



Educational Planning of Learning Processes in Virtual Environments for Quality Teaching

La planificación educativa de los procesos de aprendizaje en entornos virtuales para la calidad de la enseñanza

Steffany Sánchez Lavanda*

Lupita Franco Sánchez*

Maricela Daza Vélez *

Karen Rizzo Vera*

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Abstract

This research report analyzes educational planning for learning processes in virtual environments and its contribution to the quality of teaching. The study was conducted using a qualitative approach, with a descriptive-analytical design and a documentary analysis method. Scientific literature published between 2020 and 2026 was reviewed in indexed databases and academic repositories with regional and international visibility, with priority given to Scopus, SciELO, Redalyc, and Dialnet. The review identified four central categories of analysis: organization of learning, instructional design, teacher mediation and interaction, and assessment coherence. The findings show that the quality of virtual teaching does not depend solely on technological availability, but on the existence of a pedagogical architecture capable of articulating objectives, content, activities, resources, support, and assessment. The literature agrees that advance planning reduces improvisation, strengthens understanding of tasks, improves interaction, and promotes more consistent learning experiences. Furthermore, it is evident that instructional design constitutes the operational implementation of educational planning in the digital environment and that the teacher's role is redefined as a mediator, guide, and facilitator of learning. It is concluded that the quality of teaching in virtual environments depends on the internal coherence of the pedagogical design and on the ability to transform technology into an organized, meaningful, and evaluatively consistent educational experience. The study provides a critical synthesis of recent literature and offers theoretical foundations to strengthen teaching practice and pedagogical planning in virtual contexts.

Keywords: educational planning, virtual environments, instructional design, quality of teaching, teacher mediation, formative assessment

* Universidad de Especialidades Espíritu Santo, Guayaquil, Ecuador.
steffany.sanchez@uees.edu.ec
<https://orcid.org/0009-0004-1693-2635>

*University of Guayaquil,
lupita.franco@ug.edu.ec,
<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1376-1151>

*University of Guayaquil,
maricela.dazav@gmail.com,
<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7167-9557>

*University of Guayaquil
karen.rizzov@ug.edu.ec
<https://orcid.org/0009-0000-2918-0541>

Resumen

El presente informe de investigación analiza la planificación educativa de los procesos de aprendizaje en entornos virtuales y su aporte a la calidad de la enseñanza. El estudio se desarrolló desde un enfoque cualitativo, con diseño descriptivo-analítico y método de análisis documental. Se revisó literatura científica publicada entre 2020 y 2026 en bases indexadas y repositorios académicos de visibilidad regional e internacional, con prioridad en Scopus, SciELO, Redalyc y Dialnet. La revisión permitió identificar cuatro categorías centrales de análisis: organización del aprendizaje, diseño instruccional, mediación e interacción docente y coherencia evaluativa. Los hallazgos muestran que la calidad de la enseñanza virtual no depende únicamente de la disponibilidad tecnológica, sino de la existencia de una arquitectura pedagógica capaz de articular objetivos, contenidos, actividades, recursos, acompañamiento y evaluación. La literatura coincide en que la planificación previa reduce la improvisación, fortalece la comprensión de las tareas, mejora la interacción y favorece experiencias de aprendizaje más consistentes. Asimismo, se evidencia que el diseño instruccional constituye la concreción operativa de la planificación educativa en el entorno digital y que el rol del docente se redefine como mediador, orientador y facilitador del aprendizaje. Se concluye que la calidad de la enseñanza en entornos virtuales depende de la coherencia interna del diseño pedagógico y de la capacidad de transformar la tecnología en una experiencia formativa organizada, significativa y evaluativamente consistente. El estudio aporta una síntesis crítica de la literatura reciente y ofrece fundamentos teóricos para fortalecer la práctica docente y la planificación pedagógica en contextos de virtualidad.

Palabras clave: planificación educativa, entornos virtuales, diseño instruccional, calidad de la enseñanza, mediación docente, evaluación formativa

Introduction

The expansion of digital technologies has profoundly transformed teaching and learning processes. In just a few years, virtual environments have gone from being a complementary support to becoming central spaces for education, especially in higher education and in programs that require flexibility, continuity, and expanded access. This transformation has not only changed the means of interaction but also the pedagogical conditions from which the act of teaching is organized. Consequently, thinking about virtual education requires analyzing not only which technologies are used, but also how learning experiences are structured within them.

Recent literature shows that educational virtuality does not in itself guarantee the quality of teaching. The mere presence of platforms, digital classrooms, repositories, or synchronous tools does not ensure meaningful learning if these resources are not embedded in a clear, intentional, and coherent pedagogical approach. Virtual teaching requires a didactic architecture that articulates learning objectives, content, activities, timelines, interaction, feedback, and assessment. When this structure is absent or poorly developed, the course becomes fragmented, assignments lose meaning for the student, and the teacher's role is reduced to the technical administration of the environment.

From this perspective, educational planning takes on central importance. Planning does not merely mean distributing content or scheduling activities, but rather anticipating the conditions that will enable a learning experience that is comprehensible, relevant, and consistent in terms of assessment. In the virtual environment, such planning is realized with greater precision through instructional design, understood as the systematic process— that organizes the sequence of learning, defines resources, anticipates difficulties, selects interaction strategies, and establishes assessment criteria aligned with expected outcomes.

This final report brings together the sections developed throughout the course and systematizes the research process centered on the topic “Educational planning of learning processes in virtual environments for the quality of teaching.” The document outlines the problem statement, the literature review, the methodological design, the results of the documentary analysis, their discussion, and the conclusions drawn from the study. Its purpose is to offer a structured and coherent academic perspective that allows for an understanding of why pedagogical planning is a decisive factor in strengthening the quality of teaching in digital contexts.

In this sense, the research assumes that the underlying problem does not lie in virtuality as a modality, but rather in the way it is pedagogically designed and conducted. Analyzing educational planning in virtual environments allows us to understand the conditions under which technology becomes a formative mediator rather than a mere operational tool. Therefore, the study aims to examine the contributions of recent scientific literature and identify patterns that explain how the pedagogical organization of the digital environment affects the quality of the teaching-learning process

In the contemporary educational landscape, marked by the rapid advancement of digital technologies, substantial transformations have occurred in the ways of teaching and learning. The incorporation of virtual learning environments has expanded access to education, diversified teaching resources, and enabled new dynamics of interaction between teachers and students. However, these advances have also highlighted tensions related to how the educational process is organized when pedagogical interaction occurs in technology-mediated spaces.

Despite the growth of virtual education, difficulties persist that affect the quality of teaching in these environments. One of the most significant problems is the insufficient pedagogical planning that characterizes many online educational programs. In many cases, virtualization has been limited to transferring materials and assignments to a platform without redesigning the process to meet the specific needs of the digital environment. This situation creates a disconnect between objectives, content, activities, and assessment; it weakens students’ understanding of the assignments; reduces motivation; and affects the overall learning experience.

A preliminary review of previous activities showed that many difficulties attributed to virtual education do not stem from the digital medium itself, but rather from the absence of solid educational planning. When a course lacks a logical sequence, clear assessment criteria, faculty support, and interaction strategies, students face fragmented processes

with little guidance and limited feedback. In contrast, when there is coherent planning and sustained pedagogical mediation, virtual learning can foster autonomy, collaboration, flexibility, and more personalized monitoring.

Thus, the research problem focuses on understanding how educational planning of learning processes in virtual environments relates to the quality of teaching. The conceptual adjustment made during the course allowed us to shift the focus from a generic notion of "influence" toward a more precise, descriptive, and analytical formulation. Rather than assuming a linear causality, the study analyzes planning as a pedagogical structure that organizes learning and whose implementation, in virtual contexts, is typically expressed through instructional design.

The academic relevance of the study lies in the fact that virtual education continues to establish itself as a stable modality within training systems, making it necessary to understand the pedagogical factors that underpin its quality. Analyzing educational planning allows us to move beyond technocentric views and situate the debate in the realm of the design of learning experiences.

Likewise, the study has practical relevance, as it offers useful theoretical guidance for teachers, coordinators, and instructional designers interested in strengthening the development of virtual courses. The report is also relevant to educational research, as it organizes, compares, and interprets recent scientific literature on a current issue in higher education and in training processes mediated by digital platforms.

The expansion of virtual environments has necessitated a reevaluation of traditional assumptions about teaching, pedagogical presence, and the construction of learning. In face-to-face education, a significant part of the interaction is sustained by physical presence, shared rhythms, and immediate communication. In the virtual environment, however, these conditions must be designed. Therefore, the theoretical framework of this study is organized on the premise that the quality of teaching depends on the coherence of educational planning and its translation into instructional design.

The specialized literature agrees that virtual learning is not a simple transposition of the face-to-face classroom onto a platform. It involves new logics of sequencing, mediation, guidance, and assessment. Hence, educational planning becomes a key category for understanding the pedagogical functioning of digital environments. From this perspective, the prior organization of learning is not an administrative add-on, but rather the condition that allows for giving meaning and direction to the educational process.

The reviewed literature reveals significant points of agreement. Cabero-Almenara and Llorente-Cejudo argue that the pandemic highlighted both the possibilities and the limitations of educational systems in the face of virtualization, and demonstrated that the incorporation of technologies does not replace fundamental pedagogical decisions. Rapanta et al. further emphasize that teachers need specific competencies to design, facilitate, and assess online learning processes, which reinforces the need for a distinct pedagogical framework for virtual learning.

Bozkurt and Sharma clearly distinguish between emergency remote teaching and planned virtual education. This distinction is central to this report because it helps avoid simplistic conclusions about the effectiveness of virtual environments. Many weaknesses observed in recent experiences stemmed, more than from the digital medium itself, from a lack of foresight, design criteria, and sustained pedagogical support.

From a quality-oriented perspective, García-Aretio directly links distance and virtual education to criteria of innovation, relevance, and pedagogical organization. Along the same lines, Flores-Rivera and Meléndez-Tamayo show that pedagogical planning influences participation, task comprehension, and the articulation of the learning process. These studies are relevant because they shift the analysis from the tool to the pedagogical structure that underpins the educational experience.

Other reviewed studies broaden the picture. Alejo and Aparicio highlight the importance of planning teaching strategies within the virtual classroom; Losada Cárdenas and Peña Estrada situate instructional design and the appropriate use of technological resources in relation to strengthening teaching competencies; Pacheco and Zúñiga analyze the mediation of the teacher and the tutor in digital environments; and Rodríguez Ponce et al. demonstrate the value of digital competencies linked to teaching skills. Taken together, this body of research suggests that the quality of virtual teaching rests on coherent relationships between design, interaction, and assessment.

Educational planning can be defined as the systematic process by which learning objectives, content, teaching strategies, resources, and assessment are organized in advance. Its purpose is to provide direction and coherence to the teaching process. In virtual environments, this planning requires a more nuanced understanding of the digital environment, since it is not enough to decide what will be taught; it is also necessary to anticipate how pedagogical presence will be maintained, how student participation will be guided, and how the continuity of the educational process will be ensured.

In online education, planning is operationally expressed through instructional design. This concept refers to the intentional structuring of learning through clear sequences, meaningful activities, relevant resources, support strategies, and assessment criteria aligned with the objectives. Instructional design is not a technical component separate from pedagogy; it represents the concrete manifestation of educational planning in the digital space. When its logic is coherent, the student understands what they must do, why they must do it, what resources they will have, and how they will be assessed.

The quality of teaching, for its part, can be understood as the degree to which an educational process promotes learning experiences that are relevant, organized, inclusive, and consistent with the proposed educational goals. This quality is not limited to student performance or satisfaction; it involves the relationship between objectives, content, methodology, teacher facilitation, assessment, and outcomes. In the virtual environment, quality becomes evident when the platform ceases to be a mere repository of materials and becomes a space designed to foster understanding, interaction, and the tracking of learning.

Another relevant theoretical axis is the teacher's role. In the virtual environment, the teacher assumes the roles of mediator, advisor, and facilitator. This involves anticipating difficulties, designing learning pathways, providing feedback, and maintaining a pedagogical presence that does not depend on physical proximity but on explicit communicative and didactic decisions. Teacher mediation cannot be improvised: it requires planning, sequencing, and knowledge of the digital environment. When these conditions are lacking, the educational experience becomes fragmented, and students are exposed to greater levels of isolation.

Interaction is also an essential dimension. The reviewed literature emphasizes that virtual learning improves when spaces for meaningful communication are designed between the teacher, student, peers, resources, and tasks. Teaching online involves organizing pedagogical relationships and not merely distributing information. Therefore, effective planning incorporates forums, collaborative activities, consultation pathways, opportunities for feedback, and monitoring mechanisms. Interaction ceases to be a spontaneous occurrence and becomes a planned pedagogical decision.

Finally, formative assessment must be understood as an integral part of the design. In virtual environments, assessment is not merely about verifying final products, but about supporting the process through clear criteria, relevant evidence, and timely feedback. Consistent assessment strengthens the course's sense of purpose and allows students to more clearly identify their progress and challenges. Hence, analyzing the quality of virtual teaching requires examining how assessment, objectives, and activities are integrated within a single pedagogical framework.

Materials and methods

The research was conducted using a qualitative approach because the purpose of the study was to understand and interpret the contributions of the scientific literature on educational planning in virtual environments, rather than to measure variables statistically. This approach is appropriate when seeking to analyze complex pedagogical categories, identify recurring meanings, and compare theoretical perspectives and empirical findings present in previous studies.

The design was descriptive-analytical, employing a documentary analysis method. The descriptive phase allowed for the organization of the information found according to the study's theme, objectives, and categories. The analytical phase focused on interpreting the real contributions of the reviewed research, recognizing patterns, comparing emphases, and developing a critical synthesis of the literature.

The unit of analysis consisted of scientific articles, academic reviews, and specialized works published between 2020 and 2026, selected for their direct relevance to virtual education, pedagogical planning, instructional design, teacher mediation, interaction, and assessment in digital environments. Priority was given to publications found in Scopus, SciELO, Redalyc, and Dialnet, as these are sources of regional and international academic visibility.

The following inclusion criteria were considered: a) studies published during the defined period, b) works explicitly linked to the subject of study; c) texts with sufficient theoretical or empirical basis to analyze educational planning in virtual contexts; and d) documents with verifiable access in academic databases and repositories. Duplicate texts, documents with little thematic relevance, and popular science materials without consistent academic backing were excluded.

For the analytical operationalization, a central category was defined: educational planning in virtual environments. Four subcategories were derived from this: organization of learning, instructional design, teacher mediation and interaction, and evaluative coherence. These subcategories allowed for the organization of information, comparisons between studies, and the avoidance of a fragmented understanding of the phenomenon.

The analysis procedure followed four stages. First, the relevant literature was identified and selected. Second, a comprehensive reading of the studies was conducted to identify relevant concepts, approaches, and findings. Third, the contributions were organized into a document analysis matrix according to common categories and criteria. Fourth, an interpretive synthesis was developed to answer the research question and establish links between the results, the theoretical framework, and the study's objectives.

From an ethical and academic standpoint, the research adhered to the principles of scientific integrity through the use of citations and references in accordance with APA 7 standards, the explicit identification of the sources reviewed, and the construction of an argument grounded in specialized literature.

Results

The results of the literature review do not allow for a complacent interpretation of the problem. A review of recent literature shows that the quality of teaching in virtual environments does not depend on the mere existence of platforms or technological resources, but rather on the soundness of the educational planning that structures the learning process. When courses are designed with clear objectives, logical sequencing, teacher mediation, and coherent assessment tools, the virtual environment fosters meaningful learning; when that planning is weak, the educational experience becomes fragmented and loses its pedagogical meaning.

The first finding is clear: virtual education produces better results when it is no longer improvised. The reviewed research agrees that the most consistent learning processes occur in contexts where there are explicit objectives, sequenced activities, relevant resources, teacher support, and assessment aligned with expected learning outcomes. Consequently, the problem does not lie in virtual education as a modality, but in the lack of pedagogical architecture with which it is often implemented. A second finding places instructional design at the center of the debate. The literature does not present it as a technical add-on, but rather as the specific means by which educational planning becomes operational within the digital environment. Instructional design organizes the experience, regulates the sequence of tasks, guides resource selection, and reduces the

fragmentation that often occurs in poorly structured virtual classrooms. When the design is clear, students understand what they must do, why they must do it, and how they will be assessed; when that structure is absent, the course loses direction and coherence.

Five main findings emerge from the body of studies reviewed. First, prior pedagogical planning reduces disjointed learning and improves students' understanding of tasks. Second, instructional design strengthens the coherence between objectives, content, activities, and assessment. Third, meaningful interaction—beyond technical connectivity—is recognized as a condition for retention, motivation, and academic engagement. Fourth, teaching competencies—technological, pedagogical, and communicative—emerge as a structural factor in the success of online teaching. Finally, formative assessment is understood as part of the design rather than as an isolated stage at the end of the process.

A comparison of research studies reveals strong commonalities, though also nuances in emphasis. Some studies highlight the strategic organization of the virtual classroom and the selection of resources as the core of the process; others emphasize teacher mediation and constant interaction as a condition for learning. These differences are not mutually exclusive. Rather, they demonstrate that educational planning in virtual environments is a multidimensional phenomenon that cannot be reduced to the simple distribution of content. Planning also means anticipating forms of communication, support, feedback, and follow-up.

The first identified trend is the shift in academic interest from mere technological adoption toward the quality of pedagogical design. Recent discussion is no longer limited to asking whether virtual learning is useful, but rather under what conditions it works, whom it benefits, and what kind of planning supports it. The second trend is the growing relevance of teachers' digital competencies linked to teaching competencies. The third trend is the renewed emphasis on formative assessment and continuous feedback as part of the pedagogical framework that guides students, corrects their learning trajectories, and strengthens the coherence of the course.

The discussion of the results supports the argument that educational planning can no longer be understood as a preliminary administrative phase, but rather as the structure that enables quality teaching in virtual environments. The findings of the literature review show that virtual learning produces more robust learning experiences when there is an explicit alignment between objectives, activities, resources, interaction, and assessment. This finding aligns with the reviewed theoretical framework and reaffirms that the quality of online teaching depends less on the number of available tools than on the coherence with which they are pedagogically integrated.

First, the results directly address the distinction proposed by Bozkurt and Sharma between emergency remote teaching and planned virtual education. Many of the difficulties attributed to online education actually stem from improvised approaches that transfer materials to a platform without redesigning the teaching process. This study confirms that this lack of design leads to disjointedness, poor understanding of tasks, and a fragmented academic experience. Conversely, when online learning is planned

based on clear pedagogical criteria, it becomes a modality capable of supporting rigorous, flexible, and relevant educational processes.

Second, the centrality of instructional design identified in the results allows for a deeper exploration of the relationship between planning and quality. The reviewed literature presents instructional design as the concrete manifestation of educational planning in the digital space. This relationship is relevant because it shifts the focus from the platform to the pedagogical structure of the course. It is not simply a matter of choosing attractive technological tools, but of constructing learning pathways with comprehensible sequences, justified resources, aligned activities, and transparent assessment criteria. On this point, the results are consistent with the contributions of Losada Cárdenas and Peña Estrada, who link instructional organization to the pedagogically meaningful use of resources.

Another fundamental aspect is the teacher's role. The findings show that effective planning does not end with the preliminary design of content, but rather requires sustained mediation throughout the course. This involves guiding, providing feedback, accompanying, and maintaining a pedagogical presence in environments where physical contact is absent. The results align with Rapanta et al. and with Pacheco and Zúñiga in emphasizing that the competencies of online teachers extend beyond the instrumental mastery of technologies. Knowing how to use a platform is not the same as knowing how to teach on it. Virtual learning requires capacities for pedagogical anticipation, didactic communication, and continuous monitoring of learning.

Likewise, the discussion allows us to recognize that meaningful interaction constitutes a decisive factor in explaining the quality of virtual teaching. The literature review shows that the most consistent studies do not view interaction as an optional add-on, but rather as a condition for student retention, motivation, and engagement. In this sense, planning involves designing pedagogical relationships: providing spaces for dialogue, collaborative activities, opportunities for consultation, and moments for feedback. The absence of these mediations fosters isolation and weakens the sense of academic belonging, while their presence strengthens support and the shared construction of learning.

Assessment also emerges as a point of convergence between outcomes and theory. The studies reviewed indicate that formative assessment is integrated more effectively when it is part of the design logic rather than when it is incorporated at the end of the course as an isolated verification mechanism. This finding reinforces the notion of evaluative coherence addressed in the theoretical framework. A well-planned online course not only organizes content and activities; it also makes visible how learning will be demonstrated, what criteria will be applied, and how feedback will support continuous improvement. In this sense, assessment ceases to be a bureaucratic formality and becomes a means of facilitating learning.

From a broader perspective, the study reveals an epistemological shift in recent literature: the focus is no longer solely on technological integration, but on the pedagogical conditions that give it educational meaning. This shift is significant because

it corrects reductionist approaches that equate innovation with digitization. The findings suggest, on the contrary, that digitizing without redesign reproduces previous weaknesses and may even exacerbate them. Quality does not arise automatically from the virtual environment; it is built upon consistent pedagogical decisions. The discussion also highlights a contribution of the study: understanding educational planning as an integrative category. Concepts such as instructional design, teacher mediation, interaction, digital competencies, and formative assessment appear in the reviewed literature. The analysis shows that these notions should not be treated in isolation, but rather as interconnected dimensions of the same pedagogical architecture. This integrative perspective is useful for future research and for teaching practice, as it avoids reducing the quality of virtual teaching to a single variable.

Finally, it should be acknowledged that the study is based on a literature review and, therefore, its conclusions are grounded in the critical interpretation of scientific literature rather than in the direct observation of specific courses or institutions. However, this limitation does not diminish its value; on the contrary, it allows for the construction of a that can guide subsequent empirical, comparative, or evaluative research. The report's main implication is clear: strengthening the quality of teaching in virtual environments requires placing educational planning at the center of pedagogical design.

Conclusions

The research leads to the conclusion that the quality of teaching in virtual environments depends, to a decisive extent, on the educational planning that structures the learning process. The reviewed literature demonstrates that technology, on its own, does not produce meaningful learning; its pedagogical value emerges when it is integrated into an organized, intentional, and coherent approach.

It is further concluded that instructional design constitutes the operational implementation of educational planning in virtual contexts. Through it, objectives, content, activities, resources, interaction, and assessment are articulated, which provides direction and meaning to the learning experience.

The background and results agree that teacher mediation is a structural component of the quality of virtual teaching. Online teachers require didactic, communicative, and technological competencies that allow them to continuously support, guide, and provide feedback to students.

Another conclusive finding is that meaningful interaction and formative assessment should not be viewed as secondary elements, but rather as integral dimensions of instructional planning. Their proper integration strengthens student retention, motivation, engagement, and understanding of the course.

In light of the overall objective, the study demonstrates that analyzing the educational planning of learning processes in virtual environments allows for a better understanding

of the conditions that promote the quality of teaching. Planning thus emerges as an integrative category that links course design with the actual learning experience.

As a final contribution, the report suggests that institutions and instructors strengthen the pedagogical design and redesign processes of their virtual courses, prioritizing coherence among components and avoiding approaches focused exclusively on the technological tool. Likewise, it is recommended that future research complement this literature review with field studies that analyze concrete experiences of implementing and evaluating virtual learning environments.

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