EDITORIAL

Tutorship as a Pedagogical Strategy for the Development of Postgraduate Research Competencies

La tutoría como estrategia pedagógica para el desarrollo de competencias de investigación en posgrado

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Summary

The production of knowledge is an essential element in graduate schools and it is considered that this process is very advanced when the student completes and defends his research thesis. However, a number of students fails to develop research skills and complete their thesis. The objective of this proposal is to specify the roles and competencies required by the postgraduate tutor to achieve accompaniment and mediation in postgraduate students, promoting the organization of university tutorship and scientific research. A proposal that allows the strengthening of the research competencies in postgraduate students by means of the tutorship is raised. The proposal is based on the integrating model of the tutorship developed by Cruz, García and Abreu (2006), aimed at tutors and students who are developing their research theses at the graduate school.

Keywords: Research competencies, tutorship, performance evaluation.

Resumen

La producción de conocimiento es un elemento esencial en las escuelas de posgrado y se considera que este proceso está muy avanzado cuando el estudiante culmina y sustenta su tesis de investigación. Sin embargo, una cantidad de estudiantes no logra desarrollar las competencias investigativas y culminar la tesis. El objetivo de esta propuesta es precisar los roles y las competencias que demanda el tutor de posgrado para lograr realizar un acompañamiento y mediación en los estudiantes de posgrado, potenciando la articulación de la tutoría universitaria y la investigación científica. Se propone una propuesta que permita fortalecer las competencias investigativas en los estudiantes de posgrado por medio de la acción tutorial. La propuesta se basa en el modelo integrador de la tutoría desarrollado por Cruz, García y Abreu (2006), dirigidos a los tutores y estudiantes que se encuentran desarrollando sus tesis de investigación en la escuela de posgrado.

Palabras clave: Competencias investigativas, tutoría, evaluación del desempeño**.**

Introduction

The scientific university, developed at the University of Berlin at the beginning of the 19th century by the Humboldt brothers and others, had as one of its fundamental pillars, the research doctorate, which was based on a tutor with great research experience, who assigned a thesis to his/her disciple and guided him/her until its defense. This model has shown to be solid, and it is still present in the majority of master's and doctoral programs in the world.

However, there are currently many factors that influence the questioning of this model as an essential condition to guarantee the quality of final postgraduate work aimed at the production of new knowledge and the training of researchers:

- Many of the new skills demanded by the professional training are not promoted by this model.

- The changes of new knowledge generation are, in different ways, contrary to the training methods of the classic tutorship model.

- The extension of postgraduate academic programs, previously restricted to the preparation for basic research and now extended to the perfecting of all professions, each with its own characteristics.

- The extraordinary growth in the number of higher education graduates that generates a high demand for postgraduate studies.

In order to meet local development needs, it is also essential to conceptualize a tutorship model that is highly relevant to the purpose of training researchers in the fields of the exact, natural, social sciences, and other areas of basic research.

A very important element to consider in this type of program is that it does not commit the institution with a final degree, but rather its purpose is to provide, within the concept of *continuing education* or throughout life, the opportunity or right to graduate within a postgraduate academic program, primarily based on the student's personal effort. For this reason, the

educational institution must generate the conditions to facilitate, within its possibilities, the tutorship work with methods different from those accepted within the traditional academic programs.

Postgraduate academic programs require a tutorship system that allows the attention to students. Faced with this situation, the following questions arise: How to develop postgraduate research skills through the tutorship work? What are the roles that the tutor should have to develop research skills in postgraduate students? What skills does the tutor demand to develop the research skills?

In this sense, the objectives of the research are:

- Propose the tutors' roles to develop research skills in postgraduate students.

- Explain the skills required by the postgraduate tutor.

Conceptual Approach

Postgraduate Research Skills

One of the most frequent problems in social practice has been how to evaluate the quality of higher education graduates in the search for the efficiency of their results in the context in which they must perform. In recent decades, terms such as intelligence, knowledge, skills, abilities, capabilities, creativity, have been added to the terms such as values, personal meanings in order to describe quality. A quality that is evaluated by comparing the results obtained by the graduate with the ideal social model of excellence and that depends fundamentally on the individual subject. One of the contemporary proposals that attempts to overcome this contradiction is defined by the term *Skills*.

Despite many attempts, there is no single definition of the term, and each author emphasizes some quality according to their intentions or professional practices. Most definitions include skills as units of action that express

what a person must know and be able to do to develop and maintain an efficient level of performance in their work. It includes cognitive, affective, behavioral, and experience aspects.

Professional skills are those that allow the individual to solve the problems inherent to the object of their profession in a specific work context, in accordance with the functions, task, and professional qualities that respond to the demands of social development.

Each profession and each professional, depending on the object of their profession, social role, functions, and tasks assigned to them, must develop those skills that are inherent to their activity, which allows them to achieve successful and efficient performances.

"*Incorporating the concept of skills into the educational practice means that the result will be linked to concrete actions, not as an effect of traditional learning, but a learning where human capacities are increased through the integrated development of the person's cognitive dimensions, in which solution of problems is characterized by the research, investigation, and the use of scientific methods*" (Fuentes & Cruz, 2001, p. 2).

The research skills required from students by the postgraduate school are:

- Comprehensive Communication:

Understand and use the distinctive features of the cultured and academic language to communicate relevant information orally and in writing for their personal and professional performance.

- Scientific Research:

Develop research processes through the general scientific method to design and apply proposals to treat or solve different topics by implementing them.

- Resources Management:

Management, from the research processes with an interdisciplinary approach, of the necessary resources to be included in the different competitive spaces that allow an optimal professional development.

- Human Development:

Demonstrate and use previous knowledge to develop professional skills that allow the student to contribute and intervene in the processes of reconstruction or construction of the different social contexts in which he/she works.

The Tutor and the Tutorship

According to Coromoto (2007), etymologically, tutor means: "teacher, friend, guide, companion, defender, protector, guardian, director, and support". Martinez (2005) defines that "the tutor is an advisor, a mentor, a guide, and at the same time, a supervisor. The tutor's work is critical because he/she must know what and how to guide the tutored-students without substituting the students' work and achieving their maximum independence. In other words, to carry out their work, tutors must rely not only on the knowledge of the corresponding area of study, but also on a series of psychological and pedagogical guidelines to reinforce their work, especially those related to the creative nature of their work".

For Sánchez (2001), in an Open and Distance Education, a Tutor has three functions: guiding, teaching and motivating. In the first one, the student is introduced to the study method, in the second one, the student must be guaranteed the necessary resources and conditions for the transmission of knowledge; and in the third one, the student must discover his/her aspirations, interests and motivations in order to be able to perform his/her duties in a more responsible manner until reaching the goals set and even setting new qualitatively superior goals.

In this regard, tutorship is currently carried out in various educational modes, in numerous areas of knowledge, and at different educational levels (undergraduate, postgraduate), so the concept of tutor and function differ in their operational aspects.

- Tutorial Teaching

At the undergraduate level, it is understood as: ...a mode of instruction in which a teacher (tutor) provides personalized education to a student or a small group of students. It is generally adopted as an emergent or complementary measure for students with difficulties in following conventional courses (Latapí 1988).

Thus, in undergraduate studies, it has traditionally been considered a thesis guide. More recently, the tutoring concept has been considered as an accompanying element during the school process (ANUIES, 2000). On the other hand, in postgraduate studies, the tutors' scientific production is valued as a sufficient condition to guide the tutorship training process, which tends to focus on the research of a highly specialized subject, often to the detriment of a panoramic and balanced vision of the field.

Traditional tutorship prepares tutors for academic or school success, overlooking the development of skills to contend with the complexity and uncertainty inherent in the knowledge society (Stehr, 1994). Today's society requires individuals capable of acting in real and dynamic environments of professional life, trained to work with poorly defined problems that involve multiple variables and do not respect disciplinary boundaries.

According to Ceja, Vengas and Armenta (1988) a tutor must have an attitude of a facilitator and guide of the interaction and work of the tutored-students, and also have the following characteristics:

- Mastery of the discipline and his/her professional field.

- Knowledge of the training level of the tutored-students and their developed skills.

- Empathy.

- Sociopedagogical training.

- Willingness to provide the necessary support, at the right time, according to the student's needs.

- Be a mediator so that the students get their own ideas in the relationships with the users of the services and with other colleagues.

- Self-recognition as a professional who does not have all the answers.

- Be a facilitator and a model in the development of knowledge, professional skills, and communication of values and professional ethics.

In view of the above, it can be pointed out that tutorship is conducted from a tutor to a student or to a group of students, which can be on-site or at a distance, and that the tutor helps students in the construction of knowledge and in the preparation for exams. However, the most important part of this process is the active participation of the tutor in the student's learning process.

A tutor is a support, a guide and a facilitator of the development of the student's creative and critical capacity.

The Postgraduate Tutor

Although the Postgraduate Studies Regulations establish the academic requirements for a full-time career teacher to be accredited as a tutor, as well as the general responsibilities, these do not describe the skills that tutors participating in this level of studies must have.

This circumstance is detrimental to the selection of new tutors, the development of updating programs and, in particular, to the evaluation of tutors' performance and their role in achieving the objectives and goals proposed by each program.

Tutors must have a series of skills that allow them to achieve their academic goals. For this reason, it is essential to identify the characteristics required to be a competent tutor.

The operative concept of tutor's skills was defined as: a set of knowledge, skills, attitudes and values, which related to each other, allow the satisfactory performance of the activities and functions in the educational process, according to the established indicators and standards in the educational context. All this with the purpose that the students incorporate themselves into society with advantages at the end of their studies.

Based on the analysis of the tutors' duties and roles analyzed in the previous chapter, as well as the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values as a whole, validated by the academic committees of the postgraduate programs, a theoretical classification was made of the academic skills identified by expert tutors, which are shown in the next section.

The postgraduate tutor has been conceptualized as:

- An indispensable element for the best attainment of excellence in postgraduate studies (Sarukhán, 1988).

- Sine qua non component of any postgraduate program.

- The tutor must be a diligent guide of the tutored-student. For this, the academic system must be adapted to the particular characteristics of the student [...] the tutor forms academic cadres of high intellectual level [...] the tutor must be a recognized expert in his/her area of knowledge, who is actively carrying out research and teaching activities directly related to the object of the tutorship (Garritz, & López, 1989).

The postgraduate tutor must fulfill the mission of training new generations, enabling them to carry out relevant research of a high academic level and social commitment, which contributes to the solution of national

problems and, at the same time, strengthens the national education system at all levels.

In postgraduate studies, the educational process is oriented towards the foundation, design and execution of research; that is to say, the generation of new knowledge.

In Mexico, the Instituto Politécnico Nacional (National Polytechnic Institute) refers to the following responsibilities of postgraduate tutors:

- Guide the students in the development of their activities program.
- Help the students from the beginning to the end of their research.
- Plan the academic load, research activities and seminars that will help the students' training.
- Support the development of personal and transversal skills of the Doctoral students: responsibility, reasoning, communication, and teamwork.
- Share their methods, techniques, and experiences with the doctoral students.
- Give feedback and evaluate the students' work progress.
- Provide support in the preparation of the doctoral thesis so that the students may complete their studies.

Tutorship practices can be multiple and diverse, especially at the master's level, so this paper will emphasize on the master's and doctoral tutorship aimed at training researchers.

There are different opinions on the importance and purpose of tutorship at postgraduate level, among which the following stand out:

- It consists of a compulsory relationship of a certain number of hours per week or month.

- It must be, essentially, the position of a person who analyzes scenarios, proposes options, suggests possibilities of action, and allows the student to make decisions.

- It is a necessary link between the research and the teaching fields.

For teachers, the tutorship system is defined as the personalized attention for the design, formulation, and elaboration of the research project.

Garritz y López (1989) states that ... tutorship offers an alternative for building a space in which the development of the future researcher's potential is encouraged, as it enables a close relationship between teacher and student, and the teacher is regarded as a guide who advises the student in the course of his/her academic activities.

As shown, tutorship has become one of the best strategies for enhancing the quality of postgraduate education, especially at the master's and doctoral levels. In this regard, Garritz and López (1989) point out that, for the sound functioning of the master's or doctorate program, research is an "indispensable element", which is its very essence.

Thus, postgraduate tutorship is a bipersonal relationship (tutor-student), in which both participate in the creation of new knowledge and in the analysis of available information. These aspects differentiate postgraduate tutorship from educational modes and levels, since its ultimate goal is embodied in the design, development and analysis of original research, a product that combines the student's learning and the development of certain potentials inherent to the research act.

As a bipersonal or interpersonal relationship, both the student and the tutor participate in the tutorship. There are countless exchanges between them, whether academic or personal, in different scenarios and complex contexts. On this depends, to a great extent, the academic success or failure (efficiency rate) of the postgraduate student. This implies the need to study each of the elements of this process separately.

Tutorship, as a process, allows the student to obtain sufficient training to be successful as a professional, researcher and teacher; to make important life decisions and to develop the necessary skills, abilities, attitudes, and values in the academic field, as well as in personal and social aspects.

It is important to point out that the prestige attained by a postgraduate program depends essentially on the quality of its tutors, and the extent to which its graduates fully comply with the purposes of postgraduate education: to respond to the current and future social needs.

Tutorship Roles: A Necessary Explanation

The term role, widely used in sociological and psychological literature, comes from the French word *role*, which means a role played by an actor (Diccionario Enciclopédico [Encyclopedic Dictionary], 1953, p. 601). This meaning became a gallicism, first to English and later to Spanish, where it is equivalent to the role or part within a script and extends to the meanings of mission, commission, commitment, etc. (Diccionario Enciclopédico, 1953, p. 908).

Within the Social Sciences, particularly in Sociology, the concept of role has a special connotation based on the studies of Talcott Parsons (1945, p. 283), who described this term as the specific role fulfilled by an individual within a system of human relations.

In fact, according to the Parsonian theory, the same individual is an actor who plays diverse social roles expressed through functions that can be manifest or latent. The first ones will be those functions accepted and recognized by the actors, the second ones are those that do not have acceptance or recognition, which can lead to pathological behaviors defined as "dysfunctional" (Merton, 1973, p. 165).

The Parsons' input that gave rise to the so-called 'theory of roles' is an integral part of contemporary sociological knowledge and, therefore, of the epistemic construction of the Sociology of Education, in which the subsequent

development of this theory, carried out by Merton, had a significant influence (1973, p. 166).

Results

Based on what has been established, the roles proposed by Cruz, García and Abreu (2006), in their work Tutorship Comprehensive Model, are included. These authors identify eight roles that coexist simultaneously and are divided only for the study into roles that make up the vertical axis and the horizontal axis of tutorship.

There are two central roles that form a vertical axis, which organize the tutorship as a whole, namely: **Research Training and Vocational Training**, which includes the roles of teacher, socializer, coaching, academic counselor, sponsor, and psychosocial counselor. The proposal focuses on:

- The tutor's role in research training.

- The skills that the tutor must have for research training.

- How to assess the tutor's role.

Research training, which has two parts: first, *to support the professional practice with the best available scientific evidence,* second, *to generate new knowledge, this being a function more specific to postgraduate studies*.

a) Tutorship should promote a professional practice based on the available scientific evidence, for which the student should learn to identify problems and formulate relevant questions, seek, locate, retrieve, and critically analyze biblio-hemerographic information related to professional matters; in this way the student may propose possible solutions and reflect on his/her own action fully informed.

Also, tutored-students should be trained to be able to evaluate the methodology used in retrieved research, in order to evaluate the validity of the results and judge whether they contribute to clarifying or solving professional problems, considering multi or transdisciplinary approaches

relevant to professional practice, as well as being able to propose research projects to fill knowledge gaps.

The tutorship guide will enable the students to organize the relevant knowledge to elaborate conceptual models that allow them to judge the complexity of the problems and to propose solutions based on the available scientific evidence.

b) Tutorship should prepare to evaluate, with methodological accuracy, the interventions of a professional nature, elaborating conceptual models that consider the variables involved and the possible confusing factors, identifying suitable research designs and the feasibility and ethical aspects of the evaluation.

Tutored-students will be able to operate variables, select or develop instruments, verify the quality of their data, perform statistical analyses, interpret and compare their results with other similar studies in order to obtain valid and reliable conclusions. All this to contribute to the improvement of their professional performance, allowing them to assess the possible generalization of their results, and their potential transfer to other contexts.

For those who are trained to carry out research aimed at generating new knowledge, it is necessary to identify at least three major stages: approach, development, and conclusion.

Approach to Research.

During this stage, the tutorship guides the student in the process of searching, locating, retrieving, and evaluating the relevant information in order to limit the research problem.

The tutor guides the student in the critical and multidisciplinary review of the collected material to systematize it and elaborate a state of the art that allows the tutored-student to visualize the problems in their complexity, by considering the multicausality, the possible temporary order, and the direction of the relations between variables; and by considering the dynamic

characteristic of the phenomena to configure a general frame of reference on the phenomenon to study that allows to identify potential problems of scientific or professional research, valuing both its scientific relevance and its social transcendence.

The student is assisted in the selection of the problem that will serve to develop the research and, where appropriate, the degree thesis. The student is guided to build conceptual models based on previous knowledge, looking for explanatory capacity and internal consistency, in order to identify variables or factors involved with the problem, ordered chronologically to generate hypotheses.

The student is guided to select methodological strategies that allow to test hypotheses, control possible factors of confusion to validate the study, avoid reductionism, and judge the feasibility and viability of the research.

The advice on the selection of appropriate techniques for structuring the data analysis plan in accordance with the design and research questions, should be reflected in the research protocol and, where appropriate, presented and defended before the corresponding academic bodies to assess the quality of the proposed research and, where required, the student will be guided to obtain the approval of research and ethics committees.

Research Development.

This stage is aimed at guiding the tutored-student to carry out the research, by helping him/her to set up laboratory techniques or to carry out pilot studies when necessary. The tutor monitors the collection, quality and organization of data, and helps to respond to unforeseen events, analyzing possible ways of approaching them and guides the student in the decision-making process in order to make indispensable adjustments to the original project.

The tutor assists the student in the presentation of his/her progress before different academic forums and in the assessment and integration, where appropriate, of the observations issued by the evaluation committees.

Research Conclusion.

A tutor assists the student in the data analysis and results' interpretation, contrasting them with the related theoretical and empirical background. This allows the student to identify the scope and limitations of the study, as well as new hypotheses, other research problems, and possible applications. Finally, the tutors assist in the selection of the appropriate journals or publishing companies for the publication of results. They assist the students to create a draft of their results in accordance with the editors' guidelines, as well as to make relevant adjustments and respond to the arbitrators' suggestions.

Throughout the research process, the tutor will encourage the student to critically articulate the corpus of knowledge of the field of study with the *praxis* and results of his/her research project.

The research training should expose the student to a plurality of professional problems and research projects so that he/she is capable of observing the complexity of the field, identifying and selecting the scientific knowledge necessary for his/her professional practice or to propose new research projects in an independent and self-regulating manner.

Basic skills the tutor must have.

Cognitive Skills

Psychological training that allows the tutor the systematic updating and permanent overcoming, that makes possible his/her constant development to guide wide, deep, updated and essential contents. It is expressed in the cognitive capacity.

t is demonstrated in the systematic search, recording, studying and updating of the culture for the content mastery related to their professional work as a dimension of the professional performance mode. It is identified by the actions performed to obtain information from various sources, its processing and use according to the training potential they possess.

It is also content to study and master the integral characterization of the tutored-students from all its dimensions, cognitive, affective, attitudinal, which should be used in the direction of the educational process. In order to be successful in this task of searching, studying, and mastering the content, it is necessary to develop this capacity expressed in skills and habits of localization, processing, recording and interpretation of information from different sources, as well as motivation and willingness to do so in a systematic manner and by different means, including self-improvement and academic improvement.

This way of acting influences the formation of a quality of the teacher's personality that should identify him/her as an educated and self-actualized person.

This skill includes the following components:

1) Knowledge of information.

- Mastery of information theory.

- Mastery of the characteristics of the different information sources.

- Mastery of ways and methods of obtaining information.

- Mastery of how cognitive processes work, and the skill components for its self-regulation, self-improvement and self-evaluation.

2) The intellectual, communicative, professional skills and habits of searching, locating, processing, recording and interpreting information from different sources, such as:

- Know how to orientate oneself in the information centers through the files and other automated means.

- Know how to search bibliographies on a subject. Know how to process and record information in summaries, different types of cards, draw up diagrams, graphs, reports, concept maps, etc.

- Know how to interpret information, making critical use of it to support his/her ideas, through the whole system of logical abilities and thinking processes.

- Know how to produce information in the form of articles, news, teaching media, books, teaching materials, etc.

- Know how to plan the scientific-research activity.

- Know how to carry out the investigation process.

- Know how to communicate the results of the scientific activity.

Fundamental operations that integrate the cognitive capacity:

a) Research, systematic study, processing and recording of up-to-date information on the content of the sciences related to the subject, area of knowledge, the level and the teaching in which carries out his/her work.

b) Research, systematic study, processing and recording of the content of didactics for his/her educational work from an inclusive and contextualized point of view.

c) Research, systematic study, processing and recording of information on the philosophical, psychological, sociological, pedagogical, and curricular foundations of the teaching and learning process.

d) Search, systematic study, processing and recording of the content of the programs, the transversal formative contents, and the fundamental social values to be developed in teaching and its integration into the educational process.

e) Search, systematic study, processing and recording of political, historical, economic, artistic, scientific information and its relationship with the content of the tutored-student education.

f) Search, systematic study, processing and recording for their integration into the education process of the traditions, potentials and main problems

of the tutored-students in the contexts of the group, school, family, community, nation and humanity.

g) Search, systematic study, processing and recording for their use of scientific research theory and methodology.

h) Research, systematic study, processing and recording for their use in the educational process of the contents of the native language, foreign languages, communication theory, informatics, and educational technology.

Design Skills of the Educational Process

It is defined as the psychological formation of the personality and the construct that designates the suitability of the teacher to plan the educational process in a creative and contextualized way and to carry out the didactic transposition of the content of the culture to the educational activity of the tutored-student. This skill includes actions of diagnosing, forecasting, selecting and structuring contents, selecting sources, determining methods, procedures, teaching tasks, designing the evaluation and forms of organization for the different types of design. It is expressed in the methodological capacity.

Communicative-orienting Skills

It is defined as the psychological formation of the personality and the construct that designates the suitability of the teacher to establish all the interrelations in the education process of the tutored-students through the actions of orientation, organization, control and evaluation of the education of the tutored-students in all its dimensions, and of its own pedagogical activity. It is expressed through his/her communicative capacity.

It includes the tutor's qualities and abilities to establish an adequate interpersonal relationship with the student during the tutoring process; with an open, inquisitive and critical attitude to identify the student's interests, motivations, strengths and academic weaknesses. In addition to having an empathetic, dynamic and assertive attitude to stimulate the ideas and

proposals developed by the student in his/her training process towards an independent academic life.

The above skills are not static and when modifications to the academic programs occur, they will have to be analyzed and, if necessary, modified and added to those that are necessary for the achievement of the fundamental purpose of the postgraduate program. These skills are closely related to the tutor's roles analyzed above. They also represent a first theoretical approach that should be enhanced by the academic tutorship task.

Evaluation of the Tutor's Performance

In Latin America, many educational agents consider that in order to create the need for continuous self-improvement in the management of teachers, it is essential that teachers consciously and periodically undergo a process of evaluation of their performance.

However, other educational actors are obstructing all efforts to establish this type of policies in their education systems, through union positions that, in an attempt to "protect the teacher," forget the students' right to receive a qualitatively higher education and do not even consider the teachers' right to receive advisory and control services that contribute to the improvement of their work.

The teacher evaluation should not be seen as a strategy of hierarchical vigilance that controls the teachers' activities, but as a way of promoting and favoring the improvement of the teaching staff, and as a way of identifying the good teacher qualities in order to generate educational policies that contribute to their generalization.

Because of the tutors' social role, they are constantly subject to evaluation by all those who receive their services directly or indirectly. These opinions, which are spontaneously expressed on their behavior or skills and independently of the different factors that intervene in the school system, can give rise to situations of ambiguity, contradictions, a high level

of subjectivism, and can sometimes be the cause of inadequate decisions and of teachers' dissatisfaction and demotivation.

Therefore, it is necessary to have an evaluation system that makes this process fair and rational to evaluate the tutors' performance with objectivity, depth, and impartiality.

Ethical and political approaches to the evaluation emphasize that the most pressing problem of the teacher-tutor evaluation process is the use that the administration and the educational community can make of the evaluation reports or certificates and the implications derived from it. The evaluation can be used to enhance professional achievement, autonomy, and collaboration among teachers, or it can be reversed and promote mistrust, fears, and outright rejection among teachers as a result of misconceptions about the evaluation and its consequences for teachers.

The evaluation itself has to be an opportunity for reflection and improvement of reality, but its opportunity and sense of repercussion in the personality, environment, and the group of work of the person being evaluated has to be understood and adequately located to enable the teachers' professional improvement.

The evaluation of the tutor's professional performance is a systematic process of obtaining valid and reliable data, with the objective of verifying and evaluating the educational effects produced in the students about the tutors' pedagogical skills, emotionality, work responsibility and the nature of their interpersonal relationships with the tutored-students, parents, principals, colleagues, and representatives of social institutions.

From the above definition it can be inferred that to evaluate is to know a past reality to its maximum extent, highlighting the conflicts in the conditions and actions carried out, developing hypotheses of improvement and above all, based on the set of more founded data and reports, with the maximum intervention of the participants, to make a judgment on the scope, evolution and complexity of the task.

The evaluation is a value judgment that needs well-consolidated standards to refer to and to contrast the reality evaluated. This verification would require full coincidence in the identification of such standards and in their application.

The above definition provides us with a key for determining the dimensions that the operationalization of the variable "professional performance of the tutor" should include, and therefore it is useful for the construction of an operational definition of the said concept.

How to assess a teacher's performance?

Different strategies and sources of information have been used to evaluate the quality of the teacher's performance, among which the following stand out:

- Through the achievements of the tutored-student.

- Through standardized instruments that measure the teacher's skills.

- Through the opinion of the tutored-students.

- Based on the tutors' opinion (self-evaluation).

- Through the opinion of supervisors, principals, and other educational authorities.

- Peer evaluation.

- Evaluation of teaching using portfolios.

Each of them has its own characteristics, advantages and disadvantages, so it would be more appropriate to evaluate using a variety of strategies and sources. When information on the tutors' performance is available, the academic committees can carry out beneficial actions for the teaching staff as a whole, because from the diagnosis resulting from the evaluation it is possible to identify the weaknesses and try to strengthen them. It is also possible to consolidate the strengths by applying actions already implemented in various programs, such as the recognition to the excellence of tutors.

Proposed indicators to evaluate the quality of the tutor's performance are:

- The level of preparation reached, which reflects a cumulative background of pedagogical practice and of human thinking in general, in constant improvement given the current permanent development of science and technology, the environment, and the characteristics of the corresponding level of education.

- Level of development of the tutor's professional pedagogical skills.

- The role played in the guidance of the professional and personal training process of the personality of the tutored-students.

- Reflective attitude about his/her own work and impact on his/her students and society.

Evaluating the tutor does not mean projecting into him or her the deficiencies or reasonable limitations of the Educational System, but rather it means assuming a new style, climate, and horizon of shared reflection in order to optimize and make possible real spaces for the professional development of teachers, and for the generation of innovative cultures in the educational centers.

Conclusions

In the current context of research demands and academic production in the university context, it is necessary to develop research skills, which are characterized for being complex and require tutorial support.

Skills are people' characteristics, but not as abstract qualities of personality, but as effective achievements within a working situation, as a know how to be and how to do, for this reason the tutorial support must allow and promote this knowledge.

The tutorship process is often considered only as a bipersonal relationship, necessary and indispensable of course, but it is ignored that the training ends when students become experts fully integrated into communities of

practice (Wenger, 2001) and social networks of national and international experts. Consequently, tutorship should be considered as a dual, formative, and socializing process where it is essential to generate new and more comprehensive models.

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