THE USE OF TECHNOLOGICAL RESOURCES IN THE LEARNING PROCESS OF ADVERTISING AND PUBLIC RELATIONS STUDIES FROM THE ITE-AP METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH

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Abstract

Overcrowded classrooms, an increase in student heterogeneity, a reduction in direct public funding to higher education, the introduction of measurable quality standards, the present transformation of the formative process (focused on learning), online teaching, the concept of lifelong learning and the use of new technologies in the teaching-learning process are just some of the most relevant changes taking place lately in the context of the EHEA (European Higher Education Area). To succeed in these changes and challenges, university teachers must be involved in a pro-active way. The widening of traditional classroom tasks means teaching professionals must be prepared for the new demands such as student tutoring and advising, collaborative work within teaching teams, supervision of online work and design and elaboration of online materials.

A university teacher network has been operating in the field of Advertising and Public Relations for both the University of Alicante (Alicante) and the University of Jaume I (Castellón) since 2010. This paper presents a research showing the use of technological resources as an added value for the learning process in the new EHEA context within the field of communication studies in higher education. Each of the members of ITE-AP (Technology Integration Group) has worked in the creation of digital and audiovisual materials which undoubtedly helped improve their teaching practice.

Keywords: net, technology, quality, process, advertising, public relations.

1   INTRODUCTION

Some of the most meaningful changes that have taken place in the context of the EHEA (European Higher Education Area) are, undoubtedly, classroom overcrowding and the progressive heterogeneity of students, funding cuts to public education, the new quality culture, the transformation of the formative process now focused on learning, online teaching, the new concept of lifelong learning and the inclusion of new technologies to the instructing-training process.

In order to accept these changes and face the imminent challenges, university professors must be involved in a pro-active way, since this means a new and complex education system. Traditional tasks, mostly based on scientist content explanations, become wider. Present tasks deal with student guidance and counselling, co-worker teaching coordination, the design and supervision of online teaching together with face-to-face teaching, as well as the ellaboration and design of teaching material in different physical storage as innovative technological resources.

In this sense, and following Michavila (2000: 4-7), the six major challenges universities must face in their action plans are:

1. "Adaptation to the demands of the current employment opportunities, offering a training which lets students easy access to labour offer without skipping basic contents in their formation.

2. To position themselves in the new context of social competitiveness where the quality and ability to establish plans and introduce compromise are top priority.

3. To improve the management in a context of public resources cuts, which entails the incorporation of new financial assistance and a greater transparency in their distribution.

4. To develop themselves into the engine for local development in the cultural and socio-economical aspects through establishing collaborative nets with companies and institutions.

5. To reposition in a new global scene for employment and training, adapting their own formative strategies to it. To promote interdisciplinarity, the domain of foreign languages, students and professors mobility, partner research and the programmes and systems of shared academic accreditation.

6. And, lastly, the incorporation of new technologies to both, the management and the teaching, taking advantage from their potential to create new ways of inter-institutional relations and new formative Systems (virtual nets, online teaching, and so on)."

Teachers have to come to terms with the existence of a greater effort on the side of the planning, design and ellaboration of teaching proposals, paying special attention to the methodology to be used in the teaching learning process. The use of new technologies will make it easy for our students to acquire knowledge.

In this context, the didactic programming of the interaction processes is essential if the goal to be achieved is educative action in a structured and organized way. This entails the establishing of objectives, the selection of relevant contents, the adequacy of methodologies, the application of technological resources and material means as well as the implementation of a valid assessment system which can prove the efficiency of the educational process.

According to Gallego and Salvador (2002), a didactic programming should fulfil the following characteristics: firstly, it must be stated in a *coherent* way, since the planning of that educational action is part of a wider whole in which mutual dependency relations exist between that whole and its parts; it must be appropriately *contextualized,* since that programming has, as immediate referent, the educational context to which the educational action is directed, as well as the characteristics and peculiarities of the group the educational offer will be put into practice. Besides, it must be *suitable,* showing it is a programming based on its usefulness to cover all the students' needs and expectations, being *realistic* since it can be put into practice in the exact time which we have. It also has to be built upon *collaboration* because the teacher is not an isolated individual, (s)he works as an active member of the teaching team and works collaboratively with his/her colleagues, sharing an education project with them. Another essential component is *flexibility*, which lets guide the programming to the educational practice but without determining it in an extreme way. And lastly, it must be constructed with attention to *diversity* in the use of didactic techniques and new technologies, so they can contribute to design heterogeneous educational experiences. In this new context the EHEA represents, the Vice-deanship of Technology and Innovative Education of the University of Alicante has taken responsibility, as institutional policy, for a higher degree of compromise with the implementation of new technologies to create educational resources fitting the current learning-teaching models. Within this approach, the GITES (Technological-Educative Innovation Groups) have been promoted as platforms for collaborative work in the university teaching community.

The results of a research carried out by the *group of technological integration into the learning processes in Advertising and Public Relations ITE-AP* are presented in this paper. The analysis of the level of implication of the members of ITE-AP in the application of new technologies in their different didactic processes included in the old and new degrees of Advertising and Public Relations from two different backgrounds: the University of Alicante and the University Jaume I of Castellón.

2   METHODOLOGY

To carry out this research, a questionnaire was developed from actions elaborated *ad hoc* to measure different questions related to technological education innovation.

Firstly, the teacher was asked to express his/her degree of agreement with the need to incorporate new technologies in the formative processes in advertising and public relations. In this sense, (s)he was also asked to point out what the real teaching action should be in *b-learning* processes..

In a more specific way, different technological resources are presented in the performance of teaching interaction such as virtualization tools, the creation of digital teaching contents, tutorial management, *blogs, wikis, YouTube* and other innovations such as social networks (*Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn or Xing*). The teacher must indicate how much (s)he uses them.

Furthermore, from a more academic point of view, the teacher should specify the number of contributions concerning the use of new technologies, carried out in congresses or academic or professional events, and scientific publications. Lastly, the teacher must reflect on the need or convenience to belong to collaborative teams working in educational technological innovation.

The questionnaire was devised with *Google docs* application and the data were tabulated and represented by means of dynamic graphs through Excel 2010 spread-sheet.

The results obtained are relevant and useful to guide our teaching activity in the future as active members of ITE-AP.

3 RESULTS

CHART 1. Do you agree with the following statement: "In the context of the European Higher Education Area, it is essential to use new technologies to make learning processes easier for the students of Advertising and Public Relations".
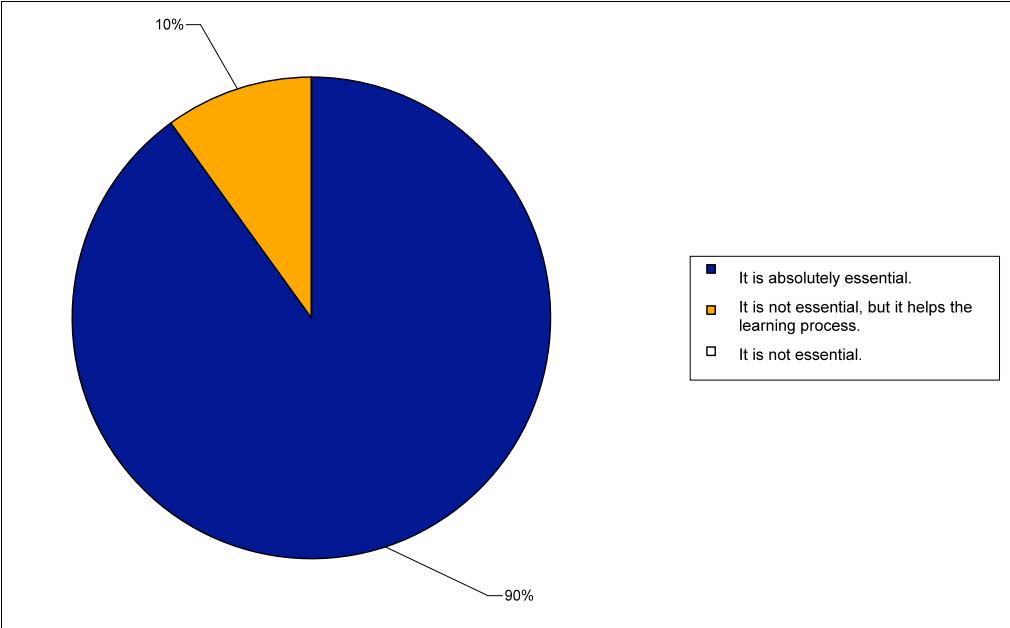

CHART 2. Do you consider B-learning is the most suitable approach to adapt ourselves to the new educational needs that arise with the implementation of the new Degrees in Advertising and Public Relations?
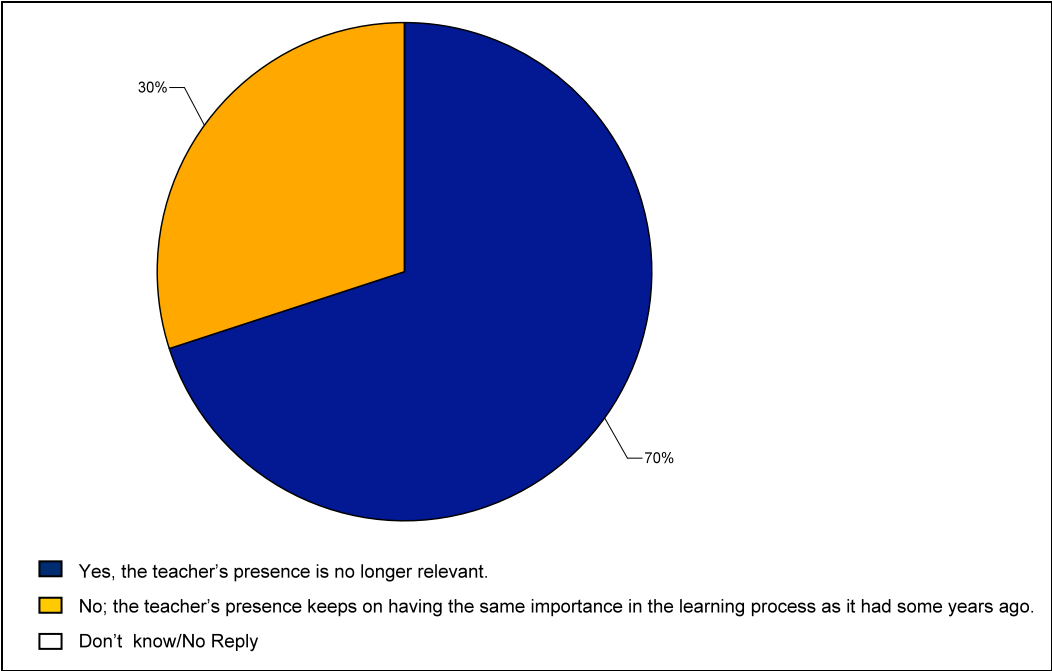
CHART 3. As a professor of Advertising and Public Relations, do you consider you make good use of the new technological resources available at the University in your teaching tasks?
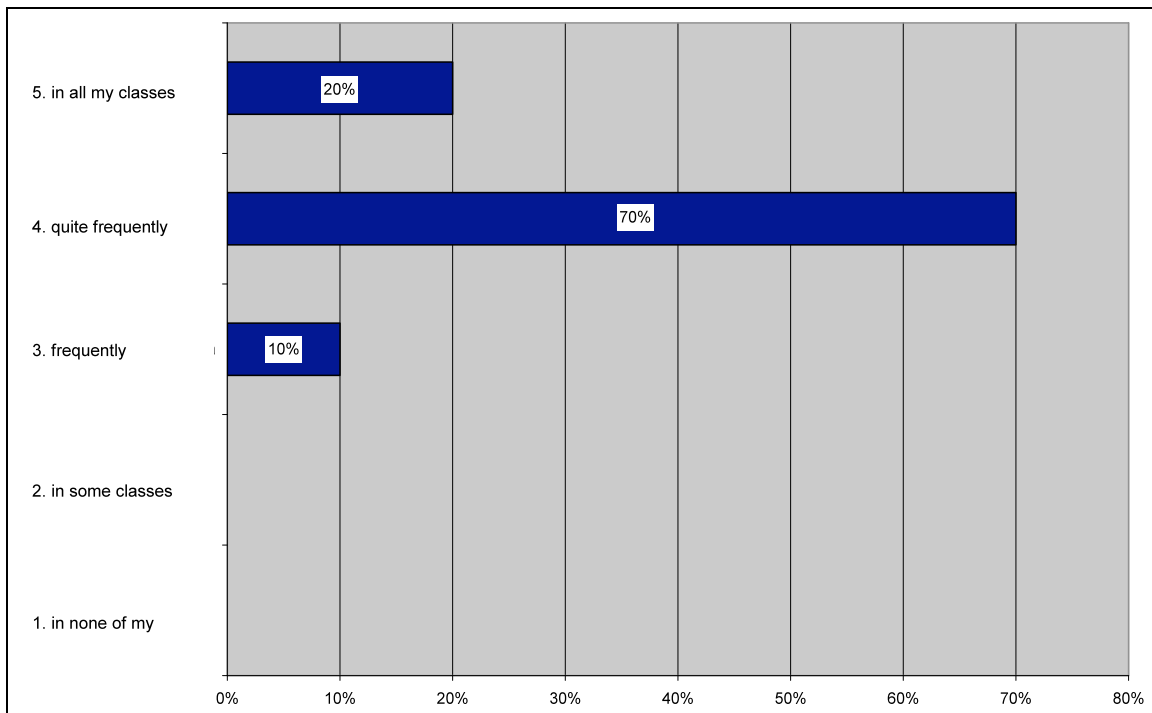

CHART 4. Have you produced in the present academic year digital educational contents to be used in your teaching activities (presentations, digital texts, video recording, audio…)?
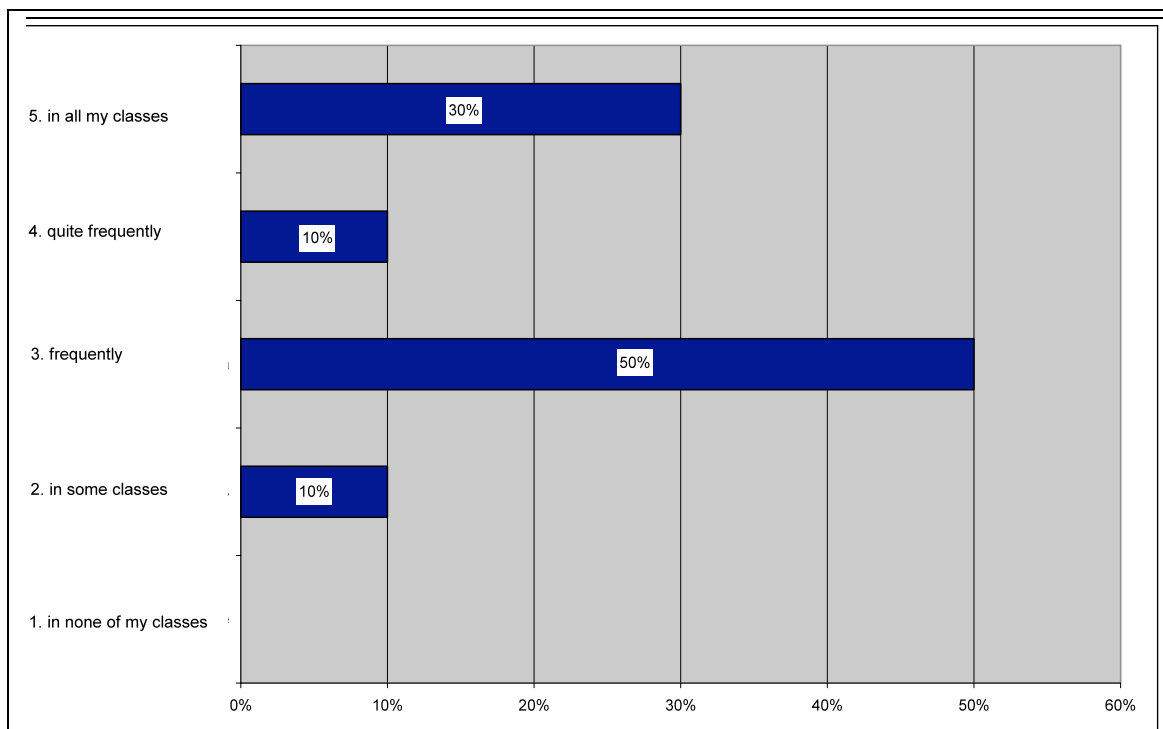
CHART 5. Would you say you have made good use of virtual tools such as the University virtual campus, Moodle or any others available to you?
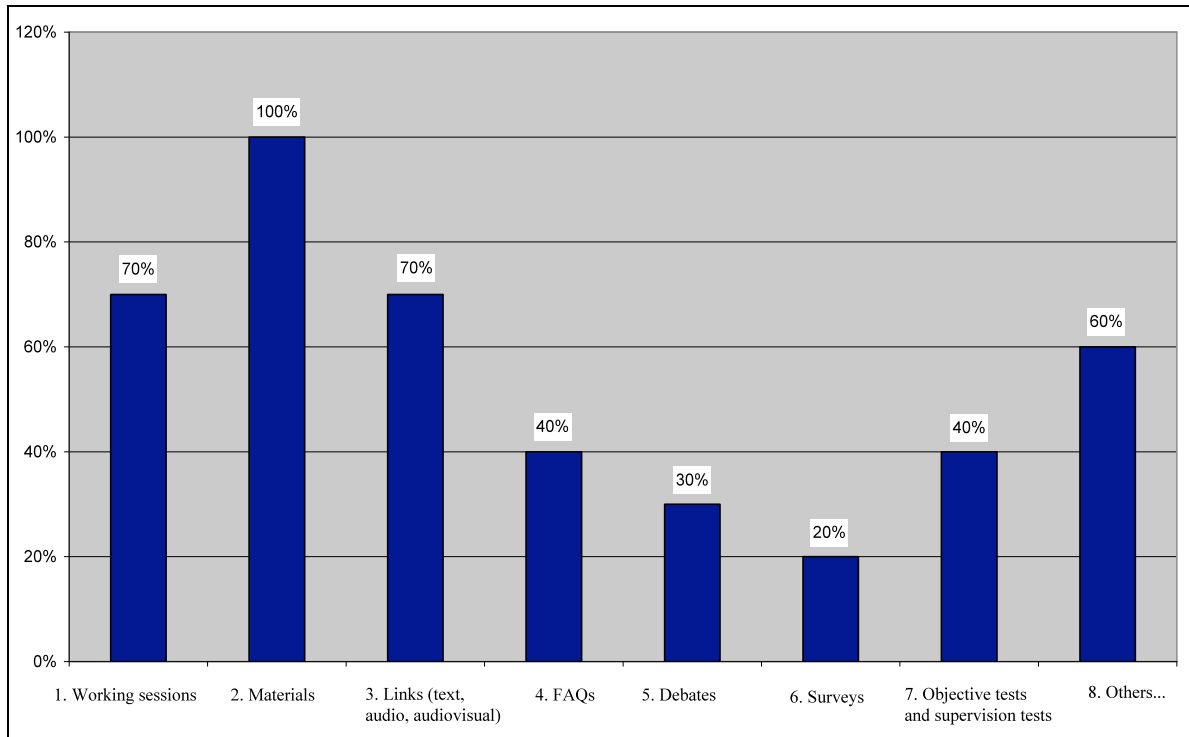

1. Working sessions	70%
2. Materials	100%
3. Links (text, audio, audiovisual)	70%
4. FAQs	40%
5. Debates	30%
6. Surveys	20%
7. Objective tests and supervision tests	40%
8. Others...	60%

CHART 6. How did you manage tutorials during the academic year 2010-2011?

30%

70%

Most of them have been managed as virtual tutorials.

Most of them have been managed as face-to-face tutorials.

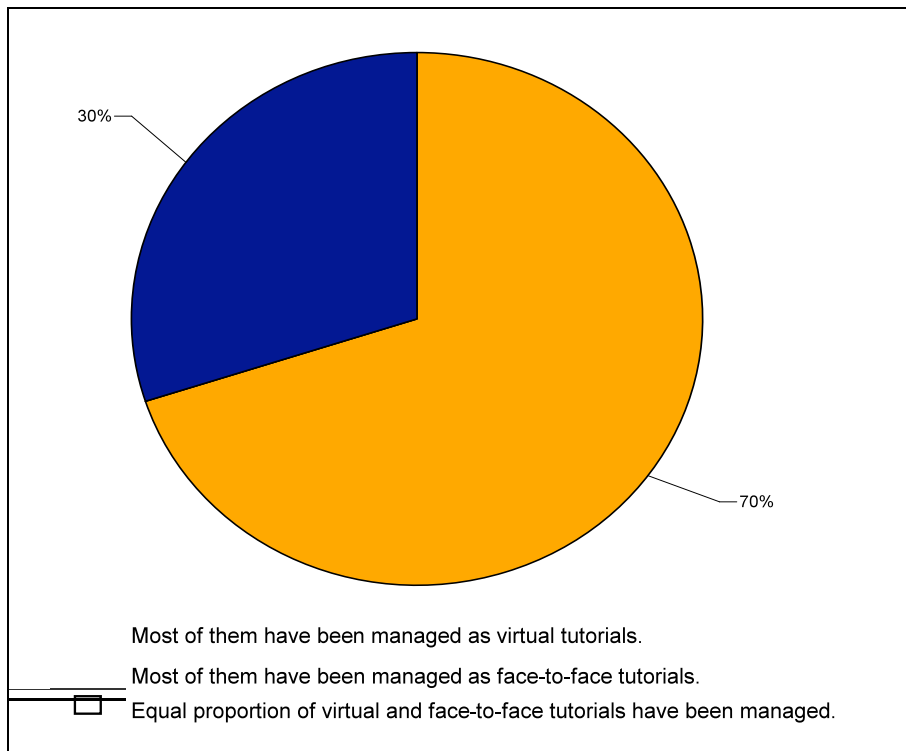Equal proportion of virtual and face-to-face tutorials have been managed.

CHART 7. Have you used tools such as blogs, wikis, YouTube and other innovative tools such as social networks (Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn or Xing) in your classes?
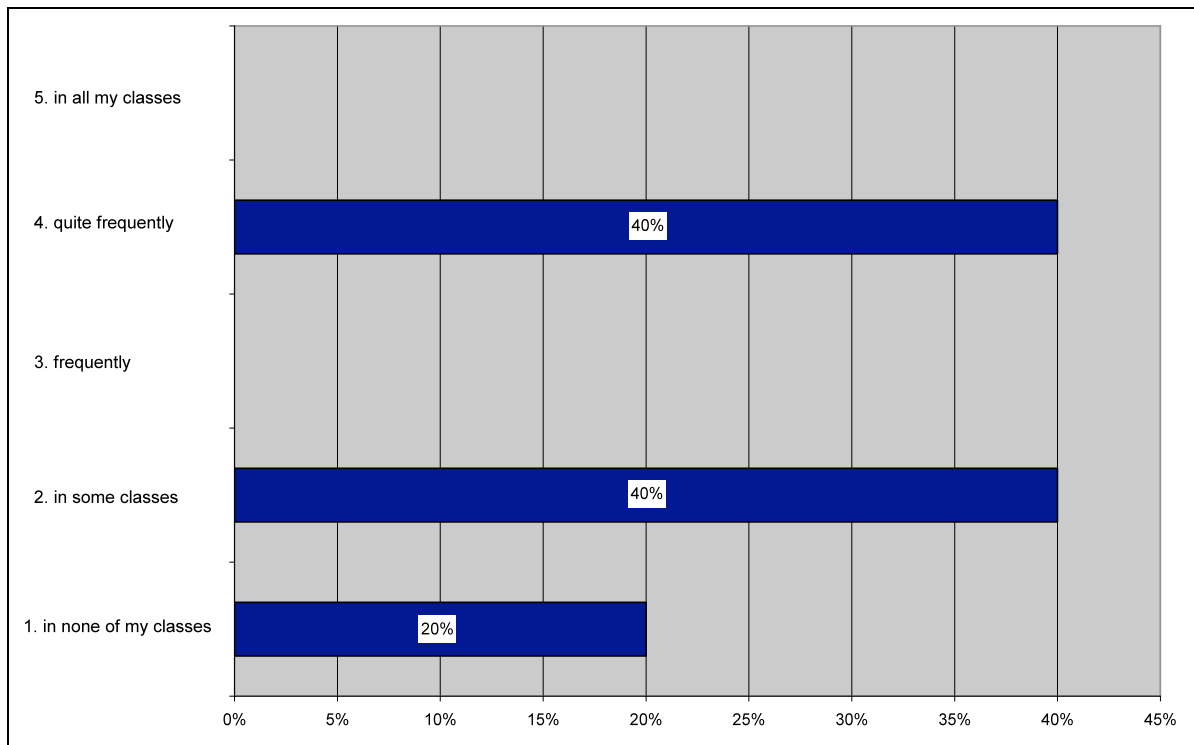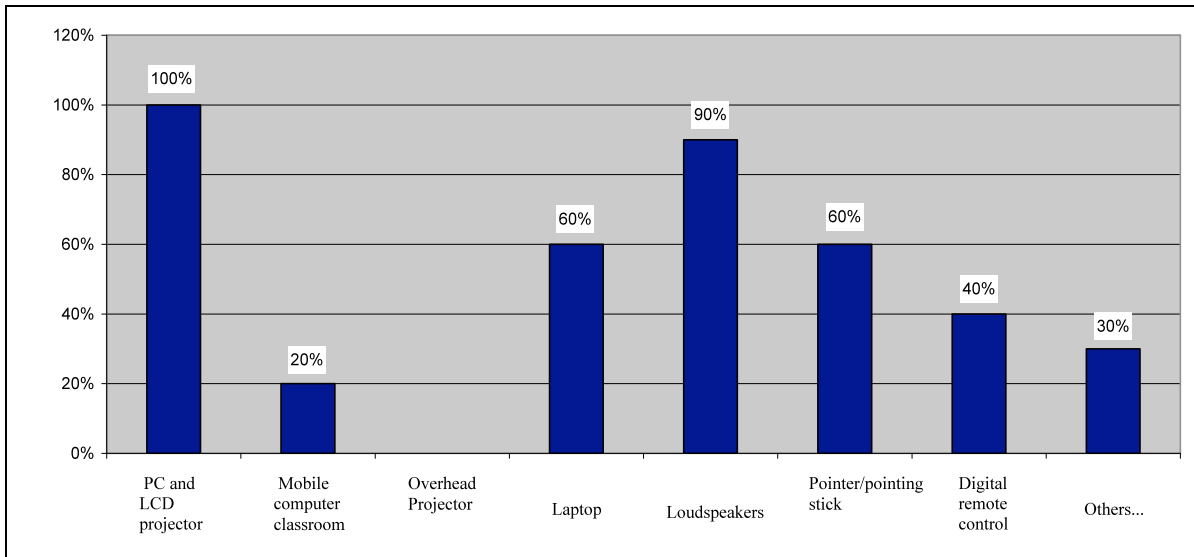

CHART 8. From the following technological resources, point out which ones you use in your classes taking into account the educational and teaching criteria of the subjects you teach.

Generally speaking, and interpreting the charts above, we can say that according to 90% of the members of ITE-AP, in the context of EHEA, the implementation of new technologies in the learning process in Advertising and Public Relations is absolutely essential (Chart 1).

In this sense, 70% of the interviewed teachers think that their presence is no longer so relevant in the educational processes based on *b-learning* methodology. Contrary to this, 30% express their presence is still having the same relevant position in the learning process it had some years ago (Chart 2).

On the other hand, the research team IT-AP made use *quite frequently* (70%), *in all their classes* (20%) or just *frequently* (20%), of the technological resources available at the academic institutions, which shows a usual incorporation of those resources to the didactic interaction between professors and university students (Chart 3).

Producing digital educational resources in their teaching activity is another key element common to the members of this research group (Chart 4), since 50% of the components state they have designed and applied them *frequently*, 10% *quite frequently* and 30% *in all their classes*. On the contrary, the remaining 10% express to have used them only *in some of their classes*.

As for virtual tools (Chart 5), through platforms such as the Virtual Campus or Moodle, among others, all the members of the network make use of digital teaching materials (100%); more than half the people interviewed use working sessions and links (70% respectively) and other alternatives (60%). The tools less used are FAQs (40%), objective tests and supervision tests (40%), as well as survey completion (20%).

On the other hand, most of students' tutorials during the academic year 2010-2011 (Chart 6) were managed by the members of ITE-AP virtually (70%), whereas the remaining 30% express to have attended about the same proportion of virtual tutorials and face-to-face tutorials.

It is in the statement which can be seen in Chart 7 where the greatest technological gap between the members of the teamwork, when using tools such as blogs, wikis, YouTube and other technological innovation like social networks. 60% of the members from the group express not to have incorporated them frequently in their didactic interaction with students of Advertising and Public Relations (40% *in some classes;* 20% *in none of their classes*). In contrast, the remaining 40% say they have used them *quite frequently*.

Another question that has been posed by means of our research (Chart 8), is the use of different technological resources in the classroom, taking into account the pedagogical and teaching criteria: all the members of the group use PC and LCD (100%). In a smaller proportion, they use loudspeakers (90%), laptops (60%), pointing sticks or pointers (60%), digital remote control (40%), mobile computer classrooms (20%) or any other technological resources (30%).

4   CONCLUSIONS

The European Higher Education Area establishes a new kind of didactic interaction between university professors and their students.

Apart from the main variables that determine the students learning process, it can be noticed that the organization and planning of the didactic process represents the strongest position for teachers to reach their goals with a specific level of precision or derivation.

Old technicist models dating back to three decades ago let develop in Spain didactic intervention processes, based on formulation of objectives and observable behaviour in the learning process, having just relative value. However, in the present context, the interaction between university teachers and students through the teaching-learning process is of paramount importance.

Thus, the process in itself is of greater importance than the results obtained through the learning process, expressed in terms of ability, competence, capacity or skills the students must acquire during their formative experience by means of an educational proposal.

This paradigm shift, that highlights the importance of the student learning process, will make university teaching professionals to adopt all kinds of measures leading to adapt ourselves to the new reality. The application of different didactic methodologies and technological resources that guarantee the success in the transference of cognitive, procedural and attitudinal contents within the curriculum design of the new university degrees is one of those measures.

Hence, it must be pointed out the appropriateness of developing teaching innovation experiences, to be shared by teachers, based on the implementation of new technological resources that can be common or similar in subjects related to the same knowledge area.

In the present case, it can be said that the level of implication in the new paradigm shift by the *group of technological integration into the learning processes in Advertising and Public Relations ITE-AP*, based on the implementation of technological resources is quite acceptable. The need to incorporate

with a greater frequency innovative tools such as blogs, wikis, YouTube or social networks in our academic community, should be emphasized.

Exploiting synergies and interrelations among the teachers integrating collaborative networks, involved in teaching innovation, will therefore increase the efficiency in this transition within study plans in which we are currently immersed.

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