



Preparation and Interpretation of cartoons as a didactic strategy for the learning of Philosophy in Secondary Education

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ABSTRACT

This research paper was done at the State Public School Esquipulas in Managua, the group of students belongs to the Eleventh A and B grade, this paper consisted of the elaborating and interpreting cartoons with the purpose to transcend from a didactic memoristic model. This is based on the mental concepts reproduction to a pedagogical model, which allows the understanding of the contents and the development of the competencies such as: autonomy, critical thinking, reflexive and entrepreneur. To achieve this work the research team proceeded by using the socio-critical method and the research action, doing a didactic intervention of seven teaching classes of the philosophy contents of the middle age and Latin-American philosophy. The findings revealed that the students improve their learning on the contents; they significantly learned, and developed their autonomy and critical thinking; and they were more concern in the study of the philosophy subject at secondary school.

INTRODUCTION

The Ministry of Education, through the Curriculum Design of the Basic and Medium Education Subsystem (2009), adopts a curriculum organized in competition to increase the quality of learning and ensure that children, young people and adults acquire the essential knowledge and practical skills to improve their quality of life. From this perspective, the objective of education is to transcend a didactic model of memory, based mainly on the mental reproduction of meanings, to an education model that facilitates the theoretical and practical domain of investigative and practical skills, which makes the Learning experience meaningful for students' life and useful for the development of the country.

The same Curricular Model characterizes a citizen graduated from the subsystem of Media Education with the following competences: willingness for autonomous learning, critical, reflective and enterprising attitude to the problems that affect the national and international community, discrimination of the different sources of information and communication, expression of ideas, emotions and feelings, among others.

On the other hand, in the Social Science Study Program, the Degree Skills, Cross-Axis Competencies and Achievement Indicators of the Philosophy subject emphasizes that students must develop the knowledge, skills and abilities to identify and understand, to act autonomously and independently, to use logical, reflexive and philosophical critical thinking.

These curricular alignments are consistent with the purpose of the study of the Philosophy, in which according to Castro (2000), teachers "have to make from them [the students] individuals sufficiently critical [... perhaps, if this happens, we can state categorically that the educational process has succeeded" (p.155). In this regard, Páramo (2011) in his article *Does the teaching of philosophy make sense in high school?* He agrees that "to foster this critical tendency, carrying it out in a rigorous and radical way, is a mission of philosophical knowledge" (p. 12), and as regards the teaching of Philosophy, expresses that the fundamental purpose of this discipline is to arouse in the students the awareness of social and cultural problems, among others, so that, through a free and personal reflection, propitiate own thinking. This perspective allows us to conceive that teaching Philosophy, rather than transmitting acquired truths, it is a matter of teaching them to see and solve problems.

In summary, the Curricular Design of the Subsystem of Basic and Middle Education, the Social Science Studies Programs (Philosophy subject) and the aims of teaching Philosophy (Castro, 2000 and Páramo, 2011), aim at homologous interests. Are complementary and create synergies. For this reason, the teaching process in the construction of knowledge becomes more important in the creation of links that articulate the educational purposes of Philosophy, with

the methodological and didactic actions that are developed in the classroom to generate learning for life.

In regards to these approaches, didactic strategies conceived as "procedures [...] to make learning possible, [...] (as a) system of activities that allow the accomplishment of a task with the required quality due to the flexibility and adaptability to the existing conditions" (Ferreiro, 2012, p.79), are a determining factor and the effective means to reach and to develop such competences enunciated in the mentioned documents, however, its scope is limited, in part, because the strategies Didactics that are applied conventionally in the teaching-learning of Philosophy are not conducive to such ends, they do not assign them a hegemonic role to the students, on the contrary, they limit their autonomy, creativity and critical thinking, through the incorporation of lifelong memorization study guides, mechanical expositions, purely conceptual evaluative instruments, dictation, and old methods that hinder students active participation.

Taking into account these factors, the application of innovative didactic strategies constitute an unavoidable academic need to improve the quality of learning and the adoption of competences such as autonomy, reflection, interpretation and criticism as well. This is why, internationally, a study of educational innovation for the teaching and learning of History was developed by Magdi Molina Contreras and Rivas Vizcaya (2013), applied to first year students "A" of La Salle College, In the State of Mérida, Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, titled: *The history of the African slaves and descendants in Merida through cartoons*. The purpose of this study was to contribute to the improvement of the quality of learning in the area of History, and among its findings it is shown that the application of cartoons as a strategy for learning has a deep didactic value, because it encourages students to perform analyzes, interpretations and critiques on the subjects of study, in addition, it is observed more participation, motivation and interest for the study of the matter.

However, considering the didactic traditionalism that prevails in the teaching-learning of the contents of Philosophy, in the present didactic experience it was hypothesized that the elaboration and interpretation of cartoons is an innovative didactic strategy and promotes the learning of content and development of competences in the subject Philosophy in Secondary Education.

MATERIAL Y METHOD

Research Context

The present didactic experience consisted of the elaboration and interpretation of cartoons as an innovative didactic strategy for the teaching and learning of Philosophy, applied in *Philosophy in the Middle Ages and Latin American Philosophy* contents, with the students of the

11th grade "A" And "B" of the afternoon shift at the public school Esquipulas, located at km 11, road to Masaya, in the department of Managua, during the second Semester of 2016.

Population and Sample

The total population of the public school Esquipulas is composed of 476 students from 7th to 11th grade. According to Ruiz (2008, p.75), the research population "is the set of all the people or objects of which they are Wants to know a certain phenomenon or aspect of a reality", Martínez González (2007) argues that, the population are all those people who meet "characteristics according to the theme and variables that need to be studied" (p.52). The research population are the students from eleventh grade "A" and "B", the students sample are 47.

The sample is the part of the population with which the research or study is carried out, that is, it is made up only of a subgroup of the population (Hernández, Fernández and Baptista, 2010) and (Ruiz, 2008). In the present didactic intervention, the selected sample was of 12 students of 11º grade "A" and 15 students of 11º grade "B", for a total of 27 students. It should be noted that the sample was determined by intentional non-probabilistic sampling, in which, according to Ruiz (2008), "the sample is chosen according to the criteria established by the researcher based on the typical characteristics of what is intended to be studied And that they can provide the information necessary to do so" (p.83). It should be noted that participation in the study was voluntary, so the sample corresponds to 27 students.

Educative Innovation

In the century of knowledge, innovation constitutes a fundamental tool to raise the quality in the production of goods and services; this also includes the *innovation* of processes in education. In this regard, Margalef and Arenas (2006) explain that the term Innovation refers to three meanings: "the creation of something unknown, the perception of what is created as something new and the assimilation of that something as novel" (p.14). This conception of *Innovation* also implies to the learning processes and could be concretized in the realization of the educational innovation through the didactic intervention of the contents mentioned above, because to innovate at the moment is pertinent and necessary in order to obtain improvements in the quality of learning.

There are many ways to innovate in education, Domínguez, Medina and Sánchez (2011), in a study carried out with the purpose of analyzing the innovative culture in the classrooms, highlight a number of conducive spaces to educational innovation, including: In the classroom, the methodological system, the curricular programs, the pedagogical model and the conception of the purpose of teaching. Therefore, educational innovation can be developed in micro and

macro spaces, through actions that tend to modify the relationships prescribed in a given conventionally applied model.

However, to adopt an innovative approach in the teaching and learning process requires commitment and awareness of its implications; therefore it should be considered that:

- Innovation is the most relevant function to improve educational practices and are guided by the role of the teacher (Domínguez, Medina and Sánchez, 2011).
- It implies a change that seeks the improvement of an educational practice (Margalef and Arenas, 2006, p.16).
- It is a deliberate and planned effort aimed at the qualitative improvement of educational processes (Margalef and Arenas, 2006, p.16).

According to the previous paragraph, the present didactic experience was carried out with the students of 11th grade, sections "A" and "B" of the Public School Esquipulas, who adopted an innovative pedagogical model, which focused on the Didactics strategy: Elaboration and Interpretation of cartoons.

Socio critical Paradigm and Action Research

In order to carry out the present didactic innovation, the theoretical elements of the *socio critical paradigm* were assumed. It has the objective to know in depth the area of study to reflect critically on that issue as well as to make pertinent decisions to improve such problems. This line of research was carried out by people from the community who perform these practices, They also meet external experts who act as advisors or mediators, that later become cooperators or co-participants in the research (Martinez González, 2007).

The socio critical paradigm also uses the action research method, which consists of a "systematic, conscious and participatory set of actions that enables people to work towards the improvement of their own social or educational practices" (Kemmis and McGgart 1992, P.9). This improvement process was implemented through the articulation of four procedures proposed by Latorre (2007) "planning, action, observation and reflection" (p.21). The didactic intervention was fulfilled with these theoretical procedures; the research was participatory in order to improve educational practices.

- *Planning:* In the planning phase the problem is raised, the diagnosis is made and the hypothesis is formulated. In the case represented during this phase, a didactic intervention plan was developed based on educational theories, through the Philosophy in the middle Ages and Latin American Philosophy Contents.

- *Action*: Action is thoughtful, controlled, grounded and critically informed; Is an observed action that records information that will later provide evidence on which the reflection is supported. Action is deliberate and controlled, projected with a careful and reflective change of practice. In this phase of the didactic intervention, an educational intervention was carried out. First the Contents "Philosophy in the Middle Ages" and "Latin American Philosophy" was taught, then the teacher presented the cartoons to students interpret them ,and later elaborate their own.
- *Observation*: This consists of supervising the action plan, the observation involves, in this sense, the collection of information related to some aspect of professional practice. In this case, we observe the action to reflect on what we have discovered and incorporate it into our professional practice. During the development or implementation of the intervention plan, there were observation made by the researcher and an external observer.
- *Reflection*: This is the phase that closes the cycle and gives way to the preparation of the report and possibly to the rethinking of the problem to start a new cycle

Research Approach

According to the above statements, this study is qualitative in nature, since it is based on an interpretive perspective, centered in the understanding of the meaning of the actions of living beings (Hernández et al., 2010, p.7); however, it also used elements of the quantitative approach to numerically measure levels of learning and domain of content that the students acquired through this innovative didactic strategy.

Research techniques and tools

- Observation: It is a process that allows an investigator to collect information related to a certain problem (Orozco, 2016c). This research technique allowed observing the empathic relationships manifested by the students regarding the didactic strategy applied and their levels of comprehension.
- Unstructured Interview: The purpose of this technique is to collect or corroborate information about a specific problem, and is done when a person requests information from another or a group of people, through unstructured questionnaires in which the interviewee constructs answers (Orozco, 2016c). The instrument was applied to 11th graders to determine if the elaboration and Interpretation of cartoons is an innovative learning activity and conduct the learning of the Philosophy Unit.
- Focus group: This is a collection procedure where a group of people meets to discuss the same topic, engage opinions, present points of view and complement ideas (Orozco,

2016c). This technique was performed with students who participated in the study to evaluate the incidence of the elaboration and interpretation of cartoons in their comprehension.

- Documentary review: It consists of investigating and exploring what other researchers have written in relation to a theme, in order to support, complement and substantiate our theoretical propositions (Orozco, 2016a). This technique was executed by investigating different bibliographical sources to theoretically base the learning activity designed and the methodological framework by which it was carried out.
- Photography: Photography allows documenting events that would be difficult to describe otherwise (Rossi and O'Higgins, 1981). This instrument allowed to evidence previous experiences, during and after the didactic intervention.

Didactic intervention description

- *Didactic Session 1.* Students' prior knowledge were explored through the application of the SQA instrument. This strategy allows to verify the knowledge that the student has on a topic from the following points: what he knows (S), that is, the information he knows; What they want to know (Q), are the doubts or unknowns they have on the subject, and what they learned (A), which allows to verify the significant learning achieved (Méndez and González, 2011). The application of this instrument allowed to know that the students boasted a 27% dominion of the contents.



Figure 1. Students solving a diagnostic quiz

- *Didactic Session 2.* The Philosophy unit in the Middle Ages was taught through an annotated reading, conceptual mapping and socialization of knowledge during the development of the class.
- *Didactic Session 3.* The Latin American Philosophy content was developed through an analytical reading of a poem by Rubén Darío (*Ode to Roosevelt*), a manifesto by Sandino

(Plan of realization of the supreme dream of Bolívar) and finally, the socialization of students' knowledge.

- *Didactic Session 4.* A group discussion was carried out about the Middle Age and the Latin American Philosophy topics (to look up the meaning of cartoon was previously asked).



Figure 2. Students participating in a discussion group

- *Didactic Session 5.* The students interpreted cartoons of both contents and socialized their ideas.



Figure 3. Students interpreting cartoons

- *Didactic Session 6.* Students developed their own cartoons of both contents and socialized the knowledge acquired through the analysis and interpretation of their cartoons.



Figure 4. A student drawing a cartoon

- *Didactic Session 7.* A focus group was conducted to assess the learning experience from the perspective of the students. In this didactic session, students completed the What I Learned column of the SQA instrument. This instrument showed that students acquired an 83% mastery of the content.

DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

Cartoon as a Didactic Strategy

Cartoon is an innovative didactic strategy in the teaching and learning of Philosophy. In the focus group a student expressed that “it is a good and different method, to answer a guide of only words”. In the questionnaire, students also mentioned that “it is a modern strategy”, “it is a way of promoting education in a fun and innovative way”, “this way of learning is revolutionary”, “it is a new form of learning”, “Does not stress us much like the exams, exams and writing”, “is funny because it comes up from the same study model.” Thus , the realization of this learning activity was new for students.

Contreras and Rivas (2011) express that the drawing of cartoons should be based on personal interpretations in which the student can reflect on the content of the texts read and the effects produced by the images perceived, in addition, that the visual representation through the Caricatures helps to manifest in a practical and enjoyable the theoretical bases learned. Montoya and Monsalve (2009) coincide in this aspect, emphasizing that a theme, an idea, a feeling and even a theoretical or philosophical concept can be expressed through a drawing, a symbol or a photograph.

Coinciding with the theoretical foundations proposed by Contreras and Rivas (2011), and Montoya and Monsalve (2009), in table 1¹, students express that, cartoon is a didactic strategy that encourage students to express their knowledge.

Table 1. Cartoon a strategy that encourage students' knowledge.

FOCUS GROUP	QUESTIONNAIRE
“I drew my philosophy in a cartoon”	“Cartoon is a strategic way to express our ideas”
“I expressed in a cartoon what I learned and analyzed”	“We express our ideas in a cartoon”
“It helped me to express my knowledge that I learned in class”	“We can express through a picture what we have understood”
“It helped us to developed our ideas”	“we represent our knowledge and express what we have taught”

Contreras and Rivas (2011) also say that cartoon is a medium of expression that “transmits in an artistic way a message related to a real situation, using humor, satire and comedy, and can make learning a pleasant and reflective process” (p.148).

This theoretical approach was also experienced by the students in the process of Elaboration and Interpretation of cartoons . “We can demonstrate what we know in a funny way”, “we explain themes and problems through picturesque and funny drawings”, “developing these cartoons have become a very practical way of learning , have fun and develop our skills”, “fosters creativity, free expression and imagination”².

Figure 5 also shows the humor students expressed through their cartoons (Sandino, in his struggle against imperialism).

1. Source: Own elaboration

2. Source: Student Questionnaire

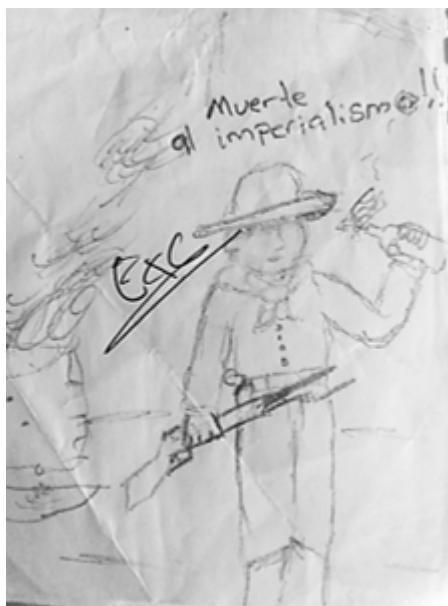


Figure 5. Cartoon elaborated by a student

It is important to note that, considering how innovative and successful this didactic strategy is, it presents certain limitations to which students express "I do not know how to draw", "I do not like to draw", "I do not have the talent to draw". Despite of the common limitations among students, one student in the focus group expressed optimism for this new way of learning: He says "Yes I could expressed my knowledge. I cannot draw very well, but it made me think of how I could express what I learned"

In relation to these limitations, it is important that as teachers we take into account the approach of Montoya and Monsalve (2009), explaining that it is not required to be an artist to draw meaningful pictures, it is more important what we want to convey than the aesthetic perfection of the resulting work. Therefore, the application of this didactic strategy does not necessarily require the skill of drawing, rather than artistic skills and abilities, it is intended that students express their understanding through cartoons.

Critical Thinking

The Curricular Model of Middle Education, the Program of Study of Philosophy, and the educational purposes of teaching Philosophy, agrees that, it aims to students generate a critical attitude. In this sense, the pedagogical model, which is concretized in the classroom through didactic strategies, is preponderant to achieve this goal. Orozco (2016a) expresses that critical thinking is determinant in teaching, and that education has been dominated by different curricula of teaching, nowadays the critical curriculum, which stimulates through reflection to a more lasting and meaningful learning. Consequently, Montoya and Monsalve (2009) affirm, that the student who finishes his / her high school should be prepared to know, analyze and solve with critical sense the local, regional, national and global problems. That is, taking both

contributions, the need to adopt a pedagogical model that generates critical thoughts in the learning process in the discipline of Philosophy is urgent.

But what is critical thinking? López (2012) makes a compilation of the different meanings that express several authors:

- It is a reflexive activity because it analyzes the well founded results of its own reflection as those of the reflection of others.
- The critical thinker is one who is able to think for himself, his main function is not to generate ideas but to reflect, evaluate and review what is understood, processed and communicated.
- Skills to identify arguments and assumptions make correct inferences and draw conclusions.

Complementing this argument, Aburto Cotrina (2008), in the journal *El Educador*, describes the critical thinking as the way of thinking on any subject or problem, in which questions are formulated with clarity and precision, information is compiled and evaluated to draw conclusions and solutions proving them with criteria. In addition, a critical thinker has perceptive acuity, makes permanent questions, builds and reconstructs knowledge, is open-minded, has a fair valuation, has emotional control and intellectual courage.

Montoya and Monsalve (2009) add another complementary element in which asserts that thinking critically involves acquiring skills to analyze the reality that is lived, become aware of it and be an active part in the construction of the same, thus it creates a link with the context in which the subject lived.

In order to students to develop these skills and competences, in the *Middle Ages Philosophy* unit , figure 6³ was presented to them.

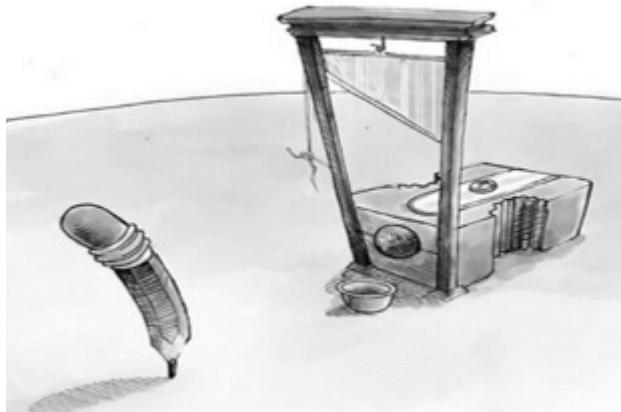


Figure 6. Cartoon representing the Middle Age Unit

3. Source:<http://www.clasesdeperiodismo.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/02/caricatura3.jpg>

It shows the criteria that students expressed as a result of their interpretation:

- “The church imposed their beliefs and frightened people, they were that thinking was bad and if they opposed, they would be killed”.
- “Philosophy is the pencil and the sharpener is the church, whenever reason wants to approach the faith, it will be rejected because they defend different ideals”.
- “Religion is going to be the one that will cut off all those thoughts (the pencil) that say the opposite of what God says, according to them, like Galileo.”
- “It was the situation in which society was, limited by the inquisition, which was the chopper who cut off knowledge.”

In the development of the *Latin American Philosophy* content, each student was asked to elaborate a cartoon in which they expressed their criteria in relation to the theme. Figure 7 is a cartoon made by a student where he expressed: “my cartoon represents the Latin American union (Cuba, Nicaragua, Costa Rica, Colombia and Honduras)⁴”. It should be noticed that each idea and argument was discussed in the conversation and developed in the corresponding didactic session.

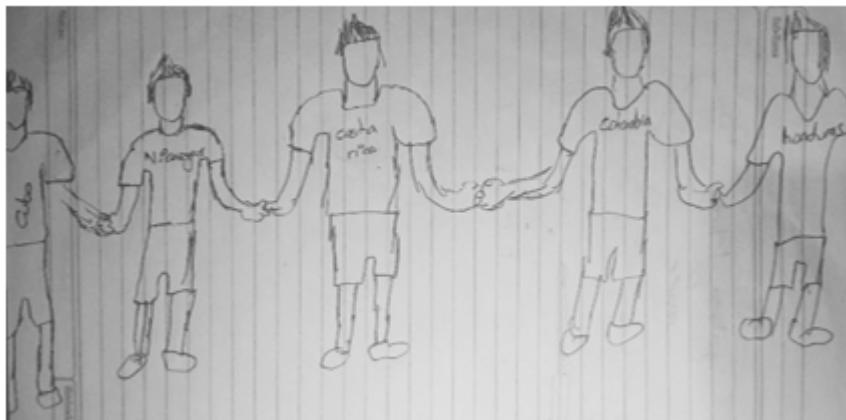


Figure 7. Cartoon made by a student

Nevertheless, the elaboration and interpretation of cartoon as an innovative didactic strategy for the teaching of Philosophy, is to develop critical thinking, social reflection and intellectual autonomy. In addition, this didactic strategy allowed students to freely express their understanding, to analyze the context, to question, to reflect and to present their own ideas and criteria regarding the role of the inquisition of the church in the Middle Ages and Latin American reality. According to these conclusions, the students themselves consider that through the elaboration and interpretation of cartoons “One self can express his/her feelings, thoughts, ideologies and the perspectives about things”⁵.

4. Source: Conversation. Didactic Session 6

5. Source: Discussion group

Learn to be: Autonomy

“The problem of education [...] is that it tends to make students *psychologically dependent* on the guidance of the teacher” (Castro, 2000, p.155), this problem is daily in the secondary education study centers. Students of all levels are characterized by verbalizing repetitive ideas from the textbook, from their teacher or from their classmates, but seldom present their own opinions because they have not developed the capacity to act with autonomy and own criteria. Precisely, in the discipline of Philosophy, this situation is more frequently seen, being this worrisome, because these young people are culminating their high school studies and will graduate without developing these abilities.

The teaching and learning of Philosophy is related to *Learning to Be*, the fourth learning proposed in the second report of the International Commission of UNESCO, chaired by Jacques Delors, in the work Education encloses a Treasure (1996), sponsors a model of Learning in which the student can broadly develop his/her autonomy and minimize dependence on the textbook, teacher and other sources of information.

Delors (1996) explains that education must contribute to the global development of each person: body and mind, intelligence, sensitivity, individual and spiritual responsibility, and that all human beings must be endowed with an autonomous and critical thinking, The essential function of education is to confer upon all people the freedom of thought, judgment, feelings and imagination to remain the architects of their destiny.

Also De Castilla (2016) expresses that, *Learning to Be* simply means: *To be autonomous*. From this perspective, education must be directed towards the development of the person and of human beings, and teachers' mission is to teach learners to reach their autonomy at each stage of the teaching-learning process.

Based on these theoretical approaches, the purpose of Elaborating and Interpreting cartoons is that students acquired a set of competences, which was achieved and evidenced satisfactorily in the cartoons that they elaborated and interpreted (see figure 8), And in their assessment of this learning activity: “It is a unique way of expressing ourselves and helps us to express ourselves freely”, “it helped us to express our thoughts”, “develops the imagination”, “we express our creativity through drawings”, “we give our own opinions, stimulate interpersonal behavior and learning”⁶. This student assessment shows that this didactic strategy supports the global development that includes moral and intellectual autonomy, thus: Learning to be.

6. Source: Student Questionnaire



Figure 8. Cartoon made by another student

Therefore, it is evident the imagination and exercise of self-judgment that the students developed through this didactic strategy. Regarding figure 9, a student expressed: "This cartoon represents a single nation, that is, Latin American unity"⁷.



Figure 9. Cartoon made by a student

Nevertheless, the correspondence between the theoretical elements raised and the activities of learning that the students realized, that is to say, the Elaboration and Interpretation of cartoons allowed them to express their creativity and imagination, to develop their intellectual autonomy, and to make judgments. In addition, it is important that teachers who teach this social discipline, incorporate new activities that allow a global development in students, and also conceives that "the mission of the school is not just to teach the student a huge amount of specialized knowledge in different fields, but above all, that students learn to learn, to ensure that the student acquires intellectual autonomy" (López, 2012, p. 42).

7. Source: Conversation. Didactic Session 3

CONCLUSIONS

The process of didactic intervention carried out at the Esquipulas Public School with the purpose of validating the elaboration and interpretation of cartoons as an innovative didactic strategy for the teaching and learning of the discipline Philosophy, was completed in a satisfactory way and was positively valued by the students. In addition to the results discussed, it can be said that:

- This educational innovation allowed students to improve the mastery of the contents studied. The exploration of the previous knowledge indicated that the students dominated 27% of the contents, however, at the end of the didactic intervention it was verified that its percentage of understanding increased to 83%.
- The elaboration and interpretation of cartoon is a didactic strategy that conducive the teaching-learning of Philosophy, since the students show their understanding of contents with autonomy, critical attitude and in a meaningful way. One student said that this didactic strategy allowed him to "store the information for much longer". This type of learning is important in the teaching-learning of Philosophy, since it makes learning an experience, applied to the context of the student, that is, useful. In addition, in the questionnaire and focus group, the students categorically expressed that this was a funny, creative and dynamic new way to learn philosophy.
- The application of this didactic strategy allowed students to learn meaningfully, developing autonomy and critical thinking. The cartoons that the students elaborated and autonomy and critical thinking. The cartoons elaborated and interpreted by the students show that they did not reproduce textual ideas of the reading material, but they made judgments from their own perspective, that is, it allowed the development of moral and intellectual autonomy. One of the students who participated in the study said: "we no longer focus on something to be memorized", this indicates that these learning activities generate processes of reflection, analysis and judgment in students and promote understanding of the contents , Also allows us to infer the relevance of elaborating didactic proposals and learn with autonomy and critical thinking, in order to reduce the purpose of teaching that assigns a priority value to the conceptual contents, thus subtracting importance from the procedural and Attitudinal.
- The pedagogical innovation as a tool for the qualitative improvement of the educational processes, it generated empathy between the subject, the didactic strategy and students. The applied didactic strategy was valued as more creative, dynamic and new for the learning in the school, in addition, the students recognized the importance and the value of philosophy in their daily life.

The teaching-learning of Philosophy in Secondary Education, must develop conceptual, procedural and attitudinal contents, however, traditionally teachers prioritize the memorization of the current context. But with the application and contextualization of learning contents, besides the use of innovative didactic strategies, innovative learning spaces are promoted in which autonomous learning, critical and reflective attitude and the expression of opinions and feelings are fostered. The educational process makes the learning experience a conscious, meaningful, and successful process.

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