Abstract

The development of distance education supported on virtual teaching and learning experiences mediated by information and communication technologies is becoming increasingly important in the Central University of Venezuela (U.C.V.). This is reflected in the interest shown by some faculties which are migrating many of their undergraduate courses from traditional classroom environments (face to face education in a established place and time) to the Virtual Campus of the institution, often unaware of the complexity it implies from a pedagogical perspective, due to the existing risk of transferring the prevailing traditional practices of conventional classroom higher education teaching to these new educational environments. These facts motivated the design and development of a group research project, identified with the code PG 07-7665 - 2009/1 which was made possible through funding provided by the Scientific and Humanistic Development Council (C.D.C.H.) of the U.C.V. The objective of this research was to explore the teaching competency profile on the basis of the elaboration of a previous theoretical framework, –already published in a former article derived from the first phase of this project,– and a set of key criteria for the instructional design and e-moderation in virtual teaching and learning environments. We applied a case study methodology in an intentional sample of eight undergraduate courses from five faculties of the university, and the research technique used was the external non participant observation. For data collection it was designed a highly structured instrument or rubric (checklist type) that allowed the three observers, in each of the studied cases, to determine the absence or presence of the components, dimensions and items analyzed. The qualitative data obtained also permitted the researchers to provide an immediate feedback to the teachers involved. The findings allowed to estimate university professors’ level of competencies for the instructional design and e-moderation in virtual teaching and learning contexts, which were proven to be very basic in some instances and insufficient in others. For this reason, we suggest that the institution must offer training programs together with a systematic and continuous monitoring and control process to guarantee a virtual education of quality.

Keywords

Professors: competence profile, learning virtual environments, instructional design, e-moderation.