

## **Chapter 6 The perception of the students about the Tutoring in virtual modality**

### **Capítulo 6 La percepción de los estudiantes acerca de la Tutoría en modalidad virtual**

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## **Abstract**

Derived from the health contingency caused by covid-19, academic tutoring, like other teaching functions, which were traditionally carried out in person, were suddenly forced to be carried out in a virtual or online modality. Since then there have been many opinions from both teachers and students about the effectiveness of this type of care. It should be said that some voices have been in favor and others the opposite. This paper presents the results of an investigative exercise, which aimed to show, from the point of view of the tutors of the Faculty of Pedagogy of the Universidad Veracruzana (UV), Campus Poza Rica, how they perceived this process, as well as which These would be your recommendations in the event of a similar situation recurring. 120 students from different academic tutors and different semesters participated in the study, the approach was descriptive, and among the results obtained, the fact that students recommend maintaining closer communication with their respective tutors, using various technological tools such as: WhatsApp, Facebook, Instagram, Telegram, Email, the EMINUS Institutional Platform, among others.

## **Academic tutoring, Virtual modality, Perception**

### **Resumen**

Derivado de la contingencia sanitaria provocada por el covid-19, las tutorías académicas, al igual que otras funciones docentes, que tradicionalmente se realizaban de manera presencial, se vieron de pronto obligadas a llevarse a cabo en una modalidad virtual o en línea. Desde entonces han sido muchas las opiniones, tanto de profesores como de alumnos, sobre la eficacia de este tipo de atención. Hay que decir que algunas voces han sido a favor y otras en contra. En este trabajo se presentan los resultados de un ejercicio de investigación, cuyo objetivo fue mostrar, desde el punto de vista de los tutores de la Facultad de Pedagogía de la Universidad Veracruzana (UV), Campus Poza Rica, cómo percibían este proceso, así como cuáles serían sus recomendaciones en caso de que se repitiera una situación similar. En el estudio participaron 120 estudiantes de diferentes tutores académicos y diferentes semestres, el enfoque fue descriptivo, y entre los resultados obtenidos destaca el hecho de que los estudiantes recomiendan mantener una comunicación más cercana con sus respectivos tutores, utilizando diversas herramientas tecnológicas como: WhatsApp, Facebook, Instagram, Telegram, Correo electrónico, la Plataforma Institucional EMINUS, entre otras.

## **Tutoría académica, Modalidad virtual, Percepción**

### **1. Introduction**

Currently, education at all educational levels has gradually returned to the classroom after a period of just over two years, due to the presence of the covid-19 pandemic, and in order to provide care at important times to students at the higher education level, one of the most important services that had to migrate from the classroom to the distance mode was academic tutoring (Díaz, 2021).

Overnight, educational authorities in our country took the difficult decision to close educational centres in order to continue academic activities from home. This unprecedented situation caused great uncertainty among university students as they went from a traditional learning environment to a virtual one. At the same time, it became clear that there was a need to find new ways of providing orientation, guidance and supervision to learners, so that they could resolve the difficulties that they encountered on a daily basis, and one of these ways was virtual tutoring. As a result of the pandemic, the ways in which academic tutors attended to their students changed, using technological tools such as videoconferencing systems, including Zoom, Microsoft Teams, Meet, Jitsi, etc.; instant messaging applications such as Whatsapp, Instagram, Telegram, as well as the classic email.

### **2. Development**

Academic tutoring according to the National Association of Universities and Higher Education Institutions (ANUIES) (2000), is defined as:

A service of accompaniment and support provided individually by the teacher to the student with the purpose of helping him/her to face his/her problems and to adapt to the university environment, to fulfil his/her academic objectives and to face the commitments of the future professional practice.

In this sense, all Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) affiliated to ANUIES have a tutoring programme (De la Cruz, 2017). The Universidad Veracruzana is no exception and since 1999 it has instituted the Institutional Tutoring System, which provides its students with the possibility of a tutor to guide their academic path during their time at the university.

According to Miguel (cited in Vázquez, n.d. and Cabero and Barroso, 2012), virtual tutoring can be summarised as the role assumed by teachers in virtual environments to advise, accompany, guide, orient, lead and evaluate the learning development of their students.

To say it seems simple, the challenge was how to provide attention to the students under this modality.

### **3. Literature review**

In recent decades, tutoring has become an issue of great relevance, as it serves as a support for the accompaniment of the academic trajectory of university students. According to Narro and Martiniano, (2013) it is defined as an intentional teaching intervention in the educational process, which consists of close, systematic and permanent accompaniment of the student, to support and facilitate the process of building learning of various kinds: cognitive, affective, socio-cultural and existential.

### **4. Functions of virtual tutoring**

Padula (cited in Cabero and Barroso, 2012) defines the function of the virtual tutor as the guiding action exercised by one or more teachers to each student with the aim of facilitating "the understanding of the contents, the interpretation of the procedural descriptions, the appropriate time and form for the completion of work, exercises or self-assessments, and in general for the timely and personalised clarification of any type of doubt" (p. 25).

Following Cabero's line (quoted by different authors such as Llorente, 2006; Cabero and Román, 2006; Cabero and Barroso, 2012; and GIZ and Educal, 2012), the following five functions are defined for the virtual tutor:

- Technical: the teacher must ensure the student's access to the virtual classroom as well as ensure that students are familiar with the tools to be used within the environment.
- Academic: the tutor must master the contents, possess skills to carry out activities, diagnose and formatively assess their students.
- Organisational: this function establishes the steps to follow for the development of the course and distributes time.
- Guidance: the tutor must also give follow-up and guidance to each of the students in order to guarantee their learning.
- Social: it seeks to minimise the feeling of isolation, loss or lack of motivation that can occur when the participant interacts by means of the computer.

### **5. Tutoring at the University of Veracruz**

In this sense, the Universidad Veracruzana from the 1999 school year began a stage of transformation in the curricular organisation, which originated the transition from a rigid structure to a flexible one in its study plans, this structure aims to develop an integral formation in the students based on four educational purposes: intellectual formation, human formation, social formation and professional formation. Likewise, flexibility gives students a margin of autonomy in terms of making decisions related to the construction of their academic credit load. In this context, we can thus assert that tutorial work is a fundamental tool to contribute to the achievement of these goals and to provide the necessary information and support to students in making academic decisions. (Universidad Veracruzana, 2009).

The Institutional Tutoring System aims to support students in solving academic problems, promoting their autonomy and comprehensive training, as well as helping to improve their academic performance, based on individual or small group attention. For the systematisation of tutorial work, the UV created a special section on its official website for both tutors and students, where you can find spaces such as: contact details, messages, my students, tutorial planning, tutor performance evaluation, self-evaluation, tutorial system, curriculum and tutorial teaching, where tutors can consult all the information related to their students, such as: who are their students, what is their credit progress, how has their tutoring performance been, what recommendations does the system provide, etc. (Fig. 1).

**Figure 1** Institutional Mentoring System



Likewise, on the EMINUS Institutional Platform, tutors also have a space to keep in touch with their mentees, publish information related to the curriculum, send messages, plan events, share videos, event room and collaboration space. (Fig. 2).

**Figure 2** EMINUS Institutional Platform



In addition, the UV also has a student portal where young people can consult valuable documents such as: Institutional Tutoring Regulations, Student Guide, student statutes, school control guidelines, i.e. they have at their fingertips the necessary information to conduct themselves during their stay at the university, in addition to the support provided by their academic tutor.

Visionary as always, the UV already contemplated in 2003, in the document published by Beltrán, J. and Suárez, J. an exclusive section for electronic tutoring, and at the beginning of this century, scientific and technological advances demanded new forms of attention such as email and chat, and later other media such as WhatsApp, Telegram, Instagram, Facebook, Google, Meet, Meetup, etc., emerged. Telegram, Instagram Facebook, Google Meet, Zoom, Microsoft Teams, among others, with which the forms of attention were diversified and increased, which to some extent favoured the tutorial work in the pandemic.

## 6. Types of tutoring at the University of Veracruz

The types of tutoring that exist in the UV are:

- Academic tutoring. It consists of the follow-up given by an academic tutor to the students' school career during their stay in the educational programme, in order to guide them in the decisions related to the construction of their professional profile, based on the study plan; academic tutoring is characterised by its personal nature, being a continuous, coherent and cumulative process (UV, 2022).
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- Tutorial teaching. This refers to the personalised attention given by an academic called a tutor, aimed at supporting students who require it, to strengthen their learning processes related to the theoretical and heuristic knowledge of educational experiences (EE), or who are interested in a broader disciplinary training, through the development of Comprehensive Training Support Programmes (PAFI). (UV, 2022).
- Tutoring for artistic appreciation. This is an activity with credit value for the Free Choice Training Area and recognised in the Academic Training Programme. The guidelines, criteria for participation, as well as the recognition awarded to students and academics are defined in the document Operation of tutoring for artistic appreciation (UV, 2022).
- Mentoring for research. Tutoring for research is an activity with credit value for the Free Choice Training Area, with the purpose of incorporating students in research projects. The guidelines, participation criteria, as well as the awards given to students and academics are defined in the document Operation of tutoring for research (DGDIE, 2022).

With all of the above, the Universidad Veracruzana aims to provide its students with support for comprehensive training that allows them to make informed, responsible and accurate decisions about their academic careers.

## 7. Methodology

Due to its methodological approach, this study makes use of quantitative research, which is that in which quantitative data on variables are obtained and analysed and the association or relationship between quantified variables is studied (Sampieri, 2007). It was descriptive in nature. The main objective of descriptive studies is to provide a more accurate picture of the dimensions of the problem or situation, to prioritise them, and thus find elements of judgement to establish policies or operational strategies that enable their solution (Rojas Soriano, 2013).

The technique used to collect the information was the survey, which is a technique for acquiring information of sociological interest, by means of a previously prepared questionnaire, through which the opinion or assessment of the subject selected in a sample on a given issue can be ascertained. The questionnaire was structured in five sections. Academic support, 2. Professional Orientation, 3. Personal Development, 4. Integration and Permanence, 5. Academic Tutor Performance and two open questions in which the young people freely expressed how they perceived the attention of their tutors and some recommendations for improvement. The application was carried out through a Google form due to the confinement in which they were still, both teachers and students, this form was shared via email and WhatsApp groups. The data were processed automatically as they were answered. From the data collected, we proceeded to interpret and analyse them, focusing on those points that allowed us to resolve the purposes of this research.

## 8. Participants

This research was carried out in the Faculty of Pedagogy of the Universidad Veracruzana Región, Campus Poza Rica and as mentioned at the beginning, the study sample consisted of a total of 120 tutors from different academic tutors, as well as from different semesters, the population being made up in the following way:

**Table1**

Period/Semester	No. Of students
Second	30
Fourth	24
Sixth	20
Eighth	28
Tenth	18
<b>Total</b>	<b>120 tutors</b>

## 9. Results

In this section we present the most significant results obtained from the application of the survey to the students of the Faculty of Education of the UV, Poza Rica-Tuxpan Region. The following results stand out:

**Table 2**

¿ What type of tutoring do you prefer?	
On-site	77 %
Virtual	13 %
Both	10 %

*Source: Own Elaboration*

As a starting point, we wanted to ask the tutors about the type of attention they prefer, the answers obtained were that 77% of the respondents stated that they prefer the face-to-face mode, which is not surprising given that they are used to the traditional way, i.e. that the tutor is the one who calls them, who chooses the topics to be addressed, interview in an office, etc., in contrast, 13% of the students showed an inclination for the virtual mode, and the remaining 10% said that they do not care which mode they prefer.

**Table3**

¿ How was the attention you received from your academic tutor?	
Excellent	89 %
Good	11 %
Fair	0 %
Poor	0 %

*Source: Own Elaboration*

The following section was aimed at finding out what is the perception that the students have about the attention they received from their academic tutors, the answers given by them show that 89 % of them consider that the attention was excellent, while 11 % think it was good, something encouraging was that no student thought that the attention was regular or bad, which shows that all of them perceive the virtual tutoring in a positive way.

**Table 4**

How was the Career Guidance provided by your academic tutor?	
Excellent	95.4 %
Good	4.76 %
Fair	0 %
Poor	0 %

*Source: Own Elaboration*

Regarding the professional guidance provided by their academic tutors, 95.4 % of the young people think that it was excellent, while 4.76 % considered it was good, as in the previous questionnaire, none of the tutors expressed having had a regular or bad professional guidance, which indicates that the teachers-tutors performed their functions adequately.

**Table 5**

<b>How do you think the attention given by your academic tutor has contributed to your personal development?</b>	
Excellent	90.48 %
Good	9.52
Fair	0 %
Poor	0 %

*Source: Own Elaboration*

Regarding this question, 90.48% of the students surveyed stated that the attention provided by their tutors has contributed in an excellent way to their personal development and 9.52% thought it was good. It is noteworthy that the students recognize the effort made by their tutors and do not mention having received regular or bad attention.

**Table 6**

<b>¿Cómo fue la integración y permanencia de tu tu tutor académico a las sesiones de tutoría?</b>	
Excellent	90.48 %
Good	9.52
Fair	0 %
Poor	0 %

*Source: Own Elaboration*

Regarding this question, 90.48 % of the students surveyed expressed that the integration and permanence of their tutors in the tutoring sessions was excellent. While 9.52 % considered that it was good. It is important to recognise this perception of the students, as it shows the level of commitment assumed by their tutor-teachers to provide them with the best possible attention.

**Table 7**

<b>Did your tutor include topics and activities related to your interests, needs and academic background?</b>	
Always	85.71
Regularly	14.29
Rarely	0 %
Never	0 %

*Source: Own Elaboration*

Regarding whether their tutor included topics and activities related to their interests, needs and academic history, 85.71% said that their tutor always provided them with relevant information in a timely manner, while 14.29% thought that this information was always relevant and timely, it should be noted that no tutor considered the information to be regular or bad.

**Table 8**

<b>Did your tutor solve your doubts or channel you appropriately to the person who could solve them?</b>	
Always	100 %
Regularly	0 %
Rarely	0 %
Never	0 %

*Source: Own Elaboration*

With regard to this question, 100% of the tutors surveyed agreed that their tutor resolved their doubts at all times or channelled them to the person who could resolve them best. This result is very good, as it shows that the tutor-teachers make an effort every day to adequately fulfil their work as tutors.

**Table 9**

<b>Did your academic tutor demonstrate time availability?</b>	
Always	95.24 %
Regularly	4.76 %
Rarely	0 %
Never	0 %

*Source: Own Elaboration*

Regarding this question 95.24 % of the tutors surveyed agreed that their tutor always showed availability of time to attend them, even in non-school hours. Only 4.76% thought that their tutor regularly took the time to attend to them. It is worth noting that no students said that they are rarely or never attended to, which shows the commitment of the teachers to their work as tutors.

### **Other results**

In order to find out what topics they would like to see addressed in the tutoring sessions, they were asked an open question, the most outstanding answers were:

- When and how to ask to do the service
- To deal with topics that involve us expressing how we feel and what we think about the activities we carry out during the semester.
- I agree with the activities and the way in which the tutorials are carried out.
- In all the sessions we have had, they have been very important and all of them are for career purposes.
- At the moment all the activities seem to me to be correct and pleasant.
- They should explain a bit more about how to get a degree by average and the thesis.
- How we will organise ourselves.
- How to get more credits and finish the degree in less time.
- Explain about scholarships or send us the information by WhatsApp.

Finally, we wanted to ask what recommendations they would make to us for a better service, the results were:

- To live together more, to get to know each other better.
- I don't have any suggestions, everything seems fine to me.
- I think it's fine the way it is.
- To have interactive meetings where we all participate.
- I think that the topics that she gives us to know are exact and she does it in a synthesised way, apart from asking us all the time if there are any doubts and that if on another occasion we have them we can dial her or send her a message and that seems excellent to me.
- Maintain more continuous communication, not only when there are tutoring sessions.
- Have a coffee-tutor session from time to time.

### **Conclusions**

To conclude, we can say that tutoring involves communication and interaction processes on the part of teachers; it also involves personalised attention to students, based on knowledge of their problems, their needs and their specific interests. Undoubtedly, for many students, tutoring becomes a fundamental and transversal need in their integral and professional training. However, for this to happen, they need tutors who are committed to their work, who accompany them from the first to the last semester, who work ethically and professionally. It is also necessary for them to have a profile in counselling and psychological guidance so that, based on the student's vision, they can propose tutoring strategies that help their students to overcome the various problems they face on a daily basis. It is also essential to use technological tools such as WhatsApp, Facebook, Instagram, Telegram or telephone, email, EMINUS platform, among others, as resources to maintain closer communication with them.



Finally, we can conclude that tutoring is an extremely important activity for students, as through it they receive support, guidance, accompaniment and orientation from their tutors in order to make good, responsible and informed decisions and thus have a better stay at the university.

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