

# Factors in the Educational Effectiveness of a Private University in Peru in times of Pandemic\*

(English Version)

Factores de la eficacia educativa de una universidad privada de Perú en tiempos de pandemia

Fatores na eficácia educacional de uma universidade privada no Peru em tempos de pandemia

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## Abstract

**Objective:** The focus of the current study is educational effectiveness. The purpose of this study was to describe the organizational factors related to the educational effectiveness of a private university in Peru during pandemic times. **Methods:** For this qualitative study, two categories were considered: “professor commitment and professional development” and “educational leadership.” A semistructured interviewing technique was used, along with a question guide that was validated by an educational administration expert and then applied to four academic coordinators from various

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fields. The information collected was organized and examined using the *Open Coding* technique. **Results:** The respective analysis of the findings led to the conclusion that, although it is evident that the educational institution shows interest in and commitment to the professional development of professors—incentivizing their participation in training programs—it is perceived that a much more solid culture of lifelong learning still needs to be developed, since not all professors have shown the same interest and motivation toward their own training. **Conclusions:** Although it was discovered that the leader displays openness to creating collaborative spaces with key actors in the institution to gather information and make decisions that are geared toward improvement, it was also discovered that leadership is primarily focused on meeting administrative needs rather than pedagogical ones.

**Keywords:** educational effectiveness; learning; educational leadership; professional development.

## Resumen

**Objetivo:** el tema del presente estudio está enmarcado en la eficacia educativa. En esta investigación se tuvo como objetivo describir los factores organizacionales asociados a la eficacia educativa de una universidad privada de Perú en tiempos de pandemia. **Métodos:** para este estudio, de enfoque cualitativo, se consideraron dos categorías: ‘compromiso y desarrollo profesional docente’ y ‘liderazgo educativo’. Se empleó como técnica de investigación la entrevista semiestructurada y como instrumento la guía de preguntas, la cual fue validada por un especialista en gestión educativa y aplicada a cuatro coordinadores académicos de diferentes especialidades. La información recogida fue organizada y analizada usando la técnica del *Open Coding*. **Resultados:** el respectivo análisis de hallazgos permitió concluir que, si bien se evidencia que la Institución Educativa muestra interés y compromiso por el desarrollo profesional docente —incentivando la participación de los mismos en programas de capacitación—, se percibe que aún hace falta desarrollar una cultura de aprendizaje permanente mucho más sólida, ya que no todos los docentes han mostrado el mismo interés y motivación hacia su propia formación. **Conclusiones:** si bien se encontró que el líder muestra apertura para generar espacios colaborativos con actores claves de la institución con el fin de levantar información y tomar decisiones orientadas a la mejora, se evidenció que el liderazgo está centrado, principalmente, en responder requerimientos más administrativos que pedagógicos.

**Palabras clave:** eficacia educativa; aprendizaje; liderazgo educativo; desarrollo profesional.

## Resumo

**Objetivo:** o tema deste estudo está enquadrado no âmbito da eficácia educacional. O objetivo desta pesquisa foi descrever os fatores organizacionais associados à eficácia educacional de uma universidade privada no Peru em tempos de pandemia. **Métodos:** para este estudo qualitativo, foram consideradas duas categorias: 'compromisso dos professores e desenvolvimento profissional' e 'liderança educacional'. Uma entrevista semiestruturada foi utilizada como técnica de pesquisa e um guia de perguntas foi utilizado como instrumento, que foi validado por um especialista em gestão educacional e aplicado a quatro coordenadores acadêmicos de diferentes especialidades. As informações coletadas foram organizadas e analisadas utilizando a técnica de Codificação Aberta. **Resultados:** a respectiva análise dos resultados levou à conclusão de que, embora seja evidente que a instituição educacional demonstra interesse e compromisso com o desenvolvimento profissional dos professores - ao incentivar sua participação em programas de treinamento - percebe-se que ainda é necessário desenvolver uma cultura muito mais forte de aprendizagem ao longo da vida, pois nem todos os professores demonstraram o mesmo interesse e motivação para sua própria formação. **Conclusões:** embora se tenha constatado que o líder demonstra abertura para gerar espaços de colaboração com os principais atores da instituição a fim de coletar informações e tomar decisões visando melhorias, ficou evidente que a liderança se concentra principalmente em responder a exigências que são mais administrativas do que pedagógicas.

**Palavras chave:** eficácia educacional; aprendizagem; liderança educacional; desenvolvimento profissional.

## Introduction

According to López, cited by Alcántara (2007), the quality of higher education presents various concepts that highlight its complex, dynamic, and multidimensional nature; that is, its dimensions extend beyond the internal and into external spheres. According to Muñoz (cited in Alcántara, 2007), the significance of higher-quality education is largely dependent on these institutions' ability to carry out the societally assigned roles, which include those that are naturally academic, occupational, distributive, political, and cultural in nature. However, Tunnermann (cited in Alcántara, 2007) argues that the absence of an interconnected educational system between the various educational levels makes it impossible to speak of higher educational quality.

In Peru, the institutional licensing granted by the National Superintendence of Higher Education (Sunedu) guarantees that the country's universities comply with the basic conditions for offering educational services, resulting in a more organized university system that is more oriented toward continuous improvement. The fundamental conditions are a collection of minimal standards that together form a safety net for students, their families, and society as a whole.

## Conceptual Framework

According to Murillo (2003), two of the issues that have caused the most concern to educational effectiveness researchers are how much the institution influences the performance of its students and what generates differences between one organization and another. In response, the goal of the current article is to analyze the key elements of educational effectiveness, highlight their significance and key characteristics, and describe certain organizational factors that are related to them.

### Key Aspects of Educational Effectiveness

According to Murillo (2003) and Baez (1994), the educational efficacy studies emerge in response to Coleman's research, which contends that educational institutions have no bearing on students' academic performance. Following these findings, other researchers became interested in learning more

about the actual influence that organizations have on learning as well as the key characteristics that set these institutions apart.

When speaking of educational effectiveness, Mortimore (cited by Barba, 2006), agrees with Blanco (cited by Muñoz, 2010) and Murillo (2003) in referring to the capacity of educational institutions to ensure the integral development of each and every one of their students above what would be expected, considering their previous performance, improving their conditions, and compensating for the differences resulting from their social, cultural, and economic context and situation. This conceptualization proposal will conclude with three crucial characteristics that are detailed as follows:

- *Added value*: studies from Unesco (2008) and Gutiérrez and Chaparro (2017) support the idea that taking into account students' prior learning and sociocultural context is necessary to ensure they make progress. On the other hand, Fernández and Gonzáles (cited by Estévez, 2001) propose the use of statistical techniques to determine how the educational organization's performance changes over time and how this change affects the students' academic progress. He also mentions that this technique's goal is to determine which institutions are effective and which are not.
- *Principle of equity*: According to Barba (2006), education currently faces significant threats such as individualism and competitiveness, making it difficult for educational centers to establish themselves as social and cultural compensation systems. In this sense, a school cannot be effective if it is not fair and inclusive since it must support the growth of each and every one of its students while valuing diversity as a natural and desirable characteristic.
- *Concern for integral development*: the Department of Education, Culture, and Sports of the Government of the Canary Islands maintains that, in addition to good performance in compulsory disciplines, the aim is to develop training in values, interpersonal relationships, the development of self-concept, creative thinking and reflective and critical capacity. This is a concern that responds to a humanistic and socially committed approach. (Estévez, 2001).

According to the Unesco study (2008), the educational effectiveness movement has succeeded in restoring confidence in the educational system and in its potential to transform society, narrowing social differences and rethinking the principle of equal opportunities. In this sense, a school that "works better" for some students than for others is not effective; rather, it is discriminatory.

Along the same lines, Murillo (2003) points out that educational effectiveness has become the movement that has had the greatest influence on the design of educational policies and on decision-making in schools around the world, one of its main contributions being the change in the way education is seen, leading one to adopt a more positive view of it.

According to Murillo (2008), taking into account the findings from the various studies conducted, effective organizations are characterized by working toward a common goal, being structurally and culturally more united, and functioning as an organic system rather than as a collection of isolated elements. As well, Murillo and Krichesky (2014) assert that educational effectiveness identifies the factors that must be addressed in order to improve educational institutions. These factors are listed as follows:

- *Factors of entry*: include student characteristics like gender, prior academic performance, and family sociocultural situation, as well as professor characteristics like age and experience, and classroom characteristics like the number of students.
- *Process factors*: shared goals, educational leadership, institutional and classroom climate, high expectations, quality curriculum and teaching strategies, classroom organization, student monitoring and evaluation, professional development of professors, family involvement with the institution, and the resources the institution has.
- *Contextual factors*: characteristics of the educational system and the environment, and contextual characteristics of the center.

### **Organizational Factors Associated with Educational Effectiveness**

According to the studies cited by Fernández and González (1997), the most recent analyses of the factors of educational effectiveness are framed under a multilevel model, in which the characteristics of the student, classroom, center, and context are distinguished.

This article seeks to describe the organizational factors associated with educational effectiveness. For this, two factors have been selected: one, the commitment and professional development of professors; and the other, educational leadership. These are detailed as follows:

## **Professor Commitment and Professional Development.**

In the UNESCO publication (2008) the idea that the role of the professor is key has been confirmed, since they can collaborate and contribute to the personal and professional future of their students and, therefore, of society. In this sense, the educational institutions that show commitment and concern for their entire community—but, mainly, for their professors in such a way that they can continue training, learning, and improving—will be considered effective organizations, where their students, consequently, will be more likely to learn. For this reason, creating a culture of lifelong learning, encouraging professors to have a positive attitude toward their own training, as well as a high commitment to their students' learning is important.

An effective educational institution, according to Cancino and Vera (2016), cannot leave the development of their skills and competencies to improvisation or to the will of their professors. Rather, it must have educational improvement policies that seek to maximize the development of its professors, since, thanks to research on educational effectiveness, it is known that what most affects the learning results of students is determined by what happens inside the classroom. This, concurs with what Murillo (2003) maintains (Murillo & Krichesky, 2014).

Furthermore, research on teaching effectiveness in the United Kingdom, according to the study by Sammons and Bakkum (2011), shows some of the characteristics that define ineffective organizations: lack of vision, unfocused leadership, dysfunctional relationship between collaborators and ineffective practices in the classroom. They point out that in these organizations, students tend to perceive professors as people who do not care about their learning, do not provide help, do not congratulate, but rather frequently resort to criticism and negative comments about the students' performance.

Finally, it is important that the educational institutions generate a culture of lifelong learning and promote spaces that ensure the development of the knowledge and skills of their professors, who play an important role in the students' learning process. As Carvallo (2010) maintains, studies on educational effectiveness have shown that educational institutions do make a difference, identifying and prioritizing the factors that influence the students' performance.

## **Educational Leadership.**

According to studies by López and González (2011), an effective educational institution is one that has a clear mission and explicitly expresses its educational objectives, in such a way that the entire educational community knows and shares

it. Therefore, according to studies by UNESCO (2008), educational leadership is an important factor in achieving and maintaining effectiveness. In this sense, there are several characteristics of educational management that contribute to the students' performance:

- High commitment to the aim of the institution. A good professional has technical knowledge, as well as high leadership and influential qualities.
- Concern and interest in exercising the administrative direction, as well as the pedagogical one, getting involved in the development of the curriculum and showing commitment to the professional development of professors, paying attention and helping in the difficulties that arise and positively influencing their motivations, skills, and working conditions.
- The style must be directive and participatory, motivating the participation of professors, families, and students, sharing information, decisions and responsibilities, since management cannot be exercised in isolation.

As stated in the study by Pont *et al.* (2008), within any educational institution, leaders can contribute to student achievement by providing the necessary conditions in which learning is generated. Their impact on the students' progress is through the professors and the institutional environment. Likewise, this study mentions that for the OECD, effective leadership may not necessarily or exclusively be concentrated in formal positions, but rather may be shared among various agents of the educational organization, in such a way that other individuals can contribute as leaders in the objectives of the institution, achieving better results. This finding, when referring to "total leadership," is also shared by Leithwood *et al.* (2008).

Finally, as part of the role of the leader, the study highlights the importance of having a clear academic vision that is shared and internalized by all members of the organization, that has strategic planning, as well as the ability to generate a culture and community of learning, and a strong influence on all the members of the institution. In addition, leadership must be and must not be limited to administrative issues, but rather, it must be oriented to pedagogical issues.

## **Methodological Design**

This research corresponds to a qualitative approach, which, according to Salgado (2007), seeks to deeply understand the meanings and definitions of the



situations that people experience. In addition, for Taylor and Bogdan (cited by Quecedo & Castaño, 2002), this type of research studies people in the context and situations in which they find themselves; where people, contexts or groups are not reduced to variables, but rather are considered as a whole.

Taking this into account, this qualitative study begins with the following research question: *what are the organizational factors associated with the effectiveness of a private university in Peru in times of pandemic?* Likewise, based on this problem, the following study objective was proposed: *describe the organizational factors associated with the effectiveness of a private university in Peru in times of pandemic.*

In relation to the proposed objective, the following categories emerged. The first, refers to the commitment and professional development of professors. The second is related to educational leadership. These categories were selected because, as Espuna (2019) maintains, the impact achieved by effectiveness in educational institutions is measured based on success in educational management and good student performance. In this sense, the professor plays an important role.

The data collection technique used was the semi-structured interview, since, according to Diaz-Bravo *et al.* (2013), its flexibility allows adjusting the questions initially posed to the interviewees, having as an advantage the possibility of adapting to the subjects, motivating them, clarifying terms and ambiguities, as well as reducing formalisms. Next, a question guide was prepared in which three questions were considered for each category. The use of this instrument allowed developing cross-examination questions to maintain an in-depth dialogue with the interviewees and obtain relevant information. The instrument's validation process was carried out with a specialist in educational management who verified the relevance of the questions with respect to each category and objective.

Once the instrument was approved, the interview was applied using the Zoom platform. For this purpose, four academic coordinators were chosen, who, having been informed of the confidentiality of the interview, agreed to have it recorded. The choice of interviewing academic coordinators was made because they have a close relationship with both the director—since they report directly to her—and with the professors, whom they supervise. The criteria taken into account for their selection were their time in the institution and their area, since the researchers of this article sought to select employees who had been working in the organization for at least five years and, in addition, from different areas. It should be noted that each of the informants was assigned a code in order to maintain anonymity.

**Table 1.** *Characterization of the Interviewees.*

Academic Coordinator	Code	Gender	Age	Time in the Institution	Area
Interviewee 1	E1	Male	33	7 years	Math
Interviewee 2	E2	Male	37	9 years	Engineering
Interviewee 3	E3	Female	40	7 years	Humanities
Interviewee 4	E4	Female	38	5 years	Psychology and English

*Source:* Authors' Elaboration

It should be noted that the Higher University Educational Institution, to which the academic coordinators interviewed belong, has been in operation for more than 20 years, has more than 40 undergraduate and graduate study programs, and has more than five branches nationwide. In 2019, after a year of evaluations, the National Superintendence of University Higher Education (Sunedu) granted the licensing after verifying compliance with the basic conditions established by the university law. Some of the measures adopted in this process include the hiring of a higher percentage of full-time professors, as well as a larger budget for research.

After the interviews were conducted, all the responses were transcribed and organized in an analysis matrix that made identifying the most important findings of each category possible, which were then grouped by themes, thus obtaining the emerging elements. Organizing the information in this way made it easier to carry out the process of interpretation and discussion, using the conceptual framework as a reference.

## **Findings Interpretation**

The interpretation of findings was presented by category, considering the most significant testimonies of the interviewees and the in-depth reflection of the researcher.

In relation to the first category, “commitment and professional development of professors,” the academic coordinators expressed that due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the abrupt transition from the face-to-face to the virtual modality, many difficulties were discovered. As a result, the virtual teaching and learning processes, as well as the relationship between professors and students were

affected at the beginning of the health emergency. "Professors had problems trying to connect with the student and mastering the technological tools, but from the second period onward a very good experience occurred. The professors were then able to resolve doubts at the moment, in forums, etc." (E2).

The interviewees stated that the experience between students and professors improved thanks to the training courses offered permanently by the Quality Area. "There are trainings that professors receive from the Quality Area regarding teaching methodology, ICT, tools so that they can perform much better in the classroom" (E2). One of the interviewees stated that these trainings had always been provided; however, "Because of this situation, the courses are more technological in nature" (E3), since, as mentioned by another academic coordinator, "The professor had to learn about virtual tools, the use of Zoom and other tools to keep the student active in class" (E1).

In addition, the academic coordinators stated that the Educational Institution shows interest and concern for promoting the participation of professors in these training spaces. "The courses provided by the Quality Area are part of its evaluation system. To continue with the following period, we measure they have taken at least one course and whether this tool has been applied in the classroom" (E1). Likewise, that the university provides certificates of participation for the training received was identified: "We must take one course per cycle, but we can also take more, there is an incentive, for example, certificates" (E4). In addition, the institution recognizes professors who achieve good results in their general evaluation, providing recognition bonuses, as expressed by the following interviewee: "Professors are being evaluated by a series of points, the professors who occupy the first positions, receive a recognition bonus at the end of the period" (E2).

In relation to the attitude and good nature toward learning, an academic coordinator mentioned that most of the professors under her charge show interest in taking the training courses promoted by the university through the Quality Area, and that a minimum percentage do not show the same disposition because there are professors who work in other educational institutions where they have already been trained: "90% show interest; the others are not apathetic, but are not as open because they work in other universities or institutions and have already been trained in these tools" (E4). Another coordinator stated: "I am in charge of approximately 48 professors and approximately 30 show interest in training, there is willingness, on the one hand, but there are groups that are not willing. Why disguise the situation?" (E3).

One interviewee stated that most of his professors teach specialty courses and work in other educational institutions and do not have time to take the training courses. Many times they do it just to comply. "Most of them do it because they have to pass the teaching evaluation and not being removed from

the university, but they do it only for that reason" (E2). In addition, the same employee mentioned that the professors who show more initiative and willingness to take the trainings are those who do not have much experience and are interested in staying in the institution and showing good performance: "My professors are not motivated to take the trainings offered by the Quality Area; some are, especially those who are starting in teaching" (E2).

Regarding the attributes most valued by students, the interviewees expressed that the students appreciate the knowledge that the professors transmit in class, the experience, the treatment and the commitment for learning. "The students are quite happy when a professor carries out the topic corresponding to the syllabus, when he/she includes his/her experience on that topic, and when he/she shows predisposition to clear up doubts" (E2). Another academic coordinator corroborated this saying: "The treatment becomes a matter of assessment, as well as the knowledge and guidance provided to the students" (E3).

In summary, with respect to the "professor commitment and professional development" category, it can be affirmed that the educational institution shows interest and concern for including professor training programs as part of its evaluation system to ensure the development of skills and competencies and, in this way, respond adequately to the demands of the new virtual modality. Although these training courses allowed professors to gain knowledge on the use of different technological tools to improve their learning experience, professors did not take the courses with the same openness and willingness.

For example, the interviewees pointed out that the most experienced professors did not show a lot of interest, since they said they had received such training in the other educational institutions where they also work. Likewise, the interviewees indicated that there were professors without time or motivation to take the courses; but they took them because the courses were mandatory. Alternatively, during the teaching and learning process, students valued the professors' knowledge, as well as their experience and willingness to resolve problems.

According to the second category of "educational leadership," the academic coordinators expressed that since the pandemic, the meetings with the university management were held more frequently, therefore, there was more communication opportunities for revisions and decision making on academic issues. "Meeting is a good constant practice because it allows us to analyze academic issues and to respond immediately when inconveniences arise; especially, taking into account the changes implemented due to this novel situation" (E4).

Similarly, the interviewees added that during the meetings, they evaluated the improvements that may be offered to professors and students, as the information gathered from both parties was important for the president: "The

president asks us to organize meetings with professors and delegates to gather information, and thus knows what is happening and what can be improved” (E3). In this regard, results showed that because of the pandemic there was a need for informative talks on the current situation and health care for professors and administrative staff. “Talks are given on care for COVID patients and on other topics related to the situation” (E1). Likewise, results exhibited that the president was concerned with those coordinators who became infected. Therefore, constant communication was maintained: “When my family and I got sick with COVID, the president sent me daily motivational messages” (E3).

In addition to the above mentioned, the interviewees pointed out that remote work has favored joint work with peers from other campuses and the arrangement of complementary activities from different campuses organized by student specialty. One of the interviewees stated: “What the university management requests is that every faculty defines which conferences will be held. Even, remote work has allowed us to meet with our peers from other campuses, therefore, this type of activities can be carried out more frequently” (E1). Another interviewee considered that these activities had been well received by the students: “I feel that students learn more by participating in these workshops because they do not feel pressured by the grade” (E2).

Alternatively, another highlighted aspect was the president’s interest and concern for the improvement of the syllabi and course materials:

The campus leader was concerned about the revision and course materials updating that professors must review, since a lot of course materials had to be adapted to remote teaching. Updating the curriculum is also a concern, which is done every four years as required by Sunedu. (E1).

In contrast, another interviewee stated the following:

As academic coordinators, if we observe any weakness or if the professors send us any observation for improvement regarding the syllabus, we immediately inform the university management who informs the Quality Area. However its execution takes time: there are some aspects that coordinators cannot go any further. (E2).

Regarding the aforementioned, one of the interviewees stated that, although there are efforts to constantly improve the pedagogical part, there is still room for improvement: “The president should lead the academic area, I feel that the coordinators do only 30% of academic issues and 70% of administrative issues, and it should be the opposite” (E2). The same interviewee stated that the

university should work on the development of educational materials in order to standardize content and alleviate the professors' workload, giving them more time for their professional development:

It would be good for the leader to make a decision regarding the courses in which a base of materials can be worked on to provide the professor. Students realize that the contents of the same course are not the same and compare. The professor is stressed out. Preparing material for a two-hour class can take a whole day, instead, they should be trained. (E2).

Additionally, the workload was emphasized as an aspect to be improved due to problems arising with the platform and the changes that had to be made in course scheduling.

The system is not updated in real time and provides wrong information. This generates discomfort and loss of time therefore the work schedule is not often respected. One finishes the work day at seven o'clock, but receives emails at nine or ten o'clock at night with requests from the administrative staff. (E3).

Another academic coordinator confirmed: "Overnight they tell you: 'We are no longer going to work this way, but that way.' Of course, these changes in schedules are due to the situation, but we end up working twice as hard" (E1).

Alternatively, regarding the most valued aspects, the interviewees mentioned the trust, the accompaniment and the good working environment. "The president trusts in our good work, I think that is why we have a good working environment and we are part of the *Great Place To Work*. I value the trust and support I need" (E2). Another interviewee expressed his opinion along the same idea: "I greatly value the accompaniment. Even though we are working remotely, I know that my leader is supporting me" (E4).

Finally, this same interviewee expressed that there was a strong commitment to the purpose of the organization: "What helps us moving forward is that we believe that education is the key and that we can make real change. My professors really believe in their work of training future colleagues and such perspective has a great impact" (E4).

In summary, with respect to "educational leadership," although the president shows commitment to the pedagogical component by promoting meeting spaces with students and professors with the purpose of gathering information and implementing improvement actions. The president's involvement with the revision of materials is limited to a remote work adaptation and the demands of

this new situation. Similarly, their concern in updating curricula arises mainly from Sunedu request.

In this sense, there is not much involvement in academic matters, perhaps because there is already a specialized area that is responsible for ensuring the institution's educational quality. Likewise, the academic coordinators feel that their administrative work is more important than their pedagogical work, suggesting that this is due to their workload. Among the positive aspects, the openness to generating collaborative spaces, the commitment to remote education, the human leadership, the trust in the work done by the academic coordinators, the constant communication, and the pleasant environment despite the virtual environment are highlighted.

## Discussion

Based on the information provided by the academic coordinators, these findings have allowed learning more about the commitment and professional development of professors and educational leadership in a private university in Peru.

According to the first category, "professor commitment and professional development," when analyzing the teaching and learning process in a virtual context, as well as the relationship between professors and students, the institution pays special attention to the implementation of training programs that improve the classroom experience, providing the necessary tools to professors so that they can perform well in class sessions and keep their students active. This is consistent with Sammons and Bakkum (2011), who point out the effective practices carried out in class as one of the effective educational institution characteristics. In turn, a study conducted by Unesco (2008) mentions the idea that the role of professors is important, since they can contribute to the students' personal and professional future.

Likewise, according to Cancino and Vera (2016), an educational institution cannot leave the development of their skills and competencies to the will of its professors. Similarly, the study conducted by Unesco (2008) states that an educational organization will be considered effective as long as it shows commitment to its community, especially to its professors, so that they can continue learning and improving. In this sense, the findings show that the educational institution shows interest in encouraging the participation of professors in training spaces in order to maximize their performance. For this

purpose they resort to the evaluation system, awarding of certificates and recognitions.

Another finding found in this research warns that, although these training courses are provided on an ongoing basis, this does not ensure that all professors have a good attitude and willingness regarding their professional development. As evidenced in the interviews, a group of professors tend to show little interest and motivation in taking these courses; however, they do so because they feel obliged to pass the evaluations. In view of this, the Unesco study (2008) notes the importance of creating a culture of lifelong learning, fostering in professors a positive attitude toward their own training, as well as a high commitment to their students' learning. To achieve this, the academic coordinators expressed the need to alleviate the professors' burden in terms of preparing materials so that they have more time and disposition for their professional development. Likewise, it is proposed that complementary training oriented to the development of soft skills be provided, as currently the topics are mainly focused on teaching methodologies and technological tools.

In relation to the aspects that the students value in the professors, in their learning process there is not only knowledge, but also experience and predisposition to answer questions. This aligns with the results of the study by Sammons and Bakkum (2011), which indicate that one of the characteristics of ineffective educational institutions is the perception of professors as people who do not care about their students' learning, do not provide help, and do not congratulate them.

According to category two, "educational leadership," coordination and follow-up meetings have been identified as an important factor in the generation of spaces for communication and review of academic and administrative issues for the planning of activities and decision making. Likewise, these spaces are important to reinforce the vision of the organization in such a way that it is shared and internalized by the members of the organization, as mentioned by Murillo (2008).

In addition, it has been found that the information gathered from students and professors through the academic coordinators is very valuable, and that making them feel heard is likely to impact their commitment to the organization. Furthermore, the research has shown that in the context of the pandemic, the campuses have worked in a joint and coordinated manner. This coincides with what Murillo (2008) maintains in his study on effective educational organizations, where he points out that these are characterized by working toward a common goal and by being structurally and culturally more united, functioning organically and not as a compilation of isolated elements.



Likewise, the importance of having a pleasant and trusting environment has been identified as having a positive influence on employees, exercising a participative leadership in which everyone feels included and feels an important part of the organization. This coincides with what Unesco (2008) points out about the participative style of the leader who should share information, decisions, and responsibilities, since management should not be exercised in isolation; however, the study did not find evidence of shared leadership among several agents of the organization as mentioned by Pont *et al.* (2008). No information has been found regarding the existence of communication and interaction spaces with parents.

In turn, according to the Unesco study (2008), it is stated that in order to achieve and maintain effectiveness, the leader must show interest and concern for exercising not only administrative but also pedagogical direction, getting involved in the development of the curriculum, providing assistance to the difficulties that arise and positively influencing professors. The findings have shown that, although there is a perceived interest in updating materials and syllabi, this is limited to a response to the demands of the environment, whether it is a specific situation such as the pandemic or a mandatory requirement of the Sunedu. Along these lines, there is a need to pay more attention to the pedagogical aspect. For example, the importance of creating basic course materials to align content and ease the burden on professors, giving them the opportunity to focus more on their professional development, became evident.

## Conclusions

To summarize, with respect to the first category ("commitment and professional development of professors"), the interest and concern of the educational institution for the development of the capacities and competencies of its professors is visible when training opportunities are created and participation is encouraged through the evaluation system, as well as the awarding of certificates and recognition. This allows improving the professor's performance in the classroom sessions and, thus, ensures a good classroom experience. However, creating a much stronger culture of lifelong learning is important to achieving greater commitment and willingness in all professors, especially those who show little interest and motivation.

In relation to the second category, ("educational leadership"), it is perceived that the coordination of meetings and communication spaces with professors

and students for decision making, allow generating an environment of trust and permanent accompaniment, reflecting a participative leadership style that, in addition to promoting collaboration and sense of belonging, reinforces the vision, achieving that this is shared and internalized by the members of the organization. However, it is evident that leadership is oriented toward resolving mainly administrative issues. In that sense, there is interest and concern on the part of the leader for academic issues that is often exhibited as a response to the demands of the environment or compliance with certain regulations. Therefore, there is a need to strengthen pedagogical leadership.

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