

Network of Innovation and Research in Teaching (RIID) for the training of Nutritionist in Chile

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Abstract. The creation of collaborative networks in higher education is a desirable aspect, since it allows improvement on the basis of good practices and feedback to the different institutions, improving the quality of training, innovation, and research. In Chile, there is not a group of nutrition professors that allows standardizing a level of quality for their graduates. The creation of the Network of Innovation and Research in Teaching for the Training of Nutritionists (RIID) was born as an initiative of academics from different universities to be formalized as an extension project. It currently has 54 participants from state, public, and private institutions from Antofagasta to Magallanes. In two years of operation, it has achieved various products in the field of teacher training (webinars, conferences), and research (presentations at conferences and scientific articles). It has been an enriching and fruitful experience for the participants, generating evidence that promotes quality in the training of future nutritionists.

Keywords: Quality of Education, Nutrition, Teaching profession.

1 Introduction

The current change towards collaborative cultures in higher education requires the creation and development of networks at the inter-institutional level, with the central focus based on cooperation and integration of institutions, considering an interaction of educational policy that indicates where to focus efforts; the community to mobilize environmental resources in favor of education; educational leadership generating transforming agents that promote collaboration (Azorín & Fullan, 2022; López et al., 2007; Santos et al., 2013), universities as institutions of reference for teaching and research activity (García Valcárcel Muñoz-Repiso et al., 2018) and finally teaching where faculty from their experience and resources learn to collaborate with each other (Azorín & Fullan, 2022; López et al., 2007; Santos et al., 2013). Subsequent paragraphs, however, are indented.

2 Theoretical framework

The imminent knowledge society presents the challenge of investing in and responding to the needs of skilled or professional people (OECD, 2010), and also of considering the community as a catalyst of cognitive processes distributed among its members (Vuopala et al., 2016). In this line, learning networks become relevant as they are online learning environments, whose definition from the field of education refers to a group of people with similar interests who interact and share knowledge, with the intention of supporting each other and increasing their learning (Kools & Stoll, 2016; Sloep & Berlanga, 2011; Vidal et al., 2012) propitiating innovations based on the interaction of its participants to enrich teachers' learning experiences, improve practice (Koper, 2009; Sinnema et al., 2022; Sloep & Berlanga, 2011) and respond to the problems of current education (Sinnema et al., 2022; Vidal et al., 2012) and even contribute to international cooperation (Almuiñas & Galarza, 2016; Biancani & McFarland, 2013), but keeping in mind that participants are the key actors in any learning network (Sloep & Berlanga, 2011).

3 Methods

The RIID project begins with a strategic planning that includes mission, vision, and strategic objectives, defining areas for the development of innovation and research activities. Subsequently, it ensures its operation and formalization as an extension project with funding from the Universidad Católica del Norte for 3 years. RIID's activities include an entrance survey, coordination meetings, work, and dissemination, which are carried out through videoconferencing, eliminating the distance barrier, which is extremely important considering that this network is made up of people from all over the country. On the other hand, the research projects managed within the framework of the RIID follow the usual channel for these purposes.

4 Results

In October 2021, the official presentation of the RIID took place with the participation of 40 members (professors), which amounts to 54 members by 2023 and subdivided according to their participation in the network. In the entry survey, it was found that the network responds to a need for collaborative work that had not been considered until now.

In the first year of operation, work teams from different areas are articulated: University teaching with sub-groups: Management and quality assurance, Didactics and Evaluation; Accompaniment and development of the future Nutritionist; Accompaniment and development of the teaching staff.

The balance between the achievement of the activities committed to and carried out shows a high level of achievement. With respect to support for training and innovation, two online training sessions were held and the first workshop for the interchange

of good teaching practices in nutritionist training, where 10 projects carried out throughout Chile were presented. In research, we have participated in two international congresses and one scientific publication (Fig. 1).

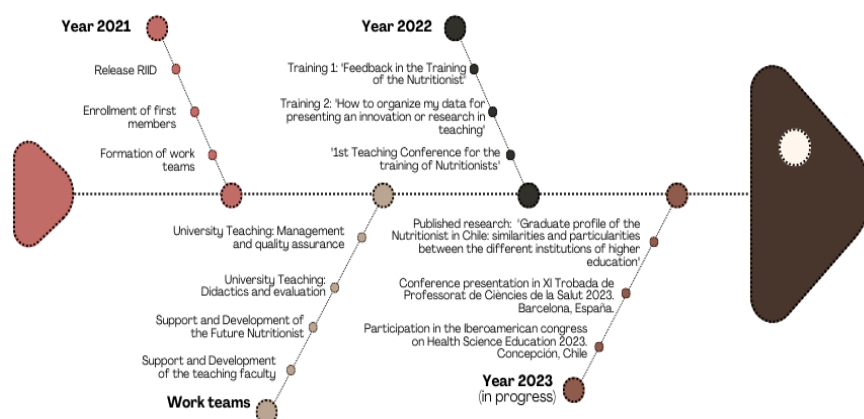


Fig. 1 Flowchart of activities performed.

5 Discussion

The conformation of RIID as a systematized form of collaborative work among Nutrition and Dietetics faculty in the country, has been an enriching and fruitful experience, which has allowed higher education institutions to face together the current challenging and changing scenario that demands innovative and transformative solutions (Azorín & Fullan, 2022), responding to collaborative work until now not realized. An example of this is the increase in the formation of collaborative networks associated with the teaching challenges in the face of virtualization precipitated by COVID-19 (Azorín & Arnaiz, 2018).

In addition, in a short time the RIID has promoted training and dissemination of good teaching practices without losing institutional identity, which coincides with Koper (2009) who mentions that the generation of networks promotes learning and reflection on one's own experience, creating a framework for sharing. From the point of view of the participants, belonging to this network brings benefits for their teaching work, promoting the development of their academic career in all areas.

On the other hand, progress has been made in research in higher education, strengthening inter-institutional connections for continuous improvement in the quality of training of future nutritionists, being a transforming instance for the way of working in the discipline, reaching the creation of new knowledge through shared goals (Hamodi et al., 2014; Vidal et al., 2012) and working collaboratively on innovation and/or research projects (García Valcárcel Muñoz-Repiso et al., 2018; Koper, 2009).

6 Conclusions

The creation of RIID is relevant in Chile since there is no grouping of nutritionist trainers that contributes to horizontal cooperation between institutions in the country. Belonging to a specific network in teaching training allows to advance in the professionalization of the teaching-learning and management processes, contributing to the continuous improvement of university training.

7 Limitations and Future Research

It is suggested to evaluate with a validated questionnaire the satisfaction of the members with the creation of the RIID and to initiate the process of international cooperation to improve the discipline at the Ibero-American level, within the framework of ensuring a continuous circle in favor of quality assurance in professional training.

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