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Artículos científicos

Educación superior: factores económicos que inciden en la deserción escolar. Caso de las licenciaturas de la UNID Tlalnepantla

Higher education, economic factors that affect school dropout. The case of the UNID Tlalnepantla undergraduate programs

Ensino superior: fatores econômicos que afetam a evasão escolar. Caso dos graus UNID Tlalnepantla

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Resumen

El objetivo del presente trabajo fue determinar los aspectos económicos que influyen en el abandono escolar de los estudiantes de la Universidad Interamericana para el Desarrollo (UNID), campus Tlalnepantla. Para ello, se empleó el método cualitativo de análisis transversal. Los estudiantes elegidos fueron los 28 que presentaron baja para el cuatrimestre enero-abril de 2020, aunque la entrevista aplicada solo fue contestada por 17 de ellos. En definitiva, las siguientes fueron las razones por las cuales tuvieron que abandonar: necesidad de trabajar (7), pérdida de porcentaje de beca (4), situación académica (3), rezago en pagos y generación de intereses (2) y enfermedad (1). Por ello, se tomó la decisión de generar una reunión informativa para el área de promoción en donde se les capacite en torno a los programas ofertados y sus alcances. Además, se está estudiando la posibilidad de incrementar las estrategias de apoyo económico para los alumnos, fundamentalmente por medio de programas de financiamiento prorrogado para la conclusión de los estudios, ya que hasta el

momento la prórroga vence con el cierre cuatrimestral. Asimismo, con asesorías se atenderá a aquellos estudiantes en riesgo de rezago para disminuir sus posibilidades de abandono.

Palabras clave: deserción escolar, dificultades económicas, programas de apoyo universitario, modelo híbrido.

Abstract

The objective of this study was to determine the economic aspects that influence school dropout among students at the Universidad Interamericana para el Desarrollo (UNID), Tlalnepantla campus. For this purpose, the qualitative method of cross-sectional analysis was used. The students chosen were the 28 who dropped out for the January-April 2020 term, although the interview was only answered by 17 of them. In short, the following were the reasons why they had to drop out: need to work (7), loss of scholarship percentage (4), academic situation (3), late payments and interest generation (2) and illness (1). For this reason, a decision was made to hold an informative meeting for the promotion area to train them on the programs offered and their scope. In addition, we are studying the possibility of increasing the economic support strategies for students, mainly through extended financing programs for the completion of their studies, since the extension expires at the end of each four-month period. Likewise, counseling will be provided to those students at risk of falling behind in order to reduce their chances of dropping out.

Keywords: school dropout, economic difficulties, university support programs, hybrid model.

Resumo

O objetivo do presente trabalho foi determinar os aspectos econômicos que influenciam a taxa de evasão dos alunos da Universidade Interamericana para o Desenvolvimento (UNID), campus Tlalnepantla. Para isso, foi utilizado o método qualitativo de análise transversal. Os alunos escolhidos foram os 28 que haviam desistido para o semestre de janeiro a abril de 2020, embora a entrevista aplicada só tenha sido respondida por 17 deles. Em última análise, foram os seguintes os motivos do abandono: necessidade de trabalhar (7), percentual de perda da bolsa (4), situação acadêmica (3), atraso nos pagamentos e geração de juros (2) e doença (1). Por este motivo, optou-se por gerar um encontro informativo para a área de promoção onde sejam capacitados sobre os programas oferecidos e sua abrangência. Além disso, está

sendo estudada a possibilidade de aumentar as estratégias de apoio financeiro aos alunos, principalmente por meio de programas de financiamento estendido para a conclusão dos estudos, uma vez que até o momento a prorrogação expira com o fechamento trimestral. Da mesma forma, o aconselhamento ajudará os alunos em risco de atraso para reduzir suas chances de abandono.

Palavras-chave: evasão escolar, dificuldades financeiras, programas de apoio à universidade, modelo híbrido.

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Introduction

University dropout is a common problem in Latin American universities that must be examined to determine the causes that generate it according to each context. In the case of Mexico, the INEE (2017) “warns that the problems related to school dropout are caused by intersystemic factors [related to] the educational offer, inequality in the quality of educational services and access mechanisms” (p. 37). Reality that increased considerably due to the covid-19 pandemic.

According to INEGI (2020), 54% of university students abandoned their careers as a result of the effects that this disease caused in all areas of social life. Specifically, Rochin (2021) outlines some of the factors associated with this school dropout:

Among the social and economic variables studied are social and economic inequality, while authors such as Torres point out the responsibility that underlies academic programs and their lack of updating.

Regarding economic factors, Donoso and Schiefelbein indicate that in many cases it affects the student's perception of their ability or inability to pay for the costs associated with university studies. (párr 15).

In addition to the above, it can be pointed out the difficulty that students presented in having electronic devices, because due to the pandemic, the computer labs of the universities had to close their doors. This obstacle to accessing technology is within the range of economic aspects, understood as “the study of rational choice, that is, the choice made on the basis of a deliberate and systematic calculation to obtain the maximum benefit of the purposes. using inevitably scarce means”(Ha-Joon, 2017, p. 17). For Lozano (2017), within the economic factors that motivate school dropout are the following:

Lack of money for enough food or no access to credit for school fees (Landeros, 2012); scarce resource for transportation (Cardoso and Verner, 2011); marginalization, early employment relationship (Ortega et al., 2014); economic exclusion (Espinoza, Castillo, González and Loyola, 2014); parental labor gaps (Salvà-Mut et al., 2014); insufficient money at home (Antelm, Gil-López and Cacheiro-González, 2015); students' need to work to support them at home (Infante and Parra, 2010; Martínez-Sánchez et al., 2013); invest time in looking for a job (Gómez-Restrepo, Padilla and Rincón, 2016); belong to low socioeconomic levels, that only one parent works (Vera, 2012); low labor remuneration of the mother or the very high income of the father (Martín et al., 2015); few possibilities of inserting themselves into working life after finishing their studies (Romero and Hernández, 2019); the economic context that the school itself reproduces given the infrastructure and equipment deficit and the poor image it reflects (Vargas and Valadez, 2016); that students do not have school supplies such as supplies or computers (El Sahili, 2011) or any financial problem that does not allow them to meet the expenses required for good academic performance, such as lack of money to access the Internet (p. 38).

Having explained the above, it can be indicated that the objective of this work was to determine the economic aspects that influence the dropout rate of students from the Inter-American University for Development (UNID), Tlalnepantla campus. To do this, the following questions were formulated: what are the economic factors that influence the students of the aforementioned university to abandon their studies? What economic strengthening strategies can the UNID offer for students to complete their careers?

The hypothesis raised was the following: economic difficulty is one of the aspects that affects the high rate of university dropouts, which could be solved by providing timely assistance to students who are at risk due to economic factors.

Higher education: economic factors that affect school dropout. Case of the UNID undergraduate degrees, Tlalnepantla

In Mexico, the educational offer at the higher level is made up of higher technical education, degrees, normals, engineering, specialties, masters and doctorates. In the case of undergraduate degrees, it is necessary to cover 180 hours of social service, while in some institutions business linkage programs have been generated that add to professional experience, accounting for a greater number of hours of internships in the company without having an excellent linking for the moment. Therefore, one of the main challenges is to bring the university closer to the company and respond to the demands that it demands, for which it is important to include in the curriculum design content that is articulated with the demanded profile and remote quality models, such as Garcia points out (2020):

Demonstrating the quality of teaching in non-school modalities represents a great challenge for higher education institutions (HEIs) in Mexico. This is due to the complexities shown in the evaluation methodologies of national organizations, such as the lack of evaluation mechanisms designed specifically for the modality, a problem that has its origin in the lack of consistency in the norms and laws that shape to education in this modality (p. 2).

However, the educational dynamics has been preserved from traditional models that account for the limited transformation of higher education despite its potentialities. In this regard, Fernández (2017) opines:

Higher education is the ideal space to rigorously analyze the many problems that nations face and to collaborate on the most appropriate solutions for them, based on the functions of teaching, research, dissemination of culture and knowledge transfer. Hence the importance of strengthening that governments must make of higher education (p. 74).

Another difficulty faced by public higher education institutions (HEIs) is the ability to serve all applicants, so they must go to private universities, which constitutes a burden especially for those who have had to change residence to be able to study:

Except in the very few countries where there are no fees, students must continue to face the associated costs, particularly when to pursue higher education studies they have had to take a temporary, personal or shared residence, in a place other than their usual residence (Iesalc-Unesco, 2020, p. 17).

To the above, we must add the manifestations of students, perceived in the first months of 2020, against online education, which has complicated the development of academic processes, especially in private HEIs:

In various countries, students have mobilized to resist the digital transition. For example, in Tunisia, the main student association called for a boycott of digital platforms, considering the measure discriminatory. Students from the University of Chile and the University of San Sebastián (private) carried out online strikes. Furthermore, in the UK, more than 200,000 students signed a petition demanding refunds of their tuition payments, pointing out that the online instruction was not what they had paid for. (Alcántara, 2020, p. 77).

In short, the cost of university studies continues to represent a dropout risk linked to hasty decision making, since it is common to identify that in the first period students cover the enrollment costs without much difficulty, but over time obstacles arise due to factors such as the decrease in the percentage of scholarships, job losses and other expenses that are not always well budgeted, such as food, transportation, school supplies, etc., which can inevitably become a reason to leave and, worse still, to psychologically affect the student and their environment:

Dropout thus becomes an important study phenomenon, not only because of the economic and social consequences it represents for a country, but also because of the personal consequences that dropping out of school brings to students and their families. (Gardner, Dussán y Montoya, 2016, p. 322).

As mentioned, the abandonment of studies implies an economic impact for both students and the institution, not only due to the loss of enrollment, but also because of the social commitment that higher education must assume. Undoubtedly, individually this phenomenon supposes the loss of confidence in the face of academic challenges (Navarro and Delfín, 2017). In addition, it prevents access to better job opportunities that are translated into a salary that allows the full development of the person.

The Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC, 2002) determined that in most Latin American countries such as Honduras, Guatemala, El Salvador, Mexico and Nicaragua, school dropouts are very high; which translates into a low educational level in the population, damaging the human and educational capital necessary for the population to enter paid jobs that help them get out of poverty. (Ruiz, 2014, p. 53).

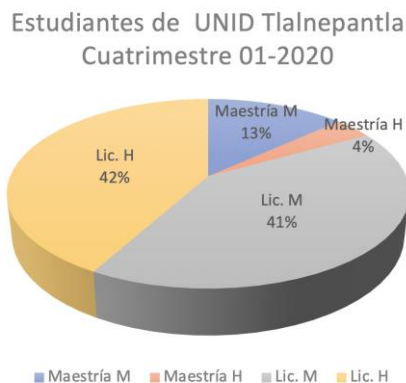
To recognize alternatives that promote the economic balance of private HEIs with the economic possibilities of students and their families, the opportunity of new flexible educational models is required. "We understand by flexibility the option of offering students the possibility to choose how, what, where, when and with whom they participate in learning activities while they are in an institution of higher education" (Collis y Moonen, 2011, p. 15).

Methodology

In the present work, the qualitative method of cross-sectional analysis was used to identify the withdrawals of undergraduate students from the Inter-American University for Development (UNID) in the period from January to April 2020. This period was chosen because it was the semester in which was transferred from the face-to-face session to the remote one due to confinement due to the covid-19 pandemic. This work involved a "qualitative systematic-narrative review to obtain an overview of the primary research studies on college dropout" (Izquierdo, 207, p. 16).

On that date, the university had 1,050 undergraduate students (520 women and 530 men) and 168 master's (122 women and 46 men) for a total of 1,218 students in all programs, divided into morning, afternoon, Saturday and distance hours. . Regarding the teaching staff, 78 teachers worked in all the programs.

Figura 1. Población estudiantil de licenciatura y maestría en el cuatrimestre enero-abril 2020



Fuente: Elaboración propia

Now, with these figures, the objective of the study was to identify the possible economic causes for which the students left university training, permanent or temporary. For this, the investigation was structured in three stages:

1. In the first, the delivery and analysis of the report of the Academic Management Coordination corresponding to the statistics of the withdrawals requested by the students in the period January-April 2020 was established.
2. In the second, an interview was conducted with the students who have dropped out and those interested (although not enrolled) to recognize the categories and group the economic problems of the families in order for the students to continue in the academic programs.
3. The third stage corresponded to the analysis of the results obtained. First, a cost comparison of similar universities near the UNID was carried out (eg, Universidad Insurgentes [UI] Talanepantla campus; ETAC University, Tlalnepantla campus; Technological University of Mexico [UNITEC], Atizapán campus; Banking School and Commercial (EBC), campus Tlalnepantla); Subsequently, the responses obtained in the surveys were analyzed to establish a parameter of the alternative that the school would represent for the population of access to the university, as well as the identification of the categories in which the greatest problems were observed to conclude the studies.

With the help of the General Academic Coordination, the necessary documentation was obtained to carry out the analysis about the students who have dropped out or are at risk

of dropping out (some criteria chosen were the number of subjects failed in the first two partial periods, the delay in monthly payments and complaints made by students).

In the context of the pandemic, the students were asked to answer if they had any difficulties related to the internet connection or the lack of devices to establish the synchronous connection.

The research was descriptive and relied on various sources of information, such as Inegi and ECLAC (Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean). To construct the economic status of the student, their family situation was identified, if the student was in charge of paying the tuition and the level of income according to the cost of the basic food basket (in Mexico it was 1,643.15 pesos).

Likewise, the aspects that Coneval identifies as poverty traits were considered: income, educational backwardness, access to health, access to social security, access to food, quality and housing spaces, access to basic services in housing and degree of social cohesion, information collected from student records, which is requested when entering the university.

Subjects of study

The 28 students (8 women and 20 men) who had withdrawn for the January-April semester of 2020 participated in the study.

Instruments

In the case of the students who dropped out, the following was investigated: a) did the university comply with what was promised when registering? which have you requested to withdraw from the academic program?

In the case of non-registered applicants, the structured interview focused on the following questions: a) Do you consider that the costs are congruent with the educational offer of the university? Are you enrolling at this time? c) Do you consider enrolling in college later?

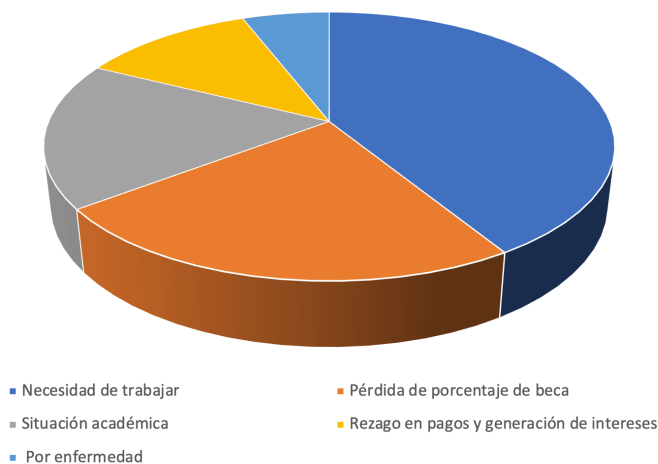
Student data was accessed and contacted by email for follow-up; when there was a need to talk to them again, they were asked for a telephone interview or a video call.

All were informed from the outset that the purpose of the research was to identify the frequent causes of student dropout in order to generate support strategies that responded to real needs.

Results

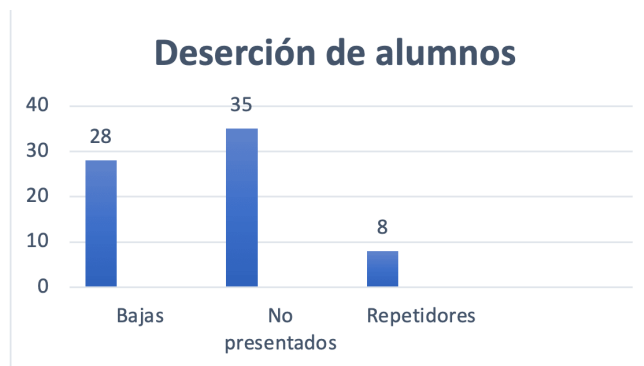
Of the 28 students who reported withdrawal and who were contacted by email, 17 responded. Of these, 15 accepted the phone call (in no case was it possible to make a video call because they were doing other domestic or work tasks). Regarding the questions asked, all said that the university did comply with what was promised when registering; 12 yes, they will return to university later, and the following were the reasons why they had to drop out: need to work (7), loss of scholarship percentage (4), academic situation (3), delay in payments and generation of interests (2) and illness (1).

Figura 2. Principales causas de deserción en estudiantes de licenciatura
UNID Tlanepantla en el cuatrimestre enero abril 2020



Fuente: Elaboración propia

In the case of those who approached the UNID to request information, little information was available: only the telephone number of the candidates was registered, so only the application form was obtained. Some of them appeared on attendance lists, so it is inferred that they could have paid the registration, although they did not return. There were 35 students on official lists who never showed up to class in all the degrees, but there was no communication with any of them due to the confidentiality of personal data. Furthermore, at the time of collecting the information it was no longer considered pertinent to contact them. Only until the beginning of the semester that began in May were they tried to contact them, although no one answered, while 8 students requested to repeat the semester due to failure problems in all subjects. They require special attention to be tutored.

Figura 3. Deserción de alumnos de licenciatura en el ciclo enero-abril de 2020

Fuente: Elaboración propia

There are different economic indicators that promote the abandonment of students, since basically the categories are integrated in which the case of students who when registering were not working, and when they were forced to support their families and enter formal work, were not they had time to continue. Likewise, there is a group of students who lost some percentage of the scholarship because they lowered the average they had obtained when entering, so the monthly payment increased.

On the other hand, there are those who were accumulating debts in the monthly payment, for which they had to request cancellation. In addition to this, the difficulties of a technological nature or educational quality perceived by students to continue with their studies in the midst of the health emergency generated by covid-19 should be mentioned.

The interruption of daily life, the traits of anxiety before the crisis, in addition to generating uncertainty about the payment of tuition fees, which is an issue that has not been taken up, since the demands of the students refer to the detriment of quality of the classes received online, which is not the same as the face-to-face classes (Unesco-Iesalc, 2020, p. 13).

On the other hand, and regarding the economic implications of studying at UNID, it can be indicated that the costs are very similar to those of other private universities in the region. In fact, the most expensive schools are EBC and UNITEC (more than 1,000 pesos a month, while ETAC and UI have about 300 pesos below UNID).

Once the academic record of the students has been analyzed, it can be indicated that seven students lost their scholarship or had too many failed subjects, so they would have to repeat a complete four-month process and present some subjects in extraordinary exam, which would imply a greater investment due to that the costs of remedial processes are higher than when it is carried out in the regular semester.

Discussion

This research compiles the information that — from the analysis of the students at risk of dropping out or who have already dropped out — allows establishing the pertinent measures in the university's action plan in the continuous improvement program. It includes aid and laptop loans, as well as flexibility in the delivery of activities requested by teachers.

It is important to mention that the rectory organizes raffles for tablets to equip students with devices; however, it has not been possible to help all students, as is done in other universities, due to the drop in enrollment.

Likewise, actions have been carried out that have made it possible to enhance the educational service in a comprehensive manner, which has improved the perception of students. In fact, even when they are interested in returning to the presence, they also recognize the value of soft skills that they have acquired in these months of the remote session.

The change in the educational model offers diverse alternatives in the flexibility that the university requires in the face of new forms of young adult learning. Therefore, a continuous effort must be made to resolve the difficulties that still exist and those that may arise in the future.

Now, with the results obtained in this research, specific monitoring programs can be implemented in which students can get closer to the teachers of those subjects in which they have a higher risk of failure.

Likewise, the number and percentage of scholarships have increased, as well as financial support through a specific follow-up where the subject teachers recovered a pass for the right to evaluation as part of the late payment identification program and its relationship with students at risk of failure.

Regarding the delivery of activities, support is given in a third moment to those who have connectivity difficulties to review the recording of all the sessions and a greater range of time is opened for the upload of class evidence. In addition, the timely roll call is requested to observe those who are absent from two or more sessions consecutively. That way the relevant follow-up can be carried out.

Regarding the economic situation, three main categories are detected that force them to abandon university programs: first, many students have been forced to join the workforce, since their parents lost their jobs; in second term, the students lowered the average that

credited them to a considerable percentage of scholarship, and in third term there are those who missed payments to a point where the debt exceeded them. For this reason, candidates to enter a university must be informed about the total costs derived from joining certain degrees, especially in those cases in which students have moved to other locations, which represents an increase in their budgets due to expenses for food, accommodation, etc.

Conclusions

At the Inter-American University for Development, Tlalnepantla campus, some factors have been identified that have promoted the desertion of undergraduate students, that is, economic and academic problems. For this reason, the decision was made to generate an informative meeting for the promotion area where they are trained on the programs offered and their scope. In addition, the possibility of increasing financial support strategies for students is being studied, mainly through extended financing programs for the completion of studies, since so far the extension expires with the quarterly closure. Likewise, counseling will assist those students at risk of lagging to reduce their chances of dropping out. With these initiatives it is hoped to renew the confidence of those who have wished to obtain their professional training at the university.

In this sense, other strategies offered by the UNID should also be outlined, such as first contact care with students and candidates in school services as well as in the promotion area in order to adequately guide those who may imply leave due to absences or due to the high number of non-accredited subjects. Likewise, timely follow-up in the partials to avoid disapproval of those who have academic leveling difficulties. In this sense, a timely attention program has been developed in the failure and detection of delay in the payment of monthly payments to provide financing alternatives in order not to generate late interest.

Thanks to the work described in this research, in a collateral way the university has taken up collegiate and peer work to carry out integrative projects that give meaning to student learning. These types of strategies are vital to promote quality school processes, where learning is useful and increases academic curiosity and collaborative work. With this, there is a correspondence between the research and its purposes.

Finally, the UNID community should be told that there is a growing interest in using hybrid teaching models, which can help reduce transfer costs and even continue with a job without giving up studies. For this, face-to-face sessions will be required for specific

practices in some degrees, with a maximum of 5 practical classes of the 14 that make up the semester (2 online subjects per semester, 3 distance learning per semester and 1 face-to-face per semester). This will entail the necessary flexibility for the student to be the protagonist of their academic process, as it will allow them to manage their time to fulfill other activities of a work or family nature, etc.

Future lines of research

The lines of research that can nurture this work are the management of educational inclusion opportunities where students find the strengthening of the competencies with which they enter to continue in the university and conclude their studies. Likewise, implement a vocational guidance strategy to guide applicants for a certain program in their choice, especially now that this synchronous modality is becoming common as a work method (Aparicio, 2008). Finally, the educational quality and the new models offered must be investigated, which have emerged to address the emergency generated by covid-19.

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