Quality and training of new teaching staff in Galician public universities

QUALITY AND TRAINING OF NEW TEACHING STAFF IN GALICIAN PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES

Calidad y formación del profesorado Novel en las universidades públicas gallegas

Qualidade e formação do professorado novel nas universidades públicas galegas

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ABSTRACT

For a proper functioning of the university institutions is essential, among other things, a quality teaching. Achieving a quality higher education means to regulate the training of its teaching and research staff and to design programs aimed at promoting their professional development in aspects such as mastery of personal skills, strategies related to curriculum planning and programs for students or participation in the organization management. Therefore, we carried out case studies to analyze and understand the training processes and professional development of the new teaching staff at Galicia's public universities. The results show the need to design specific training plans that attend the training needs and specific problems of this group.

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RESUMEN

Para un adecuado funcionamiento de las instituciones universitarias es imprescindible, entre otras muchas cosas, una enseñanza de calidad. Lograr una educación superior de calidad supone regular la formación de su personal docente e investigador y diseñar programas orientados a promover su desarrollo profesional en aspectos como el dominio de las habilidades personales, las estrategias relativas a la planificación curricular y los programas destinados al alumnado o la participación en la gestión de la organización. Por ello, en este trabajo llevamos a cabo un estudio de casos para analizar y comprender los procesos formativos y el desarrollo profesional del profesorado novel de las universidades públicas de Galicia. Los resultados ponen de manifiesto la exigencia de diseñar planes de formación específicos que atiendan a las necesidades de formación y problemáticas específicas de este colectivo.

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RESUMO

Para um adequado funcionamento das instituições universitárias é imprescindível, entre outras muitas cosas, um ensino de qualidade. Conseguir uma educação superior de qualidade supõe regular a formação do seu pessoal docente e pesquisador e desenhar programas orientados a promover o seu desenvolvimento profissional em aspectos como o domínio das habilidades pessoais, as estratégias relativas à planificação curricular e os programas destinados ao alunato ou a participação na gestão da organização. Por isto, em este trabalho levamos a cabo um estudo de casos para analisar e compreender os processos formativos e o desenvolvimento profissional do professorado novel das universidades públicas da Galiza. Os resultados põem de manifestó a exigência de desenhar planos de formação específicos que atendam às necessidades de formação e problemáticas específicas deste coletivo.

INTRODUCTION

Many studies focus on quality, especially those related to education and the university. In fact, in order to evaluate the proper functioning of higher education institutions it is essential to have quality teaching, among other things.

In order to promote higher education of quality, universities must regulate the training of their teaching and research staff. Hence the need to design programs aimed at the professional development of university teachers in diverse aspects such as mastery of personal skills, strategies related to curriculum planning and student programs or participation in the organization's management (De Miguel, 2003).

In this paper we refer to the concept of quality and, more specifically, to quality in the context of university education, and we review quality initiatives in three Galician public universities, specifically those oriented towards the training of the new teaching staff.

For this, in the first place, we approach the concept of quality from a theoretical perspective. Next, we approach quality and the training of teachers in the university's context. Thirdly, we analyze how the training of the new teaching staff is addressed in three specific universities: Santiago de Compostela, A Coruña and Vigo. Finally, we present a final reflection as a conclusion.

1. THE CONCEPT OF QUALITY, AN APPROXIMATION.

The term quality is a complex one and it can acquire different meanings depending on the disciplinary field in which it is used. The following quotation from De Miguel (1995, p. 33) clearly illustrates this reality:

> Quality ... you may know what it is, but you will not know how to express it. However, this is not a contradiction. Some things are better than others, that is, they posses more quality. But when you try to express what quality is, separately from the things that have said characteristics, you will not have a clue.

In general, people value something to the extent that it responds to their desires and they coincide in defining quality as the result of comparing their expectations with their own perception of reality. In other words, quality depends on the comparison between previous expectations and the valuation of the received product or service (Municio, 2000).

Harvey and Green (1993) point out that quality can be identified by using five different perspectives, which are: the exception (excellence), perfection or consistency, adequacy to objectives, value for money and transformation.

Quality has had a strong impact on the configuration of different economic environments (commercial, productive) and, in recent years, in other areas such as education.

In education, some proposals relate the term quality to concepts such as effectiveness, adequacy, equity, productivity, efficiency, excellence, satisfaction ... (Pérez Juste, 2004; Escudero, 2006).

According to Escudero (2006, p.278):

> ... when identified with effectiveness, quality refers to the achievement of intended objectives; adequacy and ownership are two dimensions of quality in which

emphasis is placed on the customer's perspective and on strategic planning and management as a way to achieve relevant quality; quality is also assimilated with equality, insofar as the idea of an education oriented and committed to a just and balanced personal and social development is defended and promoted.

When associated with responsibility, it is related to the degree to which the institution sufficiently fulfills its duties and obligations, beyond its strict responsibility; linked to efficiency, quality implies the minimization of all kinds of costs in relation to the obtained results; finally, linked to excellence, it carries with it a certain sense of elitism and exclusivity.

For authors such as Pérez Juste (2004: 39): "the term quality refers to different realities, as the people who use the term evidence it through the definitions they use." This author conceives quality from a "holistic approach to education" and points out that "the concept of quality education lies, rather than in any other aspect such as means, resources, processes or results, in the very entity of the pursued goals"(p. 39).

2. QUALITY AND TEACHER TRAINING

In recent years, higher education has been involved in a transformative process whose purpose has been to create a common educational space for the whole European Union (EU). Teaching quality is one of the central themes of this European Higher Education Area (EHEA) adaptation process.

In fact, the Spanish state, in its Organic Law of Universities 6/2001, dated December 21, states that the Government, Autonomous Communities and universities will promote the implementation

of programs aimed at the methodological renovation of university education in order to meet the quality objectives determined by the European Higher Education Area (EHEA).

According to Rodríguez Espinar (2005), we can speak of two dimensions of quality in higher education: the intrinsic dimension and the extrinsic dimension. A clear reference to intrinsic quality is the excellence of knowledge for knowledge's sake, independent of its adequacy to the learning subject and its pertinence to the training program.

For its part, the extrinsic dimension presents a greater diversity of perspectives and generates a few disputes; within this dimension we can speak of different conceptions of quality: quality as an exception, related to the quality of the *inputs* or to the institution's fame or reputation; quality in relation to resources, that is, teachers, facilities, students and economic resources; quality as reputation; quality as the ability to achieve objectives; quality as economic efficiency-effectiveness; quality as adaptation to the labor market; quality as an organizational innovation; the quality as user satisfaction, that is, quality in relation to the degree to which the supplied services satisfy the students requirements and expectations; and, finally, quality as a transformation or "added value".

We can say that quality in higher education encompasses a multitude of dimensions and relationships that translate into new practices such as institutional assessment, teaching, services, imparted training, agents and also teacher training.

A quality university cannot exist without addressing teacher training in depth, understood as

"the process that improves knowledge relative to strategies, performance and attitudes of those who exercise their profession (or would, in the case of initial education" (Imbernón, 2010, p. 589).

According to Delgado (2013, p. 182), "if we want a quality university, we must necessarily count on the support of its teaching staff, and said staff requires training adapted to its new teaching needs, as well as a reassessment of its effort and dedication. "

In speaking of training university teachers, we should not only refer to those who possess several years of experience, but also, and especially, to training new teaching staff, the object of our study.

Different authors (Bozu, 2010; Feixas, 2002; Marcelo, 1999) offer a series of definitions about what is meant by "new teachers." Thus, Bozu (2010) refers to this teacher as inexperienced, beginner, young, new, without the experience of learning an art, trade or faculty, or is starting an activity for the first time.

For Feixas (2002), it is the person that has some professional experience. Marcelo (1999) understands, on the other hand, that these teachers are the ones that begin to exercise a trade or activity and have had no prior knowledge or experience relative to it.

The professional profile of the new teacher is complex and requires a new competency framework and, in turn, adequate training in both the specific disciplinary field and in the pedagogical field (Rodríguez Conde y Sánchez, 2002). It does not seem sufficient to master the contents of the subjects the teacher teaches; in order to develop

quality teaching the teacher must deploy a set of knowledges (know-how, know-why, know-what) inherent to their professional profile (Delgado, 2013). The teacher should be a multipurpose professional, with sufficient flexibility to adapt to new and diverse situations and to respond adequately to new challenges and needs (García Sanz and Maquilón, 2010).

According to *The Tuning Educational Structures in Europe*, teachers' competences are: general competences, independent of the area of study and classifiable as instrumentals (cognitive abilities, methodological abilities, technological or linguistic skills), interpersonal (ability to express one's feelings, critical capacity and social skills) and systemic (global skills and abilities that put various skills or abilities into play); specific skills related to disciplinary knowledge in an academic field (knowledge), professional skills in relation to the practical and operative application of knowledge to certain situations (know-how), attitudes and values (know-why, know-what), academic competences (know how to transcend).

Quality teaching demands an adequate preparation, with constant updating and permanent training. This interest and concern for ensuring teaching quality through the training of teachers is evidenced in the development of teacher training and innovation programs in all universities, which provide the opportunity to acquire the necessary skills to perform efficiently and satisfactorily at the professional level.

In this sense, universities have to plan training activities in order to contribute to the professional development of in-service university teachers, and said activities that share the development of a series

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of relevant competences, among which the following stand out, (based on García Sanz and Maquilón (2011): to know and apply the subject's contents; know the university's culture and know how to navigate it; team work with people of the same and different professional areas; teach the students; plan teaching and research; know and know how to apply innovative teaching methodologies; use ICT in a proper manner; developing and evaluating research and innovation projects; evaluate the teaching-learning process; actively participate in the institution's management and decision-making; organize and manage scientific events; express oneself in written and oral English and, finally, project positive attitudes and democratic values.

In spite of everything, the implementation of these training programs directed to the new faculty members differs from one university to another, both quantitatively and qualitatively (Imbernón, 2012).

3. THE TRAINING OF NEW TEACHERS IN GALICIAN UNIVERSITIES: A CASE STUDY

3.1. METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study is to know and understand the training and professional development processes applicable to new teaching staff from three universities of the Autonomous Galician Community, Santiago de Compostela, A Coruña and Vigo.

More specifically, we will try to answer the following research questions: What are the main

characteristics of the training programs offered by these three universities? Who will receive the training? What are the teaching staff selection criteria? How are the training activities managed? What contents do they use? What are the assessment processes?

In line with this research's purpose, the study is based on a qualitative paradigm, via a case study; this research approach is characterized by an interest in the understanding of a concrete scenario. It is a "qualitative research design strategy that, based on the theoretical framework from which reality and the questions to be answered are analyzed, allows the selection of real scenarios that act as sources of information" (Rodríguez, Gil and García, 1999, p. 91).

In order to obtain information about different aspects of new teaching staff training, we focus on specific cases at the universities of Santiago de Compostela, A Coruña and Vigo. Our analysis is based on the documents available on the three universities' web pages.

The analysis has been directed towards a search for meaning, in order to understand the case under study through the interpretation of the information obtained from the conceptual schemas initially delimited. To this end, the information has been reduced through the identification of categories. The system of categories has been established based on the research's conceptual framework, the questions that guide it and the procedures used.

Specifically, this system consists of the following categories: unit responsible for training, denomination of training programs, people how will receive training, training programs' content,

modality and methodology, training assessment and accreditation system.

3.2. RESULTS

In line with the posited analysis, we now present the results obtained relative to the training of new teachers in the three public universities of the Autonomous Community of Galicia, taking the previously delimited analytical categories as reference.

3.2.1. Responsible unit

In the three Galician universities, Santiago de Compostela, Vigo and A Coruña, the design and development of training actions for new teaching staff, are managed by training units with different denominations and responsibilities.

Thus, at the University of A Coruña these are managed through the Training and Advisory Unit (UFA, Spanish acronym). This unit, created in 2004, has the mission of facilitating training and providing the necessary advice to university teachers and students in relation to various aspects of the teaching-learning process.

Since 2003 the Center for Learning Technologies (CETA, Spanish acronym) is the unit responsible for training at the University of Santiago de Compostela and has as its fundamental objective the development and application of new technologies in education and teacher training.

At the University of Vigo, the Vice-rectorate for Academic Organization and Teachers is responsible for this task.

3.2.2. Denomination

The three universities have training programs for new teaching staff, and this training is much more recent than the one tailored to experienced teachers.

In general terms, the purpose of these programs or training plans is to establish a training framework designed to allow the new teaching staff to acquire the necessary teaching skills to perform professionally as a teacher.

These programs receive different denominations; 'New Teachers' Training Plan', at the University of Santiago de Compostela; 'Initial Training Plan (PFI, Spanish acronym)', at the University of A Coruña, and 'Training Program for New Teachers', at the University of Vigo. [1]

3.2.3. Recipients

The recipients are teachers with little or no experience in the university, or fellows and fellows in training, as can be seen in Table 1.

More specifically, in the case of the University of Santiago de Compostela, the people who will receive this training are Ramón y Cajal, Parga Pondal Researchers who do not participate in the Teacher's Ordering Plan or Alvariño Angels Researchers and fellows with predoctoral Contracts

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[1] For further reference, their names in Spanish: 'Plan de Formación de Noveles', Santiago de Compostela; 'Plan de

Formación Inicial (PFI)', A Coruña; 'Programa de Formación del Nuevo Profesorado', Vigo. (*translator's note*)

(FPI, FP, María Barbeito, PREU, Spanish acronyms).

Teachers with four years or less of teaching experience, as well as scholarship recipients with recognized teaching experience in the Teacher's Ordering Plan are the main recipients of the Initial Training Plan (PFI, Spanish acronyms) of the University of A Coruña.

For the University of Vigo, the Training Program for New Teachers is addressed to those who have little or no prior teaching experience and/or knowledge about the university.

Table 1. Recipients of the training plans and programs for new teaching staff at the Galician universities.

University	Plan/Program	Recipients
Santiago de Compostela	New Teachers' Training Plan	Ramón y Cajal, Parga Pondal Researchers who do not participate in the Teacher's Ordering Plan or Angeles Alvariño researchers and fellows with predoctoral contracts (FPI, FP, Maria Barbeito, PREU).
A Coruña	Initial Training Plan (PFI)	Teachers with four years or less of teaching experience, as well as fellows with recognized teaching experience in the Teacher's Ordering Plan.
Vigo	Training Program for New Teachers	Teachers with little or no prior teaching experience and/or knowledge of the university.

Source: Author's elaboration from the web pages of the University of Santiago de Compostela, Vigo and A Coruña.

3.2.4. Contents

The contents in these programs or plans include a varied range of courses related to different fields such as teaching methodology, information and communication technologies, professional development, health and the prevention of occupational hazards, the European Higher Education Area or the socio-institutional and labor context, all organized in thematic blocks or training modules.

As can be seen in the following table, information and communication technologies, as well as training activities aimed at professional development coincide in the three universities used as reference. We wish to highlight the uniqueness of the courses offered at the University of A Coruña on health and occupational hazard prevention and the training module on educational innovation experiences offered at the University of Vigo.

These courses are managed by the training units themselves, where you can consult the data for each one (place, date and time), as well as the corresponding training program.

At the universities of A Coruña and Vigo the general training offering is made at the beginning of the academic year, and at the University of Santiago de Compostela it is offered progressively throughout the year.

Table 2. Training modules for the new teachers' training plans and programs in Galician universities.

University	Training Modules
Santiago de Compostela	- Information and communication technologies applied to teaching. - Teaching-learning strategies. - Assessments. - Tutoring and orientation. - Professional development.
A Coruña	- Teaching methodology. - Educational technology. - Health and prevention of occupational hazards. - Social-institutional and labor contexts.
Vigo	- Immersion in the University of Vigo. - European Higher Education Area. - New technologies and blended learning. - University teaching in the framework of the EHEA. - Professional development. - Educational innovation experiences.

Source: Own elaboration from the web pages of the University of Santiago de Compostela, Vigo and A Coruña.

(T4)3.2.5. Modality and methodology

The type of modality that is mostly used for new teacher training is face-to-face instruction or blended learning. The methodology used in training varies depending on the type of course offered, ranging from individual and group work, practical seminars and workshops, to discussions and group analysis, forums, etc.

3.2.6. Assessment system

The assessment of the learning that new teachers have acquired is done through different systems. In some cases a minimum number of assistances, varying from 80% to 85%, is required; and in other cases it is necessary to present and approve practical work.

3.2.7. Training accreditation

The received training is accredited with a certificate of attendance for each activity. In addition, the new teaching staff that performs a determined minimum of hours, a figure that varies from one university to another, can obtain a University Teaching Diploma. As an example, at the University of Santiago de Compostela the number of hours required is 100, while at the University of A Coruña is 200.

In some universities it is necessary to perform a minimum number of hours for each training module, and even a maximum of years in order to complete the training plan. For example, the University of A Coruña requires the new teaching staff a maximum of three years (extendable) in order to complete the initial training plan and, on the other hand, the following is the number of hours in each training module: Teaching methodology, 92 hours; Educational Technology

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and Blended and Distance Learning, 60 hours; Health and prevention of occupational hazards, 24 hours; social-institutional and labor contexts, 24 hours.

CONCLUSION

The new teacher training is a key element for the teaching improvement and quality processes. This is why today it is hard to envisage a university that does not assume an education capable of facilitating training for the people who integrate it, and always considers the professional situation of its staff.

In recent years universities have increased the number of training actions for their teachers, and have invested more in them, in order to achieve the highest educational quality.

As we have seen throughout the previous pages, the three cases that we have set forth corresponding to three public universities of the Autonomous Community of Galicia, have specific training programs or plans for new teachers. The organizational models that they supply, although different, can be said to share similar traits, as there is a great coincidence in the courses' profiles and in the assessment system they use.

There is also evidence of the effort that universities have made during the recent years to improve their teachers training, this is evidenced in the increased training actions and investments. Undoubtedly, the convergence process and the implementation of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) have become one of the drivers of this trend.

In our view, all these actions underlie the idea that teacher training is a key element for the improvement and quality processes in university education.

In the case of the new teaching staff, specific training is considered fundamental, while recognizing its specificity. In its planning it is necessary to start from a preliminary detection of the training needs and the specific problems that this group faces during its daily work. A specific training plan that has clear and defined objectives, based on the university's culture and on the demands of the teaching staff for whom it is intended.

It is also necessary to propose new training modalities that go beyond the "course" or "seminar" format, incorporating resources focused on innovation and reflection on one's professional practice, such as exchange of good practices, workshops in small groups, teacher support, etc. It is also of interest to develop joint training actions between universities, in order to reduce costs and expand the teacher training coverage.

Similarly, the training plans, in line with the new requirements of the new European Higher Education Area, should increase the supply of courses aimed at the development of teaching skills, as well as *online* training.

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