Situation of the dissertation

ICT are transforming Cuban higher education towards the adoption of blended and distance learning. This dissertation focuses on investigating the effectiveness of using social software to support collaborative learning in a Cuban university. Five studies were conducted within three phases that included diagnostic, integration and validation of the social software that was used to support collaborative learning. A didactic model was created to integrate social software within Cuban teaching and learning in higher education. Social network analysis and content analysis were used to evaluate the effectiveness of social software to support students’ learning through their collaborative learning relationships and through their posts in wiki pages and online discussions. Statistical analysis was used to evaluate students’ self-efficacy as a measure of their achievements in social software-supported collaborative learning. The findings confirmed social software’s suitability to support collaborative learning, as it increased collaborative learning’s effectiveness, compared to face-to-face collaborative learning. Specific findings were revealed for the use of wikis and online discussions within teaching and learning, which are extendable to other social software tools. A didactic model to integrate social software in Cuban teaching and learning, as well as a framework to analyses students’ interactions, were used for first time and validated to extend its use among Cuban university stakeholders.

Curriculum Vitae

Roberto Carlos Rodriguez-Hidalgo was born on April 21st, 1982 in Sancti Spiritus, Cuba. He got his Bachelor degree in Computer Science from Universidad Central “Marta Abreu” de Las Villas (UCLV), in July 2006 by presenting a software extension to standardise the courses hosted in the SEPAD platform. Thenceforth he worked in the Faculty of Informatics and Educational Sciences (FECS) until December 2010, when he moved to the Centre of Informatics Studies in the same university. His current professional profile is entirely developed in the Department of Education Technologies (DTE) of FCE. He began his research in Education Technologies working as student in DTE and continued it as Teacher in Training (October, 2006). Instructor Teacher (October, 2008) and Assistant Teacher (June, 2011). He got his Master degree in ICT in Education on December 2009. Under Prof. dr. Chang Zhu’s supervision, he has investigated social software’s integration within Cuban teaching and learning in higher education, as part of his doctoral studies.