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## UNIVERSITY TUTORING, ITS NEEDS AND OPPORTUNITIES IN A PUBLIC INSTITUTION

### TUTORÍA UNIVERSITARIA, SUS NECESIDADES Y OPORTUNIDADES EN UNA INSTITUCIÓN PÚBLICA

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#### ABSTRACT

The study focuses on the description of tutoring needs of two groups of students of the Bachelor of Education Sciences. All this as an exercise in self-analysis to identify the weaknesses for this institutional work within the activities of their training, particularly in the subject of Orientation and Tutoring. This also seeks to promote the development of professional skills of students in training who could, in the near future, to become tutors in educational institutions. The project takes part of the activities of the Community Network for the Renewal of Teaching-Learning in Higher Education project [RECREA] in which the Autonomous University of the Hidalgo State participates with other institutions. The instruments used are a "Mentoring Diagnostic Interview" that is based on the procedures of the tutoring area of the institution and the questionnaire for evaluation and diagnosis of learning strategies of Ferraras (2008).

#### Keywords:

University tutoring, learning strategies.

#### RESUMEN

El estudio se centra en la descripción de necesidades de tutoría de dos grupos de estudiantes de la licenciatura en Ciencias de la Educación como un ejercicio de autoanálisis e identificación de áreas de oportunidad de esta labor institucional dentro de las actividades de su formación, particularmente en la asignatura de Orientación y Tutoría, buscando promover el desarrollo de competencias profesionales de estudiantes en formación que podrían en un futuro próximo convertirse en tutores en instituciones educativas. Todo ello como parte de las actividades del proyecto Red de Comunidades para la Renovación de la Enseñanza-Aprendizaje en Educación Superior [RECREA] en el cual participa la Universidad Autónoma del Estado de Hidalgo con otras instituciones. Los instrumentos utilizados son una "Entrevista de diagnóstico de tutoría" que se fundamente en los procedimientos del área de tutoría de la institución y el Cuestionario de evaluación y diagnóstico de estrategias de aprendizaje de Ferraras (2008).

#### Palabras clave:

Tutoría universitaria, estrategias de aprendizaje.

## INTRODUCTION

Mentoring has become an essential element to ensure educational quality as well as an essential factor to counteract school dropout in several public spaces. This is because it allows a good monitoring of students and not only to provide a space for the acquisition of knowledge about learning strategies. It also offers a motivational space and an alternative support to any problem that in one way or another may affect the school performance of the student (Giménez, et al., 2018; Rojas & Dominguez, 2015).

The tutorial practice is based on the design of the models that fit institutional practices that can be dynamic if they are analyzed. Those involve different roles of teachers and procedures for tutoring (Gairín, et al., 2004; Morales, 2010). However general aspects can be defined as a guide of the procedure, since all are focused on improving the academic performance of students in the educational institution where it has been carried out.

The tutoring uses individual and group actions. Among the main techniques and instruments used are; the interview, questionnaire, systematic observation, case method, sociodrama, psychodrama, dynamics and test or psychological tests. Those instruments are integrated into a Tutorial Action Plan based on the diagnosis of needs that explore different personal dimensions of the student. That is to assess not only areas of academic support, but also personal, social, cultural, economic, etc. That in some way could directly or indirectly affect the academic performance of the students. (Sanz, 2009; Sobrado, 2008)

For this reason, at the Autonomous University of the State of Hidalgo, tutoring began in 1992, initially at the bachelor degree but, until 2003 tutoring was extended to undergraduate and postgraduate levels (México. Universidad Autónoma del Estado de Hidalgo, 2011). In effect, trying to create a mechanism and tools for monitoring and supporting the integral education of students. This tutorial action within the university mentioned before is defined by the following elements:

- It is taught by teachers hired as subject teachers and / or full-time teachers, this means there are no formally designated places or contracts for tutors.
- The tutorial action does not have resources to cover the hiring of tutors, so this activity is offered within the activity of the lesson teacher and researchers during or after work.
- There is an administrative system that manages the appointments of the tutorials to register them.

- The system also allows consulting the academic record of each student assigned, as well as managing and following up on tutoring appointments.

It should be noted that the report issued in the statistical yearbook of the university points out that during the years 2015 and 2016; 53, 246 and 55,674 tutoring actions were carried out since they were reflected in appointments recorded in the system attending as a group or individual. If it is taken into account that the general enrollment was 48,146 and 53,614, respectively, in each of the years, we can deduce that each student received at least one tutoring per year (México. Universidad Autónoma del Estado de Hidalgo, 2017).

These conditions present many difficulties to guarantee the quality of the tutorial service because there is no specific training to train the tutor. This activity is recognized as a professional one that implies mastery of competences and requires a profile that in many cases a teacher, the subject or full-time professor, does not necessarily comply (Ruiz, 1997; Sánchez-Gómez, et al., 2017). In addition, for many teachers and researchers it represents an activity that contributes to the overloading of work. Even if they have the desire to support the student with the tutorial activity (Castro, et al., 2015).

These questions arise and become very important from the analysis that is made within the subject of Guidance and Tutoring that is taught in the Bachelor of Education at the Autonomous University of the Hidalgo State. Place where the acquisition of professional competences of tutoring is promoted (México. Universidad Autónoma del Estado de Hidalgo, 2014).

The student activities within orientation and mentoring focus on situated teaching, action research and complex thinking. Those as fundamental axes of the Network of Communities for the renewal of teaching-learning in the higher education project [RECREA] (Official Gazette, 2017). That project seeks to generate communities of practice among professors of universities and schools of *Normal Superior*, which focuses on the professional training of teachers of basic education in Mexico.

In order to put into practice a tutorial with real impact on the performance of the students of an educational institution, it is suggested that the decision-making of the tutorial action activities can be actively taken by the student community itself (Santana & Feliciano, 2006). Therefore, among other aspects, the subject of Guidance and Tutoring promotes the analysis of the tutorial practice within the context itself, case analysis and performance exercises that integrate the professional practice of tutoring students in training.

In this way, a self-analysis of the groups carrying this subject is developed to define their own tutoring needs and the weaknesses to be identified. What is more, to establish some guidelines to improve the professional practice of the tutoring service in the university and in similar contexts?

## DEVELOPMENT

A diagnostic study was carried out in order to detect the needs and weaknesses of two groups of students participating in the subject of Guidance and Tutoring, with a total of 70 people who answered the survey.

To identify these needs and weaknesses, two instruments were carried out:

- Tutoring diagnosis interview (México. Universidad Autónoma del Estado de Hidalgo, 2016): which aims to identify the problems and weaknesses to address or prevent risk situations that affect the student's academic performance. Consequently, considering the following dimensions:
- Identification card, which inquires about the general data, economic situation and school background of the student.
- Family area, which values the supports that the student receives from his family to sustain his life as a student.
- Life and career plan, to identify the short, medium and long term goals that the student has in terms of all the spheres of his life. Overall not only to identify the vision but the mission, that is to say, the procedures and strategies that must be put in action to achieve them.
- Pedagogical area, refers to the assessment of cognitive difficulties and mastery of learning strategies and study habits that the student perceives hinder their academic performance.
- CEDEA: Questionnaire for evaluation and diagnosis of learning strategies (Ferraras, 2008), which considers three dimensions:
- Scale I Metacognitive strategies: where the ability to regulate and plan their study activities is valued; knowledge about oneself by identifying their strengths and weaknesses as an apprentice; and self-evaluation that allows to recognize the ways in which students learn.
- Scale II Information processing strategies: showing the skills they have in managing resources and tools to process information, such as the development of cognitive schemes, reading comprehension strategies and written composition of scientific and academic texts, etc.

- Scale III Dispositional strategies and context control: where the motivation and expectations to learn are explored as well as the control they have over the study context. This, identifying spaces and times to optimize the concentration and attention while doing the tasks of learning inside and outside the classroom. Also, considering the dispositions for teamwork and the expectations that they give to their person before the academic challenges of homework.

Regarding the results of the diagnostic interview, the main results presented are the following:

- 87% of the students said they were comfortable with the course, noting that the negative cases are because it was not their first option to study.
- The socioeconomic level of the students is mostly average, of 87%, which is consistent with a public school.
- Of all the students, 93% are regular students, that is, they do not have any failed subjects. And the average is 9.03.
- 80% of them are comfortable with the school, pointing out that the negative responses highlight the lack of clean infrastructures and the remoteness of the facilities that they have in their homes, as factors for their answers.
- The main health problems are: stress, anxiety, gastritis, headaches, insomnia and visual problems.
- The relationship with the family in 95% is good and although there are life projects with professional and personal expectations, the area can be strengthened with the most integral vision of the project, as well as greater clarity in the mission. Equally, in the procedures and actions necessary to perform to achieve the final goals established.
- 45% of the sample indicates having comprehension problems in the classroom which attribute mainly to the didactics and attitude of the teaching strategies.
- 35% have problems of concentration for the performance of their tasks, being social networks and lack of adequate environments for study the main distractions.
- 54% report having problems preparing for exams, mainly due to lack of good study habits.
- In learning styles, 52% recognize being visual, 26% kinesthetic, 16% auditory, and 6% theoretical, although some recognize some combination being tabulated the main one.
- 49% present problems for teamwork, because of the lack of responsibility showed from some colleagues.
- 61% state that they have difficulties locating and discriminating valid information.

- 77% report having difficulties in writing academic and scientific texts.
- 45% have problems to perform some kind of cognitive scheme.
- Only 25% say they have some type of non-academic problem that in some way affects academic performance.
- On a scale from 0 to 10 the motivation to learn had an average of 9.

On the other hand, the results of the questionnaire on learning strategies on a scale of 0 to 100 reveal an average of 73 in the Scale I of Metacognitive Strategies. A value of 70 in Scale II of Processing Strategies. Finally a value of 75 in Scale III of dispositional strategies and context control.

What in general terms reveals is that the students are not highlighted in any of the learning strategies. Although they are not considered low in their mastery, they do have weaknesses in all three areas, especially if the results are contrasted with what was reported in the diagnostic interview. So that the individual or group tutorials to master the skills are necessary for them.

## CONCLUSIONS

The results of the analysis for the identification of tutoring needs and weaknesses for tutoring allow us to propose the following conclusions.

It is necessary to design a model of institutional tutoring that sets out the clear definition of the tutor profile where activities, obligations, types of remuneration are specified. Thus, it can guarantee that the action of the tutorship is exercised professionally.

Institutional actions that integrate the objectives of the tutorial action should be promoted. For instance, integration fairs and promotion of the university identity, knowledge fairs, where skills and strategies to learn. Moreover to investigate and build knowledge with health fairs, where the prevention and treatment of physical and mental health problems that occur in students is promoted. The design of virtual learning objects to allow the socialization of knowledge of skills and strategies of the different dimensions of tutoring through virtual spaces where students can have permanent access.

It is also essential to generate frequent visits to identify specific needs in a changing and dynamic world.

On the other hand, professionals in training in the area of Education, Psychology, Social Work and common disciplines may participate as peer tutors of students from other disciplines. What is more take up models such as

advanced peer tutoring within the same discipline may result beneficial as long as there is training to be a tutor.

To sum up, the need for the creation of courses, graduates or even postgraduate studies focused on the training of tutors is set.

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