Analysis of the professionalization of Teaching: In preparation for the evaluation of a Higher Education unit

Análisis de la profesionalización de la Docencia: En preparación para la evaluación de una dependencia de Educación Superior

PALOMARES-RUIZ, María Blanca Elizabeth†*, TORRES-BUGDUD, Arturo, BÁEZ-VILLARREAL, Esteban and TREVIÑO-CUBERO, Arnulfo

Universidad Autónoma de Nuevo León, Facultad de Ingeniería Mecánica y Eléctrica

ID 1st Author: *María Blanca, Elizabeth-Palomares-Ruiz* / **ORC ID:** 0000-0002-4079-6969, **Researcher ID Thomson:** S-4843-2018 **CVU CONACYT ID:** 339594

ID 1st Co-author: *Arturo, Torres-Bugdud* / **ORC ID:** 0000-0003-2214-9394, **Researcher ID Thomson:** ABE-2852-2020, **ArXiv Author ID:** Arturo-Torres-Bugdud, **CVU CONAHCYT ID:** 216332

ID 2nd Co-author: *Arnulfo, Treviño-Cubero* / **ORC ID:** 0000-0002-0958-8352, **CVU CONAHCYT ID:** 373815

ID 3rd Co-author: *Cesar, Sordia-Salinas* / **ORC ID:** 0000-0003-2186-1080

Abstract

The present work arises from the need to analyze the professionalization of teaching in higher education institutions, in a preparation exercise to meet the requirements of the Higher Education Evaluation and Accreditation System (SEAES) with the objective of showing the results, obtained through the analysis carried out to respond to these guidelines, the work carried out by the academic staff in Higher Education Institutions, with special emphasis on a Unit of a University in the north of Mexico. The above, using a descriptive methodology, adding qualitative and quantitative characteristics. Highlighting the achievements obtained by its teaching staff, detecting strengths and weaknesses within the guiding criteria established by the National Evaluation System, this analysis will contribute to the modification of continuous improvement programs in teaching professionalization.

Teachers, Evaluation, Higher Education Institutions, Professionalization of Teaching, Program

Resumen

El presente trabajo surge de la necesidad de analizar la profesionalización de la docencia en las instituciones de educación superior, en un ejercicio de preparación para atender los requerimientos del Sistema de Evaluación y Acreditación de la Educación Superior (SEAES) con el objetivo de mostrar los resultados obtenidos mediante el análisis efectuado para dar respuesta a dichos lineamientos, la labor que desempeña la planta académica en Instituciones de Educación Superior, con especial énfasis en una Dependencia de una Universidad al norte de México. Lo anterior, utilizando una metodología descriptiva, añadiendo características cualitativas y cuantitativas. Destacando los logros obtenidos por su planta docente, detectando fortalezas y debilidades dentro los criterios orientadores que marca el Sistema Nacional de Evaluación, este análisis contribuirá a la modificación de los programas de mejora continua en la profesionalización docente.

Docentes, Evaluación, Instituciones de Educación Superior, Profesionalización de la Docencia, Programas

† Researcher contributing as first author.

Introduction

The present work arises from the need to analyse the Professionalisation of Teaching in Higher Education Institutions, in a Preparation Exercise to meet the requirements of the Higher Education Evaluation System, giving particular relevance to the work carried out by the academic staff in Higher Education Institutions (HEI), as they are the main protagonists and the main people responsible for the quality of the Educational Programmes, in agreement with Arredondo, (2002), as they are the ones who research and promote learning, being them the main agents of the quality of a programme, as they are the direct and tangible link between it, the Higher Education Institutions and society.

With this he shares with us that, "The exemplary quality of the teachers in their work is the foundation and standard of the quality of the Educational Process, whether in teaching or in research", which is why he expresses that what happens in the classroom, the laboratory, the workshop, the library or the computer centre, is primarily the responsibility of the academics.

For their part, Agüero, Sánchez, Martínez and Pompa (2021), state that teacher development and professionalisation are based on the concept of professional learning that is built on the job, as an activity situated in differentiated and specific contexts of high specialisation, whose characteristic is collaboration and dialogue between peers in educational communities that deal with tensions and contradictions on a daily basis.

The objective of the present project is the preliminary stage of the analysis of the actions that a Higher Education Unit has undertaken in the professionalisation of its teachers, with a view to responding to the current needs of continuous improvement in teaching, stimulating student learning in a globalised world in constant evolution.

Background

The Inter-institutional Committees for the Evaluation of Higher Education (CIEES) in the Evaluation Guide (2018), points out that the teaching staff is the fundamental element responsible for sharing knowledge and promoting strategies for meaningful learning,

Hence the importance of the relevance and suitability of each teacher in relation to the subjects they teach and the activities they carry out. The academic capacity of a programme is related to the composition of the teaching staff and its potential.

Considering that we live in the knowledge society, we are obliged as teachers to implement strategies that motivate students to construct their own knowledge and develop skills and competences to successfully face an ever-changing globalised world.

Following the idea of the CIIES, the Academic Habilitation programmes contribute to the teaching performance, reinforcing the management of groups, technologies and disciplinary teaching.

Once the teacher has been developed, he/she will have better skills, preparing him/her for research and collegiate work in the subjects he/she teaches. As a result, the academic products will be in accordance with a Line of Knowledge Generation, contributing innovation and development to respond to current educational models.

In this context, Castillo (2017), in his study on academic work evaluation programmes, points out that the role played by academics in Mexican Higher Education Institutions has undergone some transformations, which are linked to participation in incentive and recognition programmes.

In turn, citing Grediaga (2001), he states that part of the changes have been due to modifications in the economic model, which have had an impact on institutions and academics, who are the ones who carry out dissemination, dissemination, human resources training and teaching activities.

Methodology

The methodology used in this analysis is descriptive, focusing on the specific case of the Faculty of Mechanical and Electrical Engineering (FIME) at UANL, Mexico. With the analysis of the data provided by the Subdirección de Planeación de la Institución de Educación Superior.

Allowing a detailed evaluation of the trajectories of the teachers assigned to the FIME, in preparation for the requirements of the SEAES criteria, using a Crossed Data Analysis; where the General Trajectory of the Teacher is evaluated.

In addition, quantitative and qualitative techniques are included to capture the information corresponding to each teacher and their trajectory. This multi-modal approach ensures a holistic understanding of the results and allows for a deeper interpretation of the observed trends.

Development

In preparation for the Evaluation Process indicated by the Higher Education Evaluation and Accreditation System (SEAES), focusing on the area of Professionalisation of Teaching, understood as the "Set of processes that develop the skills, identity and recognition required by people to take charge of carrying out educational and teaching activities in general, with the high degree of responsibility, complexity and specialised attention that these require", SEAES (2023).

In accordance with the Twenty-First Guideline of SEAES, it is established that it will be the responsibility of each of the Higher Education Institutions participating in SEAES to systematically and comprehensively document the evaluation exercises and progress in continuous improvement in the first five areas indicated below:

– The professional training of students.
– The professionalisation of teaching.
– The educational programmes of Higher University Technician (TSU).
– Associate Professional (PA) and Bachelor's Degree.
– Research and postgraduate programmes.

Describing the SEAES context of teaching professionalisation. The area of teaching professionalisation seeks to contribute to the continuous improvement of teaching and its revaluation as a central function of Higher Education Institutions.

To this end, it seeks to promote innovation in teaching and learning processes while advancing equity in the working conditions of teachers, and their recognition and academic and social visibility as key social actors in the transformation of the National Higher Education System (SNES).

It also includes full-time professors, part-time professors, academic technicians and any other type of contract that performs teaching functions.

Likewise, it is clarified that professionalisation depends on training processes of various kinds that allow for the acquisition and continuous improvement of knowledge, skills, dispositions and ethical principles, among others. In addition to reflective practice, experience and professional trajectory of participation in collective spaces such as schools, associations or academies; institutional context factors such as support programmes, entry and retention mechanisms, types of recruitment, distribution of academic work, employment benefits, working conditions, broader social factors such as the value and social/economic role that various social actors recognise in the teaching profession.

SEAES expects each institution to formulate a report that begins with an analysis of the mechanisms for self-evaluation and continuous improvement of teacher professionalisation, from their rationale to their results and impact, as well as their degree of systematisation, participation and comprehensiveness, in accordance with the conceptualisation set out in the first sections of this General Framework. In this analysis, the following elements of this area should be reviewed:

– Rationale of the teacher professionalisation strategy, e.g. in terms of the evolution of pedagogical knowledge, present and future challenges of teaching, and the specific needs of student training.

– Design of teacher professionalisation strategies, in terms of training processes; promoting collegial work.

Based on the aforementioned guidelines, the following are the findings obtained during the preliminary stage of the Evaluation Process, to which all Higher Education Institutions are mandatorily subject.

Results

Referring to the data obtained from the HEIs, it is worth noting that at the Universidad Autónoma de Nuevo León (UANL), located in the north of Mexico, actions have been taken to professionalise, systematise and institutionalise the curriculum design processes, through the configuration and formation of working groups with the figure of pedagogical advisors. UANL REPORT (2023).

Based mainly on the guidelines of the Educational Model, the Postgraduate Academic Model. I carry out the following programmes:

−   Institutional Teacher Training Programme Digital Strategy.
−   Institutional Teacher Training Programme.
−   Diploma in the Development of Teaching Skills.
−   Diploma in Basic Training for Tutors.
−   Training courses for curriculum design teams.

Referring to the Institutional Teacher Training Programme Digital Strategy, which was carried out in the winter and summer periods. With the aim of developing the competences stated in the Academic Model and to be able to respond to the new current academic contexts. They propose the following objectives:

1.   To acquire technological skills that allow us to take advantage of current innovations for the development of academic functions.

2.   To learn and apply teaching strategies that strengthen teaching practice in favour of the development of competences in students.

3.   Strengthen skills and aptitudes that enrich personal development, stimulate self-knowledge and improve interpersonal relationships.

The programme is designed in accordance with the competences of the UANL teaching profile stated in the Academic Model and is aimed at teachers at the upper secondary, undergraduate and postgraduate levels. It also includes a programme of incentives for the performance of teaching staff to strengthen academic bodies, with the particularity of being aimed at academics who carry out teaching, research, tutoring and participation in collegiate bodies, while complying with the requirements established in the institutional regulations.

The purpose of this programme is to motivate and create the right economic conditions for quality staff to remain or join the teaching activity, granting benefits to academic staff who stand out for their permanence, dedication and quality in the academic performance of the substantive functions of the University: teaching, research and dissemination of culture.

This benefit is independent of any other benefit agreed with the respective union body and consists of creating a fund that allows the beneficiary to obtain a monthly amount ranging from one UMA (unit of measurement and updating) for the lowest level, to fourteen UMAS for the highest level reached according to their activity reports.

The Programme for the Professional Development of Higher Education Teachers also provides support in a scheme in which men and women have the same opportunities, for those who have the desirable profile, to carry out high quality postgraduate studies, support for the incorporation of new full-time professors and the reinstatement of former scholarship holders, as well as recognition and/or support for full-time professors who achieve the desirable profile and the consolidation of academic bodies, so that they can achieve research-teaching, technological development and innovation capacities with social responsibility. By helping the Intercultural Universities, through the support of integral projects, to boost the quality of their academic capacity and competitiveness and of their main processes.

The data highlighted by the UANL, contribute to the fulfilment of this substantive function, the full-time professors have the recognition of the desirable profile of a university professor.

In 2023 there are 1,381 professors with the PRODEP Desirable Profile Recognition, 1,074 have a doctorate and 307 have a master's degree or specialisation, adding that, for their qualities for research, 1234 professors are members of the National System of Researchers (SNI). In addition, 291 Academic Bodies are organised, from which 682 Lines of Generation and Application of Knowledge (LGAC) are developed, actively participating in national and international knowledge networks. UANL REPORT, (2023).

In congruence with the General Law of Higher Education (LGES), the National Policy of Evaluation and Accreditation of Higher Education (PNEAES) establishes seven criteria that are considered guiding and transversal, due to the fact that they are intended to offer a vision of the transformation of the National System of Higher Education (SNES) and cover all areas of evaluation and continuous improvement. Palomares, Torres, Báez and Treviño (2023).

The guiding criteria in the PNEAES are set out below:

−   Commitment to social responsibility.
−   Social and gender equity.
−   Inclusion.
−   Excellence.
−   Social innovation.
−   Avant-garde.
−   Interculturality.

Graph 1 Information Relevant to the SEAES Criteria for UANL 2023
Own Elaboration

Graph 1 shows the data corresponding to the SEAES Criteria in the area of Professionalisation of Teaching 2023.

In the Faculty of Mechanical and Electrical Engineering (FIME). It has an academic staff of: 429 full-time professors, 234 with a Desirable Profile PRODEP and 195 attached to Academic Bodies, highlighting 164 with a Doctorate Degree and 31 with a Master's Degree.
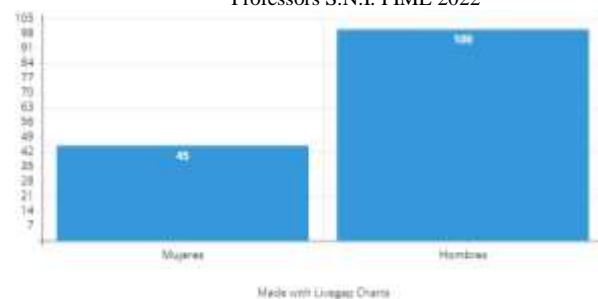
FIME Faculty 2023
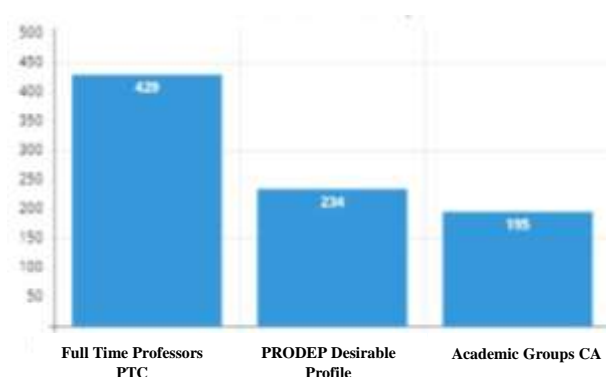
Graph 2 Teaching Staff FIME 2023
Own Elaboration

As shown in Graph 2, we observe the information that corresponds to the Teaching Staff of FIME 2023, which highlights the teachers who have a Desirable Profile PRODEP and those attached to the 291 Active Academic Bodies in FIME.

Graph 3 Teachers S.N.I. FIME 2022
Own Elaboration

Graph 3 shows the teachers with the S.N.I. distinction provided by the National Council of Humanities, Science and Technology (CONAHCYT), the Mexican Government Institution responsible for formulating and conducting public policies on humanities, science, technology and innovation throughout the country, with the aim of strengthening National Sovereignty. CONAHCYT (2023).

Conclusions

Undoubtedly, the professionalisation of teaching contributes to the permanence of teachers in their activity, as they acquire new knowledge and skills, thereby achieving recognition and job satisfaction that in the future will open up growth options such as promotions or leading projects or research, producing articles, all of which will be reflected in their students.

Innovation in content and innovative practices such as the digital strategy that arrived because of the pandemic to continue updating teaching materials, linking these lifelong learning trajectories, as well as these teacher performance evaluation exercises, with salary impact, as well as performance incentives, can provide incentives for improvement.

Encouraging the construction of teacher professionalisation communities can promote the creation and autonomy of new centres in the faculties, in line with the studies carried out by Steinert (2016), an offer that diversifies the formal modes and the combination with informal education for professionalisation, as well as a university education in line with the needs of globalised work, in an ecologically sustainable and increasingly democratic world.

In this initial analysis it will be possible to relate aspects of teaching and learning, academic careers, the evaluation of academic performance leading to a salary impact, however, collegial work practices must be strengthened to complement the requirements of the areas proposed by the evaluation system, thereby complementing the information by areas of knowledge,

At the same time, areas of opportunity were identified, as well as elements that need to be strengthened in the area of teacher professionalisation, to determine whether the compulsory nature of the courses and diploma courses proposed by the institution has an influence, and to analyse whether teachers' interest in enrolling in them is really due to their will or to the salary incentives obtained.

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