UNIVERSITY TEACHING, ITS PRACTICES FROM THE STUDENTS´ POINT OF VIEW

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Abstract

The development of all human knowledge depends on its transmission, transference and assimilation, in order to manage the resolution of problems which arise from tasks. The teaching staff can only tackle this action, since they are the ones to facilitate or transfer experience and cognitions to the students during some extent of their educational trajectory.

In this sense, since human nature is involved in the activity of teaching. This latter is capable of perfection but only through a permanent process of revision of identified imperfections if it is intended to drive a teaching staff, an educational institution or an education system to a higher quality state.

This paper focuses in the identification of better teaching practices in the higher education level. The study started with the application of a questionnaire to know the students´ opinion at the end of the semester, and then a follow-up was implemented upon those professors who obtained the minimum and maximum scores.

The study was conducted in a state university in Mexico and the purpose was to identify the teaching staff´s best practices, according to the students´ opinion.

The research process was divided in four stages. It included the analysis of evaluations of the teaching staff´s practices according to students´ opinion during four consecutive school periods, to identify the worst and best evaluated professors.

1 Interview applied to the teaching staff evaluated with the highest scores.
2 Interview applied to the teaching staff evaluated with the lowest scores.
3 Characterization of teaching practices.

Interviews were of a qualitative type, which intended to generate the opportunity to understand the teaching staff´s own world as they described it in their own words (14).

This type of resource can be considered as standardized and no-programmed interviews, whose characteristic is to standardize the meaning of the questions, as they become familiar to all interviewed subjects. In this virtue, familiarization to the questionnaire is possible through previous studies on selected subjects, as well as the appropriate selection of the interviewers (10).

Finally, a semantic net was realized by putting together a series of categories identified in the general interview.

The semantic diagram allowed the conformation of categories associations found the interviewed subjects´ discourse. Thus, eleven associations were identified which were taken as descriptors that also were linked to other categories previously found in the general interview.

The descriptors were as follows: professional formation, didactic planning, teaching and learning strategies, didactic resources and materials, evaluation process, teaching practice feedback, interaction with students, interaction with other academics, best teaching practices, achievement of teaching practices and updating courses for teachers.

Some of the results show that teaching staff evaluation instruments imply the existence of students´ subjective appreciation when evaluating their own teachers. Nevertheless, they also imply the existence of certain objectivity, since the interviewed subjects should have obtained similar scores during two consecutive years.
They also show procedures for the establishment of criteria, based on the meticulous analysis of the teaching practices, to conform indicators that facilitate the process of standardization of the best practices.

Keywords: University teaching practices, teaching staff evaluation, excellent teaching staff.

1 INTRODUCTION

At present, there are still few studies that provide substantial information on the teaching practices of faculty in Latin America. Therefore, it should be emphasized that this study has taken as reference subjects educational actors at the Autonomous University of Baja California (UABC), Higher Education Institution (HEI), public financing as an autonomous, where academics are serve as faculty.

There are various statements or assumptions about the ideal teacher, including regulations regarding both his work as a reflection on his being. Done that requires rethinking the essence of “teacher” requirements, descriptions, relationships, values, concepts and connotations of this being derived. The UABC, aware of this requirement, has developed an educational model that, far from being a constraint, an integrated framework that promotes the teaching, so that he, in full possession of their freedom and intelligence, build a practical system culminating in the formation of the professional society needs.

Teaching is a melting pot of factors that when combined final product is both learning from the teacher, as the part of the learner. However, it must be admitted, that in either direction is exercised a high or low impact on the function or role played by these two agents.

In this sense, the teaching-learning relationship is directly proportional, ie the improvement in the quality of teaching necessarily implies an improvement in the quality of learning, whereas a decrease in the quality of the relationship involves a decrease in the quality of the other.

From this perspective one perceives the need to identify within the practice of professional education, for truly good teaching practices, what are the terms of comparison that we can differentiate between the elements that make?, How many and what considered best practices, how these factors have been studied determinants of teaching?, and what can be concluded by analyzing the results obtained by the analysis.

Therefore, it is necessary to explain the meaning of terms such as teaching, practice, quality assessment, questionnaire, teacher, student, teaching, learning, university, criteria, standards, and other terms necessary to an understanding of this study.

The UABC, in their quest for academic improvement, requires the identification of those fundamental practices within the structure of the educational phenomenon, same that give meaning to the binomial of the teaching - learning differentiating subjects because of their primary role as agents, is dedicated to teaching if teaching and learner if its main action is learning.

Therefore, given the need to find variables for understanding a teacher’s ideal profile study it became necessary to provide those elements that identify, first, to the best academics and secondly, to characterize them in about their teaching practices, which could serve as a reference in the creation of knowledge to find innovative strategies to address educational problems.

For several years, various situations forced the Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) to perform both approximate studies, as research on good practices, which has produced reflections, statements (3), and even codes for action. The proposed initiatives at both national and international express concern about improving their own standards in terms of training, training, evaluation and monitoring of human resources at their disposal, it follows the enable academic staff to support both the learning process of the students, as the consolidation of the educational model chosen (17).

HEIs have undergone many changes, caused by a globalized environment, in which field, assessing the ability to perform specific tasks. This has led these institutions direct their gaze to the student-centered teaching and learning based on competencies, based primarily on new approaches to teaching and learning, most notably constructivism, whose proficiency levels are based on Marzano's taxonomy (13).

Can be added to this search for quality, productive sector pressure to obtain a more skilled workforce, more domain knowledge.
As a result, there is growing interest in the evaluation process of the educational phenomenon, mainly in relation to student learning, since, by their assessment, you get substantial information about the practices of excellence in institutions.

While the various assessment activities, you gather important information regarding the practice of teachers, we need to find those elements that distinguish their good practices, taking into account the wide range of the most effective actions taken by them and the requirements and conditions that these same teachers established to facilitate learning.

Thus, it is possible to develop, implement and standards to improve teaching practices by establishing institutional standards. Following this line of thought, one can expect that this process enables the simplification and unification models in practice in order to transfer them or transpose them in precise language to avoid errors.

Necessarily, one can say that the identification of best practices, including practices exist, these entities might be called moral philosophy declared as classical or social construction of reality according to the socio-constructivism, as operating system or discursive practices linked to fields, or as patterns of teacher-student interaction.

2 METHODOLOGY

2.1 Definition of Terms

In any investigation necessary to make a definition of terms, although not always ask the real definition or etymology, that year is considered relevant, even if only enunciate the operational definition. In this case it must be said that the concept of practice is defined as a set of processes that transform a reality in another, as a result of the interaction between the functional dimensions, intellectual, affective, normative and axiological, in which situations are highlighted, subjects and processes (3). That is, by practical means, those processes that arise from the activity performed by someone in a particular context to achieve a goal. Now if the practice does not provide differentiation between other distinctions than nominal, one cannot speak of good practice. However, if possible rank with respect to each other, then it is plausible that some are better. It is necessary to establish certain standards and guidelines that allow this characterization to carry out such work, and the valuation underlying the hierarchical ordering.

2.2 Best Practices

Those that meet the following criteria:

- Are performed in an organized as part of a system of interactions.
- They are consistent with the model, approach or theory behind.
- A group of people called the external evaluators preference values or qualifies as the best based on clear guidelines that define the notes or items that must be weighed in each, being on an equal footing and there enough of them.
- It promotes its widespread use, to improve system development and process (3), while that can be extrapolated in different contexts, situations, individuals or processes, in part or in total, getting the same result, achieving the desired goal.
- There is documented evidence of its implementation.
- Can be evaluated analytically and objectively each of its elements or the entirety thereof.
- It can easily derive the results of its instrumentation.
- Their comparative analysis of the results show a positive trend or improvement is largely caused by the practice in question.

2.3 Teaching

The word "teaching" is associated with thought and opinion, drive or make explicit the knowledge of others and can make distinctions concerning the term used synonymously. He uses the term to designate Educator who is dedicated to teaching children, while Andragogo called the professional who deals with educating adults, BA (Licenciat) who has title or license to practice, Master (magister)
who has the skill, expertise and mastery in the art of instruction, Doctor (Doctor) that is devoted to thinking, the expert, the wise teacher, (teacher) who speaks in public admit something, which gives the face for what he says or teaches others, who admits he is dedicated to teaching or exercise science or art; Professor, who has the highest ability to master or teacher, who speaks with the property and sufficiency of which dominates a topic, also designates who leads a group of students or a group of teachers with less experience or rank; Scholar, which belongs to a company established by public authority whose eminent work of a professional nature, is oriented into practice, dissemination or science education, the arts, humanities or technique. One must distinguish the academic staff who is not, in any educational institution, the latter is called administrative. There are in fact, to discern this area, some interesting proposals that should be considered. However, the support is de facto again.

2.4 The academic staff

In this sense, we can comment that while the proposal must support the separation between academic and administrative staff, the division is not exclusive, or exclusive. Academic staff can and must fulfill management functions themselves, but it is necessary to distinguish those that fall within each subject because of the category or level of participation of each one in the same institutional system. The functions include both academic staff teaching, research and management, and the preservation and dissemination of culture. However, because of the quality of academic excellence, a function should be prioritized, according to the immediate work area.

Management is primarily a function that performs the management, teaching or facilitating learning itself is a work of the teaching, creating or deepening theories, laws, models and experiments, it is essential as a function of the researcher, growth monitoring student and academic staff is an essential part of the mentor and advisor while, dissemination and preservation of culture is itself the promoter or institution link between person and society.

However, for the sake of a comprehensive model, the Autonomous University of Baja California, defines an academic practice that must consider the functions of research, advocacy and mentoring, as well as linking and teaching (17).

3 PROCESS

3.1 Approaches and study approaches of university education

There are different perspectives that must be considered against the context implying, knowledge, being and acting in Fig teacher: Teacher reflection about himself, or, as a member of a group (as members of their collegiate pairs that share knowledge, practices, norms, values and common competencies); feedback from their employers (managers and institutions), users (students) of consumers who use the teaching service (sector), from those involved directly or indirectly teaching service payments (social sector, family), who set standards or teaching service laws (Ministries, Departments, etc.), and of course, the theoretical reflection and teaching experts. However, these reflections, not base an evaluation model of teaching practice, but that requires a comprehensive approach. The evaluation of teachers by the graduates and their employers after their first years as professionals, ensure that those doing the assessments, base their perceptions based learning that has been tested in real life.

However, in educational institutions still favors the development of evaluation questionnaires by students who are enrolled or are about to finish a learning unit, module or subject. However, one must remember that it is necessary that a good analysis of teaching practice, requires adequate sustenance in triangulation between tests student achievement, a differentiated assessment (management of the teacher, from teacher to teacher and student teacher), an exploration of contextual teaching and feedback from graduates and reports linking the productive sector. It is therefore necessary to review some of the theory about teaching practices, the recommendations of the experts, and the design of the instruments developed to assess teacher performance.

There are several proposals on improving the quality of university teaching, as explained by some studies researchers and experts in the field, mainly in Europe, and that "the successive statements of Bologna, 1999, Prague (2001), Graz (2003) and Berlin (2003) have picked as one of the basic reference points of convergence towards a European Higher Education Area (EHEA), "(3). In this sense, the classical theory they are based on some evaluation tools, as cited by Moon and Torquemada, propose combining three strategies (4): "Inferring reagents logical analysis of the
components of teacher effectiveness, taking into account feedback from teachers and students, and evaluation purposes. Perform empirical analysis by using statistical techniques such as factor analysis, multitrait-multimethod designs and structural equation modeling. Basing assessment tools in educational theories (Marsh and Dunkin, 1997). "For now, the development of codes supported by quality standards like ISO 9001 based proposals, UNE 66931, the guide of the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA), criteria, indicators and guidelines of the National Quality Assessment (ANECA) point and the de facto establishment of a nascent regulations in this area, for those wishing to develop a code according to this model, such as the University of Oviedo (19).

3.2 Method

Some authors consider that "one of the difficulties in the task of teaching evaluation lies in the acknowledgment of the multidimensionality and the controversy of what are the most appropriate indicators of teacher performance" (6). However, if done documentary tracking studies have been made about what, therefore, students, teachers, managers, specialists and institutions, and society in general considered the best teaching practices, you can get a viable alternative to this methodological drawback. In general, the work of researchers, support the proposal based on a historical, ontological and logical to develop the evaluation, it should be made explicit in matrices or schemes based on understandable.

Currently, one can identify different models to evaluate teacher performance, either by reference or, as the creator of the evaluation. One such model is the "evaluation based on student opinion", where through a survey or interview are poured teacher qualifications, the evaluation model through pairs in which his colleagues offer a trial based on the observation of the teacher during class, review of documents prepared by the teacher as exams or exercises, or by collecting the opinions of students, as well as many other evaluative models.

This research is considered descriptive, not correspond to the experimental design, considered and systematic empirical research where the researcher does not directly control the independent variables because their manifestations have already occurred or cannot be manipulated. In this case, make inferences about the relationships between variables, but there is no direct intervention on the simultaneous variation of the independent and dependent variables. Therefore, it is classified in the transactional or cross-subtype, since it is data collected at one time or only time, in order to describe the variables referred to in identifying best practices for analyzing their interrelation and incidence at a given time. It should be emphasized that the subcategory that will be framed transeccional called descriptive because the objective is to locate, categorize and provide a view of the context that fosters the best teaching practices, its elements and its emulation capability and transposition.

Therefore, the procedure consists in identifying positive or considered good practice to determine the best and identifying the subjects which make possible, in order to describe the type of praxis who have exercised, in order to establish common elements including establishing criteria for implementation and facilitate emulation, transposition at different levels and contexts, as well as standardization. This study is purely descriptive, the same can be said of their assumptions. The study was guided by qualitative methodology because it focuses on the understanding of best practices, the definition and identification, not trying to control the variables, but if you discover, describe such a level that facilitates the implementation analysis in different contexts with different subjects. This is possible inferring from the data that makes it possible for a considered good practice from its own context.

3.3 Phases

The process for conducting this study was divided into four main phases:

- Analysis of evaluations of teachers by students for four consecutive school years to identify the best and worst rated.
- Interview teachers with higher scores on student evaluations.
- Interview teachers with lower scores on student evaluations.
- Characterization of teaching practices.
3.3.1 Phase I: Analysis of teacher evaluations by students for four consecutive school years to identify the best and worst rated.

Study Subjects

The total number of teachers during the 2009-2010 school year was 4,490 according to figures from the State Educational System of Baja California, as expressed in the format that UABC 911.

All teachers were evaluated for a total of about 43,461 students. According to this information it was decided that the sample should be non-probabilistic, it is what allows focus research on a predefined subject. In this case, it was suggested sampling-type subject, since the purpose of the study and its characteristics demanded richness, depth and quality of information. It seemed appropriate then set as a criterion, conducting an interview with the best evaluated six teachers and two with the lowest scores for two or more consecutive school years. It is important to note that, because the survey based on the opinions of students is census both for the evaluation, and the evaluators, to avoid the risk of bias. The inclusion-exclusion criteria is sufficient, therefore positioning serves no arbitrary questions, but regulated.

Teachers who were evaluated correspond to all who taught at the UABC during certain cycles, in addition to complying with the requirement to have been located in the top six positions and the two lowest. The identification of the subjects, their characteristics and practices and factors associated with them, were obtained by the Teacher Evaluation System (SED) of the UABC, which, based on the framework of "data collection from a Students opinion survey ", integrates information the student each semester issues regarding the performance of the teachers who have taught the course. This system is based mainly on two instruments to collect data: 1) The questionnaire for collecting relevant data to assess the theoretical, and 2) The questionnaire for collecting data relevant to assessing the practical classes.

These instruments are self-managing, are answered and an automated online directly by students, without any help. The reagents are under the scheme of multiple choice with a final section which also may submit comments in free format. The rationale for using this questionnaire, it is because it has a database that records which have characteristics of excellent teachers.

3.3.2 Second phase: Interview teachers with higher scores on student evaluations (Teachers 1-6).

In this second phase of the study were interviewed six teachers with the highest scores in the Teacher Evaluation System of UABC, two teachers of economic areas - administrative, two teachers of the humanities, and two teachers in the areas of health sciences. The interviews were conducted from a qualitative approach to understand the worldview of the teachers, the connotations and denotations of his own work, as well as speeches about "their world, as they are described in their own words" (14). This type of study can be performed with greater depth, through so-called standardized interviews unscheduled same, have as main feature, the standardization of the connotations and meanings of the questions so that the questions are more familiar to respondents; made to through a preliminary study of selected teachers, and a selection of interviewers (10).

3.3.3 Third phase: Interview teachers with lower scores on student evaluations (DEB1 And DEB2).

This phase was inserted at a later stage to conduct initial and protocol development, since, it was considered appropriate to identify teaching practices of teachers with lower scores obtained in the Teacher Evaluation System of UABC, with order to obtain elements of comparison and identify successful practices, in order to replace them with more appropriate to the model of university education. It included a description and analysis of the practices taught by these teachers to specifically identify those interventions considered ineffective in teaching. A goal for this phase include deficiencies were found that could be remedied by a subsequent implementation of teacher improvement programs, complemented by the results of best teaching practices.

3.3.4 Fourth phase: Characterization of teaching practices.

Finally he sought to build a semantic network from the number of specific categories contained in the overall structure of the interview, so that the analysis of the speeches of the teachers interviewed, facilitated the construction of a semantic network.
Semantic diagram, description and dimensions: A semantic diagram is considered as a graphical representation in the form of interconnected nodes and arcs are meant to represent knowledge. Semantic networks are also named as diagrams of concepts or conceptual graphs. The idea is to represent conceptual information in chart form (18). The mechanism of the functioning of semantic diagram is the concept association (9). Through semantic diagram associations could be found in the speech of the teachers interviewed, constituted eleven dimensions related to teaching practice, which shaped 11 descriptors to previously established categories in the interview.

These descriptors were: professional training, educational planning, teaching and learning strategies, resources and teaching materials, assessment process, feedback of teaching practice, interaction with students, academic interaction, good teaching practice, improvement in teaching and assisting refresher courses, which eventually became 11 dimensions of teaching practice addressed in this study.

4 RESULTS

The results associated with each descriptor, are wide, so in this paper we present a synthesis of the same, same as presented below:

In the training area, a paradox exists today in which is immersed the university teaching, first the Higher Education Institution (HEI) have become much more open and inclusive: in their students, in the disciplines and academic activities, and the other side of the culture that surrounds the college professor becomes more hierarchical and restrictive. For example, when talking about professionalism, refers to the practice of teaching strongly influenced by the path of life.

To Monica Feixas (7), professional development of teachers does not follow a sustained, since in this case is a highly individual development, so it is not possible to conceive of a totally homogeneous faculty, but there are different levels of maturity personal and professional. Thus we find that in the specific case before us, the teachers interviewed four have doctoral studies and two Masters. In the case of two teachers with lower scores, both have a background in medicine complemented with a specialty.

In educational planning can be understood as a commitment to learning the meanings of the future professional and personal development with the potential of intelligence based on the requirements of a sociopolitical context. Situations that are teachers, are spacious and open, with sense and control (16). For teachers with low assessments, planning is useless and explain this condition with the circumstances of the subject defined as "one hundred percent practical."

Zarzar (2000), mentions that the teacher should have five basic skills for practice: Clearly define learning objectives, designing the work plan of a school year and write the program for students; Develop the frame in the first sessions, design and implement learning activities and learning assessment Integrate and coordinate work teams and learning groups. If you retake those five skills described to analyze the practices of teachers with the lowest scores in the evaluation system, you will see that these teachers do not have a structured work plan. In addition, these teachers do not receive a detailed plan of the course by the academic coordinator to define concretely learning units that students must achieve the course.

As for learning teaching strategies, it is understood as such, the reflexive use of procedures that are used for a specific task, is more than the knowledge and use of techniques for solving problems, in that it always used, knowingly and intentionally, with an objective related to learning. They can be considered as a set of activities, techniques and media that are planned according to the needs of students, the objectives sought and the nature of the courses, in order to achieve greater effectiveness in the learning process. The DEB state the following: DEB1 "is assigned one or two patients depending on the size of the groups can review a patient can review all or 6 or 7 patients in class, depends on what you want to teach the history section clinic."

In terms of resources and materials, is considered as mediators between student members and the content to be learned, pedagogically directing the teaching-learning process, these elements allow mediators to establish a dialogue with the student teaching; materials currently
5 CONCLUSIONS

This paper has attempted to identify teaching practices from what Philippe Perrenoud (27) calls "the real work", or a series of skills required by a group of teachers to cope and adapt to their professional lives. We will have to first acknowledge that many of the resources we have university professors are a product of practice, this is the accumulation of "wisdom of experience" or the incorporation of new schemes that are changing in terms of Bourdieu one teacher habitus (16).

The results indicate that teacher evaluation instruments involve one hand, the subjectivity of the assessment of students with respect to their own teacher, but also ensure that there is some objectivity, since the subjects considered, should have similar scores obtained during two consecutive years. In this sense we can say that there should be consistency between regulatory framework, theoretical, methodological and instrumental, in order to constitute a real framework. You can set procedures to establish criteria, whose foundation proceed thorough analysis of teaching practice, in order to form indicators to facilitate the process of standardization of best practices. This study leaves open questions that by their nature cannot attend, as in the case of correlations and other practices, the explanation of the origin and purpose of best teaching practices, it simply presents the state of the art. It is therefore considered necessary to strengthen both the referential framework, methods and designs for future studies of the same item, and an explanation of factors associated with the best teaching practices. There remain, deepening the positive law on university autonomy, academic freedom, teacher evaluation, and economic and social reinforcement that entails. It would be extremely interesting topics including between developing assessments, the presence of a line with the same regulations to improve and ensure the absence of bias or the presence of conditioning elements in the realization or enforcement of, and the manipulation results for purposes other than the evaluation. Finally, is expected to be generated from the analysis constructs, theories and recommendations for the transfer of "best teaching practices" in this institution, as you see fit.

REFERENCES


