

Good practices in doctoral education: a brief approach to a theoretical framework for their management

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ABSTRACT

With the purpose of introducing the good practices approach in doctoral training in educational sciences, a theoretical-referential framework of its management in this training process was established, of which an approach is presented in this article. For the theoretical systematization, a wide bibliographic review was carried out, supported by documentary analysis, analysis-synthesis and induction-deduction, as research methods. As a result, the concepts of good practices and management of good practices in the educational field were characterized and theoretical-methodological assumptions were assumed to guide the referred management process in doctoral training.

Keywords: Best practices in education; Doctoral training; Best practices management; Theoretical-referential framework.

Introduction

Under the conditions of today's increasingly complex world, where continuous improvement of the quality of organizational processes is an imperative, the management (detection, systematization and dissemination) of good practices has been

expanding, an approach that is now present in the most diverse activities and organizations.

According to the Spanish Confederation of Organizations in favor of People with Intellectual Disabilities (FEAPS, 2007, as cited in Gradaille and Caballo, 2016), "(...) a good practice has the capacity to satisfy needs and expectations by improving the standards of a service, always in line with ethical, technical criteria and in accordance with the mission and values of the entity that promotes it." (p. 77)

The management of good practices, and this is valid for the field of education, is based on dissimilar reasons: a) they allow learning from others; b) they facilitate and promote innovative, successful and sustainable solutions to shared problems; c) they allow building bridges between effective empirical solutions, research and policies and; d) they provide excellent orientations for the development of new initiatives and the definition of policies. (Valera and Sánchez-Quirós, 2017, p.21)

In education, including higher education, this approach has also penetrated and spread, and studies have been developed "(...) regarding good or best practices that (...) can be shared, disseminated and implemented in pursuit of the objectives of quality and equity (...)" (Jerí, 2008, p. 37). Many of them have been nutrients of the educational policy guidelines that have been internationally consensual and are collected in the Incheon Declaration (World Education Forum, 2015), which specifies a new vision of education to concretize Sustainable Development Goal 4 of the United Nations 2030 Agenda.

The "Proposed Roadmap for the 3rd World Conference on Higher Education" (Barcelona, 2022) proposes for the period 2023-2026: "Develop a global platform (articulating regional efforts) to facilitate the production of knowledge and the exchange of good practices" (UNESCO, 2022, p. 40). It is necessary to warn, in this regard, that the implementation of this initiative can only offer a real contribution to quality and equity in higher education in the global context, if the current ways of doing in this order are changed and democratized, in which the classification and recognition of good practices carried out by international agencies and organizations that deal with this issue, occur only in the spaces where they intervene, creating a vicious circle in which some pay and invest to demonstrate that what they impose as policy and conception, in these spaces, is successful.

In Cuba, in recent years, doctoral training in educational sciences has experienced a remarkable growth that is expressed in the number of doctoral programs in force and the significant number of professionals who each year obtain a scientific degree in this area of knowledge. Consequently, the management of the good practices generated in these

programs is a necessity to qualitatively improve their training process. Related to this, the Project "Interdisciplinary Doctoral Training in Educational Sciences", which is managed by the Center of Studies for the Improvement of Higher Education (CEPES) of the University of Havana, has among its specific objectives: "To characterize good practices in doctoral training in Educational Sciences (...) considering diversity within a common legal framework".

The realization of this specific objective implies the establishment of a theoretical-referential framework related to the management of good practices in doctoral education. In this regard, this article aims to present a brief approach to this framework, which resulted from the systematization of the theoretical-methodological development of the object of study, based on a methodology in which document review, analysis-synthesis and induction-deduction were relevant as methods of educational research.

Development

The establishment of a theoretical-referential framework on the management of good practices in doctoral training in educational sciences involves elucidating the concepts of good practices and management of good practices, as well as their treatment in the case of education, as a more general field, of higher education, and of the doctorate, as a postgraduate academic form.

Related to the concept of good practices (good practices, which in the Anglo-Saxon context is interchanged with best practices-best practices), more than a dozen definitions set out in works by Armijo (2004, as cited in Jerí, 2008); Jerí (2008); Gradaille and Caballo (2016); Valera and Sánchez-Quirós (2017); Posada (2017, as cited in Herreño, 2019) and Montoro (2020) were analyzed.

The definitions analyzed use a wide variety of terms to specify the more general concept (the proximate genus) in which the concept of good practices can be inscribed (set of procedures; original initiatives; referent of interest; valuable contributions; actions; methodologies; tools; coherent set of actions; experience; effective action; form; method; innovative practice; body of knowledge; principles; measures; intervention, behaviors), which denotes a diversity of perspectives when offering an answer on "what are they?".

Good practices, from the examination of the definitions analyzed, also allude to correctness, effectiveness, excellence, positivity, efficacy, usefulness and success in the fulfillment of objectives and the results they generate, if the effect they generate is taken as a criterion for analysis. This points to the objectives to which their management is directed: "(...) to make what is being applied work better, faster and more efficiently with fewer problems and errors" and "(...) to optimize processes, save time, avoid errors and achieve success in the results of an organization" (Montoro, 2020). (Montoro, 2020) Some definitions mention characteristics that they consider essential for good practices: transferability, sustainability, innovation, reflection, intentionality, systematicity, contextualization, among others. Regarding this issue, Mondragón and Moreno (2020) identified two currents regarding the approaches to establish the qualification of a practice as good: one that considers that the good intentionality of the practice defines it as such and another that assumes that the accreditation of certain criteria is what defines a specific practice as good. (Mondragón and Moreno, 2020, p. 18).

Good practices are a resource of organizational knowledge management. From this perspective, Jerí (2008) understands them as: "...a way by which the existing tacit knowledge can be made explicit and when adopted corporately they have an impact on the success and realization of the institutional vision" (p. 30). He also recognizes them as:

(...) the set of knowledge that contains a cognitive component, but in turn, involves a substantive experiential one that, when concretized in specific actions, provides effectiveness in achieving the objectives that the institution requires to have greater competitive advantages and that, when shared, enriches the organizational knowledge. (Jerí, 2008, p.37).

As it happens when studied as a general concept, "there is no universal definition for the concept of good practices..." in the educational field (Mondragón and Moreno, 2020, p2), in which there are multiple proposals that highlight its specificity from different perspectives.

In this regard, they are defined as: "(...) educational interventions that facilitate the development of learning activities in which the intended training objectives are efficiently achieved (...)" (Group DIM, 2002, as cited in Jerí, 2008, p. 40); "(...) an initiative, a policy or a successful model of action that ultimately improves academic processes and outcomes" (Valera and Sánchez-Quirós, 2017, p. 21); "(...) the expression of professional or expert knowledge, empirically valid, formulated in such a way that it

is transferable and, therefore, of potential utility for the corresponding community" (Valera and Sánchez-Quirós, 2017, p.21); "(...) experiences that record successful practices carried out with the objective of implementing some strategy, methodology, design, model, modality or different management process that brings about educational improvement, i.e., innovation." (Cevallos, Cordero and Acívar, 2019, p. 6)

For higher education, UNESCO (as cited by García-Martin, in XVII FECIES, 2020) defines a good practice as "(...) an innovative method or process that involves a set of safe and reasonable practices that result in the best performance of a higher education program or institution" (Ministry of Higher Education, 2020, p. 66).

As can be seen, the definitions of good educational practices cited, and others that were studied, do not reveal differences in terms of the next genre used to define good practices, as a more general concept, by defining them as: successful cases, educational interventions, initiatives, policies, models of action, methods, innovative processes or experiences. They also allude to elements and processes in the educational field that can be influenced in favor of success and improvement (learning, academic processes in general, management, a program, an institution), as well as to characteristics that refer to requirements that a specific practice must meet to be classified as good in any field: effectiveness, efficiency, efficacy, innovativeness, replicability, transferability, usefulness, reasonableness and safety.

In assuming these particularities that typify good practices, even though they are valid in education, it is appropriate to call attention to the need for contextualization. In education, the transfer of a successful experience to another reality requires a contextual analysis in which the following variables, among others, must be considered: a) the institutional culture; b) the opportunity (favored by the educational and institutional policy); c) the availability of the required material resources and; d) the presence of a human group professionally prepared and motivated to change the reality.

The above does not deny that good practices are feasible to detect, systematize and disseminate in the multitude of concurrent elements in educational praxis, in an educational experience as a whole or in an edge or moment of it. In the case of doctoral training, they can be managed both in the key processes that concern it (research and the other concurrent formative processes for its realization), in the strategic processes related to its management and in its support processes.

The management of good practices in education: experiences in doctoral training.

The analysis of the literature consulted reveals that the concept of good practice management has received limited treatment. However, also from this review, it is noted that such management implies, among other processes that are its content: the detection, systematization and dissemination of good practices. As Jerí (2008) states, while the generation of good practices is a form of explicit knowledge, "(...) they are susceptible of being packaged (captured), codified, communicated, transferred and expressed through a formal language shared by all." (p.32)

The detection of good practices constitutes the initial process of their management. Its purpose is the location (discovery) of those practices that meet pre-established requirements to be validated as good or better, and it is advisable and feasible that they be systematized and disseminated. Mondragón and Moreno (2020), who conducted an exploratory descriptive review of a sample of 32 documents published between 2010 and 2019, covering 4 categories of analysis related to good practices (concept, attributes, detection strategies and documentation), identified five detection strategies that, in general, follow a process that is divided into two stages: selection, based on certain guiding criteria linked to the attributes that characterize a good practice, and compilation, for which different strategies are also followed. (Mondragón and Moreno, 2020, pp. 12-13).

As part of the bibliographic review carried out, numerous proposals of guiding criteria for selection were found, which constitute very useful references for establishing a specific system of indicators to facilitate the detection of good practices in doctoral training in educational sciences. Important findings were, in that order: (a) the criteria provided by Jerí (2008); (b) the proposals of the International Labor Organization (ILO, 2003), UNESCO (2003), the Andalusian Agency for Educational Evaluation (2012), CEPAIM Foundation (2014) and the International Observatory of Participatory Democracy (2015), cited in Gradaille and Caballo (2016); c) the characteristics of good practices put forward by Montoro (2020) and; d) the conditions of a good practice pointed out by the repository of best practices of the Commonwealth of Virginia (1999, as cited in Jerí, 2008). (Table 1)

From the bibliographic review carried out, no works were found that offer particularized criteria that facilitate the detection of good practices in doctoral training. In any case, the general proposals and those specific to the educational field that were examined are highly valuable references for this purpose.

Table 1. Criteria for identifying a good practice

Autores	Criterios (atributos) para identificar una buena práctica
Jeri (2008)	a) Carácter innovador, b) Carácter procedimental sustentado en una base cognitiva, c) Fruto de un conocimiento tácito, d) Eficacia
UNESCO (2003, como se citó en Jeri, 2008)	a) Innovación, b) Efectividad, c) Sostenibilidad, d) Replicabilidad
OIT (2003, como se citó en Jeri, 2008)	a) Innovación-creatividad, b) Eficacia-impacto, c) Replicabilidad, d) Sostenibilidad, e) Pertinencia; f) Ética y responsable; g) Trabajo en red, h) Eficiente
Agencia andaluza de evaluación educativa (2012, como se citó en Jeri, 2008)	a) Hechos constatables, b) Responde a las necesidades, c) Innovación, d) Secuenciada y reflexiva, e) Documentada, f) Efectiva y eficiente, g) Participación ciudadana, h) Recursos suficientes y definidos, i) Seguimiento riguroso; retroalimentación, j) Código ético
CEPAIM (2014, como se citó en Jeri, 2008)	a) Sostenible, b) Efectiva, c) Innovadora, d) Genera cohesión, e) Potencia el empoderamiento, f) Redes sociales, g) Perspectiva de género
Observatorio Internacional de la Democracia Participativa (como se citó en Jeri, 2008)	a) Objetivos relacionados con la participación, b) Innovación, c) Transferibilidad, d) Factibilidad, e) Planificación y prácticas en el gobierno local, f) Corresponsabilidad, g) Liderazgo político, h) Responsabilidades definidas, i) Proceso educativo, j) Impacto y transformación-evaluación, k) Devolución de la información
Montoro (2020)	a) Sostenibles en el tiempo, b) Innovadoras, c) Disminuyen el riesgo; d) Responden a necesidades específicas, e) Alegan a perspectivas claras del problema; f) Sistematizan procesos y resultados; g) Tienen presente la evaluación, retroalimentación y reorganización de las acciones
Repositorio Estado de Virginia, 1999 (como se citó en Jeri, 2008)	a) Claramente superiores en sus resultados, b) Superiores a juicio de personal experto; c) Mayor satisfacción de clientes o usuarios, d) Eficiencia y efectividad
Grupo DIM (2002, como se citó en Jeri, 2008)	a) Generan un aprendizaje significativo, b) Implican a los estudiantes en las actividades de aprendizaje, c) Promueven el pensamiento divergente, d) Intervienen diferentes campos de conocimiento, e) Favorecen el uso de las TIC
Chickering y Gamson (1991, como se citó en Jeri, 2008)	a) Interacción profesor-alumno, b) Énfasis en el aprendizaje cooperativo, c) Aprendizaje activo, d) Esfuerzo sostenido en la dedicación a la tarea, e) Pronta retroalimentación a los estudiantes, f) Diversidad de experiencias y, g) Altas expectativas de los profesores en relación al aprendizaje de los estudiantes
Mondragón y Moreno (2020)	a) Efectiva, b) Sostenible, c) Colaborativa, d) Pertinente, e) Transferible, f) Innovadora, g) Publicable

Source: Self elaboration

The collection of good practices, which Mondragón and Moreno (2020) consider as one moment of their selection, is the process that allows them to be compiled and then

codified, documented and disseminated. These authors identified five strategies for the compilation of good practices, which are developed from two general approaches, one passive and the other active. In the passive collection strategies, a call is usually issued to encourage teachers, practitioners or institutions to share their good practices in the framework of an academic event, competition or requirement of a good practices bank. The active approach involves the implementation of programs or strategies designed so that specialized agents (good practice hunters) track or monitor them in an institution, community or region. (Mondragon and Moreno, 2020, pp. 12-14).

The strategies for collecting good practices identified by Mondragón and Moreno (2020, p. 15), mentioned above, are: 1) Awards and competitions (passive approach); 2) Events with academic publications (passive approach); 3) Observatories of good educational practices (active approach); 4) Programs for detecting good educational practices (passive and active approaches) and; 5) Banks of good educational practices (passive approach).

Among the experiences based on banks of good practices that were found during the bibliographic review, the following can be highlighted: 1) The bank "Good practices to improve education in Latin America: Program for the Promotion of Educational Reform in Latin America and the Caribbean" (De Andraca, 2003); 2) The bank "Good Practices in Higher Education", (Cevallos, Cordero and Acívar, 2019) and; 3) The Toolbox compiled under the "University Program for Disaster Risk Reduction and Climate Change Adaptation (PRIDCA)". (Salguero, 2021).

Among the experiences supported in the events as a strategy for the compilation of good practices, during the bibliographic review, the XVII International Forum on the Evaluation of the Quality of Research and Higher Education (XVII FECIES) was found, whose book of abstracts collects sheets of good practices that concern doctoral training, referring to the continuous training of researchers; the dissemination of results; the coordination of scientific meetings; the coordination of collective work of junior researchers; research and teaching in the co-direction of doctoral theses and training for the teaching of researchers in pre-doctoral training. (XVII FECIES, 2020, pp. 66-68)

The documentation of good practices is also an important issue concerning their management, since it makes it possible to gather the evidence to accredit them, as pointed out by Mondragón and Moreno (2020). Based on it "(...) it will be possible to evaluate them and eventually publish them so that they can be recognized and promoted for replication" (pp. 14 and 16). According to the authors, the publication of good

educational practices can be found in various formats, among which the scientific article, the book and the documentary record are the main supports. Each format has specific characteristics conditioned by the evidence on the good educational practices it collects, even though, generally, the documentation includes the following data: title, authors, description, beneficiaries, problems, context, results, procedure and scope, and rationale (referring to the theoretical assumptions underlying the good practice) (Mondragón and Moreno, 2020, p. 16). (Mondragón and Moreno, 2020, p. 16).

The establishment of guidelines, manuals and codes of good practices is also an inherent part of their management, since they facilitate their generalization, formalization and, above all, their institutionalization, once they have been adopted as policies. As stated in the initial part of this article, one of the reasons that justify the presence of the good practices approach in education is that they provide excellent guidelines for the development of new initiatives and the definition of policies. For this reason it is frequent, as occurs in doctoral training, that these new initiatives and policies are then included in these guides, manuals and codes that do not intend to document good practices, but to institute them based on guidelines (principles, recommendations, norms, rules, procedures and other types of orientations) aimed at assuring the quality of the training process and providing criteria for its evaluation and results.

From the literature review we found a wide variety of guides, manuals and codes of good practice, established as part of the regulations referring to doctoral training in Spanish universities (Carlos III University of Madrid, 2013; University of Granada, 2012; Universitat Politècnica de València, 2012; University of Málaga, 2013; Polytechnic University of Madrid, 2017; University of Zaragoza, 2019; Universidad de Salamanca, 2019; Complutense University of Madrid, 2019; University of Corunna, 2020; University of Leon, 2020., 2022), covered by Royal Decree 99/2011, which regulates official doctoral education and institutes that "all members of a Doctoral School must subscribe their commitment to compliance with the Code of Good Practice adopted by said School" (as cited in University of Zaragoza, p. 1). Royal Decree 99/2011 (as cited in Universidad Politècnica de Madrid, 2017, p. 1) also stipulates the requirement of a good practice guide for the direction of doctoral theses as an indicator for the verification of doctoral programs.

The referred normative documents of good practices include, indistinctly, as part of their structure and content, a diversity of topics ranging, from the definition of their

object, scope of application and basic principles and elements related to duties, rights and relationships between doctoral students and their supervisors (directors and tutors), to the establishment of collegiate bodies for the management of doctoral programs and issues concerning their evaluation and improvement. Among the stated purposes are recurrent: a) to generate a common culture in favor of increasing the quality of doctoral training; b) to contribute to the rigor, respect, responsibility and integrity of scientific activity; c) to clarify the expectations, commitments, responsibilities and obligations of those involved in the training process (directors, tutors, academic committees and doctoral students) and to channel the relationships between them; d) to define principles of university research and; e) to describe measures to promote quality.

As for the principles and values that are assumed as guiding principles for the actions of those involved in doctoral training, which are expressed in different ways, they are reiterated: (a) the promotion of full-time dedication; (b) evaluation as an instrument of the internal quality assurance system; (c) mobility of research personnel; (d) accountability of doctoral students; (e) integration of doctoral students in research groups and networks; f) promotion of the professional development of doctoral students; g) confidentiality; h) equality and non-discrimination based on any personal or social condition or circumstance; i) professional and social responsibility; j) publication of research results; and k) scientific integrity and honesty.

An important element that concerns the management of doctoral programs, and is regulated in the manuals, codes and guides of good practices, is the establishment of academic committees responsible for the optimal functioning of the program and, consequently, they are assigned the task of defining, updating and coordinating them, as well as supervising the training of doctoral students, their monitoring and evaluation, and authorizing the presentation of theses. It is also an established practice to assign the supervision of the doctoral student's training process to a director and a tutor, with differentiated responsibilities.

Conclusions

Good educational practices constitute knowledge, in which a cognitive component and an experiential component are involved, expressed through a wide diversity of forms

(initiatives, policies, models of action, methods, methodologies, tools, principles), which stand out for the benefits they have generated in a given context (a training process, a management process, a program, an institution) by positively impacting its transformation and improving its quality, which makes them experiences that can be replicated by other actors, in new scenarios, in the search for similar benefits.

The detection (selection and compilation) of good practices in doctoral training in educational sciences should consider as general criteria for their accreditation that they be innovative, transferable, sustainable, effective (effective and efficient at the same time), pertinent, ethical and feasible. It should also take into account specific accreditation criteria that take into account the general particularities of doctoral training as an educational process in which research activity is the central component, as well as the area(s) of that process in which the new experience is to be introduced.

Good practices in doctoral training in educational sciences can be managed through the selective or combined application of strategies (awards and competitions, events with academic publications, observatories of good practices, programs for the detection of good practices, banks of good practices) and approaches (active and passive) for their collection that today constitute proven experiences in the educational field.