Chapter 17

Pedagogical Counseling Program Development through an Adapted Community of Inquiry Framework

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ABSTRACT

This chapter describes an institutional Pedagogical Counseling program-assessment and systematizing initiative in terms of an adapted Community of Inquiry framework. An inquiry through pedagogical-counseling experience-exchange process was set up to analyze, assess and potentiate ongoing support activities by the staff members of the Center for Research and Development in Education (CIFE) in counseling projects of undergraduate and postgraduate programs. Garrison, Anderson, and Archer’s (2000) Community of Inquiry framework has been adapted to the authors’ pedagogical counseling process in order to conceptualize CIFE staff’s review exercise. The process includes ample opportunities to discuss and reflect on key counseling design questions, explore counseling programs from a pedagogical perspective and implement and evaluate new tutoring designs. This chapter describes the inquiry process and the lessons learned from the implementation of the pedagogical counseling inquiry exercise.

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INTRODUCTION

CIFE, the Center for Research and Development in Education of the University of los Andes, is responsible for promoting innovation, pedagogical expertise and research in education both within and outside the Campus. After more than 10 years of experience and a great number of successful Pedagogical Counseling (PC) projects carried out with University lecturers in various undergraduate and graduate programs, where a number of education innovation projects were developed, implemented and evaluated, the need was felt to pause and make a collective reflection exercise as a Center. For this purpose, we set up an inquiry exercise to analyze and discuss the various experiences in PC accumulated by the diversity of CIFE’s pedagogical experts that orient the design and implementation of pedagogical innovations in close interaction with the lecturers. We wished to make explicit all the practical and tacit knowledge of the community’s members, as well as organize, describe, categorize and systematize the ample spectrum of practical approaches to PC that have been developed in our Center.

The purpose of this chapter is to describe an institutional initiative intended to address the diversity of teacher accompanying experiences conducted by CIFE staff members and to outline improved practices for future PC projects, in particular to find common aspects and cross-project fertilization possibilities. The aim is to extract knowledge and know-how from an essentially non-formalized and non-structured large set of cases. The exercise took the form of an engaged and collaborative approach of the CIFE staff, with a focus on the rendezvous of a variety of practices and an evaluation of the PC program. This meta-analysis exercise is called Inquiry through Pedagogical-Counseling Experience-Exchange (ITPCEE). The pedagogical approach used to frame the program is inquiry-based learning from and with colleagues, specifically a Community of Inquiry (CoI). As we shall see, the CoI framework was crucial to framing the PC experiences and shaping the role of the various players within the overall exercise, as well as providing a route map for the future of the PC program.

In the next section we shall describe CIFE’s standard approach to PC. In the following next section, we shall describe the background and the objectives of the review, assessment, systematizing and future-planning exercise. Then, we shall outline the CoI framework as originally formulated by Garrison et al. (2000), and describe how we have adapted this framework to our project. The method used the data and the relevant details of the ITPCEE process relevant to our PC review exercise, will be described and discussed later. Finally, summary of the main conclusions and the new perspectives opened up along the process are provided.

CIFE’S PEDAGOGICAL COUNSELING

CIFE is an example of a University Educational Development Center or Center of Teaching Excellence, offering guidance and multiple resources for Teacher Professional Development (Perry & Smart, 2007). The Center has experience in various programs for counseling of University lectures, with the objective of improving the educational quality of the undergraduate and postgraduate programs that the University offers. The PC process aims to generate an authentic and profound dialogue about specific and contextualized innovations in teaching practices, with a view to identifying counseling elements and strategies that may lead to improvements in that particular teaching and learning process. In many cases the Laboratory of Investigation and Development on Informatics and Education (LIDIE), a branch of
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