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VIRTUAL SEMINAR ON DISSERTATIONS AS MICROCOMMUNITY OF ACADEMIC PRACTICE

Seminario virtual de tesis como microcomunidad de práctica
académica

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Abstract: This study seeks to characterize doctoral students' perspectives regarding a virtual seminar focused on reviewing students' dissertation chapters, based on exchanges and feedback by peers and experts (professors and doctoral advisors). Different categories have been identified on the seminar's specific dimensions based on a qualitative analysis of participants' perspectives. This article takes the following into account: seminar's activities based on three models (communicative situation model, event model and textual model), training through practice, peer review, expert review and knowledge transfer. These categories provide evidence that participation in the seminar would contribute to the incorporation of PhD students into the academic and scientific community. The seminar serves as a micro community of academic practice.

Keywords: Postgraduate student, feedback, writing, thesis, online learning.

Resumen: Este estudio busca caracterizar la perspectiva de estudiantes de doctorado en torno a un seminario virtual orientado a la revisión de capítulos de la tesis producidos por los propios estudiantes a partir del intercambio y la retroalimentación con pares y expertos (docentes y también directores de tesis). En función de un análisis cualitativo centrado en la perspectiva de los participantes se han identificado diferentes categorías sobre dimensiones específicas del seminario. En este artículo se consideran las siguientes: las actividades del seminario basadas en tres modelos (modelo de situación comunicativa, modelo del evento y modelo textual), la formación desde la práctica, la revisión entre pares, la revisión de los expertos y la transferencia de conocimiento. Estas categorías aportan evidencia acerca de que la participación en el seminario contribuiría con la incorporación de las tesis a la comunidad académica y científica. Así, el seminario funcionaría como una microcomunidad de práctica académica.

Palabras clave: Estudiante de postgrado, retroalimentación, escritura, tesis, aprendizaje en línea.

INTRODUCTION

Postgraduate students face great challenges completing their dissertations or theses (Barsky & Davila, 2012; Peng, 2018; Sanchez, 2012; Simpson et al., 2016; Wainerman & Matovich, 2016; Wainerman, 2017) including, among others, those pertaining writing (Caffarella & Barnett, 2000; Castello et al., 2010; Starke-Meyerring et al., 2014). This is why different initiatives have been developed to assist students' production of their

respective postgraduate document, these include writing seminars or workshops in face-to-face or virtual modality (Autor & Autor, 2017, 2018, 2019a, 2020; Carlino, 2009; Delyser, 2003; Dressler et al., 2019; Dysthe & Lillejord, 2012). According to different studies exploring these initiatives, there are didactic strategies that favor writing at postgraduate level, dissertations in particular. These strategies underline work conducted with real dissertations, especially with those produced by their own students (Autor & Autor, 2017; Delyser, 2003; Carlino, 2009); work with experts (Autor & Autor, 2018, 2019a; Carlino, 2009); and peer review (Autor & Autor, 2019b, 2020; Carlino, 2015; Dysthe y Lillejord, 2012; Dressler et al., 2019). These strategies have also been collected by Choís et al. (2020) in a bibliographical review of practices documented in Latin America about teaching for dissertations at postgraduate level.

This research found articulations within the documented practices between a type of explicit learning of writing and pedagogical practices aimed at fostering student participation in communities of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991). However, as these researchers also note, teaching writing in seminars or workshops is often done by writing experts, despite the fact that the bibliography indicates that the members of an academic discipline community are more knowledgeable and familiar with the discourse practices of the specific field (Carlino, 2005). Regardless, as explained by Fernandez and Guevara (2017), seminars act as pedagogical devices that encourage a connection between theory and practice.

With the goal of delving into and completing the findings in this line of research, we suggest a characterization of doctorate students' perspective concerning a virtual seminar aimed at reviewing dissertation chapters written by students and based on exchanges and feedback by peers and experts (professors and doctoral advisors). The question guiding this research is as follows: Which is the perspective of students' on the different dimensions of a virtual seminar aimed at reviewing students' production and based on exchanges and feedback by peers and experts? This study is interested in exploring students' point of view regarding these different dimensions, with the objective of understanding if participating in a seminar of these characteristics would foster students' incorporation into their academic field's community of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991).

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Seminars and Workshops on Postgraduate Dissertations

As the bibliography shows (Autor & Autor, 2017, 2019a, 2019b; Carlino, 2008; Delyser, 2003; Dressler et al., 2019; Dysthe & Lillejord, 2012), many initiatives are being developed in order to accompany the dissertation process, these include writing seminars or workshops (virtual or face-to-face) which are usually conducted by expert professors. This

article takes into account the conclusions of some studies that are relevant for this research.

Among face-to-face alternatives, Delyser (2003, p.32) explains the results of a writing seminar for Social Sciences graduates; working in groups, students analyzed different dissertations based on bibliography and previously defined guidelines. According to the author, this modality “has allowed students to get rid of the fear of sharing their own document, a task that also contributes to the development of a critical view of their text”.

Carlino (2008, p.36) describes didactic situations (even peer review of students’ dissertations) that were implemented in writing workshops for graduate students in Education and Psychology. Based on the recorded results, the researcher suggests that it is fundamental “for professors to provide a sustained framework to reach adequate development and for students to acknowledge its usefulness”.

In terms of virtual initiatives, Dysthe and Lillejord (2012) present a qualitative study of an online program of the master’s degree in Education at Norwegian Research University, which has been promoted by a community of writers. The study focuses on writing practices to learn and learn to write, as well as on the ways in which digital tools mediate in building a community of writing and learning. Among other findings, the study showed that the joint commitment of a document’s production is a learning process for those who provide it and for those who receive it. The only way of convincing students is to have them experience it.

Likewise, Autor and Autor (2017), in the framework of a seminar aimed at familiarizing postgraduate students with academic production, show that an exchange between peers mediated by digital technologies promotes awareness on different aspects of the production and makes these problems explicit, therefore driving a metalinguistic reflection of theses that would otherwise be impossible individually. This reflection encompasses global and macro textual dimensions, as well as micro textual dimensions, including the recognition of linguistic resources and strategies. Aligned with the aforementioned, a study on professor’s feedback on a chapter written by students as closure to a virtual workshop and regarding the changes deriving from this feedback, Autor and Autor (2018) conclude that feedback fosters a more active reflection of students in terms of writing the chapter, which is possible due to suggestions and questions that are provided.

Recently, Dressler et al. (2019) have examined the quantity and quality of responses to feedback given by nine peers and an instructor in written tasks that were part of a virtual research course at an American university. 84.89% of the times, students integrated the feedback into their writing tasks and the percentage of integration was slightly higher for the instructor than for peers. The research also showed that students usually consider feedback that focuses on text compared with feedback that focuses on content. In that sense, the authors highlight the need to train students in activities related with feedback and text review.

According with the main findings of these studies, some didactic strategies that contribute to postgraduate students' learning writing have surfaced, particularly regarding dissertations. These strategies, also recorded by Choís et al. (2020), involve working with real dissertations (specifically by the students), exchanging thoughts with expert professors, interacting with and getting feedback from peers. As it will be explained in the chapter Context of Study, these strategies have been relevant in the design of the seminar detailed in this research.

From Seminars and Workshops on Dissertations to Community of Practice

Regarding workshops on dissertations as an approach to a community of practice, Fernandez and Guevara (2017) believe that seminars on dissertations act as pedagogical tools to foster a connection between theory and practice. Similarly, in *Una mirada analítica a la enseñanza de la escritura en posgrado: revisión de prácticas documentadas en Latinoamérica* (2020), Choís et al. detect that the practices selected establish articulations between a type of explicit teaching of writing and pedagogical practices aimed at encouraging students' participation in *communities of practice* (Lave & Wenger, 1991).

As explained by Wenger (1998), members of a community of practice share the development of a task, they establish negotiations about it and also about their participation, within the framework of specific historical, cultural and institutional contexts. This participation is associated with joint commitment of community members and with the task. Moreover, members of the community of practice share a set of symbols, stories, ways of acting and tools that constitute that community's specific *repertoire*. As per Lave and Wenger (1991), to the extent that people participate in the community, they begin to feel part of that circle and, in time, are also regarded as experts.

Consequently, this study inquiries into doctoral students' perspectives about a virtual seminar aimed at the review of chapters in their dissertations based on exchanges with peers and experts in order to understand if participation in said seminar would allow them to become part of an academic field's community of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991).

Context of the Study

The article focuses on the third edition of a 90-hour virtual postgraduate seminar, in which researchers have always performed as professors and coordinators. This edition, which took place in October – November 2019 at a leading national university in Argentina, had the participation of four doctoral students who had to have written at least two chapters of their dissertation.

The seminar was entitled “Dissertation Clinic”, and it focused on the review of at least one of the chapters based on exchanges with peers and

experts. The initiative was developed in the university's Moodle platform throughout six weeks, arranged into three work stages.

In the first stage students completed diagnostic tools and participated in two Moodle forums: one to introduce and describe their research and progress on their dissertation, the other to reflect on the process of writing and the actions of providing and receiving feedback.

In the second stage, students are divided in groups of two based on their discipline or methodology's similarities, students review their chapter and their peer's following the interaction model of communication (pragmatic), the event model (semantic) and the textual model (discursive) (Cubo et al., 2011). The first model refers to the role of interlocutors in the socio-rhetorical community, to their intentions and knowledge; the second, to the research in itself and its process; the third, to the strategies of textualization of meanings to convey at global and local level.

Based on these models, the review lasts three weeks. In the first week, students engage in the review taking into account aspects pertaining the interaction model of communication and the event model. In the second week, they focus on the textual model, specifically on the movements and steps of each section of the dissertation[1]. In the third week, students continue working on the textual model but emphasizing on the linguistic resources and strategies applied in textualization. Two main instructions are proposed: 1) for documents shared on Google Drive, students must read the chapter and highlight accomplishments or inadequacies regarding each model, there is an initial intervention by students that is followed by the professors'; 2) in the forums, an overall reflection on the chapter's accomplishments or inadequacies is expected, as well as participants' interaction for each input. This is intended to drive feedback concerning the text and overall feedback (Kumar & Stracke, 2007) concerning their chapter and their peer's. At the end of the second stage, participants share their chapters and input received with the advisors and/or specialists in their academic discipline, comments are then welcome.

In the third two-week stage, participants review their chapters based on the comments received, this is done with professors via e-mail. In the end, a final draft is delivered and professors conduct a conclusive evaluation.

Lastly, an *ad-hoc* open-ended questionnaire is applied with the intention of pondering students' assessment of the workshop's contributions and limitations. Students receive a feedback that is relative to the diagnostic tools and final evaluation.

METHODOLOGY

This is a qualitative research that mostly focuses on understanding phenomena from participants' perspectives, and in relation to the context (Hernandez et al., 2014). The emphasis is on understanding the students' point of view of a teaching experience aimed at writing with the goal of

reviewing their own dissertation chapters using interactions with peers and experts.

For this study, a sample with volunteering participants from four universities has been considered: four women with training in Social and Human Sciences (one in education, one in literature and two in English); they were all doctorate students at Argentinian universities and aged below 40.

In-depth interviews were conducted with open-ended questions to inquire into the seminar's dimensions: experience pertaining different aspects of the seminar, positive and negative aspects of taking part in it, improvement suggestions, advice provided to prospective participants, challenges and advantages of the virtual modality. These 45-minute interviews were manually transcribed by the researchers.

Also, with the aim of complementing data extracted from the interviews, answers to the retrospective questionnaire were analyzed; said questionnaire set out to identify participants' assessments of the workshop's contributions and limitations.

Researchers initially inductively codified data of different materials. They identified emerging topics from data in dialogs (when pertinent) to concepts in the bibliography, including those considered for the workshop's design. This led to a descriptive and analytical coding (Miles & Huberman, 1994) that followed the independent parallel codification approach (Thomas, 2006), based on which multiple researchers code their data. They proceeded to compare their coding to identify differences and overlapping, modifying the necessary cases to produce a final set of categories (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Categories include those mentioned by respondents in the interviews and/or questionnaires.

ANALYSIS

The analysis has allowed identifying a series of categories associated with participants' perspectives on different specific dimensions of the virtual seminar, aimed at reviewing the chapters of their dissertation based on input by peers and experts. Per the analysis, it has been acknowledged that some of these categories contribute evidence concerning the fact that taking part in the seminar would contribute to the incorporation of students to the academic and scientific community. This article focuses on the presentation of five of these categories and its properties, namely: the seminar's activities based on the three models (interaction model of communication, event model and textual model), training based on practice, peer review, expert review and knowledge transfer.

Interviews underline the degree of usefulness and practicality of the **seminar's activities based on the three models**, inasmuch as these pedagogical interventions provide views on several aspects of the arrangement of personal and colleague's drafts. According to Carla, for instance, "fragmentation was very useful, the series of activities that take a model into account"[2]. Dora, on the other hand, refers to the significance of reflection caused by the models for the writing process,

in terms of the objectives of writing and the communicative context in which the document makes sense: “because it is common to write and lose context. So it is good to keep it in mind: why are we writing and for whom. It is a guiding axis for writing”. Likewise, Talia talks about the practicality of this type of intervention, claiming it has helped her to read and analyze academic texts written by colleagues and to, similarly to Dora, make decisions regarding her own draft: “I found it very practical, it gave me knowledge and I incorporated it, discussing different models in the academic text. It was interesting because ‘I could steer my text here or there’”. Patricia mentions the contributions of a pedagogical tool based on the three models to analyze written text in general, and her own dissertation in particular:

Beginning with the interaction model of communication, how to manifest it in the text; the textual model and the event model. And the importance of expressing it in the text, to put it in words. Or somehow, in the written result. Or to manifest the topic, where it is going and the context. I think I corrected a lot of my text, I was out of touch, and my voice was not present. It seemed very impersonal... I worked a lot on that too. Because I learned how to. Or how valuable it was.

According with Patricia, the review activities based on the three models have allowed her to improve textualization of her dissertation, and she has been able to recognize the need to develop her own voice in the document, and the importance of this development.

In terms of the models, despite explicitly presenting and explaining them at the beginning of the seminar and in each week of work, two of the participants commented on the need for further explanation on how to work with the models throughout the seminar, meaning that as they are working separately, clarifications are needed to avoid students to overlap working with different models. Patricia describes: “Initially, when we began providing comments –Carla and I too – started with the textual level and got ahead with something else. I was wrong about what I was supposed to look at. I understood it better afterwards”. In the same regard, Carla’s suggestion was: “Warning the student about what we are going to do. Hold your horses. Do not get ahead. Remain calm because we are going to work on that in a different stage and focus on this”.

Aside from emphasizing on the three models that have guided the analysis and steered the writing review, participants value other aspects of the tasks proposed, in particular the practical work conducted with their own drafts or their peers’, in other words: **training through practice**. In that sense, it is noteworthy that participants positively ponder the connection established between theory and practice in the seminar. Carla explains: “Interestingly, the course did not have as much theoretical material. Neither to criticize nor to discredit the theory, but I believe in the stage we are in, it is more valuable for us to apply practice to our writing”. Consequently, the interviewee would recommend the seminar since “it is practical. You do what you need to do. It is formative but emphasizing on practice”. Patricia states “we take courses and fail to find its value, practicality. In this course, everything I did was useful to me. It is practical and I can apply it in what I am doing.”

Participants consider that this type of practical work implies major effort and commitment. Talia says: “this seminar entails a lot of work, putting many neurons to work in order to arrange things, solve problems that arise in the text”. Likewise, Patricia explains: “practice helped me solve this arduous task”.

On the other hand, according to the interviewees, practice and grueling work assisted them in making progress in their dissertations, a highly valued outcome. Patricia claims that the seminar’s aim “has been entirely favorable and beneficial in the process of reviewing her dissertation’s writing. Dora considers that “the course’s process concludes with concrete work done, a significant advancement for the dissertation”.

Concurrently to their input on the activities based on the three models and the practical training, the four participants have considered the **peer review** as a key element of the seminar. As documented in the interviews, peer review represents a major contribution due to the reading and comments by colleagues, and to the learning derived from reading and commenting other drafts. The aim is not to get input on the text, but to have the possibility to provide feedback. In that sense, Carla says: “Do not think that reading someone else’s work is a waste of time because it really yields [...]. Not just because the other person returns the favor, but because you really learn from reading the other drafts”. In turn, Dora expresses that the best contribution of the seminar has been “having your work being read by someone else and at the same time reading another person’s words. Being nourished by latest ideas, of ways of writing that are unknown and which you neglect from the beginning”. As per Dora’s words, the authors of the dissertations learn at conceptual level and at their academic discipline’s level, but first and foremost, they learn from the practice of writing. Similarly, Carla indicates:

You do not learn the academic discipline, you learn about writing. In fact, thinking about how to suggest another person to improve their work is a crucial rhetorical and cognitive exercise. It helps you see how to fix things when you are in a comparable situation. [...] you learn from your suggestions. I think it reading someone’s work drives awareness.

As this quote evinces, learning to write represents one of the seminar’s greatest contributions, learning that is accomplished according to metalinguistic reflection, a type of rhetorical metacognition experience that is formatted by the challenge of the task of providing feedback. The quote also suggests that peer review enables the possibility to act as evaluators of the texts, a role that is usually not fulfilled by postgraduate students, but that is key in connection with the activities of text production in the academic and scientific field. In that sense, Dora adds:

I think the most challenging task was to act as pedagogical companion and provide feedback on my classmate’s work [...]. I felt that way because seldom do we act as “evaluators” of someone’s work, and I believe this change in role gave us another outlook and adds gains from other perspective.

This role as evaluators demands reading and returning peers’ work and requires a large intellectual effort, which is referred to in interviews as one

of the seminar's greatest challenges. Carla speaks about it and explains how she tackled the process:

For me, it was really challenging to come up with comments that were really useful for the other person, taking the three models into consideration. That to begin with, and then verbalizing it. I can show you the feedback drafts, I was reading the text and had an open Word file. So when I identified something, I wrote it down in the file. I have that file and another one in which I corrected my notes. I had a parallel Word file but I did not write it afterwards, I did it simultaneously.

Peer review also comes up in cases in which participants opt for the second alternative (per the seminar's final suggestion to share the draft and comments with the advisor or a colleague). In those cases, interviewees stress on their colleagues' positive attitude to deliver the task and contribute with that outlook. Talia explains that she shared the draft with two colleagues: "an English professor with whom I took my master's degree and a Literature professor who is a co-worker. They were very open and kind. They gave me their thoughts on what I could change or improve. But I did not have a problem in asking them the favor and they replied 'yes, no problem' ". Patricia shared her work with a university colleague:

She thought what we were doing was very interesting. She got very excited. Although my text was long, she was delighted to read it and to offer the best possible suggestions she could, and the truth is that her suggestions were as useful as the others'. I really liked the idea because it proves us we can really do it. You usually refrain in order to avoid bothering others, because it is time-consuming, but it is really useful. There is always someone willing to read what we write.

It would seem that by looking for feedback from colleagues in the dissertation process (what happens in the seminar since advisors are frequently unavailable), helps acknowledge the significance of this type of input, even if it is commonly regarded as extra work or as a "favor" or trouble.

Along with peer review, interviewees positively value **the work with the experts**, these are professors that teach the seminar and also, in some cases, the advisors.

In terms of the teaching task, Patricia indicates that feedback provided by the experts "was very positive and enriching", and Dora considers that their input "affected the final text". In two of the cases, participants also acknowledge differences in feedback provided by experts compared with those by colleagues, to the extent that experts focused on the academic discipline, global matters and the overall organization of the thesis. In that regard, Carla affirms having managed "a better selection of content", whereas Patricia admits getting "a more global and critical view" that "was a great help while thinking about how to organize my chapter and in many matters pertaining argumentation".

In addition to the relevance of feedback provided by the seminar's professors, two participants mentioned the importance of sharing the draft with professors, an activity which, as anticipated, was suggested in the seminar. Those who mention exchanges with professors, also add that their review articulates with the permanent accompaniment of students. Referring to the working dynamic with her advisor, Dora states: "I am

constantly in touch with my advisor and she is updated on my work, on my progress, and she reads what I'm working on". Similarly, Carla explains:

She has a nice way of working, as a student you feel her permanent companionship. In fact, when you asked us to consult some changes with the advisor, we got together immediately and worked it out. I managed to do it from Tuesday to Thursday. In that sense, she is a fantastic workmate.

Finally, participants indicate possible **knowledge transfer and writing practices** acquired throughout the seminar. On one hand, they refer to the concepts and strategies of textualization and review that are applicable in their upcoming documents. Dora clarifies that the work undertaken in the seminar "resembles a guiding axis to organize writing, which I believe is important for the workshop but that can also be used in other moments of writing". Talia discusses the relevance of acquiring sustained knowledge about writing: "and it is crucial to continuously review the practice in order to get better. [...] For me, it is necessary to review and to review again. And to correct. And incorporate new knowledge. Just as I did in this workshop". Moreover, Patricia asserts: "writing is always a challenge, but editing a written text and reviewing and editing again is also a huge undertaking. [...] In this workshop I gained other resources and more help to achieve it".

In some cases, participants refer to the possibility of replicating the peer review work conducted in the seminar with colleagues in their academic discipline. In particular, Patricia comments: "I have a [classmate] studying her master's degree. It might be beneficial to ask her to read some of my texts and I can also help her". Carla mentions: "we thought about doing joint work sessions with her [a colleague]. Not as structured as the workshop, but we have thought about reading each other's work: I can read her dissertation and she can read mine, informally. Just to incorporate it as an activity".

Aside from expressing the reach of acquired knowledge in terms of individual writing processes, interviewees introduce other professional contexts to which they could transfer their acquired knowledge and skills. Talia thinks that the seminar's way of working could become a significant contribution for other colleagues in the academic field: "as a matter of innovating and getting to know other theoretical proposals, and also to improve composition and practicing it. And I believe (many colleagues here) are used to reviewing their writing and reviewing their research procedure". On the other hand, as mentioned by Carla, acquired knowledge can be recovered in teaching practices at different educational levels: "I think it can be incorporated in the undergraduate, not as systematic because there is not enough time with all the content, but an activity can be included to give and receive feedback between classmates before submitting their work to the professor".

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

This article explored participants' perspectives on the different dimensions of a virtual seminar aimed at reviewing the chapter of their dissertations with peers and experts. The study identified a series of categories that evince the fact that participating in the seminar would contribute to students' incorporation into the academic and scientific community. In particular, interviewees refer to the activities based on the three models, training through practice, peer review, work with experts, and practice acquired in the seminar. The description of these categories has enabled the sense in which the different dimensions of the seminar would favor students' incorporation into the academic community.

As per the interviews, activities based on the three models drive reflection on the production of the dissertation and the language resources involved, thus contributing with an analysis of the peer's draft and their own, but also with the future production of the dissertation. This technical approach of keeping the instances together (a flow and backflow of sorts) articulates with another core aspect of the task, which is, per the interviewees, concrete practice with participants' texts. According to the doctoral students, this theoretical proposal is valuable since it is implemented with the aim of making progress in their dissertation, experiencing training through practice. This would suggest that, as advised by Fernandez and Guevara (2017), seminars work as pedagogical tools to connect theory and practice.

On the other hand, interviewees have addressed the dynamics of peer review and its contribution regarding the dissertation's process. That dynamic allows students to fulfill roles –as evaluator peers, for instance– which they do not frequently occupy. Thanks to their participation in review tasks, students acknowledge the value of giving and providing feedback. These findings are aligned with those by Dysthe and Lillejord (2012), who have asserted that for students to engage in giving and providing feedback, it is necessary for them to experience and benefit from these activities.

Interviewees assert that this type of tasks lead to knowledge that is inherent to writing and not just to their academic discipline. Indeed, peer review promotes metalinguistic reflection on the dissertation's chapters. In that sense, the results of the study herein dialog with a prior study (Autor & Autor, 2017) which has shown that interaction among peers facilitates explicitness and fosters awareness on matters pertaining the production of text, leading to a type of metalinguistic reflection on writing their dissertation that would otherwise be unlikely in solitude.

Besides peer review, interviewees have stressed the significance of review by experts, seminar professors and advisors. Bibliography on postgraduate teaching has already documented the key role of the advisor's supervision in the dissertation's process (Basturkmen et al., 2014; Li & Seale, 2007, among many others), yet, due to advisors' work overload, there is a need to turn to other readers such as peers (Odena & Burgess, 2017; Stracke & Kumar, 2014). This work has evinced the

fact that, when students participate in review activities between peers, they acknowledge its contribution in terms of reciprocal feedback, since it encourages appropriation of criteria to reconsider the texts (Carlino, 2015).

Ultimately, according to the interviewees, a didactic intervention with the aforementioned traits provides guidance, organization and structure to the analysis of colleagues' drafts and to the personal process of writing the dissertation. They even add that acquired knowledge could be applied in future writing processes and could be replicated in other situations of academic production in which they take part as professors.

Even though the study's sample is small and should be broadened to confirm its conclusions, we believe results point to the fact that a seminar aimed at reviewing dissertation chapters based on peer and expert reviews would work as a microcommunity of practice (Lave & Wenger 1991; Fernandez & Guevara, 2017), replicating tasks (e.g., revision of a text), indexes (e.g., dissertations as academic production, requirements of academic discourse), roles (e.g., commentator, evaluator peers), and joint commitments (e.g., accepting and providing constructive suggestions) of the members of the community. Indeed, the records of prior editions of the seminar show some students continue exchanges with their workshop tutors and have set up a writing group that acts as framework, guide and practice for co-learning. For this group, the relationship established between professors, students and a coordinating writing specialist has been relevant. In that sense, we have the conviction that the micro community deriving from this workshop will be sustained in time. Future research should broaden the sample and explore some aspects of participants' academic life after the seminar.

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