FOLLOW UP STUDY OF STUDENT TRAJECTORIES IN A MEXICAN UNIVERSITY LANGUAGE TEACHING PROGRAM: A CASE STUDY[i]

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Abstract:

The trajectory of higher education in Mexico in recent years has been marked by an extraordinary growth in enrollment (Tuirán, 2012); although statistics show that half of university freshmen dropout. In the light of these figures, 8 State Universities, decided to conduct a school trajectories study. "*School trajectories is understood as the set of factors and data that affect and make us aware of the school behavior of the students during their stay in the university*" (Cuevas, 2001:145; in Fernández, Peña and Vera, 2006). The aim of the study was to get a deeper understanding of our students for increasing students´ retention rates; the information gathered would also allow and support efficient decision-making policies for improving the quality of the educational program. A questionnaire was administered to 449 students (Paredes and Chong, 20l6). As a result of the study, we considered the need to conduct a follow-up study. The purpose of the follow-up study is to find out if and how students' perceptions from the cohort 2013 had changed, the problem/s, if any, they experienced so that preventive efforts and actions could be implemented. Semi-structured interviews were used. Among the major findings: the highest dropout rate (63%) occurred at the end of the first and second semesters. Cohort 2013 main causes for not continuing with their studies were: the need to earn money, poor social and interpersonal skills, academic workloads, and the program did not cover students´ expectations. Regarding students´ perceptions about the educational program, course-content, the academic staff, internal and external factors, slightly changed. However, interpersonal problems did have an impact on this research population. The data also provided useful programmatic information for improving prospective language teachers' qualifications. Further studies have to be conducted to include the variables that were not addressed e.g. students´ previous scholar background.

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Resumen:

Actualmente la trayectoria escolar en la Educación Superior en México, se ha caracterizado por un extraordinario incremento en su matrícula (Tuirán, 2012); sin embargo, las estadísticas demuestran que la mitad de los alumnos de nuevo ingreso abandonan sus estudios. En virtud de estas figuras, 8 Universidades Públicas tomaron la decisión de realizar un estudio de trayectorias escolares. Trayectorias Escolares se entiende como "*el conjunto de factores y datos que afectan y dan cuenta del comportamiento escolar de los estudiantes durante su estancia en la universidad*" (Cuevas, 2001:145; en Fernández, Peña y Vera, 2006). El objetivo del estudio fue el conocer mejor a nuestros alumnos para de esta forma poder incrementar la taza de retención de los mismos; esta información también permitiría la toma de decisiones fundamentadas para mejorar la calidad del programa educativo. Se aplicó un cuestionario a una muestra de 449 alumnos (Paredes y Chong, 2016). Como resultado del estudio, se consideró la necesidad de realizar estudio de seguimiento. El propósito del estudio de seguimiento es el conocer si las percepciones de los alumnos pertenecientes a la cohorte 2013 han cambiado y si han cambiado en que radica este cambio, los problemas que han experimentado, si es que han experimentado algún problema; lo anterior con la intención de implementar medidas preventivas. Para la recolección de datos se emplearon entrevistas semi-estructuradas. Entre los hallazgos más importantes se puede mencionar que: la tasa de deserción más alta (63%) se presenta al finalizar el primer y segundo semestre. Las principales causas de deserción de los integrantes de la cohorte 2013 fueron: aspectos económicos, falta de habilidades sociales e interpersonales para adaptarse a un contexto universitario, carga académica y el programa de estudios no cubrió sus expectativas. Con respecto a la percepción de los alumnos del programa, el contenido de las asignaturas, la planta académica, factores internos y externos, sus percepciones cambiaron muy poco. Sin embargo, problemas interpersonales si impactaron a esta población. La información recabada también permitirá mejorar la calidad educativa de los futuros profesionistas del inglés. Estudios posteriores se deben realizar para abordar las variables que no se consideraron en este estudio, e.g. los antecedentes académicos de los alumnos.

Palabras Clave: trayectorias escolares, percepciones de los alumnos, cohorte, estancia en la Universidad, índices de deserción

1. Introduction

In 2013, the Planning Department at our state University in the central part of Mexico published a report for identifying demographic risk factors that may contribute to early undergraduate student population attrition. This report provided mainly statistical information; although some figures attracted our attention; students' dropout rates

from the BA in English Language Teaching (ELT) were quite troubling. In 2009, from 36 students enrolled in the program, only 10 concluded their degree studies within the same cohort; this represents a typical completion timetable rate of 27.8%. The remaining 5 students concluded their studies by the end of 2014 – atypical completion timetable rate-. In the following years, the figures are quite similar: in 2010, 40 students were enrolled in the program and only 16 (40 %) concluded within the same cohort; in 2011, 42 students comprised the complete cohort from which only 7 (16.67%) concluded within a typical completion timetable. The same situation was repeated within the cohorts 2012 and 2013; this means that the program follows a pattern of atypical completion timetable rates. We also learned from colleagues of other state universities, as we belong to the National network of fellow researchers in ELT, that this phenomenon did not only prevail in our BA in English Language Teaching program but also in a large number of the ELT programs offered by the other state universities in Mexico. That same year, during a National Meeting of fellow researchers, we considered the need to conduct a collaborative longitudinal study of students´ trajectories in tertiary language-teaching programs in Mexico; for determining, the possible reasons that might hinder our students from concluding their degree studies; so that retention and graduation rates could be improved.

College students may decide not to continue with their studies for a variety of reasons that might include academic, financial, personal, health, and family problems among others (Gomes and Felicetti, 2015), (Díaz-Peralta, 2008). Our main concern was to find out what we as teachers, teacher/researchers and administrators could do to keep students in the program and support their academic efforts along the way. "*School trajectories is understood as the set of factors and data that affect and make us aware of the school behavior of the students during their stay in the university*" (Cuevas, 2001:145; in Fernandez, Peña and Vera, 2006). These factors might be psychological or sociological, in either case they provide information on students' academic performance and from the institution in which they study. The main objective of the study was to get a deeper understanding of our students so that comparisons and preventive actions could be implemented for increasing students´ retention rates as well as to make changes or modifications, if necessary, to our ELT programs for improving prospective language teachers' qualifications. According to Cross (2003) language-teacher education is a central component in education because "*the quality of teaching determines to a great extent the quality of education*" (p.41). Eight state universities from Mexico participated in this collaborative project. The research technique employed for gathering data was a questionnaire adapted from García and Barrón (2011); which addresses Mckenzie and Schweitzer's factors. Mckenzie and Schweitzer, from their research in higher education in Australia (2001), have classified five factors related to students' academic performance and identified variables that further clarify them. These factors include: 1) Students' perceptions of teachers' performance, 2) Students' perceptions of the theoretical and practical knowledge of the courses, 3) Students' perceptions of the BA program in general 4) Students' perceptions of academic difficulties due to external factors and 5) Students' perceptions of academic difficulties due to personal factors. The

questionnaire was administered to a research sample population of 449 students belonging to the eight state universities that participated in the study (Appendix 1). This collaborative effort with the other state universities, threw some interesting findings; the study also revealed that there were more similarities than differences among the research populations. The findings and recommendations were presented in a book published conjointly with the other seven state universities that participated in the research project (Paredes and Chong, 20l6).

2. The Study

In consequence of the exploratory study (Paredes and Chong, 20l6), we considered the need to conduct a follow-up study as our research population students from the cohort 2013 were about to conclude their degree studies. The aim of the follow-up study was to find out if and how students' perceptions from the cohort 2013 had changed, the problem/s, if any, they had had so that preventive efforts and actions could be implemented. The data gathered would also allow and support efficient decision-making policies for improving students' retention rates; the information could also be used for improving the quality of the educational program. Semi-structured interviews were employed as research techniques (Appendixes 2 and 3). Berg (2007) points out that by means of interviews, interviewees can "*speak in their own voice and express their own thoughts and feelings*" (ibid, p. 96). A basic checklist was used for helping the interviewers keep the interview within the parameters traced out by the aim of the study (Berg 2007, p.39). It should be mentioned that 2013 cohort was made up of 38 students, by third semester 25 continued with their studies, this means a dropout rate of 66%. Currently only 21 students (55%) from the complete cohort are enrolled in the last semester and 1 student –left behind- is enrolled in seventh semester. The BA in ELT program consists of eight semesters. For the purpose of this study, 22 students were interviewed including the student who was left behind. As well as three teachers, who for various reasons have been in contact and taught different subjects to this group of students along their tenure at the university; the teacher/tutor of the group was also interviewed.

A pilot session with three BA in ELT seventh semester students was conducted to refine the interview checklist content and time management (Gillham, 2000). The only change we made was to a word, which appears originally in the questionnaire administered to this research population cohort 2013 – Table 1 Factor 1- *limitations* as it had to be explained to the interviewees. We replaced it for *weaknesses.* This word did not cause any confusion, as it is a word commonly used in ELT jargon. The criteria for selecting these students was mainly availability as were the ones who had some free time at the moment of conducting the interviews.

3. Analysis and Interpretation of the data

The interview data were analyzed qualitatively via conventional inductive content analysis, in which coding categories are derived directly and inductively from the raw data through the systematic classification process of coding and identifying themes or patterns (Hsieh and Shannon, 2005, 1278). The research population subjects, 22 in total, which from now on will be referred to as S1 in subsequent ascendant order; provided the data for the study. As well as the three teachers and the teacher/tutor that were interviewed, which will also be referred to as T1 in subsequent numerical ascendant order. The numbers were assigned accordingly to the research population surnames; the only exception was the student who was left behind, who was assigned number 22. The students interviewed were given the freedom to answer in either English or Spanish. Some authors, among them Mackay and Gass, (2005, 174), believe that forcing the interviewees not to use their mother tongue, might have a negative effect on the quality and quantity of the data gathered.

3.1 Research subjects' demographic information

The purpose for gathering research subjects' demographic information was to establish a correlation with the data gathered in the former study (2016), to determine if demographic factors have had an impact on their studies. Research population 22 (100%) marital status has not changed neither their parents´ nor their family relationships. The ones that live in Pachuca with their parents have not moved from the city, and the ones that lived in communities close to Pachuca still spend every weekend visiting their relatives. Parents' educational level and work have not suffered any significant changes; except for two parents who lost their jobs due to the economy crisis; although they started a family business, which cover their family' expenses. It should be stated that apart from the economic aspect, research population demographic information has suffered minor changes. The data gathered about economic issues, will be addressed in more detail when providing information regarding Factor 4, Students' Perception of academic difficulties due to external factors.

3.1.1 Factor 1: Students' Perception of Teachers' Performance

This factor mainly addresses how the teachers´ teaching practices/behaviors establish the right conditions for learning to take place. One of our main concerns as teacher/researchers is promoting critical thinking among our students; in the previous study, this variable received a high range of disagreement responses. Our interest in this item is because at the conclusion of their studies, our students must take a compulsory test that measures the knowledge/s acquired throughout the program. An external body that belongs to the Mexican Educational Bureau administers this test; test results have frequently been discouraging as the majority of our students really struggle to get a pass mark. We believe, due to the nature of the test, that critical thinking skills play a very important role in answering the test items. Hence, we wanted to find out students´ perceptions of how teachers promote critical thinking. The majority of the

interviewees (70%) perceive that their teachers promote critical thinking; although when answering the question of *how* the teachers promote critical thinking, a high percentage of respondents answered:

> Ss: *"They give us reading texts and afterwards we discuss them or provide our opinions."* (Excerpt taken from the interviews).

> Ss: *"They give us readings and afterwards ask questions related to the reading texts."* (Excerpt taken from the interviews).

As it can be seen, the concept of critical thinking is not fully understood as it entails a process rather than only focusing on reading texts, discussing them, or answering questions related to the reading texts. Scriven and Paul (1996) define critical thinking as, *"The intellectually disciplined process of actively and skillfully conceptualizing, applying, analyzing, synthesizing, and evaluating information gathered from, or generated by, observation, experience, reflection, reasoning, or communication as a guide to belief and action."* Some other responses were not the expected ones:

> S3: *"They motivate us to move on; I mean to continue with our studies…"* (Excerpt taken from the interview).

> S22: *"By covering the program topics"* (Excerpt taken from the interview).

The ones that do not perceive (30%) that their teachers promote critical thinking skills, could not support their negative choice. They mainly criticized teachers' attitude rather than the tasks/activities provided or just raised their elbows and answered:

> S5: *"They don't care."* (Excerpt taken from the interview).

In contrast, the interviewed teachers consider that the tasks given to the students do promote students critical thinking. This finding made us wonder if the lack of this skill contributes to the poor final knowledge test results students obtain at the end of their studies; further studies have to be conducted to find out to what extent this hypothesis can be supported.

Research has also shown that feedback is an essential aspect of effective learning to take place; due to the BA program orientation and the responses obtained in the previous study; we were also interested in finding out if Students' Perception of how feedback is provided had changed. Race (200l) also points out that feedback contributes to improving students' confidence, self-awareness and enthusiasm for learning. Unfortunately, students' perception of how feedback is provided has not changed: 17 (77%) research subjects out of 22 are not satisfied with the way feedback is provided:

S8: *"Only point out negative aspects, do not tell us how to correct them"* (Excerpt taken from the interviews).

Just a few students have found feedback useful for learning from their mistakes. However, some of them still look at feedback only in terms of grades:

S3: *"Grades are hardly ever fair…"* (Excerpt taken from the interview).

3.1.2 Factor 2: Students´ Perceptions of the Theoretical and Practical Knowledge of the Courses

Interviewees perception on Factor 2 regarding the theoretical and practical knowledge of the courses offered in the BA seems to be more positive than their assessment of teachers´ performance. Research population students believe that course content is useful, up-to-date, and beneficial to their educational development. Students' responses suggest a high degree of satisfaction with their courses. In fact, due to the Students´ Exchange Program offered by the University, two students from the cohort 2013 studied abroad for one school term. One of them at the University of Pardubice in the Czech Republic and the other one at Hankuk University in Seoul, South Korea. The main orientation of both programs is the teaching of English as a foreign language; as it can be predicted, there are remarkable differences not only in terms of the subjects offered but also in the teaching context per se among other differences. However, both students felt quite confident and relied on the knowledge and skills acquired:

S17: *"For a practice session, I was asked to teach a group of basic students a listening class… I knew the rationale behind a listening class; I knew what to do…I knew how to plan the class…"*

S20: *"Even if the language represented a huge challenge… when speaking in English, especially in classes and with my friends…I felt as if I were at home…"*

R: What about the classes, the courses per se?
S20: *"Mhm…I really had no problems with the course content components… I think I have the foundations…though their grading system was so different…"*

3.1.3 Factor 3: Students´ Perceptions of the BA Program in General

From the data gathered in the previous study 2016, research population positive perception of the BA program has not changed. We believe that a factor that contributes to this perception is the compulsory updating courses that every semester teachers must take; as well as the fact that at the end of each course, teachers must make changes/modifications, if necessary, to their course content; so that the knowledge they receive is updated. A variable that attracted our attention in the former study was students´ perception of teachers working collaboratively as this item registered one of the lowest mean score; even if school administrators have made special efforts to build

a collaborative culture among faculty members. One of the main aims of this effort was to set an example to the students so that they could integrate the principles of collaborative work to their future professional praxis. However, this poor perception has not changed. In contrast, what changed is their perception about their teachers encouraging the group to work collaboratively: in the former study, they did perceive this effort, but not anymore:

> S1: "*The group is divided into two and the teachers know this…*" (Excerpt taken from the interview).

When asking directly to the interviewees what happened when they had to work in pairs or groups, their immediate response was:

> S10: "*We only work with the ones we get along with…*" (Excerpt taken from the interview).

Regarding relevance to course content, this last item can be considered a double check of a similar one in Factor 2, interviewees responses are consistent; they find courses content relevant to their educational development.

3.1.4 Factor 4: Students' perception of Academic Difficulties due to External Factors

As it has been mentioned according to Mckenzie and Schweitzer (2001) external factors may include, financial and health problems as well as academic issues, which include demanding teachers and course content complexity. These factors, might contribute to college desertion:

A. Financial and health problems

Regardless of the fact, that Mexican families' income has been reduced due to the national economic crisis because of the Mexican Peso depreciation; according to the data gathered, financial and health aspects did not represent a major problem for students' cohort 2013. Their parents or relatives supported 75% of the research population. Some of the students mentioned that for affording their extra expenses, applied for a scholarship. In fact, a large number of students 14 out of 22 (63%) obtained grants throughout their degree studies due to their high grades. These numbers can be considered atypical as hardly ever so many students from the same cohort obtain grants throughout their BA studies. The ones that did not obtain a scholarship got a part time job as language teachers in private schools or language centers at the weekends. Health issues did not represent a problem for these students either; except for one who had to use crutches because of a minor accident. Regarding academic matters, the easiest subject for the research population, was the learning of English per se, whereas the most difficult one/s were mainly in terms of the problems they faced with the teacher/s who taught those subject/s regardless of the subject/s degree of difficulty. This means

that to this research population, the variable of demanding teachers did have a negative impact on them.

A point we would like to raise that attracted our attention was students´ responses and reactions when asked about the relationship among them as a group: 75% of the interviewees consider that at the beginning of their studies, they enjoyed each other´s company; although this feeling changed:

S6: "*The group is divided into two, the strong students Vs the weaker ones.*" (Excerpt taken from the interview).

A high number of respondents provided this same response.

S7: "*I´d rather not talk about that, it has caused me a lot of frustration.*" (Excerpt taken from the interview).

S22: "*There was a lot of tension.. I didn´t want to take sides…*"

Some other responses were:

S16: "*Some members of the group did not contribute…they just complained.*" (Excerpt taken from the interview).

S17: "*Not great, we wanted to help them, but they felt like … intimidated by us….*" (Excerpt taken from the interview).

S18: "*What can I say; we will be having two different parties after the graduation ceremony.* (Excerpt taken from the interview).

The implications of the data gathered suggest clear evidence of the not desired empowerment by some members of the group. It is well known that competition is a characteristic that is commonly present in any classroom setting regardless of the students' age, genre or social status; but if not kept in perspective it might be counterproductive for the members of a group. Research has shown that some of the negative consequences of competition are, the loss of the sense of community in the class as a whole in which the other students are seeing as rivals rather than collaborators. As well as the increase of the level of anxiety among them, and the decrease of the sense of bond among groups, temporarily increasing the bond within the winning group (Johnson and Johnson, 2006). This behavior contradicts the principles and values, we as teachers, teacher/researchers and administrators of the program want to foster among our students. In other words, we want them to learn and share the values of cooperative social skills, as they will require them in their future praxis; regardless of the real-world challenges of competition, they will experience.

3.1.5 Factor 5: Students' perception of Academic Difficulties due to Personal Factors

The information obtained suggests that students´ academic difficulties due to personal factors mainly in terms of family and personal relationships were no significant. However, some interviewees did recognize a lack of stress-management skills for dealing with problems relating with others particularly among them as a group.

A last aspect we were interested in looking into was if the Program had covered students' expectations, 96% of the research population believe they have acquired the knowledge and skills required for functioning as teachers of English.

The comments from the students, whose expectations were not covered, were mainly vague:

S7: *"I thought it was going to be more interesting…"* (Excerpt taken from the interview).

R: What do you mean by more interesting?
S7: *"Mmh like getting practice in language laboratories…."*

S9: *"Attending more conferences…."*

Finally yet importantly, the researchers coded the attendance list to know the predominant language of communication used by the interviewees; even if all of them used English as a medium of communication; language performance differences was evident as some of them 35% were forced to turning into Spanish for completing their ideas. We believe this variable has contributed to the stressful situations some students from the cohort 2013 have experienced throughout their tertiary education; further studies have to be conducted to get a clearer understanding of this variable.

As it has been mentioned, three teachers and the tutor of the group were also interviewed. The main aim for interviewing the teachers was to get a deeper understanding of the students during their college tenure. The information gathered from the teachers and teacher/tutor interviews was indeed quite revealing. All the teachers consider this group as *"a very good group"*, highly committed to their schoolwork. They also agreed on the fact that it was a very competitive group:

T2: *"All the students struggled for obtaining high grades."* (Excerpt taken from the interviews)

From the data gathered, it can be concluded that both the teachers and the teacher/tutor knew about the problems this group was facing; although they were not aware of the dimensions of the problem.

Teacher/Tutor: *"yeah, I knew there were some problems among them…"* (Excerpt taken from the interview).

The group teacher/tutor also mentioned that every semester –period of studies- the tutors are changed so even if they perceive problems, not much can be done, as there is a lack of continuity for monitoring groups that present problematic situations. In fact in Mexico especially in State Universities, a great deal of attention has been given to Tutorial Programs. The model that should be implemented in every state university mentions that the role of the tutor should be extended beyond the bounds of only helping at risk students improve their academic performance to a central role in caring for students and monitoring their progress academically and socially along their tertiary education. However, this model has not been fully adopted by all the stakeholders involved.

4. Discussion

We believe that this follow-up study has shed some light in terms of our students, who they are, their expectations, and the transitions they experienced throughout their tertiary education. The data gathered can help teacher/researchers and school administrators to take actions for improving the teaching quality to promote best teaching practice, as well to improve students´ attrition rates. Among the major findings, it can be mentioned that the highest dropout rate (63%) occurred at the end of the first and second semesters. Cohort 2013 main causes for not continuing with their studies including the three students, who dropped out by the end of third semester, were the need to earn money, poor social and interpersonal skills, academic workloads, and the program did not cover students´ expectations. The remaining 22 students except for one (98%) feel very positive towards the knowledge received. Other revealing findings are that students do relatively little private study, and staff members underestimate the extent to which continual feedback is important in motivating students for improving their academic performance. The following recommendations emerge from the data gathered:

5. Recommendations

- Candidates' interviews -entry requirement- should be taken as an opportunity for awareness raising, students involvement is a condition for student retention. This means that the candidates require skills of adjustment, integration and commitment to engage to college academic challenges.
- Tutors must report problematic situations to the program administrators so that preventive actions could be implemented. For example, to implement *interventionist psychological help* provided by experts, this help could be provided by graduates from the medical school as part of their community service.
- Tutors´ roles and responsibilities should be addressed differently for providing guidance and support to their tutees during their tertiary education.
- Students´ study habits and stress-management skills should be addressed.
- Communication should be improved among students, staff members, tutors, and

administrators.

6. Conclusion

We consider the need to conduct further studies for addressing the variables that were not included in this research. Those variables could include among others, the impact of parents´ educational background, schooling, as well as the type of education they received, and the impact of students moving away from their families; Mexico is still a country with a very important culture of the family (Nieto, 2004). Further studies, preventive or intervention studies, would also provide information to teacher/researchers, school administrators and state stockholders for implementing actions that could prevent students considered at risk from dropping out and in consequence improving students´ retention rates. We also believe that this type of research experiences would not only contribute to students´ perceptions of selves as students but also as prospective language teachers. That is to say, having achieved a certain level of awareness of their personal and academic transformation through their undergraduate educational process could lead them in pursuing their professional growth.

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Appendix 1

Factor 1: Percepción del docente

No.	Preguntas	1	2	3	4	5
1.	Los docentes te retroalimentaron por tu participación					
2.	Los docentes motivaron tu desempeño escolar					
3.	Los docentes te dieron sugerencias para mejorar tu desempeño					
4.	Los docentes identificaron tus fortalezas					
5.	Los docentes identificaron tus limitaciones.					
6.	Los docentes promovieron actividades en el aula para desarrollar el pensamiento crítico en sus estudiantes.					
7.	Los docentes tuvieron expectativas positivas de tu desempeño					
8.	Los docentes te explicaron claramente los contenidos					
9.	Los contenidos del programa por asignatura fueron cubiertos por el maestro					
10.	Los docentes estimularon la participación activa de los alumnos en las discusiones académicas					
11.	Los docentes observaron tu desempeño en el desarrollo de tus proyectos de trabajo.					
12.	Los docentes impartieron temas a partir de tus conocimientos previos					

Factor 2: Percepción de conocimientos teóricos y prácticos durante la licenciatura

No	Preguntas	1	2	3	4	5
13.	Los conocimientos aprendidos durante los ciclos previos son útiles para tu formación profesional					
14.	Las actividades planeadas en el programa de licenciatura se realizaron para tu formación					
15.	Los conocimientos adquiridos durante el semestre son vigentes con relación a tu formación profesional actual					
16.	Aplicas lo aprendido a situaciones de la vida cotidiana					
17.	Tu formación en la licenciatura contribuye para mejorar tu capacidad de crítica					
18.	Las competencias y conocimientos teóricos adquiridos durante el semestre te permitirán elaborar diagnósticos de problemas en los próximos semestres.					

Factor 3: Percepción del programa de licenciatura en la formación

No	Preguntas	1	2	3	4	5
19.	Tu experiencia en los ciclos previos te permiten constatar que tu programa educativo es de excelencia					
20.	Tu formación en el semestre influyó para aumentar tus habilidades para trabajar en equipo					
21.	Las materias de tu programa son relevantes en tu formación					
22.	Los contenidos de las materias son actuales					
23.	Las temáticas en tu programa deben actualizarse					
24.	El número de horas dedicadas a las materias dentro del aula don suficientes para cubrirlas					
25.	Los profesores trabajan colaborativamente en el diseño de los programas de las materias					

Factor 4: Percepción de dificultades académicas debido a factores externos

No.	Preguntas	1	2	3	4	5
26.	Tienes dificultades académicas porque los profesores son exigentes					
27.	Tu insatisfacción por los contenidos te genera dificultades académicas					
28.	Los trámites administrativos te provocan dificultades académicas					
29.	El grado de complejidad de los contenidos te genera dificultades académicas					
30.	Te distraes con facilidad al estudiar					
31.	Tus dificultades académicas se deben a que la carrera no cumple con tus expectativas					
32.	Tus dificultades académicas se deben a que tienes problemas económicos					
33.	Las relaciones con tus compañeros afectan tu desempeño académico					
34.	Las relaciones con tus profesores afectan tu desempeño académico					
35.	Los procesos administrativos te generan dificultades académicas					

Factor 5: Percepción de dificultades académicas debido a factores internos

No.	Preguntas	1	2	3	4	5
36.	Tus conocimientos previos te ocasionan dificultades académicas					
37.	Tu falta de dedicación en el estudio hace que tengas dificultades académicas					
38.	Tu dificultad para relacionarte con los demás afectan tu rendimiento académico					
39.	Tu falta de interés por los contenidos hace que tengas dificultades académicas					
40.	Tu falta de control del estrés te genera dificultades académicas					
41.	Tus problemas personales se reflejan en tu rendimiento académico					
42.	Tienes dificultades académicas porque tienes dificultades en tus hábitos de estudio					
43.	Tienes dificultades escolares debido a problemas familiares					

Appendix 2

Semi-Structured Follow-Up Interview Schedule (Students)

1. Has your marital status changed?
2. Are you working? –*This is a Yes/No question that requires a follow-up answer-*.
3. Where?
4. Who pays for your expenses: University fee, rent if appropriate, food and personal expenses
5. Do you think your teachers stimulate your critical thinking? –*This is a Yes/No question that requires a follow-up answer-.* Table 1, Factor 1.
6. How do they do so?
7. Do your teachers identify your strengths? –*This is a Yes/No question that requires a follow-up answer-.* Table 1, Factor 1.
8. How do they do so?
9. What about your weaknesses? *This is a Yes/No question that requires a follow-up answer-.* Table 1, Factor 1.
10. How do they do so?
11. Regarding feedback, are you happy with the way teachers provide feedback? –*This is a Yes/No question that requires a follow-up answer-.* Table 1, Factor 1.
12. Why?
13. Do you believe the knowledge provided by your teachers is up-to-date? *This is a Yes/No question that requires a follow-up answer-.* Table 2, Factor 2.
14. Why?
15. Do you believe your teachers work collaboratively? *This is a Yes/No question that requires a follow-up answer-.* Table 3, Factor 3.
16. Why?
17. What about course content, how do you perceive course content? Table 4, Factor 4.
18. What subjects do you consider *the most difficult*? *This close question requires a follow-up answer.* Table 4 Factor 4
19. Why?
20. What subjects do you consider *the less difficult? This close question requires a follow-up answer.* Table 4 Factor 4
21. Why?
22. Regarding personal problems, have you had any personal problem? *This is a Yes/No question that requires a follow-up answer-.* Table 5, Factor 5.
23. How have you dealt with it/them?
24. Have you faced any economic problem? Table 4, Factor 4.
25. How have you dealt with it/them?
26. How has been your relationship with your classmates? Table 4, Factor 4.
27. How has been your relationship with teachers? Table 4, Factor 4.
28. How has been your relationship with your tutor? Table 7 Factor 7.
29. Has the program covered your expectations? *This is a Yes/No question that requires a follow-up answer-.* Table 4, Factor 4.
30. Why?
31. Is there anything else you would like to add?

Appendix 3

Semi-Structured Follow-Up Interview Schedule (Teachers)

1. What is your opinion about the Eighth Semester students?
2. Do you consider this cohort has changed as they proceed through their tertiary education?
3. Relationship among the students.
4. Relationship with the academic staff.
5. Relationship with their tutors.
6. How do they react to the tasks/course/subjects demands?
7. How marks are important to this cohort.
8. Students' language level performance.
9. How have the students coped with the problems they have faced?
10. How do you perceive them as professionals?