ORIENTATION AND COLLABORATIVE/COOPERATIVE WORK OF MULTIDISCIPLINARY TEACHING TEAM OF THE FACULTY OF PHARMACY (UNIVERSITY OF GRANADA) FOR THE CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT OF TEACHING. 8-YEAR TRAJECTORY


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Abstract

The multidisciplinary teaching team in the Faculty of Pharmacy, from his creation 8 years ago, participates in all the actions focused in the support and formation of the beginner professor and in the improvement of the teaching of the University of Granada. Nowadays, the teaching team is constituted by 7 experienced professors (with 20 years of experience in teaching, coordinating grade level curricula, tutorial action plans, teaching innovation projects and implementation and monitoring of quality assurance systems in undergraduate degrees) and 14 beginner professors of different departments with different professional categories teaching in three degrees of the faculty: “Pharmacy”, “Human Nutrition and Dietetic”, “Food Science and Technology”. In every academic course, new beginner professors are incorporated to the team.

The methodology followed in the present work has focused on: Detection and analysis of the formative needs of the new professors, design and coordination of the training plan, design of training activities, academic execution and management of training, discussion and joint reflection among professors, evaluation of professor teaching method through satisfaction questionnaires. In addition, as for the training activities, every academic year, several activities of mentoring are performed (progress cycles, recorded classes and joint visualization).

The training activities programmed during the 2016-17 academic year are:

1. Exchanges of teaching experiences between experienced and beginner professors.
2. Use of tools by the professors to advise students in their university education.
3. Workshops for web resources and e-learning platforms for university teaching.
4. Sessions for improve planning skills and development of autonomous student work activities.
5. Seminars about knowledge of University regulations.
6. Session about work of Internal Quality Guarantee Commissions of the in each degree of the Faculty of Pharmacy.

In conclusion, the creation and consolidation of a teaching team made up of experienced professors committed to the initial training of the new teaching staff, gives rise to a space for joint reflection, exchange of experiences to foster innovation, collaboration and mutual learning which contributes to the continuous improvement of teaching practice. Likewise, the teaching team provides a continuous support and advice during the first years of university teaching that facilitates the integration and labor insertion of teachers in the performance of professional activity and helps to optimize their teaching activity.

Keywords: Higher education, teaching innovation, cooperative learning, mentoring.
1 INTRODUCTION AND OBJECTIVE

The professional insertion in the teaching corresponds to a key period in the process of professional development of the beginner professors. This period encompasses the first years as professors and, from education policies for teaching, has been given little attention [1] despite its relevance in the processes of improvement of teaching and learning of the students. Many of the works interested in analysing and deepening the singularity of this stage of professional development of teachers coincide in emphasizing the importance of the mentor teaching staff as a fundamental pillar of the counseling process and a key element in overcoming the first difficulties that Arise in the performance of the profession [2]. According to Sánchez Moreno [3] the main objective of the mentor is the integration of beginner professors in all aspects, especially in the teaching performance.

From the Quality, Innovation and Planning Unit at the University of Granada, and within its training program, it has been launched the VIII program for the strengthening and supporting beginner professors at their workplaces. The aim of this initiative is to take advantage of experienced professors in order to train beginner colleagues. This is a collaborative program sustained by the institutional responsibility to improve both teaching practice and teaching quality. In order to contribute to this aim, the Multidisciplinary Teaching Team of the Faculty of Pharmacy is currently composed of 7 experienced professors and 14 beginning professors with different professional categories, belonging to different departments: Physiology, Nutrition and Food Sciences, Biochemistry and Molecular Biology I, Pharmaceutical and Organic Chemistry, Microbiology, Pharmaceutical Technology and Physical Chemistry. These professors are involved in teaching in the three degrees of the Faculty of Pharmacy: "Pharmacy", "Human Nutrition and Dietetics" and "Food Science and Technology".

2 ACTIVITIES PERFORMED

Our teaching team has adapted the mentoring program according to those action stages described by Velasco and Benito [4], which are summarized in the following points:

1. Plan of dissemination and presentation of the professors' team mentor program: In the welcome sessions, the team program was introduced to novel and senior experienced teachers.

2. Recruitment of new participating professors, both beginners and mentors: The enrolled mentors are selected on the bases of their academic expertise, while beginners are recruited based on their interest in their voluntary participation.

3. Mentors training: At the beginning of the team, selected mentors received a training course aimed to develop cross-disciplinary skills, including different aspects of teaching methodology.

4. Building the groups: To advise throughout the course, every mentor is usually responsible of a beginner professor.

5. Monitoring: Including regular meetings between the coordinator and mentors as well as the mentor and beginners.

6. Reporting and evaluation: The perception of the work done by beginners is collected by the mentor. On the other hand, the coordinator gathers the information about the satisfaction degree reached by all the participants through evaluation surveys that mentors and mentees answer.

7. Improvement cycles: As soon as the experience is finished, the results are analyzed. Right after, the decisions of continuity and improvement of this experience are made for the development to future courses.

8. Training activities: Every year different activities are developed according to the needs of beginner professors.

The activities performed during the course 2016-2017 are outlined below:
2.1 Action 1. Meeting of introduction and follow up meetings of the teaching team

At meeting of introduction of the teaching group meeting, professors belonging to the group are informed about the whole development of the training program, the training activities (both individual and collective) that will be performed throughout the year, as well as the calendar and the evaluation criteria. Furthermore, beginners and mentors will know each other and their respective role in the program.

The coordination teacher will schedule at least two meetings of the teaching team in each four-month period, at the beginning and at the end, for exchanging impressions about the interactivity with the beginners and the reached results elaborating conclusions about the satisfaction degree at the activities carried out.

2.2 Action 2. Knowledge of University regulations

A. Internal Quality Guarantee Commissions of the center’s degrees

It is important to know the work of these Quality Guarantee Commissions working at the Faculty of Pharmacy. The evaluation and internal follow-up of the degrees has centred on aspects related to the education and the professorship, academic results, mobility programs, satisfaction of the different implied groups, suggestions and claims, diffusion of the study plan, etc..

B. Standards of permanence

The Social Council, in session of June 28, 2016, approves the new rules of permanence for the university teaching of degree and masters of the University of Granada. It is necessary to continuously advice students along their career in order to help him choosing the best subjects in each course to build a reasonable curriculum. Furthermore, it is important that he becomes aware about the rules to stay active (standards of permanence) in the degree (for instance minimum credits to be registered in each year). This is why the beginner professors need to be informed first.

C. Teaching management plan course 2017-18

Approved by the Governing Council in its ordinary session of March 17, 2017. New professors and experts study and comment on the new teaching management plan.

D. Modification of the Normative of Evaluation and Qualification of the students of the University of Granada

Approved in the ordinary session of the Governing Council of October 26, 2016. New professors and experts study and comment on the new teaching management plan.

2.3 Action 3. Teaching methodology

For the development of this action different formative activities will be scheduled:

A. Exchanges of teaching experiences between experienced and beginner professors

The objective is to facilitate sharing different teaching methods, organization of activities and learn tasks that work as models to define methodological strategies that better suit each teaching-learning process functions.

B. Definition of training activities that facilitate the autonomous learning of the student

The teaching centered in the student active and autonomous learning process requires defining training activities that facilitate this capability in the student and provide the tools for the study and self-assessment. The goals to know different training activities that the teachers in this group have used in their classes to promote the capability of autonomous learning and evaluating the pros and cons of these activities.


C. Seminars about Internet and their use for teaching (PRADO and KAHOOT)

The goal is to introduce the main tools available in Internet and promote their use in teaching through the PRADO platform. In this workshop the main tools for organization, presentation, collaboration and storage are analyzed. In addition, a workshop of virtual tools of gamification through Kahoot is performed.

D. Seminars about introduction to statistical methods and use of the SPSS program

With these seminars the members of the teaching team will have a greater knowledge about the statistical methods and use of the SPSS program to apply it in teaching.

2.4 Action 4. Prevention of occupational hazards

A. Exercises for postural corrections in professors

The goal with these workshops is to learn to identify the postural limitation as well as the point of pain to take timely prevention and rehabilitation measures.

B. Defense tools in situations of harassment in the teaching field

It intends to identify potential situations of physical threat in the teaching field and to know basic techniques of personal defense for the positive resolution of a situation of physical harassment.

2.5 Action 5. Set up of improvement cycles

The improvement cycles involve actively involve actively the teachers in the improvement of their teaching activities, a collaborative relationship among teachers is established. This is a process that combines action, reflection and a method to perform a critical analysis of the training.

Two improvement cycles are done in each academic course. Each senior teacher will work with his/her beginner teachers and the following actions will be carried out:

a) Initial planning interview for identifying the needs of each of the beginner teachers related to each senior teacher.

b) Experienced teacher seminar for each beginner teacher.

c) Beginner assistance to a theoretical and practical class of a experienced teacher.

d) Experienced assistance to a class of the beginner teacher and video recording.

e) Beginner assistance as observer in classes of experienced teachers of recognized prestige in their specific area of knowledge.

f) Analysis and evaluation of the teaching activity of the beginner teacher.

g) Definition of new objective for the second improvement cycle.

h) Overall evaluation of the training program, discussion of results and conclusions.

3 RESULTS AND CONCLUSIONS

The evaluation of the beginners in the defined training program focuses on the assistance to the scheduled sessions, as well as the proposed activities and the level of involvement in these activities. Furthermore, a satisfaction survey is done in each training activity (Quest.1) and a satisfaction survey about the teaching team (Quest. 2).
The results obtained for the satisfaction survey on each of the training activities carried out indicate that in general there is no difference between the responses of novice professors and experts. All the professors consider the training activities very interesting because they have been organized according to their needs. They consider that the duration and the contents of the activities are adequate and that the speakers who give them are well prepared and qualified. In addition, they value
very positively the two cycles of improvement made in each academic year and the sessions of exchange of experiences professors between novice professors and veterans.

Regarding the surveys on the degree of satisfaction with the work of the teaching team in general there is a high valuation both by novice professors and experts but there is a weak point that needs improvement and this is the distribution and organization of tasks within the team, because there are professors attending most of the activities and meetings convened and that they involve much more than others of its members.

In conclusion we consider essential the work of the multidisciplinary teaching team of the Faculty of Pharmacy of the University of Granada as it represents the interest of a group of professors who, in addition to performing their teaching, research and management work, collaboration and cooperation between novices and experts in order to improve day to day quality of teaching. That is why we augurate a long trajectory for this teaching team that has just turned eight years since its creation.

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