

Extension activities mediated by Virtual Environments Actividades extensionistas mediadas por Entornos Virtuales

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ABSTRACT

This research aims to develop extension activities mediated by Virtual Environments to contribute to cultural development in the Physical Culture Faculty of Guantánamo University and its social environment. For its development, some research methods and techniques were used, such as documentary analysis, observation, interview, analysis-synthesis, induction-deduction, and historical and logical, which allowed us to address more fully the deficiencies detected in relation to the little use of the advantages offered by ICTs for University Extension and which gave rise to the problem under investigation.

Keywords: Extension activities; University extension; Virtual environments; Cultural development

RESUMEN

Esta investigación tiene como objetivo elaborar actividades extensionistas mediadas por Entornos Virtuales para contribuir al desarrollo cultural en la facultad de Cultura Física de la Universidad de Guantánamo y su entorno social. Para el desarrollo de la misma se utilizaron algunos métodos y técnicas de investigación como análisis documental, observación, entrevista, análisis-síntesis, inducción-deducción e histórico y lógico, los cuales permitieron abordar con más fundamento las insuficiencias detectadas en relación al poco uso de las ventajas que ofrecen las TICs para la Extensión Universitaria y que dieron origen al problema que se investiga.

Palabras clave: Actividades extensionistas; Extensión universitaria; Entornos virtuales; Desarrollo cultural

INTRODUCTION

University Extension is a process that streamlines the university-society relationship, based on the promotion of a general and comprehensive culture that resizes the contextualization of the activity-communication binomial in its most general conception. This links scientific-technological, humanistic and artistic knowledge with local, regional and national needs to promote the cultural development of the intra- and extra-university community.

In Cuban universities, the University Extension contributes to the socio-humanistic training of students, the reaffirmation of cultural and national identity. It demonstrates the humanistic superiority of our social system and the formation of values that imply improving the quality of spiritual life; both in the internal community and in that of its social environment, with an emphasis on the preparation of future professionals, each time with a broader general culture, synonymous with comprehensive training, political-ideological development, professional competence, unconditionality and defense of the Revolution in the field of ideas.

Regarding to the University Extension, Dr. Gil Ramón González González defines it as

“...el proceso que, como parte del sistema de interacciones Universidad-Sociedad, tiene el propósito de promover la cultura en la comunidad intra y extrauniversitaria para interrelacionado con los demás procesos principales de la educación superior: la Docencia y la Investigación, contribuir a su desarrollo cultural. La extensión constituye una regularidad en la interacción Universidad-Sociedad, con personalidad propia y que aporta un producto final o resultado de la labor universitaria.” (G. González, 1996, p. 72)

On the other hand, the researcher Mercedes González states that

“el proceso extensionista es aquel, por tanto, que como resultado de las relaciones sociales que se dan entre los sujetos que en él participan está dirigido de un modo sistémico y eficiente, a la promoción de la cultura para la comunidad intra y extrauniversitaria (objetivo), con vistas a la solución del (problema) social: necesidad de contribuir al desarrollo cultural de la comunidad, mediante la apropiación de la cultura que ha acumulado la sociedad en su desarrollo (contenido); a través de la participación activa de la comunidad universitaria y extrauniversitaria (método); planificada en el tiempo y observando ciertas estructuras organizativas (forma); con ayuda de objetos (medio); instrumentando indicadores que permiten medir la calidad (evaluación) y cuyo

movimiento está determinado por las relaciones causales entre sus componentes y de ellos con la sociedad (leyes) que constituyen su esencia.” (M. González, 2002, p. 55)

In this sense, extension activities play a fundamental role by strengthening the active participation and social integration of the extension group in the process of assimilation, internalization and apprehension of a general and integral culture.

The extension process is closely linked to educational and political-ideological work, the development and comprehensive cultural improvement of the university and non-university community, the creation and development of cultural institutions in higher education centers, community socio-cultural work, outreach of university and social work, research and promotion of the results of science and technological innovation and projects actions of a technical nature that enter the current debate in relation to the use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) and possibilities that these offer to re-plan the extension work in the Physical Culture Faculty of Guantánamo University.

When conducting a study of the experiences that generate extension alternatives through the use of ICT; the proposals are favored by the new scenarios of social networks, implemented from the Virtual Environments (EV), considered as *“espacios de intercambio sociocultural-educativo configurados en las redes telemáticas, conformados por herramientas de comunicación sincrónicas y asincrónicas.”* (Guerrero-Muguercia, Sánchez-Pérez & Moreira-Carbonell, 2020, p. 89)

Based on the above, and in accordance with (Guerrero-Muguercia, Sánchez-Pérez & Moreira-Carbonell, 2019) is posed that the fundamental characteristics of Virtual Environments favor the development of University Extension based on its objective, which is the promotion of a comprehensive general culture inside and outside the Higher Education Centers.

Taking into account the aforementioned criteria, as well as the result of the instruments applied during the investigation, insufficiencies were revealed regarding the use of the advantages offered by Virtual Environments for the development of the University Extension in the Faculty of Physical Culture of the Guantánamo University.

These insufficiencies generate the following scientific problem, how to contribute to the cultural development in the Faculty of Physical Culture of Guantánamo and its social environment, for which extension activities mediated by Virtual Environments are proposed.

METHODS

In this research, a population of 113 professors from the Faculty of Physical Culture was used, of which the applied sampling was causal or incidental, selecting 2 professors who attend the extension part in each department or area of the faculty and the 6 members of the department of university extension for a total of 14 professors that represent 12, 38% of the population.

At first, a review of documents was carried out that allowed to determine the main theoretical references of the University Extension process and the Virtual Environments that serve as theoretical support for the proposal, as well as the main communication tools that make up the Virtual Environments, their potentialities and limitations for the development of extension activities, based on the most relevant events in its evolution. It was also possible to verify the non-existence of documents that guide how to carry out extension activities through Virtual Environments.

In addition, different extension activities were observed in which the following were valued as fundamental aspects: the participation of subjects from both the faculty and the community and the use of Information Technology and Communications to enable the development of the activity, among others.

Then, an interview was applied to the members of the university extension department to know the main factors that affect and can enhance the development of extension activities through these Virtual Environments.

The eight professors who were surveyed to determine their state of opinion regarding the main limitations and potentialities they possess about the use of Virtual Environments for the development of extension activities.

In a second moment, the results obtained in each of the applied instruments were analyzed, where the insufficiencies that originated the problem of this research were corroborated.

Based on these insufficiencies, extension activities were developed through Virtual Environments to contribute to cultural development in the Faculty of Physical Culture of the Guantánamo University and its social environment, which are presented below.

RESULTS

Methodological structure of the proposed extension activities.

The activities that are proposed for their correct description and application are methodologically structured as follows:

Name: It is the identifier of each of the activities, it is selected according to its objective.

Objective: Explain the purpose of each of the activities.

Tools: The Virtual Environments communication tools to be used in each activity are listed.

Means: It refers to the means that will be used for the development of the activity both for the virtual part and for the face-to-face part.

Method: Indicates the guiding method of the activity.

Methodology: The elements to be taken into account for the correct organization and execution of each activity are described.

Participants: It is the public to whom the activities are directed.

Date of realization: It refers to the date on which the activity will take place.

Duration time: Indicates how long the activity will last.

Assessment date: It refers to the date on which the results of the activity will be evaluated as well as its impact.

Extension activities mediated by Virtual Environments to contribute to cultural development in the Faculty of Physical Culture of the Guantánamo University

Activity #1

Name: Who reads more knows more ...

Objective: Promote reading, analysis of texts, sale and exhibition of books preferably related to the sports field to develop interest in reading and research.

Tools: In this activity the forum is used, which is of the asynchronous type.

Media: Computers, tablets, smartphones or other devices that allow user participation in the forum.

Method: Systemic-structural-functional.

Methodology: For the development of the activity, a topic or a fragment of the book that is being analyzed is placed in the forum and on this basis the moderator leads the debate, it will be taken into account that the selected bibliographies are in the context of the general taste of the participants in question, to thus favor greater enthusiasm and identification with them. Although the forum is an asynchronous tool, it can also be performed synchronously according to the convenience of the organizer of the activity.

Participants: Students, professors and workers of the faculty, as well as the personnel of the community that want it, whenever they have the means to connect to the forum.

Date of realization: According to planning.

Duration time: According to planning.

Assessment date: According to planning.

Activity #2

Name: Touching the Glory.

Objective: Promote the exchange with sports glories of the municipality and / or province to promote interest in the history of the community and develop interest in sports.

Tools: In this activity, videoconferencing is used, which is a synchronous communication tool.

Media: Computer, data show, tablets, smartphones or other devices that allow the participation of users in the videoconference. For the face-to-face part you need an audio and microphones.

Method: Systemic-structural-functional.

Methodology: For the development of this activity, a videoconference is created in which the moderator presents the invited sports glory and based on the questions related to their sports life, an online exchange is encouraged with the participants, highlighting their sports achievements; as well as the most relevant stories and epics.

This activity can be developed virtually and in person at the same time, for this a laboratory, theater or other premises that meet the necessary conditions to develop the virtual part will be prepared, in which in addition to the auditorium, the moderator and the invited. The guest's biography will be placed in advance on the Web Portal and in visible places in the faculty, thus ensuring that participants have prior knowledge of the guest's life and work.

Participants: Students, professors and workers of the faculty, as well as the staff of the community who wish, provided that they have the means to connect to the videoconference, if not, those who can reach the place where it is carried out in person, always without forgetting the hygienic sanitary measures imposed by our ministry of health.

Date of realization: According to planning.

Duration time: According to planning.

Assessment date: According to planning.

Activity #3

Name: Cinema sports

Objective: Create a space where participants can exchange criteria after viewing both national and international audiovisual productions related to sport.

Tools: In this activity, the video streaming is used as a communication tool, which is a synchronous tool and the forum, which is asynchronous.

Methodology: For the development of this activity, the visualization of a film or other audiovisual material related to the sport previously placed on the server is oriented, a link is created in the Faculty Web Portal so that users can access the material. Once the visualization is completed, a forum-debate is developed in which important elements related to the sport collected in the production are analyzed.

Media: Computer, tablets, smartphones or other devices that allow users to access audiovisual material as well as virtual participation in the forum. For the face-to-face part, only the means necessary for the reproduction of audiovisual materials are needed.

Method: Systemic-structural-functional.

This activity can be developed as the previous activity in a virtual and face-to-face way at the same time, for this it is organized in a video room, theater or other premises respectively conditioned to project the audiovisual material to the face-to-face participants parallel to the virtual activity. A synopsis of the material to be screened that guarantees participation in the activity will also be posted on the Web Portal, as well as on the faculty information board.

Participants: Students, professors and workers of the Faculty, as well as the staff of the community that so desire, provided that they have the means to view the material from the Faculty portal and access the forum-debate, as well as those who may reach the place where it is done in person.

Date of realization: According to planning.

Duration time: According to planning.

Assessment date: According to planning.

Activity # 4

Name: University radio "Acontecer"

Objective: Disseminate the daily work of the faculty, as well as the sporting results of the faculty, university, municipality and the province in the different competitions that are developed at all levels.

Tools: In this activity, audio-conferencing is used, which is a synchronous communication tool.

Media: Computer, tablets, smartphones or other devices that allow users to access University Radio virtually. For the face-to-face part, only audio equipment and microphones are needed.

Method: Systemic-structural-functional.

Methodology: This activity will be carried out through a streaming server, as well as the information portal of the faculty, for this The necessary information related to the topics covered in the program will be collected, and depending on the days of diffusion, it will be sent virtually to everyone through the faculty network, as well as it will be disseminated in the center through a team of audio, both for the internal community and its neighbors. It should be taken into account that it can be developed virtually and in person at the same time, in the virtual it can be live or delayed.

Participants: Students, professors and workers of the faculty, as well as community personnel who have the means to access the program virtually or who are facilitated to listen to the radio broadcast.

From these activities, others can be generated on the basis of the orientations that are provided and guided by the university management, the extension group based on the objective needs can include or vary the activities.

Date of realization: According to planning.

Duration time: According to planning.

Assessment date: According to planning.

The main limitation of face-to-face extension activities is the need to move people to develop them, in this case the extension group to the community or the community to the Faculty or both variants in case the activity takes place outside of the university premises and depend to a large extent on the time that people have to attend them.

With the proposed activities, these space-temporal barriers that limit people's assistance to extension activities are eliminated, which leads to greater participation in them even from other communities, as well as other higher education centers. On the other hand, the cost of the activities is reduced because the expense of human and material resources would be minimal by avoiding the transfer of personnel, the rental of premises, among other resources and consequently a greater cultural development of the internal community is achieved and the external one.

It is worth mentioning that in the current situation, not only in Cuba, because of the COVID-19, which forces to maintain certain norms such as social distancing to avoid the spread of this

pandemic, these activities are of great importance to comply with these standards while continuing to undertake the main objective of the University Extension.

DISCUSSION

The novelty of the research lies in offering extension activities through Virtual Environments, which contribute to cultural development in the Faculty of Physical Culture of the Guantánamo University and provide the methodological tools for its implementation, as well as serve as a basis for the creation of new activities. This contributes to promoting better and timely extension work in order to strengthen the University-Society link.

In the development of the research, various bibliographic sources were consulted whose analysis allowed to determine the main theoretical references of the University Extension process and the Virtual Environments that support the proposal. Among these references, the contributions of G. González (1996) stand out, where the essential features of University Extension as a process aimed at cultural promotion are revealed, as well as its relationship with the other substantive processes of the University. Extension stands out as regularity in the link between the University and its social environment, contributing the results of the university processes to the overall comprehensive development of the intra- and extra-university communities through the direct interaction of both parties.

On the other hand, M. González (2002) in her definition reveals the structural components of the University Extension, which are considered very useful for research and highlights the role that evaluation plays in measuring quality, but the author considers that it also allows feedback to make the pertinent adjustments that benefit the development of the extension process.

Guerrero-Muguercia, Sánchez-Pérez and Moreira-Carbonell (2020) provide in their research the sociocultural quality of the interaction that occurs in Virtual Environments. These authors in the article published in 2019 reveal the advantages and disadvantages offered by Virtual Environments for University Extension and that constitute the fundamental basis of this research to take university culture beyond Higher Education Centers in order to contribute to cultural development of the internal and external community.

By way of conclusions, it can be said that the study carried out on the different bibliographic sources consulted allowed the theoretical support of the extension activities developed, as well as the results of the applied instruments made possible to determine the insufficiencies that generated the problem studied.

The activities developed constitute a very useful tool to contribute to cultural development both in the Faculty of Physical Culture and its social environment starting at the advantages offered by Virtual Environments as a technological product and the computerization process of Cuban society to carry university culture to more people regardless of space-time barriers and current pandemic conditions.

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