

Teaching practice in higher education. Analysis from educational models**Práctica docente en educación superior. Análisis desde los modelos educativos**

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Abstract

The objective of this study is to describe the teaching practice from the experience of the students, based on the knowledge that teachers have about the subject, the pedagogical abilities or skills they possess, interpersonal relationships, personality characteristics, research associated with the chair, and planning. The method was quantitative with a descriptive scope and cross-sectional design, it was applied in 106 surveys to students of the Psychology Academic Unit of the Autonomous University of Zacatecas, in the State of Zacatecas, Mexico. A self-made instrument called "Teaching practice questionnaire, student perception" was applied with a "Cronbach's Alpha" of 0.93. It was found that if the teacher is critically trained, assesses the teaching and learning processes through dialogue, interacts with other teachers, and builds and lives values in their educational and social context, they will be in agreement with a practice close to a paradigm constructivist.

Teacher training, Higher education, Educational models

Resumen

El objetivo del presente estudio es describir la práctica docente desde la experiencia de los alumnos, en función del conocimiento que los maestros tienen sobre la materia, las habilidades o destrezas pedagógicas que poseen, las relaciones interpersonales, las características de personalidad, la investigación asociada a la cátedra, y la planificación. El método fue cuantitativo de alcance descriptivo y diseño transversal, se aplicaron 106 encuestas a estudiantes de la Unidad Académica de Psicología de la Universidad Autónoma de Zacatecas, del Estado de Zacatecas, México. Se aplicó un instrumento de elaboración propia denominado "Cuestionario de práctica docente, percepción de estudiantes" con un "Alfa de Cronbach" de 0.93. Se encontró que si el docente se forma de manera crítica, realiza valoraciones de los procesos de enseñanza y aprendizaje a través del diálogo, interactúa con otros docentes y construye y vive valores en su contexto educativo y social estará conformando una práctica cercana a un paradigma constructivista

Formación de docentes, Enseñanza superior, Modelos educativos

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Introduction

In higher education, it can be seen that teaching practices, largely delimited by the curriculum, do not respond to the type of comprehensive training required by the subject and the strengthening of humanistic approaches (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation, UNESCO, 2017).

Effective teaching practice is associated with teachers' capacity for innovation, and is also a value that educational policies are committed to in the current situation of change. In this sense, Torres (2020) defines innovation as the implementation of changes in training that produce improvements in learning outcomes, and also points out that in order to be considered educational innovation, the process must respond to needs, must be effective and efficient, as well as sustainable over time and with results that are applicable to any context.

UNESCO (2015) recognised that the role of the teacher is crucial to renew educational practices and culture, as well as to promote new teaching methodologies and new learning experiences, hence awareness of the extent to which university students reflect on the practice of their teachers will enhance the learning objectives, processes and outcomes generated in the classroom.

Teachers who recreate a lecture or teaching practice where the following qualities are appreciated: a) knowledge of the subject b) pedagogical skills or abilities c) optimal interpersonal relationships d) characteristics of a stable personality e) relationship between teaching and research and f) teaching planning; will be developing a practice permeated by the constructivist paradigm of education.

In this order of ideas, the aim is to identify the attributes that characterise teaching practice in higher education and how a constructivist paradigm is configured from this as a model of teaching work, for which the objectives of the study are:

To identify the attributes that characterise the teaching practice of teachers at the Academic Unit of Psychology at the Universidad Autónoma de Zacatecas (UAZ).

To analyse which educational model permeates the teaching work of the teachers of the Academic Unit of Psychology of the Universidad Autónoma de Zacatecas (UAZ).

Teaching practice

There are complex interactions between culture, power, politics and education. Teaching practice, shaped by personal styles, but also by reform processes resulting from educational policies, are closely linked to social processes. However, higher education teaching practice has a preponderant and direct impact on society, because adult graduates are factors of change in their context, and carry as part of their social and cultural capital, much of what they have acquired from the practice of their teachers. It is precisely the relationship between higher education and society that is currently under analysis, for three fundamental reasons: the exhaustion of the educational model, the formation of a new social frame of reference, and the strategic role of knowledge (Villaseñor, 1997). This can be explained as a product or consequence of the crisis of the modern project of education and society that emerged in the 18th century in the West. This crisis places the subject in a post-modern condition, which means that the subject is constituted as a remnant of political, social and cultural conditions that impose a distance that prevents the fulfilment of the objectives of modernity, two of the most important of which are: justice and equality.

It is essential that the ideology of conducting oneself on the basis of solidarity and not solitary freedom is founded at school. In which interdependence is a constant, based on social processes that limit mixophobia and promote mixophilia (Bauman, 2017).

Educational models. From traditional teaching to the conformation of modern educational subjects

Educational institutions as pedagogical devices, allow the construction of forms of interaction and interdependence between teacher and students, as well as between students and students, and consequently, constitute educational subjects, both teachers and students, to the extent that they occupy and make their own the meanings, norms and practices that the device -especially through the school institution- "institutes" for those places (Foucault, 2002).

The current modern or post-modern devices demand a peculiar, sometimes demanding and demanding university teaching practice in the sense that the teacher is required to have the following:

- Subject knowledge.
- Pedagogical skills or abilities.
- Interpersonal relations.
- Personality characteristics.
- Teaching-research relationship.
- Teaching planning (Fernández, 2015).

Teaching practice acquires particular characteristics, which make it possible to determine whether there is a pedagogical or educational model that characterises it. Pedagogical models or paradigms are characterised by three principles: ontological, epistemological and methodological, which delineate knowledge, research and practices in education. Therefore, every model involves both discursive and practical aspects.

Traditional model. Educational processes revolve around the teacher, with the learner playing a passive role. The form of work and organisation is based on magisterocentrism (Abbagnano, 1994).

Active school model or new school. In this model, the teacher motivates the formation of a collective spirit through his or her practice. It is the teacher, by means of certain devices in conjunction with the school, who forms a cosmivision that is necessarily built in the social relationship. The teacher adapts study methods and procedures to the characteristics of the students. The reign of prohibition no longer reigns for students, so they can act with relative freedom (Obregón, 2006).

Technocratic model. It is permeated by a paradigm of psychology called behaviourism, which of course has been reflected in pedagogical practices. This model represented a technocratic conception applied to teaching. The incipient elements were initially used in the selection and training of military personnel. Subsequently, an educational proposal was articulated (Torres, 2017).

Critical didactics. What is notable in this approach is its re-nationalisation of the social aspects of teaching, as merely theoretical learning is considered insufficient. Emphasis is placed on social activity among all agents of the educational event, which is a rich source of formative experiences (Apple, 2013).

Constructivist model. Several theories converge in the constructivist model, three of the most important of which are: Piaget's psychogenetic theory; Vygotsky's sociocultural theory; and Bruner and Ausubel's cognitive theory (Hernández, 1998). Constructivism is therefore a multiple, eclectic and, in that sense, complex unit. It can answer the questions: how to learn, what to teach, how to teach, why to teach certain content, when to teach, what, when, how, how to evaluate? But it is not a perspective that indicates infallible recipes, but it provides some guidelines: starting from the level of development of the students; ensuring the construction of meaningful learning.

Teaching practice is a social activity exercised by a professional in order to teach, which is determined by the social, historical and institutional context. Practice is therefore an important factor in education; it is the bridge that connects the educational project with the social project. In this sense, it is assumed that teaching practice is a mechanism that encourages students to exercise citizenship from the classroom in its three spheres: democratic participation, respect for diversity and coexistence and peace (Jasso, 2022). From the above, the following hypothetical approach can be deduced: Teaching practice is made up of: a) knowledge of the subject, b) pedagogical skills or abilities, c) interpersonal relationships, d) personality characteristics, e) teaching-research relationship, f) planning; it organises or proposes the bases for the construction of a teaching task centred on the constructivist paradigm that involves answering key questions about the teaching and learning processes (what to teach, how to teach, when to teach, what, how and when to evaluate).

Method

In order to achieve the proposed objectives, we worked with a sample of 106 cases, higher education students from the Academic Unit of Psychology at the Universidad Autónoma de Zacatecas, in the State of Zacatecas, Mexico.

The sample was obtained through a stratified random probability sampling, corresponding to a population of 515 students. Of the sample, 23 (21.7%) are male and 83 are female (78.3%). 74.6% of the sample is between 21 and 24 years of age, while 25.4% of the sample is between 25 and 35 years of age.

It should be noted that the Bachelor's Degree in Psychology is made up of 10 semesters. Thus, of the cases studied, 16% are from the second semester, 40.6% from the eighth semester and 43.4% from the tenth semester.

A 61-item instrument was designed, called "Practice Questionnaire, Student Perception" with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.93, suggesting consistent reliability. The simple variables that constitute the measurement of the complex variable teaching practice are: subject knowledge, pedagogical skills, interpersonal relationships, personality characteristics, teaching-research relationship, teaching planning (items assess the frequency and implementation of these variables).

It should be noted that for the preparation of tables and graphs, each of the items was recoded into different variables in order to make them more limited and therefore simplify and improve the analysis, and so ranges were assigned as follows:

- 1 means "very low", with scores ranging from 0 to 20.
- 2 means "low" agglutinates scores from 21 to 40
- 3 means "medium" agglutinates scores from 41 to 60
- 4 means "high" agglutinates scores from 61 to 80
- 5 means "very high" agglutinates score from 81 to 100

The application was carried out in groups, in school settings, and the consent of each of the participants was requested. After recording the data, frequency measures were carried out.

Results

Frequencies of Teaching Practices

Frequency analyses of the teaching practice component are presented below. Based on the information obtained in table 1, a multiple response frequency calculation is made grouping all the variables of the "Teaching practices" axis (knowledge of the subject, pedagogical skills or abilities, interpersonal relationships, personality characteristics, teaching-research relationship and planning). This shows that 64.2% of students perceive teachers as academics who carry out practices that demonstrate that there is a "high" and "very high" knowledge of the subject, which indicates that there is an appropriate selection of content considered to be scientific, which helps higher education students to acquire concepts (principles, facts, laws), procedures (skills and abilities) and attitudes (values). Similarly, it is understood that the relationship between the contents and the levels of complexity are appropriate for the bachelor's degree level. Regarding the presentation made to the students, it is noted that the teacher uses projects, problems or centres of interest that are relevant to the students.

		Responses
		Percentage
Teaching Practice	Very low	11.8%
	Low	7.3%
	Medium	16.8%
	High	32.2%
	Very High	32.0%
Total		100.0%

Table 1 Teaching practice
Source: Own Elaboration

When referring to the pedagogical skills or abilities that the teacher possesses, 63.2% of the students indicate that teachers organise and manage classroom activities, also guide and give meaning to learning and promote a socioemotional climate. Teachers are concerned with exploring and activating students' prior knowledge. Students also mention that teachers support them in deepening and developing more complex and expert representations of the teaching and learning content.

Regarding the variable called interpersonal relationships which has to do with intimate/superficial relationships, personal/social relationships and even love relationships, 57% of the students indicated that the relationships are superficial, personal and that bullying and harassment between teacher-student is avoided.

67% of the students surveyed stated that teachers exhibit personality characteristics oriented towards extroversion, agreeableness, straightforwardness, emotional stability and openness to experience. This indicates that personality characteristics contribute to good teaching practice. It is therefore an important element to consider as part of the analysis of teaching practice.

Teaching practice related to research is strengthened, since more than 60% of students express that teachers exercise their power to help them, that teachers continuously analyse their life and professional project. Students perceive that teachers construct their own school work with professionalism. Teachers build theories while respecting the cultural background, they build values, they bet on the affectivity of their students, they fight against the routine of daily practice. Students emphasise that they are trained with a critical conscience.

There is a clear intention on the part of the teachers to update and enrich their teaching, and the students surveyed state that there is a need for teachers to form thinking groups with other researching teachers. With regard to the category of teaching planning, 74% of the students mentioned that they were able to distinguish that their teachers set objectives, organise the conceptual, procedural and attitudinal contents to make them accessible by means of didactic activities and implementing some (didactic) resources.

The results of the frequencies, in general, show that students evaluate teaching practice in higher education as very good and good, as 64.2% of students think so. On the other hand, it is interesting to note that 35.8% of the young people chose the values "very low", "low" and "medium" to evaluate teaching practice, which indicates that the elements that characterise teaching practice in higher education can still be further strengthened in higher education teachers:

- Subject knowledge
- Pedagogical skills
- Interpersonal relationships
- Personality characteristics
- Teaching-research relationship
- Teaching planning
- Teaching planning

Where there is a greater area of opportunity for teachers is in teaching-research and pedagogical skills and abilities, since the measurement of these variables shows that the results are concentrated in the "very low", "low" and "medium" range.

From the results, it can be seen that the critical thinking of teachers invested in their teaching can provide them with elements that allow them to develop a practice that is close to what the constructivist paradigm proposes.

Discussion

Cañedo (2013) explains that the planning and execution phases of teaching are the main elements that guide teaching practice, but that both elements are based on the educator's conceptions of learning and teaching. While in this study it is found that the elements that most stand out as part of the teaching work in higher education are research and teamwork to form thinking groups, which leads to assessments of the processes of instruction and knowledge acquisition, this allows the development of educational trends relevant to the context of students. Like Torres (2020), it is found that teaching innovation in higher education schools is crucial and is currently a concern of governments due to the current situation of change. It is also recognised that such innovation has to focus on producing improvements in learning outcomes and must be closely linked to the needs and challenges in the educational field. Therefore, the renewal of teaching practice must go hand in hand with the demands of 21st century learning.

The data obtained show that teachers implement a praxis characterised by a traditional educational paradigm, since it is reflected that the student plays a receptive role, learning is rote and the teacher pretends to be the centre of classroom processes (Hernández, 1998). However, current educational policies demand the development of a teaching practice based on a constructivist model.

One of the limitations of the research is that it did not include an analysis of the curricular principles of higher education, as well as the curriculum of the Academic Unit of Psychology itself, which would have allowed us to specify how teaching practices are conceived from the "should be" point of view.

Another limitation is that the teaching staff's point of view was not considered in order to evaluate their own practice, which would have helped to contrast the teaching and student perspectives, generating a greater wealth of data and information.

Conclusions

Teaching practice permeated by: a) subject knowledge, b) pedagogical skills or abilities, c) interpersonal relations, d) personality characteristics, e) teaching-research relationship, f) planning; is directly linked to a model with traditional tendencies.

From the configuration and structure of teaching work based on the principles of a model of "critical thinking and teaching", a system of practices linked to the new and constructivist school is instituted.

Critical thinking and teaching as a variable that emerges from the study, is an essential part of teaching practice in Higher Education, and is configured on the basis that teachers bring into play: real and effective coordination with other educators, and the search for loyalty to a common project; the establishment of working groups and the carrying out of assessments of the school reality; attention to the diversity of abilities, interests and learning rhythms, as well as the verification of the scope and achievement of objectives; the setting of objectives (observable features of performance) in each class; and the analysis of policies, ideologies, paradigms and approaches to generate critical thinking, which must be present in their professional work.

When teachers bring the above variables into play, they create a structure that will allow them to generate educational processes from a holistic and constructivist conception.

In general, it was observed in the sample that teaching practices in higher education are good, but there is an area of opportunity in the teaching-research relationship and in pedagogical skills and abilities. Students demand that the practices of their teachers in terms of the teaching-research variable be permeated by the following, that the teacher: exercises the power to help the student; continuously analyses his/her personal and professional life project; builds a teaching practice congruent with his/her position in the world; elaborates the educational discourse every day, gives his/her own eyes, his/her experiences, his/her knowledge so that the students can investigate reality in depth and in depth; constructs theories while respecting the cultural background; constructs values; bets on affectivity towards his students; fights against routine; shares his scientific constructions with the members of the educational community; forms a critical conscience; and forms thinking groups with other teacher-researchers.

Regarding the variable pedagogical skills and abilities, students state that teachers should: organise and manage classroom activities; guide and give meaning to learning; generate a socio-emotional climate; explore and activate prior knowledge; and support the deepening and elaboration of more complex and expert representations of teaching and learning content.

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