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**Invited paper**

**LA IMPORTANCIA DE LAS EVALUACIONES DE DIAGNÓSTICO E  
INSTITUCIONAL A LA CALIDAD DEL SISTEMA EDUCATIVO EN  
MEXICO.**

**THE IMPORTANCE OF DIAGNOSIS AND INSTITUTIONAL  
EVALUATIONS TO THE QUALITY OF THE EDUCATIONAL  
SYSTEM IN MEXICO.**

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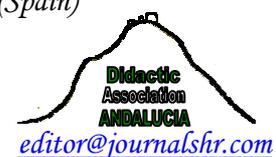
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## INTRODUCTION

In Mexico, Higher Education institutions face the challenge of inserting themselves in different transformation processes with effective proposals, developing mechanisms that permit solutions to the problems the students reach the classrooms with; so, first of all, they would have to establish effective strategies to know the characteristics the students arrive with, because there aren't any control or assessment mechanisms to identify the characteristics and needs that newcomer students present, whether if they are personal, academic and/or social, and, consequently, they don't know how to tackle them. In second place, they would have to establish a much-needed human resources formation plan according to those needs to develop adequate academic processes all the way to a terminal efficiency; and with that, to be able to respond to the acquired commitment.

Because of that, diagnostic evaluation studies that provide with knowledge of the current state of students that have just been introduced to Higher Education studies are important. As this knowledge facilitates the making of decisions regarding adequate approach that must be developed in students who don't meet certain criteria; or, there is the option of beginning a process in people, which permits the establishment of the knowledge and abilities needed for their favorable professional development

To face the challenges that a non-developed country like Mexico poses, Higher Education is a tool of the utmost importance. Education is one of the main ways that the country has to transform each one of the social members into productive people.

It rests with Higher Education to boost the country's potential for development by means of a better resource formation according to international quality standards, technologic and scientific contribution by means of strategic investigation and understanding of national culture and identity. (ANUIES, 2000)

Several national and international organizations have shown concern about Higher Education's current situation.

The Secretariat of Public Education (SEP, 1980), points out that the national average of terminal

efficiency in Bachelor Degree studies is 50%, although some others reach 80%, while some of them only reach about 20%.

The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD, 1997), highlights, as worrying features in our country's Higher Education system, the "selective nature" and "unfair operation".

The UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization), in its' World Declaration on Higher Education (1998), sets out as its' mission: "The responsables for decision making in the national and institutional levels should place the students and their needs at the center of their worries".

Moreover, it establishes as a priority action, "to provide students with advice and guidance, recovery courses, formation in effective studying techniques, and other ways of support, comprehensive measures to enhance their quality of life."

It's clear that Higher Education institutions' goals should continually evaluate their objectives' accomplishment compliance establishing models of Institutional Evaluation and carrying out the corresponding research,

Diagnostic evaluation studies allow the knowledge of the current state of the students at the starting point of their professional formation. From this knowledge, decision making concerning the acceptance or refusal of students that do not meet certain criteria gets easier.

## INSTITUTIONALISATION OF ASSESSMENT IN HIGHER EDUCATION

In the search for education quality, during the decade of the 90's several organisms were created in Mexico whose purpose is related to education assessment, which caused the IES to begin efforts of evaluation and improvement, overcoming the resistance which prevailed until the latter 80's decade, where the assessment system was conceived as an attack to institutional autonomy (Martínez, 2000: 120), and, because of that, talking about Higher Education quality in that period is of very little accuracy, as it was mentioned before, the important thing was increasing registration of students. Which is true not only in Mexico, the generalisation of the idea that Higher



Education systems should point to the admission of higher amounts of students, tending to the universalisation of the level at a long term, which brought spectacular increases in student and Higher Education institutions' numbers all over the world, specially starting from the decade of the 60's, when concern about quality wasn't really the base of the authorization to create Higher Education institutions, nor for the ones which were already in existence, but when the State recovers its' authority and becomes an important figure in terms of control. But nowadays, to reach autonomy, the discussion about accreditation organisms and agencies is beginning in almost every country, which brings up the need to think of new assessment mechanisms. That is, to recognize three moments in the process: the establishment of control mechanisms by the State, the designing of measurement tools and methods as first attempts where the State and the institutions in its' interior still intervene, and the creation of assessment organisms and strategies wherein all those who are involved in the educational process intervene. Causing the diversity of situations to assess, methodologies and applications of it; is because of that that assessment is proposed as the meaning through which institutional processes, schedules, people, and the development of educational process in the classroom are accounted for. Which leads out to acknowledge that it is hoped that Higher Education advances towards quality in educational processes through assessment processes.

Hence the discussion about the need of an evaluation culture and its' institutionalisation through the participation of internal and external evaluation premises that give account of the processes inside the institutions, and their social importance. Which is brought about by the National Education Programme 2001-2006, which acknowledges that, on that purpose, the reliance is going to be in strict and trustable evaluation mechanisms, independent from the authorities. Where the results of said evaluations will be diffused and used to improve education quality

Like that, the National Education System will have criteria and procedures to accredit and certify knowledge; and to incorporate, revalidate or recognize the equivalence of any type of studies, it will have criteria and procedures to accredit and certify knowledge; and to incorporate, revalidate or recognize

the equivalence of any kind of studies. Therefore, the concept of evaluation will have to be transformed, setting aside the conception of evaluation as a control or fiscalisation mechanism to recognize it as an important way to favor individual and organizational learning.

However, Higher Education's commitment is more complex, because it is enough to assess the new needs of the work market, but, as UNESCO states, moral and ethic values in society have to be highlighted, trying to awaken an active civic spirit among the future graduate students. Besides professional life preparation, a higher stress in students' personal development is required. Therefore, graduate and study schedules' demand could represent an opportunity to revitalize Arts and Human Studies in Higher Education, and open new possibilities of co-operative links with different public and economic organizations. (Tünnerman, 1996:30).

Quality evaluation and estimation, particularly in Higher Education institutions, should not be synonym of excessive external regulation or be used as means to restrict public funding. "They should work as mechanisms that allow Higher Education to assure its self-improvement. Therefore, Higher Education has to prove that it can compete with other organized interests that wait for financial support from public funding resources (Tünnerman, 1996:30). Where evaluation organisms and agencies have more importance.

In our country, the SEP and the ANUIES have been the institutions that have promoted the carrying out of evaluation processes and activities for Higher Education, but it wasn't until the last decade of the last century, that evaluation mechanisms for Higher Education from the perspective of international tendencies.

Higher Education has renowned and important mechanisms for support and co-ordination and support of its' institutions, like the ANUIES and the FIMPES, both private ones, and the COSNET, which co-ordinates public technological institutes (ANUIES, 2000: 113). Some of the advances in planning, evaluation and co-ordination of Higher Education can be seen in different associations, councils and other organisms that have been created to evaluate quality of education. In 1989, the National Commission for



Evaluation (CONAEVA) was created, which promoted the carrying out of self-studies from public universities; and, starting in 1991 the Interinstitutional Committees for Evaluation Of Higher Education, better known as Pairs Committees, started operations to carry out external qualitative evaluations.

Since early 1994 the Nacional Centre of Higher Education Evaluation (CENEVAL) was created, whose goal is to create standardized tests to evaluate academical abilities and diverse knowledge, at Medium Higher and Higher levels (Martínez, 2000: 133-134). Equally, The Federation of Mexican Private Institutions of Higher Education (FIMPES) was created in early 1994, whose task is to propose a general frame of accreditation processes for academical programmes in Higher Education, involving institutions in continuous evaluation processes of their academical programmes. Similarly, several accreditation of academical programmes' councils have been created, with different levels of consolidation.

As it can be seen, the institutionalization of evaluation processes in Mexican Higher Education proposes itself with bigger processes and strategies to visualize the challenges that education faces nowadays.

## EVALUATION TO ENTER HIGHER EDUCATION

When recognizing the need to institutionalize Higher Education, is important to remark the functions that evaluations have in it. In this case, evaluation is thought of as means, not as an objective for itself, that is, as means through which a valorative judgment of the evaluates object or subjects can be emitted, based on the acknowledgement of their characteristics and conditions, whether if they are predicted or not. That way, evaluation would have meaning, as it permits to take decisions to improve the quality of what is being evaluated.

From the perspective of the CENEVAL (2000: 9), the Standards of Quality for Educational Evaluation dossier recognizes that:

“An evaluation system for Mexican HEI'S should take into account, at least, three dimensions: a) evaluation levels, this is: institutional,

schedules, courses, people; b) Methodological approaches: analytic (cuantitative) and synthetic (qualitative) and, c) Internal and external perspectives“

Before what the ANUIES (2000) recognizes regarding accreditation and evaluation, some advances can be identified in several aspects: students, considering entry, traject and exit; superior and professional technicians, only with certification purposes; academic staff; academical programmes; and institutions, these last three considering evaluation and accreditation processes. In which several dependencies take part.

In this case, we will keep ourselves in the first dimension, specifically in people evaluation, in the evaluation of newly-come college students.

The idea of an exam previous to Bachelor's Degree, which were supported by every candidate for Higher Education, appears in several documents of the ANUIES. Considered from the dimension of external evaluation through an exam, whose intention would be to evaluate academic results and basic abilities. (Manual Técnico de CENEVAL, 2000: 9). In early 1994, the National Center of Evaluation for Higher Education (CENEVAL) was born; that way, starting works for design and application of the following examinations: National Admission Exam for Medium Higher Education (EXANI I); National Admission Exam for Higher Education (EXANI II); National Admission Examination for Graduate Studies (EXANI III); National Admission Examination for Bachelor Degree Studies (EGEL). (ANUIES, 2000: 114) (Manual técnico de CENEVAL, 2000: 10)

Also, it is important to point out that some public and private educational institutions hire the services of the Collage Board for the application of admission exams which are used in selection of students (ANUIES, 2000: 116). This organism was born in November 1900, due to the increment in the number of young people that finished Middle Higher Education in USA, which made selection processes to enter an institution very complex; to assess that problem, the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) was created (Martínez, 2001)



In the case of our country, other private Higher Education institutions (like the Universidad Iberoamericana), or public ones ( Like the Autonomous University of Aguascalientes), developed their own admission tests during the years 70; later on, it was the ITESM and the Universidad de las Américas which started to use the Academic Aptitude Test (PAA), from the College Board, which is an equivalent of the SAT. On a par with the CENEVAL, there are some other efforts, like those of the UABC, with a computer-application version, non adaptative of the EXCOHBA, and which works in adaptative tests.

Like that, the admission evaluation for Higher Education is assumed through the CENEVAL, as an external organism to the institutions, some others through foreign external organisms like the College Board, and some others that opt to generate their own evaluation criteria and instruments for admission into Higher Education, according to their own institutional mission and philosophy, specially in private Higher Education institutions, where the System for the Entry and Permanence in the FIMPES, through institutional strengthening and development (15), acknowledges in the Students Section that the latter constitute the main axis in the life of educational institutions, and because of that, the procedures, schedules and policies that promote the students' optimal development are important decisions when it is wanted to give an education with quality. Contemplating from the admission process all the way to academic aspects which allow the students to have an optimal professional formation. So, it is convenient to mention the duties that every institution have to take in account (16):

- Higher Education institutions should have admission, recovery and leveling programmes that assure that the qualities and expectations of the students be compatible with the objectives and requirements of academic schedules
- The institutions must establish and publish a selection and admission process, and make it available to the applicants for entry to Higher Education
- The institutions must establish leveling and recovery programmes for students.

At the same time, the ANUIES (2000: 174) acknowledges that:

- At the horizon of the first two decades of the 21th century, the mission of the SES is to achieve the improvement of the whole and of each one of its' institutions, thanks to the commitment of its' members to strict and permanent evaluation and quality assurance processes.
- There is a need for effective mechanisms for the spreading of the variety of extant studies options in the IES of a state or a municipality, providing information that allows the applicants a selection according to their own characteristics and with enough knowledge of subsequent working perspectives.
- The objective and fair mechanisms of applicant selection will be strengthened, based only in academic aptitude, shown both in the performance in the previous school year and in the results in special selection tests.
- Once the population entering each programme has been defined, according with the admission and selection criteria of each IES, activities of initial integration have to be organized, starting before the school year up to its conclusion.

#### **FUNCTIONS OF THE EVALUATION OF THE NEWCOMER COLLEGE STUDENT**

Recognizing that evaluation is a process and that it is promoted from several dependencies to know the state of what is being evaluated, it is important to highlight the need to establish evaluation strategies, in this case when we refer to the newcomer college student, the fact that clear evaluation criteria and strategies exist, whether if it's through an exam, an aptitude test o the diverse tools used for this, is not only the measuring what is important, but also the assessments and decisions that could be made from this results. Specially, coinciding with what the ANUIES points out (2000: 95) concerning students: "Students constitute, together with academic staff, the main part of Higher Education. Nevertheless, there aren't any comprehensive policies for their development, and only



in recent years institutions have developed programmes especially directed to student support”.

“Students in Mexico haven’t been priority objects of research. People who have approached them to meet them have done it in moments of high politicization or conflict, but the enormous transformations that have happened in them on the last years have been overlooked” (Idem) and one of them has been the process of evaluation for Higher Education admission.

It would have to be acknowledged that the newcomer college student’s evaluation is one of the main aspects that have to be considered when generating strategies that allow to propose development alternatives for the college student and, therefore, guarantee their permanence and quality academic performance. From this referents, the evaluation for newcomer college students will have the following functions, of interest for the institution’s authorities, teachers and students:

- Of a diagnostic nature: that allows to know the characteristics of the student at the beginning of a learning process and, according to those, the adaptation of the teaching to the real conditions and progress rate of the student, together with the treatment of particular difficulties. Is an individualization resource of the pedagogical methods whose possibilities depend on the type of evaluation. The personalized attention of a student is possible only if the evaluation is formative.
- Of a formative nature: which favors the reflection about teaching-learning processes, their characteristics and development conditions. Formative evaluation with the intention of diagnosing processes, is an ambition so demanding that it requires a relationship of the tutorial kind between the teacher and each particular student.
- Of an adding nature: which allows to determine performance levels, to decide whether if what is being produced is success or failure, referencing the global final judgment of a process that has come to an end and about which a terminal assessment is emitted. Its’ viewpoint is retrospective, in sanctions what

has happened, looking from the end of a process.

- Of a social nature: which responds to the requirements of a society, because the reached schooling level and the performance rate that one obtains through studies, serve for the opportunities of getting into the work market, therefore, an individual who nears excellence in his studies’ results, will have better employment opportunities. Evaluation also has a selective function in all school levels, and it is more significant as the schooling level increases. “The social functions that evaluation has are the base of its’ existence as an scholarly practice. The “value” certification that educational institutions issue to their students has a fundamental social role. Accreditation of knowledge and behavior express possession of a cultural capital and values that are quoted in society. The democratization of the access to basic schooling transforms learning into a possibility for everyone, regardless of their personal circumstances or social origin (Ministry of Education: 1994, 83).
- Of an guiding nature: because it allows to identify qualities for schoolwork in certain areas or subjects, discovering the most relevant competences of the student, is a guide to help the students and teachers to make appropriate decisions regarding studying methods, optional subjects, etc. This guide could be reviewed through evaluation that span long periods and when from one study period to the next, but it is also important to understand it as the tutorial aide for the resolution of difficulties, the creation of adequate working habits, the selection of development tasks for the most advanced.
- Of an educational nature: for with evaluation one contributes to correct errors, to propose strategies for deficiency overcoming, knowledge gets broader, the students acquires habits and abilities, creating the needed conditions for a better progress. “ The educational function contributes to rise studying quality, which gets reflected in the



increment of the volume and quality of knowledge and in the creation of habits and abilities which guarantee the simulation of new studying materials, besides incrementing cognitive activity, it contributes to the systematization, spread and deepening of the content, and promotes independent activity. Like this, cognitive abilities are developed and the studying activity increases.

- The common denominator of that function is to increment quality, and, consequently, the performance of the teaching-learning process, subjecting it in all its' phases and moments to a constant reviewing of its' results, which gives indicators and regulate the transformations in favor of said quality increment (Carreño: 1991, 24). This reflects that the evaluation must be a tool that favors the optimization of the educational process's quality, in which participants constantly review the achieved goals establishing proposals to improve the activities to develop.

## THE NEWCOMER COLLEGE STUDENT

Acknowledging that are the newcomer college students who participate in these evaluation processes in order to enter Higher Education, it is important to remark that some of the evaluated qualities are their characteristics of adaptation to different situations and their knowledge degree which they get out of High School with, and which become the initial profiles for their entry to Higher Education in the different knowledge areas. Because of that it rests with the students, through evaluation processes, "to demonstrate their knowledge and aptitudes through the taking of selection exams to be admitted, and to attain certain performance levels to remain registered in a major (Santoyo, 2002: 14). Which, in a certain way, represents that degree of knowledge; where, for certain institutions, they become minimal admission criteria, while in others they get done just as diagnosis; one way or another, we find in them the answer to the established profiles of academic programmes. Therefore, "to know the profiles of Higher Education students implies the finding out of their variation according to their age (De Garay, 2002), becoming, in

a certain way, in another reference indicator, which is not going to be deeply discussed in this text. But we have to highlight, coinciding with De Garay, that it is necessary to notice that the steps of conformation and maturation of the attitudes, values, expectations and experiences of young people suffer important modifications between 15 and 30 years of age (idem). Because of that, it would be worthwhile that Mexican Higher Education institutions seriously consider the variability of their students' ages with the purpose of designing diverse strategies to assess their needs.

In the near future, is very likely that the proportion of *adult learners* will increase, as the requirements of the work market impose the need that the population have higher professional levels. The rates of students returning to complete their Bachelor's Degree studies will increment in the following years, plus those who are on the verge of finishing High School.

This situation will bring the need of specific evaluation procedures, where all these applicants will have to demonstrate a certain competence level in order to enter Higher Education, just as the World Conference on Higher Education (1998: 6) points out:

" In conformity with paragraph 1, Article 26 of the Universal Declaration on Human Rights, the access to higher education should be based on merit, capacity, efforts, perseverance and determination of the applicants, and, in the perspective of education all along life, it could have place in every moment of life, taking into account the previously acquired competences. Consequently, the access to higher education won't tolerate any discrimination based on race, sex, language, religion or economical, cultural or social considerations, or on physiological handicaps.

Therefore, Higher Education institutions should act in collaboration with parents, schools, students and chosen socioeconomic groups and entities.

Should we talk about the newcomer college student, it would have to be considered that he or she has already passed the different levels of the educational system, and we could say that he or she is a socialized individual –that is, he or she has acquired the minimal behavior patterns that allow him or her to coexist in harmony with others- thanks to the received formation during the previous level.



Also, he or she should be able to provide himself or herself the most elemental care to survive in society, due to the importance given to him/her acquisition of relative autonomy in kindergarten. In Elementary School and Junior High School, the individual gets in contact with languages in general –spanish, math, science, etc.- which makes possible to transcend the reality and talk about the apparent, and also enter the world of the past. Finally, High School tries to concretize a vision of the individual as a person in concrete relationship with the social world and its' different dimensions: technical education, sciences, humanities. Nevertheless, the training centered in particular aspects that we have mentioned, finds itself framed into a common denominator: the stress that the educational system in general puts into the development of abilities and language capabilities, which seems to be given the category of being the only possible tool of expression, communication, contact with reality, but, above all, as the only way to learning. Ordinary or referential languages apparently underlie every teaching methodology for any subject.

## DIAGNOSTIC EVALUATION OF THE COLLEGE APPLICANT

The development of a diagnostic evaluation system for selection requires a deep thinking about its objectives, so that we could define criteria which fulfill their function logically and empirically.

Everyone should agree in that a diagnostic system seeks, first and foremost, the detection of the students' main characteristics. Nevertheless, we also know that there exist multiple forms of personality, and, before the diversity presented, we shouldn't be surprised with the fact that disagreement and doubt will surface in this diagnosis system; because of that, we believe that it is essential to take the task of thinking with the determination of arriving to a clear, impartial and pertinent answer to the problem that keeps us busy: diagnostic evaluation and its' different methodological aspects.

From a methodological perspective, it could be said that it is feasible to complete the task of evaluating an applicant asking ourselves about its' capabilities in two different ways: as products of an historical process

or as a possibility of being according to the tendencies that the processes which conform them have followed.

The first approach, which we will call descriptive, according to the evaluator's interest to detect those characteristics of the performance which the applicant could manifest as a byproduct of his/her educational formation. Therefore, it's necessary to design a tool in which the applicant manifests what he/she can do, say or think. As a comment, we want to point out that the methodological response to this diagnostic method is known in the world of valuations as achievement test.

The second way to diagnose the applicant, which we will call predictive, according to the interest of the institutions' interest to characterize the processes that have conformed certain capabilities; that way, he tries to know the possible capabilities of the applicant in the future. It requires an instrument that detects how can he/she do, say or think what he/she does, says or thinks. As a methodological manifestation, some "competence" or "aptitude" tests have been developed.

As we may notice, description and prediction are not the same. It is not the same to dare to know the future (to predict) than to determine the current characteristics of the product of an historical process (to describe). By virtue of that, it is unavoidable to determine in the first place what is desired of an admission system for the institution to detect an applicant: a) his/her current capabilities, or what they have learned up to this day; or b) what he/she could be able to learn as a student and achieve as a professional.

According to what has been exposed by now, we dare to say that a perfect diagnostic system for selection should allow us to know whether if an applicant has more possibilities of achieving better academic and professional standards than others; in other words, we want to predict the academic and professional "success" of an applicant through a diagnostic evaluation system. It is evident that what has been said implies the adopting of a position favorable to the predictive approach to the applicants' diagnosis, and, because of that, we want to be more explicit in our unfavorable position to the descriptive option, which we think has several logical and practical problems. For example:



- In the first place, knowledge diagnosis as treated up to this point is excessively redundant if we take into account the fact that the applicants come from an official education system that, at least, formally guarantees the mastery of certain competences (basic information or contents), needed in order to be effective in a Higher Education level; also guarantees the mastery of certain aptitudes (functional levels or modes), under which said competencies are organized. Also, the applicant has acquired certain attitudes to his/her surroundings, society, and himself. The official education system, as we have said “guarantees” said formation in virtue of the evaluation methods and practices that get established all the way through its’ trajet. The system issues certificates of the passed educative levels with the specification that the individual has been approved because he/she has accomplished the objectives or criteria of the Higher Education level, that is, he has acquired the desired competences and attitudes. Given this, it is incongruent that the Higher Education institution (and of every educational level, in general), demand the student to submit himself or herself to a specific competencies’ evaluation that he should have acquired in the previous level, except if one explicitly doubts the official system’s evaluation procedures or doesn’t know the extent on which the official system forms the students in the competences that the level requires as the initial repertoire of its’ students. Higher Education must be interested in knowing the knowledge the student is supposed to have because of the simple fact of having passed the previous educational levels (what we wanted to do ourselves in the Applicant’s Profile section), so the detected deficiencies –maybe through a knowledge test- be stopped by means of a programme specifically formulated to fill those holes, but that doesn’t justify its’ employment as an admission criteria.

It is to pretentious that a knowledge exam – developed by a Higher Education institution looking for objectives other than the valuation of previous school levels- which the applicant will resolve in a

maximum time of 4 hours can give a valid and trustable indicator of the knowledge that he/she has acquired through 15 years of schooling.

- Meanwhile, the sitting of an exam to assess the degree of knowledge of a student in order for him to be admitted into a certain educational level clearly is clearly due to an educational position –strongly criticized since the last century- which considers the student as a passive receptacle of information, and his/her learning as knowledge “acquisition”; therefore, naturally, the evaluation consists in knowing how much of that information the student can remember. Is memory-based education, informative –in contrast with formative-, dogmatic. In many pedagogical treatises and educational policy discourses, this educational trend is presented –strongly imbedded within our natural traditionalism and customs- as a enemy which has to be defeated through a formative, interactive and critical vision of educational practices.
- Besides the previous considerations, it is necessary to examine the administering of knowledge and ability examinations as admission procedures through real results, how well are they really working, specially when there isn’t any follow-up, and one doesn’t proceed to the validation of these instruments. It is common to hear that the global scores that are obtained through this examinations are tragic, because only a minimal percentage of the applicants obtain passing scores, and these are lower than 7. As well as this is a bad symptom – it is not necessarily a symptom of a deficiency in students’ formation, but of the bad design of the evaluation tool- the admission process is contradictory. It is said that only students that pass the knowledge exam are going to be admitted, but maybe the poor technical design, students that, in fact, obtained failing scores, have to be admitted too. The question in the face of this problem has to be: Is the examination accomplishing the function it is supposed to accomplish as a selection criteria?



- The most important argument, because it is based on the same reason of having a diagnosis system for selection, is that the sitting of a knowledge exam by its' methodological characteristics, is necessarily focused in evaluating the knowledge acquired up to the moment; it doesn't inform directly about the processes of which that knowledge is the result. Consequently, it doesn't allow us to accomplish the purpose of diagnosing an applicant to predict his/her possibilities of success in as a student or as a professional.

When we highlight the need of systematic and clear evaluation processes for the admission to Higher Education, there exists the possibility to make decisions in order to improve quality of education from the students' characteristics. It is also important to remark that an intention inside that possibility is to determine the possibility that a student who enters Higher Education develops and stays in it until a satisfactory ending, what we will call predictability, that is, to consider that if one has an adequate diagnostic evaluation system that permits to know the newcomer college students, and alternative programmes that support students starting from the identified difficulties, we can predict his/her success or failure in the school level.

This time, we will take three important aspects, which are: the adaptation characteristics of college students, the level of knowledge that they have, according to the chosen area and academic performance once college studies have started.

It is important to realize that adaptation and knowledge that conform the newcomer collage student's profile are part of his/her life history, not only school life, but familiar, social and cultural too. That means, many times the easiness or difficultness that the students experiment to adapt to the Higher Education system does not depend on the school or on the limitations or advantages that the system imposes, but on the tools that he/she possesses as a person to face new situations, and on the influence and education that family exerts to support him/her in his/her adaptation process. Regarding this, it is commented that: "The same objective conditions that determine the parents' attitudes and their main elections about the school career of their sons and daughters, also rule the

student's attitude in front of the same elections" De Leonardo (s/f: 119). This is, one of the factors that often has influence over the adaptation characteristics of students and over the level of knowledge that they manifest in the diagnostic evaluation for admission into Higher Education is that they often decide to continue on to it just because of the pressure that their parents exert over them, and, what is worst, they tend to choose a profession according to what their parents expect from them. Therefore, an adequate diagnostic evaluation that not only explores knowledge, but also adaptability and personality features should reflect the difficulties that newcomer college students will face when they choose to continue studying or to be successful in the career that they opted for, when it wasn't their choice.

Another pressure that collage students face when they choose profession, is the social one; if the family exerts influence, society and friends do so on a higher level, because sometimes they choose a career based on the mobility that they expect according to what has been commented by the peer group, specifically, waiting that the chosen career or simply the fact that they kept on Higher Education, favors them in "better social mobility opportunities, what conditions their attitudes towards school, and conditions them through subjective hopes, which aren't more than intuitively perceived and gradually interiorized objective opportunities" (117).

Culturally, as another factor that influences the making of decisions to continue studying and choose a career, the possibility of permanence and success that the student expects. "Psychologists have observed that the level of aspirations of individuals is essentially determined by references to the probability (judged intuitively through previous successes and failures) of attaining the desired goal" (122). This is, a successful individual typically proposes himself his next goal only a little higher than the previous one, while the unsuccessful individual tends to show one of these two reactions: sets his goal in a level that is too low, often below his previous achievements or sets it really above his possibilities. Therefore, if the levels of a group are low, the individual will diminish his efforts and will set his goals really below those that he could reach. He will set high goals if the average level of the group increases. Therefore, once he is incorporated to the



above level, social and cultural pressure will continue to be a factor that influences adaptation and permanence, starting from the performance in the system. Nevertheless, it seems that the strongest determinant for studies is the attitude of the family towards the school, which is, for itself, an function of objective hopes for school success that define each social category.

De Leonardo keeps pointing out that: “the systematic figures that separate students that come from different social ambiances, owe both their form and nature to the fact that the selection to which they have been submitted has not been equally severe for everyone, and that social advantages and disadvantages have gradually become educational as a result of premature decisions, that, directly linked to social origin, have duplicated and reinforced their influence.” (126).

In conclusion, talking about predictability is not easy if we don't fully recognize what adaptation implies, the knowledge level and how this can affect their academic performance.

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