

Self-Assessment Of The University Teaching Staff Functions

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ABSTRACT

The Higher Education institutions should offer excellence teaching and qualification opportunities for the university teaching staff. La Facultad Integrada de Pernambuco (FACIPE) (the Integrated School of Pernambuco) in Brazil, following the global trend, has been involved in implementing changes to help improve the quality of education in our universities.

The aim of this paper is to show how the teachers themselves, the core of this change, perceive their continuing training and how it can help in their upgrade process as a university lecturer.

Thus, we use the teaching staff self-assessment as a tool to develop a FACIPE teaching staff profile and a strategy to foster self-reflection to discover and identify the "real" needs for the Comisión Propia de Evaluación (CPA) (The Own Commission of Assessment) to be able to arrange Continuing Education seminars, courses and / or workshops.

Keywords: Self-assessment; Higher Education; Teaching staff functions

1. INTRODUCTION

The term "education" was first used at the beginning of the eighteenth century with the formation of the schooling system....., the ambiguity of the contents which can be deduced from the different sociocultural environments is found in its own Latin etymology, as educere means "to make something come out" and educate makes reference to "breeding,raising feeding or producing". (Duarte Clemente, 2011)

Since the the middle of last century, the concept of education has been changing, because humanity is going through changes and it now requires professionals which we never thought could have existed. The evolution of knowledge is responsible for these changes. Teaching today wouldn't exist without the learning of the students which will be the professionals the labor market requires. Nowadays most countries accept three types of education: formal, non-formal and informal. the formal one refers to schools, high schools and universities. The non-formal refers to private courses and academies. Informal education includes both formal and non-formal, since it is the education acquired throughout life.

A great educator from Brazil, Professor Paulo Freire, believed that dialogue is the key element where both teacher and student are active subjects. For him, education is self-awareness that is why he defends it as a practice of freedom. For this reason, Freire fights "banking education" where educators deposit statements and students receive, memorize and repeat: there is no educational development or learning here, barely a temporary memorization. Freire believes that in this form of education, the teacher is the only subject in the process and the student has no voice to answer, mature....

Although the term is very broad, we believe, " Education should always convert to a decision making skill on behalf of the learner, which necessarily implies that the educator be, in any case, a supplier of options, pluralism, without any kind of coercion; meaning that if there is no freedom, no trust and no possibility of learning and personalizing the world, reality, people and things, we can hardly speak of education." (Colom,B., 2008, page 55)

Acquiring professional-academic skills must always involve innovation, change, transformation and all in a double sense, at a personal level as well as the social or collective fact of the transformation. (Ferrándiz, 2011)

For this, as professionals in the field of human science, the professional must be able to perform, with autonomously and responsibly, intellectual non-routine tasks, pursuing objectives in complex situations.

This set of skills should allow the professionals to mobilize not only their <<knowledge>> in any given situation, it also involves setting into motion a "know how" and a "knowing how to be" specific to this job, knowledge that should also be learned. (Rué, 2008)

Perrenoud (2004), has elaborated a set of competencies for the teaching profession, on which we inspired ourselves to present the tasks that we consider to be most important for the student's progress and abilities.

1. Managing the learning progress, acquiring a long term vision of the teaching objectives, establishing a periodic control of competencies and making decisions about progress.
2. Elaborating and developing differentiation devices, addressing the heterogeneity of a classroom, which in Brazil has an average of 40 students.
3. Involving students in their learning and work, since it is the teacher who has to foster the desire to learn in students, making the relationship with knowledge and the meaning of school work, more explicit. Also developing a self-assessment ability in the student.
4. Working in groups, the teacher has to boost permanent teamwork, confronting a crisis of conflict among the many students, jointly analyzing complex and practical situations as well as professional problems.
5. Using new technologies, ie, the classroom is not the only place where a teacher should impart his knowledge; sending school material via email to students and using multimedia devices in class.
6. Facing the duties and ethical dilemmas of this profession, alerting and warning students about violence in the city, fighting against gender, ethnic and social discrimination; creating rules on common living among students, developing a sense of responsibility, solidarity and justice among students, because above all, the teacher is an EDUCATOR.
7. Organizing one's own continuous formation, because teachers must be able to explain their practices, establish a control of competencies and their very own personal formation program; accepting and participating in the formation of their colleagues and exchange experiences with them.

Formative assessment and self-assessment are the basis for professional growth, also to make innovation and change possible. This has to lead us to reflect about our beliefs and actions, to share these reflexions with colleagues, to listen to their comments and receive feedback about the work that has been done (Cano, 2005, p.184).

In this sense, self-assessment is a process in which participants can realize their potential and limitations and with that they can take the necessary measures to increase their knowledge and look for help to get over the obstacles which interfere in their learning process. That academic growth opens the door to sound judgments about their emotional and academic behavior; enables them to analyze the reason for their success and failure; it nourishes their learning process and helps with that of their peers; with critical awareness it evaluates the learning process accepting success and failure. (Ferrándiz, 2011)

2. METHODOLOGY

The aim of this study is to identify the meaning of the Continuing Education of the University Professor and what are the different characteristics at each university, in the wake of studies such as those of: Giroux, 2001; Pimenta and Anastasiou, 2002, Ventura, 2004; Llorente , 2007; Zabalza, 2007, Lima, 2008; Fagundes, 2011)

Because of the data obtained in 2004 at the University of FAPIPE in Brazil on the training of students in higher education and its relationship to poor training of university teachers (Duarte Clemente, 2011), we have set out to know the training plans offered by the services some European universities; to observe the professionalism and training of teachers, analyze requirements and / or voluntary nature of continued learning, self-assessment on the responsibility of the training and relate it to the needs of the university.

A design of descriptive/interpretive nature was used, meaning non experimental, since at no time did we intend to modify the situation, only describe each situation at a given time.

The sample consisted of members of the management team, coordination of the various faculties, people responsible for continuing training programs and teacher-users of those programs in three European universities, namely University of Aveiro (Portugal), University of Porto (Portugal) and University of Castilla-La Mancha (Spain). [See Table 1].

Table 1

Sector	U. Aveiro	U. Porto	U.C.L.M.
Management Team	1	1	1
Faculty Coordination	1	1	1
Head of the training programs	1	1	2
Teacher-Users	2	1	3

To obtain information we went through the following procedures:

- Document analysis (review of web pages, documents provided by the management teams and the coordinators of the Faculties)
- Semi-structured interviews
- Focus groups (with those members of the university community who wanted to participate anonymously)

3. RESULTS

In order to facilitate the reading process, quantitative and qualitative charts have been interspersed as well as some of our own comments.

In order to understand continuous training we start at the end, that is, we start from the self-assessment questions presented to the teacher-users, like:

What does continuous teacher training mean to you, as a university teacher?

We were happily surprised by the unanimity of positive responses of the interviewees on the importance that must be attributed to this type of training. This confirms the forecast made in the conceptual context of our study and strengthens our idea of being on the right track, having chosen a current topic, relevant and useful, not only to the universities we analyzed, but to provide a basis for future research and / or training in other universities.

We also found a unanimous response from the coordinators of the services at University of Aveiro and Castilla-La Mancha, about the importance of this area. Both coordinators reminded us that teachers of Basic Education have always had this type of training, so the novelty lies in moving this need to Higher Education. (Until recently we believed in the direct relationship between a good researcher and a good teacher, a relationship may not be not necessarily be so).

But we believe that one of the answers given by respondents, shows the importance given by the current university teachers to their training, considering it as an opportunity for reflection on teaching, itself "... since the hectic life of a university professor does not provide much time to reflect on their work .. "

When asked if the University supports the initiative of continued teacher education, the answers are generally affirmative, although it is carried out very differently. We believe, and so do most of our interviewees, that the important thing is not the existence of a formal body for Lifelong Learning, but and above all for the management teams of the universities (Rector, Vice-Rector, Dean, etc.) to institutionalize and encourage participation in these actions.

Table 2

<i>Universidad</i>	<i>Servicio</i>	<i>Año de comienzo</i>	<i>Estructura</i>	<i>Organización</i>	<i>Difusión</i>	<i>Obligatoriedad</i>
UA	UNAVE	2005	9 personas	3 cursos	A través de la web	No
UCLM	UIE	2005	7 personas	35 cursos 1 experto en docencia universitaria	A través de la web	No
UP	Depende de cada Facultad	2005		Depende de cada facultad	A través de la web	No

One thing to note is that the three universities have started the first training activity the same year and finished in half the time stipulated by the Bologna Declaration, where all the signatory countries had until 2010 to implement the European Higher Education Space. [See Table 2].

Of the thirteen respondents, five believe that workshops and short-term courses are more effective, recognizing that the faculty teachers have to work many hours and this makes it difficult to attend long duration courses. Three of the respondents believe that training should be varied and that it's the universities which should offer courses of various lengths as needed.

After analyzing the responses, we note that the proposed training plans in the three entities are very similar, no innovations to encourage teachers to participate (hence the very scarce participation, less than 50% of teachers attend this internal training).

We think and the respondents have noted so, that in large part, this low participation is due to the same courses offered year after year and the little relevance given by the management to the training demands of teacher-users.

4. CONCLUSIONS

Improvement in the teaching process starts with an effective self-assessment to help us understand the mistakes and fix them in pursuit of quality education (Calatayud, 2008).

This process of reflection should lead to an attitude of evaluative self-criticism to the extent that each teacher perceives the need to change any of the values assumed and some of the attitudes expressed, for other values that better satisfy and match their way of thinking about teaching, and in particular university teaching. Self-assessment of training content enables each professional to adapt their initial training to their function as university professors.

The use of self-evaluation to improve university teaching leads us to the study of the skills required in higher education to find appropriate responses to face the new educational methods and techniques (Cano, 2005).

Following this study, we corroborate the idea of Brown and Glasner (2007), that self-assessment is the involvement of users identifying standards and / or criteria to apply to their work and the passing of judgments about the area that these criteria and standards have covered. In the case of university teachers this is linked to the

functions that are requested, such as Teaching, Research, Management and University Extension and Continuing Education, preferring courses more according with their needs, feeling identified with these functions, thus showing interest in the goals and objectives they pursue.

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