

Perceived Performance on Tutors during Process of Certification in Four Teacher Training Institutions in Durango

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Abstract

Higher Education Institutions (HEI) currently face a major issue: low levels of certification and thus the terminal efficiency. The present research emerged on the need to know what the perceived performance of tutors on postgraduate levels during the certification process in four teacher training institutions in the State of Durango. The research has a quantitative approach. This work is presented both as descriptive and explanatory. The methodology used is survey, which was used as a technique and an instrument. Variables were considered to building up 177 items, with an Alpha Cronbach reliability = .93. A total of 85 students were surveyed, who are the total of students on process to obtain the MA degree on Education in the four institutions where the research was conducted. These institutions also hold the Institutional Tutoring Program (ITP). Some common traits on tutors were found, which may strengthen or weaken the process of certification; also, some factors that make certification difficult.

Keywords: Tutoring, tutor, certification, teacher training institution, academic, development

Introduction:

The present research aims to identify the performance on tutors during the process of certification on postgraduate level in four teacher training institutions in the state of Durango.

From the main objective, three specific sub objectives were derived:

- a) To describe the characterization of the participants in the research.
- b) To identify the common key traits on tutors which Foster the process of certification.
- c) To know the common traits on tutors which weaken the process of certification.

The institutions that participated were: Centro de Actualización del Magisterio, la Universidad Pedagógica de Durango, la Benemérita y Centenaria Escuela del Estado de Durango y la Escuela Normal Rural "J. Guadalupe Aguilera". It is imperative to state that these three institutions offer the MA degree by means of a thesis; besides, these institutions operate under the ITP.

First of all, this research is relevant because there is little research based on the tutors' performance and how this impacts on the process of students' certification in these teacher training institutions in Durango.

Secondly, this research underlines the awareness on the different problems which impact on the quality on these HEI which offer post graduate studies either in public or private. It also highlights the low levels in certification and thus the terminal efficiency. This research does not make emphasis on the terminal efficiency, but on the intentions of certification students have.

Thirdly, the results and final outcome this research found helps to identify the different factors that are either blocking or favoring the performance on tutors during the certification process.

Finally, based on these given factors which are blocking or favoring the certification process, after the analysis, a proposal will be possible to suggest suiting the tutors in the three teacher training institutions in the state of Durango.

Postgraduate Tutoring

Tutoring has a different approach from that in bachelor's degree. Postgraduate Tutoring emphasizes on the process oriented to the fundamentals, designing and execution of a research, in other words, on the generation of new knowledge (Martínez, Laguna, García, Vásquez & Rodríguez, 2005).

A postgraduate tutor fosters the interaction with the one being tutored and highlights the importance of the problems and questions on his surroundings; research problem analysis is conceived as a process of questioning and strategies to build up the new knowledge, from the previous knowledge and the active participation of the student. This way, tutoring supports the approaching of real problems and allows the one being tutored be the responsible of his own learning. (Martínez et al., 2005).

Current State of Knowledge

Experience has shown that after completing their studies, many students do not graduate immediately, but they let years go by. Some do not complete the process of the thesis, leaving behind the research that once was started; consequently, they do not go through the process to present their thesis and do not obtain the MA certification. Jaik, "states that the answers or approaches to the roots which originate the phenomenon are endless". (2013 p.40)

Postgraduate studies are on the rise bringing along several serious concerns to national level; among those are: quality, relevance and terminal efficiency. Terminal efficiency reflects the quality in education and it is an indicator to evaluate the functioning and goals reached by an educational institute.

Postgraduate studies in Mexico face a chronic problem related to terminal efficiency. Most recent data indicate these levels are around 30% (Jaik, Guzmán & Ortega, 2010) as cited in (Navarro M, Jaik A. & Barraza A., 2010).

According to a recent research report at Centro de Actualización del Magisterio in Durango, students who graduated between 2016 and 2011 only 41% took tutoring. It is less than the half who concluded. These students where starting their thesis; 59% of those graduate students did not attend therefore were not able to obtain their certification. (Espinoza, 2013).

García Herrera (s.f.) conducts a research named "terminal efficiency in postgraduate studies oriented to researching", and states that among the factor related to the terminal efficiency are the lack of research formation and the difference on programs and curricula. Kala (2003) and Piña and Pontón (1997) as cited in (Jaik, 2013) stated that some of the causes are: a) variety of subjects with a lack of expert tutor son the given subject; b) a scarcity of tradition to complete a thesis during the postgraduate studies. Similarly Lopez Villegas (cited in Sánchez and Arredondo, 2001) who conducted a research with the terminal efficiency concludes there is a direct relationship in the lack a systematized research work, cited in (Jaik, et al. 2013).

This research aims at identifying the performance of tutors during the certification process, so it turns out to be essential to creating new researchers; according to Cruz, Cruz Barriga & Abreu-Hernández (2010) it is a great potential to revive knowledge, integrate collaborative networking, innovation and knowledge transfer. These authors suggest tutors do not have it easy, for they lack proper instrument to guide their performance; thus their performance is according to their beliefs and own criteria, lacking a continuous reflection as trainers.

It is stated that the richness and cultural capital they possess related to their academic staff in sciences humanities and arts, is manifested in the tutoring system.

Postgraduate tutor must fulfill the mission to training new generations, to train them to conduct relevant research, high quality research with a social commitment, which contributes to the solution to national problems and at the same time strengthen the educative system at all levels. (Martínez, Laguna, García, Vásquez, & Rodríguez, 2005).

Methodological Design

The research was conducted with a qualitative approach, this study is both descriptive and explanatory. The methodology used is the survey. A questionnaire was used as the technique and an instrument. It is build up to have 8 complex variables, which derived up to 158 simple variables to measure the trend with values from 0 to 10 where 0 is the lack of value and the

10 is the highest value to a given question. There are a total of 177 items, nominal variables are 19 and they allow to demonstrate the characteristics of the subjects who were studied.

The questionnaire was revised under these three aspects: content validity by means of expert judgments; reliability with three pilot tests, obtaining a .93 value in Alpha Cronbach; and objectivity, adding questions to pilot tests. The population subject to study was the total of students in process of certification (85), data and analysis of data was made with the SPSS 15 software.

In this article, the complex variable to be analyzed is "The tutor", and it is composed of 33 questions. (Table 1).

Results and Discussion

Characterization of the participants

The following is the characterization of the participants which was elaborated through a descriptive study. Based on the questionnaire answers applied to the students, the following profile is understood: a population where most of them are women (61%); a high percentage of the interviewed are married (55%), although those single are (44%) and those with any family legal arrangement (free union 2% and divorced 2%); the predominant age is 39 years, with a slight standard variation of 10.47, the youngest student was 23 years old and the oldest 63 years old.

As for labor status, 96% work for an educational institute (84% public sector and 14% private sector); therefore, they are students who not only study but also work, most of them (84%) does not have a study scholarship (only 14% stated to have one). From those scholarships 6% are given by Durango Secretary of State Education (SEED) and 4% by Secretary of Public Education (SEP), 2% by the National Union (SNTE) and a final 4% by other institution not specified. Some interviewees are economical supported by their parents (14%) and 5% are supported by their work companies. In conclusion most of the students pay their own postgraduate studies.

It is important to highlight that half of the interviewees are school teachers: 44% elementary level, 11% kindergarten, 11% high school, 4% remote secondary, 1% kindergarten supervision, 2% pedagogical technical adviser, 1% maternal and 3% did not specify.

The postgraduate studies of the four institutions where this survey was conducted, 59% is formed of groups of students who graduated at least 10 years ago from bachelor degree. This data indicates the great interest of newer generations to obtain their certification well after graduating from college.

It was requested to the interviewee to indicate their work schedule. 85 different answers were obtained. 39% of them work around 5:30 to 7:30 hours a day, 45% work around 3:30 to 5:30 hours a day and surprisingly 16% of the students who took part in this study work 7 or more hours a day. Only the 8% of the interviewee work 1 to 3 and a half hours a day.

When asked how much time is invested on the thesis research, 60% stated that from 1 to 5 hours weekly, and 21% from 6 to 10 hours weekly, 7% between 11 and 15 hours and the 2% dedicates 16 to 20 hours and only 5% dedicate 21 to 25 hours to research.

Last nominal question indicates how many books postgraduate students read yearly. 62% reads 1 to 5 books yearly, on average the candidate reads 5.04 books with a standard deviation of 6.5, which indicates that 6% does not read a single book a year. The most repeated answer was: 2 books.

As a cultural background statement it is important to mention that from 108 countries, UNESCO gives Mexico the one place before the last one on reading levels. On average Mexican read 2.8 books a year, but only 2% of the population has the reading habit. (Proceso magazine, 2013)

Descriptive statistics

1) Students perception on the common key traits on tutors which allow them to foster their process of certification.

Next, the results are presented on the descriptive statistics about the perception on the common key traits on tutors which allow them to foster their process of certification. The most significant variables are introduced; they foster the process of certification.

The general average obtained in the application of the instrument in the Tutor Factor was 8.8. It can be stated that students from the four institutions that participated in this research considered as strengths the following traits:

- a) Students consider to be important that the tutor has a high knowledge on the subject matter and on the different contents; thus, he is able to conclude his thesis and obtain the degree. (X=9.6) (S=1.6).
- b) Students consider important that there should be empathy between the two parties. (X=9.2) (S=2.3)
- c) Tutor is accessible to meet when there has not been a previous meeting agreement to receive guidance. (X=8.9) (S=2.0)
- d) Tutor suggests bibliography from different sources (books, authors) so as to consolidate students' research thesis. (X=8.8) (S=2.6)
- e) Students are motivated to conclude the research on time. (X=8.7) (S=2.6)
- f) Students are encouraged to present advances on a written basis. (X=8.7) (S=2.2)

Based on these results it is possible to identify the common key traits tutors have which Foster the process of certification, among those are: students consider to be crucial tutor has a high knowledge on the subject matter and on different contents that allow the student to conclude his research. Students value empathy between the tutor and the one being tutored. Students value the fact to meet even if there has not been an agreement to meet. Students also care about the fact that the tutor offers suggestions on bibliography sources to consolidate the research work. Students value the tutor who motivates the postgraduate student to conclude the research thesis on time and also motivates him to present work in advance in written form.

2) From the student's point of view, it is concluded that the common traits on tutors with less value in the process of certification are:

On the other hand there are also common traits, which according to students, do not foster at all the process of certification:

- a) Tutor involves students on collaboration with other research groups. (X=5.4) (S=4.2)
- b) Tutor encourage students to write journals to be published. (X=5.9) (S=3.9)
- c) Tutor motivates students to have his papers published. (X=6.5) (S=4.0)
- d) Tutor has explained the nature of the certification process in order to obtain the certification degree. (X=6.6) (S=4.1)
- e) Tutor offers guidance on the nature of the research and the expected standards. (X=6.7) (S=3.6)
- f) Tutor has recommended congress talks, collaborations, etc. which Foster the knowledge on the given discipline field. (X=6.9) (S=3.7)
- g) Tutor keeps frequent contact through scheduled meeting at least once a week. (X=6.8) (S=3.7)

Based on the results, data indicate that from student's perception the traits which weaken the process of certification are:

Tutor does not involve students on collaboration with other research groups, does not encourage students to write journals to be published, does not motivates students to have his papers published, has not explained the nature of the certification process in order to obtain the certification degree. Tutor also does not offer guidance on the nature of the research and the expected standards, has not recommended congress talks, collaborations, etc. which Foster the knowledge on the given discipline field, Tutor does not keep frequent contact through scheduled meeting at least once a week.

Conclusions

Based on the answers to the given questionnaire, the following profile is derived: population is women, mostly (61%), predominant age average is 39 years. 55% are married 96 % of the students work for an educational institution, 84% on the public sector and 84% does not hold a scholarship for completing his studies. More than half of the students are teachers to basic level and 44% are elementary teachers.

An alarming fact is that 62% stated that reads up to 5 books yearly, the average is 5.04 books a year with a standard error of 6.5, which indicates that 6% of the students does not read a single book a year and the most repeated answer was two books a year. According to the results obtained in the characterization of the students, it is conclusive that postgraduate programs and tutoring promote reading which in turn will activate knowledge, motivate intelligence, increase cultural awareness and gives information, new knowledge, good writing skills and consequently ideas, projects, thoughts, argumentation and the building up of the thesis will be much more focused whether it is written or oral.

One of the purposes of education is to promote the processes of personal growth framed in a cultural group where he belongs. This knowledge will not be produced satisfactorily unless proper and specific assistance is given to the student through the student involvement in international activities, which must be planned and systematic to foster the constructivist mental awareness. (Díaz-Barriga & Hernández 2002). Delors, proponed in 1996 one of the most suitable ways to promote universal values to incite Young students to study great books from the past and perpetuate the beautiful traditions.

The master degree programs within the four institutions where this questionnaire was implements, 59% is conformed by groups of students with less than 10 years after being graduated from bachelor, and this percentage indicates they are interested on improving academically. 39% of the interviewed students work between 5:30 to 7:30 hours a day. 60% indicated that they dedicate around 1 to 5 hours a week to thesis research

Regarding the results in the descriptive statistics about students perception on common tutor traits, it is conclusive that the graduate students considers important that the tutor has a high knowledge on the subject matter and different contents in order that the student is able to conclude his thesis and obtains his degree ($X=9.6$) ($S=1.6$); students also consider important that the tutor and the very student share empathy ($X=9.2$) ($S=2.3$); Tutor motivates students to conclude their thesis within the established time. ($X=8.7$) ($S=2.6$); Student is motivated to present periodically his advances in a written form. ($X=8.7$) ($S=2.2$).

On the other hand, it is concluded that the common traits tutors have which weaken the process of certification are: tutor involves students onto collaboration with other research groups. ($X=5.4$) ($S=4.2$); Tutor encourage students to write papers to be published. ($X=5.9$) ($S=3.9$); Tutor motivates students to have his research published. ($X=6.5$) ($S=4.0$), d) Tutor has explained the nature of the process to obtain the degree. ($X=6.6$) ($S=4.1$); Tutor gives guidance on the nature of the research and the expected standards. ($X=6.7$) ($S=3.6$); Tutor has recommended congress, collaborations, workshops etc. to enhance knowledge related to the subject matter students are researching about. ($X=6.9$) ($S=3.7$); Tutor keeps regular contact trough frequent sessions with students at least once every three weeks. ($X=6.8$) ($S=3.7$).

Experience revels that students let years go by after concluding their studies and dome of them never take their thesis back to have it concluded; therefore, they do not have the experience to start the procedures to present their thesis and thus graduate and obtain the degree of master. Jaik, "states that the answers or the causes that originate this issue are endless". (2013 p. 40).

Based on this research, it is concluded that in order to increase certifications and thus terminal efficiency, it is necessary to straighten tutors in the Teacher Training Institutions, they are essential to those students who really want to certificate their degree, writers such as Martínez, Laguna, García, Vásquez, & Rodríguez (2005), state that postgraduate tutors must fulfill with the mission to train the new generations, tutors must train them to undertake relevant, high level academic research and a social commitment which contributes to the solution of social problems, and at the same time, to enhance the national educational system at all levels.

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Table 1. Items on variable “the tutor”

Did he perform a personal interview with you to identify your academic profile, your interest to study a postgraduate degree; and your personal and professional goals?
Did he explain which the tutoring criteria are?
Did the tutor and you previously agree on the frequency of the tutoring?
Were you given the study guide about the nature of the research and the expected standards?
Does he keep in contact through regular sessions with you at least once every two weeks?
Does he keep in contact with you at least once every three weeks?
Is he flexible to meet with you to provide guidance and answer the emerging problems even if there is no previous fixed agreement to meet?
Were you informed about the institutional facilities available (library, computer labs, etc.)?
Were you given guidance on ethical and legal aspects concerning your research?
Does he Foster the application of ethical norms?
Does he provide information necessary on dates and stages of work so as to accomplish established deadlines?
Are you asked written work and required reports and then are you given back those papers with the proper positive feedback?
Are you asked written work and required reports and then are you given back those papers at a reasonable time (usually two weeks after)?
Does he offer guidance on strategies to prepare the thesis?
Does he suggest bibliography in order to consolidate the research?
Are you oriented through strategies to develop abilities for the correct usage of written language on the thesis elaboration?
Are you motivated to present periodically your advance orally?
Are you motivated to present your advance written?
Do you receive guidance on the methodology of the research?
Do you receive guidance on the interpretation of the results of the research?
Has he recommended theatrical or practical courses, congress, etc. to strengthen the knowledge in the subject matter or related disciplines?
Are you motivated to write research papers to be published?
Are you recommended to attend drafting courses on scientific papers?
Are you involved to collaborate with other research groups?
Has he maintained a systematic scheduled on agreements and established activities?
Has he explained the process of the final exam to obtain the degree of Master?
Does he motivate you to conclude your research on the given time?
Does he motivate you to publish your research?
Do you consider important the existence of empathy between you and the tutor?
Do you consider important the existence of communication to a higher level between you and your tutor?
Do you consider important that the tutor has a high level of knowledge to help you conclude your thesis and obtain your degree?
Do you consider it is up to you solely to conclude the thesis and obtain the mater degree?
Does he treat you respectfully?

Source: Own elaboration.