A Case Study On The Dimensions Of Tutorial Action By Areas Of Knowledge In The University

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Abstract
As an educational institution, universities consider university tutorials to be a crucial aspect to promote the individual learning of students as well as transferable competences for life and their professional development, within the European High Education Area (EHEA). To this extent, in terms of the efficiency of tutoring, the different social, economic, political and cultural transformations that have an effect on students, lecturers and the university community in general must be taken into account. The aim of this paper is to analyse the different Tutoring and Guidance Action Plans for Students (hereinafter, TGAPS) from the point of view of the university institution, specifically the University of Las Palmas de Gran Canaria (hereinafter, ULPGC), taking into account the challenges set forth in the management and organisation of the university strategy with regard to this issue. Therefore, a content analysis of the tutoring actions in place in various Schools and Schools of the ULPGC will be carried out, by studying the different TGAPS introduced, and taking the academic, professional and personal dimensions of the tutorial into account. The results demonstrate that there are different practices within the tutoring action, albeit disorganised, weak and with no ties between the three aforementioned dimensions. The conclusions show the need of developing coordination from the different experiences of the high-level educational institution, in addition to introducing common measures from each area of knowledge. Moreover, it is important to organise creative and innovative tutoring actions that take into consideration the context of uncertainty that frames the tutoring action and the guidance procedures from the University.
Keywords: *Areas of knowledge; University; Dimensions; Guidance; Tutorial.*

Introduction

The globalization of the economy, the accelerated progress of Information and Communication Technologies (hereinafter ICTs) and the new ways of working have led to the emergence of inevitable new questions regarding the management and organisation of high-level educational institutions and their action in terms of counselling and tutoring students. This means that university tutoring rises amidst a sea of uncertainty, and appears to be 'adrift' in a context that does not understand timelines in the long term and strips students and lecturers from certainty (Sennett, 2000).

Within the framework of the European High Education Area (hereinafter, EHEA), tutorials acquire a relevant role in the teaching function of lecturers. The aim is to explicitly state and systematise the role that each lecturer performs spontaneously as a guide and facilitator in the learning process of students. Changes in the teaching-learning process, which require European convergence, should be accompanied by a change in the tutoring process. The EHEA intends to improve the quality of assessment and accountability, and requests further emphasis on the outputs (procedures and results), as well as the compatibility, comparability and transfer among the European Union university systems (Martinez, 2009). To this extent, the management of tutoring action from the university as an educational institution contemplates university tutoring as a crucial action to promote the independent learning of students and the development of transferable competences for their life and professional career.

Tutoring is an educational activity that is linked, with more or less intensity, to university since its origins (Gordon & Gordon, 1990). A consolidated tutoring model can prove extremely effective in the creation of integrated or transversal competencies, conceived as pathways to knowledge (Lee, 2009). In other words, they behave as shared attributes that can be generated in any degree or field: the development of certain cognitive, methodological, technological and linguistic abilities; the capability of expressing feelings, of self-reflection, of teamwork, social commitment, decision-making, among others (Lapeña et al, 2011).

Nowadays, university students need to know, more than ever, how to interpret their experiences, take into account different points of view and give meaning to their life. Based on this logic, the challenge of university studies is to become a training platform whereby students graduate with a clearer personal and professional project, together with the knowledge required to confront the creation of their life-long career (Lobaro & Ilvento, 2013).

The training of students based on continuous learning, prioritising self-learning and the creation of new educational modalities whereupon the student is the main actor in the training process, translates in the lecturers becoming, albeit not exclusively, guides, facilitators and creators of learning opportunities (Sánchez et al, 2011). University

tutoring is seen as a function that assists, guides and supports students during their learning customisation procedure and the development of personal and professional competences throughout their career, the dynamic horizon of their life project being a personal and professional project (Lobato & Echeverría, 2013). Subsequently, this paper will analyse the different proposals set forth in the Tutoring and Guidance Action Plan for Students (hereinafter, TGAPS) of a specific university, focusing on three dimensions and different areas of knowledge.

In the context of the EHEA, university tutoring should be managed based on three dimensions: academic or training tutorials, career tutorials and personal tutorials (Álvarez & Álvarez, 2015).

Academic or training tutorials

These tutorials relate to the informative and training tasks carried out by each lecturer, within the framework of their module, in order to monitor the learning process of their students. It could be described as the continuous exchange between the lecturer and the learners to counsel and guide the learning process in a specific area of study (Álvarez & González, 2008).

Therefore, these tutorials will be managed as part of the teaching process in order to develop actions aimed at the academic guidance and counselling of students. To this extent, all lecturers should organise and plan this section of academic tutorials, an essential accessory and counterpoint of teaching (Zabalza, 2003).

This type of academic tutorial can either be in person or online, due to the multiple resources provided by ICTs.

Professional or career tutorials

This dimension refers to a more integral view of the tutoring intervention in the university context, whereby the guidance task of lecturers is not wholly limited to the academic environment and the fulfilment of their module. Instead, it goes beyond this, monitoring the whole educational process and stimulating the student's personal and professional maturity. Hence, the degree tutor also carries out assistance tasks and guides students from the moment they are admitted until the completion of their studies (Álvarez, 2005). Within this context, there are authors who talk about curriculum focused tutorials (Zabalza, 2003; Villar & Alegre, 2004), whereby the tutor not only mediates between the group and the lecturers, but also coordinates with other course lecturers and the degree. The information and training activities that the degree tutor carries out with students will depend on the stage at which their students are.

At the beginning, they focus on aspects which will help them adapt to university life. During the intermediate years, they work on aspects related to the curriculum, whilst the final years focus on more vocational aspects and the transition and introduction to the labour world (Álvarez & González, 2008).

Personal tutorials

Personal tutorials focus on studying and mainly solving personal psychological issues that affect the student's academic performance (Álvarez & González, 2008).

The complex reality burdened with multiple changes, in society and at university, needs to be managed from the logic of a multidimensional tutorial that takes into account the academic, professional and personal environment of the student.

The Study

Aim The aim of this paper is to study the aspects fulfilled within the organisational framework of the vast areas of knowledge regarding the academic, professional and personal dimensions for the development of tutorials for university students.

Method. Analysis of the complex reality of the Tutoring Action Plans of the different Schools of a specific university within the EHEA framework. This perspective leads to a deeper understanding of the reality, surpassing the description (Sandín, 2003). Thus, different tutoring actions can be contrasted to offer a global overview from which aspects initially ignored will emerge (Taylor & Bodgan, 1984). The procedure chosen is called content analysis (Bardin, 1996; Mayring, 2000) as the technique for objectively and systematically understanding a stated aspect in order to focus on and explain this reality.

Sample. A content analysis of the TGAPSs of an average type university with 22,987 students and 1,585 lecturers has been carried out. The 14 TGAPSs established in the 14 schools of the University of Las Palmas de Gran Canaria have been analysed and grouped by area of knowledge, which are divided as follows (See Table 1): Engineering and Architecture (4); Health Sciences (2); Sciences (1); Arts and Humanities (3) and Social and Legal Sciences (4).

Table 1.
Schools by area of knowledge

ENGINEERING AND ARCHITECTURE	- School of Architecture - School of Telecommunications and Electronic Engineering - School of Computer Engineering - School of Industrial and Civil Engineering
HEALTH SCIENCES	- School of Health Sciences - School of Veterinary
SCIENCES	- School of Marine Sciences
ARTS AND HUMANITIES	- School of Philology - School of Geography and History - School of Translation and Interpreting
SOCIAL SCIENCES AND LAW	- School of Education Sciences - School of Law - School of Economy, Business and Tourism - School of Physical Activity Sciences and Sport

Source: Own creation.

Instrument. On the basis of the theoretical references and current TGAPSs, a protocol has been designed to systematise data collection (Bardín, 1996), based on the University School under study. These are classified by area of knowledge and then analysed using the three dimensions of university tutoring and their variables. To this extent, the study takes into account the three dimensions of university tutoring: Teaching or Academic, Professional or Career, and Personal (Álvarez & Álvarez, 2015). The analysis of each dimension has been performed taking into consideration the following variables (See table 2):

Table 2.

Dimensions and variables of university tutoring

DIMENSION	VARIABLES
ACADEMIC OR TRAINING	TRAINING TASK INFORMATIVE TASK TEACHING ROLE
PROFESSIONAL OR CAREER	CAREER GUIDANCE MATURITY
PERSONAL	PSYCHOLOGICAL RELATIONS PERFORMANCE

Source: Own creation.

Procedure and data analysis. Overall, two different parts were identified. The first part identifies the authors and research carried out on the object of the study which problematize the tutoring action within the EHEA framework, the different actions to be taken into account from the point of view of the management and organisation of a higher educational institution. The second part consists in accessing the reality of the different TGAPSs of the university under study and performing a content analysis of the mentioned dimensions, based on the classification criteria of the dimensions and their variables: Academic, Professional and Personal (Álvarez & Álvarez, 2015).

Results
Due to the vast amount of data, the results of the TGAPSs have been synthesised by area of knowledge, based on the three dimensions studied in the framework of university tutoring.

Area of Sciences
This area of knowledge includes the School of Marine Sciences. The Training Task, with regard to the *Academic Dimension*, addresses the guidance during the admission process and the degrees offered by the School; information and guidance on the study plan; training offer; guidance in the learning process; and guidance

mechanisms towards the final dissertation. Within the Informative Task, information is given on consolidation courses and on the Olympics and the Scientific Summer Camps. Regarding the Teaching Role, the following aspects are worked on: academic integration; student support for their academic project; awaken their interest in Marine Sciences; and constantly update the web page.

The Professional or Career Dimension addresses the counselling given when choosing external internships and support during their introduction to the job market and continuous learning (Career). The Guidance variable focuses on the availability and use of resources for learning, and guidance on professional options. With regard to Maturity, information on mobility is promoted.

Finally, in the *Personal Dimension,* within the Psychological variable, the school has a specific programme on attention to diversity. In terms of Relations, promoting participation in management organisms is defended together with the adaptation to the structure and dynamics of the School.

Area of Health Sciences

Regarding the *Academic Dimension*, the School of Health Sciences takes into consideration study planning, the management of the institution and the application of knowledge within the Training Task. The School of Veterinary has no actions contemplated to this regard. From the point of view of the Informative Task, the School of Veterinary offers information on the university, the organisation of the degree and school, procedures for a loan and the use of the library. Meanwhile, the School of Health Sciences provides information on the teaching project of each module, preferable previous knowledge and learning activities for each module. The Teaching Role variable is addressed by the School of Veterinary by means of the module results report. Likewise, the School of Health Sciences promotes actions such as: promoting the profile of vocational admission; knowledge consolidation courses available; solutions to learning issues; support to attaining studies; and promoting participation in academic and cultural activities.

Within the *Professional Dimension*, in terms of the Career variable, the School of Veterinary offers information on professional outcomes. The School of Health Sciences offers information on postgraduate courses (masters and PhD), specializations, guidance in decision making, choosing their curriculum path, support in study continuation programmes, and support entering the labour market. The other variables are only addressed by the School of Health Sciences, which provides guidance on the structure of the study plan (Guidance), information on mobility and support during the development of their professional project (Maturity).

In the *Personal Dimension,* with regard to the Psychological variable, the School of Health Sciences addresses the promotion of responsible attitudes, commitment during training, self-learning, psycho-pedagogical attention (referral to the university's counselling office) and the identification of students who risk failing. To this extent, the School of Veterinary addresses customised student attention, a support service to assist academic needs, personal counselling, support to students with special educational needs, and the identification of academic failure. In the remaining variables, only with School of Health Sciences addresses the integration and adaptation to university life and promotes team work competences (Relations) and teaching study techniques; responsibility and involvement in studies, together with attention to student who have temporarily put their studies on hold (Performance).

Area of Architecture and Engineering

The *Academic Dimension*, specifically the Training Task variable, focuses on the organisation of courses and seminars that complete the training. Regarding the Teaching Role, the four Schools coincide on the importance of guidance in the structure, competences and contents of the degrees. In addition, two of them, the School of Architecture and the School of Engineering in Telecommunications and Electronics, address actions on technique and teaching methodologies among lecturers.

With regard to the *Professional or Career Dimension*, the four schools' tutoring action focuses on professional guidance, support in creating the professional project and training in job searching.

Within the *Personal Dimension*, the School of Architecture and the School of Engineering in Telecommunication and Electronics address the promotion of students' self-knowledge (Psychological). Additionally, the four schools highlight the importance of university life integration (Relations) and counselling in study and work techniques (Performance).

Area of Arts and Humanities

The School of Geography and History addresses the *Academic Dimension* from actions for supporting planning and guidance in the election of modules (Training Task), the offer of information on study plans (Informative Task) and guidance for academic decision making. Similarly, it includes the coordination of the lecturing team and problem solving (Teaching Role) as actions that must be attended within academic tutoring. Within this dimension, the School of Philology addresses two actions related to two of the three variables described: tutoring mechanisms for the dissertation (Training Task) and student monitoring (Teaching Role).

With regard to the Career variable, the *Professional Dimension* of both faculties provides actions related to counselling for external internships, a global overview of the training process and support for the professional project and entry to the labour market. In the Guidance variable, both faculties defend guidance in personal, social and academic training. They also promote mobility and international exchanges (Maturity).

In the *Personal Dimension*, within its TGAPS framework, the School of Geography and History focuses on self-knowledge, self-esteem, values and attitudes of students (Psychological). The School of Philology does not appear to have any actions regarding the Psychological aspect of its students. Regarding the Relations variable, the School of Geography and History addresses the support in assertive communication, interpersonal relationships and promoting student participation in the School. To this extent, the School of Philology addresses actions on adapting and the importance of cohabitation rules. With regard to the Performance variable, the School of Geography and History addresses counselling in study and work techniques. The TGAPS for the School of Translation and Interpreting are not published, thus, it was not possible to analyse it in the framework of its area of knowledge.

Area of Social Sciences

The *Academic Dimension* of the four faculties takes into account guidance and monitoring of the dissertation (Training Task). The School of Education Sciences includes the academic curriculum design within this variable. Regarding the Informative Task variable, all the faculties in this area address information on the study plans and degrees offered by the centre. Within the Teaching Role variable, monitoring the academic activity of students and their teaching-learning process is addressed as a tutoring action, as well as promoting the admission of new students.

The School of Education Sciences and Physical Activity and Sport include teacher coordination and support to study plans to guarantee the best attainment possible. The School of Education Sciences works on guidance in decision making, review and compliance of teacher projects, sharing resources, experiences and teaching practices: implication in the use of the online platform, academic motivation for students, mediation in problems and the assembly of cultural activities (Teaching Role).

The four schools, with regard to the *Professional or Career Dimension*, promote guidance in the academic curriculum, work insertion and continuous training (Career). Furthermore, the School of Education Sciences addresses continuous training and the acquisition of an overall view of the training process. Regarding the Guidance variable, the four schools include guidance in academic decision making, guidance in the learning process, professional guidance and work insertion. In terms of Maturity, the four schools aim to provide students with a general view of the university and the school, guidance for mobility and guidance during external internships.

Within the *Personal Dimension*, the School of Law, the School of Economy, Business and Tourism, and the School of Physical Activity Sciences and Sport have a Psycho-pedagogical cabinet for the Psychological variable. The School of Education Sciences advocates personal commitment, independent learning, development of responsibility, self-knowledge and self-esteem, values and attitudes. With regard to the Relation variable, the School of Law, the School of Economy, Business and Tourism, and the School of Physical Activity Sciences and Sport address the integration of university students and student participation (Relations). In addition to these aspects, the School of Education Sciences also includes the development of teamwork competences, assertive communication and interpersonal relationships. The Performance variable is only addressed by the School of Education Sciences, which sets forth actions related to study habits and techniques, and ways of learning.

Conclusions

In the area of Health Sciences, there is not a balance between the schools that comprise it. The School of Health Sciences provides a clear presentation of tutoring actions by addressing all the dimensions, whilst the School of Veterinary has a weak TGAPS which barely touches the Professional Dimension of tutoring. It also has a weak Academic Dimension whereby its actions are merely administrative, such as processing student loans and grants or the use of the library. Within the Personal Dimension, it only includes the Psychological variable and highlights the support of special educational needs and academic failure, but it does not provide any preventive measures or general personal counselling.

In the area of Social Sciences, the tutoring actions set forth by the School of Education Sciences stand out, as they address an array of objectives and activities from the three dimensions of university tutoring. They emphasise the attention to aspects relative to the academic curriculum design, the review and supervision of teaching projects, which must follow a set of clear guidelines for teacher planning. This provides coherence to the school's area of knowledge and its application in tutoring actions and quality management.

In the area of Architecture and Engineering, there is harmony among its four schools at this university as they all address tutoring actions in the framework of the three dimensions equally.

With regard to the area of Arts and Humanities, the Personal Dimension stands out due to the concern of the School of Geography and History in aspects related to assertive communication and interpersonal relationships. Curiously, the neighbouring school, Philology, whose main focus is the study of languages and communication, does not

address, in the TGAPS framework, anything related to communication. The area of Sciences stands out for only having one school at this university: the School of Marine Sciences. It's TGAPS clearly balances the three dimensions and emphasises the academic and continuous training of its students.

Therefore, it would appear that tutoring action and the challenges set forth by university tutoring within the EHEA framework are diverse and complex. It is clear that there are diverse tutoring action practices that attain the three dimensions: Academic, Professional and Personal (Álvarez & Álvarez, 2015), but they are scattered, and do not strengthen or assemble from a more complex and engaged strategy. To this regard, it is noticeable that schools that are close to each other do not share mechanisms or tutoring actions that they could establish jointly by area of knowledge and academic complicity.

Thus, the need of coordinating the actions and experiences in which there are common parameters attaining the three dimensions and by area of knowledge is debated, as there could be encounters and guidelines that converge from the different TGAPSs, such as the importance of organising creative and innovative tutoring actions which take into account the context of uncertainty (Sennett, 2000; Bauman, 2007).

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