

Tutorial Action for the Development of Social Skills in University Students

Acción tutorial para el desarrollo de las habilidades sociales en estudiantes universitarios

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Summary

This research was carried out to design tutorials on the care of undeveloped social skills of university students, through which they express their needs, feelings, preferences, opinions and rights, respecting others and as a consequence self-reinforcement is observed and the probability of obtaining external reinforcement is maximized. The study was approached from the interpretive paradigm, qualitative approach, the projective - holistic method as a systematic process. Diagnostic information was collected from students and tutors, through interviews and focus groups, focused on behavioral, personal and situational skills. From all of this, categories and subcategories were identified that allowed choosing strategies to meet the needs. As a result, it was demonstrated that social skills, an important aspect for insertion and work performance, have not been developed despite the existence of the accompaniment of tutors. Also, the strategies used in the tutorial actions are not adequate; therefore, they must be modified. Also, it was concluded that university institutions must carry out planning processes for tutorials after diagnosis.

Keywords: Social Skills, Tutorial Action, University Tutoring.

Resumen

La presente investigación se realizó con el propósito de diseñar talleres de tutoría en la atención de habilidades sociales poco desarrolladas de estudiantes universitarios; a través de las cuales manifiestan sus necesidades, sentimientos, preferencias, opiniones y derechos, respetando a los demás y como consecuencia se visualiza el autoreforzamiento y maximiza la probabilidad de conseguir refuerzo externo. El estudio fue abordado desde el paradigma interpretativo, enfoque cualitativo, el método proyectivo - holístico como proceso sistemático. Se recogió información diagnóstica de estudiantes y tutores, a través de entrevistas y grupos focales, centrados en las habilidades conductuales, personales y situacionales. De todo ello, se identificaron categorías y subcategorías que permitieron elegir estrategias para atender las necesidades. Como resultado, se demostró que las habilidades sociales, aspecto importante para la inserción y el desempeño laboral, no se encuentran desarrolladas a pesar de existir el acompañamiento de tutores. Asimismo, las estrategias utilizadas en las acciones tutoriales no son las adecuadas; por ende, deben ser modificadas. También, se concluyó que las instituciones de formación universitaria deben realizar procesos de planificación de tutorías previo diagnóstico.

Palabras clave: Habilidades sociales, acción tutorial, tutoría universitaria.

Introduction

Higher education in Peru has many levels of acceptance and progress. In the last decades, there has been a business growth that has generated new institutions focused on providing professional education. However, only some of them have worried about strengthening and monitoring the academic growth. This research seeks to design strategies in the tutorial action to develop social skills in university students. It is worth recalling that social skills are the “set of verbal and non-verbal responses, partially independent and situationally specific, through which the individual expresses in a interpersonal context, his needs, feelings, preferences, opinions or rights”, as said by Gismero (2010, p. 12). Based on this, it is intended to identify strategic responses given by specialists, not without a diagnosis in order to know the problems and needs, so that a change in the students’ behavior is generated, since they need to develop specific skills, taking into account the immediate environment and the resources used.

Tutorial Action Workshops

The workshop is a theoretical-practical combination of a topic in a specific space and with the collaboration of the participants, interpreting the contribution of Candelo, Ortiz and Unger (2003). The main objective is to provide new alternatives to solve specific problems, using the creativity and the contribution based on each personal experience and this is established by agreeing on a fixed number of involved parties. In addition, the intention of each participant is to acquire new knowledge generated from discussions, among other concepts that are shared in the group. In turn, there should be a moderator who conducts the training workshop and established the clear objectives of learning. Likewise, the duration and number of participants will be evaluated according to some criteria proposed by the specialists, taking into account the needs of the attendees. As for students, it is about an opportunity for them to continue strengthening knowledge that is integrated in this type of training workshops with particular objectives of those who seek to be professional. In accordance with this, Reyes (1977, cited in Maya, 2007) pointed out that the workshop is a process in which students and teachers participated, committed to contribute new knowledge as part of a team that is integrated, taking into account the main basis that lies in uniting theory and practice in this pedagogy. This respects a social reality that is in constant communication and, that, by the way, tends to change as well as the particular objectives of each participant. Based on the foregoing, we can say that the workshop proposal is made due to the diagnosis of social skills. In this regard, workshops should be conducted by qualified and trained tutors.

It is necessary to clarify that the tutor is a cornerstone in the tutorial action. According to Candelo et al. (2003), he is the main character in the workshop execution, because, even though his presence is not frequently noticed, he is the one who plans, guides and supervises it. To do this, he must have certain abilities and skills such as knowing how to schedule an activity (bearing several solutions in mind if required), empathy and specially assertiveness when communicating with their other members. In addition to this, managing budgets and an administrative order that allow establishing relationships with other entities. All this will serve him to duly carry out the organization and execution of a workshop, which needs a person with leadership skills to face this dynamics.

Candelo et al. (2003) also considered that the tutor is responsible for the objectives of the workshop are met, taking into account the process that should be respected and the content that will be presented. Therefore, several factors should be considered: the topic, the emotions generated and the method used for the execution. That is, tutors should have knowledge based on the content of the program, master how to deal with teamwork and have a communication with active listening, in such a way that they learn to ask questions and motivate the public to share significant opinions. They should transmit a pleasant atmosphere to the audience and do not take a stand on conflictive topics. This refers to the management of tolerance with participants. Finally, they should manage the planning of their time and generate a feedback with the participants that results in final reflections and allows the fulfillment of the functions of a workshop.

Tutorial Action and Social Skills

The tutorial is developed based on the teacher's work with the objective to guide, aim to personal, emotional and academic fields. According to Álvarez and Castilla (2006), the pillar of the tutorial action is the individual and group support in different moments the student faces. More than one teacher participates in this guiding since work is not only conducted by the tutor, but he is helped by other teachers, who take part according to the idea of conducting a tutorial. Arbizu, Lobato and Castillo (2005, cited in Cárdenas, 2012) said that the tutorial action is an activity conducted at a group level, since although it is true that there is a strong responsibility of the tutor teacher, he cannot achieve the objectives if the other areas of an institution are not involved in the work that is carried out to improve the student performance and the fulfillment of their roles.

Cano (2012) established that a tutorial action workshop should have a diagnosis that summarizes the situation of the problem in all its dimensions; a planning that established the actions of the operative part of the objectives with the resources to be used; an evaluation that verifies the performance of the achievements established; a systematization that reflects the structure planned based on objectives and that follows a process; a monitoring that shows the constant development during the process and allows making effective decisions in the course of it; and training that sets certain objectives that seek to favor the participants based on effective contents, taking into account the previous knowledge of the members. To make the tutorial action proposal, it is necessary to know the parameters established in the preparation of workshops to achieve the objectives expected in relation to meeting the needs.

Among the different possibilities the tutorial action proposes, Alarcón, López, Mahillo and Fernández (2014) said that it is essential to have a tutor who is involved in the academic subject and in its proper guiding, since it is often necessary to strengthen knowledge. Other aspect that should be established is the professional aspect, so the student will recognize his competencies during and after the academic semester. Also, another aspect is the personal one in which advice seeks to offer stability and wellbeing to the student in the development of his several activities, especially the development of social skills. To do that, the tutor should act as a teacher understanding the importance of incorporating the critical reflection and a self-inspection attitude of their practices in order to achieve his objectives. (Rodríguez y Hernández, 2018).

According to Gismero (2000), social skills are understand as:

Set of verbal and non-verbal responses, partially independent and situationally specific, through which an individual expresses, in an interpersonal context, his needs, feelings, preferences, opinions or rights without excessive anxiety and in an assertive manner, respecting those of the others, which results in the self-reinforcement and maximizing the probability of obtaining external reinforcement (p. 12).

According to Vived (2011), social skills “are skills acquired through learning and development, so they can be promoted from school and other contexts” (p.16). The same author stated that the students, mainly, require attention and an appropriate following-up, during the development of workshops.

The tutorial action workshop, in this research, was proposed from the perspective of Gismero (2010), author who served as a guide for the selection of social skills mentioned in his scale. Among them, we have the expression of anger or discomfort, where the student tries to demonstrate his feelings in several situations, even more so when he faces an unfair situation that he normally ignores due to his problems of personality. However, this expression or the lack of it can be also caused by difficulties or inferiority complexes for family or personal reasons. Another social skill is to start positive interactions with the opposite sex, which verifies the ability to relate to others using good communication. In spite of this, many times the lack of communicative interaction highlights the lack of initiative of the person. Moreover, self-esteem is responsible for many academic success and failures (Chilca, 2017).

The social skills of defense of one’s rights as a consumer highlights the fact of reacting in specific situations that make the person defend basic rights. Saying no and cut interactions off is a social skill that highlights the way in which people refuse to interrupt an unpleasant situation or conversation that does not arouse interest. In addition, learning to say no is an action that is poorly reflected when there is little reaction and lack of character. On the other hand, self-expression in situations refers to the fact that the person has the ability to control his verbal and non-verbal communication; in addition to controlling his anxiety at several times he faces. However, opposite cases can also be presented showing the insecurity of his acts. Finally, the indicator called make requests highlights the ability some people have to make a request or make a complaint since he feels with the confidence and character to do it without any complication.

Additionally, the opposite case, where the person lets himself be controlled by his shyness and he is unable to ask a favor because of his insecurity, was presented.

Method

This research was developed within an interpretative paradigm, qualitative approach, projective and holistic research method. The design of this study was non-experimental since it was focused on observing certain behaviors already established in a given population, without generating an intentional situation, but appreciating a moment where the participants introduce themselves in a natural manner.

The census sample was composed of 30 students from the School of Systems Engineering of the César Vallejo Lima Norte University in the year 2017. Five teacher tutors from the above-mentioned university participated as relevant parties.

A standardized scale of social skills proposed by Gismero (2000) was considered and it is composed by 33 items, with 5 alternative responses called Social Skills Scale (EHS, by its Spanish initials), which was validated by experts and its reliability was confirmed through an analysis of the item. This instrument was used to identify the undeveloped social skills. Then 8 students were interviewed to confirm the weaknesses found. Once the information was confirmed, four specialists were interviewed to propose strategies in the improvement of social skills to solve the problems presented in the students' diagnosis. Based on the information collected and its categorization, a tutorial action proposal was made.

Results

It was identified that students have undeveloped social skills, problems to express their emotions, fear of a figure that transmits authority, they avoid adverse situations, have inferiority complex and lack of affection at home. They also show fear of rejection, consternation on flattery, they are shy to interact with other people, complications to express their feelings and problems to understand the others. Moreover, it was observed that students do express their discomfort to the other person, they are victims of persuasion, have fear of a group confrontation and have a permissive personality. Moreover, there are students who have complications to communicate, they cannot say no, they are prone to persuasion and they are always need the approval of others. They have difficulty to express and highlight their opinions, they have difficulties to start and keep a conversation and they are afraid of starting new interpersonal relationships, and have little understanding of teamwork.

Table 1.
Result of the student's diagnosis

Expression of anger or disagreement	Positive interactions with the opposite sex	Defense of one's right as a consumer	Say no and cut interactions off	Self-expression in situations	Make requests
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Problems to express emotions. • Fear of authority figure. • Avoiding adverse situations or problems. • Inferiority complex. • Emotional shortcomings at home. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fear of rejection. • Tendency to be feel consternation on flattery. • Shy to interact. • Difficulty to express feelings. • Difficulty to understand others. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expressing discomfort to the other person. • Victims of persuasion. • Fear of group confrontation. • Permissive and passive personality. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Difficulty to communicate. • Lack of character to say no. • Prone to persuasion. • Seeking others' approval. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Difficulties to express and defend the opinions. • Difficulty to start and maintain a dialog. • Fear of establishing new social relationships. • Little tolerance for team works. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Insecurity problems (shyness and introversion) • Overvaluation of skills and qualities. • Anxiety when expressing.

Table 2.
Result of strategies proposed by specialists

Expression of anger or disagreement	Positive interactions with the opposite sex	Defense of one's right as a consumer	Say no and cut interactions off	Self-expression in situations	Make requests
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You must say what you think and feel. • Use of personal resources to solve conflicts. • Process of acceptance and self-love. • Strengthening self-esteem in the family nucleus. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-confidence must be generated. • Recognition of abilities and skills. • Comradeship and friendship to relate. • Use of assertive communication. • Putting yourself in someone's place. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dare to express your discomfort. • Ability to negotiate. • Problem-solving techniques. • Personal development Techniques. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Respond to complicated situations. • Saying firmly your decisions. • Evaluating and choosing the best option. • Recognition of personal value. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengthening the pillars of self-esteem. • Confidence in the verbal ability. • Getting out of the comfort zone. • Recognition of other's abilities. • Use of communication tools. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Empowerment of the person. • Recognition of limitations of the person. • Channeling anxiety.

Table 3.
Result of the theorization

Expression of anger or disagreement	Positive interactions with the opposite sex	Defense of one's right as a consumer	Say no and cut interactions off	Self-expression in situations	Make requests
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expression and management of emotions. • Conflict resolution. • Self-esteem. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-esteem. • Expression and management of emotions. • Empathy. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assertiveness. • Decision-making. • Conflict resolution. • Personal identity. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assertiveness. • Decision-making. • Self-esteem. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-esteem. • Communication. • Decision-making. • Teamwork. • Communication. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-esteem. • Expression and management of emotions.

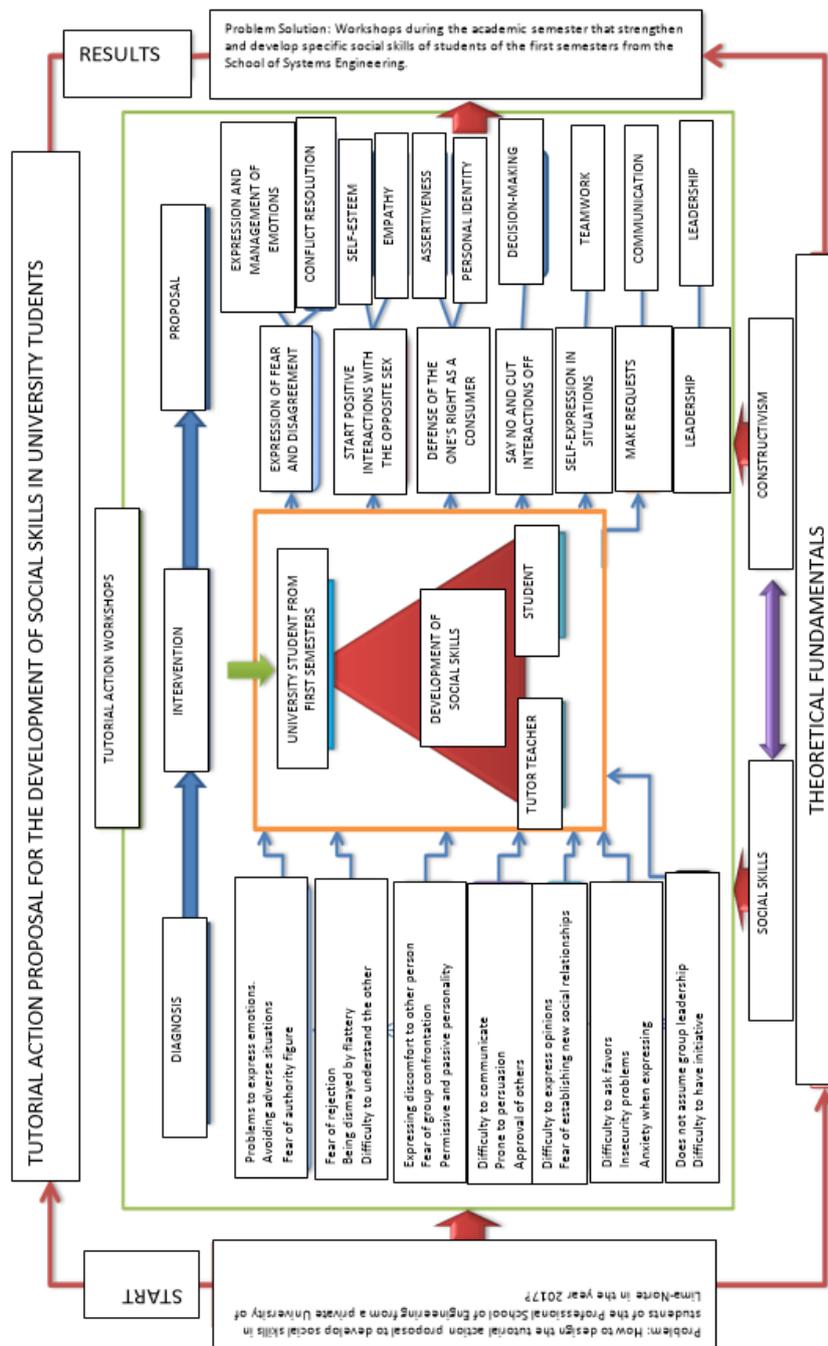


Figure 1. Proposal of tutorial action for the development of social skills. Source: Prepared by the authors.

Discussion

The research carried out by Hernández-Sánchez and Ortega (2015), under the topic “Electronic Affective Learning: an innovative model to Develop a Virtual Tutorial Action of Inclusive Nature”, was considered similar to the results that showed the fear of rejection of the participants. However, it should be taken into account that the objectives were different, since on the one hand, we wanted to keep in mind the adaptation of students in an educational context and with special teachers, while, in the other hand, the current study took into account the teacher’s work and the specifications in some social skills.

Genoveva, Navarro and López (2014) proposed “Learning of social skills in the university. Analysis of a formative experience in the levels of social education and social work.” In contrast to this, the current study presented some results that demonstrated the problem on the insecurity they have when interacting with other people, especially when it comes to asking for a favor. Therefore, students who have difficulties due to shyness or introversion and also those, who demonstrated an overvaluation of their personality that prevented them from carrying out simple actions such as asking favors, were identified.

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