platform to facilitate the teaching of students in the pilot test on advertising and public relations. This platform was set up as a library of virtual resources that students can use throughout their entire degree programme. This project outlines how it was built, the classification criteria used, the materials placed in the library and, in short, how we defined the power that the virtual library has as a tool to reinforce independent study.

The way this resource is used and the possibilities it offers for both professors and students are some of the considerations that can be extracted from the implementation of the project.

General area of interest of this innovation

The current launch of the new Bachelor's degree curricula entails exploring new methods that facilitate students' independent learning process. This text provides information on the construction and use of online resources, and it enables academic managers and educators to discover the difficulties and qualities of these resources in order to get the most from their use.

1. Objectives

The goal was to create and launch the virtual platform BREVIA, along with defining and outlining the aspects that would be necessary for the future activity and progression of the virtual documentary collection. BREVIA is a selection of digital documentary materials aimed primarily at improving students' independent learning, yet the faculty can also use it as it gives them access to an extensive virtual bibliography that can be both recommended and even consulted in the classroom.

Bearing all of this in mind, BREVIA is a tool that aims to facilitate users' access to virtual resources related to the degree programme in order to have available all the material needed for independent study (for students to study on their own and for projects) and to improve the dynamic in teacher-led classes.

2. Description of the project

The UAB has begun to develop the project to set up a virtual library in conjunction with three degree programmes it offers (Physics, Geography and Advertising and Public Relations), integrating it conceptually, organisationally and functionally within the digital media currently existent.

2.1. Technological and educational changes today

This initiative responds to the new problems and needs that are emerging based on the technological and educational changes in cutting-edge universities today in the implementation of the ECTS teaching methodology to evolve towards and adapt to the new situation. The main factors of change and the initiative of the project are:

1. The trend towards more prestigious universities.
2. The development of information technologies.

   The development of information technologies in general, and communication technologies in particular, has facilitated a qualitative leap from the analogical to the digital age. As a result, both the format of materials and resources and how they are applied in university teaching practice have evolved. Adapting to these changes, the trend at the most prestigious universities is to offer their users (especially students) improved or selected resources and materials in digital format. In order to carry out these goals, virtual platforms like BREVIA represent the chance to step onboard this new juncture.

   «This trend presupposes the selection of the technological resources and infrastructure that need to be made available to users, in accordance with relevant scientific and educational criteria, an integrated platform of digital services based on a selection of up-to-date, varied materials, as well as painstaking design. One fundamental guideline in all this effort is to expand and improve the conditions of students' learning and independent learning.»

   The engine to take advantage of these ICT materials are the academic changes which have been prompted by the implementation of the new teaching methodology based on ECTS credits. These three underpinnings are the ones motivating us to develop these tools, which furnish higher quality and more possibilities for the new concept of learning that we aim to attain.

2.2. The trend towards more prestigious universities

Based on the infrastructures and technological potential that are possible and feasible today, we can discern a clear trend that cutting-edge higher education institutions are focusing on «*improving the services and (independent) learning resources in the form of virtual resources, and making them available to the users, their students*».

The model to follow when building our own virtual library are the learning centres of certain British and American Universities (Colombia University, Harvard University, etc.); platforms with materials that have been culled and classified according to common, agreed upon criteria. For this reason, the UAB started its pathway by defining these working principles:

«*This means developing a model for managing, producing and choosing the learning materials organised according to certain common principles, as well as providing a classification system and access to these materials according to the functional criteria, which can be generalised to any UAB user within the different fields of knowledge*».

As a virtual educational tool of the UAB, BREVIA must adapt to the characteristics of its own students and become an attractive tool for achieving the educational goals of our degree programmes.

2.3. The development of information technologies

In order to pave the way for the qualitative leap that is transforming today's education from the analogical to the digital age, the UAB has been equipped with the logistical and technological support of the virtual campus. The virtual campus will temporarily serve as the tool or base platform where BREVIA is structured and constructed. We hope that its scope will make it a much more general, effective and useful tool.

2.4. BREVIA: Instructions and basic protocol for creation and maintenance

This project is based on creating a tool that is useful and effective for students' independent learning in accordance with the changes underway today in fields like technology and teaching methodology. Therefore, with the intention of its becoming a user-friendly instrument for exclusively educational purposes, basic criteria for organisation, construction and maintenance of the materials or resources offered via this tool were laid down.

2.5. Classification criteria:

In order to facilitate simple information searches and organisation, the resources will be organised based on standardised library criteria:

«*The library of virtual resources for independent study should be a learning environment centred on each of the fields of knowledge and the different degrees programmes they encompass, in order to facilitate access to the information and students' independent learning processes in the different degree programmes. In order to facilitate the func-*

tionality of this access, these virtual resources, or «library», must be organised according to standardised library criteria.»

In accordance with this principle, a variety of data were suggested that could be included in the files on the materials or resources chosen: the usual cataloguing criteria (title, author, date, publisher, etc.), the key word (the specific area of knowledge), a description, the educational level of the material and the level of private/public access of the resources. The goal of all this information is to construct a clear, user-friendly tool. All the materials all organised into seven different sections: monographic resources, dictionaries and encyclopaedias, audiovisuals, databases, portals of resources, benchmark institutions and useful software.

2.6. Material available

The main criterion to bear in mind in terms of the materials is that the BREVIA resources must be in digital format. Paper or analogical versions will not be catalogued. If this condition is fulfilled, the resources can be of different types, ranging from reference texts to selected articles to reports, problems, tutorials, field activities, laboratory activities, videos, etc. (adapting to the needs of each degree programme). Despite this, in line with the overarching goals of usefulness and efficacy, these materials should not surpass a reasonable number of 100 to 200 resources.

2.7. Several benchmark virtual projects

Having analysed and studied a variety of works, the virtual platform of the Bachelor's Degree in Advertising and Public Relations was organised based on the virtual libraries of renowned American and British universities, in an initiative spearheaded by the Universitat de Girona, by the «Virtual Veterinarian» section of the Faculty of Veterinary Science of the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, and by the working process of two other degree programmes at the UAB which are also developing the BREVIA project.

In the digital platforms of the most prestigious universities, we found a formal and technical model that has been used to build and actually structure the tool. The other three benchmarks, in contrast, have mainly been used to get to know the possibilities that an instrument of this kind can offer its users and the type of materials that can be offered on it.

The Universitat de Girona project is an example of the process of digitalising a bank of images (works of art) to improve the study and teaching of Art History. The initiative in the UAB's Faculty of Veterinary Medicine has created the «Virtual Veterinarian» project which gives access to an entire set of teaching materials (class notes, videos of operations conducted on animals, etc.) that might be useful for us

3. Methodology

The goals of the BREVIA project in the Bachelor's Degree in Advertising and Public Relations are to create a virtual library of digital resources chosen according to their

degree of relevancy and interest for students and for their independent learning. Despite this, based on these studies two aspects were added that are important, or at the very least interesting: the educational purpose of the tool and the process of adapting the instrument to the users. The design of BREVIA is being developed to improve independent learning in order to achieve the specific profiles of the degree programme. The goal is to construct a primarily educational virtual platform that exceeds certain access limitations (like timetables and location) of the current Library of Communications Studies and the General Periodicals Library. In accordance with the potential offered by the digital era, the new formats enable us to overcome these barriers. Indeed, the goal is not to construct and create and «second» library but to make available to students (and other users) a tool especially designed for their degree programme.

3.1. Development of the project and adaptation of the tool

The entire design of the project has been planned to not contradict the principles that are being instituted with the new teaching methodology, ensuring that the tool created is adapted to the new environment in which it must operate. One of the characteristics of the academic reform is that students must acquire skills related to the professional profile determined for each degree programme. In the case of the Bachelor's Degree in Advertising and Public Relations, the professional profiles defined based on which the digital resources are being gathered are the following:

1. Strategist. Consultant in commercial communication and public relations.
2. Creativity, design and management of production in advertising and public relations.
3. Account manager in advertising and public relations.
4. Media planner.
5. Consumer and market researcher.

3.2. Surveys to identify users' needs

Bearing in mind that the main purpose of this project is to create a working tool (the virtual platform) that is useful and effective for its users, in the degree programme a survey was administered to identify students' needs and therefore determine which sections and types of material were the most suitable to include in the new academic instrument.

Based on this survey, which was administered to students in the Bachelor's Degree in Advertising and Public Relations at the start of the project, we were able to identify their working habits with respect to the use of digital resources. In this way, we managed to draw up a list of the needs we detected that BREVIA could resolve as an educational tool within the framework of university learning.

First of all, the students' responses on the use of resources in the current Library of Communications Studies indicated their tendency to use them while studying for their courses. Indeed, 79% of the students admit to having used the current Library of Commu-

nications Studies only «occasionally throughout the academic year», which leads us to believe that they only go there when they need to because of specific projects or exercises and that they do not tend to use it as an indispensable part of their learning (only 15 % go there regularly). At the same time, it was interesting to discover which digital resources they use so that BREVIA could focus on the resources most in demand. This information is expressed in absolute numbers in the figure below (Figure 1) from a broad sample (N=183) of the subjects.

Figure 1. Use of digital resources in the current library (February 2006)
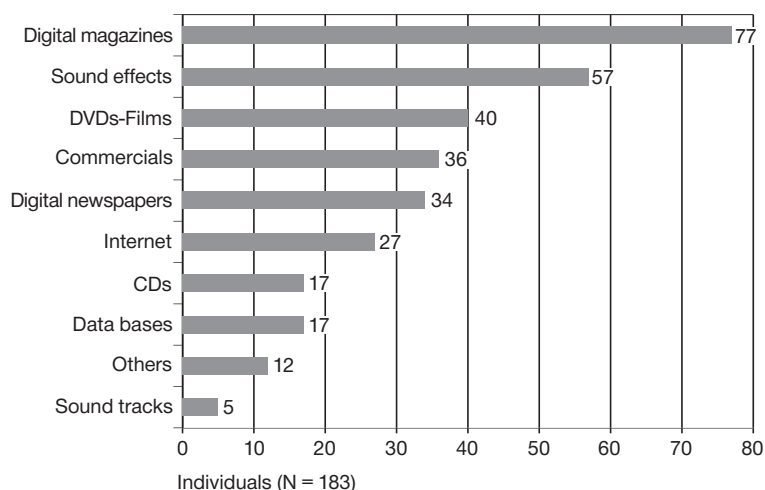
Likewise, we also researched the use of the virtual platform for teaching courses at the UAB, the virtual campus, because it is the technological platform where BREVIA is to be located. Absolutely all the students in this survey had entered the virtual campus, therefore demonstrating that it is already a tool that is well-integrated into the educational sphere. What is more, its success and usefulness is reflected in the frequency with which the virtual campus is used: a total of 77 % of the students use it more than twice a week. Taking advantage of the existence of a virtual campus related to the educational goals of each degree programme, we had to discover to what extent Advertising students were aware of the section of the campus in which BREVIA would be included. We could estimate to what extent the students used that part of the virtual campus before installing the BREVIA project there. Here, the results dropped steeply: 59% of the students in this degree programme had never checked the section «Resources of the degree programme» within their virtual campus screen (Figure 2). Delving further into this, we researched the profile of the users who were already aware of this section of the virtual campus prior to BREVIA. We confirmed that the students who

used the virtual campus daily were the ones who already knew about these resources (60 %) ($\chi^2_{(3)}$=11,03, p<0,012). This once again became clear in the positive relationship in that the students that used to virtual campus more often are also the ones who use the resources available for the degree programme more often ($r_{(181)}$=0,134, p<0,033).

Figure 2. Knowledge of the section «Resources of the degree programme» (February 2006)
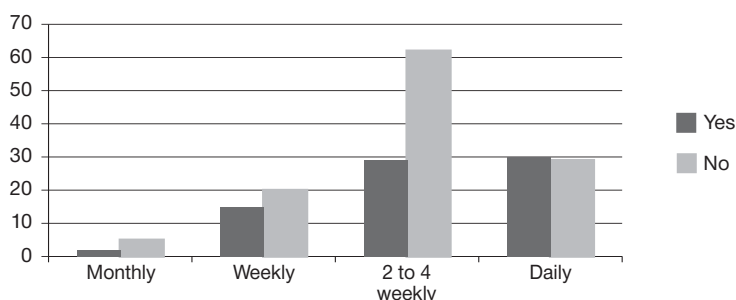
The final results of this survey of students helped us to establish the digital resources that they tend to use the most which are now located in the library (digital magazines and newspapers in the sector, sound effects and adverts, in first place). The research also showed that the knowledge and use of the section where BREVIA was to be housed was closely linked to the students' study habits on the virtual campus. Therefore, we considered it extremely important to make the virtual space easily available.

3.3. Contributions by students

The students offered many comments in this initial survey. Indeed, 54 % of the respondents shared their personal ideas, which we should regard as successful bearing in mind that they could do so in an open-ended question at the end of the survey. The students in the fourth year of the programme provided much more specific comments than the students in the previous years, who had fewer and more general comments. Broadly speaking, they requested digital resources or materials. The students requested reference works (books, theses and monographs) and digital magazines. They also wanted banks of images, photographs, sounds and adverts (either graphic or audiovisual) and databases related to the programme (databases from institutions like SOFRES, INFOADEX, etc.). Apart from this, they expressed an interest in having access to directories of websites related to the degree programme. They mentioned having the email addresses of advertising agencies, search engines, translators, forums, pages with downloads (of software, old and current advertising campaigns) and the like. A

widespread wish detected in the comments of many students was to acquire paid data-bases that are interesting which, if possible, they could access from their homes.

3.4. The virtual platform of the degree programme

The structure originally proposed for the platform was adapted to the particular needs of the degree programme. Bearing in mind the needs identified in future users, the structure was redefined as shown in Figure 3. Once the structure was defined and the contents prepared, the virtual library was launched following the appearance of the UAB's virtual campus (Figure 4).

Figure 3. Detailed schema of the organisation of BREVIA 2006

Basic reference works
- Digital works
  Advertising, marketing, public relations, design
- Top 30

Magazines
- Digital magazines
  National, international, public relations, design
- Top 10

Internal audiovisuals
- Advertising spots
- Lectures

Databases
- Adverts, images, font styles, general sounds

Directories
- Communication, marketing, public relations, blogs/news, design
- Institutions
  Catalonia, Spain, international
- Festivals
  National, international

News
- New acquisitions

Miscellaneous
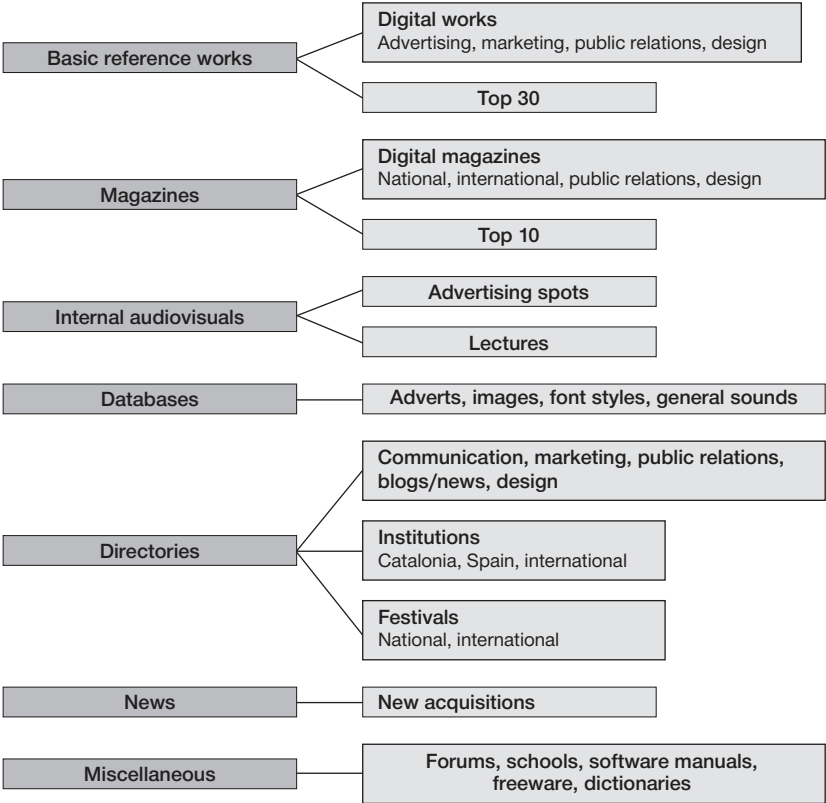- Forums, schools, software manuals, freeware, dictionaries

Figure 4. Sample of the BREVIA 2006 virtual platform

4. Results

Below are the data on the use of BREVIA by students in the Bachelor's Degree in Advertising and Public Relations. The survey was conducted as part of the follow-up report on the pilot tests at the UAB, which show the results from the «Questionnaire on the introduction of the UAB to the European Higher Education Area». The survey was piloted by the Research Group in Education and Work from the UAB's Department of Sociology.

We should bear in the mind that the results of this report only include students attending the class, who have certain specific characteristics. We should also take into account that the questionnaire was administered towards the end of the second term in academic year 2006-07, so the specific features of this term might affect the profile of students who responded. Of the questions on the survey, one referred to the use of the virtual library. The result shows that the degree to which BREVIA was used was rather low. This leads us to believe that these resources need to be promoted, given the fact that we believe that students do not habitually use them (Figure 5).

5. Conclusions

BREVIA is an extremely useful platform for the new teaching methodology. We managed to gather together a considerable collection of digital resources. Once the tool was launched, it must be updated constantly in order to ensure its usefulness and validity and to make it more visible for users. Having worked on the basic cornerstones of BREVIA, the main goals of the project were the maintenance and consequently functionality or usefulness of the new tool. For this reason, the virtual collection using the new technologies

Figure 5. Degree to which BREVIA is used
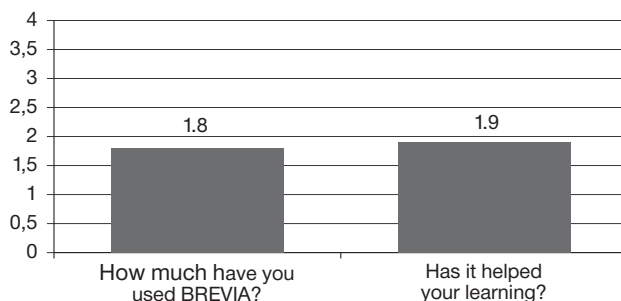
must be managed by focusing on learning within the new teaching methodology. Finally, the main purpose was to foster the use of the tool, to fine-tune it and promote it with its users, among whom the overall assessment was highly positive.

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Supplementary materials on the CD-Rom

Demonstration of BREVIA (Virtual Resources Library) by Advertising and Public Relations

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Presentation of the project leader and working group

Using the abbreviation GRP, a group of advertising and public relations professors from the UAB gathers together to offer research and training services in addition to their teaching duties within the university.

The core group is made up of professors from the Advertising and Public Relations Unit who teach in the Bachelor's Degree in Advertising and Public Relations and in the doctoral programme on «Advertising and Public Relations: Branding and audience strategies». Unlike other groups, GRP is open and its membership changes depending on the type of research or assignment. This enables doctoral students to join the group. Thanks to this dynamic, the young researchers receive backing and advice in developing projects. To date, research has been conducted that is financed by a variety of companies and private institutions: Bayer S.A., Lloreda S.A. (KH7), El Gremi de Publicitat, and a variety of MQD-AGAUR teaching innovation projects and teaching innovation projects with the support of the UAB's IDES.

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Publiradio.net: Application for creating radio advertising within the framework of the EHEA

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Abstract

The teaching innovation experience that is presented in this article is the result of four years of work that the Publiradio group in the Department of Audiovisual Communication and Advertising has spent dreaming up, designing and launching an online platform (*Publiradio.net*) for creating radio advertising. As part of the new teaching culture derived from the implementation of the ECTS credits, Publiradio.net has shown itself to be a support tool for classroom learning primarily aimed at fostering students' independent learning both individually and as groups, while it also is a website with the goal of becoming a benchmark instrument within education in audiovisual communication and advertising.

General area of interest of this innovation

If the radio has shown itself over time to be a powerful instrument for fostering learning both inside and outside the classroom (Artega, C. et al., 2004, Perona, J.J., 2001), *Publiradio.net* is a heretofore unseen educational tool not just because of its function within *cyber-teaching* but also because of the contents it offers. Currently there is no other teaching platform that brings together every single aspect related to radio advertising in a single space.

Publiradio.net is a website open to anyone interested in the subject, in that access to all of its contents is totally free. Nevertheless, as a project it is especially designed for the course *Theory and Technique of Radio Language* (second year, first term) in the Bachelor's Degree in Advertising and Public Relations in the Faculty of Communications Studies at the UAB. What is more, given its transversal nature, everything it covers is totally valid for courses on advertising creativity, as well as for the remaining courses on radio that are part of the curricula of the Communications Studies degree programmes.

1. Objectives

Since 2003, the Publiradio research group has been working on developing an online teaching tool that would serve as an educational complement to the courses on radio advertising offered as part of the Bachelor's Degree in Advertising and Public Relations. The result of this systematic effort was the creation of the application *Publiradio.net*, which starting in academic year 2006-07 effectively became part of the theoretical-practical support of the course *Theory and Technique of Radio Language*, which is taught during the first term of the second year of each degree programme.

In the first phase, the group focused on creating the virtual platform and defining its main sections and contents. Once the project came to light and *Publiradio.net* took its place on Internet, Publiradio set out to adapt the virtual resource to the most significant requirements resulting from the implementation of the new teaching methodology (ECTS credits) derived from the process of adapting university education to the European Higher Education Area (EHEA). The launch of this application first worked as an online trial, so that we could detect the strong and weak points of the platform and get to know the sections that needed reinforcement, supplementation and/or improvement. Given the fact that the application is a living, evolving tool that requires constant updating and maintenance, Publiradio decided to optimise its use as an instrument for creating radio advertising for students in the courses on radio advertising. Therefore, the following goals were set:

1.1. Main objectives

1. To adapt the *Publiradio.net* online platform in order to encourage students' independent study and turn them into active agents in their learning process.
2. To offers students useful teaching tools that would enable them to independently do the different exercises and practices assigned in the courses on radio advertising, both individually and in groups.
3. To foster students' creativity and critical spirit, as well as to encourage experimentation with the different elements of radio language (Balsebre, A., 1994, Gutiérrez and Perona, 2002) when designing radio advertising products.
4. To get more intense learning and knowledge of radio creativity and creation among students in the Bachelor's Degree in Advertising and Public Relations.
5. To stimulate students to acquire the most important specific skills that define the courses on radio advertising and advertising creativity. These skills include:
   - *In the realm of independent learning:* Learning how to learn. Knowing how to manage the time available by planning their activities realistically, functionally. Developing working, study and research skills both individually and in groups. Helping students to acquire mature, professional standards when choosing the different resources available to them for their education. Knowing how to evaluate radio advertising products.
   - *Artistic and creative realm:* Developing ideas and concepts adapted to the radio environment. Developing the imagination and productive thinking.

- *Technological realm:* To become familiar with the computer programmes that are used to complement the theoretical education, and which enable users to process sound to produce radio advertising products and contents.
- *Communication realm:* To be capable of persuading. Writing and verbalising ideas (locution) appropriately. Being able to argue and justify the appropriateness of the piece developed.

1.2. Secondary objectives

These are the goals that are more generic and that were already expressed explicitly in the idea that spurred Publiradio to create the teaching innovation platform *Publiradio.net*. These goals include:

1. To build an original application for independent learning on radio advertising in congruence with the *digital environment* of the studies managed by the Faculty of Communications Studies, which requires a higher degree of interaction between the student and the machine, and between the student and the professor.
2. To introduce a new level of innovation in the traditional *analogical* structure of the theoretical-practical learning process of students in the Faculty of Communications Studies who are taking courses related to radio and advertising.
3. To detect and include, in line with the new teaching culture derived from European convergence, the resources needed to ensure attainment of the educational goals, as well as the acquisition of the knowledge and skills necessary for graduates. In this sense, we understand that we must train students who are capable of responding to professional innovation which, in the realm of radio advertising, is required by the advertisers, advertising agencies and media agencies, and to thus neutralise the rising decline in interest in radio (Balsebre, A. et al., 2006).
4. To help to lower the level of marginalisation of radio creativity within the world of advertising.

2. Description of the project

As mentioned above, this project is a significant part of the course *Theory and Technique of Radio Language*, although it is also a useful project for any course related to the radio and creativity.

The main activities developed by the *Publiradio* research and teaching innovation group were aimed at constructing a powerful online tool so that students can discriminate between the different resources that are available to them and choose, with the aid of the faculty, the ones that are essential in the different phases of learning that are established in each course. Therefore, among other actions, the materials that have been included in the application have been organised using categories that are educationally coherent with the curricula in order to facilitate the tracking of the materials within the framework of continuous assessment.

With this philosophy in mind and with the goal of providing students with teaching resources for their education, we constructed the different sections of *Publiradio.net*, a website that features the following elements:

2.1. The sound library

A database of radio advertising products was assembled by including the jingles that are produced both in Spain and abroad, and especially in the different European countries, based on a documentary and bibliographic search of radio jingles in particular and of radio advertising in general. Within the sound library, students can find advertising productions that especially stand out for the use they make of the expressive potential of the components of radio language or because of the creative strategy they use. This section includes jingles from the 1940s until today. Each of the pieces included in the sound library is identified via a technical file, and users may listen to all of them. The sound library section enables students to access examples of radio advertising products. By September 2007 (the date the second phase of the project finished), this section contained a total of 264 sound documents.

2.2. The virtual classroom

Students have also been furnished with a virtual classroom (with sound resources and lessons) which not only fosters student-professor and student-student interaction but also gives teachers supplementary instruments to reinforce the theoretical-practical classroom teaching. The different sound elements (effects, music, separators) facilitate radio montage and become extremely useful instruments when developing the different teaching practices scheduled through the year (creating jingles, advertorials, product descriptions, micro-spaces, etc.). As sound resources, the students have more than 350 effects and tunes at their disposal. Likewise, the lessons (teaching units that complement the classroom syllabus) enable students to delve further into the basic concepts taught in the courses on radio advertising. At the end of the project, the platform had five online texts on radio language and on the strategic and communicative management of communication. The virtual classroom is unquestionably the section used most often by students when doing their practices.

2.3. Other educational elements

Within the education section students are furnished with educational resources that enable us to introduce novel systems for transmitting contents such as videos of classes, lectures, presentations, etc. Likewise, the research section shares the latest news in research in the field of radio advertising (as this article was being written, the students could see six online texts in article and presentation format).

2.4. Databases of creatives, advertisers, agencies and announcers

The students can get to know the main players in the world of radio advertising in our country, including the top creatives specialising in radio advertising, the most active

advertisers in terms of advertising investment within radio, and the agencies that come up with the majority of radio messages that can be heard every day on the different stations. In terms of announcers, the students can become familiar with the leading voices on the radio scene. In this case, they are offered an audiovisual database of the professional announcers in radio advertising with a description of the profile of their voices so that they can begin to familiarise themselves with the broad spectrum of acoustic registers and know how to recognise the voices delivering the advertising message. In all cases, the different elements on these databases are identified with a descriptive file and further information in pdf files. By September 2007, the application contained 113 documentary files: 14 on announcers, 19 on creatives, 37 on agencies and 43 on advertisers.

Finally, the platform was completed with a culling of news items related to radio and advertising, and with a section on links of interest that enable students to get further knowledge about radio advertising. Throughout the period that the project lasted, almost 100 news items and 60 high quality links were added on recording studios, advertising agencies and associations of advertising agencies, creatives and associations of creatives, advertisers and associations of advertisers, radio stations, online resources devoted to training, links with national and international research centres and specialised publications.

It is worth mentioning that within the courses on radio advertising, the faculty encourages the integration of the *Publiradio.net* online platform and the virtual campus within the structure and dynamic of the different classes. This enables us to forge synergies that facilitate both students' work and the resolution of queries that arise when they are doing the practices. It also establishes more fluid channels of professor-student and student-student communication. Therefore, a dynamic is established which involves three basic elements: the teacher-led classes, where the main theoretical concepts are explained and the different activities that students have to perform are assigned; the Publiradio.net platform, where students can access resources that help them to do their practices and projects along with materials that help them to complement the theoretical contents; and the virtual campus, which serves as a point of communication and gathering for turning in practices in given cases and for tutoring on the different projects (the scripts and briefings of the pieces are reviewed before their final production).

3. Methodology

The execution of this project has gone through different methodological phases, including:

3.1. Prior phase. Studying and analysing the needs and requirements of the application

1. Analysis of the exercises and practices assigned within the courses on radio advertising. Identification of the resources needed for students to perform them.

2. Launch of the process of benchmarking (comparative evaluation of the competition). Study and analysis of the best practices in developing online teaching platforms and constructing databases. Study and analysis of the databases on radio advertising that are used by the BBC Radiophonic Workshop in London, IRCAM in Paris and the Museum of Radio and Television in New York in order to establish the process of defining and creating our own database for the design of the online application.
3. Definition of the different sections of the website and their contents. Identification of the aspects needing improvement, expansion and/or rectification.
4. Study of the technical requirements and prediction of the platform's possibilities of growth in terms of the number of hits and volume of material it could ultimately store (making possible and ensuring its growth).

3.2. Phase 1. Searching for and developing contents

1. Searching for the basic contents needed to perform the practices (sound effects, music, separators, etc.) and including them on the platform.
2. Documentary research on radio jingles.
3. Documentary research on the history of radio advertising.
4. Bibliographic research on radio advertising.
5. Identifying websites with related, relevant contents for students' education. Searching for URLs that might become part of the section on links to the *Publiradio.net* platform.
6. Getting in touch with creatives, agencies and advertisers to get the information needed to fill out the descriptive files and biographic data that appear on the website.
7. Documentary research to draw up a Who's Who in the world of radio advertising announcers and a psycho-acoustic study to catalogue the different voices.
8. A public relations campaign with agencies and sound studios to secure the cooperation and permits needed to broadcast sound materials owned by them, restricted to the UAB.
9. Developing the different models of practices for independent learning in the process of producing radio jingles.
10. Developing the different lessons that serve as monographs on specific concepts related to radio advertising. They serve as a theoretical complement to the classes.

3.3. Phase 2. Adding the contents and teaching resources to the *Publiradio.net* platform

1. Operational computer design and technical production of the website, consisting of the online application, in coherence with the goals set and with the contents that need to be housed.

2. Addition of the different materials into the sections on the application following the criteria of relevancy and interest. The materials were included on the platform and made available to students through the possibility of downloading and expanding on information (through attached pdf documents that can be downloaded and/or read onscreen).

3.4. Phase 3. Disseminating the website and recruiting new associates for the platform

1. Communication. Dissemination of the existence of the platform as a teaching innovation tool beyond the specific setting of our degree programme and faculty. Contact with educators, researchers and professionals in radio advertising to ask for their cooperation in expanding the contents of the website through their own contributions (articles, dissemination of their studies, lectures, etc.).

3.5. Phase 4. Assessing the results, updates and maintenance.

1. Assessment of the results. Assessment of the different exercises and projects done by students according to the degree to which they met the goal set (what students were supposed to do) and the level of creativity shown in the projects (criteria when choosing and using the different resources; skilfully developing the message in terms of content and form).
2. Quantification of the degree to which the teaching innovation platform is used by students in the Bachelor's Degree in Advertising and Public Relations at the UAB.
3. Inclusion of new contents and updates of the current contents.

4. Results

As proven on other occasions (Perona, J.J., Barbeito, M.L. and Fajula, A., 2007), the actions developed throughout these years of work have enabled the group to achieve the following goals:

1. To turn the online application for radio advertising creativity into a key teaching resources within the context of the ECTS methodology, in that it facilitates independent learning, both individually and in groups, and it fosters students' creative, analytical and reflexive skills. Ever since it was launched, *Publiradio.net* has received more than 7,000 hits, a highly satisfactory figure for such a specific website.
2. To make this platform become an instrument that fosters continuous assessment of students in the different radio courses taught in the Faculty of Communications Studies at the UAB, especially in the Bachelor's Degree in Advertising and Public Relations. The statistics show that the students entered the Publiradio.net website more often when they were preparing a practice, a test or a theoretical exercise.
3. To turn the application into a useful complement for the radio courses and other courses on related topics. The results show that the students continue to use the plat-

form when performing practices in which they have to develop radio advertising products in other courses. This shows the transversal appropriateness of *Publiradio.net* and encourages students to have a holistic vision of the degree programme.

4. To facilitate independent learning among students in which they have to manage their time. The platform enables them to access the basic resources for performing their practices at any time and from any place.

5. To improve students' perception of radio advertising. Once the course is over, the majority of students claim that their opinion of radio advertising products have changed and that «they love the radio». This can help to break the view of radio as a complementary, second-rate advertising medium (Barbeito, M.L. and Fajula, A., 2005).

6. To optimise the demands for teaching innovation imposed by the digital environment, which structures the theoretical-practical learning of the degrees offered in the Faculty of Communications Studies of the UAB in the realm of radio communication.

5. Conclusions

With the development of this project, we have managed to get students to manage much of their own learning process in that they are the ones who end up deciding how to make use of all of the resources put at their disposal as a complement to the teacher-led classes. With the online application, students are offered the possibility of interacting with a tool that, once optimised, enables them to choose, listen to, download and manipulate a given sound effect or musical snippet to make a jingle, analyse the most representative voices in Spanish and Catalan radio advertising, listen to and analyse advertisements from the past, experiment with creative ways of conveying radio advertising contents, getting to know the results of the most recent studies on radio advertising or link up with all the institutions, research groups, sound studios, and the link that are involved in radio advertising.

Likewise, *Publiradio.net* is yet further proof of the growth that, thanks to technological convergence and especially the consolidation of internet as a platform for disseminating and inferring text, sound, visual and audiovisual contents, the initiatives aimed at fostering education in audiovisual communication are experiencing (Oliva, M., 2006). The radio, which has traditionally been used in different ways both inside and outside the classroom, has been shown to be a powerful complementary and reinforcing instrument for teaching and learning, is precisely leading the set of experiences that have been developed in different countries, which go far beyond its instructive and educational potential.

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Interesting links
· Website of the project: http://www.publiradio.net [2008]

Keywords
ECTS credits, radio advertising, creativity, online.

Supplementary materials on the CD-ROM
Demonstration of the *PUBLIRADIO* website: virtual tour of the news section, news archive, who's who, research and teaching, links and press room.

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Presentation of the working group

Publiradio is a university research group formed in 2002 and made up of five professors from the Department of Audiovisual Communication and Advertising at the UAB. It specialises in researching radio advertising, and ever since it was founded, it works to get better recognition of the radio as an advertising medium.

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Integrative Practicum Model (IPM) for good practices in staff qualification

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Abstract

The project is entitled *Integrative practicum model (IPM) for the research and consolidation of a network of schools of excellence for good practices in staff qualification*. Is has two overarching goals: first, to define the competences that students doing practices may develop in each of the schools bearing in mind the field from which they come; and secondly, to set up a network of outstanding IPM schools practices which, because of their characteristics, foster teamwork among students from a variety of degree programmes.

General area of interest of this innovation

The innovation is part of the practicum in the degrees in Social Education, Pedagogy and Educational Psychology in the Faculty of Education at the UAB, and it is linked to the underlying principles of the new EHEA (skills work).

1. Objectives

The goal of the project is to develop a network of schools of practices which, because of their characteristics, make possible an optimal implementation of the practicum for students studying Social Education, Pedagogy and Educational Psychology according to the underlying principles of the IPM project (interdisciplinary work, skills work, etc.).

2. Description of the project

The goal of the practicum courses associated with the different degree programmes in education is to create a space of training in which the future professionals can put into practice the knowledge and skills acquired in the other courses and develop professional competences that, because of their nature, are difficult to acquire outside the place where the professional practice is conducted. Nevertheless, the traditional structure of the practice courses poses two major limitations on the training of our students:

1. The uni-disciplinary design of the practices makes it difficult to develop skills for interdisciplinary work.
2. The fragmentation of the educational roles within the practice course caused by the displacement of the training grounds outside the faculty and the introduction of the figure of practice mentor at the school.

This led the team to design an integrative practices model (IPM) based on previous funding to improve teaching quality (209 MQD 2002). The IPM model starts from an integrative concept which, in constant contact with the working world (in this case, the schools where the students do their professional practices), enables us to reconsider the generalist approach of the practices and therefore enable them to be linked to the particularities of each professional field. The backbone of the model is the creation of multi-profession teams of students doing practices that enable students to acquire their skills in multidisciplinary settings and a space of training-mentoring that is jointly spurred by the mentor at the school and the professor-mentor from the faculty at the school. This model of practices also aims to revolve around the acquisition of the kind of skills outlined in the plan for European convergence.

The first round of funding enabled us to design and experiment with the IPM model at three pilot schools. They were promising; however, there were a series of administrative and difficulties that had to be overcome. One of these difficulties was the excessive fragmentation of the range of practices available. There is an extensive networks of schools, but they had not been sufficiently evaluated and this spread students thinly among the different schools. This dispersion made it difficult to concentrate a multidisciplinary group of students at a single school, and at the same time the excessive number of schools that a given professor-mentor from the university had to keep track of meant that they could not frequently go to the schools where the practices were being held in order to conduct the mentoring and training jointly. Likewise, skills work means that there must be a sufficiently well-defined list of skills that students must acquire during the practices. Drawing up this list is a complex undertaking when the number of workplaces in Social Education, Pedagogy and Educational Psychology is so vast. In the aforementioned project, work had gotten underway on drawing up a list of skills by fields.

As mentioned above, despite the difficulties detected, the results of the first project were promising. The schools, professors and students participating in the practices had realised the vast potential of this model, and it was precisely this conviction that led

the IPM team to consider continuing the project by working on two fronts: creating a network of outstanding IMP practice schools, and validating the professional skills that students should acquire during their practices.

The creation of a network of outstanding IPM schools was meant to create the training environments needed for a model of practicum that aims to create inter-professional teams and sites of skills-based training and work. For this reason, the criteria and requirements for belonging to this network had to be developed, the schools had to be chosen and the first network had to be set up. In parallel, the lists of specific and transversal skills that the students had to work on for each field had to be completed, the expert schools had to be chosen, and in conjunction with them the significance of these skills had to be validated.

3. Methodology

3.1. Creation of the IPM network

In order to create the network of schools, we started with a series of criteria and indicators with which we made an initial short-list of 19 schools (of the 95 that responded to and returned the initial questionnaire) to make up the first network. The heads of the schools were interviewed by the research team in order to get the information that the questionnaires could not provide, to inform them about the project and to request their participation. All the short-listed schools agreed to participate in this first network, which started operating in academic year 2006-07.

At the end of the academic year we evaluated the functioning of each of the schools in the network of practices based on the input from the practice mentors from the faculty, as well as based on the assessments by the schools themselves. Based on these assessments, the network was modified and certain schools were eliminated if, for example, their organisation did not foster teamwork among the different students.

Along these lines, the schools in the IPM network had to draw up, in conjunction with the university, a protocol that was to be used to facilitate the entrance of the student into the school as well as, even more importantly, their stay at the school throughout the academic year. These protocols were aimed at more closely linking the schools and practice mentors from the schools to the universities and their mentors. This link and commitment leads to an improvement in the practices from the student's perspective.

3.2. Choice of skills

In order to evaluate the importance of each of the professional skills that the students had to acquire in the practice schools, we asked for the collaboration of the schools that hosted the students from the Pedagogy, Educational Psychology and Social Education degree programme in the Faculty of Education at the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona.

The goal was for the professionals to assess whether certain skills could be worked on and developed by students depending on the field in which they work, specifying whether it was Pedagogy, Educational Psychology or Social Education. The questionnaires were handed out at the end of academic year 2004-05 and they were later fine-tuned.

Graph 1 shows the percentage of practice schools in each of the nine fields that participated in the evaluation:

Graph 1. Percentage of experts' jobs.
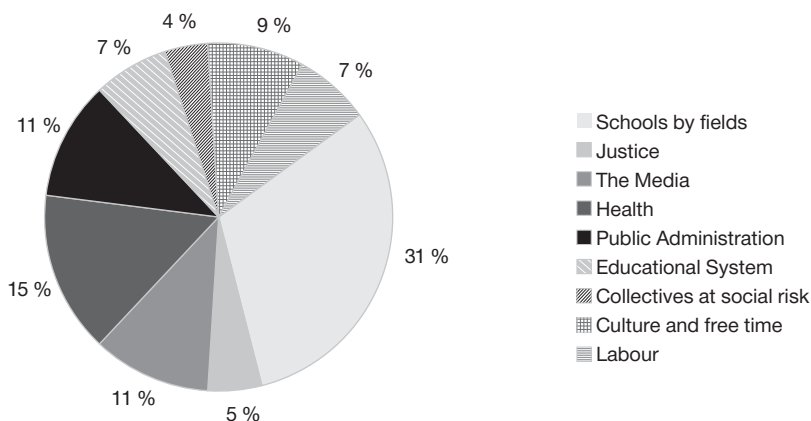
Table 1 shows first the job occupied by the 82 experts who participated in evaluating the professional skills of students in Pedagogy, Educational Psychology and Social Education, and then it shows the percentage of degrees that these experts hold.

The experts were asked to help by expressing their opinions on each skill by means of a sliding scale. To do this they had to fill in charts of skills where they were asked to rate each skill from 0 (not at all) to 5 (very) important according to the professional role (educator, educational psychologist or social educator).

The variation coefficient was calculated as an indicator of the «centrality – dispersion» of the experts' responses to the skills. These calculations led to the results discussed in the next section.

4. Results
Based on the IPM, we believe that we have created a high quality model, as shown in the numerous documents and support materials for both professors and students that have been drawn up and based on the consolidation of a stable working team of faculty

Table 1. List of experts' jobs and degrees.

Experts' Jobs	Experts' Degrees
13.3% heads of primary social care	9.6% Diploma in Social Education
18.2% headmasters	16.8% Bachelor's degree in Pedagogy
10.9% heads of study	14.4% Diploma in Teaching
2.4% pedagogues	8.2% Bachelor's degree in Educational Psychology
16.9% coordinators	10.9% Bachelor's degree in Psychology
1.2% head of employment	2.4% Doctorate in Psychology
1.2% educator	3.6% Doctorate in Pedagogy
1.2% executive	1.2% Technical Telecommunications Engineer
1.2% member of management team	1.2% Bachelor's degree Chemistry with Teaching Certificate
2.4% teacher	
3.6% assistant headmaster	1.2% Bachelor's degree in Biology
1.2% president	1.2% Bachelor's degree in Law
1.2% teacher in hospital	1.2% Bachelor's degree in Political Science and Sociology
1.2% psychologist	
3.7% educational psychologist	1.2% Bachelor's degree in Social Work
6.0% heads of programmes/services	1.2% Bachelor's degree in Library Science
1.2% secretary	
2.4% technician	
1.2% mentor	

from the two departments in charge of running the practicum in the degree programmes mentioned. At this point we can state that:

1. There is a motivated working group that takes the job seriously and rigorously.
2. There is a model of practicum that works and can be exported and generalised, which has three main players: students, mentors at the school and professors from the faculty.
3. The areas of work of the students from the Faculty of Education have been defined, as have the skills to be developed via the practicum in each of these areas of work.
4. There are seminars designed that offset some of the shortcomings that students have when engaging in the practicum.
5. A series of materials have been developed in conjunction with the practicum schools such as orientation plans and evaluation grids, which support the entire process of the entry and the stay of the students at the institution.
6. The process of information exchange, follow-up and tutorials among the three players involved (students, mentors at the school and professors from the faculty) is defined.
7. The features that the schools considered as outstanding for IPM that may be included in the network must have are agreed upon.
8. There is a consolidated network of outstanding IPM schools which in the future should be expanded if we want more students to be involved in this model.
9. There is a consolidated network of practicum mentors that watch over the process following the IPM model.
10. Despite the fact that the work conducted to date is satisfactory, renewed efforts are needed to extend and consolidate the model and overcome the difficulties that arise.

5. Conclusions

Based on everything explained above, we can conclude that there are skills in which there is a high degree of agreement (averages between 4 and 5) and skills where there is a wide range of opinions among the experts. However, we cannot draw a direct correlation among the ratings of the *knowledge* skills.

It is also important to highlight the fact that most of the experts in a given field have agreed substantially on certain given skills, dovetailing in the three professional profiles (social educator, educational psychologist and pedagogue). This mainly took place in all the fields to a greater or lesser extent.

Having reached this point, we can claim that we now have the lists of professional skills organised by fields (the IPM team determined nine areas of action: the media, health, public administration, educational system, justice, labour, culture and free time, collectives at social risk and research) organised according to the averages earned in their validation (the rating between 0 – not at all important – and 5 – very important) conducted by the 82 experts. These results enable us to define the professional skills that students in social education, educational psychology and pedagogy must work on at the schools.

Below is a list of the difficulties that are currently arising as well as the future challenges to overcome them:

1. Difficulty in expanding the network of pilot schools for administrative reasons, internal procedures at the schools themselves, the organisation of the practicum within the faculty, and students' tendency to choose schools for their proximity instead of for their excellence. Therefore, we have to eliminate the technical and administrative hurdles from within the faculty that hinder us from expanding and consolidating the IPM model. The research team, the faculty and the schools plan to analyse and examine these difficulties in order find and apply solutions.

2. Difficulty in compensating the schools for their efforts, which are always voluntary and which we attempt to palliate by fostering cooperation, the exchange of knowledge and faculty-school innovation and research projects by getting the working groups inside the faculty and schools in touch with each other and showing their potential.

3. Difficulty clearly explaining the network to the faculty, the teachers and the students. The schools must be given more prestige and students must choose them for their prestige as opposed to for their proximity and ease. In order to resolve this difficulty, a tool will be devised, specifically a website, in which the model will be disseminated and the schools in the network will be listed, and the goal will be for it to become a working instrument for professors, students and the schools. Additionally, this resource will also be used to disseminate the research and innovation groups in the faculty, as well as the projects, requests and needs of the practice schools. Contacts will be promoted according to mutual interests. Likewise, informative sessions will be held for all the stakeholders involved in the practices.

4. Difficulty finding an applicable way to work on the skills. The skills that must be developed have been analysed, but now we must define how to hone these skills, including how to evaluate and structure them according to the ETCS model. In this vein, we shall study the adaptations that that IPM needs or does not need in order to be applied according to the new model of ECTS courses and the ultimate decision on the new degree programmes. We shall also study how to promote skills work for both developing and evaluating these skills. Technical seminars will be designed and held with each of the different specialities and fields of work of the future professionals in social education, pedagogy and educational psychology.

Spreading the IPM model properly requires constant efforts in two directions. The first is from the faculty in order to break with the current organisational structure and the entrenched culture among the faculty. As for the second direction, efforts must be made with the schools so that we can consolidate a sufficient network that has the characteristics needed to host at least three students from different degree programmes; so that they are open to designing orientation processes and following up with students; so that they are willing to engage in skills work; and of course so that they can offer sound professional models and have a sound pedagogical capacity.

The future challenge of the IPM team is to extend and consolidate the implementation of the model to the majority of practices in the pedagogy, educational psychology and social education degree programmes, bringing this model closer to the requirements of the ECTS courses and the new degrees, as it appears that the practicum will have major significance in the formulation of these degrees' curricula.

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Keywords

Interdisciplinary practicum, professional skills, social education, pedagogy, educational psychology.

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Materials development and coordination in the design and implementation of syllabi in the field of educational organisation

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Abstract

The consolidation of the European Higher Education Area requires us to plan university degrees starting from the premise that students take centre stage. In this process, the group of professors in the Area of Didactics and Educational Organisation who teach courses in the degree programme linked to the field of educational organisation have developed a variety of actions aimed at fostering the quality of students' education based on better coordination among all the faculty in drawing up and developing the curricula.

This has entailed breaking with the academic isolation among the faculty involved and developing constant cooperative work, leading us to reflect on the process of teaching learnt by students, assuming beforehand the need to enrich the activity through personal contributions, expressing concerns, providing documents and helping to systematically compile good practices, all with the intention of sharing them and analysing the keys to their success.

General area of interest of this innovation

Collaborative work is assumed to be a necessary condition for teaching degrees with a certain quality and coherence. This project may be useful for any team of professors that shares this premise, as it is understood that it can be a good example for undertaking any other type of activity of a similar sort.

1. Objectives

The purpose of teamwork is to become a professional learning community that goes beyond brief, occasional actions to become regular, lasting cooperation. The specific goals are:

1. To establish a coherent organisation of the contents in relation to the subjects related to the realm of the organisation and management of educational institutions.
2. To approach a new paradigm in terms of how we understand the teaching-learning process. We have to shift from a paradigm focused on what the teacher teaches to a model in which what truly counts is what the student learns.
3. To develop materials that help to perform student-centred teaching and the development of the determined skills.
4. To set up spaces for reflection and debate with regard to the content of the materials.

2. Description of the project

The initiative got off the ground in academic year 2003-04, spurred by the new trends related to the processes of change being brought about by the European Higher Education Area, and partly by the concern with improving teaching, with the implicit hypothesis that any improvement in the coordination of the teaching in the middle term means an improvement in the quality of the degree in terms of academic performance and student satisfaction.

3. Methodology

The working dynamic is simply. The members get together around every two months. The meetings are short, basically focusing on management issues, where decisions are taken and assignments are divided up. Each of the members is involved in the projects and once a term organises a working session in seminar format lasting one or two days. These seminars tend to be held in a quiet place outside the university. The decision to work in a quiet setting is not viewed as an extraneous factor but as a strategy that enables the group members to isolate themselves from the jobs that they all have and to turn this time into a true forum of reflection and dialogue.

This dynamic has been very highly rated since it helps to make headway while also bringing the team together more and consolidating a common culture.

4. Results

It is still premature to talk about results; however, we can outline the products or actions undertaken until now, as listed below:

4.1. The matrix for assigning contents and courses

The first exercise was to draw up a list of the contents that, in the judgment of the members, must be assimilated by Pedagogy students from the standpoint of the realm being analysed. Once this job was completed and the contents were classified based on the structure set forth by Gairín (1995), we determined the courses in the Bachelor's degree and doctoral programmes in which these contents needed to be worked on.

The information gathered and organised into a two-column table was then debated, each of the contents was presented and placed in the course or courses where the members believed that they best fit according to the course description, due to the coherence and difficulty of the contents.

The first draft was then submitted to be validated by all the members of the group. To do this, each member checked the contents assigned to each of the courses they teach and analysed the fit or lack or fit between the matrix presented and what they really work on in the course with students. The following meetings were used to fine-tune these problems between the matrix and the syllabi of the different professors.

Some contents are repeated in two different courses, but they examine the issue at differing depths or examine the content from a different vantage point (indicated in the matrix with a symbol).

It is understood and accepted that the resulting matrix is not the only possible options, but it is the option suggested by the members and can be used to achieve the goals. What is interesting about it is having been able to reach a consensus and that the faculty involved in the courses take this into account when drawing up their syllabi.

4.2. Files on resources

The analysis of the contents of the teaching led us to consider how to convey these contents and therefore to methodological reflections such as analysing the resources involved. In addition to the richness of exchanges of opinions, we also believe it is necessary to discover whether we involuntarily fall into repeating the same methodologies and resources which, in addition to being unnecessary in some cases, might prevent students from learning about other educational resources.

The exchange of teaching methodologies is also appropriate for gathering critical comments from colleagues about the resources that each member of the team believes is ideal for the different goals and contents proposed. Therefore, the goal was to go beyond the cliché of professors reading their yellowed class notes year after year to open up to colleagues' ideas and determine whether it is worthwhile to introduce changes in one's own practice.

The exchange sessions are organised as follows: each of the members explains one of the activities that they often do in class to develop a given content. The other members ask questions and express their opinions spontaneously.

The exchange activity is compiled in the guise of a file (see Table 1) in which the main features of the activities explained are listed along with other interesting infor-

mation to bear in mind, which has been agreed upon or commented on during the session.

Table 1. Template of the file on teaching resources

Name of the resource:	Structured Exercise [ ] Intervention Technique [ ]
Subject in which it is recommended:	
Content worked (digits):	
Degree programme	
Other degree programmes (course):	
Time needed:	
Subjects addressed	
Requirements for use (group, type of classroom, materials, etc.)	
Best time to use	
Bibliographic reference	
And once the practice is over...	
For further information	

Finally, the compendium of files that is being assembled will serve as a tool for improving the teaching methodology, while it is also a product created by the group that reinforces the cohesion and sense of teamwork.

4.3. The case studies

The case study method is an educational technique which, by describing a situation which is called a «case study», we attempt to bring students closer to a reality for pedagogical reasons. We can say that a case study is a scenario in which there is a series of variables that interact and form a real or hypothetical and global reality that can become a subject of study. A case study can be extracted from real life, a person can gather data on a certain situation they have experienced and turn it into a case study, or you can start from a news items published in the press or another media and build a case study.

The case study method is a useful technique for applying in many fields of education. Students have to analyse the situation, define the problems and reach their own conclusions about the action to be taken, discussing the case study in a team and describing or defending their action plan either orally or in writing. This method fosters debate and communication between students and teachers. The case studies can be used as both an illustration or as a way of practising the knowledge acquired, as well as for evaluative purposes.

The case study method is a teaching strategy based on active, reflexive learning by students which includes analysing situations that might be equivocal, dubious and

uncertain. The learning is more effective when students develop analytical skills in the most realistic situations possible and when they can explicitly set forth their proposed solution. The case study method is particular appropriate for studying the organisation of educational institutions as it enables us to study real, plural contexts that are problematic or in need of improvement.

The presentation of the situation must include: an introduction, the most important characteristics of the main players, the description of the social and/or historical-geographic setting and the questions needed to resolve the situation.

The case study method requires students to participate more compared to other commonly used learning strategies. They must not only learn and understand ideas but also use them when the cases require value judgements. Students have to take decisions and defend their standpoint in the discussion. One essential factor for this method to work properly is providing students with enough information on the appropriateness of the options they choose and the work they have performed. The professor's job entails ensuring that students understand the information and later helping them to perform the work.

The professors teaching the different courses in the field of educational organisation have a certain degree of experience in devising the contents of the course by presenting a case study that can serve as an example for developing the contents of the syllabi, and through them, they also notice that the students are more motivated.

By presenting real case studies, the students are capable of developing skills like: analysis and critical thinking, decision-making as to which action to take, dealing with assumptions and fostering oral expression, interpersonal interaction and creativity. The classes are distinguished by an atmosphere of exchange and interaction between theory and practice, thanks to a type of teaching based on motivating, cooperative learning.

Starting with the case studies developed earlier, the challenge consists of finding the way to address the contents of the syllabi in the different degree programmes and how to implement collectiveness and coherence in our case studies.

This unification enabled us to glimpse a first objective: to outline a schema which all the case studies follow. The sections and certain stylistic rules and the length of each section were discussed so that even though the case studies are drawn up individually they all have standardised explanations and discussions and expository clarity. Through reflection and discussion, we reached the following schema:

1. Background: Framing the context, providing information referring to the time right before the situation, problem or case to be resolved.
2. Outlining the problem: In this section, the subject concerning us must be explained with utter clarity, with all the information needed in order to resolve the situation. Some observations to bear in mind are: to not be too long, to not offer information that can divert students from the main goal, and to ensure that students can clearly see the content the case addresses.

3. Questions related to the case study: These are addressed to students, and answering them will help students understand and focus the next section. This clearly contributes to activating their analytical and critical skills as students must identify with the situation and then search for bibliographic information, arguing the sources to resolve the case study if they need them.
4. Guidelines for resolving the case study: Here we enter the part where we put all the theoretical and practical contents into play in a substantial way. Students will have to refer to the list of concepts, the interaction of contents and ultimately the development of the guidelines set. This will enable them to put forth a solution, which depending on the case should also follow certain parameters. The guidelines and questions should also focus the topic and judge the different actions students can undertake. With all these resources, students should be able to take a decision they are capable of defending.
5. Support materials: Students are given two different kinds of materials, first the documents they must work on which must be consulted, and secondly, the essential bibliography which will also be crucial in resolving the case study.

Once the sections that each case study had to have were agreed on, the second task got underway: discussing the case studies that each group member had individually developed.

The main subject of each case study should be clearly explained. It is true that some of them can be used to address other topics as well; obviously collateral factors, nuances or suggestions can always be found that permit other studies, but each of the case studies should be designed to study a given topic within the field of educational organisation. We also agreed upon in which degree programme(s) the cases might be used, as well as their level of difficulty: starter level for the first few years or diploma programmes, and increasing difficulty for Bachelor's degree Master's, post-graduate and doctoral programmes.

A total of 38 case studies were developed, which has given us enough material to work on a vast range of content in the courses. The case studies are set in contexts of both formal and non-formal educational institutions.

The thematic sections and their corresponding case studies are as follows:

1. Theoretical underpinnings: paradigms, school autonomy and cooperation between institutions.
2. The school: sharing the school's educational project with families, the nature of organisational structures, organisational change and evaluation of institutions.
3. Community planning: strategic planning, tenders for educational services and planning for integrating immigrant students into the community.
4. Institutional documents: promoting the educational project, the report, the school plan and the internal system regulation.
5. Teaching teams: meetings, delegating functions, teaching coordination at the university.
6. School architecture: modifying school spaces, safety and hygiene at schools.

7. Functional resources: the school timetable and the budget.
8. Groupings of students: group phenomena (bullying) and behavioural rules for students.
9. The managerial role: models and theories of leadership, the skills and capacities of a leader, managerial techniques, hiring and training of management, evaluation of management and career plans.
10. Organisational culture and climate: analysis of the organisational culture, peer to peer communication, communication with families, participation in organisations, conflicts – concepts and elements, the degree of communication with and satisfaction of families.

These case studies are a valuable, novel kind of teaching material that enables us to address university teaching from a motivating, suggestive and practical approach that manages to achieve collective learning that fosters the improvement of teaching and as a result of our degree programmes.

4.4. Towards shaping common reading lists in the field of organisation

Building a teaching team and/or professional community goes beyond coordinating programmes and activities: we must also share readings, authors and trends. To do this we decided to examine the readings and bibliography that students in the programme are recommended. This job poses some difficulties, as the list must be finite and when the job of choosing or reducing the list begins, teachers are required to engage in a complex, difficult cognitive and ethical process.

Which readings should be made compulsory for students? Which readings should be recommended? The responses to these questions led to collisions between relatively opposing criteria which are listed below:

1. Tension no. 1: Classical/Up-to-date.
2. Tension no. 2: Theoretical/Applied.
3. Tension no. 3: Exclusive to the field/Multidisciplinary.
4. Tension no. 4: Formal education/Non-formal education.
5. Tension no. 5: General/ Specialised.

The first of these tensions is related to the criteria of timing. How often have we criticised a bibliography for not being up-to-date? Yet at the same time a classic book that examines the basic issues in an educational organisation programme is perhaps more recommendable for a student at the start of the degree.

All the courses in educational organisation in the curriculum of Pedagogy in our faculty are more applied in nature, as the more theoretical aspects are set aside for the post-graduate programmes. Even so, following the maxim that the *best practice is the best theory*, all the contents require a theoretical substrate, and therein lies the second tension in the use of the criteria for choosing texts and readings.

A third criterion to be borne in mind when choosing the texts was about the search for readings that are exclusive to the field of education and educational organisation,

or whether it was more appropriate to list texts that address the issues in a more multi-disciplinary manner. We often noticed overlaps in the contents of the courses because other disciplines, like educational policy, educational planning and others, also cover the same topics. This can be explained by the fact that it is difficult to address the subject from a single discipline.

A fourth tension that arose in the criteria was derived from the field of application of educational organisation: only in the field of formal education, or also in non-formal education? Might the texts from the non-formal realm be less academic or contain conceptual errors?

The fifth point that arose as a possible dilemma refers to the more or less applied nature of the subject. Should students study or learn particular experiences, or is it better to get them to grasp the concept globally so that later they can apply it in different situations?

The team of professors in the sub-area of educational organisation aimed to debate these criteria. And once again what arose were questions that can be used to build a team vision while also leading to individual growth as professionals in that the debate enriches each educator's own positions and convictions on the subject.

5. Conclusions

We can highlight the innovative nature of the case studies developed, which made possible methodological development of the contents of the areas focusing on developing student skills. We believe that systematising the readings, files on resources and case studies fosters reflection, analysis and critical thinking based on elements from a familiar reality in professional situations. We believe that resolving tasks from this methodological perspective also involves the development of cooperative work among students, given that the very nature of the instruments developed can be resolved only with debate, comparison and negotiation of the solution. The nature of the material drawn up in itself entails sharing the applications and updating the resources so that their innovative personality is retained while eliminating much of the overlap and gaps in subjects and activities that are developed when teaching the courses.

Right now it is very premature to talk about empirical evidence to endorse the fact that applying these working materials has contributed to improving students' academic performance. We can claim that the project has fostered greater cohesiveness among the faculty, which has in turn fostered the creation and complementation of our shared knowledge. Developing the materials meant not just consolidation of the coordination needed to set up a calendar of contents and resources, but it also created a forum of exchange to address subjects that get the faculty involved by creating a reflection on proposals and future curricula and research.

This process has motivated the professors to improve their practices and gain further awareness of the skills that we aim to foster through our practices.

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Presentation of the working group

The working group is made up of professors who teach courses related to the field of the organisation of educational institutions within the Faculty of Education. In acad-

emic year 2003-04, the group was set up as a teaching team with the goal of improving the coordination among the professors, taking the principles inherent in a professional learning community as our foundation.

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The secondary school – university transition: Orienting first-year students

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Abstract

This study analyses the processes of transition from secondary education to the university, and specifically the induction and orientation of students in their first year of university. The field study performed at the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona (UAB) primarily compiles the opinions of institutional leaders, students in their first year, students in secondary education and student organisations. Likewise, documentation on promotional practices, orientation and mentoring of students in their first year at Spanish and foreign universities is also examined.

The results reveal a variety of actions aimed at recruiting and orienting students, but there are few links with the processes of mentoring and orientation aimed at the same group. In any event, these are structural measures that do not always fit in with the difficulties that students encounter or with their concerns, perceptions and expectations.

General area of interest of this innovation

The university must constantly adapt itself to a society in constant change, which means structural and operational changes in the ways of teaching and managing. Therefore, there is a rising interest in universities to welcome, orient and care for their students by providing them with orientation and assistance when they are in their first few years of their degree programme, as well as supporting them in their transition to the working world. All of these actions reinforce the centrality of students and the teaching and learning process that must be promoted as the driving forces of university activity.

However, we should also bear in mind that high quality education requires organised transition processes that enable students to overcome the difficulties they find in

the educational process, and facilitating the best coordination possible among all the stakeholders involved.

In this context, studying how to make it possible for this transition to be a gradual process is particularly timely because:

1. The student population is increasingly heterogeneous due to the diversification of the routes leading to the university, as well as cultural diversity, prior professional experiences, the transversal skills they might have, etc. Letting students socialise freely is not the best way to meet their needs.

2. Students' social and academic integration into the university culture is a key factor for their educational success. The students who feel academically integrated have better chances of finishing their degrees and earning higher marks (Tam, 2002), and those who are more satisfied have higher chances of recommending the institution to future students (Delaney, 2004).

3. It has positive repercussions on students' self-esteem, academic performance and socialisation processes, while it also helps to prevent the delay and abandonment of studies, which negatively affect the processes of institutional evaluation.

All of these reasons justify a steadfast commitment to effective student recruitment strategies, especially in secondary education, as well as to conducting welcome or induction programmes for students in their first year which facilitate a smoother transition process to their university degree programmes.

The study that has been conducted (project MQD 2004 from the Department of Universities) analyses the process of transition and induction of students coming from secondary education into the university. The document presented below compiles the main methodological factors, a summary of the results and the most relevant conclusions reached.

1. Objectives

1. To analyse the experience of the transition from secondary education to the university at the UAB and other institutions.

2. To assess the impact of transition actions at the UAB and to analyse the conditions that affect these results.

3. To draw up a transition and orientation plan for students from secondary education starting their university degrees.

2. Description of the project

Tending to students, with the goal of achieving a complete, effective adaptation to the new educational situation, requires us to pay attention to the connection with secondary school and the support and orientation they have available in their first year at the university, a factor which this article analyses by surveying the known experiences.

The transition process from secondary school to university, just like all the educational transition processes, is difficult in that it means a change in rules and in the orientation of the education, which affects students' academic and social lives.

Despite the fact that the shift between the two educational phases has always existed (Quinquer, 2004), it is perhaps more complex now given the multiplicity of studies available at the university, the non-preparatory nature of the baccalaureate programmes, the problems of a connection between the contents of the courses in each stage, the lack of fit between the knowledge that university students need and what they really have, the change in the educational contract and especially the impact of shifting from one stage of education to another.

The transition should be viewed as an opportunity for students, who must be capable of taking advantage of the support offered them, and for the institution, in that it requires its constant adaptation in view of the changing educational reality of students' profiles, interests, expectations and needs.

3. Methodology

The working methodology and specific actions undertaken can be grouped into three major sections around which the study was organised:

1. *Phase 1. Analysis of existent experiences:* International and UAB experiences were surveyed by analysing reports, websites, articles, memos and interviews with organisers and users, using a matrix that gathered the information regarded as relevant as well as the sources of this information.

The instruments applied to the key informants at the UAB, validated by internal and external comparison, were:

   a) *Questionnaire for students in their fist year.* This includes questions like their participation in different promotional and orientation activities, the most useful activities in their transition process, how these actions helped them to decide to study at the university, the changes they have experienced at the university compared to secondary school, the difficulties in their programmes and the support and resources they would like to have.

   b) *Guided interview of heads of students at centres and faculties.* This includes general questions eliciting information on how the centre promotes and orients, evaluations of the actions, problems and knowledge of certain university programmes (student advisors, Argó, etc.).

   c) *Interview script for student groups*: This asks a variety of questions on their promotional process and orientation plans for each faculty.

   d) *Script for the student advisor discussion group*, focusing on the decision to choose the university, the information received prior to entering the university, the changes they have experienced at the university compared to secondary school, the institutional support they are aware of, etc.

e) *Questionnaire for students in the Argó Programme (UAB – secondary schools).* The questions were related to the reasons they decided to choose the university, the degree they plan to pursue, the support they have received in the transition process, their participation in stays at the UAB, their participation in the Argó Programme and the support they would like to have as they embark on their higher education.

A total of 263 questionnaires were administered to students from 14 faculties, plus we held 31 student advisor interviews, two interviews with representatives of student associations, ten interviews with students in the Argó Programme, one discussion group with five students from their first year, and 18 interviews with institutional leaders (Office of the Vice Rector for Student Affairs, Head of Academic Affairs, Head of Promotion and Communication, the Vice Deans of Academic Regulations, Students and Degree Coordinators). The field study enabled us to draw up a map of institutional actions at the UAB.

The analysis of the experiences outside the UAB included: identifying the most prestigious universities in the international context based on the Shanghai index, delimiting the factors to be analysed based on the information matrix and culling the student transition and recruitment activities on the websites of the different universities.

2. *Phase 2. Delimitation and analysis of significant experiences*: A variety of experiences were chosen according to the following criteria: they opened up new pathways for dealing with the transition, they were consolidated and had been in place for several years, they had been evaluated and there was proof of their importance for the issue being studied, they were accessible for offering information, and they had the participation of their leaders. The experiences were: the Dona Programme at the Universitat Politècnica de Catalunya; the Argó Programme, the Campus Ítaca and the student advisor programme at the UAB; and student retention programmes at a variety of universities.

3. *Phase 3*: *Proposed plan for the transition and orientation of students at the UAB*. The proposed plan for the transition and orientation of students at the UAB outlines the goals, actions and strategies to be borne in mind when orienting students in their first year. Its contents were the result of analysing the information of the experiences compiled as well as the assessments by the stakeholders involved and the researchers themselves.

4. Results

The map of institutional actions that are conducted at the UAB distinguishes the actions addressed at reinforcing the secondary school-university connection, those aimed at recruitment and information, and those related to student orientation. All the centres and faculties participate in these institutional actions (Table 1).

Table 1. Map of UAB actions

Actions aimed at students in secondary school and at reinforcing the secondary school-university ties

Campus Ítaca: This is a social-educational programme whose goals are: to encourage students to continue studying after compulsory secondary education; to create a space of coexistence between students from diverse social backgrounds; and to encourage the use of Catalan as the language of communication. http://antalya.uab.es/campusitaca/

Argó Programme: Its goal is to forge closer ties with secondary education. To do so, it conducts a variety of actions such as advice on research projects in baccalaureate, stays at the UAB by students in baccalaureate programmes, and prizes for research studies.

Other: Maths Saturdays, Physics Saturdays, Science Week and the «Camí de les lletres».

Actions aimed at recruitment and information

Open House days and campus visits.

Family Day: The purpose of these three activities is for students to visit the UAB Campus, either in the company of their classmates and teachers or for a weekend with their family.

Participation in the «**Saló de l'Ensenyament**» **educational fair and other fairs**.

The UAB visits you: Informative talks on demand at secondary schools and town halls (fairs are also held at the UAB about the second cycle degree programmes offered).

The **UAB bus** travels around different towns and cities in Catalonia with the goal of bringing information to the public.

Website of future students: This includes academic information, info on the services offered by the UAB, on the campus, FAQs, email addresses for answering queries, etc. The centres and faculties of the UAB also have their own website.

Promotional Video produced by the UAB's Communication Services, as well as informative brochures and other materials.

Actions aimed at orienting UAB students

Welcome and Orientation Days: Informative talks in the different educational centres on the degree programmes, registration, etc. just prior to registering or during the first few days of class.

Preparation courses for the degree programmes for new students.

Students website: This contains a variety of useful information such as the student guide, FAQs on the European Higher Education Area, the practical admissions guide, information on housing, a link to «study support» (website of the Unit of Teaching Innovation in Higher Education), etc.

«La Xarxa»: The website for students with information on the students centre, forums, support services, etc.

Psychopedagogical Advice Unit (UAP): Students may use this unit should they need psychological or educational support. It also organises «Learning Strategies» courses that count for elective credits.

Student Advisor Programme: Students in the last year of their degree programmes guide and support first-year students. This counts for elective credits.

Language orientation for foreign students (*Erasmus*).

In addition to the institutional actions conducted by the UAB itself, there are centres and faculties that also organise other supplementary promotional and orientation actions (Table 2):

Table 2. Promotion and orientation actions at the UAB

Faculty	Promotion Actions	Orientation actions
Sciences	"Physics Saturdays" "UAB Physics Fair" "Mathematics Saturdays" UAB – Secondary school biweekly encounters (Mathematics) International Mathematics Olympics	
Communications Studies	Family Day	Orientation day
Economics and Business Administration	Visits to town halls to tell about degree programmes	Preparatory courses Between-term week Questionnaires to students in first year to get to know their profile Reinforcement Thursdays at 12 noon and 6 pm
Education	Visits to town halls to tell about degree programmes «El camí de les lletres»	Orientation plan Degree workshops Mentors in all degree programmes
Law (Labour Relations and Labour)	Mock trials Family Day Visits to town halls to tell about degree programmes	Course on introduction to law "Improving learning in first-year students" programme(Laboral Relations, academic year 2000-01) Talks by other students (Labour Relations and Labour)
Philosophy and Letters	Family Day Visits to town halls to tell about degree programmes	Innovation project for first-year students (Geography, academic year 1998-99) Orientation week
Psychology	Advertising programme on degree programmes and curricula	Preparatory courses Orientation plan for first-year students.
Translation and Interpreting	Visits to town halls to tell about degree programmes Family Day CD promoting the faculty *«El camí de les lletres»*	Getting to know the courses Language testing Self-registration tutorial and mentoring for first-year students Orientation week
Veterinary Sciences	Attention to families Mentoring sessions with families Family Day County-wide and local fairs Visits to town halls, county councils and provincial councils to tell about degree programmes	Questionnaires to students in first year to get to know their profile Personalised mentoring
Business School (Sabadell)	Open classrooms Open book presentations Open summer course Weekly radio programme	Orientation plan for first-year students Talks at the start of the academic year Mentoring plan
Higher School of Engineering	Visits to town halls and secondary schools to tell about degree programmes	Preparatory courses

(continued)	Promotion Actions	Orientation actions
School of Tourism and Hotel Management	Individualised attention for families requesting it Individualised sessions	English level test First day of class
Salesians University school of Sarrià (EUSS)	*«Becoming engineers»* programme EUSS Active «Industrial course» Orientation series	Orientation weeks

Beyond the planned actions, the institutional heads of 50 % of the centres participating in the study said that they have a mentoring or orientation plan or other documents and materials that they use to organise student orientation and mentoring.

In terms of the problems that the centres and faculties believe should be addressed via mentoring, which are not done or are not done in a satisfactory way, they can mainly be grouped into three major areas:

· Mentoring: problems derived from professors' work situation and the organising into terms which affect the organisation of the integrated Mentoring, the equitable assignment of mentoring sessions, the scant influence of mentoring in the first year and the lack of professors who want to serve as mentors.

· Teaching – study. Problems derived from absenteeism, student overcrowding in the classrooms, quitting school because of low academic performance and other problems derived from the limited views of the profession itself.

· Resources: which affect, for example, the drawing up of an orientation plan or having a higher number of student advisors.

With regard to first-year students' participation in and satisfaction with the promotion, orientation and transition actions, Table 3 gathers the most significant results. We should point out that there are more women in the sample (60 %) than men, and more students between the ages of 18 (52 %) and 19 years old (22 %), as well as students in psychology (27 %), economics (19 %), computer engineering (19 %), medicine (14 %) and foreign languages (13 %).

The open-ended questions enabled us to learn that the mentoring and transition to university activities that were the most useful for the students were related to orientation and offering useful, personalised and direct information and knowledge on the degree programmes and how the faculties and university at large work. This information was received at the «Saló de l'Ensenyament» educational fair and other local fairs, in the informative brochures, at visits to the university and informative talks and sessions held at secondary schools and town halls. Oftentimes these actions helped the students decide which degree to pursue. Other services and programmes that helped first-year students considerably were: orientation and reception days and plans, the preparatory courses that introduce students to the degree, and the library services for documentary sources and for having appropriate study venues.

Table 3. Participation and evaluation of specific actions

Actions	% participation	% assessment				
		1	2	3	4	5
Open House days	50%	1	7	34	40	18
UAB visits to secondary schools	23%	6	5	39	35	15
Family Day or other visits to the campus	7.5%	-	9	37	27	27
«Saló de l'ensenyament» education fair	49%	2	10	26	36	26
Website	80%	1	5	24	48	22
Individualised sessions	7%	11	37	21	26	5
Informative brochures	59.5%	1	12	38.5	38.5	10
Informative talks and sessions (town halls, etc.)	32%	5	7	25	44	19
Welcome Days	60%	1	10	37	34	18
Orientation Days	52.5%	3	15	32	35	15
Student advisors	22.5%	11	12	31	28	18
Individual mentoring	10%	10	7	38	24	21
Preparatory courses	20%	-	8	20	41	31
Other	2.5%	-	-	14	57	29

Despite everything that has been achieved in terms of information and orientation, there is not enough to have successfully overcome the main challenges and changes that students encounter when entering the university in terms of their studies and the role they must play. Therefore, they believe that the programmes are extremely demanding and that they must study more often; by the same token, students also have greater freedom, individuality and responsibility, although the relations with the professors are at times distant or even nonexistent.

The students also encounter difficulties studying, as they claim to have little time to study and complete the assignments from the courses. They ask for a different timetable organisation that would enable them to do projects involving continuous assessment, once supplied with all the knowledge they need on the project requirements. They also ask for the final exams to count less and to ensure that project deadlines and final exams do not accumulate in the months of January and June.

Some contributions for improving the process include: spending more effort on explaining more broadly how the registration processes work, the profile and professional opportunities of the degree programmes and in general the university in the guise of presentations, campus visits and talks at secondary schools. The preparatory courses, zero classes and reinforcement classes, the workshops prior to the start of the academic year and the orientation and welcome plans are actions that contribute effectively to academic success during the first year.

The interviews conducted with institutional leaders, student associations, student advisors, secondary school students and the student discussion group revealed that:

- The mentoring actions that are considered the most relevant are the information provided by other students, the student advisor programme, integrated and personalised mentoring and informative talks on the degree programmes.
- One priority needing to be addressed is expanding the functions of the teachers with the inclusion of mentoring and the fact that the integrating mentoring is not counted in the academic record, as well as how these mentoring sessions are practically organised.
- The Argó Programme, the Campus Ítaca and the student advisor programme are all considered positive, worthwhile and satisfactory experiences that help to orient first-year students.
- Actions worth promoting include: timetable flexibility for combining studying and work, more time spent on mentoring, lowering student-professor ratios, improving information on the EHEA, increasing guidance in the registration processes and holding individualised mentoring sessions.
- The institutional support needed to overcome the difficulties outlined points towards mentoring, promoting orientation and making the faculty more accessible.
- The analysis of experiences outside the UAB, focusing on a selection of the 15 best universities in the world (Academic Ranking of World Universities, 2004), shows that:
  - With regard to promoting the university at secondary schools, all of these outstanding institutions host visits by families and open house days, they participate in educational fairs, they have virtual tours, they make presentations at secondary schools, they offer talks at the university and informative actions on the entrance exams. They also have materials for dissemination (guides, videos, radio and website) and have multidisciplinary teams that perform the functions of orientation and educational-psychological guidance for students.
  - With regard to the orientation actions at the university, they all hold informative actions on entrance exams, pre-registration, registration, the range of degree programmes available, grants and scholarships and services; they also hold personalised mentoring, self-orientation, virtual forums and have student advisors. At the same time they offer study support by means of training in study techniques.

All of these results have helped us to devise a **Proposed plan for the transition and orientation of students at the University**. Below we highlight some aspects of this plan related to its five key phases:

- *Detecting needs*. We must identify the informational and orientation needs of potential university students, those of students in their first year and those of the degree programmes they would like to pursue or are embarking on. To this end, we must evaluate their informational, educational and orientation needs, identify the specific needs in their programmes and take into consideration and assess the degree of efficacy of the practices that are already consolidated in the different degree programmes.

- *Outlining the goals*. After the needs are identified, the priorities should be set and the realms of action must be outlined, which must be aimed at: consolidating the ties between the university and post-secondary schools with the purpose of fostering mutual knowledge, coordination and recruitment of new students; putting at the service of first-year students an orientation and induction plan that provides information on the university, the curricula, professional outlets and their services; overcoming possible difficulties with regard to study habits and strategies or the prior knowledge needed to take certain courses; training students to adapt to the new study programmes and improving their learning methods; and advising students in specific terms, diverse problems or special situations.
- *The type of mentoring actions depending on key moments in the first year*. Therefore, depending on the phase, we can include two main group: actions prior to registration at the university, and actions addressed to first-year students. They must all be closely tied to the goals and priorities set by the university, the faculty, the school and/or the degree programme.
- *Organisational factors:* Below is a list of the ones we view as indispensable:
  - Including in the institutional statements the concern for the transition and the inclusion of first-year students as a commitment that has to be planned and evaluated.
  - The existence of a policy management that is in charge of setting the criteria and priorities according to an action calendar.
  - The existence of an operational management that coordinates and executes the corresponding actions, made up of the heads of the university entrance exams, the coordinators of the degree programmes and/or of the first year and secondary school teachers.
  - A technical group that provides support for the overall planning process and participates in supervising and evaluating it by providing instruments, evaluation protocols, mechanisms and regulatory strategies.
  - Having the criteria for assigning first-year professors, reinforcing their training and the existence of a working climate that supports the coordination and success of the plan.
- *Evolution of the plan*. The design, development and results of the transition and university orientation plan must be tracked and evaluated in order to reveal the aspects that are working properly and those that need improvement. They must also serve to further organise the plan and take decisions on how to optimise it, such as: defining the profile of first-year mentor, changing the training received by the mentors or student advisors, organising meetings with the heads of curricula at the different centres, setting up mechanisms for better coordination with the professors in post-secondary schools, etc.

5. Conclusions

The actions aimed at recruiting students from secondary school, in the case of the UAB, have shown satisfactory results for their target audience. The same, however, does not hold true with the orientation actions aimed at first-year students, who ask for more attention. Some of the most salient results are:

The most useful actions for helping students successfully navigating the transition from secondary school to the university are the ones that try to inform and share information about the university.

The orientation actions, services and programmes that were most highly valued during the transition to the university were orientation sessions, welcome sessions, orientation on the degree programme, faculty and university services and preparatory courses. Also useful were mentoring, the student advisor programme, the Campus Ítaca and the computer and library services that offer guidance in the transition.

The main changes the students found compared to secondary school were that the university is more academically demanding, students are required to work independently, changes in student-professor relation and the evaluation systems used.

The main difficulties found in the transition from secondary school to the university and orientation at the university were related to personal time management, the amount of the contents in the curricula, study techniques, learning skills and evaluation systems.

Overcoming the difficulties requires more and better academic and administrative information, educational-psychological guidance, the organisation of preparatory courses, personalised attention via mentoring, more student advisors, better orientation and continuous assessment mechanisms.

The development of recruitment and orientation actions at the UAB and other benchmark universities shows the need to delve further into the processes of student adaptation and retention by reinforcing the orientation and mentoring processes both before and after students enter the university. Until now the actions conducted were more structural and basic, so we must delve further into the institutional aspects (outlining and coordinating student services) and personal facets (analysis of the shaping and development of expectations and perceptions among students).

For forthcoming studies, we believe that it would appropriate to organise specific orientation programmes for each university based on joint students that enable us to make headway in defining students and developing a list of good practices in the secondary school-university transition. It is also necessary to develop mechanisms to evaluate the effects and impact of these programmes and analyse the transition process from other routes of access, such as students over the age of 25, senior citizens, vocational education and others.

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Teaching English at the university: A shared experience

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Abstract
The study discussed in this article compiles a set of reflections of a group of six educators from different departments within the Faculty of Education on the experience of teaching their courses in English in the Foreign Language Teaching degree programme, as well as some teaching strategies they have used to make it more effective.

The prior experience and the exchanges held over the course of two academic years (2005-06 and 2006-07) as part of this project enabled us to conduct a preliminary analysis of the challenges entailed in teaching the (non-language) courses in a second language (English) in the Catalan university system, and specifically of the advantages and difficulties of conducting Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL).

The advantages include the fact that learning the language is framed in a real context and students work on contents and develop linguistic skills at the same time. However, for the teachers it means testing and sharing innovative teaching strategies, as well as keeping up a high level of English competence. The main difficulties are related to the students' mastery of the language, the faculty's ability to convey the contents and motivate the class work and homework in a second language, and their ability to chose the most appropriate strategies and teaching resources.

General area of interest of this innovation
This innovation could be of interest to professors who are interested in learning the advantages and disadvantages of content and language integrated learning, who analyse the processes of teaching and learning in a given discipline in a second language, and/or who are thinking of teaching or are already teaching university courses in English.

1. Objectives

The purpose of the project is to improve the English communicative competences of students in Teacher Training (Foreign Languages) by teaching the non-language courses in English. During academic years 2005-06 and 2006-07 (the period when this project was being implemented), the following courses were taught in English: Mathematics I (core course), Basic Issues in the Sciences (elective) and Educational IT (core course) from the first year; Teaching the Sciences (elective) from the second year; and School Organisation (core course) from the third year.

The goals were as follows:

1. To improve the language skills of the students in the degree programme so that they could reach the level of English mastery needed in the jargon from the world of education (jargon related to teaching, school organisation, mathematics, sciences and the new technologies) in the five areas in which a language is learned: oral comprehension (listening), oral expression (speaking), written comprehension (reading), written expression (writing) and communicative interaction.

2. To support the faculty involved by helping them to draw up and translate teaching materials in English.

3. To analyse the difficulties students face in attaining the cognitive-linguistic skills needed to successfully complete each course and to seek teaching strategies to overcome these difficulties.

4. To improve the coordination among teachers from the different departments, specifically those who were teaching the courses in English.

2. Description of the project

2.1. Context of the project

Teaching courses in third languages is one of the priorities of DURSI, the UAB, the Faculty of Education and the degree programme in Foreign Language Teaching. This is a degree programme that constantly seeks new ways of improving its students' language skills, especially oral and written expression in third languages.

Based on the twofold goal of contextualising the use of the foreign language and increasing the number of contact hours with this language, the initiative of teaching non-language courses in English emerged as a pilot experience. Therefore, eight academic years ago, the course on School Organisation began to be taught in English.

This year, the university context has changed based on the process of adapting its degree programmes to the Bologna directives, making teaching courses in English even more timely. In fact, starting in academic year 2004-05, the Academic Regulation Committee of the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona began to recognise teaching in third languages for credits. Given this new framework, the coordinator of the degree

programme and the professor who had participated in the pilot project decided to go one step further.

The initiative came to fruition in a project to improve teaching quality (MQD) and the creation of a working group that includes the faculty who have decided to teach their courses in English (Mathematics I, Educational IT, Teaching the Sciences, Basic Issues in Science, and School Organisation) and the coordinator of the degree programme (part of the Department of Language Teaching). The experience gained in the pilot (Feixas, 2005) served as a point of departure.

2.2. Teaching approaches centred on Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL)

According to Marsh (2002), the term «content and language integrated learning» (CLIL) refers to «any educational context that has the twofold goal of using a language other than the students' native language as a means of teaching and learning non-linguistic contents». However, it often replaces the notion of «content-based instruction», and we can therefore claim that the term is used to refer to both teaching of a second language by learning contents from other curricular areas, and the learning of a non-language discipline per se, such as mathematics or the sciences, using a second or foreign language as the vehicle of this learning.

If we bear in mind that one of the goals of the CLIL approach is to provide students with chances to study contents from a variety of perspectives (Marsh, 2002), we could argue that this approach tries to palliate the paradox that Mohan (1986) describes when stating that although a language is a system that relates what is said (the content) with the means used to say it (expression), content classes ignore the role of language as a means of learning, while language classes do not take the content they aim to convey into account.

According to Coyle (1999), CLIL approaches can be used in any classroom, that is, in any age bracket and at any level of competency in the foreign language if the contents are made accessible by fostering orality (the ability to express oneself orally) and reading comprehension. This means, according to the same author, that we must rethink the concept of language so that its learning is linked to its use and not just to theoretical knowledge. Therefore, learning a language means knowledge of a linguistic system (the grammar, vocabulary, syntactic structures and communicative functions of a given language) linked to the ability to reflect on the use of this code (the development of meta-cognitive skills) and the construction of knowledge based on the development of linguistic skills and general cognitive skills.

According to Jorba (1998), the acquisition of content in the curricular areas makes it possible to develop the cognitive-linguistic skills (describing, summarising, defining, explaining, justifying, arguing) that in turn develop cognitive skills.

In other studies (Jäppinen, 2005, 2006), the taxonomy used to analyse CLIL experiences in non-university education was the SOLO instrument (Structure of the Observed

Learning Outcomes) developed by Biggs and Collis (1982), which is used to describe the structure of a response and see the hierarchical progress in the structural complexity of several responses.

This global vision of language as an instrument for acquiring both linguistic and non-linguistic skills and knowledge is implicit, for example, in the definition of the use of a language found in the European Reference Framework (2001:17), and according to this use it alludes to those

> «actions performed by people which… develop a series of general skills.. and communicative language skills in particular. People use the skills they have at their disposal in a variety of contexts and under different conditions and limitations, with the goal of performing linguistic activities … (that) entail linguistic processes aimed at producing and/or understanding texts related to topics from specific fields, activating the most appropriate strategies to fulfil the tasks.».

The general skills listed in the Framework – which are interpreted in terms of declarative knowledge (knowing), skills (knowing how to do) and attitudes (knowing how to be) and learning capacities (knowing how to learn) – are common to any field of knowledge (including linguistic disciplines) and are therefore the ones that we wish to foster in a CLIL classroom.

3. Methodology

This study gathers the points of view of students and professors involved in the experience of participating in non-language courses in English, and it analyses some of their productions. In order to achieve these goals, four instruments were used:

1. A comparison of the written output of two groups of students from different degree programmes who have studied the same course with the same professor in English and Catalan. Using *Biggs & Collis' SOLO instrument* (1982), we analysed a sample of 18 texts written in groups of 3-4 students focusing on resolving cases studies in the field of school organisation (nine written in Catalan and nine in English, three texts per case study). The texts, chosen at random, corresponded to different groups in each case. From each case study, we chose three questions to analyse in detail: questions that require students to offer argumentative responses instead of descriptive or explanatory responses. The goal was to examine to what extent they were able to identify the relevant ideas, apply them in problematic situations and justify their decision coherently. Independently, two professors classified the responses according to the SOLO taxonomy. Their level of agreement was around 90%.
2. *A guideline for critical reading of scientific texts*, developed based on materials created in the LIEC group in the Department of Teaching Mathematics and Exper-

imental Sciences at the UAB. In this case, two texts produced by each student after one free and one critical reading process were examined, and we identified the profiles of the students in terms of the degree to which they had developed the skills of reading and writing critically. The texts resulting from the free and guided critical readings were analysed using a list of categories that include the most important aspects that characterise a critical position towards a text by readers. For each student, we compared the initial free text and the guided critical text to reveal the presence or absence of each of the categories.

In parallel, by developing a Catalan-English vocabulary list, we helped students to expand their vocabulary in the target language. This glossary contains terms and expressions from the world of education and helps students use English to give instructions, organise classroom communication and guide the learning in each of the courses mentioned above.

4. Results

The results presented below are related to the three different studies conducted in this project and the development of a list of Catalan-English education vocabulary:

Study in the courses on «Basic Issues in the Sciences» and «Mathematics I» to find out students' and professors' perceptions of the experience of taking and teaching a course in English.

The professors of this course were positive about the experience, although they believed that the CLIL approach means considerably more work and effort because of the fact of teaching the course in a non-native language and ensuring that the students follow it and acquire the main points and develop reflexive competences. This leads to a sense of additional unease because when the students come upon difficulties, it is more complex to identify whether they are due to the difficulty of the material or their level of language mastery.

According to the students' perceptions, the majority did not identify taking the course in English as an intrinsic difficulty, rather they found the contents of the course challenging. However, they admit that they had to get used to following the classes in English and including the specific technical vocabulary, and that at first this was more difficult. In some cases, they mentioned an added difficulty with oral and written expression, in particular with the evaluative tests. With regard to the usefulness of the experience, all the students deemed it positive to take courses in English, regardless of the effort this entails. CLIL helped them to improve their overall language skills, especially their specific vocabulary and their oral and written expression skills, the activities worked on the most in the classroom. In terms of their interest, the students did not find that doing the course in English affected their level of interest in the course either positively or negatively. Students seemed to also generally admit that there was little oral interaction amongst themselves in English.

Some of them, despite the fact that they liked the course in English, said that it clearly means more effort and more time, both inside and outside the classroom.

In general, we have been able to prove that the students' way of understanding improvements in their language skills is more reductionist and traditional than the view of the teachers, linked primarily to linguistic aspects (phonetics, grammar, etc.). This suggests changing some aspects of the structure of the questionnaire used in order to more accurately capture students' opinions, as well as using other tools for gathering this information (interviews, etc.). We also believe that it would be worthwhile to objectively evaluate students' language competency, perhaps via cooperation with other language courses in the degree programme.

4.1. Study in the course on «School Organisation» to examine the complexity of the responses by groups of students from two different degree programmes who have worked on the same case studies in English and Catalan

Despite the fact that the sample of studies analysed is relatively small and the results they offer us cannot be decisive, we do have proof suggesting that students' understanding of the contents was in no way limited by the fact that the classroom language was English in one of the groups. In fact, few student responses were categorised in any of the first three levels in the SOLO taxonomy, which is related to superficial and essentially descriptive responses. The majority of the responses show that the students understand the complexity of the situations presented, they are capable of reflecting on them – weighing the pros and cons of the different options – and they are able to take a final decision on the actions to be conducted.

The Catalan group showed a higher number of argumentative responses than the English group. The production of complex responses in a foreign language is a cognitively more laborious and linguistically more complex endeavour than doing it in one's native language. However, we can neither generalise nor conclude that the fact that one group did it slightly better than the other was for linguistic reasons. The case studies were examined by different groups in each degree programme; therefore, the results are difficult to compare. What is more, the instrument used to analyse the results does not explain why there are differences between the level of complexity of the responses produced and to what we can attribute these differences. It is clear that we need to have a tool that is capable of integrating an analysis of both the content and the linguistic complexity of students' responses without omitting the type and nature of the questions being answered.

The results particularly ended up revealing the effectiveness of the teaching-learning process. Despite this, we would have liked to have identified a higher number of argumentative responses, as they show a level of cognitive involvement and therefore offer proof of a deeper reflection and comprehension of the content. More emphasis must be placed on developing the students' cognitive-linguistic skills in the non-language courses as well (Jorba et al., 1998). This entails, among other things, that

when planning and presenting the materials to the students, the professors must explain the type of responses they expect in the exercises more explicitly, and especially that the responses must show reflexive thinking in the sense that they defend a position and are able to assess it by means of alternative options from the different critical perspectives.

4.2. Study of the course «Teaching the Sciences» to identify students' level of critical reading of scientific texts.

With regard to critical reading, the students show difficulties when reading texts in another language. They claim that reading in English prompts insecurity in that they are not totally sure whether they have caught the message that the text aims to convey and that it takes them much more time since they have to regularly look up the meaning of many words. This attitude is in part conditioned by the meaning that students assign to the activity of reading: they interpret it as a process of transmitting knowledge that must be acquired instead of viewing reading as a chance to question the world and the teaching profession as it is presented in the texts.

The results of comparing the two texts produced by each student enable us to state that the use of a simple teaching strategy like handing out guidelines for critically reading professional texts yields the following results:

1. It produces an overall improvement in students' critical reading skills. There was a considerable rise in the critical elements of the texts they produced after the initial free reading and the ones they produced after the guided critical reading. However, we need a more detailed analysis of each category to see whether this improvement in students' critical reading is general or only concentrates on certain specific aspects.
2. It considerably increase the students' critical reading skills in relation to aspects linked to anticipating before reading. In their texts, the students show the presence of references, of explaining their expectations as to the content of the text, both cognitively and emotionally, and of identifying and evaluating the formal aspects of the text.
3. It helps students to be more aware of their difficulties and therefore it empowers them to minimise them. However, where we see a lesser degree of improvement is in their ability to take the stance as learners and as professionals.

The majority of the students believe that reading is an activity aimed at extracting the main ideas that the text conveys, and therefore they spontaneously situate themselves as passive receivers. A lower number of students also shows in their free reading texts the ability to forge relations with other more personal domains as readers, and the ability to assess what the text states. Where we find a greater difference in the guided critical reading texts is in the presence of statements about the author and his or her position. While in the free reading texts no student saw the need to reflect on the author and their role in constructing the text, in the guided text this percentage rose to around 25%.

In short, offering students guidelines on how to critically read contributes to their understanding the most relevant aspects of the text (author's intentions and position, structure of the text, the student reader's relationship with the ideas espoused in the text), and it helps them to develop a critical posture towards an intentional vision of the professional world sketched by the author. We therefore see the need to develop other more interactive teaching strategies that foster the construction of more critical personal and professional positions as the result of the reading.

5. Conclusions

Teaching a course in English is a huge challenge for professors, yet also for the majority of students who reach the university with a foreign language competency level equivalent to a basic user (common reference level A2), and who are then asked to speak, write, read, interact and understand the contents of a course in English.

One of the problems seen in studies about CLIL is that few teachers who are not language specialists dare to teach in a foreign language. Written and oral expression are the aspects that primarily need the most improvement among teachers, as it is necessary according to our theoretical framework to offer and demand textual models of a variety of cognitive-linguistic skills (describe, explain, argue, justify) that students can work through systematically.

In general, some difficulties that the students and professors encountered when experimenting with the CLIL approach at the university are the lack of fluidity in students' interaction and oral expression, and the difficulty of written expression (such as lab reports). We should note that this is more common in the first year than in the third. Likewise, the advantages are related to an overall improvement in vocabulary, the consolidation of grammar or expressions, and a rising interest in the use of the language to ask questions, explain, justify or discuss newsworthy issues and subjects related to the course in English. Where there is also coincidence is in the fact that this learning is linked to an expansion of students' vocabulary.

Navés and Muñoz (1999) claim that major efforts are still needed to provide CLIL classrooms with useful materials for the professors and their students. In this sense, the professors who have contributed to this experience noticed that there is little teaching material and few resources to make the teacher's job of teaching language contents within their courses easier, which makes it difficult to apply a very solid methodology in the classroom from the theoretical standpoint. They all agree that the difficulty of finding Catalan-English vocabulary lists specific to the sciences, mathematics, computers or teaching the sciences contributed to making the job of building the lists more toilsome and time consuming.

Along the lines postulated by Muñoz (2002), the fact of having used a foreign language as the classroom language and as a means for learning the material in the courses has led the faculty to be more aware of the challenges that their students had to

overcome and, in consequence, it has stimulated their strategic behaviour to overcome these challenges. Likewise, they all supported teamwork and claimed that without the support of their colleagues in the experiment and the degree programme they would not have been able to rise to and overcome the challenges posed by teaching in English.

The results of the objective tests of students in CLIL settings, compared to those of students who took the same courses with the same professor in their own language, do not show significant differences. The professors' impression, confirmed by both the results of the evaluations of the projects in the course and the final exam, and confirmed by the analysis of the text productions of both groups of students, is that the same difficulties arose in both student groups, and that these difficulties are inherent to learning the contents of the discipline rather than being a result of the classroom language used.

In short, the students' and professors' visions converge in that the CLIL approach promotes a greater use of the foreign language, which serves to practice the language, and by practising it, the learning improves. For the majority of students, the CLIL approach was not a problem – not even for those with language problems – and they all noticed significant improvements in their level of mastery of the foreign language and were therefore able to overcome difficulties they encountered.

For all the professors that participated, this teaching innovation project meant facing some of the major challenges involved in university teaching in another language. This pathway is just now getting underway, and we must continue in this line of inquiry in order to get more significant results and control for variables such as student performance and levels of English in order to more clearly determine the impact of CLIL on the learning results.

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Content and Language Integrated Learning, higher education, cognitive-linguistic skills.

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Teaching in an inter-university virtual environment. ECTS experiment supported by ICT

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Abstract

In today's environment of technological development and the construction of the European Higher Education Area, new needs are emerging to adapt to the new demands of teaching using strategies being promoted by the credit system (ECTS). That is, there is an imperative to experiment with methodologies related to the imminent implementation of the European credit system.

In this study, which was conducted on the virtualisation of certain courses in within the curriculum of the Pedagogy degree programme, several individual projects are presented that together aim to incorporate information and communication technologies (ITCs) into teaching as one of the key elements to improving the teaching-learning process, as well as experimenting with the new European credits.

This article presents the most noteworthy results of the experiment carried out in academic year 2005-06 based on the assessments of the main stakeholders (professors and students).

General area of interest of this innovation

This innovation might be of interest to any professor or group of university professors who are interested in implementing the European credit system. In this experience, they will discover the possibilities and challenges that ICTs pose in this process of change. The results from the experimentation process in the Pedagogy degree programme at the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona can be transferred to other situations when ICTs are the key element in the process of university change.

1. Objectives

The main goals are:

1. To experiment with the European credits in teaching the different courses.
2. To promote the use of ICTs as a tool for improving university teaching.
3. To analyse the use of technology in re-structuring teaching processes in higher education, that is, to reflect on the role of the student and the teacher, the design of the teaching-learning processes in both virtual classrooms and in developing multimedia materials.
4. To define a virtual educational environment for holding courses within the Pedagogy and Social Education curricula.
5. To develop proposals for including and planning telematic tools into the teaching and learning process.

2. Description of the study

The goal of the study is to experiment with the European credits while stressing their didactic-methodological implications, especially those related to the use of ICTs. This entails an entire process of innovation with multiple and varied activities, which give an idea of the complexity of this proposal, in addition to the creation of an entire virtual educational environment. The involvement of the different stakeholders (professors, students, research team) in turn necessitates a monitoring and evaluation mechanism that is capable of shedding light on the innovation process itself.

We chose the innovation strategy of collaborative action research, which in turn became the main referent and guide when designing the study, its phases and the working plan. With regard to the design of the study, it was organised into three main phases: A) planning, in which we addressed the first two general goals of the study, focusing on three specific actions: design of the intervention, design of the virtual environment and design of the methodological framework. B) Action-implementation, where the experiment itself was conducted. C) Evaluation/reflection, where the work conducted in the previous phase was systematised and evaluated.

The study was conducted within a context of cooperative inter-university learning in which two groups of professors were involved: teachers from the Universitat Rovira i Virgili and from the Universitat Autónoma de Barcelona, who experimented with the proposal in the Pedagogy degree programme in courses related to teaching.

3. Methodology

3.1. Design of the study

This study is methodologically founded upon cooperative action research in terms of its underpinnings, structure and dynamics. It falls within a qualitative methodological

approach as it took place within a specific context from an internal perspective, as the researchers and actors in the innovative action are one and the same.

Somehow, too, it can be regarded as a study of multiple cases, as we shall validate the effectiveness of the resources and strategy by involving them in different courses. Each of them becomes a particular case on which an exhaustive study of the process of developing the experiment is conducted.

3.2. Population and sample

In this type of case study, for reasons of provenance, the sample is preset and defined beforehand, as it is an intentional sample, thus ensuring the qualitative significance.

The sample of the professors involved is made up of the research team (six professors from the Universitat Autónoma de Barcelona and three from the Universitat Rovira i Virgili in Tarragona), with their corresponding courses. In this way, they become the individual case studies in our project.

In terms of the students, we took into account all the students registered in each of the courses affected as those involved in the study (299).

3.3. Instruments

As a result of the above, the research project meant the involvement of different, varied and complementary instruments for gathering information (questionnaires, interviews, in situ observations, group discussions, documentary analyses, etc.), which due to their very quantitative-qualitative nature and using the principle of triangulation enabled us to gather and have at our disposal the relevant, valid, proven information on the objects of study. The sources of information to be used were varied and complementary as well, also as result of the principle of triangulation. They involved professors, students and the academic administration (especially the coordinator of the degree programme).

4. Results

4.1. General initial profile

We started with a group of students, the majority of whom were female (92%), in their second cycle of study (82%), who studied during the daytime (86%) and had unskilled paying jobs (70%) mainly to help fund their studies rather than for professional reasons. The courses on which the study was conducted were mainly core courses that lasted a year (2/3).

The students had previous experience with ICTs (2/3), mainly for writing documents, checking/browsing for research, email and chatting for communication, although there is also a pronounced use for leisure and as a pastime. They have sufficient infrastructure for working with ICTs both at home and in the faculty, and they use software

related to their activity (Word for word processing, Power Point, Internet Explorer, Mozilla, Messenger).

With all the data gathered, we deemed that they had a medium level of training and mastery in computers in order to use ICTs according to their own self-assessments. They acquired this training during their studies and through individual efforts (self-taught computer users).

4.2. Initial-final evaluation of teaching-learning with ICT

Table 1. Initial-final comparison of the use of ICT

	Initial (1)	Final (2)	Signif.	Dif.
1. Facilitates group work	3.33	3.78	.000	1 < 2
2. Motivates learning	3.12	3.23	-	
3. Helps students to remember information and reinforces contents	3.14	3.49	.000	1 < 2
4. Facilitates independent learning and individualises teaching	3.45	3.42	-	
5. Demonstrates and simulates experiences	3.17	3.28	-	
6. Clarifies abstract concepts	3.74	3	.008	1 > 2
7. Fosters a new kind of relationship between the professor and student	3.36	3.54		
8. Gives access to more information	4.44	4.42		
9. Facilitates the transfer of knowledge	3.62	3.61		
10. Presents the contents better	3.77	3.91		
11. Creates or modifies new activities	3.21	3.30		

Graph 1. Initial-final comparison of the use of ICT
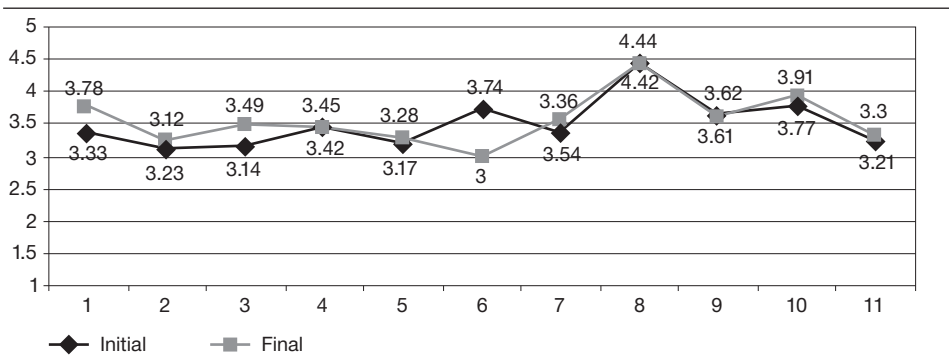
4.2.1. Positive image of ICT in the teaching-learning process

ICTs improve teaching, enable each student to work at their own pace, improve collaborative work among students, give access to more information, present the contents better and facilitate independent learning and individualised teaching. In some cases, ICTs stimulate higher motivation due to the technological novelty and the variety of methods used, as well as because of the fact that the materials are presented in an innovative, user-friendly, attractive format that facilitates the integration of contents.

We should also consider that their potential lies in its complementariness with other resources, as opposed to using ICTs exclusively, meaning that instead of discarding textbooks they should be complemented with ICT.

4.2.2. Lack of preparation, scarce availability of resources and resistance to change as difficulties when including ICTs into everyday work

Even though the students claimed to have a mid-level of training and mastery in ICTs beforehand, they are aware of their own limitations when successfully completing an ICT-supported course, even though they are motivated to tackle it.

4.2.3. Professor preparation, student willingness-preparation, availability of resources and design of the online materials as factors of success for offering an ICT-supported course.

This is coherent with the previous conclusion, as the factors of success are nothing more than the counterpoint to the obstacles or difficulties of this project. However, we can glimpse a concern for the human factor, in terms of both professors (their preparation and the design of the materials) and the students (willingness-preparation) more than the material factor (availability of resources-infrastructure). In other words, the latter, while a necessary precondition, it not enough alone as a condition to ensure success.

### 4.3. Overall assessment of the training received

Below is a series of statements with regard to the **training received** via a sliding scale (1 = total disagreement and 5 = total agreement):

Table 2. Training received

	Ave	Dev.
1. The goals of the course were appropriate.	3.86	0.7
2. The contents covered were appropriate for my professional development.	4.08	0.7
3. The contents were presented in an orderly fashion.	3.95	0.8
4. The amount of knowledge covered was appropriate.	3.65	0.8
5. The knowledge presented was up-to-date.	4.20	0.7

	Ave	Dev.
6. Working in small groups is better than working in large groups.	4.42	0.7
7. Individualised teaching is better than group learning.	2.69	0.9
8. Practical aspects are better than theoretical aspects.	3.88	0.8
9. The working climate in the group was satisfactory.	4.13	0.8
10. I consider the presentation of the contents to be didactic.	3.83	0.7
11. The length of the course was appropriate.	3.78	0.8
12. There wasn't enough time to exchange experiences.	3.22	1
13. The professors skilfully led the work to be done.	4.09	0.8
14. Written exams are the best way to evaluate this type of course.	2.35	0.9
15. It would be preferable not to evaluate this type of course.	2.38	1
16. The evaluation used was in line with the criteria of the course.	3.76	0.7
17. It is necessary to start with an initial assessment.	3.40	0.9
18. During the course I learned skills and attitudes useful for my future work.	3.95	0.7
19. What I learned in this course corresponds to the workplace practice.	3.87	0.8
20. The course offers professional possibilities for the future.	3.92	0.8
21. This type of training made me interested in registering for other similar courses.	3.31	0.9

Graph 2. Training received
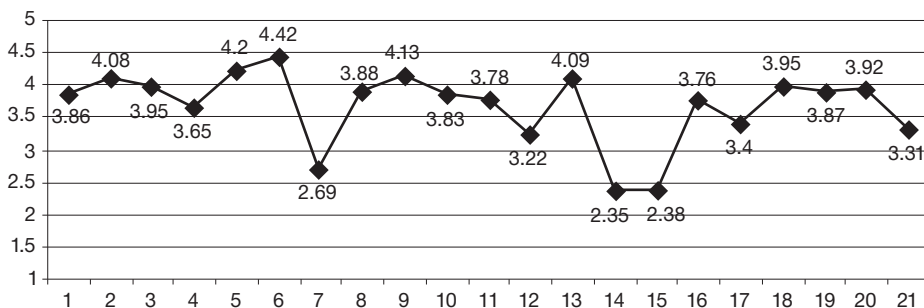
4.3.1. Appropriateness and relevance of the goals and contents

The positive assessment can be found in reference to the actual design of the course, the professional profile and the professional skills in the programming of ECTS as well as the working plan to be implemented.

In fact, not just the goals and the contents were quite positively rated (appropriateness and relevancy), but the learning acquired was viewed as being in line with the needs of workplace practice.

4.3.2. Methodological relevancy and sufficiency of the activities and resources used.

The multivariate approach of methodological strategies, as well as of resources and times for using them, were crucial to the success in this area. The students knew at all times what they had to do, with what, with whom, and their centrality and involvement in the activities was clear, as was the role of the professor. In fact, the virtual part of the course fostered this centrality, plus the professors themselves were capable of managing the work being done. The working climate was satisfactory and the students gave small group work much higher ratings compared to individualised work.

4.3.3. Multivariate strategies as the main principle for articulating a university course

The reflection on the practice, the appropriateness of the activities for the goals and the ease of having personal reinforcement during the process were the key elements in a university course, although other important factors include demonstrations, presentations of learning materials and presentations of the theories and concepts.

4.3.4. The need for new evaluation strategies

After this experience, it is clear that written exams are not the best way to evaluate this type of course, although there is no need to discard them outright. It is necessary to integrate a kind of continuous assessment that makes it possible to record information from the entire project and the process used in this kind of classroom, directed and independent learning, perhaps even starting with a good initial evaluation.

In any event, the evaluation criteria and plan must be clear, just as the students' working plan must be clear.

4.4. Development of the course

Table 3. Evaluation of the role of the participants in the development of the course
(values from1 = lowest to 5 = highest score).

	Ave.	Dev.
1. The participants have got involved in the course with interest.	3.81	0.7
2. The participants have known at all times what is expected of them.	362	0.8
3. The participants have been able to intervene when they wanted to.	4.28	0.7
4. An atmosphere of cooperation has been created in the group activities.	4.03	0.8

	Ave.	Dev.
5. The participants have perceived that the activities were productive.	3.89	0.8
6.New and innovative activities have been done in the course.	3.56	0.9

Graph 3. Role of the participants in the development of the course
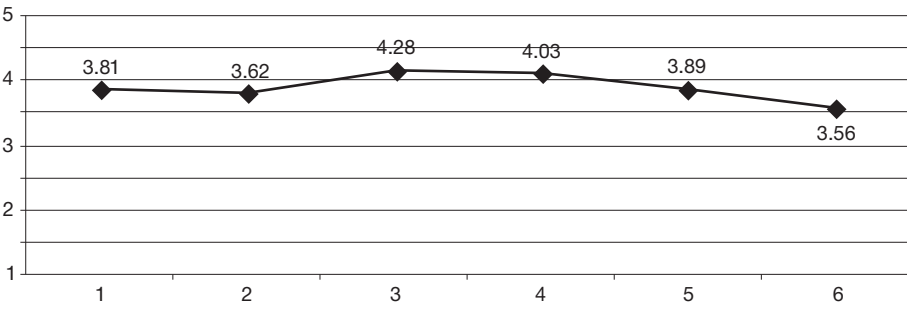
4.4.1. The importance of student-centred learning

The involvement of the participants and their playing a leading role is fundamental for the success of this type of course, and this was demonstrated by the students themselves. They very positively rated the possibility of intervening when they wanted to, yet even more important was the atmosphere of cooperation in the group activities and their perception that the activities were productive. This once again reinforces the collaborative work that underlies the methodological approach of the course, in addition to also reinforcing the idea that these activities were new and innovative for the participants.

Somehow we are making a break with the traditional teacher-led university class, although this is nothing new given the fact that the design and development of the ECTS-style curricula means displacing the focus from teacher to student.

4.4.2. The professors' explanations and small group work: the backbone of methodological variety.

Through the assessment of the activities we can see the importance of the professor when explaining the contents, just as small group work comes to the fore as one of the most highly rated activities in this teaching-learning scenario.

Also important were the search for reinforcement documents (a possibility thanks to the use of ICTs), simulations or role plays and the debates proposed by the professor.

4.4.3. Participation, motivation, functionality and applicability and their interaction as methodological principles guiding the course

This rating should come as no surprise given everything we have explained until now about group work and the student-centred classroom. In fact, what this proves is that these principles, which were previously contained in the articulation-design of the course, are now positively rated by the participants after having done the experiment.

4.4.4. Importance of the course syllabus, the procedures handbook and conceptual schemas-maps

Even though all the materials used were rated quite highly (all above the theoretical average), what stand out in importance are the syllabus, the procedures handbooks and the conceptual schemas-maps as major resources from the start of the course. We believe that precisely prior knowledge and the interaction with these materials from day one were the keys to success in the course. In fact, the students rated the activities that had schemas, ideograms and illustrations very highly because they enabled them to better classify the difficult contents in the course and clarify confusing information.

4.5. Attitudes and skills developed in the course

4.5.1. New image of the role of the university student in the teaching-learning process

The students have taken on responsibilities in the learning process, they have shared ideas, responses and visions with their professors, and their level of involvement in the course has risen. The half-classroom half-independent learning method (virtualisation of the course) motivates work on the course, empowering students to find new information and resources using the computer tools. Somehow, it is assumed that there has been a change in students' attitudes when dealing with their studies.

4.5.2. Increase in independent learning capacities

The capacity for independent learning rose (students properly planned their time during the course without having time problems at any moment, they checked other materials to get further information on certain points), although it is assumed that it was difficult to learn the contents without the professors' help, reaffirming the benefits of attending class. Even though this might seem paradoxical, this once again demonstrates the importance of the strategy used founded on students' efforts through collaborative work. The students constantly claim that they learn more by sharing with both their professors and their classmates. The former are assigned a role more as a guide or facilitator of the learning process as opposed to a mere transmitter of information.

4.5.3. Satisfaction with the role of the professor

As a result of the previous point, the relationship developed with the professor and their role in the entire teaching-learning process was rated satisfactorily. The professor has given feedback properly, has made possible other alternatives for improving and developing the activities, has offered tutoring for those students who encountered difficulties, the communication was continuous and appropriate, and the professors have satisfactorily resolved questions.

This conclusion only complements what we have already mentioned on the change in role and new professional roles and functions that the professors have activated in order to ensure the success of this experience.

4.5.4. The way of doing the activities, interaction with others, the professor's work and the teaching methods are the most highly rated changes.

The methodological strategy designed and activated for developing a course following the ECTS guidelines and supported by ICT, founded additionally on collaborative work and the shift in the focal point from the teacher to the students, results in an overall positive assessment of the procedures and interaction as the most outstanding changes.

As a result, it is not surprising that there is more interaction with classmates, the relationship with the professor has improved, and especially students have gained more knowledge.

5. Conclusions

In summary, we can state that the students in the Pedagogy degree programmes believe that ICTs offer a wide range of technical possibilities that can facilitate teaching. They make possible rapid, easy access to information, thus encouraging students to manage themselves and creating the ideal forum for independent learning. The use of ICTs enables students to work in groups and in coordination as these technologies facilitate communication, the accessibility of information, materials to support the contents, and rapid exchanges of documents and quick dissemination of files and information. In some cases, ICTs arouse a higher level of motivation due to the fact that they are a technological novelty, as well as the methodological variety used and the presentation of an innovative, user-friendly and quick format, which makes it easier for students to retain knowledge.

In this scenario, the role of the teacher must shift so that they are capable of using and managing ICTs to design and put into practice varied methodological strategies that facilitate collaborative work. In this sense, the role and functions of teachers must adapt to this context. For this we need:

1. The continuous training of teachers in ICTs. A significant number of students think that teachers need to have knowledge and skills in ICT.

2. Changes in the teachers' job: they must develop new adapted materials, investing time and effort. Other jobs: daily management of email, virtual tutorials, regularly uploading information onto the virtual environment, developing and reviewing materials, updating information, exploring all the potential of the virtual environment.
3. The teacher must play the role of coach, exercising the functions of consultant and guide. The professor ceases to be the focal point of the classroom to give way to the students, so that their involvement, efforts and dedication can be demonstrated.
4. The teachers must improve the accessibility to and development of other methodological strategies adapted to the new technological context.

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University teaching, ICT, ECTS, virtualisation.

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Presentation of the working group

The CIFO research group, from the Department of Applied Pedagogy at the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, is a consolidated research group recognised by AGAUR (2005SGR01020). Its main avenues of research are related to training in and for the working world: training of trainers, professional skills, evaluation of training and innovation in training. In recent years it has participated in several different research

projects, especially European projects, related to the aforementioned avenues of research. The group recently-published book Formación de Formadores (two volumes published by Thomson) is a summary of its research in the realm of training the trainer.

Dr José Tejada is the head of the research group. For further information: http://dewey.uab.es/grupocifo/

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Coordination among courses and student involvement

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Abstract

Coordination between faculty from different disciplines is usually a weak point at universities. In this case, the coordination was conducted jointly between two courses in the Primary School Teaching degree, in part of the respective programmes that have a series of points in common. Methodological issues were also a major aspect of this innovation, as we have sought to give students a new role, making them participate more and gain more awareness of their learning. The most noteworthy aspects of the project, however, was setting up a permanent seminar with all the professors teaching these courses so that through shared reflection the teaching proposals could be adapted to the students' educational needs.

General area of interest of this innovation

The experience presented in this article has two focal points of interest: the development of teaching materials that guide students' independent learning track, and the coordination among the university faculty of these students. In highly profession-oriented degrees like teacher training, this second point requires a profound, critical reflection, which is often hard to fit into today's university dynamics. This innovation project shows how teamwork among the faculty, even from different areas and departments, enabled us to convey to students the value of knowledge constructed jointly and the interest in approaching reality from an interdisciplinary, complex perspective.

Likewise, we often speak about the independent learning of those who are learning, although it is not easy to find the ideal midpoint between guidance and autonomy

so that there may be a diverse variety of possible learning tracks. Plus these courses always have large groups of students in short terms, which makes it difficult to closely track individual students and their progress. Developing teaching materials appropriate for designing these processes is a crucial aspect of a teacher's job, always bearing in mind that these materials must be adapted according to the courses and changing circumstances. This is another of the aspects revealed in this experience: sound planning of the teaching methodology, having drawn up the appropriate materials beforehand, produces better learning and higher satisfaction rates. However, this planning endeavour is much more interesting and profitable if it is done within a team of professors in an atmosphere of exchange and discussion that ensures the utmost rigour and more complete attention to the different factors involved in teaching.

1. Objectives

The main goal of the innovation is related to the faculty: it consists of coordination among professors from different areas, with the purpose of giving future teachers a sort of training that is more in line with their professional needs. Analysing the same reality (students, classroom, school) from different disciplines, and therefore with different theoretical frameworks of references that are not necessarily in agreement with each other, and teamwork among professors from diverse areas open up a new perspective and give guidelines to students, who must develop tools to address this complex educational reality based on the disciplinary knowledge they have gained in their degree programme.

The second goal, which is congruent with the first one, is related to the students: to develop the skill of teamwork and the ability to relate knowledge coming from different disciplines in order to be able to understand their future field: education. This skill affects not just the cognitive realm, rather we also consider that the attitudinal aspects encouraged and exemplified by the way they receive their university education are equally important.

2. Description of the project

This innovation project was conducted during academic year 2004-05 in the Faculty of Education at the UAB, in the courses on second language teaching and teaching the experimental sciences in the Primary School Teaching degree programme. These courses have the particular feature that they are taught in the third year of the programme, both in the second term, and they are both compulsory. Therefore, these are two courses that are usually taken during the same academic year. This enabled us to organise a timetable in which one day a week both courses are taught right after each other, which made it possible to set up long, shared sessions. The groups include a number of students that fluctuates from 45 to 65 according to the year and whether it is a morning or afternoon group.

Before entering into details about the different stages and actions involved in developing this project, we must first provide contextual information about these courses and the degree programme in which they are offered. A few years earlier, both courses separately embarked on a process of constant innovation in the revision of the contents of the curriculum and the methodology used to deliver it. In this sense, in both courses the subjects that are examined with the university students begin to be questioned, in terms of both their theory in the corresponding areas of teaching and their reality at schools, which in recent years have undergone a major transformation. Likewise, a reflection on building a body of knowledge that can be updated in the guise of skills that are made up of and relate different types of knowledge has led the faculty in these two courses to consider, each on their own, a more participatory methodology, closer to the needs of the future teachers that enables them to put into practice some of the most necessary skills for exercising this profession.

This project is designed and presented from the perspective of the area of Second Language Teaching.

2.1. Improving the course on Second Language Teaching

As a result of a student and teacher evaluation at the end of the every academic year, and a joint reflection effort among the faculty teaching this course in the Primary Education Teacher degree programme, some years ago a process of changes and improvements in the course on Second Language Teaching (Guasch, Milian, Ribas, 2003; Guasch, Milian, Ribas, 2006; Ribas et al, 2005) got underway. First, some of the readings that students use as sources of documentation for their small group work were changed to make them more up-to-date, more closely related with the issues that pose the most difficulties at school, and more adjusted to what the job demands of them.

The working methodology was also reorganised, fundamentally based on independent work by small groups of students guided by the teachers via instructions on the projects, the documents following up the projects and the group tutorials. Questionnaires passed out at the end of each academic year gave us highly valuable information to help us change the course with the goal of getting students more involved, fostering independent study and effective knowledge with the issues that are currently experienced in second language classrooms in a context of multilingualism.

2.2. Coordination among professors teaching the same course in two different degree programmes

The course on Second Language Teaching is taught under the same title in two different degree programmes. Since it is a course that has been on the curriculum for some years now, we have had to constantly update the contents as a result of research into language learning, and also based on the changing social reality. Therefore, a course that was started in back in the 1970s aimed at providing elements for teaching and learning Catalan in the Spanish-speaking population living in Catalonia has now become a

course that aims to provide future teachers with guidance on teaching the different languages on the school curriculum in a much more multilingual and multicultural environment than 30 years ago. Obviously, this change has been gradual, but in the past five or six years it has led the professors teaching this course to set up a permanent seminar on innovation, sometimes with officially recognised projects and other times without them, in order to prepare and assess the development of the programme and the classes throughout the entire academic year. At different points, the changes that are being introduced, in terms of both the syllabus and the methodology, have been presented and discussed at departmental meetings.

2.3. Coordination of the course on Teaching the Experimental Sciences

Given the fact that both courses affect the same students during the second term of the third year, the first task consisted of establishing contact and coordination among the professors of both courses. As these professors come from different fields and scientific traditions, this was perhaps the most difficult yet interesting undertaking. Months of meetings were needed to explain the syllabi and methodologies in order to identify their common points. With regard to methodological issues, the job was easier: we quickly saw that they shared many of the same points of departure and that the transversal skills that both courses covered were quite similar. With regard to the contents of the syllabi of both courses, as both of them aim to provide useful tools for professionals working as primary school teachers, they used two theoretical frameworks from each of the fields that enabled them to find points in common: content-based language teaching (Snow, M. A., 2001) and speaking to learn science (Lemke, 1997; Sanmartí, 2003). This common subject led to contact with teachers from a primary school in order to get recordings of classes that illustrate our interests and serve as baseline material for the joint session with our students. To this end, we designed a working proposal that consisted of two double sessions, one at the beginning of the term and the other at the end, in which we analyse the same school reality from both perspectives: second language teaching by means of a content-based course, the sciences, and the role of language in the conceptualisation and learning of scientific contents. These are the declarative contents located at the crossroads of both courses. What is more, as mentioned above, another content, this time attitudinal, referred to the fact of joining up two different disciplines with their referents, to teamwork and to providing different visions for analysing a single reality – the class in all its complexity and richness.

2.4. Evaluation of the innovation

The entire process was evaluated by the students through a questionnaire and a group conversation at the end of the academic year. The comments from students were quite favourable and they admitted to a certain degree of surprise at first: in their words, it was the first time in their degree programme that two different courses were merged

to work together. They made several suggestions arguing in favour of this cooperation because, according to them, it gave them more realistic information on the professional practice of being a teacher. From the teaching perspective, a project of this kind fosters student autonomy, places them in situations that are closer to what they will find in their professional practice, and enables them to see an approach to education based on inter-disciplinary dialogue and teamwork.

2.5. Student involvement and participation

Compared to a traditional approach in which students fed certain knowledge in a linear fashion through oral explanations and individual readings, we chose to develop a methodology that is organised around the student's perspective. Based on a variety of sources, students have to become able to assimilate information and assess it and consider it in relation to their experience and the challenges posed by today's schools. For this reason, the learning is based on exploratory dialogue (Mercer, 1997), and the different tasks are organised by alternating individual work and reading and individual reflection first, then coming to agreements in small groups of three through scripts for the subsequent discussion, and finally a public discussion with other groups that have examined the same subject. Throughout this entire process, the role of the professor consists of designing the assignments, setting the timeframes and place for doing them, choosing and guiding the readings and discussions, and providing feedback to the individual and group assignments through written and/or oral comments. This interactive process at different levels enables teachers to develop regulation mechanisms that foster learning and facilitate the development of the skills needed to take the right decisions when exercising the teaching profession.

It is true that the different professors and degree programmes have sought the means for getting students involved in the new approaches to university studies, but we must also acknowledge that in this realm there is heavy inertia, and the structural barriers, such as timetables, the lack of time, etc., make it difficult for the professors and students to meet. For this reason we believe that the interest of this innovation lies in setting up a point of departure that can be considered and extended to the new curricula that are being drawn up today.

3. Methodology

The methodological changes implemented in our courses came from asking ourselves questions on:
1. What contents do we need to teach? In addition to declarative contents that come from scientific knowledge, what is the role of procedures and attitudes, beliefs and values in students' learning?
2. What role should students play in the courses?
3. What values does cooperative work foster?

4. What role should the professor play?
5. How can we do a type of evaluation that becomes an educational tool?
6. How is this pre-service training linked to the professional world?

The main instrument used in implementing this innovation was teamwork among the faculty for exchanging ways of working and finding points in common among the different courses that might be interesting for the students' education. Teaching coordination is an indispensable element for improving the quality of teaching, especially in a profession-oriented degree programme. We should point out that this type of coordination does not have a tradition in universities and often has no place among the different tasks that a university professor is required to do.

Likewise, the materials that have been produced are a result of this joint effort and are subjected to revision every academic year by the same faculty. Specifically, we should point out the audiovisual materials made by working jointly with teachers in a primary school and the development of scripts and questionnaires for holding the joint sessions between both courses participating in the project.

4. Results

The results of this innovation have been both satisfactory and solid, in the sense that we started a line of cooperative work among the entire faculty of a course and between two different courses which will remain in place in this degree programme. The assessments of students who finish the term are satisfactory without reservations, in the sense that it is a task that requires them to interact with their knowledge in an active, personal way, and that enables them to contextualise this new knowledge in their future profession. In any event, we should also state that it is crucial to work with students' initial expectations, as whenever we want to break inertias and propose a type of work that requires more involvement and more effort, it is necessary to accompany it with a sound explanation that enables the students to understand it and share the meaning of the undertaking. The proposal must be interesting enough and forge enough bridges with the professional world so that students accept it as their own from the outset. One key element in the success of this experience is the planning and guidance of both courses, which based on several years of experience and teamwork among the faculty, has become a fairly well-balanced and experienced proposition that has materials and a pace that allow for progress in students' learning.

In this sense, the materials developed and the working dynamic in both courses are also outstanding results. The work in small groups of students, the initial questions to help them set their goals, the readings and discussion scripts that help them to think more than just mimic, the meetings to share knowledge and points of view developed by each group: they all constitute a methodological approach based on students' activities viewed as a purposeful process which takes place in a context that makes it significant and makes possible the involvement needed to turn it into a space of learning.

5. Conclusions

In conclusion, we wish to first point out the interest in the coordination among the professors of different courses and from different departments aimed at training the same students. This interest is important as faculty coordination is not a practice either provided for or valued within the functioning of the university system. In this case, as these are profession-oriented degrees, this cooperation is extremely important in students' education, as the contributions from the different courses should help students to gain a global view of the profession and know how to use the different knowledge in each field to perform competently and appropriately given the needs of their future working situations.

The second interesting aspect is the use of a methodology that gets students involved actively, that enables them to take an interest in forging relations with the profession for which they are training. If we professors are capable of planning a type of effort that requires a responsible, autonomous effort by students, we will be laying the foundations for useful, interesting learning for their future profession and for the education of our country.

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Presentation of the project leader and the working group
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The members of the group conduct research in the fields of language teaching and teaching the experimental sciences. In both cases, their interest lies in classroom research and the relationship between research and teacher training.

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Multimedia and art education: A methodological model of Teacher-Training Studies within the framework of the European Higher Education Area

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Abstract

This project consists of developing an archive of digital material to expand on and support classroom teaching.

With this material, the goal is to make a methodological contribution to facilitate students' independent learning in acquiring their professional competences within the framework of the European ECTS credits.

This material is specific for the course Teaching the Fine Arts I, a core course in the five teacher training diploma programmes.

Most of the students in these programmes have no background in artist training, so the syllabus has been organised to reinforce the knowledge that is regarded as essential. To this end, it has included the transmission theoretical concepts, practical exercises performed within a workshop, and the development of basic contents in order to apply this material in the classroom.

Therefore, we had to update the teaching material in a digital format would make possible a new sort of dialogue with the images and offer students an interactive dimension to facilitate independent learning and teamwork, balance the differences in credits among the different diploma programmes and facilitate personalised attention in overly large groups.

General area of interest of this innovation

The material created was designed for education students. In addition to this group, the contents might also be of interest to all teaching professionals in the field of the human-

ities, and to all teachers of primary and secondary school, vocational education programmes and any art teacher who needs continuing education.

The methodological proposal might also become a model of interest for teaching instrumental practices with large groups who opt for independent learning and interactive communication as a complement to the teacher-led classroom.

1. Objectives

The purpose of this project is to create a variety of new multimedia teaching materials, some of them with two-way interaction with the goal of using different methodology and teaching resources in the course in Teaching the Fine Arts I, which would enhance students' performance and foster communication and interaction between students and professor.

The goals of the project are:

1. To improve the artistic training of students and, as a consequence, to expand their skills as future teachers.
2. To include proposals for independent learning activities based on a type of learning that fosters the transition towards the new model of the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS).
3. To promote the use of new media and new technologies (intranet and DVDs) as a practice integrated into the student's curriculum and into the professor's teaching practice.
4. Using these means, to encourage students' independent learning and teamwork skills which enable them to expand and extend their knowledge both theoretically and in the processes of practising art, as well as in a variety of teaching methodologies.
5. Using these means, to encourage each students to forge their own more personalised individual pathway in their degree programmes.
6. To bring together the group of professors sharing the same syllabus by encouraging coordination with the updating of the innovative materials.

2. Description of the project

The project consists of creating multimedia materials and in checking the efficacy of these materials.

The materials include a DVD file with all the digitalised materials (videos, photos and text) and a two-way interactive website.

Five DVDs have been produced from the archive materials, four with a presentation of the theoretical contents of the course on art and teaching art, and one to support artistic practice. The archive also contains additional material and support material for the projects of each of the professors of the course which, coupled with other occasional materials, will be uploaded the website throughout the entire academic year. This is the part of the archive that can be expanded and changed from one year to the next with new contributions.

Therefore, the contents of the DVD include stable contents, the five aforementioned DVDs, and occasional, variable material which is the working material for each of the topics that each professor administers at his or her own convenience and pace. This material is made available via a website (Figure 1).

The contents of the archive are distributed as follows:

- A collection of three DVDs for the subjects: drawing, colour, volume (Part 2 topics).
- A DVD for didactic topics (Part 1 and 3 topics).
- A DVD for resources related to artistic practices (Part 4).
- An archive with additional and support materials for each topic (Parts 1, 2, 3).

Figure 1. The parts with their corresponding contents
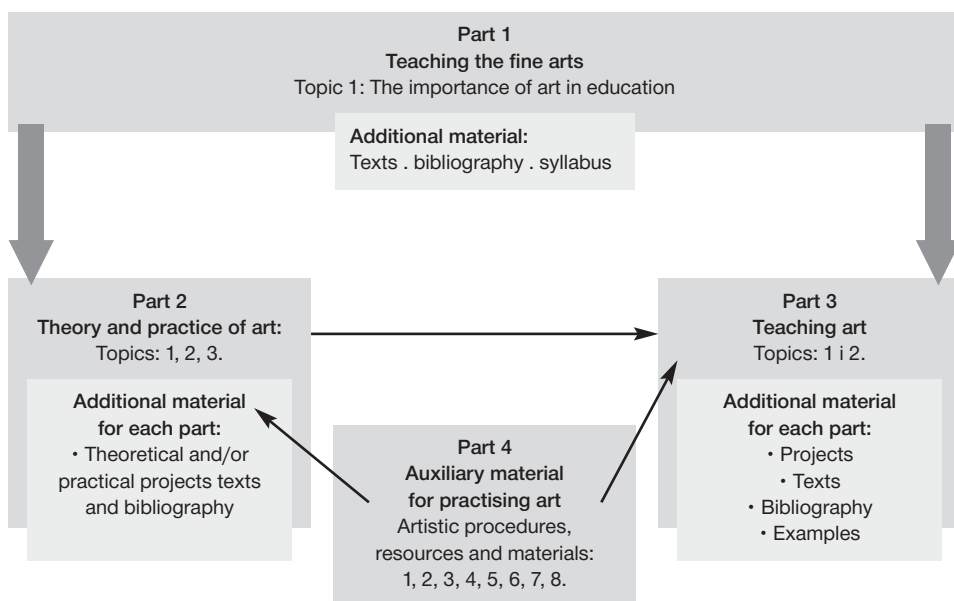
This material is targeted to students in the core course Teaching the Fine Arts I in the Teacher Education Programme at the UAB. It is a 4-, 5- or 6-credit core course in the diploma programme on teaching in the Faculty of Education, and it is also a transversal course, that is, it is also part of the following degree programmes: Early Childhood Education, Primary Education, Special Education, Physical Education and Foreign Language Education. Therefore, almost all the students in the degree programme must take it.

Most of the students in these programmes have no background in artist training, so the syllabus of this core course has been organised to reinforce the knowledge that is regarded as essential:

1. Conceptual contents on art through its practice. This means theoretical classes with workshop practices using a variety of materials and supports (Parts 2 and 4).
2. Educational contents. Psycho-educational and curricular knowledge with examples of application in early childhood and primarily education (Parts 1 and 3).

The classes in this core course tend to be large (50-65 students), especially when developing the practical facet of the artistic subjects as in this part students need individualised attention and assistance. If we bear in mind that we must promote independent learning, we saw the urgent need for a methodological change. The goal is to attend to students taking into account the wide variety of initial knowledge that they have of art, and, in the instrumental part, to respect the learning pace of each student. Each student's immersion in the artistic process is individual.

The group of professors who teach this core course has been saying for years that the material used individually in the classrooms should be agreed upon by consensus.

The process of developing this project was conducted according to the needs that arise in the classroom. We began to giving support to those aspects of the practice of art, that is, the instrumental part, where students have more shortcomings that cannot be dealt with properly because of the sheer number of students. In view of this concern, the first subject to be examined was artistic techniques, in order to later go on to the cornerstones sustaining the contents in this field: the concept of art, drawing, painting, volume and the creative processes. The educational contents are in the last part.

Audiovisual materials were created for each of these thematic parts, namely drawing, colour and volume, made up of a symbiosis of an image and a text. In these audiovisuals, the strength of the image, both still and in motion, is the key to understanding the different contents. This dialogue between text and image is transformed into the backbone of the project.

Figure 2. Images taken from the DVD on drawing.

The images in Figure 2 take on a more interesting meaning in the context of the field if they are accompanied by a text that explains why they are. This case is highly illustrative of the difficulty that is often encountered when drawing. Normally this is overcome by stereotyped images, ignoring the possibility of observing; so we must learn to look.

In these audiovisual materials, we have chosen as testimonial referents images of artists, painters, sculptors, texts by educators, art theoreticians, philosophers and also artists as a point of departure for defining concepts that are considered essential for understanding the field.

In the training of future teachers, we believe that artistic education is basic for the integral formation of the individual, as it provides elements for being able to think, understand and express, that is, an entire series of tools that are part of nonverbal communication. Art is not an island, rather a kind of knowledge.

«Art is a form of knowledge as precious to mankind as the world of philosophy or science. Of course, only when we clearly admit that art is a form of knowledge parallel to any other, yet different from them, through which mankind manages to comprehend his environment, can we begin to appreciate its importance in the history of humanity» (Read, 1977)

Despite the fact that the new technologies are common working tools that professors and students tend to use every day as a means of information and communication, we can perceive the lack of specific teaching materials that might facilitate the process of acquiring knowledge. With the creation of digital teaching materials, we reinforce the experimentation with and piloting of new technologies with a website where a new interactive model of learning is developed with monitoring by the professor.

3. Methodology

The decision to develop interactive digital materials related to knowledge of the fine arts came from the fact that images are as important as text, as they are the subject being studied as well as the content, which requires us to control not just the procedure but also the formal design of this product.

This control was achieved by using the same working team to produce and direct, as the members had both the knowledge and the infrastructure needed to do this.

The procedure was as follows:
1. First, the schema of the different content parts of the entire course was developed.
2. We decided to sequence the production according to the classroom needs and the possibilities available.
    2.1. The first thing to be produced was Part 4, for two reasons: this material was more urgently needed because it aimed to support very hands-on contents in which students needed individual attention, and it enables students to watch the same action repeatedly without the professor having to repeat it. The second reason was that it seemed like the easiest part to make. Thus, from the start of this part we were very clear on the format, that it had to be in video

as it consists of demonstrations of actions that provide information on how to use the tools and materials.

2.2. We then continued with Part 2, because there is a great deal of visual material for art-related subjects. All we had to do was write a text and find a visual formula, that is, an audiovisual script that was persuasive.

2.3. We left Parts 1 and 3 for the end, because generally speaking the topics are not so visual and obviously there is not as much graphic material.

3. We decided to make an audiovisual script of each of the topics. This could be considered the most important point in the production of this material. The script was sometimes generated by merging or restructuring a text or images or other things based only on a text.

3.1. Part 1. It starts with an original text as an introduction. It has been presented in video format in the guise of a chat between a professor and four students.

3.2. Part 2. Each topic is a script that combines video, photo and text with an off-screen voice and background music. Once the first topic on drawing was finished, the same formula was then applied to the two other topics in this part, thus forming a uniform whole.

3.3. Part 3. We have chosen the subjects on which texts are being written, and they will each be presented in a different format, still to be determined.

3.4. Part 4. This is a series of technical demonstrations on video which can be accessed via an interactive index.

4. For each subject we have to: gather and select the existent material, such as photos and texts.

5. Produce the material in which no external help is needed: filming the images, writing the texts, digitalising the images.

6. Edit the images and sound by the image technician based on the script.

7. Parallel to the development of each topic, we have to gather, digitalise and archive the additional material from each professor in files, which will be part of the archive used to feed the website.

8. Work in conjunction with the image technician to produce the definitive DVDs.

9. The technician is in charge of producing a master DVD as an archive of resources containing all the material produced.

4. Results

With regard to the results, as of now we can talk about the results of the production of the material made to date.

There are four DVDs ready to be edited: drawing, painting, volume and the technical support material. Therefore, we now have specific material, although only in the hands of the professors who may decide on the editing aspects in order to effectively put it into practice. However, we can now poised to check the efficacy of this material.

Even though producing the material is a slow process, it is proceeding at a good pace and shows a more than acceptable quality if we bear in mind that the theoretical and technical team is one and the same.

We can state that we have not yet been able to put this material to the test systematically, partly because the students would have had to have the DVDs in their possession, as the goal is for them to be able to see and revise them at their own pace. We have focused attention on producing material, and in consequence it has not yet been published. Starting now is when we will study how to evaluate the materials.. However, the professors have occasionally used the support DVD in the classroom for students who were having difficulties understanding the use of a given technique or topic (drawing), and the students' responses have been quite positive. Those who used the material repeatedly asked where they could get it. While the professors individually help one student, the group is watching a demonstration on the classroom TV, and this dynamic means saving time and more effective dissemination.

We hope to publish all the materials in order to check the part corresponding to putting the DVDs into practice in a more systematic way.

5. Conclusions

This project is ambitious not just in terms of the results of its implementation but also in terms of the production of material. For the time being, the results of this production are proceeding apace if we take into account the fact that the process is laborious.

We should mention that we still need to manage a virtual platform for setting up the website, as the one offered by the UAB is insufficient for our purposes. One alternative is Caront (Martí, E.; Rocarias, J.; Radeva, P.; Toledo, R. and Vitrià, J. 2006), which was created at the UAB itself and is planned to start operating immediately.

We also have plans to continue producing materials for other courses and to produce a collection of DVDs on art education that would be open to other areas in the Department of Expression (music and dance).

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Keywords

Independent learning, non-classroom teaching, virtual resources.

Financing

Supplementary materials on the CD-ROM

Video showing two excerpts from the *Drawing* and *Support for Artistic Processes DVDs*.

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Presentation of the working group

The proposal for this project emerged from a group of professors in the Unit on Visual and Art Education in the Department of Teaching Musical, Artistic and Corporal Expression who teach the course on Teaching the Fine Arts I in the teacher education diploma programme.

The members all share basic points of departure when transmitting the different syllabi within the field. As trainers of future teachers, they believe that visual and art education is basic for the integral education of the individual, and they believe in training future teachers with a dynamic attitude, in lifelong learning and accepting new instruments for acquiring knowledge. They are motivated by embarking on a teaching innovation project to construct a new form of communication and interaction with students.

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ELPUE: European Language Portfolio for University Education

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Abstract

The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFRL) published by the Council of Europe has laid down a common foundation on which we can work to minimise the differences among the educational systems in the different countries and standardise the criteria in language learning. The CEFRL describes and lists the knowledge and skills that language students must acquire in order to have effective linguistic behaviour. It defines six levels of competences that enable us to measure individuals' progress in each of the stages of learning throughout their entire lifetime. The CEFRL promotes the creation of a European Language Portfolio that contains the student's intercultural and learning experiences. The ELPUE is a digital, multilingual portfolio addressed specifically to university students.

General area of interest of this innovation

In recent years, we have seen the importance of language learning in university degrees and in society in general. Clear proof of this is that the ministerial orders regulating the new degrees in Primary Education and Early Childhood Education state that by the end of their degree programmes students must have achieved level C1 of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages in Spanish and Catalan, and level B2 in a foreign language. Likewise the Council of Innovation, University and Enterprise asks that all university students finish their degrees with at least level B2 in a foreign language. Therefore, we need a tool that will enable us to easily evaluate university students' knowledge of languages.

In 2000, with the publication of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFRL), the Council of Europe laid down a common foundation on which we can work to minimise the differences among the educational systems

in the different countries and standardise the criteria in language learning. The CEFRL describes and lists the knowledge and skills that students must acquire in order to have effective linguistic behaviour. It defines six levels of competences that enable us to measure individuals' progress in each of the stages of learning throughout their entire lifetime. In order to encourage learners to reflect and make them active and responsible in their language acquisition/learning process, the CEFRL promotes the creation of a European Language Portfolio (ELP) that contains the student's intercultural and learning experiences. Although Catalonia and Spain already have portfolios targeted at the different stages of primary and secondary education, there is no specific portfolio for university students. We need an ELP for higher education, an ELP that takes into account the specificities of this stage, such as the non-language courses taken in a foreign language (FL), the literature examined in different languages, stays and practices at universities or companies in other countries, among others.

1. Objectives

The ELPUE enables us to achieve the following goals:

1. To develop students' awareness of their level of language knowledge by showing that different levels of language competences can be developed according to one's use and need of a language.
2. To value the acquisition of partial language competences.
3. To help students become aware of their own language learning strategies.
4. To make available to students, and by extension to the entire university community, digital materials that make it easy to store the linguistic biography and the portfolio that accompanies it.
5. To stress the importance of mastery of Catalan, Spanish and foreign languages in university education in the 21st century.
6. To encourage the teaching of non-language courses in foreign languages.
7. To stimulate university students to expand their language experiences by doing part of their degree programme at a foreign university.
8. To reward an open, positive attitude towards multilingualism, multiculturalism and diversity.

Despite the fact that the portfolio that we are proposing is a tool that can be generalised to any member of the university community, we aim to implement it experimentally with a group of students in the Faculty of Education. Using the ELPUE, these students will be able to identify the linguistic competences they have already acquired, and in what languages and to what degree they have done so. They will also gain awareness of their learning and the strategies and techniques that enable them to improve their communicative level in languages. Using the portfolio will also help to stimulate self-evaluation and independent learning among students. The mid-term

goal is for students in the Faculty of Education to receive and use the ELPUE to accredit their level of language knowledge.

2. Description of the project

The ELPUE is therefore a language portfolio adapted to the Catalan university community. Users can choose Catalan, Spanish, English or French as their languages. The portfolio has three parts: a linguistic biography with all the descriptors needed to make a self-assessment of the student's competences, a portfolio where users can store their output, and a passport.

A special computer application was developed for the ELPUE that creates an document that can be generated from any computer. This enables users to update their information very easily simply by loading the application onto any PC or Mac.

2.1. The linguistic biography

As the CEFRL suggests, the linguistic biography is divided into two parts. The first one is more experiential, in which the user indicates their relationship with languages. Users have to tell, for example, which languages they speak, with whom, in which circumstances; which languages they read, and in which cases. In this part, they must also list the languages they have studied, which non-language courses they have taken in foreign languages, any stays abroad they have made for both Erasmus or mobility stays, shorter stays for learning languages, and trips for non-educational reasons.

The second part is related to language competences. In the CEFRL, the Council of Europe distinguishes between three types of language users: basic (levels A1 and A2), independent (levels B1 and B2) and experienced (levels C1 and C2). In reality, these three types of users encompass six different levels of competences, six key junctures in language learning.

The framework determines the competences that language learners must have in each of these six levels, regardless of which language. As can be seen in the grid below, the designers of the framework used very general descriptors to define the competences of each of the levels, and it is clear that these competences are also valid for one's native language. Each level has between three and four descriptors that broadly indicate what the user who has reached this level is capable of doing.

Table 1. Different types of users and their corresponding levels.

Experienced user	C2	Can effortlessly understand almost everything they read and hear. Can summarise information from different oral or written sources, reconstruct facts and arguments and present them coherently. Can express themselves spontaneously, with fluency and accuracy, distinguishing subtle nuances of meaning even in the most complex situations.

	C1	Can understand a wide range of long, complex texts and recognise their implicit meaning. Can express themselves fluently and spontaneously without having to obviously grasp for words or expressions. Can use the language flexibly and effectively for social, academic and professional purposes. Can produce clear, well-organised, detail texts on complex subjects, and demonstrates a controlled use of organisational structures, connectors and cohesion mechanisms.
Independent user	B2	Can understand the main ideas of complex texts about both concrete and abstract subjects, including technical discussions in their field of professional specialisation. Can express themselves with a degree of fluency and spontaneity that makes everyday interaction with native speakers possible without prompting tension in either of the speakers. Can produce clear, detailed texts in a wide range of subjects and express a standpoint on an issue, setting forth the advantages and disadvantages of different options.
	B1	Can understand the main ideas of clear information on subjects related to work, school, free time, etc. Can handle the majority of linguistic situations that arise when travelling to a place where the target language is spoken. Can produce simple, coherent discourse on subjects that are familiar to them or personally interest them. Can describe facts and experiences, dreams, hopes and ambitions, and give brief reasons and explanations for their opinions and plans.
Basic user	A2	Can understand commonly used phrases and expressions related to issues of immediate importance (such as basic personal information, family information, shopping, local geography and work). Can communicate in simple, everyday situations that require a simple, direct exchange of information on familiar, everyday matters. Can simply describe aspects of their experiences or personal background, aspects about their immediate environment, and matters related to immediate needs.
	A1	Can understand and use everyday, familiar expressions and very simple sentences aimed at meeting their basic needs. Can introduce themselves and introduce a third person, and can ask and answer questions on personal information such as where they live, the people they know and the things they own. Can interact simply as long as the other person speaks slowly and clearly and is willing to help.

One might think that this definition of competences is overly general and that we need more specific descriptors that indicate much more clearly the levels to be achieved. With this purpose in mind, the framework divides the linguistic competences of each level into five different areas: listening and reading (comprehension), taking part in conversations and expressing oneself orally afterward (oral expression) and writing. The ELPUE has added a sixth area: sociocultural knowledge. This sociocultural knowledge has not been organised into levels, as we cannot universally determine which cultural aspects one should know before others. Should one become familiar with the written literature of a language when in level B1 or B2? There might be some users who are familiar with the written literature of a language without having knowledge of that language because they might have read the works in translation. So can we say that that person is familiar with the written literature in that language? If they liked read-

ing it in translation, when they reach the right level they will most likely try to read some of the works in the second language. With regard to knowledge on the behaviour, habits and customs of individuals in a given society, should they be acquired in a given order? If so, what is this order? In the cases of languages spoken in more than one country (English, French or Spanish, just to cite three), which customs should be taken into account? For all these reasons and others, the sociocultural knowledge is not organised into six levels in the CEFRL.

For each of the areas we have also drawn up descriptors on the learning strategies that should be mobilised in order to facilitate language learning. Including descriptors on language acquisition processes and language learning techniques and strategies in the ELPUE can only help to improve academic performance. The repertoire proposed for each of the areas has the aim of encouraging learners to reflect on what they do and how they do it, on their own learning style. We have tried to set forth the most commonly used techniques and strategies so that all learners can become aware of what they do, and especially about what they do not do. When students gain awareness of what helps them to learn and which strategies they can apply to be more effective in their language learning, it is much easier for them to put them into practice in order to reach the level they want.

2.2. The CEFRL descriptors

The authors of the CEFRL defined a variety of descriptors for each of the levels and areas cited in the previous section. Despite the fact that these descriptors are more concrete than the ones established in the definitions of levels of competence, they are still overly generic and can often give rise to confusion when performing a self-evaluation. Other times they are clear enough and no one would have doubts about what they refer to.

Let us analyse the descriptors of levels A1 and A2 in the area of understanding: oral comprehension:

A1	I can recognise familiar words and very basic expressions on issues related to the family and immediate environment if people speak slowly and clearly.
A2	I can understand the most common expressions and vocabulary about issues that personally interest me (such as very basic personal and family information, shopping, place of residence, job). I can understand the general gist of short, clear and simple messages and notices.

It becomes quite clear that level A1 talks about *familiar words and very basic expressions on issues related to the family and immediate environment*, that is, about the family, work and social spheres. These same subjects appear in level A2 when talking about subjects of personal interest, as it says *such as very basic personal and family information, shopping, place of residence, job*. Can we therefore deduce that the difference between these two levels lies in whether one only recognises isolated words in

A1 or understands expressions and the overall gist of the message or notice in A2? Can we deduce that in level A1 there is no comprehension, rather just recognition? But if these words were recognised, were they not comprehended? Can we orally recognise something that we do not comprehend?

If we ask a level A1 user to give more specific examples of what they understand, oftentimes they will not know how to answer beyond the fact that they understand isolated words. Users need the competences to be made a little more explicit in order for them to identify what they know and don't know. It is true that people use language (at least their native language), but when doing it, they do not necessarily think about what they are doing with the language, what they use it for.

The grid below shows that the borderline between certain levels is quite blurry and that users may well have problems or doubts when trying to more specifically situate themselves in either level. With regard to the descriptors for B2 to C1 in the area of oral interaction, what difference can be distinguished between *being able to communicate with a certain degree of spontaneity and fluency* (B2) and *being able to communicate spontaneously and fluently* (C1)? Where, then, is the boundary between B2 and C1? It is obvious that users of the portfolio need to have much more specific descriptors for both B2 and C2 than the ones proposed in the framework.

B2	I can communicate with a certain degree of spontaneity and fluency, which makes it possible for me to interact with native speakers. I can actively participate in a conversation in familiar context, presenting and defending my opinions.
C1	I can expression myself spontaneously and fluently without having to grasp for words. I can use the language flexibly and effectively for social and professional purposes. I can precisely express ideas and opinions and easily relate my contribution to the discourse with that of the other speakers.

We could perform this analysis for each of the areas of the CEFRL and always reach the same conclusion. The descriptors proposed for each level are overly general and do not enable users to identify clearly and precisely the specific competences that they must have to reach this level.

In order for a users to discover their degree of knowledge of a language, they need much more specific descriptors than the ones provided in the framework. Therefore, we must create more specific descriptors for each of the levels in each of the five areas defined by the CEFRL.

2.3. The ELPUE descriptors
The descriptors that were developed for the ELPUE are much more specific than the ones proposed by the CEFRL. What was done was that the general descriptors from the framework were broken down into much more specific descriptors and especially into descriptors that are much more easily identifiable for users. Therefore, among the

descriptors of oral interaction in level A1 we have identified some of the most common and basic communicative situations such as greeting, thanking and introducing oneself. We have also defined some of the subjects about which users can ask and answer questions, such as asking for information on people's identity, and asking for and telling the time. Nevertheless, there is still some degree of ambiguity in the descriptors. For examples, it says *I can respond to simple questions as long as they are about everyday matters or subjects related to an immediate need*.

Keeping this ambiguity about *everyday matters* and *subjects related to an immediate need* enables all the different users to find themselves reflected, as this prevents us from having to use or cite specific lexis for each user.

Below is an example of the descriptors used in A1 in the area of Oral interaction (the text in bold corresponds to the general descriptor proposed by the CEFRL and in italics the descriptors that are specific to the ELPUE):

I can communicate simply as long as the speaker is willing to repeat what they said or say it using other words and more slowly, and as long as they help me to express what I am trying to say. I can ask and answer simple questions about everyday matters or subjects related to an immediate need
• *I can greet, say goodbye and thank.*
• *I can introduce myself and other people.*
• *I can ask for personal information on people's identity, such as their age, nationality, everyday activities, etc.*
• *I can answer questions on personal information, such as my name, my age, where I live and my profession.*
• *I can say that I don't understand and ask the other speaker to repeat what they said.*
• *I can respond to simple questions as long as they are about everyday matters or subjects related to an immediate need, and as long as the other speaker speaks, slowly and clearly and helps me to express what I want to say.*
• *I can tell the time and manipulate figures, quantities and prices.*
• *I can use time expressions like «next week», «last Friday», «in November» and «at three o'clock».*
• *...*

For each of the languages mentioned in their biography, users must mark whether or not they are able to accomplish what the descriptors say. They have to identify what they can and cannot do, and they can also add other descriptors that they can find in a bank of descriptors that they are offered, or they can write their own descriptors.

Following are examples of descriptors used in C1 in the area of Understand – Read:

I understand all the details of lengthy, complex texts, regardless of whether or not they are related to my speciality as long as I can reread the more difficult sections. I understand specialised articles and long technical instructions even if they are not related to my speciality.
• *I understand long, complex literary or factual texts, and I can distinguish among different styles.*
• *I understand any kind of correspondence without having to look up words in the dictionary.*
• *I can scan for information in long texts and on websites.*
• *I can scan for information in specialised articles and technical instructions within my speciality.*
• *I understand long, complex texts related to my social, professional or academic life fairly well.*
• *I understand lengthy, complex instructions in my speciality or on other subjects fairly well if I can reread the difficult sections.*
• *I can read and understand journals and books in my field.*

As you can see in these last descriptors, what we have done is broken down two general descriptors (bold) into seven descriptors (italics). One of our goals was to distinguish between the ability to look for information and effective comprehension of what was read. In reality, oftentimes readers do not necessarily understand absolutely everything they read, rather what they need to do is quickly identify a series of data or information in a written document (either a text or a website) in order to reuse them in an oral utterance or include them or comment on them in another document they are writing. Despite the fact that one might think that looking for information in a document does not fit in at the C1 level of the CEFRL, if we bear in mind that it says that these are long texts, specialised articles, technical instructions or websites, we can see that this type of search is not such an obvious thing as users must manipulate complex information that is also structured and organised in a complex fashion. However, it is clear that a user who has reached level C1 in reading comprehension in a language should not merely be able to locate information but must also be capable of understanding what is written with a certain degree of ease. For this reason we added the next two descriptors. One of the two says: *I understand extensive and complex instructions on my speciality, or on other subjects, if I can reread the difficult parts*. However, is it necessary to mention the possibility of rereading the difficult parts in level C1? Oftentimes in our native languages we have to read and reread a paragraph that is more complex than others, and not stop rereading it until we understand it. If this does not make the reader ineffective, we have to understand that level C1 also includes the possibility of rereading part of a text.

3. Methodology

This project has two phases, the first to create a digital support and the second to experiment with the ELPUE.

With regard to the former, using the general descriptors for each area and level of the CEFRL, we wrote the descriptors that best adapt to each of them. To do this, we analysed the referentials that were published in the different languages. These referentials group together the linguistic utterances of each language and take into account communicative, grammatical and lexical factors. Given the specialisation of the group members, we prepared the descriptors by binomials and then discussed in a large group what modifications were needed.

In the second phase we will begin experimenting with the ELPUE with a group of students in the faculty. This experimentation will be conducted in three parts. The first will consists of making an initial self-assessment of language knowledge (Catalan, Spanish, English, French and others should students know other languages), thus laying the groundwork for a reflection on students' language learning strategies. The second part will come at the end of the term, when students will once again evaluate themselves in order to see what progress they have made, complete the self-evaluation question-

naires and add the necessary proof to their portfolio. The third part will consist of evaluating the results of the experiment.

4. Results

Given the fact that the ELPUE has not yet been implemented in the different degree programmes in the Faculty of Education, we can only present the results that we expect to get, namely, that students gain awareness of their ability to learn languages and reflect on the acquisition/learning strategies they use. Students are also expected to show a more open attitude towards the multilingualism, multiculturalism and language diversity that characterise today's society, and especially today's schools. In this sense, the assessment of any language experience in the students' biography will be extremely important, as the goal is to value every step, both large and small, that makes peaceful coexistence among diverse cultures and languages possible. All of these results obviously converge in a single one: improved academic performance in the language courses in the different degree programmes.

5. Conclusions

Despite the fact that this project is still underway and no definitive conclusions can be drawn, we can posit that the implementation and everyday use of the ELPUE will help students to create the habit of self-evaluation of their language knowledge, and that this should serve as a stimulus for continuing to learn languages and initiating new learning experiences in other languages that they do not yet know.

The ELPUE should also contribute to the internationalisation of the degree programmes in the faculty given the fact that it aims to encourage students to take non-language courses in a foreign language, as well as to take advantage of exchanges and agreements with foreign universities. The everyday use of the ELPUE should encourage students to increase the number of short stays and visits to schools outside of Spain, going abroad either to complete part of their degree or to do the practices in their programme abroad.

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Interesting links
· http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/portfolio/default.asp?l=e&m=/main_pages/welcome.html
· http://www.ecml.at/

Keywords
Portfolio, language, internationalisation.

Financing
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Presentation of the working group
The faculty involved in this project has extensive experience in the field of teaching languages (both native and foreign) and has participated in different projects related to defining curriculum, evaluation and developing learning strategies. All the members of this working group have taught or are teaching in the degree programme in Primary Teacher Training in the speciality of Foreign Languages in the Faculty of Education at the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona.

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Direct action for improving the learning conditions of students in two core first-year courses. Course on descriptive English grammar

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Abstract

The primary goal of this project is to improve the learning conditions of students in two core courses in the first year of the degree programme in English Language and Literature, *English Language: Descriptive Grammar I* and *II*. In these courses, the students have to handle the grammar of a foreign language in a systematic, serious way for the first time, which proves difficult for them. In order to achieve this goal, study materials have been developed specifically for our students (level of difficulty, syllabus covered, comparison with native languages). This material has been compiled in two textbooks, in a varied collection of exercises (with differing levels of difficulty) and in an interactive website. All of this was accomplished with a working team with a great deal of cohesion and coordination, which has enabled us to achieve the main goal of the project.

General area of interest of this innovation

This innovation is part of the goal of improving learning conditions in order to increase the academic performance of students in two first-year core courses in the English Language and Literature degree programme. This has been accomplished using ICTs (the UAB's virtual campus and an interactive website), tools which also help to bolster students' independent learning.

1. Objectives

The primary goal of this project is to improve the learning conditions of students in English Language and Literature, specifically in the first cycle courses on descriptive grammar of the English language. These courses have a theoretical component which

explains the fundamental features of English grammar, especially its morphology and syntax, along with a practical component which, by using a variety of examples and different registers, lets students practice analysing English words and constructions.

Improving the learning conditions is achieved by creating specifically materials designed to be used on the virtual campus (VC), which were later compiled in two textbooks, and by designing an interactive website. By using these materials, the goals can be further specified as:

1. To foster student autonomy,
2. To increase the quality of the input for reviewing the concepts,
3. To foster the acquisition of both transversal skills and skills that are specific to the field.
   a) Transversals skills:
     · Learning autonomously
     · Writing answers to specific questions in clear, orderly fashion
     · Finding examples from abstract concepts
     · Expressing oneself in English properly
   b) Specific skills related to the project:
     · Knowing how to find examples of linguistic concepts in English
     · Recognising and analysing flexive and derivative processes in English words
     · Recognising and illustrating different types of verbs
     · Recognising and analysing the different types of syntagma that form part of the English sentence, coordinated clauses and subordinated clauses.

2. Description of the project

This project focuses on two first-year core courses:
   · English Language: Descriptive Grammar I.
   · English Language: Descriptive Grammar II.

The courses have three components: theoretical teacher-led classes three hours a week, practical classes held two hours every two weeks, and integrated (virtual) tutorials. The syllabus covers the fundamental features of English grammar, especially its morphology and syntax, and practices are given on analysing words and constructions in English using a variety of examples.

The project consists of improving the learning conditions of the students in these courses in order to improve their academic performance and autonomy. This is accomplished using ICTs (the VC and developing an interactive website). First of all, we should explain how the VC is used in the courses. Uploading the contents and exercises on the different subjects onto the VC helped make the practices and classes much more interesting and fluid for students, as they have access to the information that will be dealt with in the classroom. For each topic, summaries were developed that contain the

main points to be examined, as well as blank spaces that students have to fill in and complete as the professor delivers the contents. The use of this material has meant an increase in the amount of content covered, and has also made it possible to increase the number of practices and exercises done in class. The exercises for the practical classes were also uploaded onto the VC, and students always attend classes having already reviewed the exercises. Some of them are done in the class itself, while students will have to resolve others beforehand. Apart from uploading the teaching materials onto the VC, we have also used the calendar regularly in order to follow up daily on the contents and homework. This has conferred a great deal of cohesion on the courses and has meant that students were guided at all times.

Other tools in the VC used frequently were turning in homework and the virtual forum. Turning in homework was especially useful for the integrated tutorials. Three integrated tutorials are scheduled throughout the term and uploaded onto the VC, and students have to resolve them at home. Afterward, they turn them into the teacher using this tool. In the process of the integrated tutorials, the VC forum has been activated so that students have always been able to comment on issues relevant to the integrated tutorial and the course in general.

In the past, one of the weak points of the courses involved in this project was many students' need to do more exercises and practice the contents covered in class more independently. This is the aspect that is even much more important in a degree programme in a foreign language, such as the one we are concerned with. In order to improve this point, we worked on developing an interactive website with useful links, original study materials and self-correcting exercises (http://antalya.uab.es/english-descriptive-grammar). However, the goal was not independent learning but a combination of this plus classroom learning, as independent learning is a complement to what is done in class. In order to develop this material, we had the aid of a computer specialist and have had to coordinate and integrate the computer and language aspects. The resulting exercises and all the links ended up being extremely useful for the students. The use of this website has enabled students to work more autonomously. This latter point, autonomy, is one of the skills that has to be worked on the most with first-year students, and the results were very positive.

Within the efforts by the group, another point worth highlighting is the two textbooks that were written by the team and then published by the Publications Service of the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona. They include the contents of the courses and a variety of exercises with an answer key. Both volumes reflect the work performed by the team during the past few years. In order to write them, we were always guided by students' needs and what we had observed throughout the years in which we had taught these courses. Therefore, we can state that both publications perfectly fit the needs and characteristics of the students of these courses and are therefore an indispensable tool in their education. Furthermore, they filled the gap in the literature on morphology and syntax from the descriptive standpoint, and are appropriate to the level and characteristics of our

students. They are as a complement to the VC and the interactive website, and they provide homogeneity to the entire project. All together, we have managed to create a more stimulating and effective learning environment for students.

3. Methodology

With regard to the actions, means and resources used to carry out this project, we should first mention the teamwork methodology used in drawing up the teaching materials, which includes the professors' class notes, the dossiers for students and the exercises. Secondly, hiring support staff in English and IT was an essential factor in achieving our goals.

First of all, then, we should mention that coordinated teamwork was one of the fundamental aspects of this project. The process of developing the material was as follows. The teaching team, made up of four professors from the Department of English and German Languages and Literatures at the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona met for the first time in order to divvy up the topics according to each member's specialisation so that each was responsible for a series of topics. The meetings of the teaching team were led by the project leader, who was also in charge of centralising all the information and material. Then the professor in charge of each topic wrote a master document and prepared the student dossiers and exercises with the corresponding answer keys. All of this was sent to the other group members, who had a few weeks to forward comments. Afterwards, at the second meeting, changes in both the format and content of the material were agreed upon, criteria were discussed and the definitive versions were drawn up. Finally, the dossiers and exercises were turned into pdf files and made available to students through the VC and the interactive website. In short, the coordinated, constant efforts of the team, as well as the harmony among the members, enabled us to draw up cohesive original materials that fit in with the specific needs of the students of this course.

With regard to the materials developed, we should mention that we considered it essential to design our own materials for two reasons: first, the content of the course focuses on morphology and syntax of English, and there are no textbooks at the right level that cover this subject and only this subject. Secondly, the vast majority of students in the course are bilingual (Spanish-Catalan) and come from the same educational system, and this should be borne in mind when preparing the material: first, we were able to use the knowledge they already had, and secondly we could easily draw comparisons with the languages that the students already knew. These factors were taken into account systematically when preparing all the material.

The design of the dossiers was an important part of the innovation process because our goal was to prevent students from having to spend a great deal of time in class copying long lists of examples, and this way there was more class time to spend on further explanations. By the same token, if we included all the information, the students might

not pay attention in class. Therefore, we had to find a balance between either extreme, and avoid being repetitive. As a result, in some of the topics, there are primarily examples in the dossiers, while on others there are mainly explanations. With regard to the exercises to be corrected in class, they were drawn up with differing levels of difficulty. All the students had to master the same knowledge by the end of the course, but they started with very homogeneous levels of English. Therefore, we had to provide the suitable materials in order to handle this diversity. These exercises were mainly corrected in class in the practice sessions held every two weeks.

The notes developed by the teaching team served as the foundation of both textbooks published by the UAB's Publications Service. Once again, the coordinated teamwork following the methodology set forth above was crucial for successfully adapting the material to the printed publication. The system of meetings and revisions of the material that was to appear in these books was similar to the process of creating the teaching materials for the course.

4. Results

After the efforts made by the team, the results show that the goals set of improving the two courses *English Language: Descriptive Grammar I and II* were achieved. Below we outline how we achieved the basic goals of improving the learning conditions of students in these courses in order to increase their academic performance and autonomy.

The first goal, which consisted of improving students' learning conditions, was achieved given the fact that the learning conditions were adapted to the new technologies: a virtual facet was added to a traditional teacher-led class, which meant adapting the university system to ICTs (VC and interactive website), which in turn facilitated students' overall learning. Uploading teaching materials (contents and exercises) onto the VC meant much more interesting classes and an increase in the contents covered and practices done in class. The periodic use of the virtual calendar also gave the course a great deal of cohesion; the activation of the forum enabled many students to discuss issues that there was no time to discuss in class; and the use of the file delivery system enabled the integrated tutorials to be held online.

The second goal, to foster and improve students' autonomy, was also achieved: students made extensive use of the VC, and more limited use of the http://antalya.uab.es /english-descriptive-grammar/ website. The students have used the original study materials and the links on the website. In this way, then, in addition to following the class through the classroom sessions, they were also able to work independently and at their own pace, with the chance to work with original material designed exclusively to meet their needs. The use of the self-correcting exercises enabled students to independently ensure that they had assimilated many of the contents covered in class. In short, these exercises encouraged and fostered a blend of classroom and independent learning.

The goal of increasing students' academic performance was also largely met. The academic performance of the students in these two courses in academic years 2004-05, 2005-06 and 2006-07 improved noticeably. This can be seen in the information from the UAB's OPQ [Planning and Quality Assurance Office], as well as in the responses to the SEEQ satisfaction surveys that students were given at the end of each term. The results showed that the students were highly satisfied with the courses, they felt that they had learned, and they believed that the VC and the website were useful for learning more autonomously. They also claimed that the use of the self-correcting exercises helped them to work independently.

The goal of preparing materials to cover the needs of the students in these courses was also achieved. In this sense, we only have to recall the gap in the linguistic literature for textbooks on morphology and syntax from the descriptive standing that also offer points of comparison between English and Spanish/Catalan.

5. Conclusions

The books, exercises and website developed as part of this project were used for two academic years with a high degree of satisfaction by both the teachers and the students. First of all, the students liked having a textbook (especially one designed specifically for their needs) because it freed them up to take notes in class and allows them to participate more. The professors were also satisfied with the books because they had more class time for discussions and practices. Secondly, the exercises (varied and with differing degrees of difficult) were also useful, both those used in the classroom and those that the students themselves corrected with the answer keys provided on the VC.

With regard to student autonomy, further autonomy was achieved with both the textbook and the extensive use of the VC by both students and professors. This is one of the most highly rated aspects of the class for the students in the satisfaction surveys, especially in the last academic year of this experiment, when the VC had improved substantially.

We should also mention that the existence of this material (both the textbooks and exercises) designed specifically for our students makes it easier to rotate the professors of this first-year course.

Generally speaking, the level of satisfaction was so high that some of the professors have transferred the same working system used in this team to develop materials for other courses as well.

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Interesting links
- Website of the project: http://www.learningcircuits.org/2003/jul2003/rossett.htm [2008]
- http://www.learningcircuits.org/2002/aug2002/valiathan.html [2008]
- http://www-ice.upc.es/pro_accio/seeq/presentacio.htm [2008]

Keywords
Student autonomy, improving learning conditions, blended learning, ICT, grammar, English language

Financing
This project was financed by the AGAUR programme on improving teaching quality at Catalan universities (MQD) for 2004 (project identification number: 2004 MQD 00071).

Supplementary materials on the CD-ROM
Demonstration of the offline version of the *ENGLISH DESCRIPTIVE GRAMMAR* website: Virtual tour of different individual learning exercises.

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Presentation of the working group
The working group is made up of four professors who have taught the aforementioned courses in recent years. All four have also been involved in a variety of key aspects of this project: expert use of the VC and ICTs in general, coordinating teaching teams of a variety of courses, and drawing up and processing student satisfaction surveys designed specifically for the courses in the English Language and Literature degree programme. They have all demonstrated their interest in teaching innovation and the use of ICTs in higher education.

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Direct action to reinforce the autonomous study of students taking a degree in English studies through the creation of an interactive webpage for the subjects dealing with culture and civilization

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Abstract

Our second cycle students have achieved a high level of spoken and written English, but they have serious gaps in their knowledge of cultural and historical events in the English-speaking world. They are obliged to cover a great deal of material in a relatively short period of time in the core subject *History and Culture of the English-speaking Countries*. There is a dearth of suitable textbooks for adult foreign students as few of the books available on the market provide enough information and intellectual depth for non-English speaking university students. By means of the construction of a webpage for the subject we have tried to motivate the students to search and contrast information. The enormous amount of information available on internet has obliged us to establish guidelines so the students can distinguish between sources and learn to question all the data that appears on the web.

General area of interest of this innovation

The market is saturated with dozens of useful books on British and American history but these texts fail to meet the requirements of students studying a degree in English in a non-English-speaking country. The challenge therefore is to try to balance the menu between traditional surveys in history and a more visual approach, using internet sources, taking sufficient care to encourage the students to use these sources critically and not as a substitute for the written text.

1. Objectives

The project undertaken is an attempt to improve the students' learning abilities in the subjects dealing with culture and civilization of the English-speaking countries. We can divide the main objectives into two sections, ongoing objectives and achievement objectives. First, the ongoing aims of the project are the preparation of study guides for the students together with original material specifically designed for the needs of students taking these subjects. Second, and closely linked to the former, a vital aim is the efficient collection and contrastive study of online sources of British and American history. The achievement objectives of this project are the improvement of the way students can handle material connected with the subjects. It is also very important for the students' autonomous learning to increase so they do not rely so heavily on class notes. Finally, the project aims at improving students' capacity to understand, analyze and synthesize texts. The improvement of their written and oral communication skills and their capacity to reason and develop ideas is also crucial to a successful project. The construction of a webpage for the subject is a combination of the three elements described in the ongoing objectives: study guides, original material and a selection of reliable internet sources.

2. Description

During the self-evaluation process undertaken during the academic year 2000-2001, the degree of English Studies (*Filologia Anglesa*) detected a series of weak points, in particular a rather high rate of students not sitting exams in certain subject areas. One of these problem areas were the two compulsory subjects devoted to British and American culture and civilization. It's deduced that the low academic performance in the area of culture and civilization is due to the fact that these subjects are enormously challenging for our students. They reach the second cycle with a good level of spoken and written English but they lack a basic grounding in general knowledge about British and American culture and history. They are obliged to cover a great deal of ground in a relatively short period of time, one academic year, and the textbooks available on the market are not geared to the necessities of adult foreign students. They tend to fall short of the intellectual depth required of non-English speaking university students. Therefore the main aim of this project was seen to be the need for a drastic improvement in the learning conditions of the students in the English Studies degree once they reach the second cycle and are obliged to take two compulsory subjects in the area of culture and civilization. One of the subjects is a core module (*History and Culture of the English-Speaking Countries*) and the other one is obligatory (*American Civilization Through Texts*). The core module is an annual subject, worth nine credits and the obligatory subject is semester-based and is worth six credits. For many years these subjects, both in the present university curriculum and in previous ones, have been approached through standard methods, that is lectures with

students taking notes and the recommendation of one or more textbooks. The traditional university lecture has its strong points as the teacher provides a clear outline of the main points he or she believes the students should know. However, this style of teaching does not encourage student participation, especially with large groups as is the case in the English Studies degree, nor does it promote autonomous learning as students tend to presume that the teacher's notes will be more useful for the purposes of passing the examination. Written examinations are a helpful resource for assessing large groups of students when it is extremely difficult to attend to everybody satisfactorily. Bearing this in mind, it is essential to have a method of teaching that can serve as a guide for the students and at the same time encourage them to compare and contrast material from other sources. The obvious solution to the problem seemed to lie in the choice of a more suitable textbook as a straightforward survey of British and/or American history would provide the students with the stimulus to read further. However, this was in fact the root cause of the problem.

When designing the syllabus for the forthcoming year's civilization subjects, the teacher is inevitably faced year after year with a yet unsolvable dilemma: which text(s) to propose as compulsory reading and/or textbook for the survey courses on history and culture of the English-speaking countries. Obviously the market is saturated with literally dozens of useful books on British and American history but these texts fail to meet the requirements of students studying a degree in English in a non-English-speaking country. The majority of these, invariably scholarly and well designed, textbooks tend to overload the student with statistics, dates and names that end up confusing the non-native reader. American students have received instruction in history at high school and are already familiar with the key events (such as the causes of the American Revolution), leading historical figures such as Thomas Jefferson or Abraham Lincoln) and understand the symbolism conjured up at the mention of the Boston Tea Party, the frontier, the Old South and similar cultural references. History books such as George B. Tindall, & David E. Shi's *America: A Narrative History*, while providing an extremely comprehensive picture of the future United States from its so-called discovery by Europeans, cover far too much material for a course that students have to digest in one semester. Likewise, the somewhat misleadingly entitled *The Brief American Pageant* (2004) fails to cater for the more modest needs of foreign language university students as they are both mammoth volumes containing an extraordinary amount of historical information. Naturally there is a danger of leaning too far in the opposite direction. Textbooks especially intended for non-native speakers of English do provide concise outlines of American history by highlighting just the major events, but at the expense of sacrificing intellectual depth. This kind of book fails to stimulate the adult student as the more restricted content seems to go hand-in-hand with a superficial analysis of major historical changes.

From the above diagnosis of the situation, it seemed obvious that we had two options, either to write our own textbook or else design a course that would combine

the advantages of using standard texts by reputed scholars together with the stimuli provided by digitalized material, previously selected by the teachers, and presented in the form of study guides for each session. Students nowadays are regular consumers of internet, which can be both positive and negative for our purposes. The fact that students are perfectly capable on their own of finding a webpage that deals with, for example, the Irish Famine, does not necessarily mean that they will read it critically. There was a serious danger of an abuse of material readily available on internet as it is obvious that reading a webpage is more entertaining and less time-consuming than reading an article in an academic journal. This urged us to make very careful selections of the sources we would recommend and the websites we would use as examples in class. We needed to prepare our materials very carefully and make a balance between factual content and the analysis of the narratives of historical events. This is not to suggest that we are in any way trying to impose any censorship on our students. In actual fact, we suggest they look at certain websites, such as http://www.omdurman.org/ to see another version of history, albeit in this case a rather Islamophobic one in order to develop their analytic skills. The incorporation of visual elements such as maps, pictures, chronologies and so forth, were intended to show the students that there are several possible historical narratives, not just the written account. With this in mind, we prepared our sessions as PowerPoint presentations so students were exposed to visual material, which was backed up by a series of written texts that they were asked to read in order to compare and contrast the narratives. The webpage we have designed for the subject provides a summary of all the areas covered in the subject together with recommended texts, maps, chronologies, pictures, links and, in some case, music.

3. Methodology

The preparation of study guides for the students formed the basis of this project. An outline of the contents of each lecture was prepared beforehand and posted up on the virtual campus. The study guides were prepared as PowerPoint presentations and contained the following items:

1. Brief summaries of the topic of the lectures e.g. an outline of the main events that triggered the Reformation of the Church in 16th Century England
2. Pictures of the major figures involved e.g. portraits of Henry VIII, Oliver Cromwell, Benjamin Disraeli.
3. Maps featuring the geographical areas under discussion e.g. a map showing the decisive battle fields in the American Revolution
4. Short quotations from relevant literary, cultural or religious texts to illustrate the social repercussions of the event in question e.g. Samuel Pepys' diary entry on the Great Fire of London, W.B. Yeats' poem on the Easter Rising
5. Contemporary issues that can be interpreted differently in the light of early historical incidents e.g., Margaret Thatcher's 1989 poll tax and the 1381 Peasants' Revolt

The students were then encouraged to go to the internet sources and complete their readings. Students were asked to submit essays discussing the interpretation of certain events. The fact that they had been exposed to various different narratives (pictorial, discursive, literary etc) helped them to obtain a global vision of British and American history and not become overwhelmed with data and statistics. We are very much aware of the pitfalls of misusing internet as a teaching and learning tool as students may not take the sessions seriously and feel they are being entertained rather than being taught anything. However, following the guidelines of Wang and Swanson (2005) we believe that the advantages of integrating internet into our regular teaching far outweigh these fears.

3.1. Specific example: The Abolition of the Slave Trade

The methodology used in the preparation of this project can best be illustrated by a specific example: the abolition of the slave trade in the British Empire. The interested student can find numerous web pages devoted to this subject especially recently as 2007 was the bicentenary of the abolition. The problem we are faced with is that, however interesting and worthy this topic is, we cannot devote more than one or, at the utmost, two sessions to it, bearing in mind the nature of the subject in hand. History and Culture of the English-Speaking Countries is a survey subject that covers the whole of British history from the Roman invasion up to the 20th century plus some notions of Britain's role in the creation of an overseas empire in places such as Australia, New Zealand, Canada and South Africa. Thus we are faced with the task of dealing with an extremely important event in British domestic and overseas history, which has repercussions in the multicultural society of contemporary Britain. It is a vital part of British history which should be dealt with in a rigorous and objective manner but the problem is to provide the students with enough basic ideas to understand how the abolition movement evolved and why Britain eventually took the decision to abolish the slave trade in its Empire without losing sight of the cultural importance of this event in Britain nowadays. For this reason, we used a variety of sources to present the topic: an outline of the events that led up to the passing of the abolition bill in Parliament, the work of the major abolitionists and their adversaries, maps of the triangular trade, portraits by well-known artists showing how young black servants became the status symbol of the rich in the 18th century, a painting by the 19th century artist Turner illustrating the dark side of the slave trade, and finally a poem by a black British poet recalling her ancestry and her roots in the Atlantic slave trade [see example]. The combination of discourses helps the students to view the material globally and to make valuable links between economic, political and social histories and to understand the importance of such events in the construction of a British identity. A traditional teaching method often fails to make these useful links as it tends to focus on a linear narrative in detriment of a wider, more comprehensive view.

4. Results

The results of this innovation in the method and content of culture and civilization courses have shown that the students needed guidelines when dealing with internet sources. Despite the fact that they are familiar with the internet they lacked the necessary criteria for making selections and developing a critical attitude towards all the information that is available on the net. This critical capacity has enabled them to carry out class assignments more efficiently as they do not rely too heavily on the first source that they come across. The original material that we have designed specifically for our students' needs has allowed them to filter much of the information that is available in traditional textbooks on British and American history. We needed material that suited the age and intellectual level of our students. It is true that they are not familiar with many cultural and historical references but, at the same time, they are university students who need to find an intellectual stimulant in their reading. Finally, the construction of a webpage which includes the study guides, the internet sources and the original material we have prepared will allow our students to focus more clearly on the areas they need to be familiar with as future specialists in English Studies.

5. Conclusions

With the construction of a webpage for the subject of *History and Culture of the English-Speaking Countries* we have achieved a great improvement in the learning skills of our students. In comparison with students from previous years, we can conclude that the progress of the students who have been exposed to the material and study guides we have prepared is much greater. We have also noticed that the ability to question sources, written and virtual, is much higher and the capacity of the students to analyze specific questions has vastly improved. The preparation of the material, designed with the needs and profile of our students in mind, has encouraged a greater degree of autonomous learning as the dependency on class notes has diminished notably. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, the use of visual material in the classroom has proved a stimulus for the students to make connections with current events and understand the utility of this subject in their degree.

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Interesting links

· http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/british/abolition/ This is a model for any teacher of history and a website we strongly recommend to our students. [2008]
· http://members.aol.com/scothist/scotland.html [2008]
· http://www.scottish-history.com/ These are the kind of websites that students enjoy reading and both have contributed to the format of our own webpage. [2008]
· http://antalya.uab.es/history_culture/ accessed 29-1-2008. This is the webpage we have built up for the subject. It is still in a preliminary phase. [2008]

Keywords

Culture, history, English Studies, Autonomous learning.

Financing

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Acció directa per reforçar l'estudi autònom i semi-presencial dels estudiants en les matèries de cultura de la llicenciatura de Filologia Anglesa mitjançant la creació d'una pàgina web interactiva.

We began on October 1st 2005 and completed work on September 15th 2007.

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Presentation of the working group

The teachers involved in this Project have been teaching culture and civilizations courses for several years. Felicity Hand has specialized in the survey courses in British and American history, Sara Martin in contemporary cultural studies and Laura Gimeno in American civilization. All three members of the team are lecturers in the English Department of the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona.

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Adaptation to the EHEA in the training of professionals in automatic natural language processing

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Abstract

Globalisation has meant an exponential increase in multilingual communication. The technological advances associated with the democratisation of access to information and global knowledge in a multitude of languages require new multilingual instruments that enable us to manage and organise the flow of written and audiovisual documents that are being produced. In order to meet this rising need of multilingual professionals specialised in language training for applications in the different areas of the language industry, we must propose an advanced, eminently multidisciplinary and trans-linguistic education. However, in order to achieve this goal, we must design new teaching strategies that enable us to manage the diversity of initial educational levels and contact languages.

General area of interest of this innovation

The goal of the innovation presented in this article was to improve the management of diversity (both linguistic and initial educational levels) of students in a European Master's in automatic natural language processing (NLP), but beyond the speciality in which it is applied, it might be of interest to any professors who in their respective fields must confront interdisciplinary or multilingual diversity in the classroom, and both manage and foster it.

1. Objectives

The impact of the new information and communication technologies in today's society is linked to widespread access to multilingual information sources that also enable contents generated locally to be disseminated worldwide. This is true to such an extent

that, for example, in its 2002 *Rapport de discussion sur la straté gie d'innovation du Canada*, the government of Canada proposed a strategy called «prioritising the language industries in the national educational strategy» (http://www.innovationstrategy.gc.ca/gol/innovation/site.nsf/fr/in02346.html).

For this reason, in a globalised context, languages have become an essential element, and the training of multilingual professionals specialised in language training for applications in the different areas of the language industry requires an advanced, eminently multidisciplinary and trans-linguistic education

This is the educational profile that defined the design of the European Master's in Automatic Natural Language Processing (NLP), developed in conjunction with other European universities in terms of both the contents of the programme and the teaching methodology. However, in order to achieve this goal we had to design new teaching strategies that would enable us to manage the diversity of different initial educational levels (related to knowledge of both technology and language) and contact languages. This need, which was already accounted for in the initial design of the Master's, became even more clear when the programme was implemented. Indeed, the students that signed up for this programme came from a wide range of degree programmes, while they were also specialised in a wide variety of languages. In order to carry out the prior diagnosis before beginning the project which served as a basis for the improvement plan, we first analysed the distribution by languages and by field of speciality of all the students in the first two years that the Master's was implemented.

With regard to prior education, if we divided the degrees into two large groups of language specialities and technology specialities, we can see that despite the fact that the majority of students came from the languages (in the broad sense, including some specialities in natural language processing but with a predominance of languages), at the start 28.2 % of the students in the the NLP Master's came from technology-oriented degree programmes (IT, engineering, etc.). This was considered quite favourable for the programme, but it required an assessment of how to manage this diversity.

With regard to the languages of the group which was used to make the initial diagnosis, all the students were at least trilingual, but they had fourteen different native languages: Catalan, Spanish, French, English, German, Italian, Russian, Polish, Romanian, Portuguese, Arabic, Japanese, Hungarian and Greek. And, if we bear in mind only the first three languages of each, we saw that the students could work in 24 different language combinations, which is extremely rich for creating multilingual instruments that were to be made. Nevertheless, there was no common language among all the students registered.

As a result, the project's goals included an interest in facilitating the creation of digital and multimedia teaching resources in order to increase the out-of-classroom support actions by the use of ICT and to ensure the quality of the programme in terms of the results of the learning acquired, and in particular students' attainment of the skills related to multi-

lingualism and multidisciplinarity, given the fact that these aspects are not just relevant for the existent target but are also core for the profile of a Master's education.

2.2. Description of the project

2.1. Point of departure

The project presented in this article is part of a sweeping process of methodological reflection on the European Master's in NLP after the first two years it was implemented. The working group on the project organised the work into several different phases and goals.

First of all, we made a self-evaluation of the degree programme as a whole, which ended by drawing up a corresponding report for AQU [Catalan Agency for University Quality Assurance] based on the results of the first two courses on a variety of points, including the academic results and satisfaction of students and professors.

With regard to the academic results, what particularly stood out was that the number of students who did not show up for the evaluation of several courses rose in the second course of the Master's programme compared to the first course and compared to the previous figures from the doctoral programme. Likewise, we also noticed a certain improvements in students' academic performance compared to previous years.

With regard to the second point, we could see that the degree of satisfaction among the students (3.78 points over 5) and the faculty (3.3 points over 4) was quite high overall. However, both groups negatively rated the items related to the teaching spaces and, in the case of the faculty, there was a great deal of dissatisfaction with the external dissemination of information about the programme (1.8 points over 4).

This self-evaluation, which also included a qualitative evaluation, led to a diagnoses of the strong and weak points of the Master's and an improvement plan, which took the following factors into account:

1. The lack of teaching resources for blended learning. Even though the faculty in the programme had made many efforts to adapt to the ECTS methodology, the results of this undertaking had mainly resulted in a significant improvement in the teaching-learning activities in the educational programme, not just the conceptual contents but also the more procedural and attitudinal contents. In contrast, there was a clear and major lack of digital materials that would enable the type of activity done in class to be supplemented by independent learning activities using the new technologies. The creation of this type of digital and multimedia resource was also aimed at offsetting the weak points mentioned by the students on the equipment in the teaching labs.
2. The need to foster exchanges of teaching experiences among the faculty of the different partner universities in order to encourage the convergence of teaching methodologies used at the different universities that were part of the consortium.

3. The wisdom of validating the competences designed (cf. AQU, Tools). In the subsequent coordination meetings, the absence of external validation mechanisms (by academics and professionals) became clear, in terms of both the relevance of this type of academic programme and the effective attainment of the competences it aims to convey.

In the project to improve teaching quality, we worked on these diverse aspects of improvement, although here we only present the points in which the methodological efforts of the faculty team were more heavily required: the design of functionalities for the virtual campus, the creation of multimedia material for independent, semi-independent or collaborative study among peers, and the design of pedagogical activities to foster students' multilingualism and multidisciplinarity.

3. Methodology

From the organisational standpoint, the project presented in this article had to set up a series of actions, means and resources aimed primarily at implementing a virtual environment that would foster the support of learning, encourage the development of teaching materials with ICTs and design pedagogical activities that would foster multilingualism and multi-disciplinarity.

First, to resolve the difficulties generated by the initial multilingualism and multidisciplinarity, we believed that we had to create a specific virtual space for the Master's programme that would facilitate interaction and the exchange of documents and materials among students and between students and professors, in particular for the students and professors not just of the UAB but also, in a later phase, for all the partner universities. Therefore, with the help of the Office of Interactive Autonomous Teaching (OAID) of the UAB, we designed and made a teaching platform that has a public area presenting the Master's and a restricted area that has the usual functionalities of a virtual campus (teaching materials, file management, turning in projects, email, news and notices), yet also functionalities such as forums in large and small groups, for collaborative work and for self-evaluation. We should stress that this restricted area is managed by the programme itself, which enables us to create groups and subgroups, create transversal, inter-course activities and include the contributions by the other partner universities.

Secondly, based on the existence of a teaching platform tailor-made for the Master's programme, the faculty of the Master's started to draw up specific materials for the different courses, using and taking advantage of the new information and communication technologies. Indeed, when we started the project, this type of material only existed for one of the Master's courses. We have tried to ensure that this material follows the principles of fostering student autonomy, that it includes not just contents but also educational activities aimed at resolving problems and collaborative work with peers. We should also stress that support materials were developed for transversal learning in several different courses within the Master's programme.

In order to foster the multinlingualism of the students and minimise the difficulties they might encounter in understanding classes, the literature and the materials, conducted two specific actions. First of all, we decided to use the GALANET teaching platform for inter-comprehension among the Romance languages (http://www.galanet.eu), which includes a space of language resources in Spanish, French, Italian and Portuguese, along with an independent learning area to help students understand an unfamiliar related language, as well as to help speakers of different related languages to understand each other. We also held an interactive training session among groups of students from four different languages from around the world which asked them to complete a task together (write a press release on a subject agreed upon in all four languages) collaboratively among the different language groups of the students, which involves understanding written and oral documents in all four languages.

Likewise, we encouraged the inclusion of a learning activity in some of the Master's courses that consists of each student searching for, for each of the courses involved, an introductory bibliography of three articles in three different languages (native language, a second language and an unknown language but one that is related to the student's languages), making an oral summary of them in the language of their choice (Catalan, Spanish, French, Italian, Portuguese or English) in front of their classmates, explaining it in such a way that they can understand it. The students have to take notes and make a written summary (in any of the same languages) of all the articles based on their classmates' presentations (in different languages).

Finally, as mentioned above, multidisciplinarity is present at three levels in the NLP Master's: in the discipline of automatic natural language processing itself, in the profile of the training, which includes both linguistic and technological contents and procedures, and in the students' educational background.

This is a considerable wealth, but it also means resolving the difficulties derived from such diversity. The goal is to empower students in each of the specialities in the skills of the other, as well as to train them to work on multidisciplinary teams to resolve the same problem cooperatively, that is, not just working in groups but also finding compatible procedures.

In order to foster this multidisciplinarity not just in the contents but also in the practical aspects, which is essential in the working world, we conducted two actions.

First, we encouraged the creation of educational activities that affect more than one course in order to lower the atomisation of the contents and procedures, and secondly we designed multidisciplinary problems that the students have to resolve in small groups made up of students from educational backgrounds in both technologies and languages.

4. Results
The results of the project to improve the teaching quality were mainly seen in three areas: first, in the quantity (and quality) of the teaching materials to support learning and peer

cooperative activities and activities for working groups, secondly in the increase in the students' functional multilingualism, and finally in fostering multidisciplinarity.

The results we can present here affect the changes that took place between the first two courses in the NLP Master's (2004-06) and the third course (2006-07), in which some of the innovations mentioned above were applied.

4.1. Quantity (and quality) of the teaching materials to support learning

We can evaluate the quality and quantity of the multimedia teaching materials to support learning according to the following criteria: a) the existence (or not) of materials for each of the courses in the programme; b) the total number of materials in all the courses combined; c) the existence (or not) of activities with an NLP approach for each course; and d) the existence (or not) of group work activities.

As can be seen in Figure 1, the evolution over the three-year period is considerable in terms of both the number of courses that have multimedia support activities (one until 2005-06 vs. ten in 2006-07) and the total number of materials (fewer than ten until 2005-06 vs. more than 30 in 2006-07).

Figure 1. Number of courses with multimedia support activities
and total number of materials.
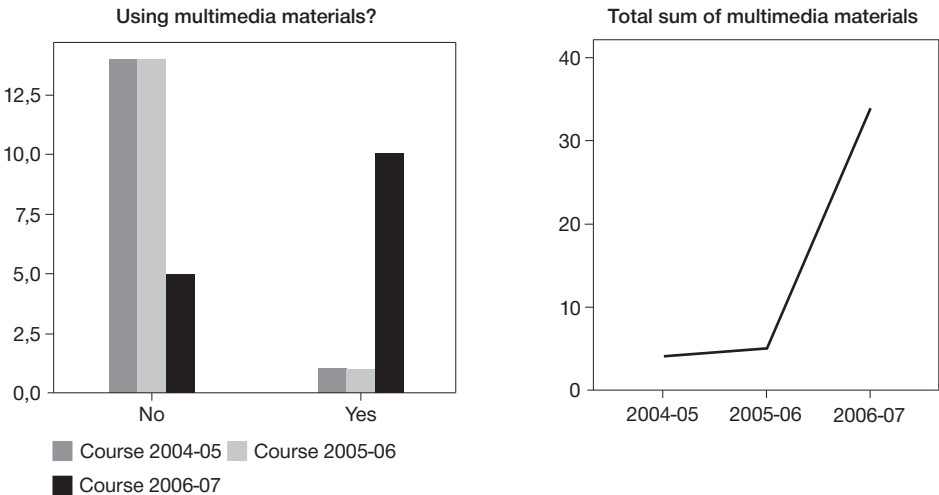
With regard to the presence or absence of pedagogical activities involving problem-solving or group work, we can also see that they have at least tripled in academic year 2006-07, to the extent that all the courses now have NLP activities and more than 85% include group work activities.

Figure 2. Number of courses with NLP activities and group work activities.
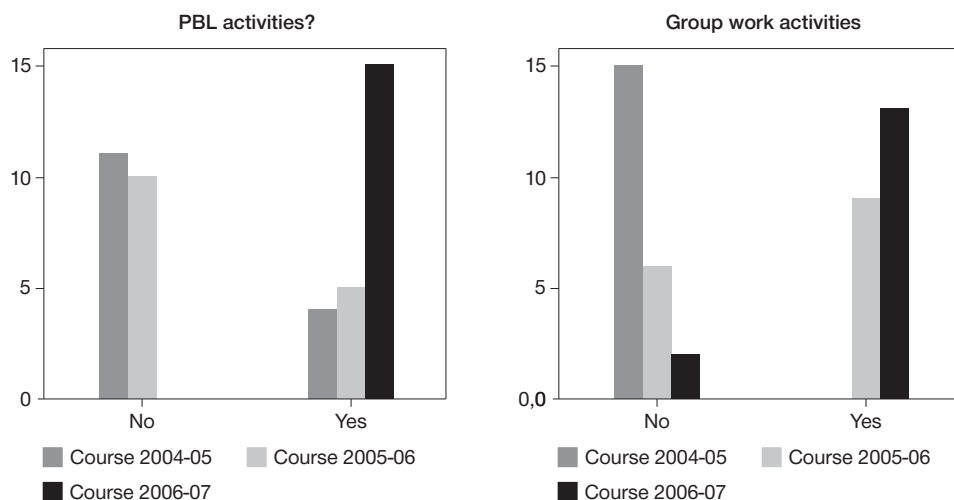
4.2. Increase in students' functional multilingualism

In view of our students' linguistic diversity, we have chosen two indicators on improvement in the innovation: a) the number of modules that include specific activities to foster multilingualism (generally speaking, by means of activities that encourage mutual comprehension among related languages) and b) not the number of languages our students are capable of understanding orally and in writing, but the number of languages in which each student on average has had to do the evaluated oral and written comprehension activities. The results can be seen in Figure 3. The number of courses that include specific activities has multiplied twofold in the past academic year, and the number of languages that each student worked on in written comprehension rose significantly (Sig.=.000) in recent years (2004-05: 2.21; 2005-06: 2.90 and 2006-07: 3.39). With regard to oral comprehension, we have seen an even more pronounced rise (2004-05: 2.00; 2005-06: 2.39 and 2006-07: 3.62; Sig.=.000).

4.3. Fostering students' multidisciplinarity

In order to evaluate the effect of the actions undertaken to foster students' interdisciplinarity, we adopted the indicator on the number of courses that have included specific activities involving working in interdisciplinary groups. In the majority of cases, this involved problem solving which requires both technological and language skills at the same time. The results are shown in Figure 4, in which we can see that more than 85% of the courses have included this type of specific activity.

Figure 3. Number of courses with specific activities to foster multilingualism and number of languages used by each student on average in written and oral comprehension.
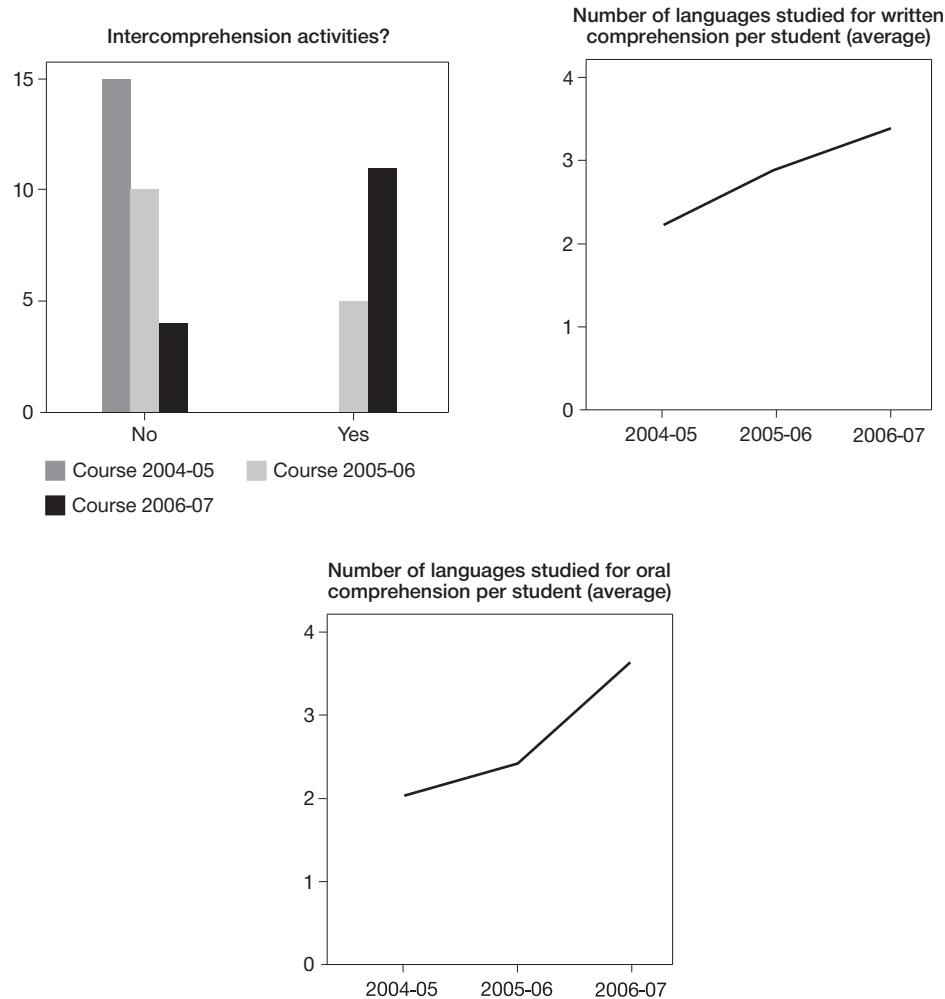
5. Conclusions

The preliminary results show some interesting headway from the project to improve the teaching quality for the NLP Master's programme. First of all, we can see that the faculty has significantly bolstered the amount of intra- and inter-course teaching materials and has generally included teaching activities involving problem-solving, interdisciplinary group work and students' functional multilingualism. By the end of the academic year, the professors who had included these aspects into their teaching practice believed that when they finished the programme the students were able to read litera-

Figure 4. Number of courses with specific activities to foster students' interdisciplinarity.
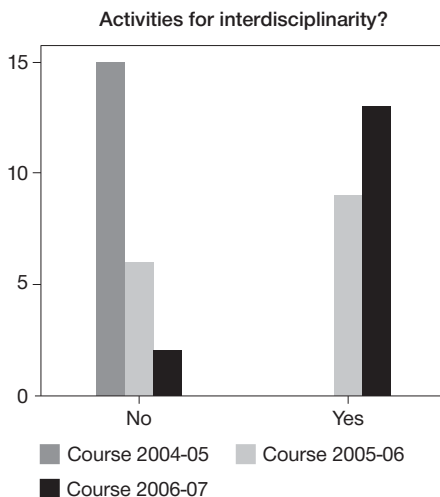
ture in at least four different languages, make oral presentations in public in languages other than their own, and help to pose and solve practical problems with people from fields quite different to their own.

Just as in the preceding years, at the end of the academic year we administered a student satisfaction survey. The most highly rated items (all over 4.1/5) after the availability of the faculty, were, in order, the items on: a) working in interdisciplinary and international teams; b) how the professors managed the multilingualism; c) the teaching materials; and d) the use of a specific syllabus. These results were confirmed by the responses to a qualitative question on the survey, namely «What did you like the best about the NLP Master's?» The aspects that students mentioned the most often were, in order of importance, «the new way of teaching» (79 % of the students), the availability of the faculty (58 %), the linguistic diversity and overcoming the initial language challenges (43 %), the multidisciplinary approach (42 %) and the availability of teaching materials for everyone (29 %), in addition to other more minority responses.

These results show that if the entire team of professors includes in their teaching transversal training activities specifically designed to manage multilingualism and the heterogeneity of students' educational backgrounds by collaborative peer assignments, methodological tools and virtual resources, the difficulties observed initially can be considerably overcome, and interaction and the personal and educational enrichment of the students can be attained, which is shown in a high degree of satisfaction. However, we should also stress that this requires the involvement not just of the team of professors but also the group of students.

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Interesting links

· http://www.galanet.eu [1-3-2003]
· http://www.innovationstrategy.gc.ca/gol/innovation/site.nsf/fr/in02346.html [1-3-2003]
· http://www.eurocomcenter.com/index2.php?lang=fr [1-3-2003]

Keywords

Managing diversity, multilingualism, plurilingualism, intercomprehension

Financing

Supplementary materials on the CD-ROM

Demonstration of the GALANET website: virtual tour of the phases in the process of publishing a press file.

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Presentation of the working group

The authors of the project belong to the laboratory on Phonetics, Lexicology and Semantics (*fLexSem*) of the Department of French and Romance Languages and Literatures at the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona. Each one in their speciality (prosody and lexicography) has been interested for some time in the new teaching-learning approaches for foreign languages, and more specifically the intercomprehension of Romance languages.

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Interactive multimedia course aimed at independent learning of prosody

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Abstract

In view of the importance of information and communication technologies in today's society and the process of adapting educational programmes to the European Higher Education Area in which universities are enmeshed, there is a need for new ways of learning which make both independent study and dealing with the subjects in both classroom and out-of-classroom settings possible. The purpose of this project is to create an interactive, multimedia theoretical-practical website in which students can learn about prosody (with information, literature, links, image and sound documents analysed and commented, exercises and self-tests). The goal is for the contents to cover the needs of two groups: those who want to embark on basic research in linguistics, and those who want to improve their communication skills. The results of the introduction of this innovation as a support to the classroom work are promising from both the quantitative and qualitative standpoint.

General area of interest of this innovation

The website PROSODIA is targeted at students of phonetics and oral expressions who are interested in prosodic analysis of utterances, either at the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona or other universities. Given the fact that this encourages independent learning and blended learning, it can contribute to facilitating the adaptation of the courses to the European Higher Education Area. Its use in blended learning environments, especially when combined with active monitoring and evaluation methods, can help students profit more from the course and can have an impact on their academic performance (see, among others, the document by the European Commission, 2000 and the monograph by Pérez Batista and Mestre, 2007).

1. Objectives

The purpose of the project is to create an interactive multimedia theoretical-practical website in which students can learn about prosody (with information, literature, links, image and sound documents analysed and commented, exercises and self-tests). With it, we hope to provide students with a point of support in their work, contribute to effective time management in bimodal or hybrid environments (using blended learning) and improve academic performance. The overarching goal is for students to develop their ability to learn independently, gain experience in selecting relevant information appropriate for the goals, improve their knowledge of the subject and fine-tune their mastery of the technology.

2. Description of the project

With this project we aim to alleviate the scarcity of materials that examine prosody (not just intonation) on the Internet, with which students who wish may make progress in learning the contents while also analysing speech samples and doing exercises. The website can be useful in language and humanities programmes, and in any degree programme in which prosody must be analysed. It is considered especially apt for courses on oral expression and phonetics. For example, a humanities student whose goal is oral expression is perfectly able to familiarise himself with the basic notions that enable them to interpret the graphs and analyses provided in order to place them in relation to his own communicative purposes. They would likely be interested in studying lecture samples and discussing – among other relevant aspects – the prosodic details of elocution. A language student, on the other hand, might be interested in the relationship between acoustic variation and the determination of phonological units and in the perceptive validity of the results of the acoustic experiments. Professors and students can choose the most appropriate information according to their needs, level and the degree of detail they need to examine the subject in each course.

The content of the website is organised into ten topics. Each one states the goals and the sub-topics, offers progress exercises and provides a series of references on both paper and Internet. The topics are explained by using hypertext so that students can create their own line of reading depending on their interests and needs. At the end of the topics, self-evaluation exercises are available. Once the response is chosen, students receive explanations that can help them to understand why the answer is regarded as «correct» or not. The goal is to ensure that learning takes place in this phase as well. The exercises were prepared with the help of the interactive programme *Hot Potatoes* (developed by Stewart Arneil and Martin Holmes at the University of Victoria).

Each of the versions of the website which have been developed, and which are the natural continuation of an endeavour begun some time ago (de-la-Mota, 2004), were made available to students in case they might be somehow useful as a complement to the classroom, despite the fact that they contained materials under construction. In

this article we shall focus on the results from the first term in academic year 2007-2008, after introducing the innovation in a course devoted to phonetics and phonology.

3. Methodology

3.1. The design of the web pages, texts and illustrations

The contents are presented in a series of informative files based on the use of hypertexts and designed, in terms of both their format and length, taking into account the fact that they should facilitate reading and working from a computer screen. Care was taken with everything from the font style to the amount of information that should be included in a given page. Each of the written texts, graphs, sounds and videos included on the website have a conceptual function, plus they also contribute to ensuring that the explanations are more user-friendly. We can illustrate this with several examples. *Time of Silence* is a novel that contains an interesting written passage which stands out for the value of the pauses for the speakers. Rhythmic expressions can be described in different aspects of life, of art. One example that shows us rhythm in music and dance is the performance «Castrati» by the National Dance Company. Students can follow this link and see a brief video. Naturally, gymnastics can also be a good example of rhythm. In Figure 1, you can see the distribution of bodies, batons and hoops.

Figure 1. Batons and hoops. Example 1. Olyarg Banner.

3.2. Speech samples

Some voice files included on the website come from a corpus of research experiments and high quality recordings made prior to this project. However, many of the voice and video samples that can be seen have been created just for the project. The recordings were done in silence, mainly in the Bleacher Room, the Auditorium and the soundproof chamber in the Faculty of Philosophy & Arts at the UAB. The following equipment was used:

1. A *lavalier* microphone from a SHURE WL185 condenser and a SHURE PGX4 receiver.

2. A MicroTrack 24/96 digital recorder.
3. A Panasonic NV-GS230 video camera and a Starblitz TS-360 tripod.
    For the editing, processing and signal analysis, the following programmes were used:
1. *Audacity. The Free, Cross-Platform Sound Editor.*
2. *Praat: doing phonetics by computer,* a complete, advanced acoustic analysis programme developed by Paul Boersma and David Weenink of the Institute of Phonetic Sciences at the University of Amsterdam.
3. *Windows Movie Maker, Video editing software package.* Microsoft.

3.3. The files with speech fragments

In the case of the set of samples that are commented on in detail, each of the sequences has a specific website: a «file» where you can listen to the voice and see the film of when the fragment was produced, examine the graph showing the acoustic analysis and read a brief comment. The files can be see both on the same page and in an expanded version on a different page. All the speech fragments can be downloaded for students to analyse from their own computer, if they want.

The acoustic analysis was performed with the *Praat* programme. Each graph includes several different illustrations of the sound wave: the oscillogram, the spectrogram, the fundamental frequency contour and the intensity curve, so that the melodic evolution and difference between loud and soft sounds can be studied easily. The website also contains the segmentation into phonetic syllables and the transcription (Figure 2).

Figure 2. Oscillogram, spectrogram, fundamental frequency contour and a phonetic transcription of the sequence «Juan dice que lo resuelva él»
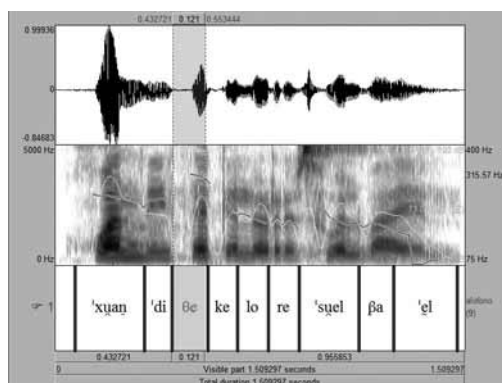
The file obtained by integrating all this information can be seen in Figure 3.

Figure 3. File on the sequence, «¡Marina, que llegamos tarde!»

3.4. Technical aspects of the website

PROSODIA is an interactive website written in PHP language on the Wordpress platform. MySQL is used as the database server. Both the programming language and the database are open source technologies. The website is compatible with all browsers and puts a premium on user-friendliness and downloading speed, essential components for all online projects.

4. Results

The first result of the project is the existence of the website, which is constantly undergoing revisions. The second results is the effect that the innovation might have on student learning. In order to have a point of reference that enables us to assess the impact of the teaching innovations undertaken, we shall present the quantitative and qualitative data on a first-year course taught in the first term in the Spanish Language and Literature programme, Spanish Language I, a compulsory core course. This course is devoted to the phonetic analysis of the language, including both the sounds and the prosody.

During academic year 2007-2008, students were given regular access to Internet, to the website developed, to the analysis programmes and to other electronic materials, as all the sessions were held in the computer classroom in the Faculty of Philosophy & Arts. For the evaluation, the students had two possibilities: either a single exam (an option that ultimately no students chose) or continuous assessment based on a supervised team project and an individual portfolio, in which students compiled the topics, resolved exercises, expanded on the essential points with literature, and maturely reflected on what they had learned, taking note of the skills they had acquired, the difficulties encountered and how they were resolved, their accomplishments and weaknesses, and the amount of time they spent on the topic and their expectations.

The students spent 15 classroom hours studying prosody. The first few sessions were used to introduce the topic and present the organisation and contents of the website, which then remained available in case students wanted to use it later on as a support and check it outside class time, just as they tend to do with the recommended literature. The other classroom sessions were used to discuss the topics, answer questions and do exercises using the materials on the website, both individually and cooperatively. The learning portfolio was turned in three weeks after the topic was finished.

Below are some of the indicators that enable us to assess the impact of the website on student learning: the satisfaction surveys, the assessments in the portfolios, the results of the SEEQ questionnaire on the teacher's performance, the analysis of the use of the website and academic performance.

4.1. Satisfaction surveys

With the goal of finding out students' perception of the quality and usefulness of the PROSODIA website, to obtain indicators on their degree of satisfaction, and to reveal the aspects that needed improvement, we administered a survey. The possible responses were: «not at all», «very little», «somewhat», «quite a bit» and «a lot». To the question «Do you think the PROSODIA website meets your needs?», 52.63 % responded «quite a bit», 42.11 % «a lot» and 5.26 % «somewhat». To the item «The PROSODIA website has helped me to learn», 68.42 % answered «quite a bit», 26.32 % responded «a lot» and 5.26 % said «somewhat». When asked about the interactivity of the website: «Do you think that the comments made on the answers in the self-evaluation exercises contributed to your learning?», 47.37 % said «quite a bit», 31.58 % answered «a lot» and 21.05 % said «somewhat». And the organisation of the website was even more highly rated, if possible. To the question «Do you think the website is well-organised? Can you find information easily?» 63.16 % answered «a lot», 31.58 % said «quite a bit» and 5.26 % said «somewhat» (see Figure 4).

The results of the surveys are positive and stand as an indicator of quality. Based on the information available, we can consider the most highly rated aspects and introduce new improvements.

4.2. Assessments in the portfolios

Learning portfolios were used as a methodological strategy to foster autonomous, reflective and meaningful learning during the course. They were not envisaged as a mere compilation of projects, rather as a re-creation or re-interpretation of students' knowledge and as a reflection of the evolving development of the skills taught in the course. Among the many aspects they deal with, students shared their opinion on the PROSODIA website and its impact on their learning: «I think it's a very useful resource, well-organised and especially comprehensive» (S.H.) and «It helped me to understand the grasp concepts that hadn't been covered in class before. It is clearly organised, its contents are precise but comprehensive and the design is simple and clear, even though

Figure 4. Degree of satisfaction with: meets needs (necesidades), helps students learning (aprendizaje), usefulness of interactive comments (interactividad) and organisation of the website (estructura).
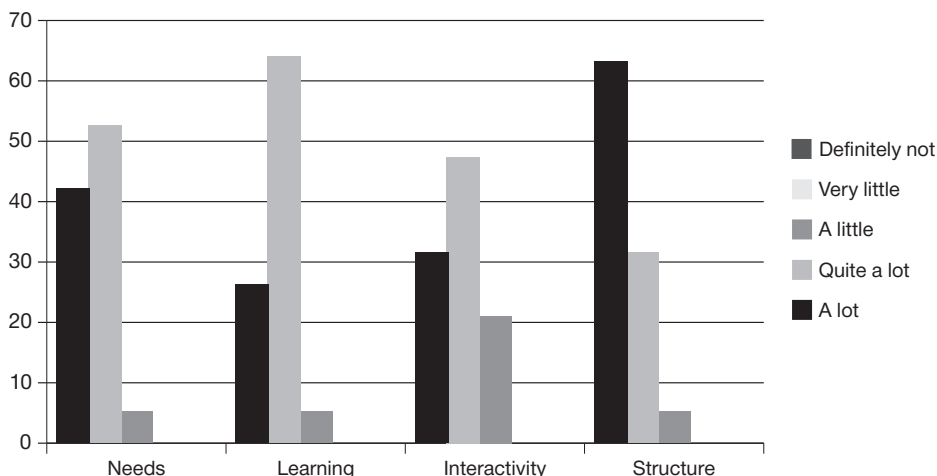
the result of the website is being developed» (M.R.). «It is easy to use, has a simple design that helps people who are not very familiar with computers to not have too many problems using it. I think that the content is well explained and told step by step, this helps a lot when understanding the syllabus.» (A.G.).

### 4.3. The SEEQ (Student Evaluations of Educational Quality) questionnaire

The SEEQ questionnaire on teacher performance, which is regarded as the standard instrument for evaluating teaching worldwide, provides information on a variety of factors: learning, enthusiasm, organisation, interaction with the group, personal attitude, content, tests and difficulty of the workload. Each factor is rated on a scale of one to five: the top score is five. At the end of the term, the responses to the questions most directly related to the materials used during the course, which therefore might include the assessment of the website, were very positive.

10. The course material was well prepared and carefully explained.	4.2 (d.t. 0.77)
29. The literature, additional material, assignments, etc., contributed to improving the assessment and comprehension of the material.	4.1 (d.t. 0.64)

4.4. Analysis of the website

Use of the website was monitored using *Google Analytics*. Figure 5 shows data from the period falling between the 14th of January and the 17th of February 2008.

Figure 5. Analysis of the traffic generated by the PROSODIA website between the 14th of January and the 17th of February 2008. Data obtained using the web analysis programme Google Analytics.
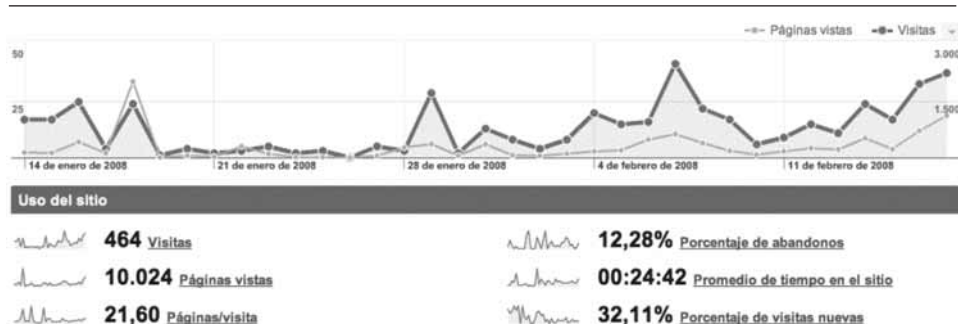
During this period there were 464 visits, which generated 10,024 pages visited, with an average of 21.6 pages consulted on each visit. This figure, along with the figure on the average length of the visit, 24 minutes and 42 seconds, shows that users easily navigate through the website and that they consider the materials published there worth using. Likewise, the website also had several intense days of activity, actually recording more than 1,000 pages visited on a single day.

4.5. Academic performance

In order to check whether the academic performance attained was different from before, we made a comparison between the marks in the first course held in academic year 2007-08 and those from the courses held in 2000-01 and 2002-03, years when the theoretical part of one group in the course was also taught by the professor in charge of this innovation. At that time, even though the students did several different projects in the course, they were evaluated with a single exam, and all the theoretical classes were held in a conventional classroom.

The number of students who showed up for the exams rose in the year of the innovation. In academic year 2000-01, 55.36 % of the students registered showed up for the exams, while in 2002-04 57 % showed up and in 2007-08 65.71 % showed up. With the exception of one case, the students who did not show up for the exam had not attended class and were not following the course. The success rate was very positively affected by this innovation. In the first course held in 2000-2001, 41.94 % of the students who showed up for the exam passed it, and in 2002-03 55.55 % did the same. In academic year 2007-08, 95.65 % of the students passed the exam.

In terms of the marks earned, in the first course in 2000-01, 22.58 % passed with an E or D according to the ECTS grading scale, while in academic year 2002-03 22.22 % did. In academic year 2000-01, 16.13 % earned a C or B according to the ECTS grading scale, while in academic year 2002-03 25.92 % did. In academic year 2000-01, 2.32 % earned an A according to the ECTS grading scale, while in academic year 2002-03 7.4 % did. In academic year 2000-01, 58.06 % of the students failed the class in the first round, and 2002-03 somewhat fewer, 44.44 %, did. However, during the first round of academic year 2007-08, 34.78 % of the students who showed up for the exam passed with an E or D according to the ECTS grading scale, 39.13 % earned a C or B, and 21.74 % earned an A (40 % of which passed with honours). The percentage of failures is also much lower: just 4.35 %. This shows a very pronounced quantitative and qualitative improvement after the innovation. Not only did more students show up for the exams, more of them passed and they passed the course with higher marks.

5. Conclusions

The PROSODIA website can be considered yet another tool to help in the teaching and learning process which can contribute to fostering independent work among students which, in blended learning environments, can be used as a complement as long as its use is guided by the goals of the course and the topics being addressed. After introducing this innovation in a first-year course on the phonetic study of the language in which we encouraged the use of technology in the classroom and used active teaching and evaluation methods, we could see first that students were satisfied with the organisation and contents of the materials on the website and secondly that the teaching methodology was effective, as reflected in the academic performance attained. Having the student evaluations is an engine for improvement that will unquestionably contribute to more accurately focusing the future changes in the website in terms of both design and content.

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Interesting links
Readers can get an idea of the website by looking at the materials available at: http://hipatia.uab.cat/prosodia [2008]

Keywords
virtual resources, blended learning, partial classroom learning, independent learning, prosody, language.

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Supplementary materials on the CD-ROM
Video showing a sample of the materials found on the course website and the procedure to be followed.

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Presentation of the project leader and the working group
Carme de-la-Mota, who holds a PhD in Spanish Language and Literature and a Bachelor's in Catalan Language and Literature, and is a Full Professor of Spanish. Her research is devoted to studying oral language, especially the prosodic description of speech. She has researched for the Reference Centre in Linguistic Engineering (CREL) of the Generalitat de Catalunya and has worked on contracts with companies like Telefonica I+D, CSELT (currently Telecom Italia Lab) and Loquendo. Montserrat Marquina, who holds a Bachelor's in Spanish Language and Literature and Catalan Language and Literature and a diploma from the *Graduate Programme on Linguistic Correction and Quality*, has worked for Telefónica I+D and the Barcelona Media Foundation on projects related to speech technologies. Pere Rovira holds a Bachelor's in Physics from the Universitat de Barcelona, a graduate degree in the Digital Economy from the

University of California, Berkeley, and a Master's in Information Systems from the London School of Economics. He was director of operations at Anuntis Segundamano, is specialised in web analytics and online marketing, and is in charge of www.webanalytics.es.

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Improving the teaching methodology and evaluation of learning the course on «Latin and Classical Culture»

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Abstract

The goal of this study is to offer the university community the outcome of two years of research in the Humanities. A website is being developed that includes theoretical contents, audiovisual materials, batteries of self-correcting questions and more. The course for which this portal was created is a core course in the first year of the Humanities degree programme; however, the resulting product can be extrapolated to the compulsory first-year Latin course taught in all the language and literature degree programmes at the UAB, with the exception of English, and to some of the courses from the first cycle in the Classical Languages and Literatures degree programme. This project covers the need to organise blended learning courses in order to capture the interest of a segment of the population which, because of time problems, cannot base their education solely on classroom learning, but who do not resign themselves to solely distance education. It can also be of aid to students who at certain points in a given course, for a variety of possible reasons, cannot attend class regularly.

General area of interest of this innovation

These materials might be of interest to faculty teaching the classical languages, and in general to any professor interested in classical culture. The contents are mainly designed to support the teaching of first-cycle courses in the Faculty of Philosophy and Arts, although they can also be used by secondary and baccalaureate teachers as well.

1. Introduction

The adaptation of today's university programmes to the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) can serve as an incentive to reflect on the learning strategies that

foster the development of the skills inherent to each subject. The degree in Humanities from the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona (UAB), where the first-year core course in *Latin and Classical Culture* (12 standardised credits = 9 ECTS credits) is taught, participated in the Pilot Plan implemented in academic year 2004-05 with the Department of Universities, Research and the Information Society (DURSI) of the Generalitat de Catalunya.

The new system poses a huge challenge not just for the faculty but also for the students, because it means a shift from the traditional concept of teaching based on classroom hours (of teaching) to a concept focused on student learning and a new way of calculating the academic workload. Students are estimated to work around 1,600 hours per academic year, that is, 40 hours a week for 40 weeks. Around 25-30 hours of work are equivalent to one credit in the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS), and the 1,600 hours estimated per academic year are equivalent to 60 credits. At the UAB, one ECTS credit is equivalent to around 25 hours of student work. After reaching 180 ECTS credits, students may earn the degree in Humanities.

Far from being stressful, the new European Higher Education Area should be yet another pretext for continuing our reflection on goals, methods and outcomes.

1.1. Background in teaching innovation

The study presented in this article is part of a tradition that is unique to the area of Latin Language and Literature at that UAB, as a hallmark of research into teaching Latin in Catalonia and Spain. The first attempts to improve students' learning of the Latin language date back to 1976, with the experimentation with learning material that was quite novel back then, which was ultimately published and disseminated by the UAB's ICE in two volumes: *Introduction to Latin I* (Bellaterra 1982) and Introduction to Latin 2 (Bellaterra 1983).

Several years later, based on the need to have new materials that were appropriate for students who had received their baccalaureate education under the new LOGSE system, a new book was published, *Introduction to the Latin Language* (Bellaterra 1998), which is still used in all the first-year classes (Classical, Catalan, French and Spanish Languages and Literatures degree programmes) in the Faculty of Philosophy & Arts. This proposal meant an educational transposition of some of the basic principles of functional linguistics to teaching Latin.

In 2000 the UAB's new Latin Language and Literature portal was launched, devoted to teaching Latin from the different standpoints: grammar, syntax, games and film: http://antalya.uab.es/pcano/aulatin.

2. Objectives

The goals proposed with the design of the educational web pages for the course «Latin and Classical Culture» were the following:

1. To adapt the contents of this core course to the interests of students in the Humanities degree programme and to the new directives coming from the new higher education framework.
2. To provide students with interactive materials based on independent learning, self-evaluation and distance tutoring.
3. To achieve an improvement in first-year students' learning outcomes.
4. To evaluate certain skills, including reflective and critical reasoning, the ability to express oneself orally and in writing, the capacity for teamwork, etc. by means of small seminars or course portfolios, yet without discarding other ways of evaluating learning, such as essays or expositions of topics, open-book tests, objective or multiple-choice tests, oral tests, practical tests, tutorials, etc.

2.1. Description of the course: Latin and Classical Culture

This is a first-year core course for 12 standardised credits (= 9 ECTS credits = 225 hours of student work) which is taught in the Humanities degree programme.

Because of the transversal nature of this degree programme and the conditions for being admitted to this programme, the students registered in it come from a wide variety of backgrounds:

1. Students from the Humanities baccalaureate – which are the ones with the educational background most closely related to the contents of the course.
2. Students from the Social Sciences baccalaureate – who have received very little or no education in knowledge of the Greco-Roman world.
3. Students who have taken the university entrance exams for individuals over the age of 25 – whose level of maturity and culture are generally higher, yet who tend to be weak in specific knowledge of the field; we should also mention that this group has risen considerably in the past few academic years.
4. Students with a diploma-level humanities or science degrees who are embarking on the second cycle but have to take this course as part of their supplementary education.

The course aims to give students the keys to understanding Greco-Roman civilisation as a whole and, to the extent possible, the Latin language. With this goal in mind, its backbone is a sweeping study of the Roman culture framed in its historical contents and with a special emphasis on studying the ancient literary genres and conveying the Latin language and ancient culture in the West.

By the end of this course, students should be able to:

- Comment on a text by applying the historical, institutional, literary and cultural knowledge acquired about Roman civilisation – and perhaps Greek civilisation.
- Comment on excerpts from the main Latin literary genres, relating them to their author and pointing out their main features.
- Explain the process how the classical languages and cultures were transmitted, especially relating it to textual transmission and to the shift from Latin to the Romance languages.

- Identify the presence of the classical tradition in European literature, in the fine arts, music, etc., based on the cases studied.
- Interpret the basic meaning of a Latin text based on their knowledge of the Romance languages and a series of guide questions.

2.1.1. Teaching-learning methodologies

The course includes both theoretical sessions and seminars, which enable us to make an in-depth analysis of not just the required readings but also the audiovisual material that is used to support the explanation of the contents.

Students have to pass three written tests with objective questions, essays and text commentaries. They must also develop an individual course project (to be presented to the group, as they are shared topics, albeit with a wide variety of approaches) that is supervised by the professor.

2.1.2. Evaluation

Table 1. Evaluation methods used according to activity

Procedure	Evaluation criteria	Weight
Oral presentation of the written project	Proper oral expression. The ability to work in a team and interpersonal skills.	10 %
Written project	Assessment of the written project (coherence, proper expression, use of bibliographic tools, originality)	30 % (10 % March + 20 % May)
3 written tests	Knowledge Analytical skills Ability to synthesise	60 % (20+20+20)

3. Description of the project

3.1. The design of the educational web pages of the course «Latin and Classical Culture»

Thanks to the revolution brought about in recent years by the introduction of information and communication technologies (ICTs) into teaching, not only have they fostered distance education but they have also begun to be combined with the traditional teaching-learning system with virtual work outside the classroom. There is a gradation from a totally classroom-based classroom to intermediate methods (blended learning) to learning that is conducted totally virtually.

The educational web pages presented in this article serve to complement the classroom course, and they were planned and designed with this purpose in mind. The goal is not to turn the course into a virtual course – presence in the classroom is crucial, as

we are, after all, at a classroom-based university – but to offer support materials for all the students, and particularly for those who, for a variety of reasons, cannot attend class at given points in the course. With this system, we contribute to improving the quality of the teaching.

The materials included in these web pages are divided into three different sections:

1. They contain much of the theoretical contents covered in class (in teacher-led classes or in presentations in small seminars), always accompanied by the corresponding audiovisual material.

2. They include, as complements to the contents, a range of texts that are somehow representative as a reflection of each writer's style and their way of understanding and practising literary creation. The translation into Catalan or Spanish is always attached because the students' level does not usually enable them to get a profound understanding of the original. In the classroom, the role of the professor is limited to helping the translation process. In-depth translations of texts are relegated to secondary status in view of the students' backgrounds, in that none of them are pursuing language training per se.

3. For each of the subjects, there are several objective tests so that students may have material that can be used for self-evaluation after each section. Therefore, students are empowered to monitor their own learning, as from now on the goal is for students to become active stakeholders in their learning and evaluation process. These tests are similar to the ones that are later included in the objective tests.

The design of the web pages has the following aims.

- For students to improve their knowledge of the course based on the creation of interactive materials founded upon independent learning, self-assessment and distance tutoring.
- Based on alternative evaluation methods, such as small seminars and especially the portfolio system, for students to improve four basic transversal skills: oral and written expression, the capacity for teamwork and the ability to find information using the new technologies.
- In short, for students' outcomes to improve and for the number of students who drop out of the course to fall.

The web pages are found at the following URL: http://claudia.uab.cat:81 (2008). In many cases, to avoid possible legal problems, users are required to identify themselves. The materials included on these web pages are accessible to all students after they provide a user name and a password. They can also be used in two courses, the core and compulsory courses, respectively, from the degree in Classical Languages and Literatures: «Latin Language and Literature I» and «Introduction to Latin Literary Texts» and in the core course «Latin», which are taught in the first year in all the language programmes with the exception of English.

## 4. Academic results in recent years

During the first two years of adaptation to the EHEA, we could see that more students have passed the course, although we have not managed to significantly lower the number of students who drop out.

Below are the results in each academic year:

· Academic year 2002- 03

During academic year 2002- 03, of the 85.1 % of the students who remained in the course, 68.5 % passed it, and 18.5 % did not sit for the final exams (Graph 1).

Graph 1. Figures from academic year 2002-03, comparison of the percentages of students who did and did not finish the course.
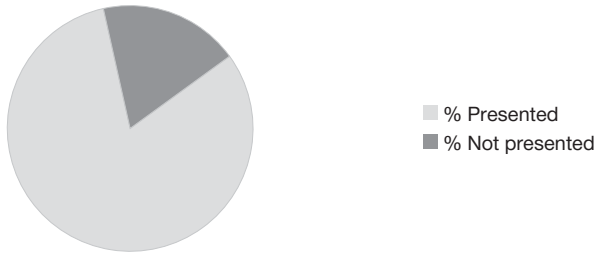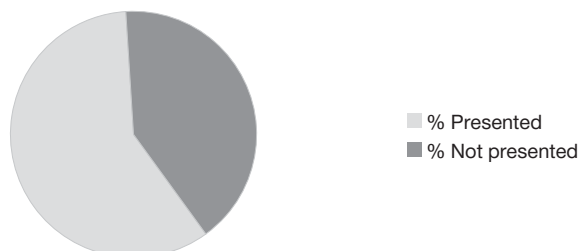

· During academic year 2003-04, of the 64.1 % of the students who remained in the course, 54.7 % passed and 35.9 % did not sit for the final exam (Graph 2).

Graph 2. Figures from academic year 2003-04, comparison of the percentages of students who did and did not finish the course.
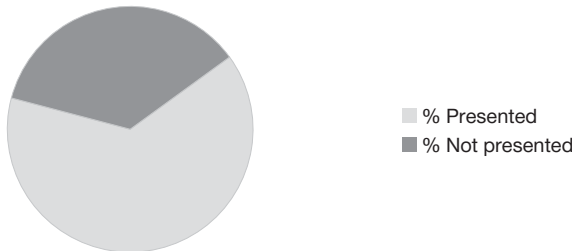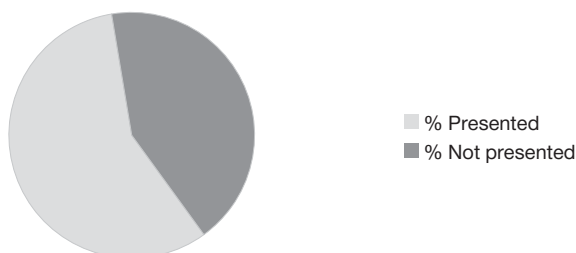

· During academic year 2004-05, of the 59 % of the students who remained in the course, 51.8 % passed and 41 % did not sit for the final exam (Graph 3).

Graph 3. Figures from academic year 2004-05, comparison of the percentages of students who did and did not finish the course.

- During academic year 2005-06 (when the ECTS credits were implemented for the first time), of the 45.9 % of the students who remained in the course, 40.5 % passed and 34.1 % did not sit for the final exam (Graph 4).

Graph 4. Figures from academic year 2005-06, comparison of the percentages of students who did and did not finish the course.

- During academic year 2006-07, of the 50 % of the students who remained in the course, 33.3 % passed and 50 % did not sit for the final exam (Graph 5).

Graph 5. Figures from academic year 2006-07, comparison of the percentages of students who did and did not finish the course
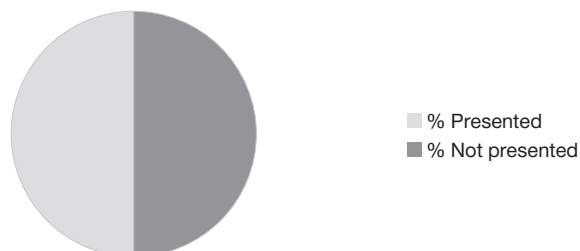
Chart 1 shows the results for each academic year:

Chart 1. Comparison of the percentage of students who sat for the tests *vs*. no-shows in each academic year

YEAR	Group	No-shows	TOTAL	% passing grades	% sitting for test	% no-shows
2002-2003	1	10	54	68.5 %	81.5 %	18.5 %
	2	14	44	56.8 %	68.2 %	31.8 %
2003-2004	1	23	64	54.7 %	64.1 %	35.9 %
	2	20	53	56.6 %	62.3 %	37.7 %
2004-2005	1	34	83	51.8 %	59.0 %	41.0 %
	2	20	59	54.2 %	66.1 %	33.9 %
2005-2006	1	20	37	40.5 %	45.9 %	54.1 %
	2	14	41	51.2 %	65.9 %	34.1 %
	50	3	7	57.1 %	57.1 %	42.9 %
2006-2007	1	24	48	35.4 %	50.0 %	50.0 %
	2	24	42	33.3 %	42.9 %	57.1 %
	50	5	11	54.5 %	54.5 %	45.5 %

The most significant figure is the increase in the no-shows, which can be attributed first to students' inability to keep up with the more intensive pace of evaluation, and secondly to the existence of many students who dropped out of the course mid-year for work reasons.

This analysis of the data for academic years 2002/03, 2003/04, 2005/06 and 2006/07 should enable us to compare them with the results in forthcoming academic years.

5. Conclusions

Although it is certain that the process of European convergence has posed a fantastic opportunity for experimental degree programmes like the Humanities to design a new degree structure and to reflect on the profile of students they want to educate and which skills we want to provide them with so that they may be successful in their future profession, it is also true that this convergence has also led to an in-depth reflection on the teaching strategies to be used in the forthcoming years. We believe that the teacher-led class must keep its place in the new system, just as there should be room for other educational activities that are rarely used in some programmes, such as small-group debate sessions, team projects, etc. This type of activity should enable us to make a

more accurate assessment of our students' oral expression skills, one of the competences that they should have polished by the time they finish their degree programmes.

Regular attendance at class is useful for students to be able to progress steadily. Given the fact that there are a multitude of cases (our degree programme is a clear example), we must strive for flexibility. Despite the fact that absenteeism is behind that vast number of cases of academic failure, some of the students who combine their studies with jobs are able to manage their time available and show outstanding academic performance. In this context, we believe that it is worthwhile to draw up blended learning teaching-learning materials.

Including innovations in teaching, along with continuous assessment, virtual tutorials and the very process of European convergence all entail a considerable effort for the faculty, as we have been able to discern from the surveys administered to the professors. The increase in teaching time is difficult to estimate, but we must find a way to evaluate and institutionally recognise the impact of this change.

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Interesting links

- Website of the project: http://claudia.uab.cat:81.[2008].

Keywords

Latin, classical culture, European Higher Education Area, EHEA, Bologna, educational web pages, ICT, blended learning, continuous assessment.

Financing

Supplementary materials on the CD-ROM

Demonstration of the *LATIN AND CLASSICAL CULTURE*: tour of the different parts of the syllabus.

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Project leader and the working group
The project leader, Gemma Puigvert i Planagumà (full professor of Latin Language and Literature), and professors Joan Carbonell Manils (full professor of Latin Language and Literature) and Antoni Iglesias Fonseca (full professor of Historiographic Sciences and Techniques) are members of the Department of Ancient and Mediaeval Studies at the UAB. The first two, in conjunction with Francesc Carbajo Molina, secondary school teacher, had already worked together previously on teaching innovation projects.

The project leader has also been in charge of promoting DURSI's pilot plan in the Humanities degree programme in academic years 2004-05, 2005-06 and 2006-07. She is currently the coordinator of the Humanities degree programme and the leader of a project funded by AQU (Catalan Agency for University Quality Assurance) to draw up an evaluation guide for skills in the field of the Humanities.

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