Tutoring implementation in the Psychology bachelor degree programme, based on e-learning

Implementación de la tutoría en la Licenciatura en Psicología, modalidad virtual

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ABSTRACT

This article is part of the results obtained from the tutoring strategy implemented in the Psychology bachelor degree program, based on e-learning, offered by the Autonomous University of the State of Morelos (UAEM). The experience of the first generation of the mentioned program is analyzed (2014-2018). The purpose of this research project is to document and evaluate the implementation process of tutoring in this program. The research question was: How effective have the virtual cubicles for tutoring been, as implemented in the UAEM Psychology bachelor degree programme. The methodological approach has been action research, with data gathered for the first phase based on e-observation in seven tutoring virtual cubicles, in order to document and evaluate the experience throughout a specific generation. Based on the results, changes and improvements are proposed for the tutoring spaces, resources and process.

RESUMEN

Este artículo es parte de los resultados obtenidos de la operación de la tutoría en la Licenciatura en Psicología, modalidad virtual, de la Universidad Autónoma del Estado de Morelos (UAEM), en la cual se recupera la experiencia de la primera generación de ese programa (2014-2018). El objetivo fue documentar y evaluar el proceso de implementación de la tutoría. La pregunta de investigación fue ¿cuál ha sido la efectividad del cubículo virtual de tutoría implementado en la Licenciatura en Psicología, modalidad virtual, de la UAEM? La metodología consistió en la investigación-acción, y para el acopio y análisis de la información en la primera fase, optamos por la e-observación en siete cubículos virtuales de tutoría a fin de recuperar y evaluar la experiencia de una generación completa de este programa educativo. Con base en los resultados, proponemos ajustes y mejoras en el diseño de los cubículos y en el seguimiento en las actividades de la tutoría.

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OBJECT OF STUDY

In 2003, while adapting to the virtual modality, the on-site curriculum of the bachelor's degree in Psychology of the UAEM [Morelia Autonomous University] incorporated a tutoring program according to the University Model (UAEM, 2011). The strategy used for the implementation of the virtual modality combines two types of online spaces: the student room and the cubicle for group tutoring.

Both spaces respond to the differentiated needs of the students. The student room was conceived as an area of general attention for all and would respond to a double logic of bulletin board and service window, in an on-demand framework. On the other hand, the group tutoring cubicle would offer closer support conditions focused on attending both group and individual needs of the students' learning path. Likewise, the cubicle was identified as a tool to follow up on the transverse component of the curricular map, professional internships and social service, as well as to promote integral formation.

According to the normal population distribution, often represented by the Gaussian curve, it is common that the majority of the student groups are to be found in the average performance and academic achievement values, while few of them tend to be in the extremely high or extremely low values and are often times the main tutoring objective, whether to channel outstanding capabilities or, offer scaffolding to students in danger of academic failure. Following this logic, the student room was conceived mainly to respond to a self-managing service to those mean values in need of specific academic or administrative information, and the cubicles, to identify and give priority to those students at the far ends of the curve.

Four years after the implementation of this virtual tutorial model in the Bachelor's degree in Psychology, several purposes for which said tutoring was conceived were identified as not having been met, more specifically the follow-up of the transverse component of the curricular map, situation that has been acknowledged upon graduation of the first generation.

Likewise, while considering the maturity of the model, documenting it was considered necessary in order to constitute the Tutoring Operative Program (POT, [Spanish acronym]) of the bachelor's degree, and to incorporate it to the Tutoring Plan of Action (PAT, [Spanish acronym]) of the Faculty of Psychology.

In this study, we present a first evaluation of the tutorial model implemented in said bachelor's degree during 2015-2018.

TUTORING IN HIGHER EDUCATION IN MEXICO AND AT THE UAEM

The 2013-2018 National Development Plan (2013) refers to the following tutorial objective: "Reduce school drop-out, improve the graduation efficiency at every educational level and raise the transition rates from one level to the other" (p. 124). This document considers necessary to "expand the operation of the tutorial support systems in order to reduce the student drop-out rate and encourage the timely completion of studies" (p. 124). This plan is echoed in the Education Sector Program (2013) in considering being convenient to "set down new educational actions to prevent and reduce academic drop-out at middle and higher education levels (p. 23).

Several studies on higher education tutoring have been carried out and among them is the study from Fresán and Romo (2011), that refers that the introduction of tutoring in the Mexican educational programs began in the year 2000. As for the National Association of Universities and Higher Education Institutions (ANUIES, Spanish acronym]), it surfaced that the institutions launched tutoring systems to assist students during their entire academic formation with the advice and support of a professor.

Munévar (2015) took up the concept of tutorial action of Castillo and García (1996), who define said concept as a didactic situation that includes the actions of the professor-tutor to help the students in the teaching-learning process, motivating them and providing them with pedagogical orientations in the study of didactic materials, counseling them, orienting and informing them individually as well as in group. As for García *et al.* (2012), Maya (1993) and Valverde and Garrido (2005), they describe the term "tutor" as the teacher who provides academic follow-up during a course.

As for the UAEM, the tutor is the person in charge of following up on other aspects linked to the integral formation, development of study habits and the resolution of administrative, orientation and technical doubts of students. Along these lines, the conceptualization closest to how the UAEM conceived support tutoring during the academic life of the students is that of Lugo and León (2008), who define tutoring as an academic activity that contributes to the integral formation of the student by focusing on the students' academic achievement, the help provided to resolve their academic problems and the development of study, work, reflection and social coexistence habits.

The institutional documents referring to tutoring are the University Model (UAEM, 2011) that considers four instrument axes of the formative mediation: the formation strategy for the students' academic generation and the application of knowledge, teaching intervention modes for the integral formation, the tutoring program as well as the hybrid and virtual modalities. This research focuses on three axes as we will explain further on.

The Institutional Tutoring Program (PIT, [Spanish acronym]) of the UAEM (2013) defines tutoring as

> A personal and academic support process throughout the formative process to improve the academic achievement, resolve academic problems, develop study, work, reflection, social coexistence strategies and foster the student's integral formation, orienting them, i.e., it is a systematic orientation provided to a student to support them in their academic performance according to their needs and specific requirements within the academic context (p. 23).

The same document considers three tutoring modalities: in-class, virtual and hybrid (pp. 24 and 25).

The design and curricular restructuration guidelines of the UAEM (2017) point out coherence with the University Model and the PIT by defining tutoring as

> An academic activity that contributes to the integral formation of an individual undergoing formation and that improves his academic achievement, helps resolve his academic problems and develops study, work, reflection and social coexistence habits. Through tutoring, the capacities, thought processes, decision making are stimulated, and support is given in resolving problems and developing projects. Tutoring must be incorporated into educational programs according to every educational level (UAEM, 2017, p. 35).

The PAT of the Faculty of Psychology is also in line with the University Model, the PIT and the design and curricular restructuration guidelines (UAEM-Psychology Faculty, 2017); however, it only considers the in-class modality, hence the need to perform an update that includes the virtual modality, since as of the University Council agreement in December 2017, the Faculty of Psychology took over the said educational program in 2018, which was the former responsibility of the e-UAEM Multimodal Formation Program.

Regarding the tutoring phases, the University model sets forth the tutoring moments according to the stage at which the student is in his formation: at the beginning of the educational program, at the intermediate or advanced level, at the moment of choosing the student's field of studies or the specialization, in professional or social internships, and in the generation and application of knowledge that concludes in the supervision of scholarly work to obtain a degree or thesis (UAEM, 2011).

The implementation of the tutoring in the virtual Psychology program is based on the PIT and it consists of three stages (UAEM, 2013):

- Initial stage: the tutor's function is to mediate the transition of the student's formative process from the in-class modality to the virtual modality.

- During the entire process: the tutor's function is to provide academic follow-up, identify and attend the specific needs and give support in resolving problems.

- Final stage: the tutor's function is to orient the student on the graduation options on completion of the formative process, professional internships and social service.

The specific activities of the tutor were defined as follows (UAEM, 2013):

- Academic function: help the students identify the competences they need to reinforce or develop, as well as the functions that they must comply with in order to develop the formative process in the best of circumstances.
- Administrative function: support the students in the administrative enrollment, permanence and graduation processes. To do so, it is necessary that the tutor know the administrative processes regarding the program operation.
- Technical function: the tutor must focus on resolving the basic aspects of consultancy on the platform, for the online advisors (change of dates, visualization of elements, modification of files, configuration of elements and grades, among others) as well as those of the students (sending messages, assignments, forum publication).
- Orientation function: maintain willingness and moderation to support advisors and students during mediation, pay attention or channel personal problems that affect their performance in class.

EVOLUTION OF TUTORING AT THE UAEM

The tutoring activity in the different academic units of the UAEM operates under different forms according to the needs that arise in the educational contexts. As we have mentioned previously, there are several institutional documents that address the topic of tutoring. Besides those already mentioned, there is the Institutional Development Plan (PIDE, [Spanish acronym]) 2012-2018 and its most recent version, PIDE 2018-2023.

According to these documents, every academic unit designs a PAT for every educational program with the intention of defining the actions and resources necessary to the implementation of the tutoring in the context of the program.

On the one hand, POT [Spanish acronym, Tutoring Operative Program] establishes the tutoring operation criteria and mechanisms in all the in-class, virtual and hybrid modalities.

The UAEM has taken tutoring into account since the 1990's. Table 1 shows its institutional evolution.

Table 1. Evolution of tutoring at the UAEM higher level.

Years	Actions
1991	Article 40 of the General Regulation of Postgraduate Studies refers to the tutoring system as "creating tutoring collegiate academic structures that guide the student in his/her academic formation and research" (2005, p. 21)
1999	The UAEM University Council approves the Guidelines for the curricular restructuration of the educational programs, which take tutoring into account as an element of the curricular flexibility.
2010	The UAEM University Model is approved as a specific section for tutoring.
2011	The first virtual tutoring cubicles are created for in-class programs.
2012	The 2012-2018 PIDE considers that the educational innovation of the university revolves around three axes: curricular innovation, PIT and the promotion of multimodal formation.
2012	Launching of the first edition of the multimodal tutoring course whose purpose was that teachers acquire and mobilize resources to mediate tutorial processes with the support of virtual learning environments. The Pharmacy School and the Agro Livestock Sciences Faculty participated in this first edition.
2013	The second edition of the multimodal tutorial course is being offered to the teachers of the Faculty of Chemical Sciences and Engineering, the academic unit that implements this strategy for the first time at the UAEM.
2013	The UAEM University Council approves the PIT [Spanish acronym, Institutional Tutoring Program].
2015	The PIT that was approved by the University Council on June 21st, 2013; modified in the session of the University Council on September 2015 (still currently in effect)
2015	The virtual tutoring cubicles are created for the Law and Psychology Bachelors' degrees in virtual modalities (as of this year all the generations of both programs are starting using them)
2017	The multimodal self-administered tutoring course is offered for the first time to the UAEM teachers-tutors who wish to be trained.
2017	The PAT of the in-class bachelor's degree in Psychology of the Faculty of Psychology is approved.

2018	The multimodal self-administration tutorial course is offered for the second time.
2018	The 2018-2023 PIDE considers that 100% of the educational programs at middle and higher education will have a PAT and that the fulltime professors-researchers will give the tutoring.

Source: Self development, based on institutional documents of UAEM.

TUTORING IN THE BACHELORS' DEGREE IN PSYCHOLOGY, VIRTUAL MODALITY

The curriculum of the bachelor's degree in Psychology, virtual modality, establishes a nine-semester duration course, and from the start to the end, virtual tutoring is taken into account. The tutor, through this modality, follows up on the components of the transverse block (English, computing and ethical code). Moreover, it provides support to the students with their different needs throughout the semester. A student room and a virtual cubicle have been made available so tutoring can be carried out. This tutoring offers contents and activities to attend the students' needs. Likewise, in every semester, the students must participate in different activities to go forward in the transverse block, integral formation, internships and social service.

According to the curriculum (UAEM, 2014, p. 56), it is essential to implement a PAT consistent with the PIT for the educational program to operate. Until now, we do not have this document; however, the tutoring program in the educational program is based on the PIT and strategies and activities for the following up of students have been established. These will be explained further on.

METHODOLOGICAL DESIGN

The Frascati Manual of the Organization for Cooperation and Economic Development (OCDE, [Spanish acronym] 2002) defines applied research as an original research conducted with the purpose of acquiring new knowledge and addresses a specific practical purpose or object.

One of the variants of applied research is the research-action which "improves practice by developing the capacity of who exercises it to discriminate and judge when facing specific and complex situations. It unifies research, improves performance and develops people in their professional roles" (Elliott, 1991, p. 52).

Since our research was conducted by three individuals involved in virtual tutoring with different roles, including the tutor role in the Bachelor's degree in Psychology, virtual modality, and considering that it aimed at generating a proposal for the improvement of the model implemented;

said research lies within the scope of applied research, more specifically research-action.

The first phase of the informal exploratory interviews of the tutors and the personal practice as tutor of two of the authors of this paper allowed them to identify that the student room was responding to its original purposes. However, we noticed that the space that required some adjustments was the virtual tutoring cubicle; hence, we decided to carry out the research in at least three stages according to the principles of iterative enquiry (spiral research) in research-action:

- Assessment of the first generation of the cubicle operation (seven virtual cubicles from the third to the ninth semester since the first generation did not have any cubicle for the first and second semesters; the cubicles were implemented in the 2015 second generation).
- Proposal of modifications to the virtual cubicle according to the findings of the first phase.
- Assessment of the operation of the modified cubicles, and if necessary, propose new modifications and assess them.

To assess the first cubicles, we decided to conduct a qualitative approximation in e-observation. This cast an integral vision of the tutoring implementation based on the functions of the tutor proposed in the UAEM University Model (2011): academic function, administrative function, technical function and orientation function.

Hine (2004) defines e-observation as observing in detail the interactions of the participants and the use of the tools specific to the virtual learning environment, in this case, the Moodle platform. In this process, the researcher is submerged in a world that studies for a specific time and takes into account interactions, activities and meanings that are forged among those that participate in the formation processes. Ardèvol *et al.* (2003) conceptualize it as a process to register and analyze information on the online object(s) of research.

In the first phase of this research, we carried out e-observation in seven cubicles of the program, from the third to the ninth semester. We chose to observe the first cubicle implementations since they are the reflection of the model originally formulated. This e-observation was semi-structured since we used a guide of items deriving from the general question of the research which facilitated the registration and categorization of the information. This allowed us to perform an analysis of the interactions, activities and resources available used by the tutors and the students in every virtual cubicle with the purpose of becoming totally aware, in one generation, of the situations or effects that arose during the operation and, based on the results, propose adjustments or improvements to the virtual cubicles, or propose their redesign.

RESULTS

This paper shows the results of the first phase of the research and partial results of the second, besides a first proposal to redesign the virtual tutoring cubicle according to the e-observation.

The first generation of this educational program was constituted initially by a total of 30 students and a tutor for every semester (as of the third semester). This tutor could be the same person or someone different since the appointment of the teachers in every semester depended on a merit-based competition. It should be mentioned that in order to serve as a tutor, it was necessary to have previous tutorial experience or formation (in-class or virtual modality) and being qualified as online advisor.

For the implementation of virtual tutoring in this first generation of the program, we revised the operation of tutoring in in-class programs. We observed that the UAEM did not have solely one model since different activities were assigned according to the program and the academic unit. By following the University Model and the PIT and the program specifications, we proposed that the tutor, in this context, would provide follow up in the integral formation, curricular transverse block (Computing, English and Professional Code of Ethics), administrative, technical and orientation aspects, in order for the students to meet program credits or requirements.

The professional code of ethics operates as a learning unit in the list of subjects that make up the curricular blocks even though it is important that it be credited in a specific amount of time; however, credits from the computer and English courses have to be completed with courses given by the UAEM or by external educational institutions. The tutor is responsible of providing the students with a follow up and ensuring that they obtain the corresponding credits. This will be detailed further on.

According to our e-observation, the information collected was categorized as follows:

- Welcome video
- Communication tools
- Tutoring activities
- Tutoring resources
- Integral formation
- Support services to students

WELCOME VIDEO

The third semester cubicle did not have any welcome video. The information in the video of the fourth and fifth cubicles was provided by the tutors in a generic manner: a brief welcome, presentation on their academic background, professional experience and some of functions they have to carry out as online tutors. The tutors of the seventh and eighth cubicles talked only of three functions of the tutor; it was an incomplete presentation. The tutors of the sixth and ninth semesters were the only ones to mention the four functions of a tutor according to the UAEM University Model (2011). Next, as an example, we will refer to the contribution of the tutor of the ninth cubicle (e-observation, 2019):

- Orientation: emotional support to go forward in their academic development as well as channel them with a specialist, if necessary.
- Technique: Counseling on how to resolve problems in using the platform (accessing the platform or uploading files).
- Administrative: support in revising grades, re-inscriptions and procedures for make-up examinations.
- Academic: support in developing academic work, study habits or research work.

COMMUNICATION TOOLS

The communication tools of all the virtual tutoring cubicles include latest development forum, questions forum, chat and social forum.

Latest developments forum: In this type of forum we identified 86 topics opened by the tutors in the third to the ninth semesters of which 37 correspond to the administrative dimension, 44 to the academic dimension, and five to the orientation dimension. No topics were posted in the technical dimension. It is important to mention that the information obtained from the e-observation was characterized by finding concrete aspects on the three functions of the tutor:

Administrative function. A total of 37 topics were opened of which 18 corresponded to letting know the dates, timetables and reminders for the chat sessions; fifteen were notices for scholarship procedures, dates and exam procedures (make-up exam and proficiency certificates), payment receipts, credentialing process, data updating for school insurance, online reference library procedure, UAEM school calendar, change of course advisor and follow up at the beginning of blocks; three topics were tutors welcoming students; and one of them was an invitation to attend a march. As we can notice, the administrative function shows a varied menu of the information provided by the tutor to the students; hence, the administrative area in charge of the operation of the educational program could rely on the tutors in order not to have a heavy workload and be able to give the corresponding follow up.

Academic function. There were 45 topics in all, of which 29 consisted in inviting the students to participate in different integral formation activities, computing, English, health, sports, academic acts and professional internships. Nine were on the diffusion and follow up of the transverse block of the educational program; four were to invite the students in carrying out activities of the virtual tutoring cubicle; two had to do with the teaching assessment; and one was on the students expectations of the course. As we can see, the academic function also had a significant weight in comparison to the follow up of the completion of the credits of the transverse block, general formation, assessment of the courses and professional internships. This function was in line with the University Model and UAEM PIT (2011, 2013).

Orientation function. A total of five topics were registered, one of which had to do with the following up of the students' formation process during the month of September given the earthquake of September 19, 2017, that affected the Morelia population. Another topic was to offer the students support group to address emotional containment as well as the earthquake. There was also another topic on the mediation between students and advisors; another on the work environment and lastly, one on the diffusion of a support group for the UAEM parenting students. The orientation function has a lesser number of aspects the tutor had to provide follow up to in comparison to the administrative and academic dimensions; notwithstanding the fact that the five topics were important to support the students.

Questions forum. This forum invited the students being tutored to share their concerns so the tutor could formulate responses that could be read by the entire group. In the third semester, the following questions were posted: What is the date of payment of the stipend scholarship? At what time are the English and computing courses given? How to download the payment receipt? In the virtual cubicle under observation, responses were given to the first two questions but not to the last one. In the fourth semester, the questions were: In what level of English should I enroll? Can I take an in-class computer course and at what institution? From the fifth to the ninth semesters there were no questions. In the eighth semester there was a topic to share information of the administrative dimension which was also published in the latest development forum. In the ninth semester, the tutor added a line of discussion to survey the participants in regard to the timetables in which they could participate in the chat; only one participant responded and pointed out she had complicated schedules but she would be grateful if the tutor could clarify her doubts on the credits allotted to English and computing. The tutor attended her request.

Chat. Chat sessions were not programmed in the fourth, fifth, sixth, eighth and ninth semesters; hence, there was no participation. Chat sessions were planned in the third and seventh semesters; however, there were no registry entries. With these data, we realized that the participation in this

activity is null since most of the cubicles do not project these sessions. This called our attention since in the last development forum, there are 18 publications of the tutor (third, fifth, seventh and ninth, one publication; fourth, twelve publications; and sixth, two) inviting the students to participate in the chats. Therefore, we infer that the procedure to develop the corresponding programming might not have been clear to the tutors.

Social Forum. Of the seven cubicles in which e-observation was conducted, only two cubicles had this space available, five of them did not. In the third semester, the tutor made a presentation in the cubicles mentioned above, and in the sixth semester, the tutor opened two lines of discussion. On the first line, she invited the students to participate in the massive open online course (MOOC) *Search on the Internet for university students* offered by the UAEM, to acquire computing credits. On the second line, she invited the students to revise the activities and the information sheet in order to submit their assignments in a timely manner. We realized that this publication was making inadequate use of the space since this invitation should have been made in the last development forum.

Given the evidence of scarce use, we consider that the social forum is not necessary in virtual cubicles since the students have other spaces such as digital social networks to interact in non-academic aspects.

As for this communication tool section, the space mostly used was the latest developments and announcements forum, where the information published referred to administrative, academic and orientation functions. As for the question forum, the evidence proved that a reduced number of students made use of it. We observed an optional use (by tutors) of the weekly chat; however, there was zero student entry. This is probably due to the fact that most tutors did not program the sessions.

TUTORING ACTIVITIES

Regarding virtual cubicle tutoring, eleven activities were registered from the third to the ninth semesters which are shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Tutoring activities from the third to the ninth semesters

Semester	Activities	Number of contributions on the platform
Third	Questionnaire. Whom should I resort to?	13 contributions out of 27 registered on the platform
	Questionnaire. My plan of studies	15 contributions out of 27 registered on the platform

	Student's diary	2 participations out of 27 registered on the platform
Fourth	Questionnaire at the beginning of the semester	8 contributions out of 27 registered on the platform
	Forum: *Top tips for study success*	Without any participation
Fifth	Forum: The value of the near win	1 contribution out of 27 registered on the platform
Sixth	Forum: The spectrum of plagiarism	The forum has three lines of discussion: On the *Topic 1* line. Six students out of 17 participated On the *Topic 2* line. Six students out of 17 participated On the *Topic 3* line. Six students out of 17 participated
Seventh	Forum: The importance of empathy	There were 10 contributions out of 17
Eighth	Virtual exhibit of professional internships	There are 10 contributions out of 15 participants and the tutor provided a grade and feedback to all of them.
	Forum: Social service and degree eligibility modalities	There are 11 contributions out of 15. The tutor gave feedback to three of the participants only and assigned grades to five contributions.
Ninth	Forum: Graduating from the bachelor's degree in Psychology, virtual modality	The tutor added three lines of discussion: On the *Topic 1* line. Five students out of fifteen participated in the discussion on: *Degree Eligibility* On Topic *2* line. Five students out of fifteen participated in the discussion on: *Employment, self-employment or postgraduate studies* On the *Topic 3* line. Five students out of fifteen participated in the discussion on: *5-year Vision*

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Source: Self development, based on e-observation made in virtual cubicles from the third to the ninth semesters (2019).

As we observe in Table 2, the activities focus on reflecting on a specific and pertinent topic according to the stage the student is at. There was at least one participation in all the activities except for the fourth semester forum.

TUTORING RESOURCES

These resources are shown in Table 3.

Table 3. Tutoring resources from the third to the ninth semesters.

Semester	Tutoring resources
Third	PIT Plan of studies of the bachelor's degree in Psychology, virtual modality Curricular map of the bachelor's degree in Psychology, virtual modality
Fourth	Semester initial presentation Infographic: *Top tips for study success* PIT Psychology Plan of studies, virtual modality Psychology curricular map, virtual modality Who accompanies me throughout my formative process? In which spaces do I get my formation?
Fifth	Video Sarah Lewis: *Embrace the near win*
Sixth	Reading The Spectrum of Plagiarism: Labeling 10 Types of Non-original Work 2016-2 Semester initial presentation
Seventh	Reading, Reading fiction makes us more empathetic
Eighth	Semester initial presentation (2nd, 4th, 6th and 8th) |August, 2017 Storytelling: Report from the Observatory of Educational Innovation

	Video: *What is storytelling?* Information resources on social service and degree eligibility modalities
Ninth	Information resource on graduating from the bachelor's degree

Source: Self development, based on e-observation made in virtual cubicles from the third to the ninth semesters (2019).

As we can observe in Table 3, there is a variety of resources (videos, presentations, texts, infographic) that are related to the type of tutoring activities that have been programmed. Some of the cubicles have the semester initial presentation detailing the operation of, for example, the block calendar, dates of examinations, assessment, etc., that help the student remember the important moments of the operation of every block.

INTEGRAL FORMATION

This section of the cubicles is organized in three subsections. Each one of them has an offer of options and a space so students can upload their participation in the courses or activities in the corresponding environment:

Integral formation. This section presents a MOOC list that prestigious universities offer on portals specialized in this type of course. According to the University Model, the integral formation of the student is being promoted; hence, this option is included in the virtual cubicles. According to e-observation, from the 27 participants registered in the third semester, 19 out of 25 submitted a total of 25 reports.

Computing. A MOOC list is presented as an alternative to cover the computing credits. According to the e-observation, from the third to the sixth semester, there was no record submitted; in the seventh semester one student submitted two; in the eighth semester, four participants sent a report and one, submitted three; in the ninth semester, two participants submitted two reports, one participant submitted one report, and another six. In the last three semesters, there was a greater number of deliveries possibly since the students were at the end of their studies. It is worth mentioning that for the majority of the reports submitted the tutor did not provide any feedback on the acceptance of the reports which is quite interesting since it is an aspect that could have helped the student in knowing if he was doing the right thing to obtain the credits for the transverse block.

English. The data were remitted to the UAEM Foreign Languages Center, where the students can take English courses. In some of the cubicles, a MOOC to develop competences in the English language was offered to the participants. According to the e-observation, in the ninth semester, twelve

students out of fifteen registered delivered at least one report; hence the inference that said students were those that remained active; however, from these 12 students, three of them are pending in submitting their reports, and the majority of the students completed their credits in said language.

SUPPORT SERVICES TO STUDENTS

Every cubicle has a student support service section whose purpose is to be informative since it contains the link and telephone numbers of the ORIENTEL service; all students with psychological problems can resort to this center (or be referred to by tutors). This section also offers a link to the scholarship institutional page, link to the UAEM Service web where the students can obtain information on the services offered by the library, medical center, etc.; link to the UAEM different activities and calls that could be of interest to the students.

DISCUSSION

When Menéndez (2012) clarifies that "a good in-class teacher (even an excellent one) is not necessarily a good online tutor" (p. 50), up to a certain point, he is probably right since the role and competences in virtual learning environments a tutor is required to develop go beyond being an expert in disciplinary knowledge since the online tutor must understand the nature of education in non-conventional learning modalities (hybrid or virtual modality) in order to acquire or foster skills and attitudes in line with their tasks such as accompanying, guiding, orienting and advising students on their formative path.

Hence, to implement bachelor's degrees (Law and Psychology) in the virtual modality at the UAEM, it was essential to allocate a specific space (virtual cubicle) to carry out the functions of academic, administrative, technical and orientation accompaniment by means of a "virtual tutor". Moreover, the university chose to hire teachers qualified as online advisors to comply with the tutoring functions since the latter require an integral profile that, in a first instance, carries out mediation and interaction with the student; and second, intermittently with administrative and technical support managers who not only contribute in generating, administrating and maintaining the virtual space but also in contacting the students; third, in the university and social contexts be the link or spokesperson of situations such as "social service" and administrative procedures; fourth, interact and mediate situations with online advisors in charge of teaching a subject and the individuals responsible of the formative internships.

It is essential that the role of the online tutor in the Bachelor's degree in Psychology possess the skills, knowledge and attitude to be an excellent mediator with the students, their colleagues, the personnel of the management area and, in turn, with all of them at times and in spaces that overlap. Likewise, the online tutor must acknowledge that mediation

understood as a fundamental action must be carried out by every one of the stakeholders involved in the teaching-learning process in a virtual setting.

Rodríguez, Sánchez and Rojas (2008) point out that "mediation acts in reestablishing systems of order derived from cognitive or affective conflicts arising or structured by the meeting of stakeholders, i. e., it is useful when the need arises of generating links through consensus, allowing the reorganization of the group whenever necessary" (p. 358). In order to carry out the mediation, every one of the stakeholders must put their communication competences in practice since, within virtual learning environments, every detail of the dimensions of educational communication must be carefully taken care of in order to understand what is being said and, at the same time, be understood by the other stakeholders.

Lastly, the proposal of implementing the multimodal tutoring has several areas of opportunity as we will see in the conclusion section. We should highlight the need to generate integral intervention modes that help the students to feel accompanied during their formative process, hence, we consider that tutorial mediation is a vital element that helps different stakeholders in establishing strategies and plans of action necessary to foster conditions that allow the subject under formation (student) to build their knowledge based on their context and reality.

CONCLUSION

The first phase of this research helped us identify some aspects that require the intervention and improvement of the operation of the tutoring model implemented in the program and proposals that constitute the second phase. Next, we present the areas we consider deserve priority attention.

In view of the absence of virtual modality in the PAT of the bachelor's degree in Psychology, the need looms of updating this document to include it. It is also convenient to create the POT to document the follow up given every semester. It is worth mentioning that, *de facto*, the virtual tutorial cubicles operate as POT.

The University Model proposes incorporating the integral formation; however, the UAEM educational programs in the operative environment do not always follow a strategy to guarantee that said formation is met each semester. In view of this situation, the program of Psychology in virtual modality requires a tutor to operate who is responsible of following up on the activities through the tutoring cubicle in order for the student to cover the credits or requirements related to the components of the non-disciplinary plan of studies or that can be considered peripheral, as is the integral formation, and the components of the transverse block or social service.

Likewise, we identified that the integral formation in this program did not have credits, thus, the students do not consider it as something important in their formation. It seems that not having any credits makes it non-existent. It is the same with tutoring, which does not have any credit value; therefore, it is complicated that the students carry out the activities included in the cubicles. Hence, a proactive attitude from the tutor is necessary for the cubicle to comply with its function.

Regarding the tutors' welcome videos and their tutorial framework, it is essential to standardize a plan in which every participant presents in a complete way the activities they carry out. As for the communication tools, the function of every space must be explained to the tutors since some of them used them incorrectly or did not use them as is the case of the chat.

According to the results, the participation in the chat activities programmed in every virtual cubicle was null. Therefore, these activities could be suppressed or oriented to tutors on how to program said activities so the students could access the platform whenever necessary.

It is important to diversify the activities in order to motivate a greater participation of the students since on a total of eleven, six correspond to forums. The activities of every cubicle are designed to accompany and reinforce every formative stage of the students; however, in operating the program, the students do not perform the activities all the time and those who complete them do not always receive the tutor's feedback; hence, the need to restructure the design of the prototypes of the virtual tutoring cubicles and categorize the activities by formative stage: general, disciplinary and professional, besides including other supplementary activities to offer the tutor a range of options that covers the needs of this tutoring. By doing so at every formative stage, the tutor would have more elements to issue an integral assessment of the student.

Regarding the delivery of reports, we observed that the students harbored constant doubts on how many reports they had to submit per semester and what type of activities would be considered valid; these concerns were not always attended by the tutor on call. Another aspect is the difficulty of follow up the formative path since the virtual cubicles are unconnected between semesters and the tutor does not have any information on the history of the student regarding topics whose follow up is essential, such as covering the computing and English credits.

Regarding the design of the virtual tutoring cubicle, we noticed that the first version of Moodle 1.9 platform was used, and subsequently, version 2.7. By comparing the first and the last cubicle observed, we noticed that the last improved in all senses: graphically, topically and structurally. As an additional note, even though its importance is not obvious, we should mention that the virtual cubicle constitutes an evidence for external assessments (Institutional Committees for the Assessment of Higher

Education or the applicable one); this sets strategic value as means of documentation of the tutoring process.

On completion of the e-observation process, we noticed that we could achieve greater use of the spaces if there were a sole cubicle for every generation (not semester) so the evidence of the activities carried out in the previous semesters could remain in one space; this would facilitate the follow up of the academic and administrative dimensions of the program. As evidence of external assessments, it would also be effective in avoiding academic drop out since the following up on every student's path and integral formation process as well as the tutor's attention-intervention would be in one space per generation.

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