

SCHOLASTIC ASSESSMENT AND EVALUATION: ROOM FOR DISCUSSION ON THE SUBJECT OF UNIVERSITY PROFESSOR FORMATION AND THE IMPACT OF A TEACHER'S CULTURAL BACKGROUND

□ INTRODUCTION

- *New directions and trends in scholastic achievement evaluation*
 - In this presentation we would like to present qualitative results of an ethnographic study carried out at a State Mexican University, attended by 36 thousand students on three different levels: high school, undergraduate and graduate.
 - The study included students and teachers of two faculties at the University: Educational Sciences and Law School. The study lasted for 2 years.
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INTRODUCTION

- Once evaluation concepts analyzed we would be able to provide answers to the following questions:
 1. Were there similarities and differences between the teaching models used by teachers of the same department?
 2. Does the official evaluation model bear any resemblance or is it getting closer to the real model applied by the teachers?
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INTRODUCTION

- The study showed that, traditionally, evaluation is circumscribed to conventional exams, thus limiting learning to routines and memorization and, this situation must give way to a comprehensive acquisition of knowledge and, evaluation should serve only as a link between of what is taught and what is being learned.
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INTRODUCTION

- One of the latest identifiable tendencies in literature is to integrate scholastic evaluation into the educational process (teaching-learning), thus shifting it away from its traditional end position, still so deeply rooted in our institutions of higher education, to the center of the educational process itself.
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THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The last decade had witnessed a shift from traditional scholastic evaluation to a more comprehensive and flexible assessment model, even though the latter for all practical purposes still resides in a theoretical haze.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

- An ethnographic qualitative research was carried out with the participation of educators and undergraduate students in the Department of Educational Sciences and Law School at the University of Hidalgo. The final results of the study posed questions to which answers could be found, for instance:
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- The incorporation and shift of scholastic evaluation into the educational process may apparently produce a need for some readjustments, for it should follow the same outlook and development as the process itself. Ginsburg, et al. (1993), quoted by Barberá (1997), points out that instruction and evaluation are **inseparable**, for instance, if the teaching method emphasizes learning by heart evaluation must follow along the same pathways.
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THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

- What are the similarities and differences between the practices of evaluation, using the scholastic model, among teachers of the same department? Does the teacher's assessment modus operandi correspond or comply closely with the official one?
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THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

- This statement, in broader terms, allows for its affirmation, yet reality does not necessarily follow in the same footsteps. For instance, during periods of educational reform implementation, teaching methods leading to more comprehensive learning may vary substantially among professors, yet evaluation may remain the same as before.
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THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

- Nowadays, many students receive this “contradictory double message” in their educational institutions, and evaluation seems to be stuck in a rut, dominated by stereotyped exams based on mechanistic and memorization concepts, procedures and tendencies..
 - Gimeno (1995), points out that formal evaluation is a pedagogic requirement that is not easy to carry out as it requires certain conditions from the very start:
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THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

- ❑ a) professors must find evaluation feasible and in accordance with their possibilities and time;
 - ❑ b) its basic aim should be information gathering showing an ever better scope of knowledge acquired by the students;
 - ❑ c) evaluation should not distort, halt or hinder the development of teaching or learning by causing anxiety in students, consuming teacher's time that could be used for other activities and, finally
 - ❑ d) avoid the creation of an autocratic environment that of control of human relations.
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THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

- Evaluation, from this standpoint, recognizes that social functions and those of control, take away the importance of knowledge that could be obtained by working with students in an atmosphere of idea exchange and discussion.
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THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

- In conditions of control, evaluation becomes separated from learning, losing its formal learning value. The separation of teaching and evaluation tasks among teachers has its equivalent reverberation in students: information acquisition and strategies as to how best respond to an evaluation become **disjointed**. This adverse situation calls urgently for a change; therefore the idea of *Integrated Interactive Evaluation* to be incorporated into the process of teaching and learning was proposed (Cardinet, 1986; quoted by Gimeno, 1995).
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THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

- Getting to know students requires an open line of communication with him or her; the understanding of their problems, circumstances and their academic work. This is fundamental on higher academic levels, where student teacher interpersonal contacts could be scarce.
 - Evaluation should recover some of its natural wisdom as a parameter of knowledge and integrate a greater scope of informal evaluation during the educational process, which surely will serve and guide the professors in the design of the following course, including class accomplishments and their perception of student growth.
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THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

- It is evident that our institutions of higher education lack a well defined evaluation culture; though on the other hand, evaluation is a requirement to be counted with, especially on higher academic levels, therefore the development of such an evaluation culture has become a condition *sine qua non* for a quality oriented education.
 - Nowadays, evaluation is applicable to many different components of curricular programs (students, teachers, programs, didactic materials, the very educational institution...), however, traditional scholastic evaluation makes use of examination techniques and refers to students only.
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THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

- Even with a long history of student evaluation, our educational system considers the subject of evaluation untouchable -same occurs in many other countries- and many professors persist in making use of traditional methods of evaluation by giving lots importance to examination techniques that center on products (facts, data, etc.) rather than on the very process of knowledge attainment and development of cognitive abilities of a higher order (Moreno, 2005).
 - Furthermore, exams are generally based on cognitive contents (facts and concepts) leaving out such affective factors as attitudes, principles and values.
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THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

- *For a long time evaluation involved students exclusively; half way into the sixties all measurement instruments used in scholastic evaluation, according to bibliographical notes of the time, made reference to student learning and academic growth. Up to that time, only a few indications of other vectors to be evaluated could be found (Nevo, 1997).
 - Following, however, scholastic evaluation across its historical evolution, one can appreciate the quantitative and qualitative changes that occurred, from apparently scientific measurement instruments to a more ample understanding of the scope of research variables to be evaluated, like for instance, the very educational process and not only its products.
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THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

- On the other hand, the notion of evaluation brought forth a great number of definitions, which in turn complicate evaluation and educational picture a bit further; it is like making a trip to a complex and multivariate research terrain, where there is no certainty and said definitions could be understood from many standpoints, some of them arguable and controversial.
 - Likewise and according to Nevo (1997:22), educational evaluation could be defined as ***“a systematic gathering and accumulation of information making reference to the very nature and quality of educational objects”***. This definition bears three important implications:
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THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

- ❑ Evaluation cannot be built on intuitive bases only; it requires a systematic process base, making use of principles, methods and instruments.
 - ❑ The application of technical elements to knowledge and abilities could increase significantly the objectivity of the descriptive evaluation component, yet making it known that evaluation cannot be completely objective ever.
 - ❑ Objectivity has a more important function in judgment than in description; however it should be made clear that objectivity by no means implies arbitrariness.
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THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

- According to Howard Gardner's (1998:187) concept, *educational evaluation is* "the attainment of information about individual abilities and potentials of man, with a twofold purpose: to find answers that would be valid for individuals, subjects to evaluation; with feedback and extrapolation data that would be valid for the entire community".
 - In the Spanish context, Gimeno defines student *scholastic evaluation as* "the process which allows teachers, who perform the evaluation themselves, to look for and make use of information coming from various sources, in order to arrive at value assessment of a given student in general, or make a distinct value judgment of a particular trait of the same student."
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THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

- The very idea of evaluation comprises *per se* values and standards and implies not only the degree of a student's trait identification, or to what degree the student's behavior has changed, but also compares the values obtained with those set forth by the objectives.
 - Evaluation is a human activity that is essential and inevitable; it considers student aspects, teacher personality, teaching methods and didactic material. It also embraces family and social environments, the academic organization itself and the educational "ambience", human contents and the atmosphere of the educational center.
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THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

- In our case, evaluation is understood as a cyclic and continuous process allowing us to design, retrieve and provide useful information for processing alternatives in decision making. Popkewitz (1988), with whom we identify, points out that society learns about itself from an evaluation process and, being well informed, contributes with its participation to social action and planning.
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THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

- ❑ Perez Gomez (1989), on the other hand, argues that changes originated in evaluation provide a base-support system for multiple principles:
 - ❑ *Conceptual:* evaluation accepts unforeseeable results and events;
 - ❑ *Viewpoints:* allowing the retrieval of process and product data;
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THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

- ❑ ***Methodological:*** where formal and rigid strategies give way to the inclusion of informal procedures; where single methods could turn into multiple ones.
 - ❑ ***Ethical & political:*** Evaluation provides information to all of the participants and recollects opinions and interpretations of interest from different groups in the educational program. Evaluation makes a shift at this point, from its bureaucratic stand to a democratic one. Two important conclusions can be drawn from the most recent studies.
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THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

- ❑ Firstly, any object can be subject to evaluation and it cannot be limited to students or professors only.
 - ❑ Secondly, the object to be evaluated must be precisely identified and as such constitutes an important part in the development of any evaluation design.
 - ❑ Despite differences of opinion among scholars on the subject of evaluation, there exists an agreement as to the necessity of substituting traditional evaluation by another vision that of an evaluation centered in analysis, positive criticism, reflection, dialog, justice and equality among participants.
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THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

- All the same, another and very distinct reality occurs in practice, where contradictions come up, but the established classroom routines *unquestioned* and *unquestionable* die hard (Moreno, 2000). Santos Guerra (1993) states: there occurs a paradoxical phenomenon in teaching institutions: “it is the place where evaluations take place most frequently yet changes occur least rapidly”.
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THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

- The teacher plays a fundamental part in evaluation with his or her very particular academic way of testing of what was learned by the student. It is the teacher who carries out this process according to certain criteria and parameters and finally, evaluation is guided by the teacher's thinking, ideas and a set of beliefs about teaching and evaluation.
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THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

- Madaus y Kellaghan (1992), quoted by Estebaranz (1994), believe that we know very little about teacher evaluation, even though a distinction can be made between aspects of scholarly activities; in practice it becomes difficult if not impossible to make such a distinction. A test application is pretty straightforward, however a teacher's appreciation and judgment of student is not confined to only one activity, that of a test.
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THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

- ❑ The preponderance of student appreciation and judgment made by a teacher is subjective, informal and created along the educational process. The teacher's thinking affects the actions carried out and vice versa, actions affect their thinking (Moreno, 2002).
 - ❑ Differences in strategies used by teachers depend on differences in intentions involved in decision making, thus to understand teacher behavior patterns, calls for a thorough factor and internal process analysis, both of which determine teacher intentions and behavior.
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THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

- Educational research has shown that the way teachers think influences the actions and decisions made in the classroom in order to cope with of the complexity of teaching itself. Furthermore, if one wants to arrive at evaluations that would neither obey hierarchical structuring nor subject selection and would enrich pedagogical processes, makes it necessary to pay attention to ideas teachers have about evaluation.
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THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

- ❑ *Culture and subculture in teaching*
 - ❑ It could be said, that culture from its generic perspective, serves as a framework at the onset of teaching and maintains itself and prevails in certain teaching methods and work proposals.
 - ❑ In teaching, culture implies and contains sets of beliefs, values, customs and ways of doing things as assumed by teacher communities who have to confront and deal with similar requirements and limitations all along the years.
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THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

- *Culture and subculture in teaching*
 - On the other hand, Santos Guerra (1995:42), considers professional culture as “a set of experiences, beliefs, ideas, perspectives, rituals, values, motivations and customs that define a profession, in a given time and context”. Thus, if one wants to understand what a teacher is doing and why is he doing it one way and not another, it behooves one to understand on the whole the teaching community, the work culture in which it is immersed and forms part of it at the same time.
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THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

- *Culture and subculture in teaching*
 - Culture in teaching bestows sense, support and identity on the teachers and their work. Frequently teachers are apparently the only adults in classroom, however psychologically they are never alone.
 - Daily tasks they must carry out are influenced by the visions and orientations of their fellow teachers with whom they work or used to work before the present time.
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STUDY OBJECTIVE

- ❑ Gather evidence relevant to the formation of university professors via student performance evaluation;
 - ❑ Describe, and interpret the contents and formats of those and assess the data according to newer and present day evaluation models.
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METHODS AND PROCEDURES

- To carry out the study, an ethnographic approach was chosen using the method of case study. The procedure required observation of class groups at Law School (fifth and tenth semester) and in the Department of Education (fourth and ninth semester) at the Autonomous University of Hidalgo (UAEH), in order to assess student evaluation practices.
 - Data were gathered by means of the following devices (instruments):
 - a) Class session participant observation (60 observations), via field logs of the following faculties:
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METHODS AND PROCEDURES

- Strategic Planning in Educational Institutions, Specific Didactic Workshop, Educational Intervention Models, Curriculum Strategies Workshop, Professor Evaluation, Formation and Training Program Development Workshop, all of those carried out by the Department of Education; and the departments of Mercantile Law I, Penal Law I, Torts (Civil Law) I, Labor Law I and II, Jurisprudence; Law School;
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METHODS AND PROCEDURES

- ❑ b) Semi structured interviews with 12 professors (6 per department), with a purpose to get deeper into those aspects that are relevant to the study;
 - ❑ c) Student discussion groups (36 students, 18 per each faculty): to detect personal attitudes and get to know distinct perspectives and particular student interests in relation to the study;
 - ❑ d) Document analysis to detect and get to know the conceptions and ways evaluation is carried out.
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METHODS AND PROCEDURES

- Documents submitted for analysis included: exam samples, study programs, academic meeting minutes, documents created by the proper institutions on the subject of evaluation.
 - Data obtained via different measurement variables and instruments were used to derive information in a three way **comparison** mode.
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METHODS AND PROCEDURES

- *Sampling:*
 - Intentional sampling included: 6 groups of each respective University Department (Law and Education), 12 professors and 36 students. The selection criteria were as follows: one professor: head of the department and one full time professor of the same department, professors with a teaching background and those without one, newly hired teachers and those with a lot of time at the university.
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RESULTS AND CONCLUSIONS

- Data analysis rendered the following analytical categories:
- 1) Evaluation of scholastic achievement;
- 2) Methods and procedures applied in the educational process;
- 3) Classroom atmosphere and mood;
- 4) Student perceptual experience;
- 5) Academic culture;
- 6) Professional proficiency (teach strength and weaknesses); 7) University teacher relations.
- From the results obtained it could be said:

RESULTS AND CONCLUSIONS

□ 1. Scholastic achievement evaluation

- There exist differences between evaluation patterns practiced by professors of the two university faculties in question: law professors make use of conventional examination tactics needing short and up to the point answers, all based on memorization, while education sciences faculty members rarely apply written exams and prefer other strategies, such as class expositions, research papers, field research and exercises, among others.
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RESULTS AND CONCLUSIONS

- ❑ In both faculties some teachers apply surprise examinations.
 - ❑ Neither faculty has alternative evaluation proposals and only exceptionally put in practice self-evaluation or co-evaluation, and when they do so, it is mostly a cover up (a simulation)
 - ❑ There stand out four functions: orientation, feedback, control and administration, and the ones that dominate are the two latter ones, leaving out strictly pedagogical ones.
 - ❑ Evaluation, in many cases, is applied as punishment for lack of discipline or to control classroom behavior.
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RESULTS AND CONCLUSIONS

- ❑ Evaluation tasks of a respective group are established individually by each teacher.
 - ❑ There exist differences among teachers in assignment of value to each evaluation task, thus the grade does not reflect by any means the work, effort and responsibility of scholastic achievement, it only reflects the subjective product value assigned by the teacher.
 - ❑ Evaluation permeates educational practice and also conditions relations among participants. Many a time it creates difficulties between teachers and students brought about by inconsistencies on the part of the teacher.
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RESULTS AND CONCLUSIONS

- ❑ Evaluation lacking consideration, invades classrooms in cases like for instance, a teacher who makes unfavorable remarks about students in front of everyone else or penalizes publicly those who are 'distracted'.
 - ❑ Written activities occupy a preponderant time share in academic activities, as teachers want to make sure, they have a piece of 'objective evidence on hand', in case there is a need for clarification at a later time.
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RESULTS AND CONCLUSIONS

- ❑ What is being taught in the classroom is not always evaluated because of a lack of planning and which in turn seeds doubts and uncertainty among students.
 - ❑ Law School students are subject to conventional exams and those at the Faculty of Educational Sciences likewise confirm that the end product results are favored by some faculty members, disregarding the educational process as such and even though officially exams are no longer number one the agenda.
 - ❑ Students consider that the evaluator's character and personality, (emotional ups and downs) affect greatly the results of a formal evaluation.
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RESULTS AND CONCLUSIONS

- ❑ Even those students with the most successful scholastic achievement record are not satisfied with their achievements for somehow, deep down, they feel that the evaluation system is fraudulent.
 - ❑ In general, students make it clear that they are responsible for the evaluation results.
 - ❑ Some students consider that evaluation is fair others do not.
 - ❑ There are students who question the validity of group examinations.
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RESULTS AND CONCLUSIONS

- *Methods used in the educational process: teaching-learning*
 - Teaching faculty members of the department of Educational Sciences use diversified methods in the teaching-learning process, while teachers at the Law School do not; they even employ dictation as a strategy in teaching. Didactic material and other didactic resources are only used by faculty members of the Department of Educational Sciences, and they are not employed by law teachers.
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RESULTS AND CONCLUSIONS

- ❑ Student presentations are activities commonly used by members of both faculties, an activity, mostly not supervised or evaluated by a professor, yet considered as an evaluation criterion.
 - ❑ Written tasks, teamwork or individual ones prevail.
 - ❑ Innovative strategies have been detected and they reside in and are relevant to the educational process, like for instance: teamwork, brainstorming and generation of concept maps, research, etc. but evaluation still follows traditional pathways.
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RESULTS AND CONCLUSIONS

- A contradiction between teaching methods and evaluation has been detected, for example, even if the students perform their tasks in a team, they are still evaluated individually. This contradiction applies to both faculties at the university.
 - Errors are not considered an opportunity to be learned from; therefore they are ignored as a natural way of learning.
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RESULTS AND CONCLUSIONS

- *Classroom atmosphere:*
 - Is characterized as relaxed at the Faculty of Educational Sciences; at Law School it is all to the contrary; the mood is that of restraining behavior and imposed sanctions, a situation that points at a personal-social dimension and that constitutes part of an informal student evaluation in the classroom.
 - One could observe a lax atmosphere at the Faculty of Educational Sciences; students would become distracted, losing the principal objectives and aims of education.
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RESULTS AND CONCLUSIONS

- ***Student viewpoints:*** according to students, some professors display a negative student vision because of unethical behavior like cheating on exams, which is prevalent during the first semesters, but the malady self cures with time.
 - ***Educational culture:*** the majority of teachers do not respect time schedules; they come late and leave earlier than scheduled; they lose a lot of time on attendance roll, which is more notorious in Law School, and some teachers include student attendance and punctuality as criterion in scholastic evaluation.
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RESULTS AND CONCLUSIONS

- ❑ Only students are blamed and considered responsible for their low scholastic achievement according to faculty members; the teachers attribute low academic performance to the following factors: previous low level academic preparation; the majority of students have jobs and little time is left for studying; some have personal problems and some just show a lack of vocation.
 - ❑ Groups do not adhere to punctuality, which in the long run result in negative consequences in evaluation
 - ❑ Some students believe that certain teachers show a definite preference for students actively participating in class, and therefore evaluation becomes sloping and slanted.
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RESULTS AND CONCLUSIONS

- ❑ Discipline and obedience play a major role in evaluation.
 - ❑ Lack of planning and improvised evaluation practices are commonplace.
 - ❑ *Teacher proficiency:* The professional formation of the teaching staff of the Faculty of Educational Sciences is different from those who teach at Law School. The latter believe that to be a good teacher means to know the subject matter thoroughly.
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RESULTS AND CONCLUSIONS

- There exists a belief among teachers, in both faculties, that a lack of pedagogic formation can be 'magically cured' with experience in teaching.
 - A lack of capacity to carry out efficiently didactic tasks and student evaluation were identified among certain staffers.
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RESULTS AND CONCLUSIONS

- In some cases, the teachers showed a lack of knowledge of what they were teaching, which consequently brought about a lack of interest and motivation among students, who openly declared 'they did not like the subject taught' and evaluation rendered poor results.
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RESULTS AND CONCLUSIONS

- *University teacher academic collaboration :*
 - The teaching staff of both faculties coincided in their opinions on the issue of collaboration as being only occasional and imposed by their respective coordinators, who would designate two or three participants of their liking, to take part in a meeting.
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RESULTS AND CONCLUSIONS

- Faculty members pointed out some factors that make teacher academic cooperation difficult: some are contractual, some because of a lack of responsibility and identification with the teaching institution and others because of faulty policy of hiring academic personnel.
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AND THIS IS WHAT HAPPENS WHEN GUIDANCE AND EVALUATION FAIL

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**“I forgot to make a back-up copy of my brain,
so everything I learned last semester was lost.”**

□ THANK

YOU
