

Mexico (CONAFE)

“Dialogue and Discover” Model, from the Community Courses Program

“Dialogue and Discover” manuals are used by Mexican community instructors (young people without professional teacher education who teach for a limited period of time in small marginalized rural communities). The objective of the manual is to guide, organize and support their teaching activities with concise summaries of curricular contents and didactic and methodological information on activities that are suited for mixed-age classes.

Main focus of innovation: LEARNERS, TEACHERS, RESOURCES, ORGANISATION

Other keywords: equity

General Information

Name of the ILE: “Dialogue and Discover” Model, from the Community Courses Program

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ILE submitted by: National Council for the Promotion of Education

Rationale

Why do you suggest that it should be included in the project? How does it respond to 21st century learning challenges?

Mexico's rural and indigenous socioeconomic conditions have kept the population without the basic public services. In order to guarantee the right to education in these areas, the government through the National Council for the Promotion of Education (Conafe) designed a community program which attempts to offer education according to their needs.

From the beginning, Community Courses program was designed to be applied at a national level. At present it includes fewer than 8,000 communities because although the scale of the program is important, it means only a small portion of the total enrolment of primary education. They are actually micro-schools that average a dozen students each. Thus, the children attending the Community Courses are only a fraction (0.6%) of the total enrolment.

Our challenge is to cover the population's needs for primary school education through a method/model that meets its requirements, taking their possibilities into consideration –as diverse as they may seem- with the quality and efficiency needed so they can enjoy the same opportunities and benefits that the rest of the population at larger and/or urban locations.

We consider that “Dialogue and Discover” is a work model that can meet this challenge because the materials used in the teaching-learning process in the classroom were tested directly by Community Courses' teachers and instructors in various regions of the country. This process of experimentation went hand in hand with the elaboration of the proposal and was a permanent source of information for its adjustment and re-elaboration.

The model responds to the country's diversity, to the needs of its rural and disperses communities. It is designed so that a community instructor (teacher), a young student who is familiar with the community's customs, can teach the students. The didactic materials are simple and easy to use. The model employs a multilevel system, which means that one instructor teaches different grades in the same class room.

All the model characteristics are appropriated to deal with the learning challenges that Mexican educational context face.

This project aims to improve the Dialogue and Discover program as a strategy to turn community schools into innovative learning environments through the case study of 20 primary schools.

The project responds to the 21st century learning challenges because the dialogue and Discover program gathers characteristic that reflects the ILE principles:

- Students are the main actors of the teaching and learning process since they develop projects of their interest
- The program respects individual learning necessities and cultural backgrounds
- Assessments are continually made during the school year
- The students' prior knowledge is taken into consideration to the teaching and learning process
- The subject contents are related to the daily activities of the children
- Group work and cooperative learning is constantly used in developing group projects
- Continuously students present their projects to the community promoting the feedback between families, students and instructors

Learning Aims / Intended Learning Outcomes of the ILE

What are the core learning aims and which knowledge, skills or attitudes are to be acquired? (These may include outcomes related to learners' social, interpersonal, or meta-cognitive development)

- The main objective is to improve the application of the Dialogue and Discover program with the use of supporting materials
- To increase the academic performance of the treatment group schools in the 2011 ENLACE.
- To improve the community instructor skills in the classroom
- To improve the material distribution
- To assess students' competences

Learners

Which group(s) of learners is it aiming at? Who is eligible to take part? How many learners are there? What are their ages?

This research includes students from 20 primary schools that will be selected based upon their positive and negative results on the 2009 National Evaluation of the Academic Performance at School Centers (ENLACE). The control group will consist of 10 primary schools and the rest will be the treatment group. In each group 5 primary schools will have had positive results and 5 negative ones.

After detecting the schools with the lowest and highest test results, the objective is to develop new support materials to guide the instructor in the application of the Dialogue and Discover program in the 2010-2011 school year. This strategy will attempt to discover if the Dialogue and Discover program needs to be improved or updated.

Facilitators

Who are the teachers/facilitators? Who are the leaders? What are their professional backgrounds? What are their roles?

The educational agents involved in the development of the Community Courses are:

Community Instructors

They are young people covering their social service requirements as instructors. Their ages range between 14 and 24 and they have concluded their secondary school or high school education. They are of rural origin and play the role of teachers and are characterized by their enthusiasm and commitment to establish affective ties with the children and other members of the communities.

Training Tutors

The Training Tutors are young people who were outstanding as instructors, both in their actions towards the benefit of the communities as well as in their work as teachers with the school group, who are invited to train and advise new instructors.

Education Assistant

The level of Education Assistant is the highest ranking for a service provider who has been outstanding as a teacher. They are responsible for guiding and advising Training Tutors.

Asociación Promotora de Educación Comunitaria (APEC) (Association for the Promotion of Community Education)

It includes the parents, tutors and members of the community serviced by the CONAFE who participate in: the definition of the educational modality, the organization and installation of the school room, the provision of housing, food and safety for community instructors, the definition of the class schedule and the development of the educational program.

Organization of the ILE

How is learning organised? How do learners and facilitators interact? What kind of pedagogy do they follow? What curriculum is used?

Work organization at the unitary school

Students are grouped into three levels. Level 1 includes children who are learning how to read and write and is equivalent to the 1° and 2° grades of primary school. Level II is integrated by 3° and 4° grade students, and Level III includes grades 5° and 6°.

As the teacher of a unitary school, the facilitator has to distribute his/her time among the different levels, so this model has direct activities which require the presence of the facilitator and indirect activities which student's can undertake with only his/her supervision.

Student's of every level follow the same program, work together on the same activities and remains at least two years at the same level. Therefore, manuals include didactic situations that allow the children to approach them with different resources when they repeat them a year later.

Unlike the tendency to homogenize student groups at school, Community Courses seek to make the most of the different capacities and knowledge of the children of a same level. The construction of knowledge is a social process that is favoured through the constant interaction and communication relations between subjects with different levels of cognitive development.

Curriculum

The primary school curriculum is integrated by 4 areas of knowledge: Spanish, Mathematics, Natural Sciences and Social Sciences. The curricular contents of the six grades of primary education in the four areas of knowledge was concentrated for the community facilitator into two Manuals, which guide him/her on how to apply the "Dialogue and Discover" model. Since the instructors do not have a professional teaching education, it is necessary for these manuals to provide as much pertinent information on the conceptual contents of each area as possible, as well as the didactic and methodological resources for them to teach favouring and respecting the student's learning processes. The community courses' curriculum basically includes the same contents as the official primary education program, although differently organized.

Type of pedagogy applied

Since this method is conceived as a cyclic learning process, it generates successive comprehension and assimilation stages of the school contents with which student's interact several times over different years. The purpose of this is to achieve a better comprehension of it.

The logical proposal of the design of the didactic situations basically responds to the knowledge we have of general learning processes. However, each activity opens spaces to integrate the forms of expressions and the cultural characteristics of the regional environment of the community courses.

Curriculum divided by teaching and learning sequences.

"Dialogue and discover" incorporates multilevel activities (except for mathematics), that both organize the work of the instructors and favour the socialization of knowledge.

At the beginning of each thematic content, the facilitator presents a situation and prompts the children to come up with ideas and solutions. The children's first actions or explanations manifested are made to evolve into activities that eventually demonstrate the knowledge they have constructed.

Knowledge is functionalized in order to promote the evolution process. In other words, the child must have a sense of appropriation or incorporation of the new knowledge in terms of: solving a problem, communicating an idea and/or understanding a phenomenon. This promotes that the children naturally start understanding their environment better.

Once two or three levels have interacted, specific activities are proposed to each level that generally faces the children with a new challenge.

When the work in each level is concluded, the two or three levels that were involved in the sequence of activities in the beginning, work together again. During this teaching stage the participation of the instructors is more direct and it functions as a closure or conclusion of the work on a theme. It starts when the children present what they worked on as couples or as a team before the group. The purpose of this is to socialize the knowledge constructed until that moment. The facilitator then promotes the discussion and argumentation of the different explanations that the children have come up with or found.

Based on this discussion, the instructors provide pertinent information. The children incorporate the opinions from other fellow students and from the facilitator about the situation or object analyzed, that are significant to them.

The learning sequence is complemented immediately and throughout the year through situations in which the children deepen, affirm and extend the knowledge.

The materials included in the Series “Dialogue and discover” are:

1. The experience of being a instructor
2. Level I and II Community Instructors Manual
3. Level III Community Instructors Manual
4. Spanish Work Booklet, Level III
5. Natural Sciences Work Booklet, Level III
6. History and Geography Work Booklet, Level III
7. Mathematics Work Booklet, Level III
8. The Book of Games, Levels I, II and III
9. Work files for Level II

In addition to the above mentioned materials, for the study case project a series of supporting material will be developed to guide the instructors in implementing and making the best of the Dialogue and Discover program.

Learning Context

In which context does learning take place? What does the physical learning environment look like? Are community resources used to facilitate learning and how?

Communities with less than 100 inhabitants, distant from urban populations and with inexistent or insufficient basic public services: drinking water, drainage, public lighting, and roads, among others. Families in these communities survive through self consumption agriculture, small scale animal breeding, the production of crafts or fishing near rivers or lakes and to a lesser degree, to the exploitation of forests and minerals. The majority of the adult population in these communities is illiterate or did not finish their primary education.

To install a CONAFE Community Course, parents in the community must organize themselves and legally constitute the Promoting Association of Community Education (APEC) to promote the participation and organization of its members. They must commit to take care of the operation needs of the educational facility installed in the Community, to provide an adequate and safe space for schooling activities and to obtain resources and support from municipal authorities.

In coordination with the teaching figures and Conafe Delegation's employees, the APEC also has to take care of the school's infrastructure. In addition, its members have to commit to provide food and housing for the facilitator assigned to teach the Primary Courses and for the Training Tutor during the support and follow-up visits. One of their main responsibilities is to attend to and participate in the meetings summoned by CONAFE'S State Delegation to deal with issues related to the development of the Community Education actions and to report if the Community Teaching Figures are present at the community and teach the number of days per month programmed and to inform the CONAFE about their performance in the classroom and the community. On the other hand, they teacher figures have to update them on the improvements and school performance of the students.

History of ILE

Who initiated it? For what reasons was it started and with what purpose? Have these changed since?

The Dialogue and Discover material was designed aiming to guide, organize course work and support the teaching activities of the community instructor.

In the beginning of the system, the Conafe requested support from Department of Educational Research (DIE) of the Advanced Research and Studies Center of the National Polytechnic Institute (CINVESTAV-IPN) to elaborate a community instructor' manual. In 1975, the DIE created the Community Instructor Manual Levels I and II (grades 1st to 4th) and two years later the Community Instructor Manual Levels III (grades 5th and 6th).

In 1988, the Conafe asked the DIE to update the manuals. This updating had to respond to the conditions in which the programs were operating at the time, the characteristics of the teachers, the needs of the communities and the current official programs of the Ministry of Education (SEP).

This review was jointly executed by DIE, CONAFE's Central Offices and State Delegations' personnel, as well as with teaching figures. The project of the elaboration of the new manuals was named "Dialogue and discover".

In 1999, the CONAFE restructured the curriculum of the Community Courses around five axes: Comprehension of the natural, social and cultural environment, Communication, Logics-mathematics, Attitudes and values and Learning to learn, which are reflected in the curricular chart known as Skills Community Preschool and Primary.

During the 2004-2005 school year, the DIE personnel were asked to undertake the study "Evaluation of the performance of the teaching figures of the Community Courses program".

As of 2005, based on the recommendations made by the DIE as a result of the evaluation, it was decided to continue with the materials of the "Dialogue and discover" series during the 2006-2007 school year. The Community Primary School is currently working with these materials.

Funding of the ILE

How is it funded?

With Federal resources assigned to the educational programs of the Mexican Government. Federative Entities also contribute with financial resources and the localities where these school centers are located, contribute with the land where they are installed.

Learning Outcomes

What are the learning outcomes achieved by the ILE, including academic, social, interpersonal and meta-cognitive outcomes? How is learning assessed?

Through the years evidence has demonstrated that Dialogue and Discover program is one of the best options in Mexico to teach in rural and indigenous communities however, Conafe's intention is to help instructors to apply the model so that it can be approached to an innovative learning environment.

Applying the ILE principles which already lies in the program bases but have not been exploited, the study case attempts to create new strategies so that the instructor could be able to teach the program in a more effective way and improve the student performance.

Therefore the outcomes will be obtained as a result of the asses prepared for the 2010-2011 school year in the 20 study case schools.