3ᴿᴰ International Congress of Investigation. Faculty of Pshychology.

National University of La Plata

Knowledge and current scenarios.

La Plata, 15, 16 y 17 de Noviembre de 2011

Topic: University inclusion: Utopia versus reality.

Coordinator: Mirta Gavilán – E-mail: gavilanmirta@gmail.com

Institution: National University of La Plata, Psychology School

General abstract:

The investigations and Extension Projects performed by the chairs of Vocational Guidance and Preventive Psychology from de Faculty of Psychology of our university, with population of so called high psycho-social vulnerability, let us think about different questions and consider new analysis lines related to the university admission.

Our previous research, "Assessment strategies of Vocational and Occupational Guidance aimed at reversing psycho-social inequity", was partially implemented through the assessment of the extension project: "Equity and Guidance: the challenge of a proposal". This one focused in opening a space for guidance, implementing interdisciplinary strategies to stimulate different abilities and achievements, but mainly self-esteem.

The main target of this project was to encourage the development of abilities and talents necessary to the new stage that youth have to face when finishing high school, in much more competitive contexts and much less kind scenarios than their schools of origin.

This purpose was partially achieved through strengthening skills that made possible the development of educative, occupational, personal and social projects. Through our current investigation: "University dropout: inclusion strategies" funded by the Secretariat of Science and Technique and our monitoring of the graduate ones of the above mentioned

extension project, we found that for first time in different schools, a considerable quantity of students had chosen university careers, but unfortunately they couldn't be admitted in the system.

The new strategies implemented for their inclusion and the academic and psycho-social difficulties that these young people from the studied population have, aroused the subject of the present congress, although our present project includes all entrant students, according to a statistic sample and from different variables.

In the next presentation we will consider five axes related to this topic, pertaining to our investigation project: "University dropout: inclusion strategies".

1. *The university dropout problem;*
2. *The university dropout of youth from vulnerable populations as a challenge to Guidance;*
3. *The university dropout problem in students from the Faculties of Engineering and Veterinary;*
4. *Tutors as an inclusion strategy - The experience in the Faculty of Exact Sciences;*
5. *Inclusion strategies to students beginning their careers in the Psychology School.*

<u>Methodology</u>: each member of the symposium will have twenty minutes for their presentation. Then there will be thirty minutes for sharing among participants and finally, the coordinator will make a synthesis.

<u>Development</u>: considering the different presentations of the investigation staff, their contributions will be analyzed.

---

1. *The university dropout problem*

Authors: Mirta Gavilán & Cristina Quiles
Institution: National University of La Plata, Psychology School
E-mail: cristinahaydeequiles@gmail.com

The dropout of beginner students is a frequent subject in university. Despite of the various admission systems for students, it's a concern both national and internationally.

Even though investigation has been developed and various factors that influence this fact have been studied, there is little research that considers strategies to reverse the situation.

In Europe Margarita Latiesa (1995)[1] from the University of Granada stated that the growth of the university dropout began four decades ago and continued growing till now. She points out that the dropout rates in Spain are around 30 and 50 % and are similar to those of other countries like France and Austria. She refers that these rates are similar in different contexts as USA. There are some differences in Germany, where it is between 20 and 25%; Switzerland, between 7 and 30 % according to the region; Finland, 10% and Netherlands, between 20 and 30%.

In Latin-America, the International Institute to Superior Education in Latin-America and the Caribbean - IESALC/UNESCO- during 2000-2005 supported a regional project included in the program: *Superior Education in Latin-America and the Caribbean* (2005) to analyze the dropout problem. With this purpose case studies were carried out, taking university careers from public and private institutions.

In our country the situation is really concerning. Thus was stated by Alberto Dibbern (2007)[2], in charge of the University Policies, in the international seminar *Diagnosis and experiences to diminish dropout.* This work reports about the increasing rate of dropout all over the country which is up today of the 60%.

The result of our investigations and of our extension projects carried out with young people from vulnerable populations, point us that the inequalities that they bear, take us to foresee their dropout of university.

This presentation will focus on knowing which are the prevalent factors related to dropout and migrations during the first years in the chosen careers; which strategies each academic unit put into practice to include and retain students, to then perform a comparative

---

[1] Latiesa, M. (1995). *Tipología y causas de la deserción universitaria y el retraso en los estudios.* Universidad de Granada, España. Disponible en: http://dialogo.ugr.es/ anteriores/dial05/11-5.htm. (consultada el 16/6/09).

[2] Dibber, A. (2007) Seminario Internacional: *Diagnóstico y experiencias para la disminución de la deserción estudiantil.* Cartagena de Indias, Colombia.

diagnosis. Also, the general purpose of our current investigation: "University dropout: inclusion strategies" is to propose, considering the knowledge that this research provides, appropriate preventive strategies to the admission of students and occupational guidance to those who drop out in order they can make new educative projects, work, personal and social. During this presentation both considered methodology and variables will be defined.

<u>Key words:</u> University – Problem – Dropout - Inclusion

---

2. *The university dropout of youth from vulnerable populations as a challenge to Guidance*

Authors: Teresita Chá & Nadia Brhel

Institution: National University of La Plata, Psychology School

E-mail: ritateresitacha@yahoo.com

During several years we were dedicated to study and investigate the issue of Guidance in high school with vulnerable populations. For this purpose the project: Equity and Guidance: a challenge of a proposal was developed. This let us assess guidance strategies to help decrease their psycho-social inequity in their inclusion to work and/or higher education.

The above mentioned current project, includes a tracking strategy and led to our ongoing research. Thus a particular line of investigation is raised.

The monitoring of this youth from vulnerable populations that began university represents a meaningful contribution to our research and its purposes: to suggest prevention strategies to an appropriate inclusion of the beginner students and a re-guidance to those who drop-out.

The methodology we use is of "multiple convergence", because in the same investigative process we work while monitoring the students.

Results: we are now in a tracking stage of those students who were included on guidance processes and that have been admitted to university. We make this by means of different devices: personal contact at their homes or in class, through internet or social networks, etc.

We study their relation to university life, the impact of cultural issues, their personal characteristics, their ability to learn strategies and skills to university life, the plans of support of the academic units, the students' way of learning, the main obstacles they find and also some strategies that we have tried with who had dropped-out.

Conclusions: the problem many of the students from vulnerable populations have to their admission at university, strengthen the hypothesis of working from Guidance in new integrative options to alternative training circuits, given that Guidance challenge as a social practice, is to support young people to sustain a life project included in the work and knowledge society.

<u>Key Words:</u> university dropout – vulnerability – guidance - tracking

---

3. The university dropout problem in students from the Faculties of Engineering and Veterinary

Authors: Mariela Di Meglio & Victoria De Ortuzar

Institution: National University of La Plata, Psychology School

E-mail: iglesiasmfa@sinectis.com.ar

In this presentation the actions performed in the Engineer and Veterinary Schools will be reported.

The choice of these careers besides responding to different knowledge areas, have in common the *siu guarani* system. This latter provides the students a tool that let them reach the university's web site to make different tasks like admission, data updating, re-enrollments, etc.

Undoubtedly, this possibility to access to information and to perform some managements without leaving home improves the processes, the quality and safety of the data.

The first actions focused on getting to know the admission requirements of each academic unit. In this way we also acknowledge about the beginners who have troubles with their admittance or who disapproved. We've taken into account two situations: the students included in the admission course and those who haven't passed the class and must do the course again.

The Engineering School has a tutorial system. The new management of the Veterinary School is implementing supporting strategies for the beginners.

The first contact established with the students was a survey. This one was carefully performed, selecting variables that allow us to compare data from different academic units and monitor the students. Thus, a detailed analysis of each situation will be possible.

The survey includes the following variables: origin place, gender, age, high-school average, parental studies and occupation, reasons why he/she chooses the career, how he/she's got the information, if he/she has made a guidance process.

This survey was applied to 300 pupils of engineering class, in morning and afternoon shifts, their participation was voluntary.

In Veterinary School the surveys were applied when the entrance course was ended, in morning and afternoon shifts.

The methodology we use is of "multiple convergence", because in the same investigative process we work while monitoring the students.

Results: we are processing the collected data and to make the monitoring that will allow us to access to the conditions and possibilities of continuity of this students during 2011. We have performed a database with the data collected in the survey, from the following variables: familiar educational level, occupational level, origin.

In this presentation we will expose the bases of the variable selection, as well as we will consider the admittance ways, and the strategies that each faculty provides to support the beginners.

<u>Key words:</u> dropout – admitted students to engineering and veterinary schools – monitoring - guidance

---

4. Tutors as an inclusion strategy - The experience in the Faculty of Exact Sciences

Authors: Mabel Tejo & María Eugenia Ruiz

Institution: National University of La Plata, Psychology School

E-mail: mabi22@yahoo.com.ar

Within the inclusion policies that the National University of La Plata develops to decrease the university dropout, there is a commitment to put into practice the tutorial system. To introduce this latter a program is implemented. It is the program used by the National

Ministry of Education for the subjects that are considered "priority" by the State: Economics, Exact Sciences, Natural Science, Computing and professorships in Physics, Chemistry and Mathematics. There are also tutors for the improvement plan to other careers as Engineering, Architecture, Veterinary and Medicine; and there are other schools that are making their own experiences as Dental Science and Journalism.

The tutorial system of the Exact Sciences School has been working for three years. During this period it has contributed with experiences related to:

- Definition of tutors as groups
- Description of a tutorial profile
- Description of the tutor's role
- Development of purposes, work possibilities, advances and limitations
- Institutionalization

Since 2009 they are involved in the Support Program to improve the teaching of first year of the following careers: Exact Sciences, Natural Sciences, Economic and Computing (PACENI), dependant of the Secretariat of University Policies, National Educational Ministry.

The tutorial system is defined by the Academic Secretariat as the space where students can go to expose situations or problems during their first steps in university. The tutor's main purpose is to decrease the dropout and develop diagnosis tools to recognize the more important troubles. These strategies are based on putting into practice proposals focused in ease the insertion in the university life, strengthening interactions among students and so get a deeper knowledge of the context and the personal reality where they are involved.

In the Exact Sciences School a pedagogical space is implemented. It is organized in three areas:

1. Initial area: it is about the actions related to the connection between high school and the university admission. Tutors are involved in this area.

2. Teaching area: this area works on the improvement programs, rules and training designs. They have created a forum, open to the community, that intend to build a space of collective communication and a generator of proposals associated with the pedagogical issues of the institution.

3. Research area: it is dedicated to relate research and academic problems.

Considering this organization and according to our interview with the Academic Director, it was decided that our investigation staff joined to this pedagogical area, so we had to explain our role and tasks.

Even when our role was clear, some demands arose due to our professional profile. This led us to define our possible contribution as psychologist, always pointing out the purposes of our investigation. Some of the actions taken are:

- Collection and analysis of statistical data
- Contribution with the definition of the tutor profile, about the psycho-social issues
- Meetings with tutors to provide them tools to address psycho-social issues of the students
- Contributions in designing the admission workgroups
- Participation on the assess of the admission course

Key words: tutors – dropout – strategy – exact sciences

---

5. Inclusion strategies to students beginning their careers in the Psychology School.

Authors: María Laura Castignani, Natalia Ciano & María Natalia García

Institution: National University of La Plata, Psychology School

E-mail: mlauracastignani@gmail.com

This paper describes the actions made by the staff related to the admission to the careers of the Psychology School and presents the implemented inclusion strategies.

In the Psychology introductory course in 2011 we applied the survey to a sample of 358 students (about 27%). This course lasts four weeks, and runs since middle February to middle March each year.

Among the collected data that result meaningful to this paper, we emphasize the main worries that students have when starting their career. The more frequent answers we've found are: the approach to academic texts, the poor educational performance, the troubles on learning, problems on writing and understanding, among others. Other point to investigate was if they thought they were ready to begin university. Those who thought they were not ready argued: "at school, nobody taught us how to understand a text"; "I used

to learn by heart"; "I have not enough study tools"; "I think I have to learn to study well"; "I don't know if I can adapt to the pace of study", etc.

Within the inclusion policies proposed by the Psychology School we can point that in 2011 the Program of admission, inclusion and permanence (PROPER) was created. The program suggests that the inclusion to university providing of tools, both cognitive and socio-affective, that assists to the continuance in studies.

This task is carried out by a professional staff that through diverse devices guides and deals with any situation that affects the student´s academic path, mainly with beginners.

The mentioned program (PROPER) suggests the following purposes:

- Identify and analyze the admission issues, continuance and graduation of Psychology students, mainly in case of the first years.

- Suggests actions and devices that make possible an appropriate approach of any problem related to the admission, continuance and graduation of Psychology students.

- Get knowledge on the process involved in the admission, continuance and graduation of Psychology students of the National University of La Plata.

Among the activities developed by this program, there are workshops available about reading and academic text comprehension for students of the first year that try to improve their reading to be successful in front of the challenges that university demands.

Results: currently we are processing the collected data. In order to organize the work groups to analyze the present situation, we've selected following variables: familiar educational level, occupational level, origin.

We think that the actions performed by the academic unit with the Program of admission, inclusion and permanence help meaningfully to the inclusion and performance improvement of students who begin their careers.

As counselors, we have to create integral preventive strategies to improve the inclusion of beginner students and provide educational re-guidance of those who drop-out, in order to they can get their own educational projects, social, work and personal.

Key words: beginners – inclusion – workshops – retention.