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### RESEARCH ARTICLE

#### THE IMPACT OF TUTORING ON STUDENTS OF AN EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM IN THE HEALTH AREA.

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#### Abstract

The student is the reason to be of all educational institutions and they are always on the path of continuous improvement. It is an unavoidable commitment in all institutions of higher education that offer a comprehensive and quality care, emerging the institutional program of tutoring. With the intention of knowing the impact of tutoring in an educational program in the health area, the tutoring program in the Bachelor of Gerontology was analyzed, involving a population of 132 study subjects. A quantitative approach was used, with a descriptive scope and a non-experimental design; the hypothesis is rejected, a high rate of tutorates (90%) didn't show interest in the tutoring program. It is concluded that the excess of flexibility that the tutoring program has, affects the lack of interest of the tutored ones. It is recommended to implement a mechanism that motivates the student to use the service offered by the university tutoring.

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#### Introduction:-

With the intention of providing holistic attention to the student, the mentoring program emerges and positions itself as an important element in the Higher Education Institutions (HEI), adjustments have been made taking elements of European models, in the desire to be at the vanguard of the new educational focus, whose results are incipient because it doesn't coincide with the real context in Mexico. The objective of this research is to analyze the impact through the benefits that the institutional tutoring program (ITP) provides to the students of the degree in gerontology. ITP elements are taken as they are: the activities carried out by the tutors and the sense of responsibility that the student has towards the tutoring program, evidenced by the attendance at the tutoring sessions.

The institutional program of tutoring is already an obligation of all Higher Education Institutions (HEI) in Mexico, as it is part of the social responsibility that every university must offer to its students to achieve a comprehensive education, that is, in addition to the academic part, it must be supported the aspect of mental health, offering spaces for sport and the development of their artistic abilities. To achieve the above, there are programs and spaces such as the University Cultural and Sports Center, the Directorate for cultural dissemination, as well as the programs that support the student, among which we can mention: the Tutoring program, Interculturality and the Healthy University program, which are common in all universities and institutions of higher education. Sánchez, M. (2013: p.1) presents the following definition:

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"Academic tutoring is a support and guidance that is offered to students in their academic performance, resulting in planning for the study and development of learning skills." This approach is very successful because the students need to improve their academic performance, and the tutoring program is offers them just that. The student who takes it seriously and participates in the activities offered by the tutoring program has guaranteed success in their studies, because they work in self-knowledge, which allows identifying their potential and improving their personal and academic performance.

**Romo (2004) expresses in his research the main difficulties detected which are summarized in:**

"a) insufficient number of professors to attend the program, b) shortage of experienced or trained teachers to tutor, c) heavy workload of full-time professors, d) lack of personnel that allows monitoring, evaluation and the administration of the program, as well as specialized attention services; and e) non-compliance with the commitments demanded by the program by the institutional management bodies. "(Romo, 2004: 17)

Despite the fact that more than 14 years have passed, the problems identified remain valid, and it is important that higher education institutions work on correct planning that allows them to obtain better results in the application of the institutional tutoring program.

As part of the activities that the tutor does in the tutoring program, there is a portal in Spanish called Tutoring, resources for tutorial guidance (Orientared), where tutors can get to work with their tutors the topics of self-esteem, diversity, guidance, among other interesting resources. In Colombia there is a university corporation that has a model of comprehensive student care denominated with the abbreviations MAIE, and then it is described:

It is an institutional policy aimed at providing academic, financial and psychosocial support to students with a view to guaranteeing their entry, permanence, academic success and timely graduation; it is also aimed at serving the population with special educational needs. It offers: counseling and accompaniment, specialized tutoring, academic strengthening workshops, awareness-raising workshops for teachers to care for students with disabilities. (Paragraph 1)

The financial aspect is what makes this model interesting, because it is the part that lacks the institutional program of tutoring proposed by the ANUIES (National Association of Universities and Institutions of Higher Education, by its initials in spanish), in this sense it is proposed to review the aspects offered by higher education instances in other countries and the feasibility of including some aspects that enrich the work carried out in Mexico in the subject of tutoring.

**Study context**

The educational program degree in gerontology, is part of the educational offer of the Faculty of Nursing, DES health sciences of a public university in Mexico; In the school year January - July 2017 there was an enrollment of about 150 students in four groups located in the semesters: second (two groups A and B), fourth, sixth and eighth, in these last semesters there was only one group per semester. For the attention of this enrollment there is a faculty composed of: two full-time teachers (FTT) and two part-time teachers (PTT) and ten subject teachers (ST), a total of fourteen teachers, of which only the FTT have the obligation to perform the tutoring function and for the other categories is not mandatory, each of them decides to participate voluntarily, which is very difficult to happen because it means an additional burden of work that is not economically or morally remunerated.

It is a reality that all teachers in some way perform the tutorial function, as it's common to observe that students look for the teacher, either in a space during class, at the end of it or at any time that students feel the need to talk to a person who listens to them, when they want to share a situation that worries them, in some way the teachers are always there, to guide them either academically or emotionally, however that "doesn't count" as tutoring because there is no record and there is no evidence of the work done.

To be a tutor means to accept a commitment with the institution and with the tutored students, among the activities carried out by the tutor we found: Establish a space in the schedule for the attention of tutorships, make it known to the authorities and the students, carry out a biannual planning of the tutorial action for each student, which integrates the start and end dates of the tutoring activities, sessions and activities to be carried out, according to the needs of each student, development of the school trajectory for each one, filling out of evaluation forms of the tutorship; in addition, each session must be filled out an attendance form and must be signed by the tutored student and validated by the person in charge of tutoring of the degree, this format has a space to record the time dedicated to each student

and the tutorial action developed must be specified. At the end of the semester, the total number of hours dedicated to the tutoring program must be reported, for this reason each time a person is attended, it is requested that they write down their information and sign the attendance form, which is complicated when attending to students in crisis, where the priority is to attend them and the filling of formats goes to a second level, besides, it is very uncomfortable for the tutor to ask the student to fill out a tutorial format in the middle of an emotional crisis.

Each semester, two groups of new students are received in the educational program Degree in Gerontology, this time there were 52 in total. From the induction course they are made aware of the entire offer that the institution has at their service, among them they are told about the tutoring program and they are informed that they will be introduced to their tutor. At another time, the tutor is presented to the groups he will be in charge of; the next meeting is when the tutor asks them to come to the first tutorial session, there, it is presented the tutorial action plan that will be taken in the semester, the number of sessions is specified, days and times are scheduled; when the teacher who teaches them is also their tutor, there is a certain "control" and it can be guaranteed to a certain extent that the students will attend the planned activities.

When the biannual mentoring action plan is presented, it has been observed that about 90% have interest in the economic benefit or in kind, they have as a priority to know what they can receive, if there is no such stimulus, then they perceive it as an "additional burden" to the academic work and often decide that they are not willing to "spend" their time, when they can take advantage of it to obtain better grades in the learning units that they are studying. The above represents a serious problem perceived by the tutors and discussed in the national forums of tutoring: the lack of interest of the tutored ones; in this scenario, the following questions arise: How to get the attention of the student? What is the strategy that can be applied, to guarantee the interest of the student during his passage through the degree? The work carried out by the tutors is complicated, when there is a chain of pressures: the pressure of the person in charge of tutoring in the educational program, and that person, in turn, has the pressure of the institutional head of tutoring; all in the eagerness to reach and maintain the indicators.

With the intention of guaranteeing a certain level of control in the tutored, a teacher who gives them classes is assigned (as far as possible), which has given a better result, making the new student to complete the sessions of tutoring, even if it is outside of class schedules; on the other hand, in the students of advanced levels there is total disinterest in attending tutoring sessions outside of class hours, that is, they condition their participation in the sessions and request that they be carried out within the hours established in the tutor's class, which impacts on the dedication to the academic subjects of the scheduled session, according to the contents of the learning unit. But in what other way can a tutor guarantee that the tutored student attends the sessions? Above all, when a complete report must be submitted at the end of the semester that includes different formats such as: attendance lists for each session and the duration of each one of these, as well as the activity carried out, in addition to the academic trajectories of all the tutored.

### **Challenges of the mentoring program**

#### **Alejandra Romo (2011) expresses that**

In the field of its practice, it is considered essential that those responsible for its exercise understand the need to place tutoring and its true potential in the institutional context, which guarantees a favorable impact on the student's performance, once a student is assured greater knowledge of this one. For this, it is required a different organization around mentoring, as well as promoting its full institutionalization, which in no way aims to attribute a hierarchy as the only way to improve the quality of the teaching-learning process. Part of the institutional transformation implies that mentoring is integrated into other actions to, as a whole, achieve the required improvements. (Romo, A. 2011: p.8)

The main challenge in the mentoring program is to insert into the university life the culture of prevention, that is to say that the student perceives that it is a high priority that their mental health is the first step they must have and recognize that if they have emotional difficulties derived from family and social problems, that have not been solved or that do not have any means of emotional protection, it will be extremely complicated that they manage to concentrate on the academic content of the learning units that make up their academic load in each semester. The student must appropriate the program of tutoring, they need to perceive that emotional intelligence is an important part that complements their emotional stability and gives them security to satisfactorily attend their academic training, that is, that they perceive that the tutoring program is useful and that there can access psychological care services and academic support. In this sense, the ITP must carry out a serious and objective evaluation of the results

obtained, that there is certainty that we are on the right track, that there really is a vision and security in the activities that are carried out.

Often you hear the speech that students must decide, that they cannot be forced, even less in a tutoring program, but do the students have a maturity both emotional and academic? Do they really have the maturity to decide what is best for them according to their life plan? It is important to conduct a study that validates the official argument of flexibility in the decision, the free will it's certainly important, it is also a reality that when something is imposed causes annoyance, consensus is important, that's why it is suggested that a sensitization be made to students, so they understand the dimensions of tutoring, allow them to identify the benefits derived from it and especially the positive impact on their personal and academic life. Within the framework of flexibility, in almost 90% of educational programs an event called the tutorial fair is held, which consists of placing the names of the tutors and each student writes their name on the tutor's table they want, selecting their tutor for that semester. The problem here is that perhaps the selected tutor does not give classes to those students or maybe they do not coincide in time or space, causing the tutor to have serious difficulties obtaining his/her semiannual record as tutor, because they will not attend the tutoring sessions or the filling of the assessment formats of tutoring, or their academic career. For this reason in gerontology the event of the tutoring fair is not held, it is assigned to the tutor according to the group to whom he/she teaches during the semester, guaranteeing that the activities of the tutorial action are fulfilled. However, there are also some situations such as the fact that the tutored students ask that the tutoring activities take place within the class schedule, under the argument that they do not have another time to do it, the part-time and subject teachers find it very convenient because they do not have to come at other times, allowing them to fulfill the tutoring activities. Tutoring within the class session is a mistake, because it reduces the time allocated to the development of the thematic contents of the learning unit that is taught to the group.

When making an empirical observation a society is perceived composed of dysfunctional families, the lack of jobs in the country results in economic problems in families. How does the mentoring program consider this social problem? It is important that the tutoring program responds to students, they seek support and that is what universities and institutions of higher education should grant. The budget reduction that exists in the country is a reality; currently students receive support of copies and loan of laptops, to those who enroll in the intercultural program, the support they receive in tutoring is support for their mental health through of the area of psychology of the Faculty of Humanities and the state dependencies linked with addictions and mental health.

Alejandra Romo (2011) expresses one of the main needs that must be taken into consideration in the tutoring programs that are developed in HEI:

A valuable image can be seen in the fact that we assume that we live in the midst of a "new university culture", in which changes are needed to maintain necessary practices such as quality and evaluation, relevance, use of the computing, effective strategic management and social accountability. Romo, A. (2011: p.15)

It is important to start and continue the subject of the evaluation of the tutoring program, in order to advance in the quality, in this sense the western region of the ANUIES published a document that analyzes the impact of tutoring in the institutions that make up this region and express that:

The challenge is to have an academic tutoring according to reality, which encourages the reduction of the referred rates and at the same time improve the quality of undergraduate training by strengthening the integral education that the Institutional Development Program (IDP) has proposed for several periods and that is committed to provide, considered again in the IDP vision 2030. (Rosas and Ramirez 2013, page 21)

It is evident that the tutoring is here to stay, that it should be renewed and focus on the challenges of the year 2030 to maintain its validity.

### **Methodology:-**

The study was carried out with a population of 96 subjects of study, of the Degree in Gerontology. It has a quantitative approach, with descriptive scope and a non-experimental design. The research hypothesis is: The tutoring program has a positive impact on the tutorates of the Bachelor of Gerontology, 85% (112 tutored students) show interest in the same ITP (Institutional Tutoring Program).

An instrument of own creation was applied, and its called: Perception that the tutored has of the institutional Program of tutoring, integrated by ten items of multiple choice, of which the first three are of dichotomous answer, from 4 to 9 you have three answer options: 1 = always, 2 = sometimes, 3 = never. The number 10 is open, in which

the tutored is asked to write their opinion about the tutoring program, according to their experience. (Look at annex 1)

### Results:-

The hypothesis is accepted, because a 100% (96) of the tutored ones answered that they know that there is a tutoring program in their degree (item 1), 91% (87) affirmed that they knew their tutor (item 2), 86.5% (83) stated that the tutor appeared at the beginning of the semester and informed them of their tutorial planning (item 3), 57% (55) sometimes goes to the tutor when they have a problem (item 4), 71% (69) always attend the tutorial sessions (item 5), 44.8% (43) consider that the tutoring always helps them to improve their academic and personal condition, and 47.9% (46), consider that tutoring sometimes helps to confront a problem (Item 6), 37.5% (36) never assists with their tutor to analyze scholarship options (Item 7), 41.6% (40) sometimes do it; 76% (73) states that tutoring is important as an accompaniment in transit at the university, 55.2% (53) states that tutoring is important in improving their academic training. In item 10, only 12.5% (12) responded negatively.

### Conclusions:-

1. Students perceive the importance of tutoring, but it can be strengthened with the commitment of the Tutors to fulfill the activities of their function.
2. The tutored students know about the tutoring program, however, they need to be aware of the program, which is important so they can measure the benefits derived from the ITP.
3. There is no mechanism that obliges the tutored students to attend the tutoring activities; they decide how they organize their time and how important it is for them. They show interest only in what will give them some kind of economic benefit or in kind.

### Recommendations

1. Follow up the tutors to verify that they design their tutoring plan, present it to their students and carry out the actions planned in the document.
2. Include a mechanism that strengthens students' sense of responsibility towards the tutoring program; It is suggested that the Tutor give a kind of "release" from the tutored student so that he/she can register for the next semester.
3. Analyze options to support the tutored students in a tangible way, with the intention that they feel there is a real benefit of the tutoring program.
4. Avoid excess flexibility in students; a serious awareness-raising work must be done so that students understand the dimension of the tutoring program and the benefits that can be obtained from it.

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**Appendix**

Perception of the tutored students of the Institutional Tutoring Program

**Grade and group:**

**Gender: Age:**

**Instructions:**

Ten items are presented, of which the first three are of dichotomous response, from 4 to 9 read the question and write the number that identifies your action: 1 = always 2 = sometimes 3 = never. The number 10 is open, write your opinion about the tutoring program, according to your experience.

ÍTEM	VALUE
1. Are you aware that there is a tutoring program in your degree? no	1= yes 2=
2. Do you know your tutor? no	1= yes 2=
3. Did your tutor present to you, at the beginning of the semester, the planning of the tutorial action? 1= yes 2= no	
4. When you have a problematic situation, related to academic, familiar or personal aspects, do you go with your tutor to give you support?	
5. How often do you attend the tutoring sessions that your tutor calls?	
6. Do tutoring sessions help you better cope with academic and personal matters?	
7. When you are interested in applying for a scholarship, do you go with your tutor?	
8. Tutoring is important in your accompaniment during your higher education.	
9. The tutoring program has been an important support in the improvement of your academic training.	
10. How do you perceive tutoring?	