Humanistic Mentoring in Graduate Education:
An Urgent Innovation in Uncertain Times

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In a global health pandemic context, a group 16 of education Master's students met voluntarily with their tutors in a virtual research support seminar, during the Saturday mornings of the first and second semester of 2020. This study aimed to know to what extent did mentoring and human tutoring characteristics emerge in a virtual research seminar experience. Through a qualitative research approach that included the analysis of the conversations and dialogues of the recorded sessions, insights showed that some of these characteristics emerged naturally along with the sessions, but as time passed, emotional and personal aspects were appearing more often than some others, showing that students felt more comfortable talking about themselves and supporting their classmates, as well as expressing their academic doubts and project thoughts freely because of humanistic tutoring approach. Most of them achieved the goal of finishing their project chapters on time. The humanistic and professional characteristics of teachers emerged as the main factors to develop this humanistic tutoring approach.

INTRODUCTION

Educational Innovation in Times of COVID-19

It seems that world is currently facing a learning culture change in which the number and scores of standardized tests go up, but the understanding and commitment of the student decreases (Ramsay, 2020). As a result of surveys of world business leaders, in 2008, Wagner compiled what he called the seven survival skills that should be developed in the university of the future:

- Critical thinking and problem solving
- Collaboration
- Agility and adaptability
- Initiative and entrepreneurship
- Communication
- Information analysis
- Curiosity and imagination

Other studies support the above mentioned by referring to the need of nurturing human potential inside of universities that enhances individual learning results and at the same time complains about facing, what they call, a crisis in human resources and entrepreneurship (Robinson, 2014 and Fayolle et al. 2020). Characteristics such as flexibility, inclusion, collaboration, authenticity, relevance and the extension of influence of the university will be those that distinguish higher education in institutions of the third millennium according to various authors such as Feliz, 2005, Jonker et al., 2020 or Toraman et al. 2020 to name just a few. While ideal educational objectives should remain lifelong learning, global interaction and metacognition. The importance of interaction in the learning process is further strengthened, since it has been consistently shown that students learn more when they interact with the material, when they interact with each other and when they interact with teachers (Friedman, 2005; Dede and Richards, 2020).

Studies carried out on commitment, interaction and participation of students with their own learning in higher education (learning engagement) proposed that they should be involved in practical situations where they can apply their theoretical knowledge by interacting with teachers and with their classmates. The challenge then prevails to promote knowledge capable of addressing global and fundamental problems in order to register partial and local knowledge according to Arocena and Sutz, 2001 or Nursalam, 2020. It seems - say Flynn and Vredevoogd (2010) - that the new generation of University students prefer an educational model based on activity and interaction that does not align with the one currently prevalent in several of the

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