Self-assessment of the Master's Degree in Nursing: Tutoring an Axis in the International Experiences of Students

Laura Valdez Franco[1*] and Graciela Gonzalez Juarez[1]

[1]*National School of Nursing and Obstetrics, National Autonomous University, Mexico. Ciudad Universitaria, Coyoacan, Mexico City, Mexico.*

Authors' contributions

This work was carried out in collaboration among all authors. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.

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ABSTRACT

Aims: To recover the international experiencies of the tutors of the master's degree in Nursing of National Autonomous University of Mexico to identify the vision and attitudes they show towards the international development of students in training.
Metodology: Descriptive, non-experimental, and transactional research involved both program descriptive information and interview with five tutors selected for their international career, mentoring and availability.
Results: It was identified that the main task of the tutor is to know the interests, motivations, and limitations of each student to achieve their profesional skills and promote them towards internationalization and multidisciplinary collaboration in their career. With these findings it is posible to identify the decisions that tutors can make, as well as gaps within the same tutoring to promote international studies among tutoring.
Conclusion: It can be concluded that the figure of the tutor certainly ceases to be only a professional guide, to become a motivating entity that seeks for the student to overcome and reach different goals that are much more demanding among them; therefore, the personal and

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Corresponding author: E-mail: alma.vf.244@gmail.com;

professional experiences of the tutor and his/her own perspective of the tutoring become the pillars of the metamorphosis that occurs in the stuent during the period of his/her master's degree.

1. INTRODUCTION

The self-evaluation of postgraduate programs has been implemented as an institutional policy at the National Autonomous University of Mexico since 2005, and is the main component of the programs registered with the National Council of Science and Technology since 1991, through the National Postgraduate Strengthening Program, which constitute more than three decades of experience of these practices that have been specializing over time, with the consequent modification of practices in Higher Education Institutions [1].

The present evaluative research is developed within the framework of the self-evaluation of postgraduate programs, specifically in the master's degree in Nursing. Various quality indicators are contemplated, including tutoring, as a teacher or a researcher who is part of the basic and full-time core of academic programs in the University.

At National Autonomous University of Mexico, this figure has guided the student since 1941, when the Institute of Chemistry assignated a tutor to each PhD student. This practice was strengthened until it was formally recongnized in the regulations of the postgrade, although tutoring has been clearer to accompany doctoral studies, while in professional master's degrees it has been barely investigated [2].

The figure of the tutor is a fundamental axis in the National Autonomous University of Mexico postgraduate tutorial system, in which the pillars of support in the academic trajectories of students are established. The system is the result of the improvements in the regulations to recognize the importance of the collegiate and inter-institutional life of the postgraduate model of the institution, which is characterized by the participation of various academic entities in its operation and by an interdisciplinary mentoring that guides the training of researchers.

At the National Autonomous University of Mexico there are four entities which offer the Master's Program in Nursing; These entities are: Iztacala School of Higher Studies, Zaragoza School of Higher Studies, Institute of Anthropological Research and National School of Nursing and Obstetrics. In order to be a tutor for this program he/she must be a full-time professor.

In the Tutorial Teaching System, the figure of the academic tutor emerges in the master's degree in Nursing as its maximum performance in monitoring the thesis of postgraduate students since their entry and during the semesters covered by the program. The relationship between the tutor is raised and organized from the Regulation of Postgraduate Studies of the National Autonomous University of Mexico [3] with the following system: main tutors, tutor committee, program coordinator and students.

Thus, the aim of tutoring is to formalize and establish permanent and formal contact between the teacher and the student, while their studies last. It is an accompaniment that is carried out between tutor and students to guide the school trajectory, the thesis and a pedagogical link for the training of researchers and nursing professionals [4]. In other words, tutoring has two axes from which it is articulated as a training strategy in postgraduate studies, which is shown in Fig. 1.

The mentoring relationship is established through an individual mentoring program of "pedagogical contract in which the central point is the identification of directions, objectives and goals to be achieved by the student, with the shared responsibility between the student being clearly defined by the tutor and student to achieve the established goals" [5].

Admission to the program implies the assignment of a main tutor to coordinate the academic trajectory during four semesters, which in the recent versión of the program implied a significant commitment of hours towards the last semester of training, in order to prepare and conclude the thesis [6].

In order to achieve international experiences, it is mandatory to understand the qualities and professional history (wich may include personal
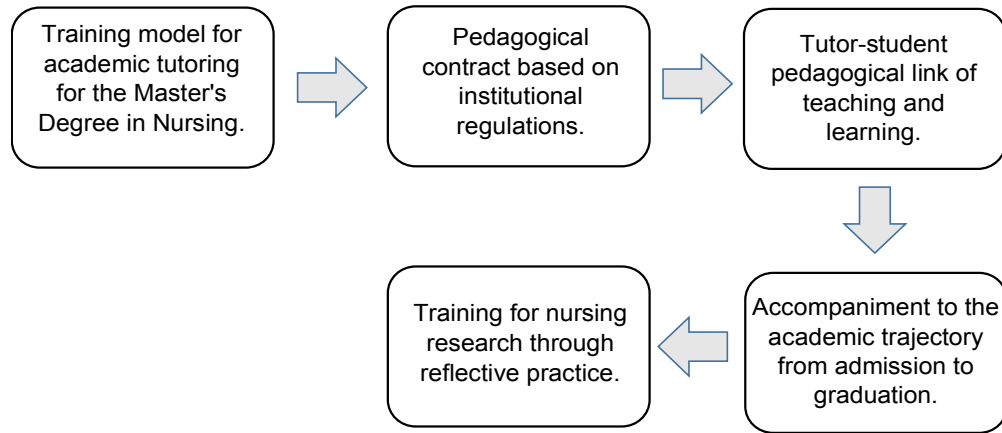
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│ Training model  │      │ Pedagogical     │      │ Tutor-student   │
│ for academic    │ ──▷  │ contract based  │ ──▷  │ pedagogical     │
│ tutoring for    │      │ on institutional│      │ link of teaching│
│ the Master's    │      │ regulations.    │      │ and learning.   │
│ Degree in       │      │                 │      │                 │
│ Nursing.        │      │                 │      │                 │
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│ Training for    │      │ Accompaniment   │
│ nursing research│ ◁──  │ to the academic │
│ through         │      │ trajectory from │
│ reflective      │      │ admission to    │
│ practice.       │      │ graduation.     │
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Fig. 1. Components of the reflective tutoring model in the master's degree in Nursing
Source: Own elaboration based on Gonzalez (2015) [2].

history too) of the tutor that may direct him/her to encourage the student to look forward for an international professional development.

1.1 Reflective Tutoring

Due to the extensive development of educational evaluation, institutional models have been implemented that serve as a guide for self-evaluation, since this modality has only a few references about its practice [7].

At National Autonomous University of Mexico, the self-assessment model is diagnostic and conformed by four phases: context, input, process and product (CIPP) [8], this according to the National Autonomous University of Mexico Postgraduate Self-assessment Guide [9], which is a systemic assessment to analyze the various components of an academic program.

The institutional evaluation of tutoring is part of the self-evaluation model for graduate programs and located in the process phase. It is an internal formative self-assessment exercise, for the case at hand. It is based on the reflective practice of tutoring by Donald Schön [10].

Reflective tutoring is aimed at training in and for practice in Nursing. It is an art that is structured on the basis of atypical training traditions, in which it is common to find a dual curriculum and that explains the development of the nursing practice, it also implies that when nurses work under the tutelage of teachers Veterans with real patients, learn more than what is taught in the classroom, such as the development of broad

skills to intervene with theoretical and practical training in the various fields where they inserted, as well as various psychoeducational and pedagogical interventions that demand interdisciplinary training, among other.

Thus, the self-assessment approach of the master's program tutoring to assess international academic experiences in students requires a participatory model [11] that has been developed within a framework of action-research models and other pedagogical renewal movements.

Institutional self-evaluation promotes the self-regulation of the actors based on the learning generated and processing information about their own performance and improving or changing it. In this context, an important component is the feedback in relation to the actions and the impact they have had to assume a prospect of what to change, what to improve or what to avoid in the short and medium term, in this case, in terms of tutoring to promote international academic experiences.

Evaluating the mentoring in the program contributes to developing capacity building, the purpose of which is to promote the autonomy of the participants to solve problems or strengthen areas of opportunity identified in the self-evaluation. This perspective corresponds to the "empowerment" model proposed by Fetterman [12].

Tutoring is a complex field of training and evaluation, as it requires an evaluation system that reflects solid mastery of the field of

knowledge, as well as conceptual and theoretical training in postgraduate studies. Tutors are jointly responsible for ensuring that their students are not only capable of obtaining data in the research process, but also that they possess a deep theoretical and conceptual domain [13]. Different authors affirm that, on the one hand, we must train students to master their field of knowledge, conduct research and obtain valid and reliable data to verify hypotheses, as well as develop capacities to obtain results in dynamic and complex environments.

Research on tutoring in higher education refers equally to the training process as it does to the figure that accompanies the student, that is, the tutor. Tutoring, as a formative process, implies recognizing its relevance in the accompaniment for the development of socio-affective competences and not only cognitive or procedural [4].

On the other hand, Gonzalez [2] presented the analysis of the postgraduate courses for each of the four areas of knowledge of the National Autonomous University of Mexico, nursing remained one of the masters with the most opportunity for development within Health Sciences which shows that we have a great field of work to strengthen valued competencies: a) apply theoretical-methodological tolos to problems research; b) use knowledge to solve profesional problems; c) analyze and synthesize specialized scientific articles, and d) understand articles and specialized texts in a foreign language, the latter being one of the most deficient competences in the master's degree in Nursing.

Tutoring is a process in the training of Nursing professionals. Aguila et al. [14] reported that the skills of the tutor, such as their availability and experience, are essential for communication and to promote learning and personal growth. In postgraduate studies, the tutor promotes knowing how to do, knowing how to be and how to deal with the problems associated with the postgraduate thesis in the specialties [15].

Tutoring has become a key indicator in the evaluation of teacher performance and its scope looms within the framework of theachers working conditions that impact attitudes of participation, critical reflection, intellectual Independence and skills, and strategies for didactic instrumentation that place the tutor in a teaching role in higher-level educational institutions [16].

The international experiences of tutors have been addressed, however, Crose [17] affirms that at the higher level there are practices that have modified the presence of students in national and international contexts; for example, the wide geographic distances between countries and cultures have been disminishng through the use of technology, which has opened up new relationships and interactions worldwide. The objective was to analyze the international experiences that, from the perspective of the tutors of the master's degree in Nursing, enhance the academic life of the students who are members of the program.

2. METHODOLOGY

The reported experience implied an investigation. It is a descriptive, non-experimental and transectional investigation that implied descriptive information of thee program to investigate the experiences of the tutoring expressed according to the experience of the tutor and, based on it, find the ways to promote it in order to identify international criteria beyond those requested by quality accreditation bodies in Mexico. The interview was carried out through the electronic tool Zoom, since at the time of interviews we were already in a period of confinement in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic. Five tutors (three women and two men) participated in the Master's Program in Nursing who were selected intentionally, considering their international trajectory, experience in tutoring and availability. An interview script was designed that lasted one hour on average, considering aspects of training and international experiences for the thesis, as well as the dissemination of results. The interviews of each participant were used to account for the textual expressions of the informants. Anonymity was kept using a coding, generated by the authors, with a tutor (T), the initial of the Nursing profession (E) and a consecutive number, thus obtaining the following codes: TE1. Tables were obtained from the tutors´ coincidences and graphs with percentages were made.

3. RESULTS

The results of the research show that: 33 full-time tutors participate in the program, of which 84% have the degree of doctor and 16% have a master. Nine of them belong to the National System of Researchers (27%): 3 at the Candidate level, 5 at Level I and 1 at Level III.

Despite the presence of doctors, only five of them have international experiences (15%).

The tutoring that enhances international academic experiences covers both teachers and students, it is a practice space that considers the presence in congresses, colloquia and international meetings on health (50%); 15% referred foreign guests, talks with international experts and research stays; 5% alluded to the motivation of students to participate in events in other countries. There was no reference to bilingual seminars, which would represent a way to introduce students to interaction with foreign peers or speakers of other languages.

Tutoring is a complex academic activity on the vision of Nursing and the research process and does not have an exclusive object or purpose:

> *[…] Tutoring is a continuous accompaniment where the tutor carries out a student to build and strengthen all the way, it is a daily construction, it is a strengthening of what the tutor already brings, of his academic trajectory, it does not come out of nothing, students have also worked, they bring a life story, a training, especially our postgraduate ... most of the students work, probably 100% of them work,and since they leave they join the productive field, their learning is daily, it is continuous and what they seek at any given time when entering graduate school is to give that theoretical support to what their daily life is in the professional field, to become more assertive from a scientific point of view, but they bring a whole baggage of knowledge and experiences that are sometimes empirical, because they react to the event and so, with this adaptation process* (TE5 / 20-31).

> *[…] Tutoring does not have a single purpose, in reality it is a very complex educational activity with many edges; although the development of the thesis is a central aspect, in reality, the tutor is visualizing how it is person, this Nursing professional is going to develop in the broadest sense of the word, he is not only a person who comes to do a thesis, he is a person who is going to be part of your research group, he is going to have experiences that allow him/her to see that research is not something like a kitchen recipe, but really something that is being built, redesigned, progressive, retreats and allows him/her to have a real experience of the research process and how it is to make*

*decisions during a research project* (TE4 / 12-22).

With this notion of tutoring, the tutors emphasized the personal characteristics of the students as a central element of the tutoring and its scope: 31% referred to financial solvency, 25% recalled the inherent commitments of the students, 19% referred regarding foreign language skills, 13% said that the institutions where the students work give them permission to be absent to attend other types of academic events. Likewise, 6% of the interviewees agreed that students may feel unprepared or inferior in front of a foreign guest, as well as those who idealize the research capacity to generate great changes shown in Graph 1.

The results show that tutoring is a mutual training process for communication research in which feedback is adjusted according to the needs and possibilities of the students. Tutoring implies a complex relationship of links that have meaning and significance in that interaction that shapes and shapes the tutoring accompaniment.

This pedagogical contract contributes to strengthening a teaching and learning link where knowledge of various kinds are exchanged. The training of the tutors during thesis work implies a research context where the students and especially the tutors need to develop general competencies to face the demands of the postgraduate degree, because due to the history of the discipline, with a tradition of technical training, the Nursing requires the development of scientific writing and systematic investigation of its interventions:

> *[…] To give a tutoring it is very important to be able to communicate with the student, it goes beyond that accompaniment, to be able to know: What are the students' experiences and interests, or expectations? Because tutoring is not circumstantial, it is a planned meeting where the tutor and the student meet and this meeting is fundamental, if there is not a tie between them, it won't happen, so you have to feel what the student wants, what he/she feels, and the first meeting is essential, it is the key* (TE2 / 15-22).

Once the tutors have established an initial approach, as a diagnosis, a tutoring plan is designed. Among the main strategies that tutors offer to students, the first (27%) was the
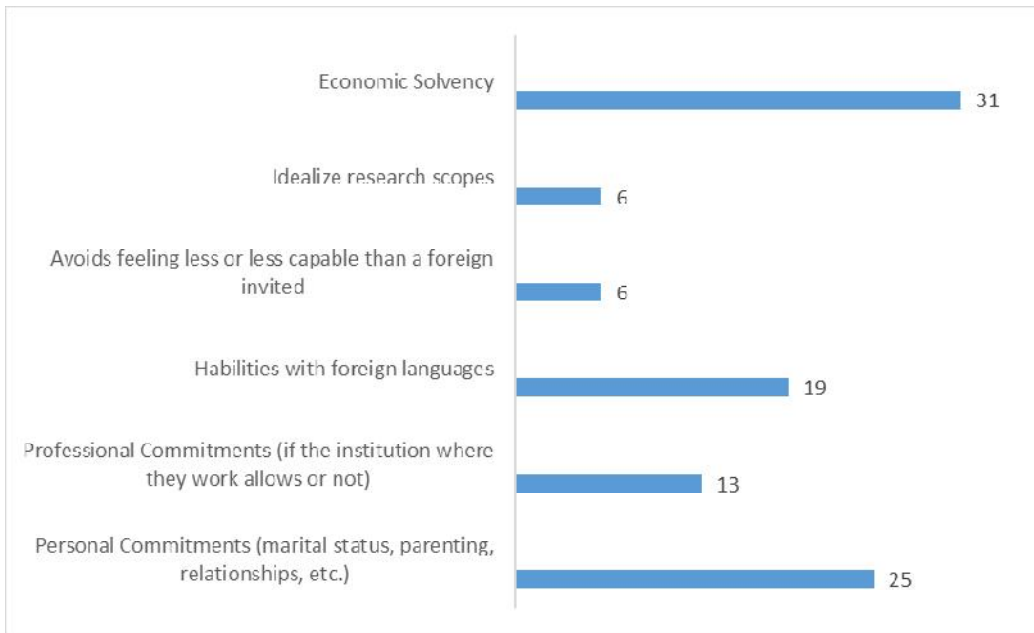
Graph 1. Personal characteristics of the students
Source: self made.
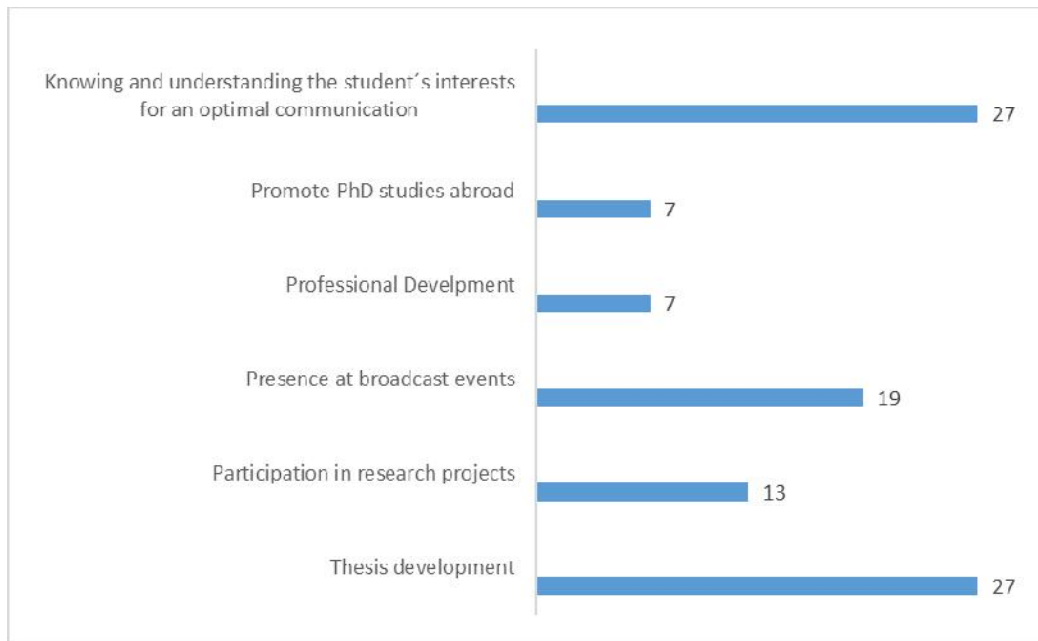
Graph 2. Mentoring activities reported by tutors and students
Source: self made.

development of a thesis to obtain a degree, as well as knowing and understanding the interests of the student in order to achieve optimal communication during the development of tutoring (Graph 2).

Among the tutors' intentions, it stands out that 19% invited students to participate in dissemination events, 13% includes students in real research projects, and finally, 7% fought for the search for professional development of the

Graph 3. International experiences of the tutor on collaboration networks
Souce: self made.

students, as well as promoting in them the intention of continuing their doctoral studies in other countries.

The work of the tutors and tutors included putting the research topics in context and the commitment to their own experiences to enhance collaboration networks and include students in them, as well as strengthening the view of the topic and object of research among the student population, promoting growth simultaneously with their international peers.

It was found that 31% of teachers agree that, by becoming a tutor, they will be able to transmit the same interest in professional development; 23% say that it is important to get closer to the student in order to understand the different situations that young people experience in order to understand them and find the best way to provide support.

On the other hand, 15% agreed to prioritize the generation and strengthening of collaborations with colleagues from other countries, as well as promoting financing programs; In the same way, it was found that the tutor must also have the possibility of going to another country to understand and appreciate the experience. Finally, 7.69% consider that identifying the main tutor is important to obtain adequate feedback on the project, and that they should not be carried away by personal interests related to the

academic body and institutional evaluations (Graph 3).

Tutoring is a continuous accompaniment of the tutor with a student, but to build and strengthen the training of the researcher in Nursing it is necessary:

[…] Knowing what their interests are, incorporating them into my research groups, my research projects, I try to ensure that my student, although he/she has some particular interests, manages to combine them with a more formal research project that is already being developed. In that sense, you have to do an interview, you have to know their particular interests, the student has to know what are the projects that are currently being developed by the tutor and do it as a planning process, envisioning that it is two years old, let's say, to specify this process and that then you have to be very careful with the establishment of the objectives of the study that is going to be raised. Also sometimes happens, to see if we achieve it, you really must have a work plan with them, so the students also have to commit to follow the plan and I finally believe that this systematicity and that permanent support, because you really become their company, a figure that is very attentive to them (TE4 / 1-8, 125-130).

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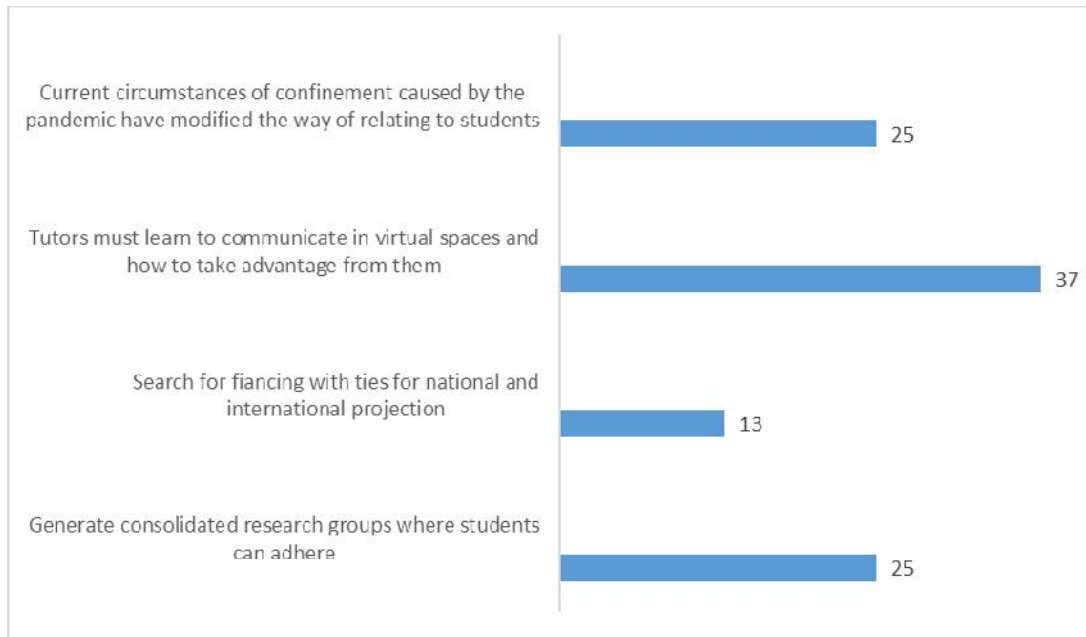
Graph 4. International linkage and virtual spaces to generate research groups
Source: self made

Tutoring is a space that can contribute to the generation of letters of intent and the ddlinking of the program. When we speak of international ties, we mean the agreements that exist between institutions and the support between international tutors who seek to present and provide students, in order to achieve a satisfactory connection between different groups, institutions, countries and disciplines. The formation of research groups is required to broaden the perspectives of the projects in which the tutors take part.

A strategic way for graduate students to have international experiences is to join research projects, as stated by the following tutor:

[…] Tutoring is accompanied by a series of skills that our students develop as individuals and as professionals to do essays, to advance in a research project, professional development implies gradually training and maturing as a person and as a professional, because They will face different teachers, criticisms of their own work, difficulties, and the tutor must accompany the person and the professional so that they learn to solve these situations, through skills that they have to develop and allow you to advance, not only with the development of the thesis, but also as a professional in other aspects, then you must develop resilience, be tolerant of

frustration, you have to learn to work as a team, to work collaboratively (TE4 / 33-43).

Tutoring is a personalized and complex space that seeks to contribute to the horizons of nursing research. The experiences of the tutors and tutors guide the impact that the training has and its scope, which also constitutes a space for dialogue and horizontal communication.

The tutorial work is crystallized in the colloquium, which represents more than an academic forum for peers, since it also has the participation of the faculty of tutors who, at the end of the participation of their tutors, evaluate their progress, although, sometimes, this event It can be highly complex for the mentees, but it is improved with assertive feedback from the tutors:

[…] The colloquia sometimes make me very sad, because I see my student nervous, with great fear, he/she is going to present and I see all the tutors there accompanying and I listen to some tutors in their moment of showing off and mentioning "that such author and this and that", in an incisive way, and I stare at them and the question is: and what was the contribution? What was the help for the student to improve? […] I usually tell my student: "Go ahead, calm down, we have worked hard, rehearsed, do your part and

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get ready because we are going to enter at the time of complacency, do not argue with anyone, I will take note of everything whatever you want and then you and I are going to talk about it shortly and we will think about what can and cannot be done, I don't want you terrified, trying to explain to whoever makes a claim or asking why you think you are right;I and what that they are telling you is not correct, it is not the place, nor the moment ", precisely because many people enter the event to show off, a few others do come to support, to make the person have greater confidence in their moment of presenting their advances [...] (TE5 / 142-169).

4. DISCUSSION

The objective of this writing was to analyze the international experiences that, from the perspective of the tutors of the master's degree in Nursing, enhance the academic life of the students assigned to the program. The training process considers elements such as the tutor's perception regarding the tutoring he/she provides, which implies three axes: formal accompaniment to build and strengthen the academic and daily trajectory of the tutored; a complex activity on the vision of nursing and the research process, and finally, the personal bond that contains a space of complicity in which it is tried to conclude the thesis through an agreement of mutual support with the support of the tutor, with co-responsibility in progress. There are necessary conditions to develop the tutoring that are based on the interest in the research topics of the students, which implies combining the interests of the tutor and the tutor, and above all, recognizing that the student has specific personal needs to make compromise agreements where ethics prevail. Among the relevant experiences of the tutors, the presence of tutors with a good level of English and their graduation in a timely manner.

It is undeniable that there are also some negatives and they are related to the lack of responsibility and commitment of the tutors, as well as the availability of time to achieve their academic goals, which many times are not realistic. Therefore, a fundamental aspect in tutoring is the establishment of clear, precise and specific goals to progress in their academic training successfully.

"The concept of tutoring is present in the new models of education personifying the need to support educational processes, not only with activities of the conventional didactic type but also addressing the individual in his different facets, accompanying his decision-making processes from the purely academic to the personal, offering models and alternatives to take better advantage of their educational experience and find practical application to the different knowledge that is shared or built in academic activities" [18].

The self-evaluation of the postgraduate programs contributes to the reflection of the actors with methodologies of the own context of each discipline, level and orientation of the postgraduate programs, in this case, Nursing in a professional orientation program. We agree with Sanchez [1] when he affirms that the practices of educational institutions that offer postgraduate courses have been modified with the context that accreditation demands, although tutoring at National Autonomous University of Mexico has been more than an institutionalized system with the presence of various actors to achieve the objectives of the program and the institutional postgraduate program together; It is an activity with a normative dimension, however, the findings have been able to show its complexity and the various dimensions that make it up to promote reflective training: the socio-affective, ethical, motivational, personal dimension, among others.

Tutoring, as an accompaniment process, requires that tutors participate in greater international academic activities, although this experience is presented in the master's degree in some tutors with extensive experience. The doctorate in Nursing, which would be a strengthening niche, is being managed, so that the research teams also include participants from other national and foreign institutions. This situation could modify the styles and forms of accompaniment of tutors in postgraduate studies and in the training of research competences in students.

The tutoring relationship works with the pedagogical contract of shared responsibility between the tutor and the tutor to achieve the established purposes, which coincides with that reported by Moran and Ostiguin [5].

The master's degree in Nursing, followed the institutional model of self-assessment and the

process that mentoring implies, but it has to promote its own model and situated with reference to it for successive investigations, an internal exercise of formative self-assessment.

Evaluating the mentoring in the program contributes to empowering the community that integrates it [12], a reflective community that is transformed with the learning obtained and exercises its social responsibility at the University.

Tutoring is a complex field of training and evaluation [13] due to the complexity of the field of knowledge, the ways of conducting research and developing capacities to obtain results in dynamic and complex environments.

Tutoring, as a formative process, implies recognizing its relevance in the accompaniment for the development of socio-affective competences and not only cognitive or procedural, which coincides with the findings of Gonzalez [4].

Tutoring is a nodal activity in the training of Nursing professionals that implies dialogue and communication with their students, but also with the tutoring system, which partially agrees with the studies of Aguila et al. [14].

The experiences of tutors in the international area have been little addressed, however, we agree with Crose [17] regarding the limitations related to languages to enhance the international presence of tutors and tutors, with international impact for the dissemination of the knowledge and the establishment of academic networks, joint publications with international peers, but also in terms of teaching activities and mobility of teachers and students.

4. CONCLUSION

It can be concluded that the figure of the tutor certainly ceases to be only a professional guide, to become a motivating entity that seeks for the student to overcome and reach different goals that are much more demanding among them; therefore, the personal and professional experiences of the tutor and his/her own perspective of the tutoring become the pillars of the metamorphosis that occurs in the stuent during the period of his/her master's degree.

COMPETING INTERESTS

Authors have declared that no competing interests exist

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