ARGUMENTATION: A MEANS FOR TEACHER TRAINING FROM TUTORING.

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Abstract.

The topic of argumentation in Higher Education has been gaining more and more relevance in the formation of students, in that order it is necessary to favor from the classrooms strategies that strengthen this competence.
In the Faculty of Education of the Universidad de Nariño, the formative research processes assumed by students are a space to promote written argumentation, since it presents the construction of academic texts in which students engage in a dialogical relationship with knowledge in the disciplines, an aspect that involves the management of argumentative strategies; However, in the course of their formative plan, there is evidence of a weakness in the foundation of this competence, especially when writing degree works and other types of academic texts that involve taking a position, adhering to a thesis or solving a problem; students are unaware of the rules, types of argumentation and specific structure of this type of texts, making it necessary to propose an improvement plan in these writing processes.

Therefore, this article deals with the subject described from a qualitative paradigm, with a descriptive and interpretative orientation, which seeks to characterize the importance of academic argumentation as a necessary competence to generate new disciplinary knowledge within the research processes that can be enriched from tutorials to facilitate the evaluation of academic writing and the methodological and conceptual foundation in the training areas of the students.

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Keywords: Argumentation, tutoring, autonomous learning, research, pedagogical communication.

Resumen.

El tema de la fundamentación en argumentación en la Educación Superior ha ido tomando cada vez más relevancia en la formación de los estudiantes, en ese orden hay que favorecer desde las aulas estrategias que fortalezcan esta competencia.

En la Facultad de Educación de la Universidad de Nariño, los procesos de investigación formativa que asumen los estudiantes son un espacio para fomentar la argumentación escrita, ya que en ella se presenta la construcción de textos académicos en los cuales los educandos entablan una relación dialógica con los conocimientos en las disciplinas, aspecto que implica el manejo de estrategias argumentativas; sin embargo en el curso de su plan formativo, se evidencia una debilidad en la fundamentación de esta competencia, sobre todo al adelantar la escritura de trabajos de grado y otros tipos de textos académicos que implican la toma de postura, la adhesión a una tesis o la resolución de un problema; los estudiantes presentan desconocimiento de las reglas, tipos de argumentación y estructura específica de este tipo de textos, haciéndose necesario plantear un plan de mejoramiento en estos procesos escriturales.

Por lo anterior en este artículo se trata la temática descrita desde un paradigma cualitativo, con una orientación de tipo descriptivo e interpretativo, en el que se busca caracterizar la importancia de la argumentación académica, como una competencia necesaria para generar nuevo conocimiento disciplinar dentro de los procesos investigativos que pueden enriquecerse desde las tutorías para facilitar la evaluación de la escritura académica y la fundamentación metodológica y conceptual en las áreas de formación de los educandos.

Palabras clave: Argumentación, tutoría, aprendizaje autónomo, investigación, comunicación pedagógica.

LA ARGUMENTACIÓN: UN MEDIO PARA LA FORMACIÓN DE MAESTROS DESDE LA TUTORIA.

I. INTRODUCTION.

During the pandemic process, where the roles of teachers and students changed, as well as the means of pedagogical communication, the tutoring-based teaching method became a fundamental component in the training of professionals. This process entailed the development of additional competencies in both teachers and students to effectively.

Tutoring, as an alternative teaching approach, requires the development of skills to organize, prioritize, and select information effectively. It also involves encouraging

independent thinking so that students can progress in their learning through academic argumentation, which serves as a key tool for understanding and internalizing knowledge.

Therefore, this paper aims to elucidate the didactic process of tutoring implemented with higher education students at the University of Nariño during the pandemic period. Throughout the teaching-learning process, the need to strengthen students' critical thinking skills for managing their autonomous learning became increasingly evident. Critical thinking is a complex, multifaceted process that involves a series of skills such as analysis, synthesis, information selection, and the ability to develop argumentative reasoning that fosters self-regulation of knowledge acquisition, as pointed out by Díaz (2014) and Ramírez (2013).

In this context, designing a class based on tutorials meant moving away from traditional, lecture-based teaching. It involved adopting a new approach to guide students, which required strengthening their research and argumentation skills.

Argumentation in communication, as pointed out by Díaz (2014); Gilbert (2017), implies empowering in students critical reasoning, thorough documentation about a topic, appropriate rhetorical organization to present ideas and an effort to examine, understand, interpret, analyze, question or evaluate any belief or form of knowledge, therefore, in a class its promotion and evaluation in the treatment of curricular topics or contents is fundamental.

As a result, for tutoring to effectively support meaningful learning in students, it is essential to implement a set of strategies connected to the development of critical thinking. This is because the exposition of critical reasoning inherently involves a communicative purpose—such as arguing for or against a particular point of view, persuading others of the truth or falsity of a thesis or conclusion, justifying an evaluation of a process, or pointing out the implications of a perspective that is not fully or partially shared (Díaz, 2014, pp. 23–24).

Therefore, this article describes the importance of argumentation to improve the autonomous learning process of students, since it is a fundamental competence associated with the practice of reading and writing different texts with which learning is evaluated.

II. DISCUSSION.

Adopting a tutoring-based approach required teachers to rethink how they delivered and exchanged information, shifting towards more interactive and flexible methods. A key part of this transition was the emphasis on pedagogical innovation, particularly through the integration of information and communication technologies (ICTs). These technologies supported the implementation of virtual learning environments and enabled the design of instructional materials tailored for both synchronous (real-time) and asynchronous (self-paced) learning. ICTs—including digital platforms, communication apps like WhatsApp, and social media also contributed to the development of classes which shifted from a traditional lecture-based approach to a tutoring-based support model.

During the tutorials, we attempted to incorporate engaging technological tools to support the 'student-as-reader-and-interpreter' in the learning process. The goal was to help students organize, select, and manage relevant knowledge in order to internalize the core concepts of their academic training. This aimed to foster meaningful learning—not only in terms of content acquisition, but also in developing interpretative skills and the ability to reflect on and transform the realities addressed within each discipline. As a result, during the pandemic, it became essential to continuously evaluate and validate these resources to better understand the implications of integrating tutoring into the instructional process".

"The shift from a traditional classroom setting—characterized by lecture-based instruction and face-to-face interaction—to a tutoring model supported primarily by information and communication technologies (ICTs), required educators to adapt to various pedagogical, social, and cultural challenges. These factors significantly influenced the development of the teaching and learning process".

In Colombia, and specifically at the Universidad de Nariño, implementing tutorial-based education presented a significant challenge. Teachers needed to promote a learning culture that embraced virtual tools and encouraged the regular use of self-evaluation as key strategies for understanding and assessing student learning.

Teachers had to take on the role of learners themselves, exploring various teaching strategies to meet the

objectives of their micro-curricula. This required a process of self-training to ensure effective communication in the classroom. In addition, they began to adopt other essential elements in their teaching practice especially the use of learning support resources to organize course content in a pedagogically sound way. These tools were important to avoid overloading students with tasks and information presented in a mechanical or uncritical manner during their training".

Tutorial sessions made it easier for teachers to understand their students' individual characteristics and learning conditions. These interactions helped educators to recognize the life contexts of their students, including economic, social, and cultural factors that influenced academic performance. Challenges were not only related to limited access to appropriate technological tools for learning, but for the socio-affective aspect that is vital to generate motivation in learning.

For instance, in the training of future educators in the Bachelor's Degree in Spanish Language and Literature, particularly in the course Integral and Investigative Pedagogical Practice, students were supported through various strategies. These included independent study, individual work, collaborative group activities, and both (individual and group tutoring) sessions. This methodological approach intended to support learning and maintain interaction with students. Additionally, depending on each student's specific circumstances, other resources such as printed modules or study guides were provided to support those facing difficulties with internet access.

The tutorials were structured using both synchronous and asynchronous interaction systems, along with methodological guidance aimed at supporting student learning. In this context, tutoring was understood as a form of academic support provided by the teacher, who acted as a learning advisor by guiding students in the use of methods and tools that enhance learning and promote meaningful dialogue between teachers and students. Thus, tutoring was seen as an ongoing process that supports students in managing their own knowledge.

In the field of education, the tutor-teacher is responsible for guiding and supporting an individual student (or a group of students) throughout their learning process. In addition to their regular teaching duties, the tutor also takes on a formative and advisory role, aiming to support student learning in a more holistic way. This support must be comprehensive—it should not be limited to the acquisition of knowledge, but should also include cognitive, emotional, and attitudinal dimensions. These areas are essential for developing key competencies that involve not only knowledge, but also skills, abilities, and attitudes" (Delfino, 2016, p. 4).

These new ways of organizing classes through tutorials were the result of a responsible, committed and critical exercise of the professors, who with effort and commitment provided the means and resources to guarantee the training of professionals in an ideal way. The tutorials became the resource to cover the development of the subjects, an aspect that not only marked a change in the didactic-methodological order, but also in the evaluation approach. The systematic evaluation model gave way to a process-based evaluation, regulated by the implementation of co-evaluation and self-evaluation, where the actors assumed the responsibility of evaluating their formative process.

Tutorials were not just meant to deliver course content. They aimed to consistently support students in their learning and personal development. Through these sessions, students were encouraged to think critically about their own learning, especially by developing skills in interpretation, argumentation, and proposing ideas. In this setting, tutorials became a space for meaningful dialogue between teachers and students, where argumentation played a key role in understanding how students build meaning in both spoken and written work.

Tutorials required guiding the development of curricular content in a more flexible and efficient manner. To achieve this, teachers adopted content selection principles based on critical thinking standards highlighted by Richard (1986), as cited by Diaz (2014, p. 24). These standards emphasize the importance of evaluating the relevance, depth, and scope of the content, along with clarity, precision, and clear objectives in lesson planning. Such criteria are essential for fostering critical thinking and, consequently, effective argumentation.

In this context, the evaluation of students' argumentation began with an analysis of the teaching methods used in the activities they completed to achieve their learning goals. This involved assessing their cognitive engagement through questioning of course content, drawing inferences, and identifying key topics and their real-world implications. Such evaluation helps students apply the knowledge gained and understand the relevance of these topics within their own context. As Gilbert (2017):

(...) We advance all the time through disagreement, controversy, discussion and decision making: we are always arguing, discussing, clarifying, dissenting, exploring, testing, questioning and, generally speaking, trying to make sense of a dense and confusing world. (p. 16).

The depth, breadth, and logical coherence of the activities submitted by the students were used as indicators of their ability in argumentation and critical thinking. Various academic texts—particularly written ones—were analyzed to assess whether students were effectively incorporating elements of critical reasoning in their reflections.

III. RESULTADOS.

The shift from traditional lecture-based classes to a tutorial-centered approach required teachers to develop didactic resources that promote argumentation as a key component of students' critical thinking. According to Díaz (2014, pp. 18–19), some of the most important of these resources include the following.

Table 1. Argumentation and critical reasoning processes

Procesos de razonamiento crítico	Acciones
Comprensión lectora	Inferir el significado de los textos
	Identificar información faltante en un texto
	Parafrasear un texto o resumirlo
	comparar hechos, eventos o situaciones
Manejo de la información	Contrastar dos cosas o situaciones que parecen similares
	Analizar situaciones, hechos o temas y asumir una posición
	Identificar problemas y proponer soluciones
	Evaluar y cuestionar información
	Explicar el por que
Razonamiento reflexivo	Argumentar a favor de una tesis
	Anticipar o predecir consecuencias de un hecho o evento
	Entablar relaciones de causa - consecuencia
	Formular hipótesis
	Definir conceptos abstractos

Note. Adapted from critical thinking processes. Source: Diaz (2014). Rhetoric of academic writing.

Based on the above, the tutorials revealed certain challenges faced by students in developing critical reasoning related to the course content, particularly concerning the following processes:

Comprehension, selection, and interpretation of information: students showed weaknesses in contextualizing specialized disciplinary knowledge and integrating information from texts related to their fields of study. They also faced challenges in fully understanding and strengthening the epistemological foundations of their courses.

Literature search: Although students are often considered digital natives, it was observed that they lacked sufficient skills to effectively select sources and integrate information to answer the questions posed in class assignments.

Textual skills (writing): students presented difficulties in the production of different types of expository and argumentative texts, together with a limited management of textual properties and processes of reference and correlation of complementary sources to support their explanations.

There was a noticeable weakness in the development of academic argumentation, particularly in incorporating others' perspectives and deepening concepts. A descriptive and narrative style predominated in their written work.

Rhetorical skills: connected to the previous challenges, the tutorial monitoring process revealed limited abilities among students to persuade and construct logical arguments related to the class topics. Students generally tended to present opinions about what they had read or researched, rather than critically engaging with the information.

Information management: As noted earlier, the pandemic revealed weaknesses in students' ability to share knowledge through the use of ICTs during tutorials. Although students frequently interact with digital tools, there was a lack of applications specifically designed to support learning development.

Emotional intelligence: strategies were needed to promote autonomous learning and to create suitable environments for collaborative and cooperative work. Students showed limited tolerance when it came to understanding the factors affecting group learning and the gradual progress of the assigned activities.

Oral expression: students demonstrated difficulties in presenting and defending their ideas across various academic settings, such as class discussions. When

expressing their ideas, they often failed to adequately address the questions with strong theoretical support. Their oral and written work requiring argumentation was generally limited in depth and development.

All these experiences in the student support process highlighted that tutoring, as a form of pedagogical guidance, requires rethinking the evolving roles of both teachers and students. It also demands innovation in didactic resources, transformation in teaching methods, deeper conceptual understanding, and the construction and transfer of knowledge, all of which depend on developing critical thinking skills.

"Critical thinking goes beyond merely gathering and rephrasing information. Having a good memory does not automatically make someone a critical thinker. A true critical thinker can draw conclusions based on their knowledge, apply that knowledge to solve problems, and independently seek out relevant sources for further learning" (Díaz, 2014, p.7).

The above highlights the necessity in higher education to develop argumentation skills, not only for evaluating course content but also for fostering reflective thinking about the declarative knowledge assessed in classes. Engaging in academic argumentation within a tutoring context involves cultivating abilities to use techniques and strategies that ensure the credibility and strength of one's statements, aiming at persuading an audience to accept or challenge a thesis. This thesis may take the form of a concept, theory, fact, or problem that requires thorough explanation supported by well-founded justification.

Argumentation involves acknowledging disagreement and conflict, recognizing that the perspectives of others are essential for discerning diverse interpretations. It also refers to 'the ability of an individual to persuade, dissuade, convince, or demonstrate the truth or falsity present in an idea or specific phenomenon'" (Ramirez, 2012, p.10).

Arguing involves not only cognitive and linguistic skills but also reflects a process of scientific literacy that empowers students to generate reasons and explanations about theories or experiences within their specific fields. As Zubiría (2006) emphasized, 'ideas must be argued; otherwise, they are no more than opinions" (p.108).

In short, it was essential to guide students through tutorials to validate and asses their argumentative competence, not only with the issuance of texts typical of this discursive plot such as essays, reviews or scientific articles, but to stop in the process of this production to review the sources of information, the capacity of analysis and synthesis against the contents updated during the classes.

"Argumentation, like all other forms of organization, narrative, expository, descriptive and dialogical, is based on a specific situation of enunciation whose primary characteristic, within the dialogical dimension, is intersubjectivity. However, argumentation emphasizes even more this intersubjective process of convincing the other" (Martínez, 2002, p.166).

Therefore, argumentation requires students to develop the ability to analyze specialized texts critically and to make informed judgments about their content, thereby promoting critical thinking.

"Before writing, (...) it is essential to compile a set of relevant sources that support our argument, along with a theoretical framework that demonstrates our understanding of the subject and gives us the authority to present our own perspective or discovery. In essence, producing written academic work requires familiarity with the key theses that frame the topic we aim to address" (Castaño, 2020, p.122).

In this regard, it is essential to train students in argumentation processes, as highlighted by Gilbert (2017), Ramírez (2012), and Weston (1998). This competency is key to helping them engage critically with course content. It involves developing skills for justifying theories, explaining concepts, and comparing authors, using various types of arguments—such as rational, factual, example-based, or authoritative. Additionally, incorporating complementary tools like summaries, keywords, illustrations, tables, charts, and diagrams can support students' gradual development of knowledge".

Consequently, tutoring—as a didactic strategy designed to support students in their learning process—should focus on developing their argumentative skills through a pedagogy of argumentation. This involves encouraging students to question the foundations of a lesson, the relevance of concepts and theories, and the significance of the content guiding their academic development.

Fostering argumentative competence is one of the key challenges of 21st-century education. As teaching evolves

and the volume of disciplinary information grows daily, it becomes increasingly important to strengthen students' critical reading and thinking skills to help them navigate and interpret the specific knowledge areas within each field".

IV. CONCLUSION.

Encouraging argumentation as part of students' training in higher education—particularly through tutorial-based teaching that reflects the changes in 21st-century education—should help students form critical perspectives on academic topics. This pedagogical approach supports the integration of knowledge, promotes interdisciplinary thinking, and strengthens critical thinking skills, enabling students to question dominant cultural, social, and political ideas related to the production and dissemination of knowledge.

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