

Causes of desertion in the English teaching and translation bachelors degree programs and prevention mechanisms 2002-1-2005-2

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SUMMARY

A descriptive investigation was done to find out the causes and detect possible solutions to the problem of desertion in the Bachelors degree programs of Teaching and Translation of the English Language at The Facultad de Idiomas, UABC; taking the constructivist theory as a basis.

The constructivist position considers education as a joint process shared by student and teacher within a group, situation in which the student can become progressively competent and independent in the resolution of tasks, and in the use of concepts and in practicing certain attitudes. From the constructivist position, the students learn and they develop as far as they can construct adequate meaning around the contents that shape the curriculum.

This construction implies the active and global contribution of the student, his availability and his previous knowledge within the framework of an interactive situation in which the professor acts as guide and mediator between the student and the learning object, the class situation and the specific cultural group (Coll, Palacios and Marchesi, 1990).

Learning does not depend exclusively on cognitive abilities, it affects all the capacities and also the global development of the student; reason why it is important to know the scope of the involved characteristics. The student who registers to attend a

class; arrives with expectations, attitudes, previous knowledge, relationship and cognitive abilities; but in addition has other external activities to the classroom, that have a determined burden in work load, since sometimes he works besides studying, or has duties in his house. (Coll, et al 1990)

According to the approach of Cesar Coll Palacios and Marchesi (1990) there are six conditions that influence the behavior of the student regarding education:

1. The individual student.
2. The global student
3. The atmosphere in the classroom, considering the acceptance of the group, integration and cohesion that the teacher manages to establish as a guide
4. The abilities of the teacher.
5. The atmosphere constructed with its physical, aesthetic and psychological properties.
6. The policies of the center, regarding achievement rules.

For this study the vocational guidance factor was also added.

Attribution Theory (Weiner) and Cognitive Dissonance (Festinger)

In a constructivist atmosphere the educator is going to try –by different means and from different positions– to influence the student’s learning who has the last resort to learn or not. Additionally, the student does not consciously decide this and it is going to attribute his successes and scholastic failures to different factors; in this sense, it has been found that people differ in orientation: it can be internal –it is known as *internal locus*– the one that values its own performance establishing causality; or external, known as *external locus*; the one that justifies from foreign factors the outcome of its own performance. Depending of the conviction they have of the responsibility for these successes and failures (Weiner, 1992). Moreover, the student who deserts tends to avoid the “cognitive dissonance” as far as possible, this means that he will look for coherence between his attitudes and his behavior.

On the other hand, in agreement with the research of Bugental, Brown and Reiss (1996 in Morales, F. 2002); if the students have difficult or negative situations in their family or social life, this is going to interfere with their cognitive capacity (like mentally solving arithmetic problems), this is defined as a reduction of the attention resources to accomplish different tasks.

Another important relations system is the one that occurs in a determined classroom where there is a group of people with dominant characteristics who have prejudices towards minority traits such as: lack of resources, being a single mother, having indigenous characteristics or suffering from a chronic disease or disability.

Principles of educative and vocational guidance

- 1) It must be a planned and developing process

- 2) The importance that parents become more involved in the guidance of their children.
- 3) The guidance work must be directed to self-election, shaping of attitudes, acceptance of others, and prejudice rupture.
- 4) It must encourage in school the development of interests, attitudes and work abilities in young people.

These four principles are basic essentials to emphasize the structuring of a guidance program, considering the necessities of the students for whom the program is designed.

Problem

Which are the causes of desertion of the students of the teaching and translation degrees of the schooled and semi-schooled English language Bachelors?

Target Population and sample

Students who have left their studies throughout the period in study, from 2002-I to 2005-II

Random sample type; they had availability to answer the questionnaire, as well as the students who could be located; they constitute the 0,69% of the total population for the period.

Type of study: Descriptive Study, *ex post-facto*

Instruments: A questionnaire was designed to obtain sociological data, mechanisms or procedures done, interest in continuing or receiving guidance and affirmations for each one of the 6 areas that affect scholastic behavior according to the Constructivist Theory.

The socio-demographic data was very useful to classify and elaborate a profile of the students who leave their studies:

- *Desertion by age*, between 18 & 25 years, cover 82% of the cases
- *Related to gender*, 53% are women and only 5% got pregnant and married.
- *By address*, 87% live in an area near the University
- *The semester they quit*, a 10% only attended the Propedeutic; 44.7% leaves in the first semester, 23.7% leaves in the second one and 15.8% in the third one.
- *During the Propaedeutic*, the 0.07% left.
- *By degree*, Teaching Bachelor with 66% of the total registry for the period, had a desertion rate of 59%; being Translation Bachelor the highest.
- *Work*, 76.3% is working now and only 24% worked then.
- *Studying another degree*, 58% does not and 37% does.
- *Will return*, of the 24 that do not study, 12 say they will return, it makes the 50%

- *Type of leave*, Definitive for 13.2%, Temporary for 2.6% the same as academic, and 81.6% did not follow any procedure.

**COMPARATIVE TABLE
STUDIES 90-93 & 93-94, 2002-2005
BY ORDER OF IMPORTANCE**

UABC (90-93)	FACULTAD IDIOMAS (2002-2005)	FAC. CS. HUMANAS (93-94)
Personal problems	Financial Problems	Unhappy with the degree
Bad placing	Availability and attitude (unhappy with the degree, did not like the teacher)	Financial problems
Financial problems	Failure	Change of address
	Insufficient vocational Guidance	Pregnancy
	Did not like the subjects	Marriage
	-	Illness
	Not enough English	Work problems
		Family problems

Exploration of mechanisms to prevent or to avoid dessertion.

Fourteen (14) interviews were done during the two semesters that this study took. There were 38 students who answered the questionnaire on causes of desertion by telephone or over the Internet. From this consultancy, the following data was obtained:

2 Transfers- change of major

3 Re-registered.

7 Vocational evaluations, 4 had academic withdrawal, 3 changed majors

1 Studies in another university, preferred information on Japanese.

1 Studies in another school; obtained information about English credits.

Conclusions and suggestions:

- Prioritize the educative and psychological guidance for the students of the first semesters and Newcomers Course.
- Make dropping a course a mandatory paper work procedure whether it is of a temporary or permanent nature, at an internal or administrative level.
- Vocational evaluation of the students who are relocated (reapply the psychometric test).
- Put the benefit of the student in first place and explain the formal procedure for dropping a course.
- Promote workshops of techniques and study habits. Guidance Groups where abilities that consider self-esteem, life project and social abilities are fortified.
- Study groups, individual and /or group consultancies with groups of pairs.
- Establish mechanisms to detect economic necessities and reinforce positively in the group the image of the scholarship student.
- Strengthen the coordination with tutorships-guidance-teachers for the referral of risk cases, mainly in the first two semesters of the degree.
- Multiply actions relating to the diffusion of the degree courses.

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