Faculty development: The challenge of creating a shared vision of faculty at University

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Abstract. *Instituto Universitario Hospital Italiano de Buenos Aires* (IUHIBA) is a private university institution that offers a comprehensive education for health professionals such as undergraduate and postgraduate careers, and residencies, within other academic offerings. This institution is characterized, among others, by the daily coexistence and articulation of multiple teaching roles (with their corresponding designations and characteristics).

The peculiarities and expansive growth of IUHIBA during recent years led to an action research project in order to respond to enquiries regarding their complex and diverse faculty. How do the members of the university define teaching? Is it possible to form a common vision of "professor" at University explaining the diversity and peculiarities of the different roles? We began a research process due to this and other enquiries, whose former surveys we believe have to be shared.

Key words: Teaching role - Academic development - academic vitality

1 Overview

Instituto Universitario Hospital Italiano de Buenos Aires (IUHIBA) has recently begun to conduct an action research project to solve enquiries regarding their complex and diverse faculty.

This institution is characterized, among others, by the coexistence and articulation of multiple teaching roles (with their corresponding designations and characteristics).

What does it mean to be a professor at IUHIBA? How are the different institutional members defined? Is it possible to form a common concept despite the differences that allow strengthening the academic development of the faculty? These and other questions led to what we now define as the Faculty Development Committee (DAD).

2 Theoretical Framework

In order to answer questions of whether there is only one way of teaching much research was conducted. Harden and Crosby (2000) proposed a guide, regarding the teaching training in medicine, in which they identified twelve connected and closely related roles. Teaching responsibilities are complex and their roles differ, depending on distinct

variations. "Explicit recognition of the professor's commitment to a specific role may reinforce his commitment to education and show the value that the institution confers to this process" (Harden & Crosby, 2000, p. 344).

Paricio (2019) proposes a model of permanent academic development towards the professionalism of teaching, to eliminate the isolation of each professor and develop a common practice. Among the magnitude of professionalizing teaching, we include the coordination and participation in collective upgrading processes, resulting from the conviction of belonging to a common project with institutional commitment.

Steinert (2014) has conducted extensive research in order to contribute to further analysis around the faculty development. She argues that the aim of the same is to promote and foster the academic vitality of professors and the institutions where they teach and thus, improve the training of future professionals. The faculty development may lead to organizational changes.

Our purpose is to build a common institutional vision of teaching at university through this project, so that we may clearly identify its teaching roles and tasks, verify the requirements and training needed and analyze other methods to contribute to the faculty development.

3   Method

The project is framed in an action research proposal, coordinated by those in charge of the faculty development of those who belong to the institution, in order to understand and upgrade educational practices.

At the beginning of 2023, the DAD Committee undertook a research process regarding the teaching concept at IUHIBA, from a qualitative approach to understand and build new perspectives.

Therefore, different resources are used to collect information regarding the perspective of institutional members who become part of this concept: Authorities and some professors in training have been asked about this during this first period, and documentation and regulations from different university areas have been collected.

We designed a mechanism for analyzing the teaching task and some concerns that arise from the concept of being a professor in our institution. In this way, we called regular meetings, formed by representatives from different areas of the institute, in which we discussed several topics regarding teaching, analysis of implicit ideas, the institutional data and the theoretical frameworks that support our perspective on university teaching. The Committee has performed an initial analysis of the information gathered and obtained during these meetings, allowing us to advance in the concept of the teaching role in the institution.

4   Results

The initial results show the diverse perspectives among the institutional representatives. For some members "everything means teaching", even when there is no intention to train. On the other hand, others believe teaching only means direct contact with students. In this context we recognize different ways of teaching: from the task of "lecturing" in a classroom, to the role model during professional practice in an office or a laboratory.

From the disciplinary expert, with a broad academic background in charge of a subject or class, to the Problem-Based Learning (PBL) tutor who requires skills not strictly related to the disciplinary contents of the career.

Beyond the diversity of concepts that emerge, one of the aims of this mechanism is to reach agreements and collective conclusions, combining criteria on how to continue strengthening the faculty development in our institute. For this reason, the initial results confirm the need to continue creating work spaces with a wider group of institutional members.

5 Discussion and Conclusions

During this stage of the project, we came to some preliminary conclusions that enriches what is being developed:

When talking about "teacher" in our university we refer to a polysemic term, since there are a variety of teaching methods, through different training proposals: undergraduate (in traditional and integrated curricula) and postgraduate careers, Simulation-based teaching, training in Hospital Residencies, among other academic offerings. All of them are subject to specific requirements for application, performance and training. This polysemy refers to Harden's proposal regarding the different roles of professors. However, we have not agreed yet on whether performing only one of the many tasks identified is enough to be considered "professor".

Pursuant to Paricio, the DAD Committee formed, as a way of expanding towards a cooperative organization, allows to foster the sense of belonging and the institutional commitment of the members of our institution.

The ways of fostering the academic development of our faculty are by reaching agreements on the concept of teaching and combining criteria about teaching; and, from there, as stated by Steinert, improving the training of future professionals.

6 Limitations and future research

We are in the initial stage of this research project. Once we have reached certain agreements on the concept of teaching in our institution, we will conduct further research on what it means to be a "good professor" for the university community, and how to develop and strengthen the process towards professionalization.

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