Scientific articles

Iluminemos el camino de aquellos que han tropezado para que puedan salir adelante

Let us light the path to those who have tripped so they can move forward

Iluminemos o caminho daqueles que tropeçaram para que possam seguir em frente

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Resumen

La educación superior en México enfrenta retos significativos en términos de reprobación y rezago escolar, lo cual afectan negativamente el desempeño académico de los estudiantes y su desarrollo profesional y personal. De hecho, y a pesar de los esfuerzos para reducir estas tasas, las instituciones de educación superior continúan buscando estrategias para abordar esta problemática. Por eso, el objetivo de esta investigación fue analizar el rezago y la reprobación de los estudiantes de educación superior desde la perspectiva de la tutoría con el fin de proponer estrategias para la mejora continua. Para eso, se empleó una metodología descriptiva mediante un enfoque mixto secuencial en dos etapas: primero, se aplicó un cuestionario a 413 estudiantes y, posteriormente, se realizó un análisis cualitativo a través de un grupo focal con 7 estudiantes y 10 entrevistas a responsables de procesos relacionados con la tutoría. Los resultados demuestran que las asignaturas con mayores índices de reprobación son inglés, matemáticas, tecnologías de la información y estadística. Asimismo, el 66 % de los estudiantes reportó problemas emocionales derivados de asuntos familiares, y se identificó una falta de compromiso con los estudios y dificultades con el sistema de créditos, que limita la elección de profesores. En otras palabras, la investigación reveló la necesidad de implementar programas preventivos, de monitoreo, psicosociales y psicoemocionales, así como una política pública de salud mental. Por tanto, se recomienda

fortalecer los programas de tutoría y adaptar el currículo para mejorar el rendimiento académico y prevenir el rezago y la reprobación en la educación superior.

Palabras clave: tutoría, reprobación, rezago, retención.

Abstract

Higher education in Mexico faces significant challenges in terms of failure and academic lag, factors that negatively impact the academic performance of students and their professional and personal development. Despite efforts to reduce these rates, Higher Education Institutions continue to seek strategies to address this problem. The objective of this research was to explain the lag and failure of higher education students through tutoring, in order to propose strategies for continuous improvement. A descriptive methodology was used through a sequential mixed method in two stages. First, a questionnaire was applied to 413 students and, subsequently, a qualitative analysis was carried out through a focus group with 7 students and 10 interviews with those in charge of processes linked to tutoring. The subjects with the highest passing rates are English, mathematics, information technology and statistics. 66% of students reported emotional problems derived from family issues. In addition, a lack of commitment to their studies and difficulties with the credit system that limits the choice of teachers were identified. The research revealed the need to implement preventive programs, monitoring, psychosocial and psychoemotional programs, as well as a public mental health policy. It is crucial to strengthen tutoring programs and adapt the curriculum to improve academic performance and prevent lag and failure in higher education.

Keywords: tutorships; disapproval; lag; retention.

Resumo

O ensino superior no México enfrenta desafios significativos em termos de insucesso e atraso académico, que afetam negativamente o desempenho académico dos estudantes e o seu desenvolvimento profissional e pessoal. De facto, e apesar dos esforços para reduzir estas taxas, as instituições de ensino superior continuam a procurar estratégias para resolver este problema. Portanto, o objetivo desta pesquisa foi analisar a defasagem e o fracasso dos estudantes do ensino superior na perspectiva da tutoria, a fim de propor estratégias de melhoria contínua. Para isso, utilizou-se uma metodologia descritiva por meio de uma abordagem mista sequencial em duas etapas: primeiramente, foi aplicado um questionário a

413 alunos e, posteriormente, foi realizada uma análise qualitativa por meio de um grupo focal com 7 alunos e 10 entrevistas com os responsáveis pela processos relacionados à mentoria. Os resultados mostram que as disciplinas com maiores índices de reprovação são Inglês, Matemática, Tecnologias de Informação e Estatística. Da mesma forma, 66% dos alunos relataram problemas emocionais decorrentes de questões familiares, sendo identificado falta de comprometimento com os estudos e dificuldades com o sistema de créditos, o que limita a escolha dos professores. Ou seja, a pesquisa revelou a necessidade de implementação de programas preventivos, de monitoramento, psicossociais e psicoemocionais, bem como de uma política pública de saúde mental. Portanto, recomenda-se fortalecer os programas de tutoria e adaptar o currículo para melhorar o desempenho acadêmico e prevenir atrasos e fracassos no ensino superior.

Palavras-chave: tutoria, fracasso, atraso, retenção.

Introduction

Higher education institutions (HEIs) in Mexico continue to face problems related to failure and academic lag. In fact, and although the failure rate at the national level has decreased to 11.9% in the 2023-2024 cycle, compared to 12.3% in the previous cycle (Secretaría de Educación Pública [SEP], 2023), the authorities of these institutions continue concerned about this situation and make efforts to address the problem through various strategies, including tutoring. This consists of a process of personalized and academic support provided to the student in order to improve their academic performance, prevent failure, lag and, therefore, possible dropout.

> Tutoring, in the higher education scenario, conceived from a preventive and formative vision, could be understood - then - as a cooperative process of training and sequenced actions, closely linked to educational practice and with a clear projection towards the global maturity of the student. individual, through which he is taught to learn, understand, reflect and decide in a committed, responsible and autonomous manner (Álvarez, 2002, p. 33).

This task has an extracurricular nature, since it is not included in the curriculum. Even so, it can be considered as an individualized attention strategy or in small groups, complementary to teaching, which seeks to address the learning problems faced by the student (Beltrán and Suárez, 2003). The study by Pérez *et al*. (2023) on the role of the tutor

during the pandemic confirms the importance and relevance of the tutorial activity, and highlights the role of tutors as key players in the attention and support of the student.

When discussing the role of the tutor, Gaytan *et al* . (2024) "conclude that students define the ideal university tutor as a professional who provides support during the university career, offering the key tools to successfully navigate and make assertive decisions" (p. 90)

Now, tutoring issues in education are not new, since in Mexico they gained relevance in the 1980s. However, they are currently gaining renewed importance due to the concern and emotional need of students, exacerbated by the covid pandemic. 19 and the environment full of technological distractions, such as social networks.

Mentoring, therefore, remains a valuable tool, even if its effects are sometimes not completely tangible. It is based on several assumptions: 1) tutors are trained to provide support and guidance thanks to their experience; 2) there is a work plan focused on addressing the main needs of students; 3) the tutors effectively carry out their work, keep records and have the students well identified regarding their school performance; 4) students are responsible for attending the scheduled sessions and carrying out the activities requested by the tutors, and 5) there is a physical and virtual infrastructure (platform) to address and follow up on any concerns. Therefore, it is crucial to reflect and rethink these actions, as well as raise awareness among those responsible for the different areas.

For the purposes of this document, a student who fails to pass one or some of the subjects enrolled in a school year is considered failed. According to the Ministry of Public Education (2019) of Mexico, failure occurs when a student has not acquired the knowledge established in the corresponding study plans and programs at the end of the school year. This affects the efficiency of the educational process and leads to examining the contextual, social and economic references of the students who enter this failure scheme, as well as possible failures in the teaching-learning process.

Those students who, upon failing a subject, must retake or repeat it and do not progress at the same pace as their classmates who started the school year on the same date, are considered lagging behind. These students are considered vulnerable due to various contextual circumstances, which will be addressed later.

Having specified the above, this research aimed to explain the factors that, from tutoring, affect the lag and failure of higher education students with the purpose of proposing strategies for continuous improvement. To this end, the following questions were posed: how

is the lag and failure of higher education students explained from tutoring? And what strategies can be implemented in HEIs to reduce lag and failure?

As a hypothesis, it is suggested that the problems of failure and lag are due to factors such as the economic, family, work, emotional and institutional situation (accompaniment), which translates into demotivation and low efforts to continue with studies.

Literature Review

Tinto's theory (1989) helps to understand the reasons behind students' failure and lag. According to this author, it is essential to know the students' objectives when entering university and a specific career, since these may not coincide with the objectives of the institution. In this case, the institution must know these objectives and work to align them.

In addition, persistence in studies requires a high intellectual level, social skills, knowledge of writing, mathematics and other skills, as well as good interaction with classmates and teachers. To do this, it is important to review each case individually, since not all problems are similar, and identify those that originate from the lack of adequate institutional policies to address the problem.

Continuing with Tinto, it is crucial to set realistic expectations for students, as they are often promised things during the enrollment process that are not met, which can lead to feelings of disappointment. Another relevant factor is the transition from high school to university level, since many students receive family support at high school level and, upon reaching university, they face loneliness, since they are considered adults. Furthermore, the environments of the middle level and the upper level are very different.

Among the recommended institutional measures are the following: employing advanced degree students as counselors, promoting advisory groups especially for early grades, forming residency groups, and establishing tutors.

Based on the above, Braxton (2019) refers to Tinto's theory to explain the problem of failure and lag. According to Braxton, this theory addresses both individual factors (characteristics of the individual) and institutional factors (environment, sociodemographic aspects, lived experiences) as determining elements in dropout or persistence. The key questions are the following: how does the university affect student failure and lag? What routes should be followed to avoid failure and lag? What actions can be implemented to serve marginalized groups that find themselves in unfavorable situations?

For his part, Keane *et al*. (2023) conducts an exhaustive review of the literature and highlights several theorists, including Tinto, who maintains that the integration of the student into the social life of the university campus translates into better academic performance. Keane , therefore, affirms that attention and support during the first year reduce the probability of abandonment.

One of the strategies to reduce failure and lag must include a diagnosis prior to the student's admission, which takes into account their family, work, cultural and socioeconomic situation. In addition, it is essential to provide monitoring and support so that the student learns to make decisions autonomously.

The objective of tutoring is to train self-managing students, capable of managing their own progress and developing their own strategies, which is achieved through constant contact, which must be at least three times per school period, with minimum sessions of 30 minutes. During these sessions, the student's progress must be measured using an instrument created and provided by the tutoring unit of the educational institution.

In addition to this, it is essential that HEIs implement preventive programs, as pointed out by Araya and Palma Rojas (2023), who suggest the creation of early warning and monitoring programs, as well as individualized monitoring aimed at students at risk. Likewise, psychosocial and psychoemotional programs must be offered to strengthen the ties and identity of students, for which it is necessary to train personnel to teach these programs and promote the active participation of students.

Now, it is evident that the covid-19 pandemic has had a significant emotional impact on students, which is why it is common for them to present anxiety problems. Wijbenga *et al* . (2024) show that addressing emotional problems such as anxiety, depression and stress improves academic performance, by facilitating understanding in classes, willingness to carry out tasks and attention in classes, as well as planning and time management. . Therefore, to prevent falling behind in university, it would be advisable to include a public mental health policy on the agenda.

In modern pedagogy, the focus on memorization techniques has been left aside. However, the study by Memije *et al*. (2024) highlights the importance of these techniques, among others. These authors found that failure and low performance in mathematics are related to failures in the psychopedagogical strategy, such as lack of organization and time management, and difficulties in analysis, synthesis, memorization and note-taking. Memije

et al. They argue that recovering attention and memorization techniques is essential for effective learning of mathematics.

Other studies that have made contributions in national and local contexts are the following: Arellano *et al*. (2024) investigate failure rates in subjects such as differential calculus and explain that this subject is one of the main causes of dropout (56% of active students). The three main causes of this are the difficulty with the teacher, with the exams and with the subject itself. Therefore, the authors recommend that students choose a career they are passionate about, as many drop out due to a lack of interest in their field of study.

Reyes *et al*. (2020) show that women experience slightly more stress than men when they fail an exam at the beginning of the school year. Furthermore, they are the ones who most frequently seek support, which suggests that they recognize the problem and take proactive actions to solve it. The authors, therefore, suggest the implementation of workshops with targeted learning strategies to improve study habits and promote awareness so that students recognize their problems and ask for help.

Bravo and López (2019) conducted a review of the literature on the failure and permanence of undergraduate students, and found that the main causes of failure include the lack of study techniques, the lack of vocation towards the chosen degree and, from the side teacher, the lack of an adequate pedagogical methodology, appropriate evaluation procedures and criteria, as well as the quality and resources for teaching.

On the other hand, Lozano and Maldonado (2020) discovered that teaching help, empathy, and inclusion are not directly associated with failure in upper secondary education. According to these authors, the factors that have the greatest impact are socioeconomic and family levels and the student's attitude towards studying, which is aligned with existing theory.

Along these lines, Fuentes and Rivera (2022) argue that the factors that explain failure are contextual and personal, rather than academic. Their results indicate that, as age increases and students combine work with study, there is a greater propensity to fail. Furthermore, they point out that men would fail more than women due to a lower search for emotional, social and academic support. They also find that love difficulties are related to failure, while factors such as the mother's education, distance from the study center and economic factors have a smaller impact on failure.

According to Aguirre *et al*. (2018), it is essential to offer courses and training to tutors on how to practice tutoring to ensure that they have career experience to specifically guide their students. In this sense, it was identified that the tutor's functions transcend the academic field, since they also listen and address problems that can go beyond the classroom. To do this, tutors must be honest, ethical, professional and have a firm conviction in their role, because, in short, tutoring can contribute to the student's personal growth.

Furthermore, the factors that affect failure and lag vary depending on the educational modality. In the case of the distance modality, Roque and Rosas (2023) highlight that one of the key preventive factors is dialogue and continuous communication between the institution's staff (teachers, tutors and administrative staff) and the student.

Obviously, tutoring programs contribute significantly to the comprehensive education of the student and help reduce failure, lagging behind and dropping out of school. These programs provide students with valuable information that improves their academic achievement, as they encourage teamwork and the development of better study habits and learning methods (Vidal and Toledo, 2024). However, teamwork must continue to be promoted and quality guidance should be offered that focuses on consolidating self-management processes (Ureña *et al*., 2024).

In this regard, Ávila (2023) states:

> [Tutoring] requires a closer link with the curricular subjects of the study plan, to the extent that they become semi-obligatory tasks for students within their school hours, so that the tutorial intervention has a lasting and visible effect on the comprehensive training of students (p. 160).

Ponce (2024), for his part, identifies several key elements in tutoring to reduce the risk of students dropping out of school: a) taking an interest in the academic risk situation; b) explore said situation in detail; c) jointly develop a work plan to improve the situation; d) guide students on how to face their academic and personal difficulties; e) channel them to support bodies if necessary, offering advice to address academic needs related to their subjects and learning methods, and f) monitor the situation through the teachers who teach the classes, evaluating progress and needs. From the perspective of Correa and Rochin (2024), it is crucial to focus on improving academic performance through effective communication between the tutor and the tutee in an environment of trust.

Now, according to the CUCEA tutoring website (2024) (https://tutorias.cucea.udg.mx/), students must be provided with information on regulations,

regulations, activities and forms to follow up on their main problems and needs, while tutors must be provided with an activity guide and relevant information about the tutorial activity. However, as Sánchez demonstrated *et al*. (2017), in addition to the existing platform, a chat, a notice board and other community manager tools should be activated to improve the student's educational experience, which would make it possible to make the most of the available technological tools.

In most HEIs, according to their regulations, undergraduate students have three opportunities (ordinary, extraordinary and repeat the subject) to pass a subject and avoid being dropped. At the University of Guadalajara (UDG), article 33 of the General Regulations for Student Evaluation and Promotion, (2017) states (see figure one):

> The student who, for any reason, does not achieve a passing grade in the extraordinary period, must repeat the subject in the immediate following school year in which it is offered, having the opportunity to accredit it during the ordinary evaluation process or in the extraordinary period, except for graduate students. If the student fails to pass the subject in the terms of this article, he or she will be dropped.

If the subjects are not accredited within the established deadlines, students still have another opportunity, which - in accordance with article 34 - they can request from the education commission of the university center council:

> The student who has been dropped in accordance with article 33 of this ordinance may request in writing to the Education Commission of the Center or School Council, before the start of the immediate following cycle in which he or she has been dropped, a new opportunity. to accredit the subject or subjects owed. The Education Commission of the Center or School Council may authorize a new opportunity to accredit the subject or subjects owed by the student in the following cycle in which the subject or subjects are offered, taking into account the arguments expressed by the student in their writing. , their academic history and observed conduct, as well as what is established in article 36 of this ordinance.
>
> If this request is authorized, the student will have the opportunity to credit the subjects owed, only in the ordinary evaluation period, in case of not attending the course and not achieving a passing grade, in each and every one of the subjects that owes, will be automatically and definitively deregistered.

After this, the students would have to be discharged. However, this situation has happened to many of these, even though the regulations in article 35 establish the following:

Students who are withdrawn from the University of Guadalajara in accordance with articles 32, 33 and 34 of this regulation will not be authorized to re-enter the degree or postgraduate degree for which they were withdrawn. In the case of high school, you will not be authorized to re-enter any of the educational modalities in which it is offered.

Figure 1. Failure and lag flow chart
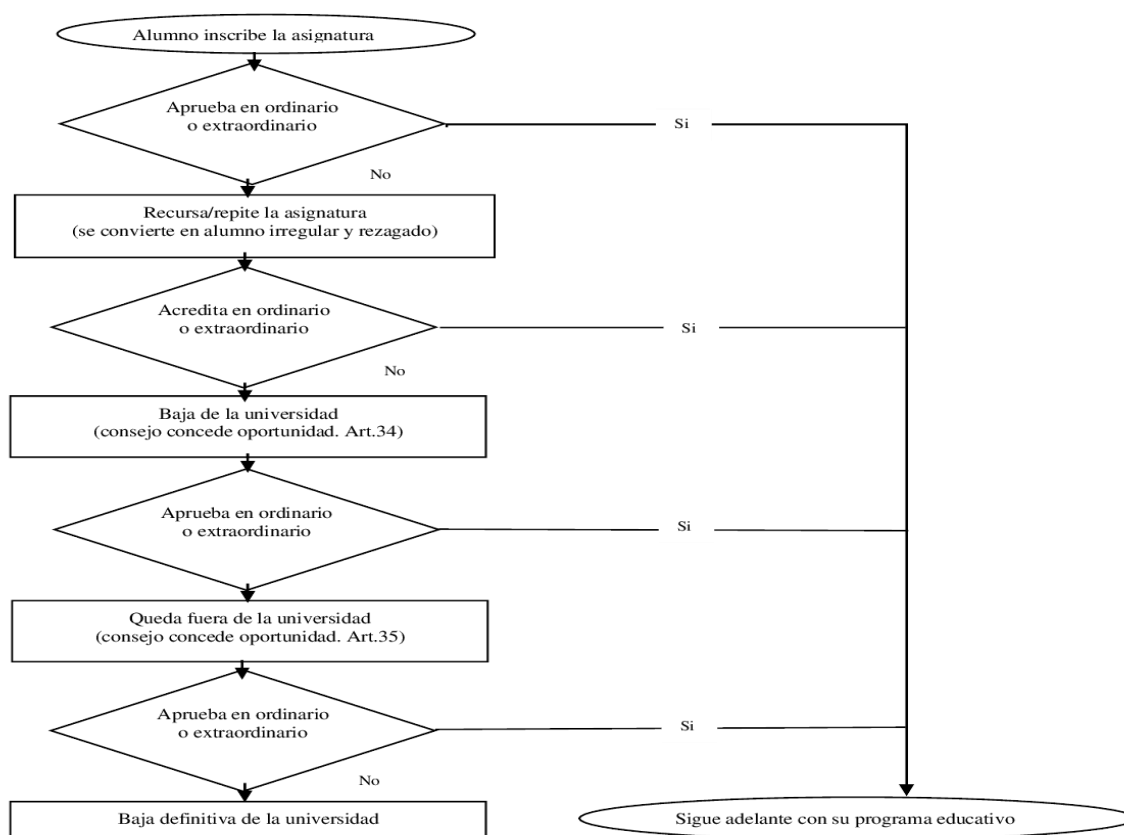
Source: Own elaboration based on the General Regulations for the Evaluation and Promotion of Students, (2017)

Method and material

A comprehensive literature review was conducted using a descriptive methodology, using a two-stage sequential mixed method (Creswell, 2014) in order to obtain deeper meanings and interpretations.

In the quantitative part, a survey-type questionnaire was applied to all students (population of 512) in a situation of failure and lag during the 2023-A calendar. Likewise, a sample of 220 students was calculated with 95% confidence and a 5% margin of error. 413 students responded, representing 80.6% of the total.

$$n=\frac{NK^2P(1-P)}{(N-1)e^2+K(P(1-P))} = 220$$

n=sample

k=confidence level= 95% (1.96)

e =margin of error=0.05

p=proportion= 0.50

(Rodriguez, 2001) .

To do this, the following criteria were used: a) students who have failed the same subject three times and b) students who have retaken a subject. The survey was administered in August 2023. The questionnaire, made up of 17 questions about age, gender, hours of work per week, subjects failed and retaken, and reasons for failure, among others, was reviewed by two academics from the tutoring unit and submitted via Google Forms.

Likewise, non-probabilistic convenience or accidental sampling was used, which—according to Hernández and Escobar (2019)—is applied until the sample is completed according to the established criteria. This type of sampling was chosen for its easy access and low cost. Gómez and Gómez (2019) point out that this sampling is common in social sciences and qualitative research, since it focuses more on meanings than on numbers.

In the qualitative part, a content analysis was carried out to offer inferences from verbal and communicative data (Krippendorff, 1997). On October 4, 2023, at the facilities of the University Center for Economic and Administrative Sciences (CUCEA) of the University of Guadalajara (UDG), a focus group was held with students to reaffirm or refute the results of the survey. 7 students participated in the session: 4 women and 3 men (see table one). It is worth mentioning that at this stage the students were presented with the results of the survey and they were asked if they agreed with them or not; In general, the results were confirmed. Likewise, they were asked questions such as the following: why are they failing and falling

behind? What actions and commitments have you implemented to reverse your situation? Why have the measures they have taken not allowed them to improve?

Table 1. Characteristics of the students (focus group)

Partici pant	wor ks	Travel time from home to univer sity (minut es)	Did you like your career ?	What transportation do you use?	Who pays your expens es?	Do you have any scholars hips?	Confir m data presen ted	Why is it in article 35?
Wome n	No	30	Yeah	Public	Family	No	Yeah	Mom is sick and I had to take care of her
Wome n	Yea h	30	Yeah	Public	Herself	No	Yeah	
Wome n	No	40	Yeah	Her dad takes her	Family	No	Yeah	Family and emotion al proble ms
Wome n	Yea h	60	Yeah	Public	She herself contrib utes to her house and pays rent and food.	No	Yeah	I work full days and couldn't go to class. There are teachers who leave homew ork with a lot of tasks and they did

|								not have time and it fell behind.
Man	Yeah	45	Yeah	Public	Himself	No	Yeah	Due to work, "I skipped a few tasks because of work."
Man	Yeah	40	Yeah	Public	Himself	No	Yeah	Works full days six days a week
Man	Yeah	60	Not much	Public	Himself	No	Yeah	I had no motivation due to the situations experienced in the family and personal problems.

Source: Own elaboration

In this same qualitative section, with the intention of capturing the perception of the people in charge and linked to the tutorial processes, an unstructured (free) interview was carried out with 3 managers and 7 tutor teachers. They were mainly asked about their experience with failing and lagging students, the reasons they believed explained this situation, and what could be done to help students and reduce the failure indicator.

One of the strengths of this research was the incorporation of *coaching* as a tutoring strategy, as well as the participation of students who were in this situation during the aforementioned school year. Without leaving aside peer tutoring, which has been studied in other works, it is evident that, when applied correctly, it produces very positive results.

The following figure two presents in a simplified way the "model" that illustrates how individual, work, family and institutional situations contribute to students' failure and lag, and how tutoring, as a support process, can influence student retention and continuous improvement of education.

Figure 2. Tutoring, lag and failure of university students
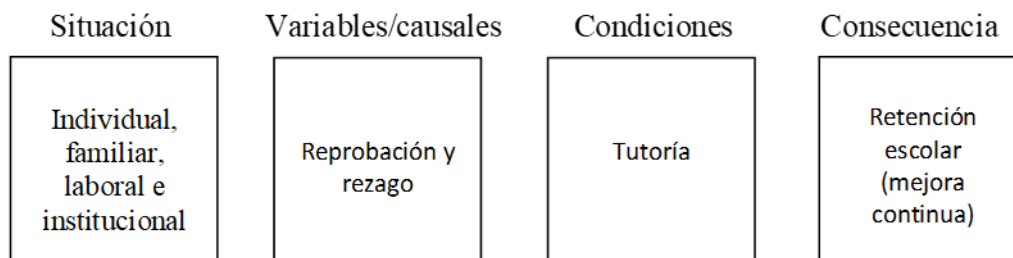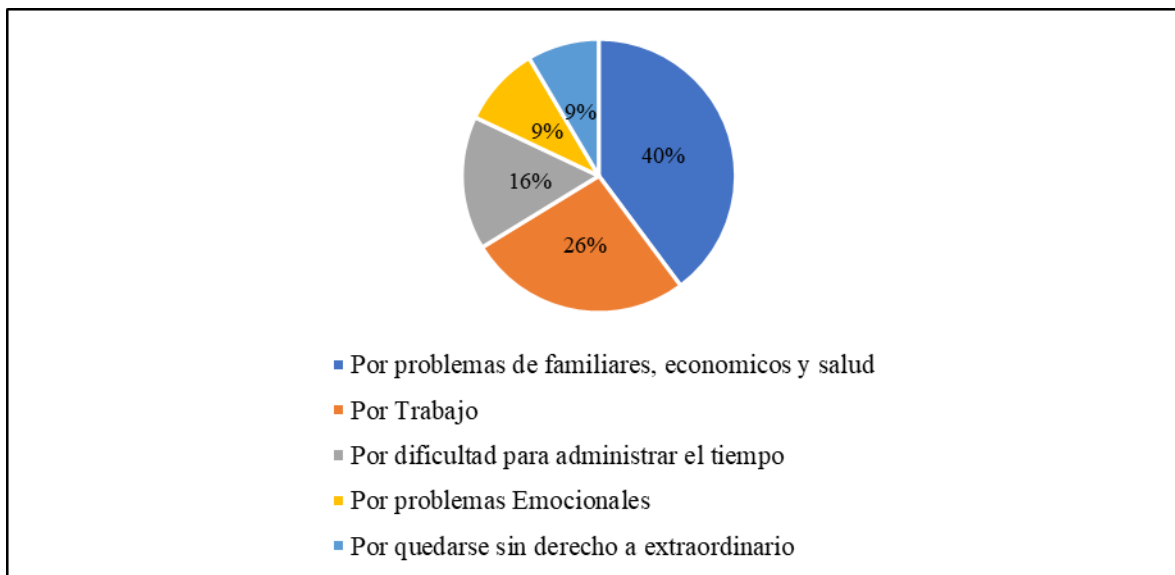

Source: Own elaboration

Results

According to data from the CUCEA tutoring unit for the 2023-A school year, 2.3% of students were in a situation of failure and lag, which represented more than 500 students.

Survey information

According to the survey, students who have failed and are behind are, on average, two subjects and two semesters behind in relation to the calendar in which they entered the university. Specifically, 60% of those who fail and lag behind are men, while 40% are women. The subjects that fail most frequently, in order of importance, are 1) languages, mainly English, 2) mathematics, 3) information technologies, 4) statistics, 5) operations research, and 6) methodology and practice of investigation. Furthermore, 14.6% of the lagging students are foreigners and 40.7% work.

Figure three presents in a general way the factors that contribute to lag and failure, including family, economic and health problems, work, difficulties in managing the available time, emotional issues, and the loss of the right to present extraordinary exams.

Figure 3. Reasons why students fail and fall behind

Source: Own elaboration

Figure 4. Average rating (between 1 and 5) of the emotional situation (in the last 30 days) of the student by educational program
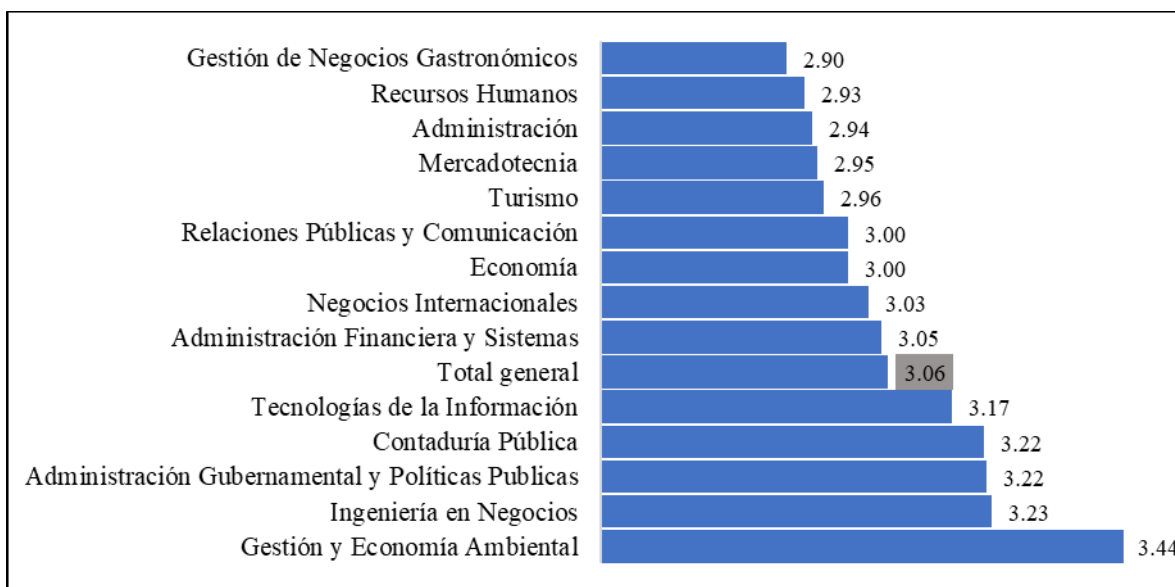
Source: Own elaboration

Regarding the emotional situation, students rate it with a 3.06, which indicates that it is regular and worrying, and shows the lack of programs that address these needs. Only the majors in Environmental Management, Business Engineering, Government Administration, Accounting and Information Technology are above the general average (see figure four).

Table two shows the bachelor's degrees with the highest percentages of failure and lag.

Table 2. Students who have failed and fallen behind by educational program

Degree	Percentage
International Business	15
Public Accounting	13
Administration	12
Marketing	10
Financial Administration and Systems	9
Information Technologies	7
Economy	7
Government Administration and Public Policies	7
Tourism	6
Human Resources	3
Business Engineering	3
Gastronomic Business Management	2
Public Relations and Comunication	2
Environmental Management and Economics	2

Source: Own elaboration

Focus group information

Regarding the information obtained from the focus group, the causes related to failure and lag are the following:

1. Teachers: Students report that they leave too much homework and address topics too quickly, regardless of whether they have understood them. Furthermore, they mention that many teachers are elderly, which makes them inflexible and insensitive, and sometimes they do not explain well.

2. The students' trajectory: Since high school, many of them have failed subjects.

3. Student work: 50% work six days a week, between 6 and 8 hours a day.

4. Emotional problems: 66% of students claim to have faced emotional problems, mainly arising from family issues, which has affected their concentration.

5. The credit system (educational system): This system allows students to choose schedules that almost no one wants.

6. Lack of student commitment: They do not have study habits and do not try hard enough.

When asked if they like their career, 80% responded affirmatively, especially from the specialty subjects. Likewise, they have positive expectations at the end of their career, among which are obtaining the degree to find a better job and climb the career ladder. They also value that their family is proud of them for having a career and personal self-

actualization. They all point out that they really like the campus, as they consider it a suitable space for study, and they highlight the quality of the sports workshops. However, what they do not like is the treatment of some administrators and teachers, who they believe are not committed, are absent or arrive late. Furthermore, they perceive that some subjects are not useful for their profession, since the contents are repeated and do not add value.

On the other hand, regarding what they were willing to do to reverse the situation they found themselves in, they responded that they would dedicate more time to their career and even considered changing jobs or reducing their partying outings. However, it is worth noting that more than 50% did not commit to making any changes.

According to the students, the main reasons for failure and falling behind are related to their long work hours, which prevent them from fulfilling their academic responsibilities. However, they must work to cover their own expenses. Additionally, they mentioned that they receive little support and guidance from their families, which affects their motivation and commitment. They also noted that they lack good time management and a plan or strategy to advance their studies and overcome difficulties.

Students who manage to advance and get out of the gap usually rely on classmates who explain the topics to them. In the focus group, the following aspects were identified:

1. Lack of study habits: Students lack organization in managing their time and reviewing their study materials. 60% do not have adequate physical space at home to study or carry out school activities. In addition, they lack basic skills such as making outlines, mind maps or taking class notes, and many prefer to take photos of the contents, which then makes it difficult for them to study. However, it was observed that they form study circles among themselves, explain the topics to each other and consult tutorials on YouTube periodically. When in doubt, they turn to the internet and artificial intelligence, and it has also been documented that they tend to procrastinate.

2. Low study priority: Their priority is not studying, which is reflected in the fact that they do not complete homework, frequently miss class due to their work obligations, and do not maintain frequent dialogue with teachers. They were documented to have many work and family responsibilities, which prevents school from being their top priority. Likewise, they are in favor of personalized classes, although this is practically impossible in a public university, where groups usually have an average of 30 students or more.

As is known, in both public and private institutions, many students work to pay for their studies, which takes away their time to complete tasks. However, there is evidence of some who manage to take advantage and enhance their work experience to develop greater responsibility and dedication, which often implies that they dedicate their weekends to doing tasks.

Some students go to the tutoring unit in search of support, although these have limitations and cannot interfere with the teacher's work. This raises an interesting question for reflection: why should a teacher approve a student who does not attend class and do his homework?

Educational policy focuses more on quantity than quality, since increasing coverage is prioritized. As a result, students become familiar with the university system and learn to adapt to its rules, often seeking to have things "fixed" with minimal effort. In this sense, it must be considered that current public policies prefer to keep young people in schools instead of having them on the streets, which represents a challenge, since it implies addressing their needs from multiple fronts.

On the other hand, students do not find use in the core subjects and show greater interest when they begin to take the specialization subjects, which, in some programs, are not taught until halfway through the degree. Despite these difficulties, it is important to recognize the merit of having gotten to where they are, that is, of having reached the level of higher education.

The credit system

The credit system is seen as a "vicious circle" that contributes to failure and falling behind in school. Students point out that it does not allow them to schedule subjects until the best performing students have done so, which limits their options both in terms of available schedules and desired teachers.

The credit system creates a competition in which students with high averages have a significant advantage. In contrast, those who work are at a disadvantage due to their lower qualifications, forcing them to schedule last and only when they can. As a focus group participant expressed it: "They choose the best averages and the spaces are sold out, and when you want to schedule the places are already gone. On the other hand, the fact that you register the subject does not guarantee the schedule or the teacher you choose ."

From this perspective, students who face work and family difficulties have a high probability of dropping out. Additionally, there is no formal guidance on how to schedule, so some informally approach student committees for help. The credit system does not favor failed and lagging students, which generates frustration and, as expressed by a focus group participant, a feeling of discrimination, both from other students and from some teachers.

Regarding family support, communication with parents, especially the mother, is crucial for students to continue and overcome their situation. Many students who come from other cities do not have the support of their parents, but despite this, they do not abandon their studies.

Information from interviews: academics, managers and tutors
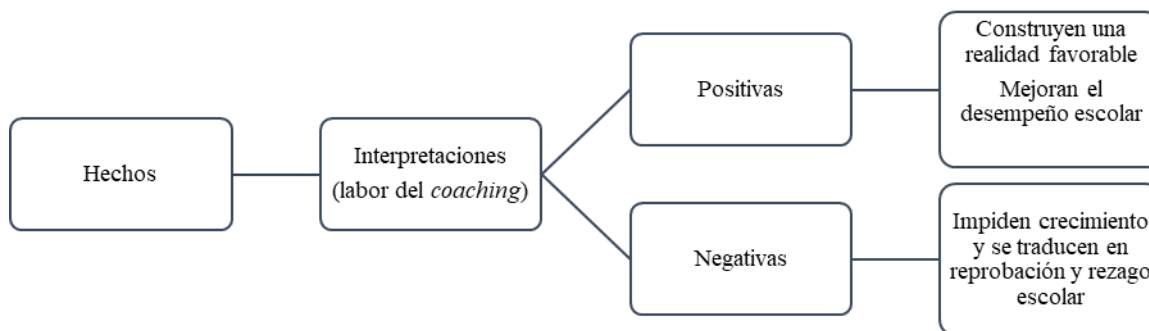
The coaching

One of the tools used in mentoring is coaching, defined by Wolk (2007) as the art of "blowing embers"; In other words, it refers to the coach 's role in guiding students to generate new responses to adverse situations. In this approach, coaching involves sessions, mostly face-to-face, to help the student clarify their objectives and define their goals. To do this, we start from the premise that coaching requires the existence of a clear objective; If the goal is to pass and not fall behind, coaching helps the student to observe themselves, improve their management and make effective decisions.

According to the person responsible for the coaching program at CUCEA, "coaching focuses on the problem, not the person." This tool helps develop skills such as resilience, time management, decision making, identification and formulation of objectives, environmental management, teamwork, stress reduction and public speaking skills.

A major problem to address is the entrenchment of beliefs and mental models, often formed in the family environment, that lead students to believe that they cannot achieve their goals. Therefore, the first step is to separate facts from interpretations influenced by their environment and then place the student in a favorable environment and teach them to observe and interpret the facts differently. For example, if a student says, "My dad died, and that's why I failed and fell behind," you could help reinterpret this situation so that the student sees his effort as a tribute to his father and a way to fulfill with what he taught him.

Figure five shows the need to teach students to interpret facts in a positive way to take advantage of them for their benefit.

Figure 5. Interpretations of the facts

Source: Own elaboration

The success of the process depends 90% on the commitment and actions of the student himself, and only 10% on the coach 's training. During the process, the student is helped to set realistic goals, which is achieved through questioning designed to reach the breaking point, where the student realizes the need to do something different. The objective is to clarify what you really want, how you are going to achieve it and define the time necessary to achieve each of your goals. The *coaches* are also university students of higher degrees, some of whom have experienced similar situations of lag.

Students who have not managed to overcome their situation often have an unclear vision of what they really want. They do not understand the implications of their actions and tend to "make castles in the air", since they have been sold the idea that they need economic independence and that to do so they must be entrepreneurs. They often have a long wish list but are looking for quick results.

This generation finds it difficult to be vulnerable and, therefore, they do not usually go to professionals to deal with psychological problems. Instead, they explore themselves using social networks and resources available on the internet. In fact, it has been documented that those students who have managed to overcome their situation of lag and failure have often received coaching, which becomes a fundamental support for other students in similar circumstances.

Peer tutoring

The success of peer mentoring is due to the following factors:

1. Some students come on their own initiative, while others are referred by teachers.

2. In the tutoring unit, students register, request support on the topics they need, are assigned a schedule and a peer tutor.

3. Students in more advanced grades explain to their classmates the topics that are complicated for them and that they were unable to understand correctly in class.

4. Activities are carried out and sessions are scheduled until the student understands the necessary topics. There is no limit to the number of sessions students can request.

In interviews with those who have received tutoring, it is highlighted that these have been useful to them because, being personalized, they can ask specific questions that are answered by the peer tutor. Students feel more confident because the tutor is a peer in the same situation as them.

Tutoring for special cases

In these cases, a diagnosis is made using a series of survey-type questionnaires, including general data, a psychometric examination, a socioeconomic examination and a personal interview, instruments that serve as the first filter. Normally, it is the person in charge of the unit who has the first contact with the students, and this person has a specific profile and training, as well as experience in caring for young people.

Subsequently, students are asked to complete three survey-type instruments digitally, which help detect their psycho-pedagogical needs and focus the required attention. Based on the information collected, it is determined if the student should be referred to more specialized instances or if they will be followed up within the unit.

Tutorial management

The person in charge of the CUCEA tutoring unit (interview 10) comments the following:

> One of the main problems that tutoring faces is the lack of commitment of the tutor teachers, because, although it is in their contract that they must carry out the tutorial activity, few attend to it adequately, their main argument is that there is no plan tutorial.

Even so, workshops, courses, conferences and remedial courses are offered so that students acquire tools and strategies that improve their performance. Those who manage to overcome the problem of lag are those who show interest and responsibility, deliver their activities on time and attend classes consistently. However, it should be emphasized that the support and participation of their parents in the process is also essential.

Discussion

HEIs must be creative in offering services and support to reverse the situation of student failure and lag. This involves providing not only knowledge, but also skills, attitudes and values that generate greater interest in young people. To do this, HEIs must ask themselves questions such as the following: what are they doing to listen to students and understand their needs? How are you helping them move forward? By what means do you maintain permanent contact with them? How do we ensure that students feel satisfied? What innovative elements, different from traditional methods, are used to guide and guide them?

As interviewee four pointed out (minute 28), "we are ignoring that the teacher must do everything, and the teacher is not prepared or trained to guide these profiles." Likewise, interviewee 6 added that the pandemic exacerbated the problem, and that recovery will take several years. Some new causes include students' perception that they are not learning enough, and it is still unclear what universities are doing to improve the conditions students face.

In this context, we agree with Valdivia *et al*. (2022) in which the current challenge of tutoring, especially as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, is to build a computer system that allows remote tutoring and streamlines the care and support processes.

According to Álvarez and Álvarez (2015), comprehensive tutoring is made up of five dimensions:

1. Career Mentoring: Typically conducted by the program director or coordinator.
2. Subject tutoring: Provided by the teacher during the teaching of his/her subject.
3. Personalized advisory tutoring: Offered by professionals with specialization, such as psychologists, nutritionists, etc.
4. Peer Tutoring: Taught by a student.
5. Practical tutoring: Carried out by a teacher specifically designated for this purpose.

According to our perception, we identified four dimensions, described in figure six. All of them are essential to address the problem of failure and falling behind in school.

However, according to our experience, the most effective dimension is peer tutoring. In addition, it should be noted that specialized tutoring is available, although the most notable dimensions in our experience are those that appear in the following figure.

Figure 6. reduction to the problem of failure and lag
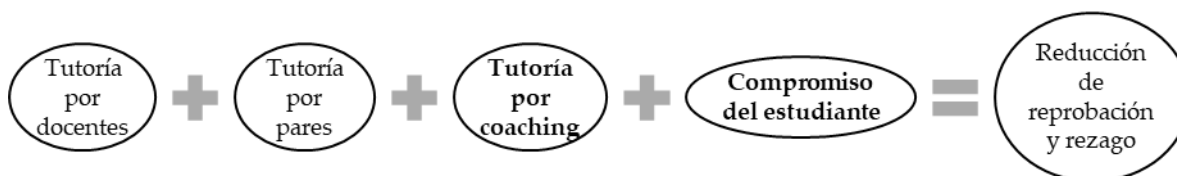
Source: Own elaboration

The study by Olvera *et al*. (2023), although focused on basic education, provides relevant findings on the lack of responsibility and commitment of students as influential factors in failure. Our data coincides with these factors, which is why we consider it essential to implement action plans for student success, especially since these problems usually carry over from previous educational levels. Likewise, students should be involved in teamwork, work on their self-esteem and confidence, develop leadership skills, raise awareness about social responsibility and encourage the creation of social projects.

For their part, Morales *et al*. (2023) highlight that lag and failure are influenced by all participants in the educational process, although unequally. They mention the importance of family support, the educational trajectories of students, the role of teachers and the tutoring policies of the educational authorities of HEIs, which is why they emphasize the need to address these factors preventively to avoid dropping out. Although in our case we also found an incidence of these elements, we believe that it is crucial to promote and develop personal skills, since our findings show that resilient students can overcome even adverse factors.

We agree that the first year is crucial to prevent failure and falling behind. In this regard, Arellano *et al*. (2024) highlight that one of the main reasons for student failure is giving up. Therefore, in that first year, where the highest failure rates occur, tutoring and psychological care are identified as fundamental elements in the process.

Regarding the study by Arellano *et al*. (2024), who points out differential calculus as one of the subjects with the highest failure rate, we found that mathematics in general is one of the most failed and lagging subjects, and we agree that the reasons include the teacher's teaching practice and his way to evaluate. Therefore, it is necessary to review the evaluation

methods with the aim of standardizing criteria, as well as examining the practice and pedagogical elements used by teachers.

Likewise, our findings agree with Tinto's (1989) theory, which explains failure and lag in terms of family and institutional factors, with an emphasis on personal characteristics. Furthermore, we agree with Fuentes and Rivera (2022), who maintain that the factors that explain disapproval are both contextual and personal. However, in our case we also identified academic elements, especially related to teaching practice, deficiencies in the evaluation criteria and the reproduction of inequality in the credit system.

Likewise, we get evidence that supports Keane *et al*. (2023) in that support during the first year is essential to retain students, since it contributes to reducing failure and lag.

Conclusions

The data collected allows us to approve the initial hypothesis that students fail and fall behind due to a combination of economic, family, work, emotional and institutional factors. Furthermore, academic factors—such as teaching practice, the credit system, study habits, and personal commitment—are crucial to reducing failure and falling behind in higher education.

Therefore, it is recommended to generate alternatives for students who have little time available for study due to their work, family and economic commitments. Possible measures include the following: allowing a reduction in the number of subjects that can be taken simultaneously, offering subjects at different times and modalities for greater flexibility, and offering emotional care and pedagogical support courses to optimize their time and improve their performance. academic.

Likewise, the importance of peer tutoring, specialized tutoring, coaching, training for tutor teachers and the generation of pedagogical courses to support students is validated, so it is suggested to review and update the pedagogical model to offer to teachers with training and pedagogical resources that respond to current needs.

In addition, it is recommended to review the credit system in order to reduce failure and lag, and provide a formal schedule from the beginning of the semester and train students in the planning and scheduling of their subjects.

In addition to that, there must be a regulation, plan and tutoring program, and constantly evaluate them to implement the necessary improvements, as well as complement

with an updated tutoring platform that allows the monitoring and personalized registration of students, and the generation of real-time reports.

Finally, it is recommended to work on a declared pedagogical model with different processes so that the tutoring system is properly integrated. At the same time that we propose actions to support students, it is crucial to develop strategies for teachers, who have also been affected by the pandemic and require support.

Although this study was carried out in a public university, we consider that failure and lag are problems present in practically all institutions, including private ones, since, if not adequately addressed, there is a significant risk of dropping out. In short, what is stated in this document must be translated into concrete actions so that they do not remain mere intentions.

Future lines of research

Although we have shown that coaching affects failure and lag, it is necessary to carry out specific studies to address this problem in a more in-depth way, as well as explore in detail the responsibility and commitment of students.

Another issue that requires detailed study, and that was not fully addressed in this work, is class absenteeism associated with addiction problems. For this reason, it is suggested to further investigate the trajectories of students from upper secondary education, since they could be disruptive factors in failure and lag.

In addition, it is recommended to conduct studies on tutors to identify their needs and indirectly improve student performance.

Finally, it is important to resume vocational guidance studies to help students identify their true vocation and affinity with their chosen career, which could reduce the propensity to fail, fall behind and, consequently, drop out.

Limitations of the study

While *coaching* can be useful in addressing student failure and lagging, we do not have enough evidence to say that it significantly reduces these problems or to prioritize it over tutoring. Even so, it should be considered a complementary element to tutoring, which does have solid evidence that it improves student performance.

To reaffirm and ensure our results, it is recommended to carry out studies with random samples that offer greater representativeness. It would also be beneficial to carry out specific

studies by type of degree to identify in which areas there is greater failure based on the risk factors mentioned in this study.

Gratitude

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