Evaluation of the real curriculum of the career Tourism and Hotel Management

MSc. María Catalina Tapia López
Researcher Teacher
UNAN-MANAGUA, FAREM-CARAZO
kathytapia7@hotmail.com

MSc. Raúl Alberto Medrano Chávez
Researcher Teacher
UNAN-MANAGUA, FAREM-CARAZO
raulunancarazo@hotmail.com

ABSTRACT

UNAN-Managua has been conducting a process of ongoing analysis and reflection on its work, in order to raise, develop, evaluate and manage. In order to reach excellence levels in academic processes, it is essential, among other activities, the permanent evaluation of the curriculum, in order to be able to improve it continuously, as Brovelli (2001: 102) points out, "Understand that evaluating the curriculum and educational institutions is to start improving them..." Also, the process of evaluation and updating of the curriculum allows to incorporate the advances that are given in the field of science and technology and in this way, to be able to contribute to the efficient and timely solution to environmental problems.

1. INTRODUCTION

Globalization and rapid advances in the field of technology and communications have led to the development of the knowledge society, which brings along new challenges that must be assumed by all educational institutions, particularly by Higher education, in order to ensure the training of professionals who have the necessary skills to respond timely to the demands and needs of their environment.

In this sense, it is of vital importance that universities systematically evaluate and adjust their curricula so that it incorporates, fundamentally, the advances that arise in the field of technology and the sciences, through innovative didactic strategies, that allow the Educational institutions meet the demands of society and fulfill their mission with quality.

The National Autonomous University of Nicaragua (UNAN-Managua) is immersed in a university accreditation process, proposing a set of strategic actions aimed at achieving this goal, which allow raising quality standards, both at the academic and management level. That is why it is

considered pertinent, to promote permanent processes of evaluation of the curriculum, in order to reach these quality standards.

The present work is established as a first effort to promote these permanent processes of curriculum evaluation in UNAN-Managua, starting at the beginning of the Regional Multidisciplinary Faculty of Carazo (FAREM-Carazo). For this purpose the Degree in Tourism and Hotel Management has been selected, which was created in this faculty, attached to the Department of Economic and Administrative Sciences. La Carrera has four groups of classes, with a population of 110 students, first, third, fourth and fifth year; with a perspective of graduates of 20% by 2015.

The curriculum of the course was prepared by a Career Curriculum Commission made up of teachers from the FAREM-Carazo, structured as follows: a coordinator, five teachers with training and experience, both in the administrative and in tourist area, a representative of the guild of the teaching staff, a representative of the student leadership and the management of the Department of Economic and Administrative Sciences.

The curriculum was designed on the basis of the UNAN-Managua Educational Model, Normative and Methodology for Curriculum Planning 2011, which is a student-centered model and in the development of procedures, skills, strategies and techniques that allow them to learn to be, to know, to make, to coexist, to undertake and create initiatives that promote the tourism and hotel industry in the region and the country, using the research axis as an essential component of the education process, through the methodology of discovery learning within and outside the classroom. The whole process of elaboration counted on the accompaniment and advising of specialists of the Academic Direction of the UNAN-Managua.

In order to reach excellence levels in academic processes, it is essential, among other activities, the permanent evaluation of the curriculum, in order to be able to improve it continuously, as Brovelli (2001: 102) states, "Understand that evaluating curriculum and the educational institutions is to begin to improve them … ".

Casarini (2009) points out that there are different plots of the curriculum that are susceptible to evaluation: the formal curriculum, which evaluates the profile of the graduate and the structure of the curriculum; The real curriculum, which focuses on the evaluation of the strategies applied by teachers, learning processes, learning products, as well as the material, spatial, human conditions and, finally, the hidden curriculum that implies the evaluation of the Values, models, attitudes of teachers and students, the processes of socialization in the classroom, among other aspects.

2. METHODOLOGY

It was taken as a point of departure by Casarini (2009) that the real curriculum is the implementation of the formal curriculum with the inevitable and necessary modifications that requires the contrasting and adjustment between a curricular plan and the reality of the classroom, without losing sight of the fact that the real curriculum finds its raison d'être in educational practice.

It has been considered that teachers are a primary source of information for the evaluation of real curriculum. Casarini (2009) points out that "Teachers constitute a privileged sector in curricular evaluation and teaching, so it is healthy to consider, on the one hand, that they are key informants in evaluative processes …" (p 195). In this process, surveys were applied to five teachers who teach

classes in the course under study.

Also, students are another source of primary information for diagnosis. Casarini says that the key figures in the curriculum are teachers and students and are the most important concern of the curriculum evaluator. For this study, a survey was applied to 52 students in the third, fourth and fifth year of the major.

Additionally, the Major coordinators have been considered as important information sources for this study, since they have defined, among their functions, to coordinate the academic work carried out by teachers. In this sense, the two coordinators who have been assigned the career of Tourism and Hotel Management were interviewed.

On the other hand, Brovelli (page 114) states that the evaluation of the curriculum must take into account the external assessment, which takes into account a focus group of four graduates, in order to inquire about the type of professional functions that they really play, to know about the quality of their performance, of the competences acquired, during their training and the practices made.

The information processing was performed using the statistical package SPSS v.18, particularly for the processing of the surveys applied to the students. In the case of the information gathered from the interviews and the focus group, tables were designed in order to facilitate its analysis process.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Next, the main findings of the process of evaluation of the real curriculum of the Bachelor Degree in Tourism and Hotel Management (ATH), in the FAREM-Carazo, are presented. Initially, the results are derived from general questions asked to the students. Then, taking as pointed out by Casarini, the results are organized considering the aspects when evaluating the real curriculum: evaluation of strategies applied by teachers, evaluation of learning processes, evaluation of learning products, as well as evaluation of the material, spatial, human, and other conditions. In these sections, we present the cross-view of both students and teachers, as well as the opinion provided by the Major coordinators.

3.1. Career information

Students were initially asked if they knew the career plan; Only 35% of respondents expressed their knowledge. A partially positive fact is that the Major is slowly gaining appeal in the academic market (high school students) considering the boom and growth experienced by the tourism sector in our country. This is evidenced in the applied survey, in which 75% of the students affirmed that this Major was their first option of entrance in the University. This figure contrasts with the statistics for 2010, in which only 10% of freshmen of the Major had expressed that it was their first choice.

When asking the teachers who teach classes in the Career of Tourism and Hotel Management about the profile of it, everyone agrees to know it, also expressed that, in a general way, the contents set allows to achieve the general objectives of the program; However, they explained that there are programs that omit subjects that are relevant to the subject, so that they sometimes make adjustments in order to strengthen students' knowledge and that many times, the number of hours allocated is insufficient for the development of all contents.

3.2. Evaluation of strategies implemented by the teacher

For the evaluation of the learning strategies, a series of factors were considered, organized in two categories: teacher intervention and didactic strategies used by the teacher.

3.2.1. Teacher intervention

As for the intervention of the teacher in the classroom was known, that a percentage less than 50% of teachers, always explain to their students the objectives of the subject and that 25% sometimes do. (See figure 1)

At the beginning of the class the teacher explains the objectives of the subject

25%
42%
33%
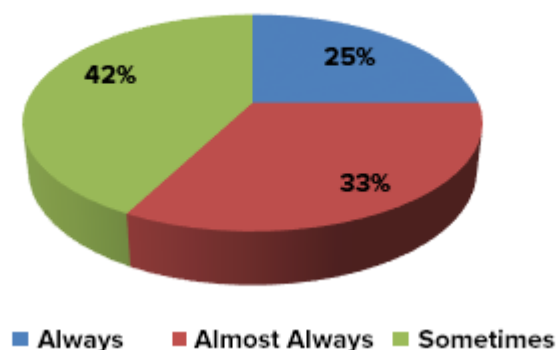
■ Always   ■ Almost Always   ■ Sometimes

Figure 1. Explanation of the objectives of the subject

The mentioned before shows that in the development of some subjects, the students are unaware of the purposes to be achieved and the contributions that the subject provides for the fulfillment of the Career profile

Students were then consulted if their teachers explained the learning objectives at the beginning of each unit (see Figure 2).

At the beginning of the unit the teacher guides the learning objectives

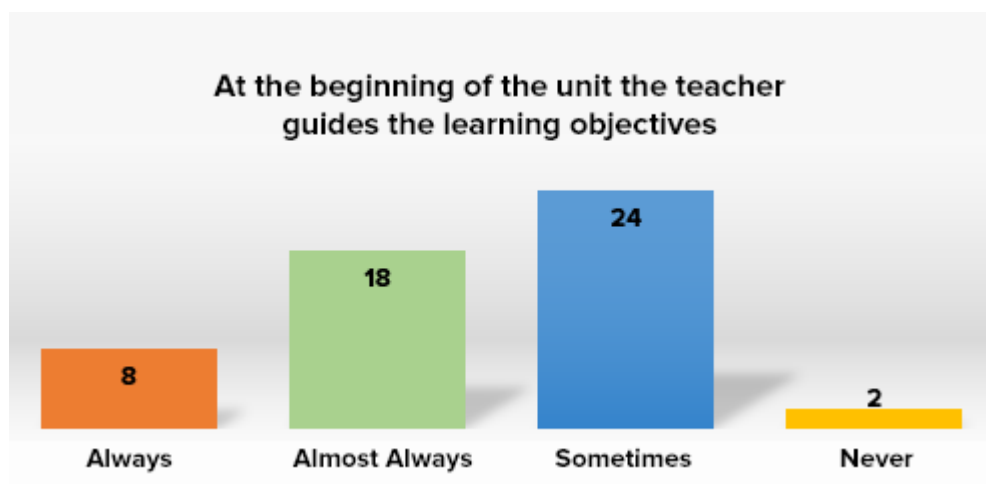| Always	Almost Always	Sometimes	Never
8	18	24	2

Figure 2. Explanation of objectives per unit.

46% of the informants consider that most teachers do not clearly orient the learning objectives, which does not allow an adequate internalization of the knowledge by the students, since in not understanding the real usefulness of the knowledge and its applicability, learning becomes less significant.

On the other hand, only 40% of the respondents said that teachers always ask about the previous knowledge of the contents to be developed, which shows that not all teachers are conducting diagnostic evaluations oriented in the Educational Model and programs of course, therefore, the opportunity to validate and reconstruct, if necessary, the previous knowledge of the students, is lost.

A fundamental aspect in the real evaluation of the curriculum is the methodology applied by the teacher. Students were consulted about this aspect and 94% of the respondents said that the teacher uses an appropriate methodology that is in line with the characteristics of the subject that he / she develops (see Figure 3). Likewise, 80% consider that the didactic resources used by teachers are relevant for content development, which represents a strength in relation to teacher intervention in the classroom.
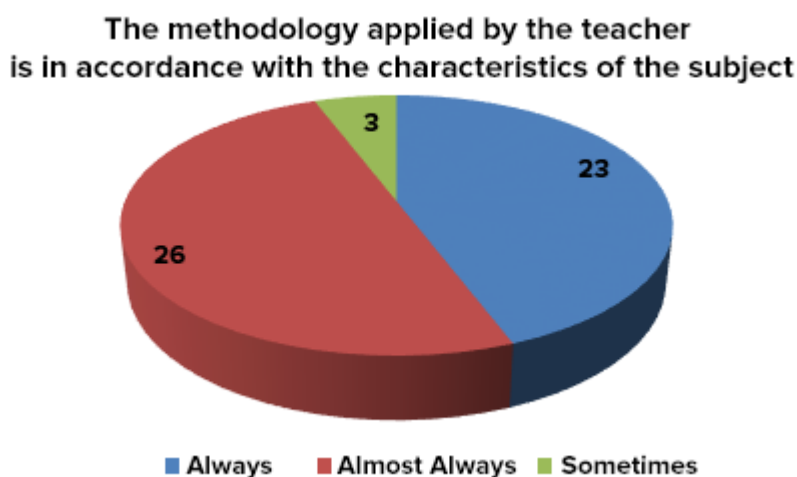

Figure 3. Methodology according to the characteristics of the subject.

It is important to emphasize that teachers 'opinions coincide with students' perceptions, since 98% of the teachers consulted say that the methodological activities selected for content development are the most adequate to reach the learning proposed in the objectives. They also expressed that they take as a reference the methodology suggested in the program of the subject, this shows that the consulted teachers adjust their teaching practice to the methodological orientations provided in the subject programs.

In relation to the closing activities at the end of each class session, only 23% of the respondents believe that the teachers summarize the contents addressed at the end of the class, that is, the consolidation process of what was learned is not being carried out.. On the other hand, 19% of students express that teachers always assign independent study activities. This practice demonstrates the non-compliance with what is established in the curricular model and in the

thematic plan of the subject programs, since these include a significant number of hours for the independent work of the students.

The Educational Model of the UNAN-Managua establishes that Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) will be used not only to improve pedagogical practices, but also to allow students other learning scenarios. In this sense, students were consulted about the use of technology by teachers, only 10% of the respondents expressed that teachers use technology, this shows the non-compliance with what is established in the Educational Model. However, this contradicts what was said by the teachers consulted, since they claim that they use technological resources for the development of their subjects. The students were consulted if the teachers oriented the use of bibliographic resources for the development of the subject. Ninety-three percent of the respondents expressed that teachers always guide the use of bibliography. In this regard, teachers said that few use the bibliography suggested in the subject programs, as they consider it insufficient, suggesting the need to update it annually.

3.2.2. Didactic strategies used

Students were consulted about the didactic strategies implemented by their teachers, obtaining the results shown in Figure 4. *(See figure on next page)*

This shows that teachers are implementing in the classroom didactic strategies oriented in the Educational Model of the UNAN-Managua, with contextual location and collaborative learning being the most used strategies. It is very interesting the coincidence between the opinion of the students and the teachers, since both sources of information agree on which are the most used strategies. Likewise, teachers expressed that the fieldwork and the analytical-reflexive written report are the strategies they use least.

However, it is vital to point out that Major coordinators, except for newly hired teachers, do not carry out a methodological accompaniment to verify the actual implementation of these strategies in the classroom. That is, there is no follow-up to the actual implementation of the semester course plans prepared and delivered by the teachers. The coordinators expressed that the follow-up given to all teachers is through daily indirect supervision, in which the teacher reports on the unit and contents to be developed. However, it is not valued how this content is developed in the classroom systematically, only when scientific-technical supervision is carried out.

3.3. Assessment of learning processes

For the evaluation of the learning processes, a set of aspects was considered that were organized in three categories: significant learning, participative methodologies and evaluation of the subject.

3.3.1. Significant Learning

Students consider the methodologies that facilitate learning more meaningful are case resolution and fieldwork. In the case of the resolution of cases they affirmed that it allowed them to put into practice the acquired knowledge and in this way, to give a meaning to what they learn. In the same way, they consider that the field work they do, mainly through Vocational Training Practices, has allowed them to link with the labor field and acquire knowledge that cannot be obtained in the classroom.
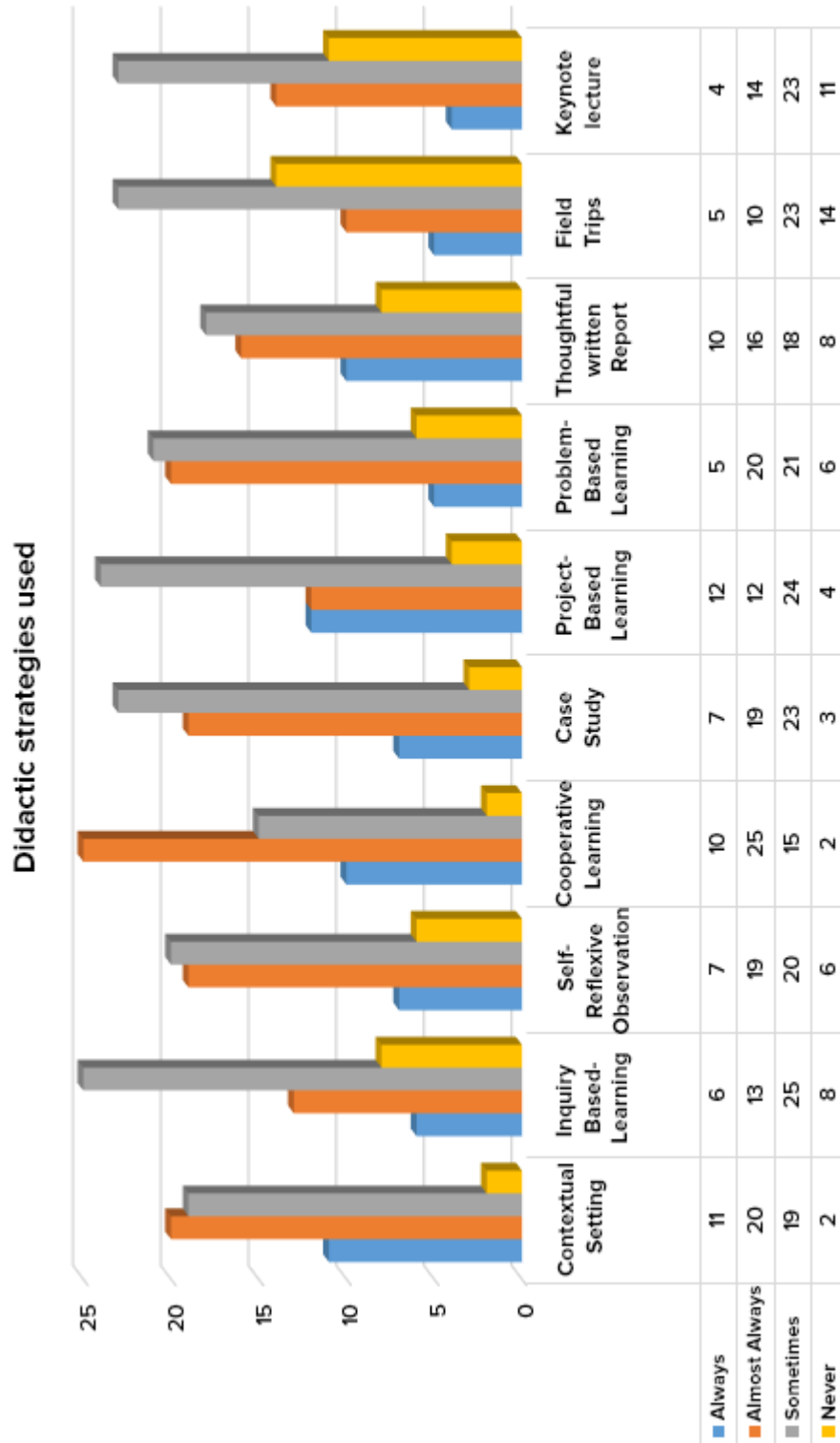
Didactic strategies used

	Always	Almost Always	Sometimes	Never
Contextual Setting	11	20	19	2
Inquiry Based-Learning	6	13	25	8
Self-Reflexive Observation	7	19	20	6
Cooperative Learning	10	25	15	2
Case Study	7	19	23	3
Project-Based Learning	12	12	24	4
Problem-Based Learning	5	20	21	6
Thoughtful written Report	10	16	18	8
Field Trips	5	10	23	14
Keynote lecture	4	14	23	11

Figure 4. Didactic strategies used by teachers

The above is corroborated by the students graduated from the Career, since during the development of the focus group, they shared that through the resolution of case studies, they should not only put into practice the knowledge already acquired, but also, they should investigate in order to be able to solve the problems presented. They also pointed out that the subjects related to research and the formulation of projects are those that allowed him to develop a more meaningful learning.

3.3.2. Participatory methodologies

Regarding participatory methodologies, the Educational Model of UNAN-Managua states that the teaching-learning process implemented by this Study house is based on a pedagogical model that focuses on the student who takes an active and participatory role, so that in the model is oriented the realization of works in order that the students have an active role in their learning process. According to the students' opinion (72%), teachers are promoting participatory methodologies, which agrees that one of the most used didactic strategies is collaborative learning.

3.3.3. Summative evaluation processes

Students were consulted about the summative assessment processes of the subjects. They were asked if the teachers explained at the beginning of the course the evaluation system to be implemented and if they performed four group work and four individual short tests, as established in the UNAN-Managua Educational Model. 89% of respondents answered that always, or almost always, teachers explain the course evaluation system. Likewise, they expressed that 92% of teachers comply with the form defined in the Educational Model.
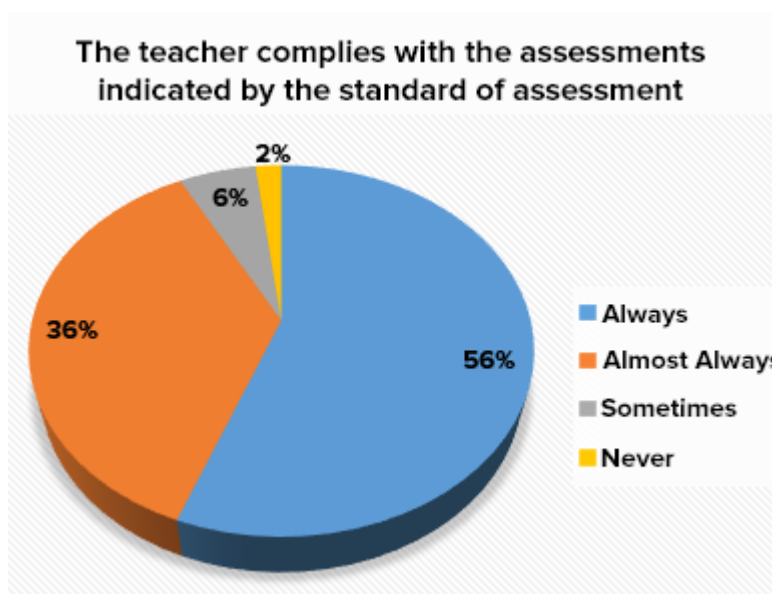

Figure 5. Compliance with summative assessment according to regulations.

Likewise, teachers stated that they explain to students the evaluation methods that would be used during the development of the subject, considering as a reference what is established by the evaluation regulations, even complying with the dates proposed by the academic authorities of the faculty (Beginning in week number three, examinations in weeks eleven and twelve, culminating in week fifteen).

Continuing with the evaluation process, the students were consulted if the teachers delivered the results of their assessments in a timely manner, since the academic regulations establish that they must be delivered 72 hours after the evaluation activity. Figure 6 shows that there are very few teachers who deliver the results of assessments in a timely manner. It is important to note that many students expressed that several teachers never give them the work they do and do not inform them about the accumulation they are getting throughout the semester.

The results of evaluation are delivered 72 hours later

6%
29%
27%
38%

■ Always ■ Almost Always ■ Sometimes ■ Never

Figure 6. Delivery of evaluation results according to regulation

In addition, the majority of the students consulted affirm that they do not receive any type of feedback from their work, short tests and exams (see figure 7), this represents a direct affectation to the educational quality and, therefore, the non-fulfillment of the established in the Educational model and curriculum of the major, since the student is limited the opportunity to learn from their mistakes, remaining with gaps throughout their training process.
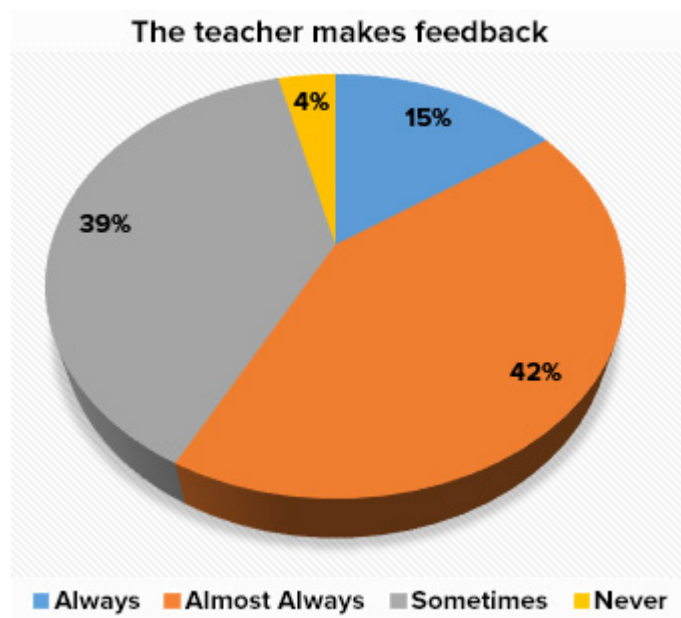
The teacher makes feedback

4%
15%
39%
42%

■ Always ■ Almost Always ■ Sometimes ■ Never

Figure 7. The teacher makes feedback

On the other hand, teachers, unlike the students, expressed that they comply with the delivery of the grades of the different evaluations in a timely manner, but they agreed with the students that sometimes the feedback of the evaluations is not made, arguing time constraints.

Regarding the evaluations, 55% of the students mentioned that the methods and techniques used to evaluate the units were the most adequate, however, 45% believe that this is not the

case, mainly in relation to the short tests. At this point, it is important to note that at the time of interviewing the coordinators of the course, it was evident that teachers do not present the short tests they apply to their students or the rubrics where the criteria to be assessed in assignments is defined or in the end-of-course projects.

3.4. Evaluation of learning products

The coordinators said that in 2014, two teams of V year students participated in the Innovation and Entrepreneurship Day at the level of the Faculty, classifying one of these groups to participate nationally in the competition of innovation, promoted by CONICYT and the CNU. These students were ranked second in the field of environmental protection.

Fifth year students presented 15 reports of Formulation and Evaluation of Projects related to the tourism and hotel sector. In addition, students from the senior years presented in 2014, ten projects that participated in the University Conference on Scientific Development (JUDC).

On the other hand, in the year 2014, students of the fifth year of the career carried out professional practices in different tourist entities. In the year 2015, all the students of third, fourth and fifth year of the Major were located, in different tourist organizations and hotels. This has allowed them to put into practice the knowledge acquired throughout their Career, obtaining students very positive experiences. Likewise, thanks to the link that the Faculty has with INTUR, 20 students of this major participated actively in the 2014 and 2015 summer plan, giving support as tour guides in the department of Carazo.

3.5. Assessment of material conditions

3.5.1. Classroom conditions

With respect to classroom conditions, 90% of the students surveyed rated between excellent and very good the correspondence between the size of the classroom and the number of students, the lighting and ventilation of the same, as well as the isolation of external factors such as noise. In these aspects, both the teachers and the Major coordinators, coincided with the perception of the students, who positively value the facilities in which the classes are developed.

3.5.2. Computer Laboratories

The Faculty has four modern computer labs, equipped with 120 computers that have installed the basic programs as well as Internet connection, in order to guarantee the optimal conditions that allow students to develop basic computer skills and, at the same time, use the computer in the development of the required competencies. However, it is vital to note that these laboratories are not located in the building where students receive class, which in many cases is difficult to access, because they must move from building to have access to them.

3.5.3. Language laboratories

It has a modern language laboratory, equipped with a specialized multimedia device for its purpose, but unfortunately, ATH students visit it very infrequently, because the teachers do not program its use. This situation represents a great weakness, moreover, considering the profile of the Career, which states that graduates must graduate by mastering the English language.

3.5.4. Library

There is a library, but in some subjects the necessary bibliography is lacking, forcing students to use Internet research. It is important to mention that very few teachers are oriented towards making use of search engines in indexed journals. As weakness is mentioned, the little influx of teachers and students to the library of the Faculty, this directly affects the quality of the educational process.

3.5.5. Miscellaneous resources

The Faculty has means of transportation that can be used by the students to make study visits. However, there are times that are not available as they have been reserved for other University activities or for students from other careers. In the first year, you need to hire external buses for the number of students. In addition, students must asume the cost of fuel, which sometimes limits the field visits, since many of the students of the Faculty are of limited economic resources.

In general, teachers have few offices, furniture and computer equipment, Internet access. On the other hand, the Faculty has only five multimedia projectors (data show) in excellent condition and three, in the process of repair, which are insufficient for the high demand of the teachers, this generates that few of them can use them in the performance of their academic functions, restricting the teacher in the development of their didactic strategies.

It is important to emphasize that the different sources consulted, among them the graduates and the coordinators of Major, explained the need to have a food and beverage laboratory, which allows the implementation of participative methodologies in different fundamental subjects of the Career, which demand of this type of spaces. In many of these classes, students perform basic practices related to the manipulation of food and beverages, improvising in the classroom, however, they are insufficient.

4. CONCLUSIONS

Having completed the process of gathering and analyzing the information, we derive the following conclusions:

- At the beginning of each semester, teachers submit the semester plan of the subjects to be taught. The Carrera coordinators validate the agreement between this plan and the course program, and also verify that the teachers propose the implementation of the didactic strategies defined in the UNAN-Managua Educational Model. However, there is no follow-up to the actual execution of that plan, in the classroom.

- An important finding is that there is little supervision and methodological supervision of teachers, since this is usually done with teachers hired as schedules, new teachers and teachers who have weaknesses in their performance (students' complaints, failure to deliver of plans, progress and reports).

- The development of the real curriculum with respect to the formal curriculum in the different subjects is evaluated in a partial way, through indirect daily supervisions, in which the teacher reports on the unit and contents to be developed. However, it is not evaluated how this content is developed in the classroom systematically, only when scientific-technical supervision.

- In general, the contents oriented in the subject programs allow to reach the general objectives of the program and the profile of the Career. Although, there are programs that do not incorporate subjects that are of vital importance for the subject, reason why sometimes the teachers make adjustments in order to strengthen the knowledge of the students. In addition, there are weaknesses in the tourist profile due to deficiencies in the tourism industry.

- There is little realization of diagnostic evaluations by teachers, which does not allow to attribute meaning and construct the implied meanings of the contents; Also, there is a lack of an adequate process of feedback by the teacher. Likewise, there is little monitoring and verification of the evaluation methods applied by the teacher.

- Teachers make little use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) in the teaching-learning process, it is under the use of English and computer labs by the students of the major. The infrastructure that the University has is insufficient for the development of courses proper to the University, since it lacks a food and beverage laboratory, as well as a hotel and restaurant laboratory.

BIBLIOGRAPHIC REFERENCES

Brovelli, M. (2001). Evaluación curricular. *Fundamentos en Humanidades* , 101-122.

Casarini, M. (2009). *Teoría y Diseño Curricular.* México: Trillas.

Castañeda, M. T., Castro, F. & Mena, C. (2012). Instrumentos para evaluar el curriculum formal en carreras pedagógicas. *Panorama*, 6 (10) , 71-85.

Cervantes, E. (25 September 25th 2009). Slideshare. Retreived on July 12th of 2015, from http://es.slideshare.net/guestdb53ce/los-cuadernos-de-los-alumnos-una-evaluacin-del-currculo-real

Di Franco, G., Siderac, S. & Di Franco, N. (4 de Noviembre de 2004). *El curriculum real y la formación docente.* Retreived from: http://www.uccor.edu.ar/paginas/encuentro1/difranco.D.pdf

Perrenoud, P. (1990). Cap.8: El curriculum real y el trabajo escolar en la construcción del éxito y del fracaso escolar. (págs. 213-222). Madrid: Morata.

UNAN-Managua. (2015). *Proyecto Institucional.* Managua: Editorial Universitaria.

Universidad Nacional Autónoma de Nicaragua, M. (2011). *Modelo Educativo, Normativa y Metodología para la Planificación Curricular 2011.* Managua: Editorial Universitaria.

Universidad Nacional Autónoma de Nicaragua, M. (2011). *Modelo Educativo, Normativa y Metodología para la Planificación Curricular 2011.* Managua: UNAN-Managua.

ANEX. PHOTOGRAPHIC EVIDENCE

Photograph of students filling out surveys

Photograph of the development of the focus group with graduates