

The integration of digital technologies in tutorial management. Positive impacts and areas of opportunity

La integración de las tecnologías digitales en el manejo tutorial. Impactos positivos y áreas de oportunidad

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Abstract

In this paper, the importance of integrating digital technologies to the tutorial function at a higher level is raised as a fundamental, useful and effective tool to support the monitoring of students. For this reason, it was considered relevant to indicate the positive impact from the point of view of teaching point of view, as well as to determine the areas of opportunity for continuous improvement, in order not only to support students but also to share experiences among peers to enrich the tutorial work.

Tutoring, Digital technologies, Impacts

Resumen

En la presente ponencia se plantea la importancia de integrar las tecnologías digitales a la función tutorial a nivel superior como una herramienta fundamental, útil y eficaz para apoyar en el seguimiento de los estudiantes, por ello se consideró relevante indicar el impacto positivo desde el punto de vista docente, así como determinar las áreas de oportunidad para la mejora continua, con la finalidad no solo de apoyar a los estudiantes sino también de compartir experiencias entre pares para enriquecer la labor tutorial.

Tutoría, Tecnologías digitales, Impactos

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Introduction

Tutoring is understood as the function performed by a lecturer with the aim of providing follow-up and support to the students assigned during their professional career, in the case of higher education, this function is assigned within the activities that the lecturer must perform as part of their academic workload.

This activity is fundamental for the correct performance of students throughout the various stages of their professional career, entry, permanence, graduation and graduation, so the follow-up and support must be strategically planned so that the objective is achieved.

During the Covid 19 pandemic, we faced the transition from the face-to-face to the virtual modality in the various educational programmes, and in terms of tutoring it was also necessary to implement digital tools to maintain communication with those being tutored, as well as for orientation, follow-up, guidance and support in various areas, which is why at the Universidad Autónoma del Carmen, as in many higher education institutions in Mexico, it was necessary to implement digital tools to maintain communication with those being tutored, as in many higher education institutions in our country, a teacher training day was held for the management of the Microsoft teams platform through which classes were taught by videoconference, as well as through various digital media and social networks, which favoured the monitoring of the teaching-learning processes.

In the case of tutoring, individual and collective planning of various strategies was required to avoid interruption of the tutorial processes, which through the aforementioned digital strategies allowed for significant progress in the academic performance of students, the detection of cases of risk of failure, as well as the timely psychological channelling of students with personal and family problems.

Tutoring at higher education level

Tutoring has been understood as the accompaniment of a teacher to the student in all stages of their university education, entry, permanence, graduation and graduation to support decision making, completion of various procedures, academic guidance and referral to various areas.

According to (Narro and Martiniano, 2013), it can also be defined as the intentional teaching intervention in the educational process, which consists of close, systematic and permanent accompaniment of students to support them and facilitate the process of constructing learning of different types: cognitive, affective, socio-cultural and existential.

Tutoring at the higher level involves the management of strategies by the tutor with the support of the institution to provide guidance, support, monitoring and channelling of students at all stages of their academic training, which requires that the tutor not only has the necessary openness, empathy, respect, opportunity, relevance, creativity, willingness and leadership, but also has the knowledge and suitable tools to perform their role in the most efficient and appropriate manner.

For this reason, tutors must be constantly updated in their academic and disciplinary training as well as in the use of pedagogical and tutorial tools that allow them to perform their work properly.

It is worth mentioning that tutoring has also been understood as the hours that the teacher invests in advising the student in relation to their subject; however, this concept has been extended to what we identify today in many higher education institutions as a monitoring and teaching intervention in the educational process in order to accompany, guide and orient the student at all stages of their training.

As part of this work assigned to the teacher within their activities, such is the case of our institution, the Universidad Autónoma del Carmen, from the academic regulations, which involves developing a series of skills, attitudes and aptitudes for the benefit of students.

Tutoring is a fundamental function for students, which if developed in an adequate manner, allows for the promotion of values, stimulates students to avoid desertion, reduces failure rates and increases terminal efficiency.

In general, it is considered that tutoring can contribute to the training of professionals capable of facing the problems of the labour field (Reyes M.M, 2021).

It is important to point out that the strategies applied vary according to the institution and to each teacher, but it has been observed that a good management of tutoring, i.e. the implementation of suitable and relevant strategies, has contributed to the improvement of academic performance, reduction of dropout and dropout rates, to achieve better job opportunities upon graduation, to motivate students to undertake national and international mobility and in the field of interpersonal relationships and emotional and personal aspects, all of which contribute to their comprehensive training.

A relevant criterion for understanding tutoring is from educational guidance, since from it it is possible to recognise and identify the objectives and scope of tutorial action and understand that it is a continuous and permanent process of support that is not only evident during their school career, but throughout their lives (Torres, V. T and Torquemada G. A.D, 2016).

Although the management of tutorial action depends on each teacher, in our institution there are certain provisions that guide our work, set out by the department of the general directorate of institutional tutoring, which allow us to guide our work towards the fulfilment of the axes and strategies that the institution itself sets.

In this order of ideas, it is important to indicate that given the circumstances that we have experienced worldwide derived from the health contingency, measures were taken in the educational field from 2020, such as migrating from the face-to-face to the virtual modality to continue with the teaching of courses at various levels, In the case of the Universidad Autónoma del Carmen, digital platforms such as Microsoft Teams were implemented, with prior teacher training, as well as the use of various means of communication through digital devices, which also had an impact on the tutorial function, since for almost two years it was necessary to resume communication and monitoring between tutor-tutored.

Integration of digital technologies in tutorial management as a consequence of the pandemic

Although digital technologies were integrated with greater emphasis after the health contingency caused by Covid 19 two years ago, it is well known that the process of including them in educational processes around the world began some years ago, which has undoubtedly facilitated the transmission of knowledge, Even though virtual education has generated diverse points of view, some considering the disadvantages such as the barriers between students and teachers, which implies a lack of feedback and often limits meaningful learning, however, the advantages have been evident in many areas.

As for the management of tutoring, technological and digital tools have also permeated, especially since the current pandemic, since they have allowed distance communication with students, the transmission of information in the various educational institutions, as well as the treatment and attention to various problems that students face on a daily basis.

The Universidad Autónoma del Carmen has been no stranger to the process of transition from face-to-face to virtual mode as a result of the measures taken by the Mexican government to avoid interrupting the educational process, and in the case of tutoring, the transition to virtual mode has also been necessary.

This transition process, which was preceded by teacher training in the use of digital platforms, led the teaching staff to become involved in the use of these tools, initially for teaching, but also worked effectively for tutoring.

With regard to tutoring, according to the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), it is part of the teaching function, so the teacher must provide support and follow-up to the student to achieve better performance and comprehensive training that allows optimal professional development, such attention that at the time was developed personally or in groups, with the pandemic was temporarily interrupted, until the teachers were implementing communication tools and strategies, being digital, suitable and relevant for this purpose in most of the Higher Education Institutions.

In the case of the Universidad Autónoma del Carmen, in the various faculties, as already mentioned, the use of the Microsoft Teams platform was implemented in which both individual and group sessions were attended by the assigned tutors, in particular the personal experience in the area of law with up to 67 assigned tutors approximately, group sessions were scheduled in which in principle the interaction began with new entrants, as well as students in more advanced semesters, in which they were made aware of the generalities of the tutorial action, important topics were also programmed for the integral formation for social integration, construction and promotion of values, support in personal and professional development and even topics of emotional relevance such as stress management, how we face the pandemic, resilience, decision making in the professional field, even strategies of oral and written expression, many of them were developed with the support of the psychopedagogical department of the institution.

In our experience, these activities were very satisfactory, since the students participated actively and even had openness in expressing difficult situations experienced during the pandemic, which allowed us to detect cases of students who required support from the psychopedagogical department, as well as from other areas such as student services in professional practices and social service, since even virtually they were carried out by several students; however, in the case of national and international mobilities they were temporarily suspended to avoid contagion by COVID-19.

In short, when information and communication technologies are applied, their potential transforms teaching and learning environments, allowing the creation of virtual environments with non-traditional methodological approaches, which move from individual to collaborative learning and contribute to the effective transmission of knowledge, where the role of the tutor is fundamental for the success of the student's training activity (Silva Q. J, 2010).

Positive impacts

As we have already mentioned, tutoring is a means that helps students at the higher level, since through it the students receive accompaniment and guidance from their tutors.

Although it is true that higher education students are coming of age, it is no less true that they still need the support of their teachers to provide them with all the necessary support to find solutions to their doubts as quickly as possible.

Despite the negative impacts that the pandemic had on school classrooms at the beginning of the pandemic, today and almost at the end of the year 2022, when most students and teachers are already vaccinated, UNACAR, as an educational institution, has the technological resources for internet connection, so students can make use of this resource, and most of them have internet connection in their homes, so the teaching-learning process was not hindered.

As for the effects left by COVID-19 in relation to the teaching-learning processes and tutorial activities, it can be determined that UNACAR students, as part of their training, participated in synchronous activities, which was of total help to them, since they were able to relate to each other. It was also taken into consideration as a positive impact that our university has implemented the competency-based education system, which is why it was considered smooth to work under the virtual modality approach.

We can also mention as a positive impact, the fact that virtual education, during the pandemic, became a challenge for students and teachers, as all students had access to the official teams platform, in the same way, they performed satisfactorily in terms of searching for information to carry out their tasks, used various internet search engines as support to expand knowledge and made use of various digital tools at their disposal, a consequence of being in the era of knowledge and having passed the digital age.

Thus, the virtual classes gave us the opportunity for both teachers and students to develop the necessary skills, which represented a greater effort, dedication and joint work for the academic year to be of use, the classes were given at a distance, achieving the objectives of the syllabus in competences.

Now, as for the tutorials, it is worth mentioning that they were of total support for those being tutored, as the accompaniment that was given in a group and personal way, transitioned to the virtual modality, but with the same quality, and with greater support, as some young people were going through delicate processes, both in their family environment, with a sick person at home or, unfortunately, with a sick person at home or, unfortunately, with a family member at home. This required greater awareness on the part of teachers in their role as tutors to give full support to students in situations of distress. These were difficult times, but at the moment, the situation of our students is relaxing.

The tutors have been a fundamental pillar in this process and by virtue of the openness and trust that we have with the students, we were able to interact and these conversations in times of crisis were essential for their academic and personal development, we made teams so as not to leave alone those who most needed our support, together tutors and students in this essential work.

Another of the positive impacts that we currently have, on returning to our classrooms, is the awareness that we have on both sides Tutor-Tutored; since we have worked so that our students-tutored were integrated quickly, without any problem to do so, so that today we are working with them to ensure that as future professionals, they become well informed and deeply motivated citizens, provided with a critical sense, and able to analyze the problems of the society in which they live, seek solutions, apply these and assume social responsibilities.

Thus, academic tutoring is an important tool to strengthen the teaching-learning process, since the current educational models must be transformed to enhance the skills and competences of the students-tutored, (Ahumada García F. N & Nieto, C. I, 2015).

Given the challenges faced by the student-tutored, face-to-face tutoring is an effective strategy, given its potential to personalise the training processes and the monitoring of student trajectories, as a personalised strategy, it can be fundamental, even more so if it assumes inclusive principles, as is the case of our educational institution.

Finally, we can affirm that tutoring has a positive impact on the student as part of their integral formation, since it represents a fundamental tool, it is conceived in the new educational model at the Universidad Autónoma del Carmen and from the actions implemented since its creation and during this transition process, problems were detected around the tutored students, both in the academic and personal areas, which were dealt with in an adequate and timely manner, and where appropriate, channelled with areas such as the psycho-pedagogical department, which has been very useful and supportive.

Areas of opportunity

At the Universidad Autónoma del Carmen, tutorials have two aspects, an individual one, in which only matters that concern a tutor are attended to, and group tutorials in which integration, follow-up, support and training strategies are implemented through talks, dissemination of institutional communications and indications regarding the processes in various matters or administrative procedures concerning their admission, continuance, graduation and graduation, among other things, and there is also an institutional tutoring timetable, There is also an institutional tutoring schedule, in which the student is nourished, attending conferences, symposiums, lectures, master lectures, also, there is individual interaction in the registration of activities of integral formation and channelling to the different institutional areas, likewise, students can attend different congresses, or academic events or carry out student mobility, both national or international to broaden their knowledge in general, as well as contribute to their professional future.

In the face-to-face tutorials, we work with the students to address their strengths and weaknesses, supporting them in identifying their strengths and weighing them up, as well as working with them when their weaknesses may cause them conflicts in their studies that lead them to fail one or more subjects.

In this order of ideas, we can mention that the institution, from the tutoring area, organises various activities and events to support both the students and the training and updating of the tutor-teachers, in order to improve the tutorial action, always for the benefit of the students.

Derived from the above, a tutorial action plan is implemented, which the tutor prepares each semester, so that on a secure basis, appropriate scenarios are planned and activities are developed with the group, that is, the actions to be implemented in the group of assigned tutors are designed, the sessions are organised in such a way that they do not interfere in the already called institutional hour of tutorials that are carried out every Friday, from the coordination of tutorials at institutional level, so that students attend these activities.

The aim of the tutors is to guide the student towards a life project, to orientate his or her actions in the personal, academic and professional spheres or to channel his or her project towards a productive activity, but also to make him or her feel satisfied with him or herself, to link him or herself with the goals set in his or her student life, to achieve them and also to set a promising future for himself or herself.

Nowadays, tutoring plays an important role, in particular as a guide in their academic training, preventing school dropout in higher education students.

Other areas of opportunity in tutoring, according to Quispe Gavid, M. & Arellano C. O, (2017), tutoring is designed for the achievement of educational quality, which means that terminal efficiency is weighted, since most of the students who finish their profession, take their exam with the option of a degree and graduate in a shorter time, in order to successfully enter the labour market.

Therefore, it is necessary to point out that this process is not easy, but it tends to be an opportunity to support the tutored student to get ahead in their studies, to conclude their university career and to integrate into the labour field, with the best opportunities that the human being deserves, to achieve success in the different areas of their life.

Conclusions

Derived from the reflections of the present study, the tutorial actions that are carried in the curricula of universities, such as UNACAR, it is worth mentioning that these promote the development of skills that allow students to review and understand their learning processes, seek solutions, given that their skills already allow them to recognise and solve their difficulties and how to improve in order to achieve their student purposes.

Hence, tutorials represent the accompaniment of the student, with emphasis on the academic performance of the tutored, with the aim of expanding their knowledge and also to promote the cultural aspect through the arts, sports and personal/emotional aspect, which will serve for their future and as a life learning as part of their comprehensive training.

It is important that the tutor's function starts from the moment the students enter higher education and accompanies them in all their stages, such as entry, permanence, graduation and graduation, so it is the tutor's job to carry out an analysis at each stage and monitor their progress and development, which will allow the timely detection of various problems that may arise and provide solutions to them in a timely and effective manner.

This requires all the institutional support, which is aimed at the comprehensive development of the tutored, being necessary to continue the incorporation of tutoring programs that have allowed to focus on students to know what their weaknesses are but also their strengths and enhance their skills for a comprehensive education that contributes in the future in its integration as a professional in the workplace, allowing the achievement of their goals and be worthy citizen for the society in which it develops.

Finally it is possible to affirm that the digital tools have been of great utility in the processes and tutorial actions since it allows the tutor-tutored approach contributing in the update of the handling of these tools as much for the tutor as for the tutored, even at a distance it was possible to fulfil the goals and objectives around the academic performance, desertion, school abandonment, graduation and graduation, even in the period considered within the pandemic from 2020 to date, two generations of students graduated from the Bachelor's Degree in Law and the Bachelor's Degree in Criminology and two generations entered the same way, which shows that academic activities were not interrupted and consequently the tutorial actions, this for the benefit of the tutored students.

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