

Professors from FAREM-Carazo build up their Teaching Portfolios

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SUMMARY

This year has started with the project “Monitoring and Evaluation of the Quality education improvement (2012-2016)” through the cooperation between the Autonomous University of Barcelona (UAB) and the Multidisciplinary Regional Faculty of Carazo, UNAN- Managua. Its development aims to improve the quality of education through the reflection and provocation of the teaching work change.

It was decided to conduct a case study in FAREM-Carazo so that it can be taken as an example to develop in other faculties. For it, there is an interdisciplinary and interfaculty UAB team with interest and experience in teaching innovation. Also, all professors of the department participated, who are coordinated by MSc. Juana del Socorro Rodriguez Lara, delegated by the FAREM-Carazo.

Since January 2016, the first workshop “Teaching Portfolio” is directed to 62 permanent professors from Educational Sciences and Humanities, Economics and Management Sciences, and Technology and Health Sciences departments. The objective of the workshop is related to the domain and development of the teaching portfolio as a tool for reflection and improvement, to enhance competencies in their education, and to create their teaching folder in the established periods.

1. This experience is one of the actions carried out with the support of Call XXXIII of the Solidarity Fund of the Autonomous University of Barcelona (Fundació Autònoma Solidària).

In early August, a second workshop on “Monitoring and Evaluation of the Teaching Portfolio” was developed, in which it was allowed to check the qualitative and quantitative advance of it, as well as the reflection of its work as a teacher and training, needs university professors have, by culminating with the delivery and presentation of the teaching portfolios. The result was very positive, and it will continue with the formation of the voluntary assistance of part-timers professors.

INTRODUCTION

As part of the Curricular transformation process that is develops in the National Autonomous University of Nicaragua (UNAN-Managua) the Initial training and ongoing teacher Program appears, which initiated with the help FSXXVIII (2010) and AECID (Ref. 1/041892 / arises 11) that is designed to strengthen and support the teaching skills of UNAN-Managua teachers as a whole. Innovation and educational renewal were promoted in all the careers and territories (Carazo, Chontales, Estelí, Managua, and Matagalpa) where UNAN-Managua has an impact (Fuentes and Tapia, 2012).

Currently, through FSXXXIII (2016) project, it is pursuing the influence on the analysis of quality improvement in UNAN-Managua and in particular, it intends to make a case study taking as reference the FAREM-Carazo. Thus, the bases are given to continue analyzing the rest of Colleges and Campuses.

The 2012-2013 course, representatives of the various FAREM and enclosures of UNAN-Managua, received a specific training around teaching portfolio that was highly appreciated, highlighting its potential to promote the improvement of instruction quality. So the commitment to comprehensive training for other professors of the University was assumed. After three years, the impact is assessing, and new needs are identified.

In January 2016, a specific training of knowledge and implementation of teaching portfolio began, it is mandatory for all the permanent professors at FAREM-Carazo. In the beginning, they were a minority of teachers who knew and used this tool, which is considered within the literature as a promoter of reflection, self-assessment, and regulation of teaching action, primarily to improve university quality.

Since that date, teachers began to develop their teaching portfolio. Each section of this folder has a time set aside to meet the goal of having it ready for July. For this reason, at the end of July was developed a second workshop about monitoring and evaluation of the teaching portfolio. In this workshop, there was oriented to teachers and settled new challenges of development and delivery of it. In the first week of August a day of exhibitions which teaching folders were observed and assessed by the methodological unit from FAREM-Carazo and the representative of the UAB of the cooperative project already mentioned.

In the reflecting process of concerning about their portfolios creation, professors express the need for training, especially on how to assess student learning. So the time spent by Dr. Marta Fuentes Agustí was so useful for the first training on the importance of focusing on student learning assessment. In such training, evaluation was characterized and its relevance in the processes of teaching and learning, evaluation systems were compared, examples of various assessment instruments and rubrics and the rules of UNAN-Managua were reviewed such a process of reflection about the practice itself began.

Development and methodology of the workshop

The Teaching Portfolio as a tool of thought for professors, allows them to reflect towards improving teaching and professionalization because it is a set of learning evidence that teachers present to show the followed process in its training and to be evaluated or promoted occupationally.

FAREM-Carazo, stated the teaching portfolio Workshop through the Methodological Unit, which was given to permanent teachers from Education Sciences and Humanities, Economics and Administrative Sciences, and Technology and Health Sciences departments, involving a total of 68 professors. Such training was held on Thursday, January 28 and Monday, February 01, from 8:30 to 11:30 a.m. and Tuesday 16 and Wednesday 17 February from 2:00 to 4:30 pm this year.

A methodological proposal was developed according to the Planning formats that govern the academic life of UNAN-Managua. This proposal has a brief introduction, a defining of the objectives, the contents (conceptual, procedural, and attitudinal), and the target population, the methodological design (activities and evaluation form). The workshop was based on the approach of learning by doing, with a particular emphasis on collaborative work, short presentations, debates, participatory and recreational activities. The participants were managers of their knowledge and appropriated them with the help of the facilitator teacher. It was taken as the base the material of Fuentes, Galán, and Suárez (2011).

The primary objective of the **first workshop** was related to the mastery and development of the teaching portfolio as a tool for reflection and improvement of professors from FAREM-Carazo, which will enhance their skills in their education and must develop their teaching portfolio in the established periods.

The workshop began with a self-evaluation of education, in which the participant teachers reflected on what are the aspects that characterize them as good professors, concluding that “the competencies that a teacher must have, go beyond their work in the classroom, so, the elements of research and management should characterize them. Throughout the sessions, individual and collective work were done, and the orientation of work done at home departed from previous knowledge and teaching experience.

It is relevant to say that in recent years, as part of our job as teachers in FAREM-Carazo, a subject file must be delivered which contains: the program of the subject, the semester programming, daily planning, programming progress reports and academic performance, the compilation of teaching materials used, among others. In the workshop, it was clarified the difference between **teaching portfolio**, as an instrument of reflection by professors- and the **subject file**.

To understand the differences among them, the parts of the teaching portfolio were settled. Individually and collectively, the first draft of its portfolio was prepared following the guidelines provided. It was decided to follow the structure of teaching portfolio that currently is used in Catalan Universities: biography, teaching philosophy, evidence and plans.

The evaluation was impartial aside subjective elements; the criteria were straightforward and practical, which allowed measuring the progress made by professors. There were applied some guidelines with identification questions as tools of identifying prior knowledge and practices, reflection and self-evaluation of their teaching. These data along with the personal description of

plans, identification of needs and changes proposed that allow the quality of instruction projection of FAREM-Carazo.

Supporting material for each of the participants created which contains a labeled portfolio, questionnaires, worksheets, and assessment and self-assessment tools. A control of professors' attendance and participation was taken.

The **second workshop** was related to the monitoring and evaluation of the development of the teaching portfolio which enabled reflection on their teaching. The followed methodology was equal and cooperative work in which teachers could share the experience of an elaborated teaching portfolio that allowed to take aspects of reference to complete the portfolio of some professors who had some difficulty.

Initially, there was delivery a list which indicates the section of the teaching portfolio they had developed, and they directed that those who had not done it must not indicate anything on the sheet and that would reorient each of the sections through the sign of a teaching portfolio. Then we proceeded to the presentation of some of the elaborate portfolios.

After the workshop had ended, teachers answered a questionnaire in which they were asked to list the faced difficulties and lessons learned in the development of the teaching portfolio (CD). Then, to help complete the information on the CD, one of the members of the methodological unit presented his teaching portfolio, arousing further interest among teachers who for one or another reason did not do it, and those who already had developed, they identified some aspects that could be added to their work.

Finally, it was reflected the importance of the development of the CD, this allowed professors to share their experience, challenges, and difficulties, the followed steps, among others, and those professors who were starting their working or had not done it, they could see the goods that a teaching portfolio contains, expressing their commitment to work on it. So, the presentation of the new timetable was stated.

Also, the dialogue of reflection on teaching promoted the detection of some training needs. By this time, the training requirements were concretized and the way of how to meet they were assessed. In February 2017, professors from the Methodological Unit will travel to Barcelona to share experiences in other universities.

The **third phase** was a day of portfolios presentations with a view to validating the work done by professors. The event was held in two stages: Wednesday, August 3, 2016, in the morning, with the participation of professors from the Department of Education, Sciences, and Humanities, Teachers of the Methodological Unit and the representative of the UAB who directly validated the CD, made some remarks and congratulated the teachers for their work; a dialogue that allowed to confirm the training needs in particular subject was also established.

In the afternoon of the same day, the day continued with the participation of professors from the Science, Technology, and Health and Economics and Administrative Sciences departments, using the same methodology: presentations, dialogue to identify training needs through the manifestation of professors.

RESULTS

Once the information is finished and the results based on the data collected during the process and at the end were analyzed (personal dossier of each teacher with the patterned activities along the workshops, the presented teaching portfolio, the presentations made and the applied diary made by the organizers with notes about dialogues, interviews, and discussions held, the answer to the requested questionnaires) the **main achievements** are listed below:

Conceptual Level

1. Theoretical guidelines for the development of the teaching portfolio are established.
2. The teaching portfolio structure is identified.
3. The ideal process for the building of the portfolio of instructions set.
4. Teaching portfolios are building up by each teacher from FAREM-Carazo.
5. The need to share and work together is conceptualized.
6. Continuity is given to the joint construction of knowledge.

Procedural Level

1. A Commitment to working during the first semester in the building up of the teaching portfolio, by establishing specific dates to the delivery of each of the constituent parts.
2. Differentiation between elements of the teaching portfolio and subject file.
3. Development of teaching portfolio with all its sections.
4. Reflection on teaching as a university professor.
5. Training needs are determined.
6. Actions are identified to encourage teamwork.
7. Follow-up actions are initiated: self-assessment, regulation.

Attitudinal Level

1. Joint reflection and self-evaluation of teaching as an element of continuous improvement.
2. Majority Recognition of the importance of the teaching portfolio as a tool for reflection by university teachers towards a continuous improvement.
3. Active participation of a vast number of permanent teachers from the three education departments of FAREM-Carazo.
4. Exchange of experiences during the development of teaching portfolios (the process).
5. Exchange of finished products: teaching portfolio. It is shared and what the colleagues do is known.
6. Cohesion team. Being able to talk, share and ask for help, advice, others.
7. Innovative attitude (newness, change, transformation, progress) based on curiosity, renewal,

creativity, and avant-garde.

Contributions are not limited to the attendees, but it is extended to the institution while to the Department it has meant more and better meets its staff, the way they do, identify needs and enhancing virtues. The interdisciplinary and multi-departmental work has led to new links, approach the work of others, take examples and models, create links and unify FAREM-Carazo.

Given these results, we intend to continue with the monitoring and evaluation project of the improvement of the Educational Quality at FAREM-Carazo (2012-2016). In these moments the questionnaires are deeply analyzed, and new shares are valued hoping to be as successful as those taken so far.

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APPENDIX



*Pictures of different moments of the presented experience.
Coordinating group working on the follow-up process.*