



Redesign bachelor's degree in communication. Case study Distance Modality - UTPL in Ecuador

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Abstract. To attend the provisions of the Organic Law of Communication in Ecuador, which states that all university careers will be redesigned in function of relevance to the needs of their geographical areas, international trends of knowledge and will contribute to achieve the objectives of the National Development Plan of Good Living ¹ from 2015 to May 2016, a team of teachers and researchers in the Department of Communication Sciences of the Universidad Técnica Particular de Loja conducted the redesign of the career of Social Communication for distance learning students, as presented below.

Keywords: Higher education; communication; law; curriculum; development; chairs; integration.

1 Introduction

The redesign of communication studies in distance modality from the Universidad Técnica Particular de Loja (UTPL) is intended to train communicators at grade level, from the humanism vision of Christ that guide's the University, so that they can develop and exercise their profession in an ethical sense, in the context of the right to communicate and have freedom of expression, contemplated in the National Plan of Good Living.

The academic offer is destined for people who cannot attend a presence university program but demands a constant intake of students to gain skills and knowledge for the management of communication technologies, discipline in managing their study time and self-criticism capacity.

The pertinence of communication studies is given by several elements ranging from its conception as a right of individuals to the contribution of development of organizations and technological innovations. Even though communication is a civil right guaranteed in the 2008 Constitution of Ecuador it also requires, among other conditions, professionals trained to handle communication in a responsible manner, educational task's that at a superior level of specialization contend responsibility of the universities.

Communication is, firstly, a fundamental anthropological experience. In an intuitive manner communication consists of exchanging with the other; it is simply not possible the individual and collective life without communication [1]. Therefore, the communicational conception becomes the instrument generating content, which prioritizes the fulfillment of citizen's right to inform and be informed.

For the exercise of communication in Ecuador it is relevant to consider the Organic Law of Communication approved in 2013, which in its Art. - 71 states that: "Information is a constitutional right and a public good; and Communication, which is elaborated through the media, is a public service that should be provided with responsibility and quality." To fulfill the vision of communication as a public service it is necessary the development of communicators capable of generating and sharing quality content in a responsible way, in this context the intervention of the academy is essential. Part of this vital process constitutes the agreements and cooperation conventions with which it pursuits to "expand educational programs at a national level, strengthen university networks, promote the approval of the curriculum diagram".

¹ The National Plan for Good Living 2013-2017 is a tool designed to create public policy with management and public investment. The Plan has 12 National Strategies and 12 National Objectives.



The Career of Communication at the UTPL, as part of the distance educational offer covers up several provinces of the country matching the urban centers of the highest population rate and that are located in equidistant cities to attend the entire territory, also there are the places that historically have attended the demand for education in the communication field. But in addition to this we inform the population interested that the process could not be accomplished without the personal effort of each student, accompanied by a profound sense of ethics.

The Career of Communication at the UTPL articulates with the goals (4 and 5) of the National Plan for Good Living [3], in connection with the training of professionals with conviction service to inform the public, analyze the exercise of power and promote democratic debate; these actions lead to strengthen political, economic, social and cultural development.

As for the epistemological horizon of the profession should refer that is related to the academic traditions in communication sciences, which take form in the XIX and XX centuries, they are associated with three big groups: normative theories; theories of media, culture and society; theories of audiences that constitute the theoretical basis upon which it supports the training proposed in communication at UTPL [4] [5].

The structuring cores that proposes the Communication Program as part of the redesign process, falls into four main groups:

- Management and handling of journalistic information. The transmission of information is the key to communication. Public communication processes centered their sights on the content received by users, prioritizing a service that provides the communication over technology. In this context, it is necessary a responsible communication, with special care in the treatment of information and proper use of ICTs, without neglecting the context of social reality.
- Cultural industries for development. According to UNESCO [6], cultural industries are the ones that carry out creative and artistic tangible or intangible products, with potential to generate income through the exploitation of cultural assets and the production of goods and knowledge-based services.
- Information technology. Since the seventies, technologies have marked the evolution of the media by its form and background; they have consolidated digital media that can coexist with conventional media. Technological tools and digital speeches are imperative for the exercise of communication. Reference to the concept of transmedia, understood as the intentional fragmentation of information across different platforms and supports in order to provide the audience further knowledge of content.
- Strategic communication. Organizational development is the practice that aims to uncover, systematize, formalize and update the internal culture that forms the identity of an organization. Strategic communication is responsible for: "1. Spreading identity within organizations through systematic exercise of organizational communication (also called internal communication); 2. Transform identifying features, characteristic of an organization in symbols or signs that may be communicated systematically to relevant external audiences "[7].

The real problems that integrate the subject matter of the profession start from a recognition of the following issues:

1. The Ecuadorian culture industry generates goods and services that do not supply the national market, which does not express the potential of cultural knowledge.
2. Globalization entails the development of the society of information and represents a risk for local identity because of the existence of current cultural domain.
3. In the country, Internet infrastructure connectivity is limited.
4. The Organic Law of Communication (OLC) determines the equitable presence of public, private and community media.
5. It is necessary to work for a balance in content and in audiovisual genders.



6. Another problem is the use of advertising poorly oriented for social responsibility commitment.

The trends in local and regional development, which are included in the areas of study and performance of the profession, are:

1. The progress of the society knowledge allows greater access to information for education.
2. The digital illiteracy.
3. New forms of communication and Web 2.0, which result in digital convergence.
4. Increased of political participation and the growing interest in political accountability
5. Strategic communication contemplates the art of organizing and planning, using an integral structure of the channels in and out of the organization.

Based on the grounds exposed we search to propose a curriculum planning for undergraduate studies in social communication for distance studies at the UTPL in Ecuador. The research hypothesis is: The redesign of undergraduate studies in communication UTPL reaches a curriculum that integrates the development objectives of the country and responds to a tendency of local and regional development.

2 Methodology

The methodology used is qualitative from the review of official documentation produced by the Higher Education Council of Ecuador, regulations and instructions for the redesign of university courses, a review and formulation was conducted between December 2015 and February 2016.

3 Results

The proposal's degree in study of the generation of communication products, messages emitted from the media and the normative that guides the practice of communication, to develop educommunication and transmedia content, which responds to the demands of citizens, users of new media, in relation to Interculturality and the dialogue of knowledge.

We pay attention to the policies and strategies of the objective five of NPGL² expressing the need to "build common meeting spaces and strengthen the national identity, the diverse identities, plurinational and Interculturality" [3]. The emphasis put in these actions allows the creation of dialogues that promote social integration and inclusion of all citizens in the spaces of empowerment of citizenship. As well consolidating democratic processes that enable peaceful interactions between citizens, transforming the social reality and contributing to a sustainable development.

For this proposal to formalize, the bases are built upon the principal core of the profession, through which specific programs and communication products develop inclusively with a strong accountable identity root. In this manner it would be achieved the respond to the need of improving the quality of products that would be part of the cultural industry of Ecuador.

The redesign proposed by the School of Communication, attends mainly the study, the construction and diffusion of knowledge through professional training from the humanism of Christ, with ethical sense for a wide exercise of communication rights and freedom of expression.

Specifically, the training of journalists proposes the handling of social media, communication tools and research methodologies that allow the inquiry and processing of information that the communicator will provide to the community. Appropriate with access procedures and democratization of information, towards building the knowledge society.

² National Plan of Good Living



In this process of change, the offer of learning communication requires the incorporation of technological innovations and social relations in interaction with internal and external audiences to whom the communication is directed.

The distance learning system of the UTPL has a way of teaching and learning based on "a mediated didactic dialogue between teacher (institution) and student located in a different space from the teacher, which will learn in an independently and collaboratively way "[8]. Since mediation is almost entirely through ICT, we can also define distance education as a technological multidirectional communication system that links multiple teaching resources, a solid tutorial work and an effective support of an organization. For its part, the Council of Higher Education in its Article 4 of Regulation career and academic programs in online modes, distance and part-time learning or convergence of media, consider distance learning as "one in which the teaching component, practical application and experimentation of learning and autonomous learning, are mediated through the use of technology and virtual environments on platforms of interaction, and the articulation of multiple educational resources (physical and digital) " [9].

The distance education model is strengthened with the mission, vision, principles and institutional values. This mode supports its management components that are harmonically overlapped in an educational model based on skills that guide the entire curriculum design; where the student is the central actor in the educational process, the same one that is mediated by a teacher and tutoring, teaching materials and resources equipment and new technologies. This entire set is permanently fed by the evaluation-research that provides information for continuous improvement of processes and the quality of educational services being delivered.

The UTPL specifies its educational model according to the following areas: integral formation of students; responsible learning; teaching organization in teams; competition curriculum and guidance practice; research for learning; the use of educational technologies and the entailment with society.

The integral formation of students occurs in educational activity supervised by the teacher, which promotes to be addressed in a comprehensive way, all the scales of a person (physical, psychological and spiritual) and their different fields of action (individual, social, political, religious, educational), all with the aim of achieving full development with a sense of perfection, through their personal life project. In this area it is necessary to consider the profile and the specific characteristics of students, since these factors also preside modalities and study methodologies applied. A part of the cultural heterogeneity and age, other important aspects to consider are prior knowledge, study habits, learning styles, various family and work commitments, and the degree of professional experience, which starts the formation.

Finally there is an increase of people that access the UTPL with special needs and limitations of various kinds: groups historically excluded from higher education or living abroad Ecuadorian citizens. The UTPL is addressed to anyone who wants to study, regardless of his or her economic, labor, family, geographical and physical background, by making accessible quality higher education to anyone who needs it.

The Universidad Técnica Particular de Loja, inside a stage of technological innovation, undertakes on a new scheme for the delivery of bibliographic material in Distance Modality; which consists in an electronic bibliographic material and an electronic device; these materials include:

- Electronic device type Tablet
- Conventional basic texts
- Didactic guides or guideline texts of various components
- Distance exams

As for the use of educational technologies, the UTPL will rely on the pedagogical and didactic mediation of educational technology, especially virtual learning environments and open educational resources OER, who obey intentionality's macro and micro curriculum defined, and designs well-structured and planned. The use of technology also allows an inclusive educational system, according to the mission and social responsibility of the university.



The technology will encourage the responsible character, free and collaborative learning. From this technopedagogical perspective, it is not the system of studies and the student who will adapt to the requirements and the technological developments, but rather the technological instruments that will be adapted to distance education modality and the type of population involved in this process.

The support resources: Information and Communications Technology are the following:

- Virtual Learning Environment (VLE)
- Academic Chat
- Video collaboration
- Videoconferencing
- Academic Forum
- Physical and virtual Libraries
- Open Educational Resource - OER

The educational model of the UTPL, according to their vision and mission, recognizes Christ as the teacher by excellence. This model is scientifically based on the metaphysical ontological thought of Fernando Rielo [10], founder of the community of Idente Missionaries, in which the human person is defined as a mystical being, inhabited constitutively by someone, by an absolute model, that is present in his consciousness, knowledge and learning, which opens to perfection in him and in all fields of their life.

In the UTPL, the education act includes two key points, according to Fernando Rielo: education in ecstasy and the education in a reciprocal cult, from them different didactic focuses and methodologies of teaching and learning will arise, avoiding reducing the educational act at an instrumental and methodological level.

The end of the pedagogy of the UTPL consists essentially of educating the ecstatic man's ability to come out of themselves and pursue the encounter, to fusion with the absolute, with the truth, that will lead for the full realization, the mastery of a field study, the integration of different types of knowledge, placing them at the service of the integral welfare of the person and society.

In response of the exposed, the proposal formation (Fig. 1) integrates fields of study regarding constructs that organize the knowledge in an inclusive manner, rescuing experiences and processes of reality, for its understanding, prevention and intervention. It also attends tensions and problematic nucleus focused on the following areas:

- Axis of communication. The public, private and community media should guarantee pluralistic, objective and truthful information, so it complies with the fundamental purposes of communication: educate, entertain and inform.
- Axis of development and cultural integration. It is understood by culture expression of citizenship, the dialogic encounter and spontaneous generation of new visions of society.
- Axis of technology implementation. The use of technological tools has evolved and allows new ways of communication, where the citizen has taken a leading role generating basic content that attempts to fulfill the demands of journalism.
- Axis of regulations and citizen participation. Citizen participation is a right consecrated in the Constitution, seeks the integration of actors in the areas and processes that are generated in communication systems based on the normative that regulates community, social and business acts in different media and forms of communication.

Also, the curriculum diagram presents a research model articulated to the purpose of the research training of future professionals in each of the units of curricular organization and of studies.



UTPL										TITULACIÓN DE COMUNICACIÓN PROPUESTA DE MALLA DE LICENCIATURA EN COMUNICACIÓN EGC- REDISEÑO	
Nivel	Unidades de organización curricular	Núcleos problemáticos	CAMPOS DE FORMACIÓN						N. de asignaturas	No. de Horas	
			Fundamentos teóricos	Práctica preprofesional	Asignaturas integradoras	Prácticas pre-profesionales	Epistemología y metodología de la investigación	Integración de contextos, saberes y cultura			Comunicación y lenguaje
I	UNIDAD BÁSICA	Limitada generación y circulación de información específica, clara, oportuna y completa.	Lingüística (160)	Teoría de comunicación aplicada a los medios de comunicación (120)	Comparación de información de medios públicos, privados y comunitarios de Ecuador (40)	Metodología de investigación y técnicas de estudio (120)	Realidad Nacional y Ambiental (120)	Redacción y comprensión lectora I (80)	6	800	
			PROYECTO INTEGRADOR DE SABERES: "Manejo de información en medios de comunicación privados, públicos y comunitarios de Ecuador"								Redacción y comprensión lectora II (80)
			Introducción a la Comunicación (160)	Teoría de la imagen (160)	Análisis de los medios de comunicación y medios públicos (80)	Análisis de contenido de los medios de comunicación (80)	Epistemología (120)	Historia de la Comunicación (120)			Redacción y comprensión lectora II (80)
II	UNIDAD BÁSICA	Limitada generación y circulación de información específica, clara, oportuna y completa.	Semiotica: Análisis de los signos en la comunicación (160)	Participación ciudadana en procesos comunicativos (80)	Acercamiento de la política pública y normativa de la LUC a los medios de Comunicación (80)	Métodos cuantitativos de investigación. (120)	Humanismo, Universidad y Cultura (80)	Estilo y redacción para prensa (120)	6	800	
			PROYECTO INTEGRADOR DE SABERES: Informe de Agenda Setting de los medios de comunicación								Estilo y redacción para medios audiovisuales (120)
			PROYECTO INTEGRADOR DE SABERES: Acercamiento a las políticas de Comunicación, exposición de estudios de caso								Estilo y redacción para medios audiovisuales (120)
IV	UNIDAD BÁSICA	Escasa interculturalidad y diálogo de saberes	Regulación y legislación de la comunicación (160)	Diseño de comunicación visual (120)	Generación de productos comunicacionales que fomenten la identidad cultural en la Zona 7 (40)	Métodos cualitativos de investigación. Análisis hermenéutico de información (120)		Estilo y redacción para medios audiovisuales (120)	6	800	
			PROYECTO INTEGRADOR DE SABERES: Generación de productos de comunicación que fomenten la identidad: Proyecto MediaLab								Estilo y redacción para nuevos medios (80)
			Educación (160)	Comunicación organizacional (160)	Comunicación estratégica digital (80)	Identificación de sectores prioritarios para proponer campañas de comunicación (40)	Investigación aplicada (120)				Estilo y redacción para nuevos medios (80)
V	UNIDAD PROFESIONAL	Retagado acceso a las aplicaciones tecnológicas para el ejercicio comunicativo en los medios.	Marketing y Publicidad (160)	Periodismo digital (160)	Planificación estratégica de la comunicación (160)				6	800	
			PROYECTO INTEGRADOR DE SABERES: Campañas de comunicación integral en medios, instituciones y/o proyectos de servicio social								
			Responsabilidad Social (160)	Comunicación y cultura digital (80)	Desarrollar contenidos transmedia que vinculan los principios del periodismo con perfiles de usuarios de nuevos medios (40)	Procesos de investigación social (80)	Emprendimiento (120)				
VI	UNIDAD PROFESIONAL	Retagado acceso a las aplicaciones tecnológicas para el ejercicio comunicativo en los medios.	Convergencia de medios (160)	Producción audiovisual (160)	Comunicación en crisis (160)				6	800	
			PROYECTO INTEGRADOR DE SABERES: Centro Multimedia del Proyecto Smart Land - Proyecto MediaLab Zona 7 de Ecuador								
			Análisis y lenguaje cinematográfico (160)	Narrativas audiovisuales (120)	Generar contenidos edcomunicacionales para ser emitidos en la TV, que atiendan las necesidades prioritarias de la Zona 7 (80)	Periodismo de Investigación (80)	Antropología básica (80)				
VII	UNIDAD DE TITULACIÓN	Alejamiento y poco conocimiento de las regulaciones que orientan la participación ciudadana.	Políticas culturales (160)	Fstrategias de análisis de participación ciudadana (80)	Monitorear los cambios de los marcos regulatorios en comunicación y cultura de participación (80)				6	800	
			PROYECTO INTEGRADOR DE SABERES: Banco Audiovisual Público (BAP)-Proyecto MediaLab para la Zona 7, que atienden a las necesidades prioritarias del país								
			Comunicación política (160)	Producción de radio (160)	Auditoría de la comunicación (160)	Sistematización de experiencias de prácticas investigativas de la profesión y/o Preparación examen complejo (80)	Etica periodística (80)				
VIII	UNIDAD DE TITULACIÓN	Alejamiento y poco conocimiento de las regulaciones que orientan la participación ciudadana.	Estudios de recepción (160)	Sistematización de trabajo de titulación acorde a las líneas de investigación referentes a los itinerarios (160)		Herramientas informáticas de investigación social (160)	Etica y Moral (80)	Composición de Textos científicos (80)	6	800	
			PROYECTO INTEGRADOR DE SABERES: Sistematización de LAS EXPERIENCIAS EN PRÁCTICAS PREPROFESIONALES: TRABAJO DE TITULACIÓN								
DISTRIBUCIÓN DE HORAS POR UNIDADES DE ORGANIZACIÓN CURRICULAR									54	7200	
		Unidad Curricular	No de horas			%					
		Básica	2400			33.33					
		Profesional	4400			61.11					
		Titulación	400			5.56					
		Total	7200			100					

Fig. 1. Curriculum proposal. Elaboration: Own

4 Conclusion

The Career of Communication aims to transform the study, construction and diffusion of knowledge about culture, digital technologies and the use of language, using in this process the various tools and communication platforms, to create contents that promote the management of responsible and critical information at the service of the community, the media and organizations. Therefore the hypothesis is accepted: The redesigns of bachelor's studies in communication at the UTPL reaches a curriculum that integrates the development goals of the country and responds to trends locally and regionally develop.

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