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THE CRISIS OF HEALTH AND EMOTIONAL AND COMPETENTIAL WELL-BEING TO BE A GOOD TEACHER

La crisis de salud, de bienestar emocional y de competencias para ser un buen docente

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Abstract

Many efforts have been made by the entire teaching community to be able to finish the academic year with some satisfaction. The educational community, already hit for a long time by issues of stress and low motivation, is faced with the passage of COVID-19 in a crisis for trying to manage with certain well-being and in a virtual way the content of the subjects, the evaluation tests, the monitoring of students among other issues. For all this, it has become necessary for teachers to enhance their social and communication skills. This article presents the problems suffered by university professors at a private university in Spain regarding health, emotional and social well-being. The objectives set is to know by the students how important it is for them that their teachers have social and communication skills. In addition, the characteristics that a good teacher should have were addressed. A descriptive design is proposed as a research method and a questionnaire with quantitative questions is used as a tool. The results point to the need for teachers to enhance their communication skills and tools, as well as active listening. Teachers of the 21st century will be those where values, ethics and morals prevail in their person. It will also be necessary for them to master social and communication skills, as well as having extensive experience in the profession. In conclusion, the teachers who possess the aforementioned set of skills and competencies are the preferred teachers of the students.

Keywords: Competences; Skills; Teachers; Well-being; Experience; Students.

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Resumen

Han sido muchos los esfuerzos realizados por toda la comunidad docente para poder finalizar el curso académico con cierta satisfacción. La comunidad educativa ya golpeada desde hace tiempo por cuestiones de estrés y baja motivación se ve enfrentada con el paso del COVID-19 en una crisis por intentar gestionar con cierto bienestar y de manera virtual el contenido de las materias, las pruebas de evaluación, y el seguimiento de los alumnos entre otras cuestiones. Por todo esto, se ha hecho necesario que los docentes potencien sus habilidades sociales y comunicativas. En este artículo se expone la problemática sufrida por el profesorado universitario en una universidad privada en España sobre el bienestar de salud, emocional y social. Los objetivos que se plantean son los de conocer por parte de los alumnos que importancia tiene para ellos que sus profesores posean habilidades sociales y comunicativas. Además, se abordó cuáles son las características que debe tener un buen profesor. Como método de investigación se plantea un diseño descriptivo y como herramienta se utiliza un cuestionario con preguntas cuantitativas. Los resultados apuntan hacia la necesidad de que los profesores potencien sus habilidades y herramientas de comunicación, así como la escucha activa. Los docentes del siglo XXI serán aquellos donde prevalece en su persona los valores, la ética y la moral. También será necesario que dominen las competencias sociales y comunicativas, así como tener una dilatada experiencia en la profesión.

Como conclusión, los profesores que posean el conjunto de habilidades y competencias mencionados son los docentes predilectos por parte del alumnado.

Palabras clave: Competencias; Habilidades; Docentes; Bienestar; Experiencia; Alumnado.

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. The health and well-being of teachers in schools

It is well known that health linked to the wellbeing of teachers has always been a subject of much controversy. According to the World Health Organization (WHO) in 1946, health is defined as: "The complete state of physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease".

Assuming this definition makes us wonder if educators, teachers and professors in educational centers have been able to enjoy a balance in the three branches, physical, mental and social.

It is true that if we talk about occupational health we are referring to studies or actions aimed at understanding the importance of work in health disorders in a population, as well as the preventive measures that can be taken in the labor context (López López-Menchero, 2009). It is also worth mentioning Law 31/1995, of November 8, 1995, on Occupational Risk Prevention (BOE No. 269, of November 10, 1995) in Spain, where the European regulations and directives concerning the application of measures to promote the improvement of the health and safety of workers, as well as the legal framework in which the community prevention policy is integrated, are stated. Specifically, Article 14 of this law sets out the rights of protection and safety for workers.

Although, unfortunately, the reality in educational centers is different, it is well known the disorders, psychological illnesses, stress, anxiety, which affect teachers in the educational field. This eventually leads to temporary sick leave for employees.

According to Hijano (2010), teachers are a very heterogeneous group. However, there are some notes common to the whole group, among which is the treatment with people. Although the relationship with students is one of the most potentially rewarding aspects, the fact is that in a significant number of cases, this communication is dominated by tension, either because of indiscipline on the part of the students or because the teacher lacks social skills (Martínez-Otero, 2003). This point is totally transcendental and in recent years has been gaining momentum among the teaching staff. Not only is the teacher expected to be an excellent connoisseur of the subject, but also to have the necessary social and communication skills to be able to transmit the content to his or her students. With the Bologna plan, more and more teachers have had to be trained in competencies and skills in order to be able to transfer them to the classroom.

It should also be noted that educational activity is saturated with responsibilities (López López- Menchero, 2009). Teachers have become part administrative and on the other hand police agents, saturated with work and requirements of rules that take them away from that teacher whose main responsibility is to know how to transmit knowledge, values and attitudes to their students.

Currently the proposal has become even more complicated, the teachers were forced to move their classes to their homes and during the end of the academic year, they had to try to continue with their subjects encouraging their students so that they could put the focus of interest in the academic part trying to leave in the background the problems with COVID-19, such as the impact of physical isolation, the welfare of the student and his family after a loss, etc.

All of this has put a great strain on an already overburdened collective in terms of functions and responsibilities.

1.2. The importance of teachers' interpersonal relationships.

In this section we will highlight the importance of teachers' well-being for effective communication in the classroom. Within the professional profile of the teacher, it should be noted that the perception, understanding and regulation of emotions is becoming increasingly important for this profession, not only those of the professional himself but also those that can be exercised on others, in this case, on his students. In the educational field, actions are being taken to raise emotional awareness, offering training courses or transmitting certain competencies and skills to students.

Recruitment and selection companies are increasingly aware of the need for professionals with social-emotional competencies. They are looking for people who have talent management tools in their curriculum. Returning to the educational field, before experiencing the collapse of having 100% of classes in virtual systems at home, teachers were characterized as a distressing and overwhelming profession because they are constantly interacting with many people trying to regulate their own emotions and those of others, now we can speak of a psychologically exhausted profession after finishing the term at home.

What becomes present, after living together with COVID-19 to finalize the course in the educational field, is that different professionals are required in teaching. Teachers in the next academic year will need emotional intelligence and great resilience and generosity to approach the academic year. The teacher has to be a facilitator, an efficient pedagogue, a mediator with his team, a teacher who will manage and design his own resources, will know how to handle technologies and will know how to use failures as a source of learning to develop greater autonomy in the student (Muñoz, 2003).

They should also have other types of competencies such as emotional intelligence, to be able to perceive, understand and regulate emotions, both their own and those of others (Mayer and Salovey, 1997, cited in Extremera, Fernández-Berrocal and Durán, 2003). This ability is what will allow teachers to understand the suspicion of emotions and their management in order to adequately influence the teaching-learning processes of their students.

There are several studies and research on the state of anxiety and stress suffered in educational environments. These studies show that teachers are more vulnerable than others to physical and mental illnesses (Extremera, Fernández-Berrocal and Durán, 2003).

For all these reasons, according to Abanades (2017) it should be possible to assess the situation of teachers so that they feel protected and in turn competent to develop their profession with successful results, controlling situations, optimally managing relationships within their organization with parents, colleagues and students and, finally, triumphantly guiding their students through a more practical and less theoretical development of activities.

In education, interpersonal relationships are also a basic component of the various competencies (Zabalza, 2003). The widespread idea that teaching is the transmission of knowledge is insufficient to reflect the richness and variety of the exchanges that take place in the teacher-student relationship. Teaching establishes exchange processes that go far beyond information.

Bradford comments that teaching is basically about the interpersonal relationship of the encounter:

The teaching-learning process is a human transaction that unites the teacher, the student and the group in a set of dynamic interactions that serve as a framework for learning understood as a change that is incorporated into the life project of each individual. The basic objective of education is the change and growth or maturation of the individual; that is, a deeper and more complex goal than mere intellectual growth. (Bradford, 1973, p. 21).

The interpersonal relationships that are maintained in teaching present a series of challenges on the part of the teacher, some of which are described below:

1. The higher the percentage of students in the classroom, the more complicated management will be for the teacher. According to Feldman in 1976, the importance of teaching quality lies in having the ability to know how to relate to students. Having satisfactory interpersonal relations will be an equanimous quality that students themselves will value in their teachers.
2. The teacher's own leadership style, some of the best known contributions are the research conducted by Lewin, Lippitt and White, 1939, who described three different styles of instructional leadership:
 - a) The authoritarian or directive, where the teacher specifies the activities and how to carry them out, orders what must be done in each case to achieve the objectives and distributes the individual tasks.
 - b) A second style would be that of the democratic or participative leader, where students feel more involved in their learning and participate and collaborate in the projects and in the decision making of the activities. This leader also gets involved and, instead of making personal criticisms, recognizes the work done.
 - c) Finally, the *laissez faire* or passive leader is worth mentioning. In this case, the teacher has a passive style, only reacting when requested to do so by others.

Other research has determined the profile of dominant teachers. The actions of these professionals are based on controlling all activities always through orders and mandates, where threats and constant reproaches prevail without valuing the work or effort of the students (Anderson and Brewer, 1945).

Surely from all these classifications the teacher is identified with several actions and attitudes of various models. Ideally, there should be a balance between the teacher and the student.

As McDermott points out, there are successful and unsuccessful directive forms of classroom communication, just as there are successful and unsuccessful authoritarian forms:

No one teaching style is inherently better than another. If students and teachers can understand the style well enough to build their work plans and a trusting relationship, then the relationship will work. (McDermott, 1977, p. 101).

3. Finally, the last great challenge for teachers is the classroom climate. Researchers agree that a good classroom climate is fundamental for the development of the teaching-learning method in the students. Fox defines it as follows:

The climate of an educational institution results from the type of program, the processes used, the environmental conditions that characterize it as an institution and as a grouping of students, departments, individuals, and members of the management. Each institution has its own distinct climate. The climate determines the quality of life and the productivity of teachers and students. Climate is a critical factor for the health and effectiveness of a school. For human beings, climate can become a developmental factor. (Fox, 1980: p. 457).

In short, knowing how to relate to students, the leadership style we establish with them and the climate we generate in the classroom, whether in a classroom setting or through webinars, will be essential to have the ability to establish quality interpersonal relationships in the educational environment.

1.3. Being a good teacher in the face of new educational challenges

It is understandable that teachers need a good content curriculum, and above all, experiences that can endorse the work done so far. And, even so, all this alone will not make the difference between being a good teacher and not being a good teacher.

Within the educational field, being a good teacher is also a personal matter, since, being a vocational branch, the person prepares himself/herself throughout his/her life, in a constant and continuous way, and this is not an easy job. So far, we have taken into consideration the well-being and health of the teacher as well as the interpersonal interactions with the educational community (students, teachers, parents, heads and managers...) in order to develop a successful work.

The change from being a teacher to being a better teacher is also a matter of acting well, based on our experience. If being a teacher is not only a personal achievement, becoming a better teacher is a social and personal process (Knight, 2005). Therefore, in addition to interpersonal skills and competencies, we cannot ignore experience, that practical part of the teacher's work. The classroom should not focus on direct instruction. No one likes it and no one feels particularly motivated. Teachers don't like it either, they feel as if they are firing information into the void. Human beings should not be passive. When they come together, they should be interacting, problem solving, or working things out (Robinson, 2015).

Next, in order to address the issue of teacher experience, we will describe some of the advice by Knight (2005) on what teachers can do to facilitate on-the-job experience.

1. Trying to take the perspective that working long hours is merely a sign of incompetence rather than a sign of distinction. Although Campbell and Neill, in 1994, confirmed that the hours worked by British non-university teachers would be evidence of poor professional practice.
2. Teachers are required to work long hours and certainly the office work is less satisfying than when we are interacting in the classroom. Knowing how to allocate time is no easy task. Reading articles, attending to mail, evaluating, writing comments, preparing sessions and of course being able to reflect on everything is a complicated task, we will need to be efficient.
3. This author states the need to be able to reflect frequently. Being able to write becomes easier when we know what we want to say, so it is necessary to be able to reflect more often. According to the finding that successful new university professors are those who write something daily, one can write what one has reflected on while walking around the office (Boice, 1992).
4. Ask for feedback on early drafts of our teaching materials, rather than when the products are near completion.
5. Like many of the tasks in the educational field, we have the mania of collecting data (meetings, evaluations, etc.). Is it necessary to talk about it, let's think about whether it is necessary to keep it.
6. Let's try to learn immediate response techniques, i.e., to be able to quickly dispatch e-mails.
7. Let us be aware of how much time a meeting is worth devoting to it and abandon it when the deadline is reached.
8. We must learn to say "no".
9. The fact that students can learn from each other and provide information to each other is a time saver for us. These practices are also good for students' learning.
10. Read a lot. It becomes necessary to read things that can help us revise our research, our teaching and our work.
11. There is always an association between physical fitness and mental well-being. As we have discussed previously, we can see our work differently if we maintain a balance in our physical and mental well-being.
12. In order to try to make mental energies work for our benefit and not the other way around, we sometimes need self-help work, emotional cleansing and neurolinguistic programming.
13. Seek opportunities to do things where our personal and professional vitality is valued and appreciated.
14. It seems that it is not normal for us to recognize the successes of others, for the institutions almost the worth or not of each one is defined by the failures and not by the successes. We must celebrate the things we do well and know how to recognize others for a job well done.

Following these premises, it is intended that the teaching staff can prepare themselves to have health, mental and emotional well-being and to be able to

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successfully carry out their classes implementing their communicative and social skills to the maximum. In addition, being efficient in our work will help us to maintain balance and have more time for those issues of interest.

2. OBJECTIVES

After addressing the scenario in which the teaching field lives, we consider some proposals related to the importance given by the student to certain skills and competencies, as well as to the methodology used. Most teachers are already aware of what they can do to improve the balance between mental and emotional health, the quality of relationships and the development of communication skills, so it is also necessary to focus on the students to know the importance of these skills.

As objectives we propose the following questions:

- To know the importance given by the students to the teacher's communication skills.
- Analyze which are the characteristics most demanded by students to be a good teacher.

3. METHODOLOGY

The research methodological proposal is descriptive with a quantitative approach. The instrument used is a questionnaire created in Google/forms from which students were asked about the importance they give to the competencies and personal brand of their teachers.

Although in this study we will not develop all the questions, the questions in this questionnaire were extracted from the authors Arévalo, Sáenz, & González (2016) in their article "Personal branding as a decisive element for a good teacher". These authors seek to identify the qualities that a good teacher has. According to them, more and more centers in the educational field are looking for quality professionals who are recognized and have a good personal brand.

3.1. Sample

The sample chosen was 115 students from different subjects and degrees at the undergraduate and graduate levels. The link to the questionnaire was sent and 75 results were obtained. The degrees and subjects that make up this group are:

- Degree in Marketing: 1st course subject: Competences I Personal and professional effectiveness.
- Degree in Marketing: 2nd year subject: Oral and Written Communication Skills.
- Master's Degree in Marketing and Communication: Communication and Personal Branding Module.
- Master's Degree in Human Resources: Personal Interview Module.

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The following graph shows the percentage of students who collaborated: undergraduate with 43 responses and graduate with 32 responses.

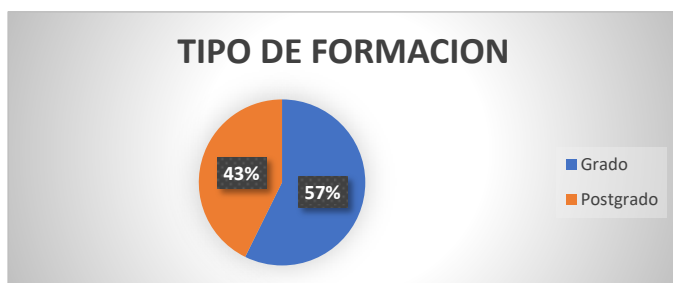


Figure 1. *Sample of students.*

Source. Own elaboration.

We believe that by passing the questionnaire at the end of the semester, and with everything that happened in the last quarter after COVID-19, we have obtained a lower number of responses than we expected.

4. DISCUSSION

As mentioned above, we are not going to focus on all the questions in the questionnaire, but on those that are particularly relevant to our research proposal.

In this article we have commented on the importance of health wellness in the teacher and thus be able to transmit values and principles in their subjects. We have also addressed the importance of communication and communicative competence in teachers, as well as the relevance of the experience acquired in their profession.

The following figure shows three areas of action, a personal area where values and ethics are implicit in the teacher, another area would be that of training, which would include not only studies but also the experience of teachers, and finally the teaching area, which would include the social and communicative skills of the teacher. The students are asked to specify each of the questions by giving a score from 1 to 3, with 1 being the most important for them and 3 the least important.

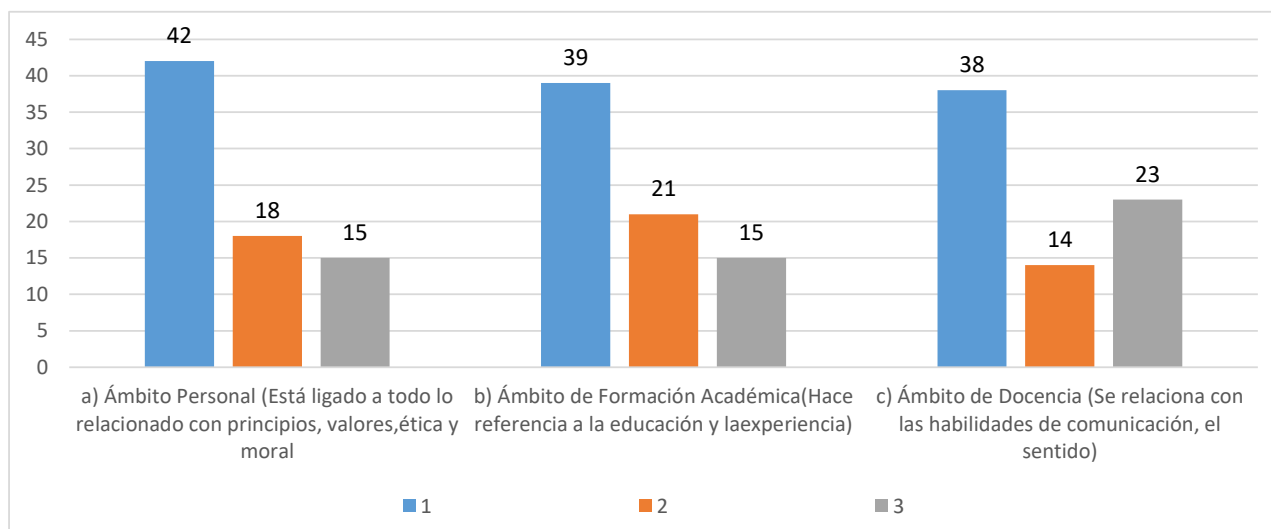


Figure 2. *The importance of the teacher's domains.*

Source: Own elaboration.

As we can see in the three areas of action, the students confirm the importance for them that their teachers possess and transmit values and principles, also that they have practice and experience in their work and that they can demonstrate and develop communication skills.

In the personal area, 56% of the students confirmed its importance by assigning it a 1. In the area of academic training, 52% of the students confirmed option 1. These data are adjusted taking into consideration that the students selected each of the three responses according to their degree of importance.

Another of the questions we have addressed in the article is the capacity and ability to be a good teacher. Students were asked about what would be those characteristics that could define a good teacher based on the following competencies: organization, punctuality, listening skills, ability to transmit knowledge, authority in the classroom, and assessment feedback. In the following figure we see the answers.

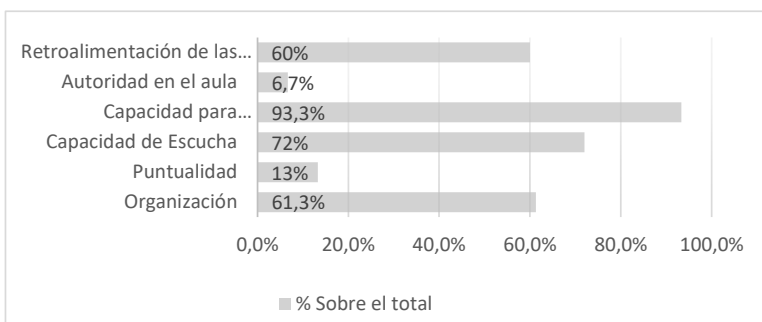


Figure 3. *Characteristics that describe a good teacher.*

Source: Own elaboration.

As we can see in the results, the most important characteristics that could define a good teacher would be the ability to transmit knowledge, with a total percentage of almost 94%, followed by the ability to listen, with a total percentage of 72%, and in third position, organization, with a total of almost 62%. Although with less importance, they valued the feedback of evaluations with a total of 60%, punctuality with 13% and authority in the classroom with almost 7%.

5. CONCLUSIONS

After the answers obtained based on the results, we reached the following conclusions. Although several authors agree on the importance of the teacher's well-being in order to be able to effectively transmit content, skills and ethics in each of their subjects. In truth, the teaching staff is going through a crisis, since it is a sector that has already been suffering from a certain amount of wear and tear in its profession due to the constant interaction with the educational community, as well as the amount of hours and administrative bureaucracy that it has to deal with.

Another issue is that in the last trimester, teachers have been forced to conduct their classes virtually, where they have been required to have more interaction, communication and attention to their students' performance, as well as their attendance and participation. As we know, technological competence is more than implanted in our society, but teachers, for the most part, continue to have certain differences in its management, as well as the preference of face-to-face sessions rather than virtual ones.

In terms of fields of action, more than half of the students agree that it is important for their teachers to be proficient in the fields of action, as well as to know how to transmit values and have ethics. They also agreed that they should have social and communication skills, as well as extensive experience in their profession.

From the results obtained and in relation to the introduction, more than half of the students are in favor of having teachers who possess this mental, social and emotional balance in order to be able to approach what they consider to be good teaching professionals.

Another of the sections that we have argued in our introduction has been how to be a good teacher. When we asked the students about the characteristics that a good teacher should have, they confirmed the importance of teachers with social and communicative abilities and skills, those who also handle communication techniques such as active listening.

If we consider the proposed objectives, we reach the following conclusions.

Our first objective was:

- To know the importance given by the students to the teacher's communication skills.

Authors such as Zabalza (2003), Knight (2005) and others confirm the need for teachers to develop social and communicative skills. It is no longer a plus as we thought years ago, but a necessity for all professionals in the educational field to be able to show empathy and active listening to students in order to transmit and teach them communication skills and tools.

On the other hand, according to the responses obtained, the students significantly value the teacher's communication skills, active listening, among others that apparently do not give as much importance as punctuality and authority in the classroom.

The other objective we had set is:

- Analyze which are the characteristics most demanded by students to be a good teacher.

If being a teacher is not only a personal achievement, becoming a better teacher is a social and personal process (Knight, 2005). Interpersonal skills, competencies and experience are essential elements in a teacher's backpack.

Students value the experience that teachers have, as well as their emotional, communicative and social skills, but as we could observe in the students' answers, they value even more the personal sphere of the teacher. A teacher who is capable of transmitting values and ethics, who understands, does not judge, and whose morals predominate when faced with the issues and situations to be dealt with. All these elements contribute to the achievement of students' professional competencies, such as cooperative learning, the keys to teaching ICT, etc.

Another point to highlight is the need for teacher training in ICT. If we look at Figures 2 and 3, it is corroborated that students want teachers who stand out in their personal sphere and who are great transmitters of content. This premise, together with the new

era in virtual teaching-learning, will make teachers work more on digital tools and competencies to teach classes virtually with a good ICT base.

In conclusion, it is necessary that the teacher possesses communication skills and competencies, as well as communication tools and, preferably, that he/she has extensive experience. The ability to maintain successful interpersonal relationships is also required. We could consider that these skills could provide teachers with the balance of social and emotional well-being they need. In addition, it is expected that a hybrid model will continue to be maintained in the university setting, combining face-to-face and virtual classes. Teachers who have the ability to create empathy, know how to listen and have digital competence will be chosen and called good teachers by their students. In terms of well-being and health, in addition to advice on how to be effective at work and exercise, among other things, teachers will need to be resilient and develop emotional intelligence to be able to continue to cope with all work activities with a positive attitude.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

After the responses obtained, it is considered that in future research it is necessary to include in the sample students from other faculties and schools and, if possible, a nationally and internationally representative sample of universities.

It is also important to sample at less critical times during the academic year, preferably at the beginning or during the academic year in order to obtain a greater number of responses and not at the end of the academic year.

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Lines of research: skills and competencies, emotional intelligence and teacher training.

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