THE ACADEMIC TUTORING FOR ADEQUATE DECISION MAKING IN THE ADMINISTRATION DEGREE OF THE VERACRUZANA UNIVERSITY

Silvia Flores Aguilar, Ignacio Ortíz Betancourt, Guadalupe Capetillo, Fabiola Leyva Picazzo, Dulce Betancourt, Rebeca Carmona, Karen Sedano

Universidad Veracruzana (MEXICO)

Abstract
In 1997, Universidad Veracruzana (University of Veracruz, in English) proposed a change in curricula, implementing the Integral and Flexible Educational Model (MEIF in Spanish) which pursues the autonomy of its students through an adequate decision making in the choice of educational experiences (EE) during their academic trajectory. In this context, Universidad Veracruzana launched the tutoring program as an important element for the MEIF, being relevant for their academic training and for a successful graduation. This study analyzes the perception of students of the Administration Degree, from both Veracruz and Xalapa Regions, regarding the operation of the tutoring program, in order to identify probable failures and, finally, to generate proposals and suggestions for improving for the students’ performance and reducing the dropout rate.

Keywords: Integral and Flexible Educational Model (MEIF), tutoring, public universities, educational experiences (EE).

1 INTRODUCTION
Nowadays, referring to quality in education aims focusing in achieving excellence in the processes of the activities carried out within the institutions and specifically talking about services that support students, which are vital to have students prepared to face the challenges that arise in the labor market. Then, Universidad Veracruzana, as the biggest and most important public university in the State of Veracruz (Mexico), implemented the tutoring program, to help students with academic issues which obstruct their integral formation.

Once students enroll in to the tutoring program, they get an academic tutor and have to complete a series of compulsory sessions during each academic period. In these sessions, tutors provide essential information related to the Integral and Flexible Educational Model (MEIF in Spanish), which is a main resource for their academic is training. With adequate guidance of the tutor, students have control over the selection of courses and the time in which they will graduate.

2 METHODOLOGY
2.1 Presenting the problem
For the last four academic periods, it has been observed that Administration degree students’, enrolled at Veracruz Region, do not know basic topics for their academic training, such as: The fundamentals of the Integral and Flexible Educational Model and the gama of services and benefits provided by Universidad Veracruzana; all these being significant for their academic formation.

In order to enlarge the scope of this study, it is compared the perception of the students of Administration degree from both Veracruz and Xalapa Regions. The output of this analysis helps to direct efforts to improve the tutoring program and to give students better resources that enhance their academic trajectory.

2.1.1 The tutoring program at Universidad Veracruzana
Tutorial sessions are an academic support that the Universidad Veracruzana offers to students from the moment they start their academic trajectory, with the objective of promoting their autonomy and integral formation. Also, this will help to reduce the chances of them to desert their academic degree.
Academic Tutoring (TA)

Upon joining University, the Coordinator of the tutorial system of each Faculty assigns to each student an academic tutor, who is responsible for supporting the decisions related to the construction of their professional profile, based on their area of interest.

- **Academic tutor**
  - Is a part time or full time teacher or researcher trained in the institutional tutoring program and interested in contributing to the professional training of students. His main task is to support them to develop their abilities around the educational program, always respecting the students’ decisions, not imposing their ideas, nor solving their problems, emphasizing that the responsibility of the their decisions lies on each student. Also, academic tutors provide information about scholarship programs and academic training opportunities, international mobility programs for students and academic seminars or conferences in which they can participate.

2.1.2 Population purpose of study

This study was carried out only with students of Administration degree enrolled in August 2014 from both Veracruz and Xalapa Regions. A sample of one hundred students from each region was surveyed, all of them selected randomly.

### 3 RESULTS

A comparative and descriptive analysis among regions was conducted in order to find differences amid students’ perception about the tutorial program conducted by Universidad Veracruzana. A survey composed by ten items was applied. Only main findings are shown in Table 1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 1.</th>
<th><strong>COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>ENROLLMENT 2014 VERACRUZ REGION</strong></td>
<td><strong>ENROLLMENT 2014 XALAPA REGION</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 1.- DO YOU HAVE AN ASSIGNED TUTOR?  
YES 92%  
NOT 8% | 1.- DO YOU HAVE AN ASSIGNED TUTOR?  
YES 100% | In the Veracruz Region, not all the students surveyed have an assigned tutor, because some of the teachers decided to retire when academic period already started while in the Xalapa Region students indicated that they do have an assigned tutor. Also, students enrolled at Xalapa Region stated that when a tutor retires, he is replaced immediately. |
| 5.- HOW MANY TUTORIAL SESSIONS DO YOU ATTEND EACH SEMESTER?  
NONE -8%  
ONE OR TWO -37%  
THREE 55% | 5.- HOW MANY TUTORIAL SESSIONS DO YOU ATTEND EACH SEMESTER?  
NONE -10%  
ONE OR TWO -55%  
THREE 35% | Most students in Veracruz Region stated that they attend all sessions scheduled, while most of the students in Xalapa Region indicated that they only attend one or two sessions. A higher level of participation was reported among students enrolled in Veracruz Region. |
| 7.- DOES YOUR TUTOR HELPS YOU TO SOLVE ISSUES THAT OCCUR DURING YOUR ACADEMIC TRAJECTORY?  
YES – 73%  
NOT – 27% | 7.- DOES YOUR TUTOR HELPS YOU TO SOLVE ISSUES THAT OCCUR DURING YOUR ACADEMIC TRAJECTORY?  
YES – 10%  
NOT – 90% | According to students from Veracruz Region, most tutors help them to solve issues that arise during their academic trajectory. These results contrast with the ones got from students enrolled in Xalapa Region. |
9.- DO YOU CONSIDER THAT YOUR TUTOR SET AN AGENDA FOR EACH SESSION BASED ON YOUR INTERESTS AND NEEDS?
YES – 91%
NOT – 9%

9.- DO YOU CONSIDER THAT YOUR TUTOR SET AN AGENDA FOR EACH SESSION BASED ON YOUR INTERESTS AND NEEDS?
YES – 80%
NOT – 20%

Very similar results were got from both regions; nevertheless, a higher rate of students enrolled in Xalapa Region expressed that their tutors do not consider their academic records.

4 RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 Veracruz Region
First at all, students must have an assigned tutor permanently; in case that the tutor is about to retire, it must be replaced immediately. Also, tutors must provide valuable information to students in the right time and through efficient channels. When tutorial sessions are programmed, it is necessary that tutors allocate enough time to cover all the topics scheduled. Then, it is important to assign tutors who have availability of time.

Besides, it is important that during tutorial sessions tutors deal with topics that contribute students’ academic and human training; it is desired that students have the chance to express both academic and personal issues, obtaining professional help.

4.2 Xalapa Region
In order to improve the performance of tutors, they must motivate and guide students through their academic trajectory; since first session, it is also essential that tutors keep students informed about the importance of attending all tutorial sessions, since each one covers diverse and relevant issues, which are favourable in their academic training.

Also, tutors must analyse students’ academic interests to set the agenda for each session. As both personal and academic issues are discussed during sessions, it is important tutors provide confidence to students, allowing them to express their problems.

In addition, it is relevant that tutors get adequate training courses, which are indispensable to provide useful information and promote values and skills that enrich students’ academic trajectory.

5 CONCLUSIONS
Universidad Veracruzana promotes an integral formation model which encourages the autonomy of students through an appropriate decision making process. In the Veracruz Region, one of the main problems is that not all students have an assigned academic tutor. In addition, tutors do not mention or cover the necessary information in each session.

On the other hand, students enrolled in Xalapa Region face the fact that tutors do not consider their academic record, being this harmful in their school trajectory.

Finally, it is clear that the tutoring model has multiple benefits, however, tutors do not fully apply it; therefore it is important that the tutors envision the scope of this task. Then, it is indispensable that tutors keep in constant training, so they can communicate effectively the benefits of attending all tutorial sessions.

REFERENCES