Electoral effervescence on a bus: didactic strategy of student journalistic coverage in real time

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Summary. Didactic strategy of journalistic coverage carried out in the electoral processes of Costa Rica in 2022, which consisted of the design and application of two tours on a bus, called Electoral Caravan ECCC CR 2022. Students of the Mass Communication Sciences (ECCC) career of the University of Costa Rica (UCR), national and foreign, participated, some of whom had not previously participated in democratic electoral processes in their countries of origin. Each activity included the following steps: 1. Pre-production of the strategy. 2. Induction for participants. 3. General production. 4. Review and publication of produced materials. 5. Consultations with students and analysis of the results. The experiences and skills obtained by the direct immersion in the field of work constituted the main learnings of the tours, defined as: the speed to make decisions, real-time application of classroom contents, and motivation for participation in democratic processes.

Keywords: Pedagogical Experience, University, Mass Media, Politics, Democracy.

1 Introduction

1.1 Context of the didactic strategy

The presidential elections in Costa Rica have been considered an electoral holiday. Public schools become polling places on the day of popular elections (which for the purposes of this article we will call E-Day). This democratic celebration is joined by people of all ages, in order to support the bodies related to the Supreme Electoral Court, collaborate with the political parties of preference, go out to vote, or simply to observe and enjoy the atmosphere. The popular election of the executive and legislative branches is on the first Sunday of February, every four years. In the event that 40% of the votes cast do not correspond to a single political party, a second popular election will be held on the following first Sunday in April, as established by the current Political Constitution. Voting stations begin to receive votes at six in the morning and end at six in the afternoon (Political Constitution of 1949 and its reforms, 1949).

Since 2010, no party has obtained the minimum percentage required to win elections, so on each occasion two electoral rounds have had to be made. (International Idea Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance, 2014; Semanario Universidad, 2018, 2022; Rodríguez, 2018).

Due to the CoVid-19 pandemic, people who were in the last years of high school or who were first- or second-year college students in 2022, had not had the experience of frequently leaving their homes due to confinement. These people were the bulk of students we had in the summer period 2021, corresponding to the months of January and February of the year 2022.

In the ECCC we have carried out electoral coverage in national and municipal elections with student participation. In order for them to carry out practices related to their profession, photographs, small videos and notes are produced for publication in the UCR media that cover and provide resources on electoral political work. (Rojas, 2014; Miranda, 2018; University of Costa Rica, 2023).

In the 2022 presidential elections, a series of modifications were included with respect to previous experiences, such as the incorporation of a bus in which all the participants traveled to reach the same ″stops″, the design of a route to visit key places, and editing software.

2   Theoretical Framework

The pedagogical line of ECCC is constructivist, so didactic strategies are sought in which the multilateral and harmonious formation of the personality of each student is encouraged, as indicated by Gamboa (2019), from spaces that are not only classrooms and that have adequate teaching accompaniment. That is, experiences that are directly linked to their fields of expertise.

Gamboa (2019) considers that you learn in the activity and as a result of this:

> Learning is a reflection of reality by the subject, and as such occurs in the activity it develops; It expresses its conscious character and the active participation of the subject in the process of appropriation of the contents of culture, its disposition to intellectual effort, reflection, problematization and the creative search for knowledge. (p. 36).

According to Novak, as cited in Moreira (2017), meaningful learning has a humanistic connotation, which underlies "the constructivist, positive integration between thoughts, feelings, and actions that lead to human aggrandizement". (p.6).

Hmelo-Silver, Duncan & Chinn, 2007, point out that for knowledge to be acquired in learning environments, it must be similar to the likely future contexts, in which they manage to develop interconnected, meaningful and useful compressions.

Ausubel (1963) in Moreira (2017) proposes that prior knowledge and predisposition to learn are the key conditions for meaningful learning.

Likewise, the impact of these activities will be both personal and social, influencing who students become and what they do later in life. (Beckett cited in Jover, G. & Luque, D., 2020).

Corrales (2015), argues that social networks are a new actor that influences citizen participation in electoral processes.

3   Method

The didactic strategy Caravana ECCC 2022 was carried out in both electoral rounds with students of the Mass Communication career of the ECCC of the UCR.

It was developed in five moments:

1. Pre-production of the strategy: definition of the route, coordination of transport, preparation of graphic identifiers, induction and work guides for E-Day, coordination of loan of photography and video equipment and with the people in charge of university media. (*Semanario Universidad*, radio shows, *Canal* UCR and its networks).
2. Induction for participants: instruction session on the conditions to participate in the activity, explanation of the dress code, departure and arrival times, bus route.
3. Day E: general production. Two teachers from the ECCC accompanied two groups of students on the visit to voting centers in the Greater Metropolitan Area (GAM), where they took photographs and videos of the environment in general, as well as interviews, to make news stories that document the electoral process. The materials produced were reviewed by the teachers and sent to the editorial board of the media outlets for selection.
4. Review and publication of materials produced. We use the #CaravanaElectoralECCC. (School of Mass Communication Sciences, 2022).
5. Consultations with students and analysis of the results.

4   Results

A form was applied to our population in Google Forms, from which we extract some of the main results:

1. On the first tour, a quarter of the participants were not enrolled in any course related to the activities. On the second tour, that percentage grew to more than 50%, which indicates that many people attended to take advantage of the experience and that interest doubled.
2. The entire population reported being at the highest levels of overall satisfaction with the experience.
3. The twelve-hour day was considered rough.
4. 95% of people went to places they had not been before, that the experience contributed to strengthening learning and that they would participate in similar activities again.
5. They stressed that the tour allowed them to: develop speed to make decisions, learn more than in the classroom, live the experience in the street, feel the adrenaline of the moment, encourage participation in democratic processes, learn in a playful way, place their work in media outlets, reduce fear, develop in different environments.

5   Discussion

Student immersion in the field of work with an adequate theoretical basis, with teaching accompaniment, and detailed instructions, have positive results. Students value educational activities that allow them to approach the reality of their profession, especially when it has an important practical component. The contact with this reality helps them to understand, with greater clarity, some characteristics of their careers, such as what it means to generate audiovisual material for electoral coverage in real time.

6   Conclusions

We point out seven fundamental aspects for the strategy to work in other educational contexts:

1. Solid pre-production.
2. Adequate teaching accompaniment.
3. Teamwork skills.
4. Knowledge and access to technological resources.
5. Ability to adapt to unforeseen events.
6. Institutional support.
7. Motivation of the student body.

7   Limitations and Future Research

The main limitation that was presented was the displacement by the GAM, because there was a lot of traffic and the transport was land. As the hours passed, the number of people taking to the streets increased, slowing down the movement. This was observed most strongly on the first E-Day, when there were more people and vehicles on the streets.

The strategy has great potential to be replicated in various academic fields, making the corresponding adaptations to each experience and discipline, because it allows students to develop skills and abilities for their professional performance.

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