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Challenges of a college tutor

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Abstract

This paper explains the changes that have emerged in recent years in Europe and Latin America about the universities, and therefore the challenges teachers are faced with, in order to become good tutors. The tutor's challenges are divided into pedagogical, social, administrative, and technical. The conclusion from reviewing the literature is that there are five main challenges for the tutors, which have to do with the mastery of his subject, creating a learning atmosphere, knowing the administrative processes, having the knowledge for instructional design, and the most complex of all, the efficient use of Information and Communications Technology (ICT).

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1. Introduction

The dynamics of universities have changed in recent years. From universities in Asia and Europe to Latin America, the teacher's role has changed, and he now has not only the responsibility of teaching, but also has to do research, management and provide tutoring.

By becoming a tutor, a teacher generates a new pedagogical *relationship* which goes beyond scheduling content and learning activities or evaluations (Hernández, 2011).

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For Gallego and Riart (2010), the tutor should be able to know how to educate the person, prepare the professional and educate the relationship. To do this, Del Rincón Igea (2000) states that the tutor must make three specific actions:

1. Facilitate the incorporation of students into college,
2. Support students with their academic itinerary, and
3. Guide the incorporation into the working world.

So, tutoring refers not only to support during college, but preparing the student for the future.

Therefore, in order to become a good tutor, a teacher should meet the expectations of the students, parents, directors, pedagogues, and their own expectations as indicated by Asensi & Lázaro (1989).

These expectations are divided into four areas: pedagogical, where the tutor must become the facilitator of learning; the social, where the tutor must create a pleasant and trustworthy atmosphere that allows teaching to take better shape; the administrative, where the tutor must adequately plan their course, either in person or online, and the technical, where the tutor makes use of technology, in which he or she designs audios, videos, software and other tools to enable better interaction with the students. For all the above, the tutor in any region of the world is faced with new challenges.

2. Justification

In 1998, UNESCO established globally in the "World Declaration on Higher Education in the Twenty-First Century: Vision and Action," presented in the "Framework For Priority Action For Change And Development In Higher Education," the need to modify the learning process in higher education, as it believes that due to the speed of social change, there is an urgent need to develop a new vision and a new model of higher education that focuses on the needs and abilities of the student.

To achieve this, UNESCO believes that it is essential to carry out in as many countries as possible, deep reforms in the educational systems and programs, as well as a policy of widening access.

In this same sense, due to the fundamental role of the teacher in the teaching-learning process, the same organization suggests that in addition to the various responsibilities of the teacher, the teacher must be able to provide guidance and advice, remedial courses, teaching for studying, and other forms of student support which will improve their living conditions.

Subsequently, a reference is made to the declaration of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA, or EEES for its abbreviation in Spanish), which is responsible for assisting students in programs that facilitate their learning, as indicated in the following text:

Among the various actions proposed based on the Bologna Declaration in 1999 in the search of a space in the European Community, the emphasis is on giving students opportunity for self learning. The first reorganizes teaching through the application of ECTS (European Credit Transfer System), the second is the need to adopt degree systems that are comparable and compatible across different states of the European Union. In both cases, the action of the teacher's tutoring plays a critical role in the educational process of the university students (Oro, 2004).

Finally, speaking at a Latin American level, Tuning Latin America and the 6X4 project were created, having done work in Mexico, Chile and Brazil, among other countries.

3. Findings

The challenges faced by the college tutor in Latin America can be inserted into the functions Berge (1995) indicates a tutor must have. These challenges can be:

- Pedagogical
 - Social
 - Administrative and
 - Technical
- 1st Challenge. Mastery of the subject.

The tutor must have the skills, habits, attitudes and knowledge required for the area of knowledge in which he or she operates. The better the tutor masters the area of knowledge, the easiest it will be to help the students. In this sense it is important to consider not only the theory, but also its practice.

2nd Challenge. Creating a propitious learning environment.

It is essential to establish a good learning environment, in which communication is the basis of learning. If the tutor masters the knowledge but fails in communicating it, learning will not occur. In many cases students are aware that the teacher knows but they are afraid of asking questions. Students must feel at ease to voice their concerns and achieve academic fellowship.

3rd Challenge. Knowing the administrative formalities and procedures of the university.

The tutor must be the source of information for the administrative formalities and procedures. For students, it is not necessary do the paperwork for them, but it is imperative to guide them on what steps to follow and the requirements of these procedures and formalities. There are a number of academic activities that students must follow during their years in college. Following the tutors' example, upperclassmen can help freshmen students. The needs of a student during the first year are completely different from those who have already been at the university for more than two years. Using the model of tutors with experience, advanced students can also assist in the final process of helping beginning students to be successful.

4th Challenge. Instructional Design.

The tutor, either on an online course or in person, must be able to develop a program using an instructional design, at least in the basic phases of analysis, design, development, implementation and the evaluation or continuous improvement as indicated by Yukavetsky (2008). Although it is desirable for a tutor to be able to develop an instructional design linking teaching with research, making use of ICT and having a focus on complex thinking as proposed by the Universidad Veracruzana will achieve the desired goals. The challenge is that the instructional design must be seen as a process, not as a product. It should be a process in which learning is the goal, not only for the student, but also for the tutor.

5th Challenge. ICT use.

The weakest point of tutors in countries that are not developed or are in the way of being developed is the gap between teachers (tutors) and students in the use of technology for learning purposes. This is a major challenge for tutors unaccustomed to the use of ICT's, since they were accustomed to using technology on a daily basis as students do today. For that reason they must be prepared to close the gap.

Sanchíz Ruiz, Martí Puig, & Cremades Soler (2011) in ITC Skills for Guidance Counselors, indicate the skill requirements a tutor must have regarding ICT and they divide them into:

- Web Page
- Email
- Videoconferences
- Telephone
- Chat
- News
- Cell Phone Messages
- Software

Noting that, in terms of *Web pages*, the tutors should be able to find and use relevant websites, with official information, pages that are useful for the student, such as job sites or pages related to their professional development. They must also be able to create content for a website, and above all, know how to browse the Internet adequately. In like manner, they mention that the tutors must be able to communicate, request information, provide guidance and be sensitive to the needs of their students through *emails* that help, orient and guide students.

They also add that the tutor must be able to organize *videoconferences*, and in this way, provide remote guidance, and in a synchronized manner. The sessions may be individual or in group, and it is necessary to organize them properly so that they provide better support for the students. To do this, it must be determined if the conditions for a good session are met, and the number of students that will be addressed.

In addition, Ruiz et al point out that the *telephone* is a tool that many tutors do not wish to use to communicate with their students, but is often is the media the students prefer, because they feel it is more direct and gives an immediate response. Here, the tutor must be able to conduct a proper interview with the student and provide an efficient tutorial that allows solving the problems quickly.

The chat is another media preferred by the students, therefore the tutors must know how to use, provide important information, and if necessary, carry out the tutoring by using this tool. The teacher should properly manage the chat in-group sessions to avoid losing control of the conversation.

For online tutoring, the tutors should possess ability to guide students through *news* or other forms of communication.

Cell phone messages are very common among students, so their use for tutoring is essential to resolve problems or concerns quickly, which is why the tutor should be able to inform and guide by using this device. But before getting there, students must be allowed to communicate through messages also with their tutors.

Finally, the tutor must be able to use *software*. The software should be effective to enhance or improve student learning. The tutor must also be skilled enough to handle online psychometric testing, using all kinds of software available for tutoring and must show students how to use them effectively.

4. Discussion and Conclusion

It can be said that the first 3 challenges can be met in the short term, but the fourth and fifth are a bit more demanding. The university should be the one that dictates the path where to direct the instructional design, but in case the university does not, the teacher should take the initiative and implement an instructional design which must be considered in continuous improvement until it has matured.

As to the fifth challenge, tutors need to first recognize the technological gap between them and their students, and then develop strategies to use the ICT for their daily activities with the students. The university's administration must also support the efforts of the tutors to produce a better quality student.

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