

## EDUCATIONAL GUIDANCE STRATEGIES IN THE CASE OF UNDERGRADUATE PUPILS OF STUDENT MOBILITY

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### Abstract

This work attends to identify and characterize the educational guidance strategies in the case of undergraduate pupils of student mobility. Although there are wide national and international backgrounds related to guidance, investigations on educational guidance in the case here considered are considerably few. In our context we can take into account a growing increase of students who decide to study undergraduate degree at national universities, which leads to the need to develop guidance intervention strategies that accompany and promote their educational histories. In this work at first place we describe the backgrounds and characteristics of the student mobility at the Psychology School of the National University of La Plata (2007-2017), from the systematization and analysis of institutional documentary sources. Secondly, the educational guidance actions implemented with students who studied subjects in the second semester of the 2017 school year are specifically analyzed. For this purpose, a semi-structured interview was designed and implemented, organized in different axes, which was applied to the aforementioned students. Finally, results are discussed and intervention strategies are proposed that consider institutions and significant actors for student mobility processes at the university level.

**Key words:** Educational guidance; mentoring; student mobility; higher education

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This work attends to identify and characterize the educational guidance strategies in the case of undergraduate pupils of student mobility (hereafter SM). The bibliographical analysis allows observing wide national and international backgrounds referred to educational guidance. However, the development of investigations on SM is considerably few. The approach of educational guidance at SM processes can be considered a vacant area, even in studies referred to the internationalization of psychology. In our context we can consider a growing increase of students who decide to study undergraduate degree at national universities, which leads to the need to develop guidance intervention strategies that accompany and promote their educational histories.

Currently under the word *guidance* a set of theoretical and applied perspectives are defined, which have had different names over time, such as vocational guidance, work guidance, educational and occupational guidance, that is about:

*Inter-disciplinary and trans-disciplinary process supported on the principles of preventive intervention, development and attention to the pupil diversity, whose educational agents (counselors, parents, teachers-mentors, family and community) assume the role of facilitate and promote their comprehensive development so they can become into transformative persons of themselves and of their environment.* (Molina Contreras, 2004, p. 10).

Educational guidance (Müller, 2011) provides with the best academic performance, skills development, pupil integration to the educational institution; his emphasis is in learning.

Likewise, the complexity of the current world leads to significant changes in the educational and the work/occupational fields, such as: socio-cultural changes, educational and work systems changes, psychosocial issues related to unemployment, etc. In this sense, Gavilán's contributions that develop a theoretical operational model in guidance are relevant. It is defined as:

*The set of strategies and tactics that the psychologist and/or the educational psychologist specialized in guidance applies, so the subject of guidance, individually or collectively, through a comprehensive, reflexive and committed attitude, can develop an educational, work, personal and/or social project throughout life.* (Gavilán, 2017, p. 186).

To develop the mentioned model, the author describes the guidance trilogy (Gavilán, 2006, 2017) that takes into account three axes that revolve around guidance: process, social imaginary and prevention.

The concept of *process* considers mainly the time dimension. It is about the different ways of intervention and presents different levels related to the educational / occupational choices: macro-process; micro-process and specific process.

In the social imaginary axe Gavilán (2000) takes the Castoriadis' contribution (1998) on the *imaginary institution of society*.

*The author distinguishes between an “effective” social imaginary and a “radical” social imaginary. The first one keeps the society joint: it is what legitimate an existent order; it is “what is instituted”. Instead, the radical social imaginary is able to transform the meaning world by means of innovative imaginary proposals, that is, “what is instituting” that is responsible of the production of new manners of meaning (Gavilán, 2017, pp. 70-71).*

The dialectic game between what is instituted and what is instituting explains the processes of consolidation, break and change.

The last notion of guidance trilogy is *prevention*, which refers to:

*The capacity that human beings and their social group have to anticipate, with different strategies, to situations that could cause different sorts of harm, making possible the creation and strengthen those knowledge, attitudes, skills and values that will assist to prevent or minimize those damages. (Gavilán, 2000, p. 22).*

It should be noticed that in this model development, the inclusion of *fields and knowledge* proposed by the author is meaningful:

*The field is an area of knowledge and practices related to the same problem and with a set of matters that arises from that approach; knowledge and practices that can be focused from the discipline, as well as the inter-discipline, as they are complementary activities; and/or from the trans-discipline, understood as a field created from different perspectives (Gavilán, 2017, p.110).*

Although other classifications can be found, fields can be divided into educational, health, work-economic and social policies.

Finally, this model adds a space for reflection that transversally runs through the axes and fields, so called *specific knowledge* and *extended knowledge*. This addition implies to consider the notions of discipline, inter-discipline and trans-discipline, to approach (separately and jointly) some problems that make our task as counselors.

On his part, Muller (1994) asserts that the counselor task will allow knowing each guidance subject, listening to him, assisting him in his self discover, as well as the educational, occupational and socio-economic reality in order to encourage the construction of a vocational-occupational project. In that sense, Müller (2011) thinks that all educators, for the fact of being so, assume a counselor role:

*Guidance as advice and accompaniment to promote better learning, considering subjective aspects involved in learning, approaching and solving*

*problems, identifying difficulties and creatively facing them, encouraging the desire to learn and the pleasure to continue learning, discovering and developing personal skills and promoting the development of a work project (...) and training for the future (p. 31).*

In this sense, Müller (2011) defines mentoring as “the ability that every teacher has to take the side of pupils, to suffer with them the “conceptual birthing” process, to help them to solve their personal problems, problems of learning, of autonomy-dependence and of relationship” (p. 35).

However, the addressed subject in mentoring will change according to the students’ requirements, their ages, learning situation, their interests, motivations and troubles.

Being educational guiders or mentors implies to carry out a reflective work on the great contemporaneous changes and the transformation of demands that, consequently, question the educational institution and the teachers’ duties.

*Counselors and mentors need to consider the macroscopic contexts that influence on the educational system members: diagnosis of current society and culture, knowledge on the movements of economy and work world, economic and sociopolitical power, place of the country in the world (Müller, 2011, p. 25).*

According Perrotta (2016) the internationalization concept is polysemic, since it refers to different processes among which can be mentioned: internationalization of research and curriculum, the opening of subsidiaries universities in different parts of the world, distance learning, academic mobility, etc.

One of the definitions of internationalization more accepted by specialists in this subject is the one mentioned by Knigh (1994), who says that “at the national / sectoral / institutional level, it is defined as the process of integrating an international, intercultural or global dimension in its purpose, functions and resources of post-secondary education”(Knight, 1994, p. 2).

The internationalization in higher education supposes to think that the characteristics of educational institutions go beyond their country boundaries insofar they are influenced by the relations with professors, students, educational institutions, public administrations and further agents from other countries (Throsby, 1998).

According Madarro Racki (2011), academic mobility of students, teachers and investigators is one of the main components of the internationalization universities processes. Undergraduate or post-graduate student mobility is defined as the possibility that teachers, students and investigators have to study part of their

studies, within the framework of their academic training, in a foreign university and these studies to be recognized by the original institution involved. The author identifies and describes two favorable aspects: on one hand, those specifically referred to persons' learning, and on the other, those related to the institutional benefits derived from it (careers and academic practices transformation, integration of different territories, etc.). Accordingly, the SM is valuable not only for the pupils themselves, but also to the construction of an institutional strategy in the wider framework of higher education internationalization (Madarro Racki, 2011).

Those pupils interested in a short stay (one or two semesters) in any school of the National La Plata University have to follow one of these methods: 1) Student mobility by agreement: the university to which the student belongs must have an agreement with the UNLP so the student gets a stay of one or two consecutive semesters in the institution attending regular classes; 2) Student mobility by program: the UNLP is involved with different associations and networks that implement student exchange programs to make an academic stay in the institution during a semester.

### Method

It is a non-experimental descriptive study (Hernández Sampieri; Fernández Collado & Baptista Lucio, 2010). Its approach is qualitative, through an instrumental case study (Stake, 1998).

The investigation participants were seven students of SM from foreign institutions. They applied to attend subjects of the higher cycle (4th, 5th y 6th years) of the Psychology degree in the Psychology School of the National University of La Plata, during the second school semester 2017.

Likewise, documents and institutional records were included: application letter from the university of origin, motivation letter, application form for SM.

According the specific objectives, a semi-structured interview was designed. It was made ad hoc, to the SM pupils who were attending to subjects at the Psychology School during the second semester 2017. The interview was made according to three axes: a) identification data; b) educational history - application form for SM; c) educational guidance. The interview ends with an open question intended to enable the student to share any aspect of the experience that he considers meaningful and appropriate to add.

The implemented procedure consisted, at a first stage, in making contact with referents from the University International Department and from the International Relations Area of the Psychology School of the UNLP, who allowed accessing

to the institutional documentary sources intended to collect data regarding the mobility of undergraduate students who studied subjects at the Psychology School of the UNLP, during March 2007- December 2017. They also allowed identifying and systematizing, among other aspects: demographic data (sex, country and institution of origin, etc.) and academic data (subjects he aims to attend, SM duration, indicators of guidance strategies, etc.) Besides, the collected data in these institutional areas enabled the selection of the participants.

In second place, the seven selected pupils of MS were contacted. Then, the individual interviews were carried out. The last stage consisted in a feedback with the selected participants.

The analytical procedure focused on the content interpretation. To do this, the interviews were written out.

To analyze the data collected through the interview, we proceeded to code and categorize the responses.

Results were grouped by categories which correspond to the aspects inquired through the interview, such as: 1) General characteristics of the selected pupils; 2) Academic history and application form for SM; 3) Educational guidance strategies previous to the application; 4) Guidance strategies during the SM; 5) Information about the teaching and promotion rules and 6) Evaluation.

## Results

Results are displayed according to the following diagram. At first we describe and analyze the backgrounds and characteristics of SM at the Psychology School of the UNLP. Secondly, we identify and characterize the SM pupils and the Educational Guidance strategies implemented from the documental analysis and the semi-structured interviews.

### **Background and characteristics of student mobility in the Psychology School of the UNLP**

Since its creation in 2006, the Psychology School of the UNLP has received sustain applications from foreign pupils interested in studying subjects during one or two semesters. During the period March 2007 – December 2017, 106 foreign undergraduate students applied to carry out a short academic stay in the Psychology School of the UNLP; 79 of them actually attended and 27 did not.

Table 1 shows the number of SM requests received per school year and if the mobility was made.

**TABLE 1**  
*Requests from students who made the SM and those who did not*

Student Mobility	School year											Total
	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	
<b>No</b>	-	4	3	3	1	3	2	1	-	3	7	27
<b>Yes</b>	6	6	1	1	8	17	3	10	8	10	9	79
<b>Total</b>	6	10	4	4	9	20	5	11	8	13	16	106

Table 2 describes the number of SM requests according to country and educational institution of origin

**TABLE 2**  
*Requests from foreign SM pupils, according to country and university*

Country	University	Total
<b>Germany</b>	Friedrich-Schiller-Universität Jena	3
	Universidad Heinrich Heine Universität Dusseldorf	1
	Total	4
<b>Brazil</b>	Universidade de Sao Pablo	1
	Universidade Estadual de Londrina	1
	Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais	4
	Universidade Federal de Uberlândia	1
	Universidade Federal Do Ceará	1
	Universidade Federal Do Santa María	1
Total	9	
<b>Canada</b>	Carleton University	1
	Total	1
<b>Chile</b>	Academia de Humanismo Cristiano	1
	Total	1
<b>Colombia</b>	Fundación Universitaria de Ciencias de la Salud	1
	Fundación Universitaria Luis Amigó	5
	Pontificia Universidad Javeriana	4
	Universidad Católica de Pereira	4

	Universidad de Antioquia	4
	Universidad de San Buenaventura Cali	2
	Universidad Mariana	4
	Universidad Nacional de Colombia	2
	Universidad Pontificia Bolivariana	2
	Universidad Simón Bolívar	3
	Fundación Universitaria de Ciencias de la Salud	1
<b>Total</b>		<b>32</b>
<hr/>		
<b>Spain</b>	Euskal Herriko Unibertsitatea	1
	Universidad de Granada	3
	Universidad de las Islas Baleares	6
	Universidad de las Islas Baleares	1
	Universidad del País Vasco	7
	Universidad Nacional de Educación a Distancia	1
<b>Total</b>		<b>19</b>
<hr/>		
<b>France</b>	Institut de Sciences Politiques de Rennes	1
	Université Rennes 2	2
	Université Rennes 2 - Haute Bretagne	1
<b>Total</b>		<b>4</b>
<hr/>		
<b>Mexico</b>	Universidad Autónoma de Aguas Calientes	3
	Universidad Autónoma de Baja California	1
	Universidad Autónoma de Zacatecas	1
	Universidad Autónoma del Estado de México	2
	Universidad de Colima	2
	Universidad de Guadalajara	5
	Universidad de Sonora	1
	Universidad Veracruzana	2
<b>Total</b>		<b>17</b>
<hr/>		
<b>Paraguay</b>	Universidad Nacional del Este	1
<b>Total</b>		<b>1</b>
<hr/>		
<b>Perú</b>	Universidad César Vallejo	16
<b>Total</b>		<b>16</b>
<hr/>		
<b>Uruguay</b>	Universidad de la República	2
<b>Total</b>		<b>2</b>
<hr/>		
<b>Total</b>		<b>106</b>



## Educational guidance strategies in the case of undergraduate pupils

It can be seen that of the 106 students, 85 are women and 21 men. They all belong to different humanistic careers although pupils from careers specifically related to psychology prevail: 101 students of psychology career, 2 of Psycho-Pedagogy, 1 of Politic Sciences, 1 of Anthropology and 1 of Social education.

Regarding the students' country of origin, we saw that they majority live in Europe (27 students) or Latin America (77). In smaller extent, applications were received from North-American pupils (2).

Now, regarding the school year 2017, the UNLP received 16 applications from pupils interested in a short stay in the Psychology School: 4 for the first semester (2 of them decided not to make the mobility) and 12 for the second semester (5 of them did not stay). It could be noticed that from de 16 students who applied, 14 did for a stay of one semester and 2 with the intention of studying two semesters in our school. Concerning the universities of origin, it could be noticed that 13 pupils study in Latin-American countries and 3 in European ones (see Table 3). Regarding the students' age, 14 of them are in the age group 20-24, while only 2 are in the group 25-28.

**TABLE 3**  
*Description of foreign SM pupils according the 2017 semester, country, university and stay duration*

School year 2017	Country	University	Semesters		Mobility Student	
			1	2	YES	NO
<b>First Semester</b>	<b>Germany</b>	Friedrich-Schiller-Universität Jena	1	0	1	0
	Total					
	<b>Spain</b>	Euskal Herriko Unibertsitatea	1	0	1	0
	Total					
	<b>Mexico</b>	Universidad de Guadalajara	1	0	0	1
	Total					
	<b>Peru</b>	Universidad César Vallejo	0	1	0	1
	Total					
<b>Second Semester</b>	<b>Colombia</b>	Pontificia Universidad Javeriana	1	0	1	0
		Universidad Católica de Pereira	3	0	0	3
		Universidad de San Buenaventura Cali	2	0	2	0
	Total					

<b>France</b>	Université Rennes 2	0	1	1	0
Total					
<b>Mexico</b>	Universidad Autónoma de Aguas Calientes	1	0	1	0
	Universidad Autónoma del Estado de México	1	0	1	0
Total					
<b>Peru</b>	Universidad César Vallejo	3	0	1	2
Total					
<b>Sub-total</b>		<b>14</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Total</b>		<b>16</b>		<b>16</b>	

### Educational guidance strategies in case of pupils of student mobility

Results are shown according to the categories corresponding to the different aspects inquired in the applied interview.

*General characteristics of selected pupils and reasons/motivations why they carried out the SM.* The 7 pupils who applied to carry out the SM in the Psychology School of the UNLP in the 2nd semester of the school year 2017 came from 4 countries: 3 Latin-American (Colombia, Mexico and Peru) and one European (France). When these students applied, they were 20/22 years old (1 student had turned 20 years old, 3 of them were 21 and 3 were 22). According their academic history, it could be noticed that pupils were studying careers related to psychology. The main reasons that motivated their application to SM were: learn contents missing in their study curricula, deepen their knowledge on an area of psychological professional practice, know the country and its culture and live an experience of autonomy and personal growth. Of the 7 pupils who applied to carry out the SM in the school year 2017, 6 explained when completing the application form, that they were not in contact with UNLP professors. One pupil said, during his SM, not having had contact with UNLP professors.

*Academic history and application to carry out the SM.* The research participants come from higher education of Latin America and Europe. They are studying between 5° and 8° semester of their careers: 3 students are studying the 7th semester, 2 the 8th, while 2 of them are studying 5th and 6th semester respectively (see table 4). Concerning how they found out the call for the SM, 4 of them did

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through their university of origin, 2 through friends who are now studying university careers and carried out SM in previous years and finally, 1 pupil who comments that he found it out through study mates.

**TABLE 4**  
***Description of foreign SM pupils who studied in the Psychology School of the UNLP during the second semester, school year 2017***

School year 2017- Second semester		
Country	University	Number of pupils
<b>Colombia</b>	Pontificia Universidad Javeriana	1
	Universidad de San Buenaventura Cali	2
Subtotal		
<b>France</b>	Université Rennes 2	1
Subtotal		
<b>Mexico</b>	Universidad Autónoma de Aguas Calientes	1
	Universidad Autónoma del Estado de México	1
Subtotal		
<b>Peru</b>	Universidad César Vallejo	1
Subtotal		
<b>Total</b>		<b>7</b>

*Educational guidance strategies implemented before the application.* All the participants said that, before application to SM, they were in touch with a referent of the International and Inter-institutional areas in their universities of origin and counted with some sort of academic and/or administrative accompany from their part. Meanwhile, 4 participants add that they have been accompanied by the Psychology School or Department. Regarding the academic and/or administrative strategies that they received to make the SM, they mention the information and advice related to the documents: passport, temporary residence visa, application/motivation letter from the university of origin, psycho-physical aptitude certificate, approved subjects certificate, international travel insurance (that must cover the following aspects: medical assistance in case of accidents and/or illness, health transfers, total or permanent disability, medication in cases of outpatient and /

or hospital treatment, repatriation, assistance in case of robbery and / or loss of documentation) and an act of the UNLP institutional policy signed by the student and by the international relations responsible from the university of origin. Likewise, they mention that they have received information about the necessary academic requirements to respond to the SM call, about the countries and educational institutions where there were agreements or current programs and available scholarships/benefits. Finally, it was noted that some participants contacted the areas related to the discipline in their institutions of origin to establish the subjects homologation to be studied in the Psychology School of the UNLP. Among the implemented actions, the students highlight: meetings with the referents of the educational institutions of origin through virtual e-mailing, informative chats which students of different disciplines talked about their SM experiences and meetings with potential applicants and referents to answer to academic or administrative doubts. Regarding the choice of subjects they requested to study in the School of destination in the application form, 5 pupils say they choose them by themselves, 1 says that it was the result of the work of both institutions (of origin and destination) and the last one that it was the result of the work between the student and the career director.

*Guidance strategies during the SM.* Following we present the results arisen from the participants concerning the guidance strategies. For this purpose, we will take into account those areas which they were in touch, as well as the aspects considered when they arrived to the university of destination. First of all, it was established that 5 students commented that after they have reached La Plata city, they contacted virtually or personally with the University International Relations Department of the UNLP. Among the aspects that were considered, they described they have received advising on different matters, such as: information on the documents they have to give or to receive from the area (visa, acceptance letter), start and end dates of courses, scholarships, university canteen and lodging. Likewise they highlighted a meeting in which the foreign students of SM of the 2nd semester were welcome and were provided with information about La Plata city, UNLP history and general data about the subjects. Regarding the communication with a referent of the area of International Relations, all the participants mentioned they have been in touch personally and/or virtually with this area about the subjects they will study (in the following section we'll deepen on this matter), development and characteristics of the subjects, a schedule of the course and the homologation of the subjects approved. Finally, 5 students mentioned having participated in a meeting at the beginning of the semester, which they were provided with information about the Psychology Degree Curriculum (2012),

institutional webpage (billboard of lectures, consultation schedule, etc.), subjects description, promotion systems and approval conditions, and information about schedules and teachers of the different areas (theoretical, practical and supervised professional practice spaces).

*Information about the regulation of Teaching and Promotion of the Psychology School of the UNLP.* In this section we will analyze the aware that research participants have about the regulation of Teaching and Promotion, as well as about the organization of academic areas and promotion systems of the School before beginning to study. In that sense, 4 pupils express they know the document, while 3 say they do not. From the comments included in the students' affirmative answers, it could be noticed that they sometimes confuse the document with the promotion systems that it described. Concerning the question if they appeal to an academic accompany, 4 participants said they did not, 1 student appealed to the academic mentor of the school of origin (in order to agree on the subjects to study, to clear up doubts about the characteristics of the subjects, to try to adjust the timetable of courses and the signing of documentation) and of destination (in order to deal with the promotion system and the final homologation of the subjects), and finally, 1 student said he contacted the academic mentor of the school of origin (referred to the subjects homologation, both in terms of content and qualification).

*Evaluation.* In this section participants were asked about the evaluations of the subjects they are studying. All the students said they have had some evaluation. Referring to practices, 1 pupil expressed he presented an investigation work and 6 students told they have given in-person and individual exams. For their part, 3 students said they had carried out activities related to Professional Supervised Practices. They were asked if they had difficulties in evaluations and 2 participants answered affirmatively. They cleared up that they were due to the Spanish language proficiency (dictionaries of the corresponding language were allowed), with the groups, in case of group exams (all the SM pupils formed the same group), the evaluation methodology (in the schools of origin habitually there are multiple choice or true/false questions, in this case there were questioning to develop) and the impossibility to include graphs and tables in the answers. All the investigation participants said that teachers gave them information to make the exams. They were about contents and bibliography to be taken into account, reminding of exam schedule, to clear up doubts about the questions and suggestions referred to the organization of the answers development.

## Discussion and conclusions

This work attended to identify and characterize the educational guidance strategies in the case of undergraduate pupils of student mobility. The result analysis allows considering the shortage of guidance interventions strategies that accompany and promote educational paths of the SM students. Guidance, as it is understood in this paper, refers to a set of strategies and tactics that enable that the subject of guidance, in this case a SM pupil, can construct an educational project related to his professional training (Gavilán, 2017).

This set of strategies is optimized insofar the counselor has a critical spirit to analyze the cultural and socioeconomic reality of the present world and count with theoretical resources that allow him not only approach but also intervene appropriately.

The implementation of educational guidance interventions with SM pupils implies the joint with different areas and actors of the educational institutions involved.

From an inter-institutional and eventually interdisciplinary approach (the counselors of the schools of origin can be graduates of different disciplines such as psychology, education sciences, psycho-pedagogy, etc.), strategies must be created so that the students of SM have the necessary tools that allow them not only to apply and study the subjects, but also to achieve an optimal academic performance. In this sense it is essential for counselors, to count with a network which allows thinking in new intervention strategies to implement with pupils to provide a pleasing path during the SM. The heterogeneity of the discipline objects and methods, the specificity of the curricula of psychology careers and the profile of the mental health professional are variables to be considered. So, the communication between mentors of both institutions (of origin and of destination) is essential, before and during the SM.

Among the aspects that could be agreed upon, we find:

- Subjects that the pupil can study according to matters such as previous knowledge required and his organization (duration and location of the school year).
- Required skills that enable to attend to professional practice activities
- Minimum content the student must get at the university of destination for not falling behind or having difficulties to continue studying at the university of origin.
- Academic organization: theoretical classes, practical works and Supervised Professional Practice.

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- Academic requirements that students have to accomplish at the university of origin.
- Course spaces: school lecture hall and / or attendance to municipal and / or provincial institutions where the Supervised Professional Practices are carried out (schools, hospitals, etc.).
- Bibliography.
- Promotion systems: evaluations.

As before mentioned, if working to strengthen an inter-institutional network, counselors from both institutions (of origin and destination), can assist advising teachers, so the unknowing would not cause students abandonment or disappointment.

When thinking of the joint with who are in charge of the school academic areas we consider relevant to take into account, among other topics, the development of knowledge, activities and projects related to psychological investigation and extension. In that sense, we consider favorable the inclusion of the SM pupils into non mandatory activities, such as investigation and/or extension projects, inclusion in congresses or lectures of their interest organized by UNLP or by the School of Psychology.

Student mobility implies the possibility to strengthen the relation of work and action among the higher education institutions and to provide pupils of greater cultural integration, knowledge expansion and the development of joint spaces among the actors involved (pupils, teachers, mentors, authorities, etc.).