

Meaningful learning applied to communication university teaching in Spain during the pandemic. An asynchronous collaborative experience

**Andrea Castro-Martínez
Cristina Pérez-Ordóñez
Universidad de Málaga**

The pandemic led education systems to switch immediately to online learning, in many cases without the necessary period of design and adaptation of teaching tools. In many cases with no specific training in online teaching, the lecturers had to adapt their classes to a permanent virtual space, usually abusing synchronous teaching. This literal adaptation of the methodologies used in the classroom to the online learning scene, in addition to aspects such as periods of lock-in, required physical distance and overexposure to digital media, have caused significant tiredness among students, who reported difficulties in maintaining their attention in synchronous lectures.

This paper presents a proposal implemented in 5 subjects of Spanish communication degrees by two professors who had previous experience in e-learning education. Our aim is analysing the usefulness of class diary writing in a collaborative and asynchronous process for each student in the whole class. For studying this tool, two methods have been developed in each of the subjects: the participant observation and satisfaction surveys on the use of the personal diary.

The results indicate that it is a tool highly valued by the students which allows them to work on the contents of the subjects themselves, in such a way that the students use the class diary as a means for individual reflection and for real debate with their classmates. It also shows how this tool limits the negative effects of the social pressure of presenting one's own idea in public. Thus, students who are more shy or less skilled in public speaking participated to a greater extent and with higher quality contributions than they usually do in a physical setting. Furthermore, it is an interesting tool for complementing other learning strategies such as the flipped classroom or using the practical application of theoretical content through real case studies. On the other hand, it facilitates knowledge of transversal contents such as design, the gender perspective and current affairs in the professional sector.

The findings of this work indicate that the personal diary was a successful instrument for teaching communication subjects during the pandemic. Higher education could be enhanced by the combined use of synchronous and asynchronous technological tools to stimulate meaningful learning, transcending the model of online teaching that involves a simple conversion from the lecture to a videoconferencing system. Higher education could be enhanced by the combined use of synchronous and asynchronous technological tools to stimulate meaningful learning, transcending the model of online teaching that involves a simple conversion from the lecture to a videoconferencing system. Student diaries provide a channel of expression and reflection that each student employ whenever and wherever he or she needs to. It is therefore a permanent space for collaborative learning and the development of critical thinking of great value for university teaching that can also be applied in the post-pandemic era.