



## How to Prepare Teachers to Blended Learning? An experience in the National Autonomous University of Mexico

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### **Abstract**

*This experience forms part of Coordination Habitat Puma, DGTIC, National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM) whose overall objective is that university professors introduce into their academic work technological tools, specifically introduce academic classroom activities supported by ICT. In this context there is unrolled the experience of teacher training in modality blended learning.*

*The Coordination Habitat puma offers an academic offer to all the university teachers based on two ideas: 1) to live through the experience in the use of technology as a tool of support to the learning of a content and 2) to learn doing. Of this form the whole academic offer tries to offer in his courses a reflection of the educational practice to give course for the introduction of technological tools, in order to look for the educational innovation inside the classroom. Hereby the teachers are busy with giving the above mentioned offer have to possess some specific characteristics in order that the participants on having finished, could lead to his new practical classrooms. We are called these teachers as tutor.*

*The formation of these tutors is based on a workshop that it develops: didactic skills, it is to say how to develop strategies in the blended learning, skills for the communication, what it implies how to communicate to him in an academic space blended learning and technological skills, it is this point, our approach is not to teach or to learn the different technological tools, but rather to develop digital skills that allow to approach any tool.*

*This formation has been given in several occasions, having a very rich experience. On one hand it is a course very good received as a specific space of formation for teachers who devote themselves to the teachers' formation. Also as a space of reflection on the possibilities of the technology in the classroom and as a way for the teachers' formation.*

### **1. Tutoring in the Coordination Habitat puma**

The tutor training for the blended learning experience was born in response of the Coordination of technologies for education- habitat puma, DGTIC, UNAM to specialized training that we need from the tutors. The tutor profile is founded in two characteristics:

1. Knowledge of different ICT tools.
2. Experience in the incorporation of ICT tools to support the teaching and learning process in the classroom.

Coordination brings to the university professors an academic offer focused to increase and develop digital skills in the use of information and communication technologies, so that this use is efficient, ethical and safe.

We have given courses from 2009 to the different educational levels of the UNAM, in high school, undergraduate and graduate teachers. All courses offered are based on three ideas:

1. Live the experience as a student.
2. Learn by doing.
3. Work what has been learned directly with students.

1) Live the experience as a student. The academic offer puts the teacher in direct contact with the technological tools within their daily lives. The courses were conducted in blended learning; we have some face-to-face training sessions and the rest of the activities we are working online. Teachers will live the experience of being students using technologies and learn new content in a mixed

environment, with the intention of making a time to propose new activities that students will enjoy increasing their learning experience. This way there will be plenty of time needed to develop activities and experience possible difficulties.

2) Learn by doing. We maintain that there is no better way to bring teachers to the use of technology than incorporating them with the direct work with technological tools within the context of their everyday practice in the classroom. For example, learn how to design teaching strategies with social networks; the first activity is to exercise in social networks: you can create a group, share comments in the wall, and so forth. As well as all the technological tools that we use. It is important to mention that the program is directed to the development of digital skills, and not knowledge of tools. This way, the teacher does not learn to work only with specific software.

Another feature is that the professor learns by doing in the area of his knowledge. If you are a teacher of physics you will work with content in physics, if it is biology, with contents of biology, etc. To do this we put them in a teaching situation. A teaching situation is "a situation to work specific content with students, considering the different elements that interact: the professor, the students and the medium comprises a set of activities that will develop the student's ability to learn content (Obaya y Ponce, 2007)

3) Work what has been learned directly with students. Once their teaching situation is completed, perform the planned activities with your group of students. This way, the tutor of the workshop gives support to the professor, from technical issues to didactic. In order to become acquainted with the work within the classroom with technology, know the time necessary to involve technology and the type of space that they will require. The advantage of working a teaching situation in the courses is that teachers are equipped with tutor who guides and advises them for a successful implementation. This context frames the training of tutors.

## **2. Conception of the tutoring in Coordination h@bitat**

As you can appreciate the role played by the tutor in each of the courses is vital, comments and observations made by teachers help to incorporate with the technological tools in the classroom. Therein lays the relevance of their training. The coordination has devoted a great deal of effort to the training of counselors through the delivery of the training workshop for advisors in blended learning modality.

As a consultant in the blended learning modality the primary objective is to develop knowledge, technological, didactic and communicative skills through activities that foster a relationship both online and face-to-face with the participants. From the theoretical-practical content, pedagogical and technological fomented by the Coordination of Technology for Education

The workshop is a 40 hour blended learning, this follows the same methodology that we use in the supply of training for the university professors.

1) Live the experience as a student. This workshop was raised as a model course, that is to say, a course that would serve as the tutor of good practice. In a way people become accustomed to the procedures that an advisor must follow as well of how to deal with the participants. Be a pupil in the mixed-mode and then treat the pupils the same way they were treated.

2) Learn by doing. Learn how to tutor by tutoring. To achieve this, each advisor will count with a small group of fictitious students. Which means that they are contained in the platform, have activities, participate in forums, but in reality do not exist as individuals. The adviser will review their future tasks and will follow up. For this we design a practice area, a course with these fictitious students.

3) Work what has been learned directly with students. In this case the challenge that we face is to evaluate student work under the perspective recently learned. Evaluation is important in our methodology, at this time the consultant makes observations and advises the professor on the good use of the technology.

The workshop is based on developing skills that will enable the consultants meet with its task of guiding teachers. These skills are: educational, technological and communication. We believe that

with these skills the consultants can deal with different situations of mentoring, enabling them to base their responses in a theoretical and practical basis.

The teaching skills cover topics such as planning and coordinate onsite sessions, review teaching situations. For its part, the technology skills refer to the management of platform Moodle with the role of teacher editor, within this procedure on follow-up to students, rate and comment tasks, forums, and databases. Finally, the communication skills modeled aspects of good written messaging, the discussion in forums and aspects of empathy.

In general, the activities that a tutor must meet are: perform a work of accompaniment, technical guidance and teaching to the participants of a course as well as evaluating activities carried out and issuing a rating.

To accomplish this, we put our future tutors in model situations, situations that frequently occur. For this reason we extracted real situations, for example real messages that were sent to tutors by students or homework sent by student. There are situations that the tutor must face for example students with a dissatisfied result on an exam, students asking for help on unclear doubts as well as congratulate excellent work and receive positive feedback by the teacher.

So, we put into practice:

- Problematic situations. Difficult Cases to handle.
- Average situations. What the students respond regularly.
- Exceptional Situations. We show excellent work sent by students.

The main work of the tutor is to show teachers the concrete use of technological tools to support a teaching process through its exhibitions and comments. Teachers also receive a guide to structure and plan activities with ICT tools.

### 3. Results

The workshop has been conducted on five different occasions. Three of them were based on an open call, the rest were orders of two institutions that required training their tutors. The First open call, had four groups and a total of fifty-five approved. Second open call, had two groups and thirty-three approved. The others institutions had four groups and forty-four approved. In one year we formed 132 tutors.

In Mexico there is a nil bid to study the advice on mixed-use environment; we have a lot to offer courses entirely online, at distance or completely in a classroom. In addition, there is little reflection on the mixed models. In this sense this workshop was very successful among the online tutors or people interested in the instructional design, already which allowed them to reach out to other dimensions of education. They have also completed faculty devoted to classroom instruction, enrich the professional field within and outside the classroom.

Rapprochement between experts in pedagogy and technology, to know the point where there are these two areas.

Within the coordination participants who graduated from this workshop as well as tutor some workshops, show domain in the way of assessing and follow channels of communication. Give good feedback to their students. Manage to integrate the set of practices that we continue to put in place a workshop.

One of the interesting points that have been raised within the workshop can be seen in the following reflection of a former ex student:

*"I believe I am now aware of the importance of timely and immediate response to my students.*

*This course has been very rewarding for two reasons. The first, I was able to live the experience as a student and understand the multiple difficulties my students may encounter. The second is being able to strengthen and give a greater structure to the work of tutoring that we carry out in chats and forums.*

*In this method of tutoring we give students a close and warm accompaniment in order to motivate. We encourage students from initiation, development and closure of our academic programs. In my experience as a student, these types of messages are encouraging to follow additional tasks and*

*minimize the feeling of solitude.*

*I thought that mentoring implied giving mixed classes from a virtual meeting room from a traditional perspective.*

*The joint mentoring is a new way of training for the latest educational demands for both teachers and students experience.”*

As we can see this is not only training, but a proposal to change the educational paradigm.

Blended learning education involves much more than the good use of technology in the sense of knowing correctly the use of tools, is a shift in the implementation of classes. This way, it is important to have a good model. This workshop will serve as not only a learning content, but to have a reference point of blended learning.

The workshop participants are faced with different challenges that can get various topics such as perspective, the change in the conception, not only technological but of roles, but thinking the traditional teacher in a virtual classroom.

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