HUMAN REVIEW | 2022 | ISSN 2695-9623
International Humanities Review / Revista Internacional de Humanidades
https://doi.org/10.37467/revhuman.v11.3818
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THE LABORATORY AS A TOOL FOR INNOVATION IN SOCIAL SCIENCE TEACHING

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KEYWORDS

Laboratory
Innovation
Social Sciences
Mediation
Social Work

ABSTRACT

This article analyzes the results of a teaching innovation project developed during the academic year 2021-2022, whose main objective was to assess the need to include a compulsory subject of mediation and collaborative conflict resolution in the degree in Social Work at UCM. To this end, an international working group has been formed in the form of an Ideas Lab that has developed a research combining quantitative (questionnaire) and qualitative (Design Thinking) tools, whose results have allowed to develop a proposal that has been submitted to the dean's office for consideration in the future modification of the degree. But undoubtedly, the most remarkable thing is that through the laboratory it has been possible to guarantee essential elements for the quality of the training of our university community: transversality, transdisciplinarity, internationalization and transfer of knowledge.

PALABRAS CLAVE

Laboratorio
Innovación
Ciencias Sociales
Mediación
Trabajo Social

RESUMEN

En este artículo se analizan los resultados de un proyecto de innovación docente desarrollado durante el curso 2021-2022, cuyo objeto principal objetivo era valorar la necesidad de incluir una asignatura obligatoria de mediación y resolución colaborativa de conflictos en el grado en Trabajo Social de la UCM. Para ello, se ha constituido un grupo de trabajo internacional en forma de Laboratorio de Ideas que ha desarrollado una investigación combinando herramientas cuantitativas (cuestionario) y cualitativas (Design Thinking), cuyos resultados han permitido elaborar una propuesta que se ha presentado al decanato para su consideración en la futura modificación del título. Pero sin duda, lo más destacable es que a través del laboratorio se han podido garantizar elementos esenciales para la calidad de la formación de nuestra comunidad universitaria: transversalidad, transdisciplinariedad, internacionalización y transferencia de conocimiento.

Recibido: 01/ 07 / 2022
Aceptado: 05/ 09 / 2022

1. Introduction

The main aim of this article is to identify the contributions that a laboratory can make to increasing quality and innovation in the way a subject such as Social Work is taught and researched; and more specifically, in the field of mediation and alternative conflict resolution systems. It also analyses the methodology used by this laboratory to take the first steps and create an appropriate workspace, in which the principles of transversality, transdisciplinary, internationalisation and transfer are guaranteed.

The origin of this laboratory stems from the experience of several members of the ARDSXXI[1] research group in teaching 'Mediation: a conflict management and resolution system', an optional subject that has been taught within the degree of Social Work at the Complutense University of Madrid for more than 10 years. This subject is well-known among the teaching staff of different departments, and it generates great interest among students. Over the last few years, professors in charge of this subject, with the help of members of the research team to which they belong, have presented various teaching innovation projects that have improved the quality of teaching through the development of various techniques with which they have been able to face some shortcomings and promote a better understanding of the subject by the students.

The introduction of this subject within the "minor in English" offered in this faculty (30 ECTS offered in English) was a turning point when it was established that the internationalisation of the subject does not only involve teaching in another language, but also, and essentially, it enables the student to have a broader vision of the reality of the subject taught through comparative study. The need to promote the internationalisation of teaching has pushed professors to seek new teaching strategies. Through innovation projects, which have been attended annually, an international seminar has been implemented, attended by professors and experts from different countries and areas of mediation. Teaching material has been produced in collaboration with colleagues from other universities; and international conferences or meetings have been held in order to provide students with an international experience at home which is highly valued. During the 2021-2022 academic year, a teaching innovation project was presented with the title "International proposal for the creation of a compulsory subject on mediation and collaborative conflict resolution for the Social Work degree as well as other related degrees", with the essential objective to combine all this effort and integrate it into a laboratory, understanding that this is the best way to continue growing in this field. This laboratory, although integrated in the Faculty of Social Work, has an international and interdisciplinary vocation, and is aimed at the entire university community.

Firstly, the contributions of the laboratory as an instrument to promote innovation and quality in the social sciences are explored in this article, specifically in the field that concerns us, mediation, and conflict management. Secondly, the article briefly explains the process of creating the laboratory and the activities carried out within the framework of the teaching innovation project no. 124 of the UCM. Thirdly, we analyse how Design Thinking has been used to put all the values and principles of action that can be developed through the Laboratory into practice. We will then analyse the main results of the methodology developed. Finally, we will provide a series of conclusions in order to be able to make future contributions to the work that has already been started

2. The laboratory as a tool to foster innovation and quality in social science teaching

2.1. Why a laboratory?

The term "laboratory" is defined by the RAE as "place equipped with the necessary means to carry out research, experiments and work of scientific and technical nature". It is also defined as "the reality in which something is experimented or elaborated" (RAE, 2021).

The reasons mentioned above might make people picture a scientist with a white coat and protective goggles, gloves and a huge number of instruments that help him carry out his research task in an efficient and effective manner when they think of a laboratory. We think of a scientist searching for a new cancer treatment or a vaccine, something truly necessary in recent times. We hardly think of a teacher in the social sciences or humanities who seeks new teaching methodologies, who opens his or her classroom to other colleagues so that they can learn about other ways of teaching; a professor who shares and translates essential articles, shares case studies, or even offers his or her know-how and professional services to the public free of charge.

Among the reasons that may explain this association is the fact that humanities and social sciences "were traditionally presented as sciences that teach finished phenomena, which explain facts from the past, and which, therefore, are not susceptible to being repeated in a laboratory test, as opposed to the teaching of natural sciences, which needed many practical elements to be explained" (Corrales Serrano, Díaz Rincón, Sánchez Martín, Moreno Losada, 2019, p. 139).

The way Humanities (e.g., Philosophy, History, Geography) and social and legal sciences (Law, Sociology, Political Science, Education and Social Work) were understood, led to teaching being offered in the form of lectures, which are eminently theoretical and not very practical. However, this conception has changed over the years. The implementation of what is known as the Bologna Plan brought about important changes: the focus is now placed

1 ADRSXXI https://www.ucm.es/adrsxxi

on the student, who has shifted from being a passive subject in the learning process to becoming an active one; just attending class is no longer enough, it is now necessary to develop a series of competences through readings, case studies and debates. The teacher is no longer a "teacher" but a "tutor", a companion in the learning process. This reformulation of the learning process has come to point out that social sciences and humanities are also "experienced" in the classroom. The student needs to put the theory that is learnt in the classroom into practice.

Teachers, not without reluctance, have had to learn to work in both a physical and a virtual environment. These environments are essential to enable communication with students, deposit information and elaborate tasks. Teachers have had to be trained in teaching techniques, such as the use of videos, case studies, new technologies, theatre, etc. and in various tools such as the use of the reflective diary or service-learning models (Flogueiras Bertomeu, Luna González and Puig Latorre, 2013). In other words, humanistic and social disciplines are approached in a scientific way nowadays, which allows for a practical approach to the various subjects.

The laboratory now appears as a tool, or rather, as a space whose use is justified for the following reasons (Corrales Serrano, Díaz Rincón, Sánchez Martín, Moreno Losada, 2019, p. 141 ff):

- It is a fun space that can serve for the presentation of problems, search for solutions, analysis and treatment in a less formal context than theoretical classes.
- They favour the perception of social and humanistic subjects as practical, useful and experimental.
- It is a flexible space in which furniture, posters, maps, pictures, newspapers, etc. can be incorporated in different ways. A "motivating" (p. 141) environment that is not found in classrooms.

There are numerous previous experiences in the use of the laboratory in the social sciences and humanities in various fields. For example, in the field of secondary education, the studies by Santacana (2005) and Corrales Serrano, Díaz Rincón, Sánchez Martín, Moreno Losada (2019) stands out. In the field that concerns us, the university, similar experiences have been developed at the University of Valencia (Social Lab)[2], at the Pablo de Olavide University in Seville (FCSLab, Laboratory of the Faculty of Social Sciences)[3], and at the Complutense University of Madrid, in the field of social work with groups (Grupolab)[4]. Taking all of the above into account, a laboratory has been set up with the main objective to help the university community to learn, develop and put their negotiation skills into practice, as well as strategies for conflict resolution in a collaborative, participatory and democratic way.

DRLab (Dispute Resolution Lab) is a laboratory for innovation and research in collaborative management and Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR). The purpose of this laboratory is to articulate a discourse and a series of actions and activities around the concept of ADR, especially mediation and its teaching and research; while exploring new forms of collaborative work and knowledge production that do not emulate traditional practices. The laboratory links the activities of participating academic and non-academic institutions from Spain, Italy, Portugal, Belgium and Norway, in order to connect with "what is happening outside", in common places that aim to reflect the current reality of mediation in order to favour the contrast of experiences with plurality and transparency.

The DRLab is configured as a space of commitment in which one can rigorously debate mediation, produce consensus and make shared decisions; to point out discrepancies, disagreements, express problems and propose common initiatives. In this task, the DRLab becomes a space where the process of production and reproduction of ideas has the tentative, experimental and provisional nature of generating ideas, but with the active vocation of systematising protocols of action such as, for example, those of good practices or those that allow for the improvement of teaching guides, which represent progress in the teaching of mediation and conflict resolution at the University.

2.2. Why a laboratory on collaborative conflict management and mediation?

The emerging importance of ADR is directly linked to the realisation of the Sustainable Development Goals and the 2030 Agenda, as it is directly linked to Goal 16 on the need to promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective and accountable inclusive institutions at all levels.

As indicated in the Agenda, justice and peace must be achieved; and the fundamental right of access to justice for all must be facilitated. New technologies must be applied to the administration of justice so that it is faster, more agile and efficient. It must fulfil its dual task of punishing the culprit and contributing to repairing the damage caused without delay. In Spain, following the guidelines of the 2030 Agenda, an important change is being promoted in the way of understanding the procedural response to a conflict.

Experts argue that the main political and legislative challenge is to change the pro-litigation culture in which the court is seen as the preconceived option (De Palo, 2014). In order to bring about this cultural change, important legislative reforms have been made. The recent Law 3/2022, of 24 February, on university coexistence (BOE no. 48, of 25 February 2022), establishes that "the promotion of coexistence within the university community exceeds

2 https://www.uv.es/uvweb/socials/es/social-lab/social-lab-1286001600167.html
3 https://www.upo.es/facultad-ciencias-sociales/es/fcslab/
4 https://ucm.es/grupolab

a disciplinary regime and cannot be dealt with, at least exclusively or preferentially, by means of it". Therefore, universities, in exercising their university autonomy enshrined in Article 27.10 of the Spanish Constitution, have established measures and actions that favour and stimulate active coexistence and co-responsibility among all members of the university community, and can develop them with greater intensity. Likewise, in April 2022, the draft bill on Procedural Efficiency of the Public Justice Service was approved, which makes a firm commitment to ADR (appropriate means of dispute resolution) with a relevant role for mediation, conciliation and negotiation based on the new paradigm of adequacy, efficiency and sustainability of the system, which renders litigation models obsolete and proposes the foundations of the negotiation model. In this scenario, which aims for Justice to function as an engine of social cohesion, the promotion of a "culture of mediation" is required, which allows for tacit knowledge so that the implementation of these policies is successful and makes it necessary to train citizens in mediation, both at school and at university (García Villaluenga & Vázquez de Castro, 2019).

However, having a law is not enough. This cultural change needs to be essentially driven by the education and training of citizens (Blanco Carrasco, 2020). Among the recommendations proposed in the 2016 Directive's report is a better promotion of mediation by the National Authorities, good practices, as well as the European Commission's willingness to continue co-funding mediation-related projects. It is clear that cultural evolution in a collaborative sense 'requires longer periods of time and more complex educational and training processes, also linked to the generational change of justice operators and users' (Pilia, 2019, p. 52).

The DRLab aims to respond to two essential needs: Firstly, to promote collaborative conflict management throughout the university community, which will bring about a change in the way in which not only students, but also teaching staff, administration and services staff and the rest of the public deal with conflict. Secondly, this laboratory aims to articulate a discourse and a series of actions and activities around the concept of ADR, especially mediation, its teaching and research, while exploring new forms of collaborative work and knowledge production that do not emulate traditional practices. The laboratory links the activities of participating academic and non-academic institutions from Spain, Italy, Portugal, Belgium and Norway, in order to connect with "what is happening outside", in common places that aim to reflect the current reality of mediation in order to favour the contrast of experiences with plurality and transparency.

2.3 Why a laboratory for teaching and research?

In the social sciences, the lab offers a space in which to develop and share different activities related to both teaching and research in this field, since we understand that both tasks, teaching, and research, must go hand in hand. It also contributes to creating a better link between theory and practice, especially in those areas of the social sciences that are not limited to analysing reality but rather to transforming it, such as law, psychology, or social work. Social work, for example, is defined as "a practice-based profession and an academic discipline that promotes social change and development, social cohesion, and the empowerment and liberation of people (...)" (International Federation of Social Work, 2014).

It is necessary to apply knowledge to practice for knowledge alone is not enough. Theory will be reinforced by research and reflection. The professional act must be theory-oriented since research does not only serve analysis, but it also helps reflect and rethink practice. This reflection is understood as an ethical duty of professionals to enable further progress in the discipline. This reflective practice is broadly defined as "the practitioner's deep thinking about phenomena or situations before initiating any action" (Amaro, 2018, p. 16). Alternative systems, and especially mediation, aim to intervene in conflict situations from a professional perspective and seeking social transformation. Taking the above into account, it is necessary to accompany the professional in his or her intervention, encouraging reflection and feedback between theory and practice.

The DRLab is a space for commitment in which to rigorously debate mediation, produce consensus and make shared decisions; to point out discrepancies, disagreements, express problems and propose common initiatives. It is a space where the process of production and reproduction of ideas has the tentative, experimental, and provisional nature of generating ideas, but with the active vocation of systematising protocols of action such as, for example, those of good practices or those that allow for the improvement of teaching guides, which represent progress in the teaching of mediation and conflict resolution at the University. The aim is therefore to set up an international working group that takes the form of a Laboratory of Ideas, with a vocation for permanence, generating alliances that will survive the project, generating sustainable knowledge and research. To achieve this, the DRLab is based on the following methodological criteria that guarantee the quality of training and research in our university community: transversality, transdisciplinary, internationalisation and knowledge transfer.

a) Cross-disciplinarity

Training in both mediation and conflict management is specific training in certain areas of knowledge; they are also competences that all university students should be able to accredit. It is essential that European universities, and especially UCM, provide their students and the rest of the university community with quality cross-disciplinary training in these subjects, especially in those areas where these concepts are not addressed. Mediation implies the acquisition of a series of competences in the analysis, management and conflict resolution

that are understood as transversal to all its studies. This implies that these are competences in which students should be trained throughout their degrees in any branch of knowledge.

b) Transdisciplinary

The theoretical construct of mediation stems from the theoretical corpus of a series of related disciplines which are integrated and determine its interdisciplinary origin and determine its epistemology. This has given rise to a vast specialised theoretical body of its own. Thus, training in mediation must contemplate different levels for future professionals, which is why it is not linked to a specific area of knowledge, but it is enriched by models, theories, techniques and strategies from very diverse areas of knowledge, such as Law, Psychology or Social Work. Therefore, its teaching must consider this essential characteristic, and, at the same time, it may be necessary for the training of professionals from very different disciplines. The teaching of a mediation and conflict resolution subject in a specific area or university department sometimes prioritises some aspects, leaving others aside, which are essential for adequate training. The study of mediation requires the search for strategies that build epistemic, conceptual, and methodological frameworks shared by an integrated team that provides a holistic vision, broadening the domain of each one of the disciplines involved. The laboratory will allow for exchanges of teaching staff linked to other areas and disciplines who can offer the perspective of their own discipline and the aspects it affects trying to complement, expand or reach a consensus on the most essential elements for all of them.

c) Internationalisation: the third mission (TMA)

The DRLab promotes international learning environments, responding to the central objectives of international and national education policies, such as internationalisation at home (laH) and internationalisation of the curriculum (IoC). It is a space for improving the quality of education and research, as indicated in the Internationalisation Plan for teaching at UCM. The international work team that forms this laboratory is based on collaborative models that are the social consequence of the level of progress of science, which cannot make progress with the work carried out by isolated individuals (Ziman, 2003) or with exclusively national practices.

The laboratory furthermore connects with the third mission objectives (TMA) (Trencher et al., 2014) of higher education institutions to contribute to the social, economic, and cultural development of the community from an international perspective, offering questions and answers to global challenges (Jones et al., 2021). These learning experiences develop cross-culturalism (Robson et al., 2018), the comparison of national elements, the handling of the complexity of "plural cultures". They form a collaborative learning community: researchers from different disciplines and practitioners with diverse experiences, knowledge, and goals, and those affected, enable a holistic approach of collaborative knowledge production to improve relationships, problems or the satisfaction of social needs through the development of knowledge and practices that promote what is perceived as the common good (Pohl & Hirsch Hadorn, 2007).

d) Knowledge transfer

From this transdisciplinary action, which allows theoretical-methodological-practical approaches, we emphasise the translation of the reflection and the results of this project into practical solutions for the problems to which mediation responds; issues that Hadorn and Pohl (2008) called life-world problems and that Stokols (2006, 2013) characterised as transdisciplinary action research.

One of the main contributions of the laboratory as a methodology is to connect academia with professional practice. Social work students need to be prepared for the labour market they will encounter upon completion of their degrees. In the field of mediation, studies indicate that there is significant discrepancy between theory and practice, which may affect the future of these professionals (García Villaluenga & Vázquez de Castro, 2019; Blanco Carrasco, Corchado Castillo, & Ferreira, 2020). The laboratory allows laying down the foundations that improve conflict management skills and the possibility to explore a professional world different from that of their original professions: that of the mediator. For these reasons, the laboratory will not only involve university lecturers, but also professionals with vast experience in mediation from different countries who will be able to contribute their vision of the training needs of our university community. It will also allow for the establishment of bridges of collaboration between the University and mediation institutions, creating synergies in the training of professionals, studies or research linked to certain services or professional practice agreements.

3. The laboratory as teaching innovation project. Objetives

The teaching-learning process is at the heart of the objectives of educational innovation, including more proactive and creative learning strategies and experiences that promote disciplinary, pedagogical-didactic, and socio-emotional competences that enable relevant learning (Deroncele et al., 2020). For this innovation initiative to be sustainable, it must be institutionalised (Fix et al., 2020), so a teaching innovation project is the most appropriate frame of reference to achieve the goal of sustainability and it allows the results of the process to be explained and shared with those who have similar interests. For this reason, the teaching innovation project no. 124 entitled International proposal for the creation of a compulsory subject in mediation and collaborative conflict resolution

for the degree in Social Work and other related degrees was presented, which received the highest score and funding of all the projects presented in the area of social and legal sciences at the UCM .

The main objective of this project is the creation of a Laboratory for the analysis and improvement of mediation training in European higher education institutions, which has been established under the name of Dispute Resolution Lab (DRLab)[5] . This laboratory is led by the Faculty of Social Work of the UCM, pioneer in mediation training in undergraduate and master's degrees and, above all, pioneer in offering a subject on mediation in the plan for the internationalisation of teaching. To establish this group of people, teaching staff in Spanish and European Higher Education Institutions interested in teaching mediation were approached. This contact has been developed through a systematic search on the websites of Spanish and foreign universities that offer training in mediation. Contact with different entities that carry out mediation and conflict management functions was also made, especially in Madrid city, to assess their interest in taking part in the project and in the planned international meeting. With all the training gathered, a database was created with a total of 59 members.

Secondly, it was deemed necessary to address through the laboratory the need to introduce a mediation subject within the training of the degree in social work, and, perhaps, in other related degrees, such as Law or Psychology. With this objective in mind, a series of activities related to the remaining objectives of this report[6] were carried out:

- Creation of an ad hoc questionnaire on mediation teaching provided by the participants. This survey will collect information on the degree in which it is taught (semester, ECTs, students per year), content (syllabus, areas) and materials (bibliography, online resources, etc.). Initial impressions on the shortcomings in training and improvements to be made were also gathered.
- Comparative analysis of teaching guides for the mediation subjects of the participating universities, which will be provided to the participants of the conference to deepen the data obtained.
- Holding an international conference where the preliminary results of the comparative analysis were presented to encourage debate and further study of the obtained results.
- Development of a proposal for a compulsory subject and a cross-cutting subject in mediation and collaborative conflict resolution.

4. Method

4.1 Participants

A database of 59 participants was elaborated to take part in the survey. Seventeen completed questionnaires were obtained and analysed.

Most of the participants are Spanish (52.9%) and more specifically, from Madrid (29.4%). Most of them were professors (87%), while 12.5% were professionals. The participating professionals worked mainly in public institutions (75%) as opposed to those who worked in private institutions (25%). 81.3% had qualifications in mediation, 62.5% had experience as professional mediators. 87.5% were women and the average age is 51.62, which was not a surprising fact since the sought sample included people with significant teaching and/or mediating experience. Social Work (43%) and Law (25%) were the areas of knowledge most teachers come from. Fewer professors came from other areas (Psychology, Sociology, Education, Philosophy and Translation and Interpreting).

Fourteen members of the team attended the international conference; eight of them were foreign and six of them were Spanish. Out of these fourteen attendees, four of them were professional workers, one of them was a member of the Administration and Services at UCM and the rest of them were professors from different European universities. The meeting was also attended by students of the mediation course offered in English in the degree of Social Work, reaching a total of 47 people. These students came from Spain, Italy, Portugal, Germany, Belgium, Greece, Turkey, and Lithuania and belonged to the Erasmus programme in the faculty of Social Work. The meeting was held on March 17, 2022.

4.2 Design

A design based on Design Thinking (DT) was developed, as a way of approaching the project from a broader perspective, integrating the laboratory's principles of action: transversely, internationalisation, transdisciplinary and knowledge transfer.

With design thinking, innovations can be developed through various tools regardless of the capacity for creativity and innovation of individuals and/or teams. We therefore use DT as an innovation approach to promote new models of learning that involve a transdisciplinary working team to develop the "intelligence of the us" (HPI School of Design Thinking 2022), in a laboratory that offers a safe space that facilitates creative development.

5 https://www.ucm.es/labdr

6 https://eprints.ucm.es/id/eprint/72639/

Team, space and process are the three supports of DT. The five-stage d.school model was adopted as a protocol that allowed the discovery of innovative answers to the questions proposed in this project. In this process there were overlaps in terms of the basic stages and different techniques were used in each of them: Empathise, Define, Ideate, Prototype and Test (von Thienen et al. 2017).

Empathy creates meaning and knowledge (Köppen & Meinel, 2015), and generates access to the perspectives of all team members. Among the variables that were studied, questions were asked about their mediation and conflict resolution style and about the subjective meaning of teaching mediation for the members. In order to create an interpersonal approach and getting to know the team members, an ad hoc questionnaire was elaborated in Spanish and English. The questionnaire was divided into three sections: basic information about the institution, information about the subject and its teaching guide, and information about the importance of training in their area of knowledge. An international seminar was also held, which was the first meeting in the DRLab. During this stage, a lot of data was generated. This was reported and it fostered the team's curiosity and their empathy with the project itself. The results obtained from the data analysis allowed the Define phase to be tackled and these results were shared with both the team and the different institutions involved in different points of the process.

Defining what challenge to focus on. The information obtained from the questionnaires in the Empathy stage was organised, categorised, classified and synthesised in order to frame and define the challenges to be addressed.

Design of solutions by generating a wide range of ideas collaboratively (von Thienen et al. 2017). The chosen technique was Brainwriting or Brainsketching with Post-its. All participants wrote or drew each one of their ideas on a post-it note, which they stuck on the board. Each new sticky note served as stimulus for new ideas. This procedure of visualising ideas served to organise and classify them.

Prototyping is the art of listening (Lafuente, & Cancela, 2017) so that ideas can become a product (Royalty, et al., 2019). In a process of "thinking, doing" the ideas were iteratively interpreted to visualise and materialise the concepts. These facilitated the creation of solutions: the final product that responded to the three constructs became a reality in the define phase.

Testing: In this final phase, the final product was presented for evaluation to determine its viability. The report-proposal was sent to the Dean's Office of the Faculty of Social Work at UCM.

5. Results

The obtained results in the various activities correspond to the objectives of the teaching innovation project that was presented.

5.1. Defining: main challenges to consider

In this stage, the results obtained in the questionnaire and in the analysis of the teaching guides were organised, categorised, synthesised and classified, and a report was prepared and made available to the members of the laboratory. The results generated the following categories as main challenges, which would guide the work to be carried out in the following phases:

- Reasons why mediation and conflict resolution should be a compulsory subject.
- Elements that should not be missing in the curriculum.
- Methods and techniques in the teaching-learning process.

5.2. Designing: international day for collaborative work

In the ideation phase, ideas are "saturated and grouped" and shared with the group, with the aim of developing collaborative and creative work. For this purpose, an international seminar on teaching mediation was organised. During this seminar, the results of the questionnaire were shared with all the participants and, based on the categories created in the previous phase, collaborative and creative reflection was sought among the participants. The chosen technique was Brainwriting or Brainsketching with Post-its. All participants wrote or drew each idea on a post-it note, which they stuck on the panel. Each new sticky note served as a stimulus for new ideas (see figure 1).

Figure 1. Brainwriting with post-its.

Source: own elaboration

The results obtained in this phase are as follows:

Why should it be a compulsory subject in the degree in Social Work?

a.- Conflict management is an essential competence in the training of social workers. It must be present in the curriculum from the first semester. The degree can be the opportunity to understand the importance of acquiring this knowledge and competences.

b.- Conflict is everywhere, so the mission of social workers as agents of change and their harmonising role requires these competences.

c.- Problem solving in human relations, assessment, and intervention to increase well-being and social cohesion (present in the global standards for the education and training of social workers) makes the acquisition of these competences essential.

d.- Conflict management competences are also competences in peaceful relations, they go beyond professional life and permeate personal life. The acquisition of these competences leads to the formation of responsible citizens with a social impact that materialises in fairer and more peaceful societies.

e.- Conflict management skills must transcend law, psychology, medicine and nursing and other related fields.

What should not be missing in the curriculum?

a.- Conflict resolution skills: Communication techniques: listening, dialogue, non-verbal language.

b.- Emotional intelligence skills: self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, social skills.

c.- Removing barriers between theory and practice: reflection skills, conflict resolution skills, introducing reality into the classroom or the university into reality.

d.- The international perspective is always present. Students surpass international standards, increasing cultural identity, fostering, and understanding different environments and enabling them to lead positive changes in the world of social work and conflict resolution.

e.- Ethical principles to guide research and action.

f.- Clear definition of roles (social worker vs. mediator), common elements and differences.

g.- Legal context of conflict resolution.

What are the best methods in the teaching-learning process?

a.- Learning must be meaningful and based on constructivism which places the learner at the centre of the teaching-learning process.

b.- Techniques that are not exclusive and can be applied realistically in the classroom, such as cooperative learning.

c.- The learner takes on the role of the expert and heterogeneous groups are formed. Positive interdependence and individual responsibility are encouraged. Interpersonal and group skills are acquired in this way.

d.- Problem-based learning.

e.- Inter-sectoral and inter-professional discussions.

f. - Role-plays.

g.- Case studies.

h.- Relationships between professional practice and academia that allow students and professionals to participate in both fields.

i.- Development of case studies based on intervention models.

j.- Interdisciplinary projects justified by the characteristics of the discipline.

5.3. Prototyping: proposal on the teaching of collaborative management and mediation in the degree of Social Work

Among the main objectives of the laboratory was the elaboration of a report with the results of the questionnaire and the conclusions of the international conference. This report was sent to all the members of this project, the participants in the international meeting and the students participating in design thinking - who appear as co-authors of the report. After including their contributions, this document was sent to the dean's office of the Faculty of Social Work on 4 April 2022.

The above-described report includes a proposal to include two subjects in the next modified versions of the degree in Social Work: a compulsory subject on conflict management and culture of peace, and an optional subject on mediation and social work.

The compulsory subject on negotiation, culture of peace and alternative systems of conflict resolution for Social Work students should include general content about conflict as well as collaborative and constructive ways of dealing with it. This subject should not be centred on mediation, but instead, mediation should be just another element of the training. All but a few groups indicated that it should be compulsory training for social work students. Only one group indicated that it should be optional for the Social Work degree and compulsory for the Law degree. The study specifically mentions certain degrees in which this training should be compulsory: Social Work, Law, Psychology, Economics, Politics and Sociology, Education, Philosophy and other related areas. The training that these students received should be approached from an interdisciplinary and international perspective, offering the possibility of studying in English, and also, accessing international sources, projects and experiences that offer a more comprehensive vision of conflict management. Taking the responses obtained into account, the training that these students should receive should essentially deal with the following content: Conflict analysis; conflict management skills; negotiation strategies and techniques; alternative conflict resolution systems; mediation principles, process, results; mediation and social work.

This report also recommends including similar training in other related degrees, such as Law, Psychology, Sociology, Education or Philosophy. This report includes a proposal regarding the content, bibliography and teaching methodology that should be included in the teaching of these subjects if incorporating them is decided.

An optional subject on mediation and social work. The results of this study show that in certain degrees, students should be offered one or more optional subjects that reinforce the knowledge acquired during the first stages of the degree. These subjects allow students to choose the areas of knowledge that are of most interest to them and on which, a priori, they could focus their professional future on. Conflict resolution has been in the DNA of social work since its origins, but we must rethink the training of our students, who must pay specific attention to ADR, as an area of knowledge that claims autonomy from disciplines and professions to which it has historically been linked. Considering the responses obtained, the training that these students should receive should essentially focus on the following content:

- Understanding the relationship between mediation and social work.
- Negotiation and mediation within social intervention.
- Acquiring advanced mediation skills in intervention aimed at the peaceful management of conflicts.
- Know and understand the most important areas and contexts for the development of mediation in social work.
- Know and understand the ethical and legal limits of mediation.
- Acquire the knowledge to understand mediation as a profession distinct from social work.

This proposal includes the essential elements that should be included in the teaching guide for both subjects.

5.4 Testing: future of the project.

We hope that the result of this work will be taken into account by the Dean's Office of the Faculty of Social Work in the future modification of the degree, planned for the next academic year. The impact of the research carried out will not be known until this modification is introduced, however, we can indicate that this project has had the following important findings:

1. Boosting internationalisation at home. Two members of the project taught the students of the mediation course at the Faculty of Social Work on March 15, sharing their teaching methods with the existing teaching staff and students. These lecturers had a very different background (Social Work) to that of the lecturer in charge of the subject (Law). During the lecture, practical tasks related to active listening, rephrasing and paraphrasing were developed, which, although introduced during the course, were taught from a very different perspective. This has allowed Spanish teachers to learn how the same subject is taught by foreign teachers. In the students' evaluation of the subject through the DOCENTIA programme, many referred to this day, to their satisfaction at having had the opportunity to share the classroom with lecturers from other universities, as well as taking part in the proposed activities on an equal footing with the rest of the members of the university community (lecturers and administrative and service staff with professionals of recognised prestige).

2. *Final Degree Assignments linked to the project.* Two of the students who are members of the project team prepared their final degree assignments linked to this experience using the same name as that of the project.

3. *Innovation project for the academic year 2022-2023*. Lastly, a new teaching innovation project called "International proposal for the creation of a cross-cutting subject on collaborative conflict resolution and mediation for the UCM university community" has been presented. Based on the results of the study, a new teaching innovation project has been requested in order to offer a proposal to the Rectorate of the Complutense University of Madrid to create a transversal subject on negotiation, collaborative conflict resolution and mediation. This proposal will be developed following the methodology that has been previously described and will be considered by professors and professionals from different countries. All those who attended the international conference, as well as the Erasmus students who wished to continue working on these subjects, have joined this project.

6. Conclusions

The laboratory that was created for teaching and researching collaborative conflict management systems and, especially, mediation, has proved to be a particularly useful tool for achieving essential objectives in our work as professors. The use of the laboratory in the social sciences, and especially in mediation, allows us to offer students an international and interdisciplinary experience. The activities are intended to enhance internationalisation at home (IaH) by promoting both teaching in English and internationalisation of the curriculum (IoC), incorporating international content and learning outcomes, international teachers and students, and international assessment of competences (Schuerholz-Lehr et al., 2007). Project members and lab participants have shown interest in promoting the internationalisation of conflict resolution and mediation courses, both at UCM and at other university institutions, through collaboration. As part of this collaboration, they have begun to compile and share a series of teaching resources and a guide to good practices that have been included in the developed proposal and which will be made available on the website created for the laboratory. Likewise, experiences have been exchanged in the international collaboration for the teaching of mediation with a vocation of permanence that will allow the teaching exchange between the different institutions, for which examples of good practices will be promoted, such as the permanent international seminars that will be integrated in the mediation subject of the Faculty of Social Work.

The laboratory has made it possible to carry out research through a questionnaire in which all members have actively participated. These results were elaborated thanks to the work of all the members of the laboratory and were made available to them during the international seminar organised, which allowed not only an approach to the reality of the teaching of this subject with verifiable data, but also to value the teaching experience and the reflections of colleagues who encounter the same difficulties when teaching or researching this subject.

This laboratory involves not only researchers and teachers, but also professionals who help bring academia closer to professional practice and facilitate the transfer of knowledge. Students also participate, encouraging active learning and service-learning. The participation of these students is also essential in order to get a feel for our teaching and to be able to offer mechanisms to improve the shortcomings that can be observed in our professional practice as teachers.

The laboratory also allows different disciplines to integrate harmoniously, seeking a holistic and transdisciplinary approach, which is so necessary nowadays, especially in the field of mediation and conflict management. The mere participation in this laboratory makes it possible to put essential skills for social work into practice, such as working in a group or sharing tasks. More importantly, it allows the acquisition of a series of essential skills for life in society, skills understood as transversal in the university, and which should be known by all members of the university community, such as conflict management and responsible participation in conflict resolution.

The laboratory thus becomes a flexible tool that offers a physical or virtual space that brings interests together, offers resources and generates new ways of collaboration in teaching and research in the social sciences

7. Acknowledgements

We are grateful to the Department of Social Work and Social Services of the UCM for financial support for this article.

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