

The Healing Power of Relación Tutora

Meixi

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Glossary of terms

Asesor Tecnológico Pedagógico (ATP) – Teacher-coach that accompanies schools to provide academic support

Catalogue – Collection of temas that one has worked on

Comunidades de aprendizaje/ Relación tutora/ Tutoría – The project of working in tutorial relationships, a one-on-one tutoring method where networks of tutors and tutees are formed.

Telesecundaria – A modelo of secondary education mostly in rural areas traditionally using television as a medium for learning

Tema – A Spanish or English text or problem in Math, what students use in relación tutora as a basis for their work.

Tiangis – Moving markets that usually occur once a week where many buy their produce and vegetables

Introduction

This research was born out of two particular experiences that have made me even more intrigued and interested in *how* schools have transformed some of the toughest communities. The first experience was teaching in NorthLight School (NLS), Singapore. Being at NLS first made me acutely aware of students who have been wounded by school and has made me realize how I love being with and learning from that population.

The second experience is from my work in Thailand. Ever since I was 13, for the past 10 years, I have been visiting communities in Chiang Rai, Thailand. As a child, I thought and believed with all my heart life was simple and all beautiful. But as I grew up with the kids there, I realized life was tough and injustice often reigned. Throughout the 10 years, I have seen time and time and again how families and schools have been become more and more separated, more distant; and how that has destroyed the lives of some of my friends. With this burden in my heart, but also with the hope that things can and must be different in my region, I set out on Jan 30, 2012 to live in Zacatecas.

After spending about 4 months in Zacatecas- from January to July 2012 (being outside of community in April in June), with the majority of my time spent in the community called Presa de Maravillas, I have come to grow and learn in a way that would not have been possible without this experience. For four months, I really lived with the community. Mondays and Wednesdays were usually spent in afternoon lessons with the primary school, Tuesdays was tiangi's, where you could find almost everyone you knew in the outdoor market either buying or selling things. Thursdays was either a day to do the laundry or wash the dishes and Friday I'd go to a painting workshop with other women in the community. I was game for anything – making cheese, climbing over rocks to get to another part of the community, riding donkeys and of course, dancing. And through all of this I really grew to love the people there, what living in community really means and how the school Pedro Vélez was an oasis for the students in this context.

After analyzing all the data and field notes, the most important thing I have learned is real educational and social change begins from the person. That is, when personal transformation happens, it fuels a change that is greater than itself. This spreads and ripples out from the classroom and into community to heal. That's the healing power of the *relación tutora* – a personal healing that then goes on to change the classroom dynamics and the community. Furthermore, the changed persons are then equipped to go out to other schools and regions and are part of a movement taking on the educational system, changing more hearts and minds in teachers and academic authorities through *tutoría*. We see more students changing their life outcomes, with more interest and enrollment in higher education, taking steps towards altering their future in the long run.

Research Methodology

At the beginning, I decided to concentrate the research in Escuela Telesecundaria Pedro Vales, Presa de Maravillas, Villanueva, Zacatecas for the profile of students I was interested in. This school currently has 17 students with two teachers, Maestro Gabriel de León Sánchez (also Principal of the school) and Maestro Cesario de Río Jasa. The history of this population is that the majority of students have been rejected or expelled by

another Técnica in another community called Malpaso or other communities close by. 90% of students battle with bad experiences with school and trouble in the home, many abandoned by their parents or live in communities where drug and crime are rampant. However, through working in relación tutora, there have been notable and remarkable changes in these students and in the community. Four years ago, Pedro Vélez was the worst school of twenty in the zone. But when they began to work in tutoría, obligated by their supervisor Pablo Cabral, and despite the tough situations and context of their students, they are now in second place (in between Santa Rosa in first place and La Laguna del Carretero in third place, both also working in tutoría) and above the national average in academic achievement.

As the study moved along, I moved to live in San Ramón for two weeks in May with the telesecundaria Miguel Hidalgo y Costilla and Maestra Sara Moran, who also has students who have trouble at school and/or a home, including a student who was recently expelled from the Técnica in Villa de Cos, almost drawing a parallel to the students and situation in Presa de Maravillas. Furthermore, I made side trips to work in Río Grande and Tlaltenango and took the opportunity to see if the trends I was seeing in Presa de Maravillas and in San Ramón were common in other regions, and they were.

In this paper, we explore the personal change that has occurred in students, teachers, academic authorities and how that has spread both consciously and subconsciously into both the school's community and beyond. While most of my time and data collected was concentrated in Presa de Maravillas and to an extent, in San Ramón, this paper is the sum of my experiences in Zacatecas as a whole. I tried to incorporate the experience across regions and most of the time, while each region faced different challenges, I heard the same story of transformation. Here, I draw case studies from the four regions through the interviews and observations with students, former students, parents, teachers, community members and academic authorities, of how this transformation in communities has and is taking place through tutorial relationships.

La Relación Tutora

What is so special about the relación tutora? The catalyst for personal change in both students and teachers could be explained by two things. First, it was the high dominance of an academic tema that gave teachers and students the confidence in themselves. This was uplifting for many, especially students who were traditionally labeled "weaker academic achievers". Second, real academic achievement and gain was obtained through a *human* process, through quality time and attention. The combination of a rigorous academic dominance and the humanness of the tutoría creates a magic the moment one enters in it, and that is powerful for personal transformation.

Kirsten Olson in her book notes, "Human learning is in part a mystic and mysterious experience, requiring both privacy and communion, challenge and pleasure, to reach its highest levels." (2009, p.28) For me, this embodies what the tutoría is – challenge and pleasure, privacy and communion. Using the tutoría as a base of the transformation, I organize the data looking at the "moments in tutoría", the actual practice of working in tutorial relationships and how each of them has had a profound impact on the lives of the

students and teachers. The moments of tutoría, can be organized into seven different aspects that, according to the data, are significant for personal change in anyone in tutoría. It is critical to note that while these parts of the tutoría seem distinct, each and all work in cohesion, building on each other to collectively bring the deep personal transformation in those who work in it.

The seven aspects are the following:

Tutoría	Personal Change	Beyond (Classroom & community)
1) Choosing the tema	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Liberty and freedom • Increased interest in school 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parents see new motivation and get involved in the learning • Changes in behavior at home
2) Research and self-reflection– learning to learn	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-directed and ownership of learning • Sense of accomplishment and increased self-esteem 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Having the tools to be life-long learners • Changes in attitudes and increased mutual respect in classroom and home • More students continuing their studies
3) The Dialogue- Questioning and critical thinking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quality academic learning brings confidence and joy to learn • Deep learning that applies to life and motivates students and teachers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More students prepared and excelling in the preparatory • Seeing the world differently to help the economic work in community • Unity in community due to changes in students • School a symbol of pride for the community
4) Personal attention and individualized learning and flexibility of time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Equality to ensure quality academic learning • Flexibility of temas help keep students interested in school work • Teachers understand more about student and family situation • Changes in personal attitudes and behavior 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A new closeness between teacher and student in classroom • Solidarity in school
5) Demonstration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Confidence to speak in public, pride in one's work 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Part of community of learners in classroom • Creating belief and pride for families again when they see the achievements of their children
6) Creating the tutoring guide	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deep learning, learn twice • Responsibility and accountability to share the knowledge • Increased motivation to learn 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creating a real tool set to share the work • Creating a care for the others in the classroom and community • Increased parent collaboration
7) Academic exchanges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Socialization • Part of larger network, have real opportunity giving 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opportunity for students to feel part of movement

	validity to work and more motivation to learn	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pride of families when students go to such exchanges and hence more involvement in school
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Moments in tutoría

1) Choosing the tema

Choosing one's tema is the very first interaction between the tutor and tutee as they enter into the tutoring relationship. The tutee has the liberty to choose any tema of his or her choice after being offered a range of options, based on their intrinsic interests in a subject. Sometimes students work together with teachers to create their own temas, where students pick any line of research and begin to create a tema that can then be passed onto others. The opportunity to choose a subject on basis of one's interest is the first radical shift from the traditional learning process and has been a critical step to generating more interest and motivation in students who have otherwise lost interest in learning.

When I asked a student, Zulma, from San Ramón, what is “comunidades de aprendizaje”, she answered,

It's a liberty that they give you to choose the tema of your choice and work in a subject that you like. I like this way of learning better.

Zulma was in her first year, slightly rebellious in class and outspoken. She defines the entire program as a *liberty* that students now have to choose something that truly interests them, something that they can enjoy. As Olson (2009, p.6) states in her book, many schools now have denied students of their passion and “Being denied passion is no long acceptable in learning situations- it produces institutional despair and unacceptable educational underperformance.” In the contrary, many students in the study spoke of their favorite subjects and how this liberty in the classroom gave them new agency to direct their own learning. Especially for students who are already turned off from the idea of studying, the option to choose a subject and material you like was the very first step for them to regain the interest and joy in learning again.

In Presa de Maravillas, the secondary school was beginning to work with the primary school. With permission from the primary school teacher, we took out about 5 students in grades 5th and 6th and put them to work with students from the telesecundaria, Pedro Vélez. Lina in her third year in the secondary school was assigned to work with Antonio. Antonio was notorious in the primary school as not wanting to study, always causing a disruption and escaping from class. He was in grade 6 and had repeated both fifth and sixth grades in previous years. His primary school teacher finds it easier having him out of class than in it.

The field note except below is the very first session of working with Antonio. Despite being labeled as “lazy” and “stupid” in the primary school and showing initial resistance to working with Lina, the ability of choice was key in helping Antonio enter into the tutoring relationship and enjoy resolving a simple problem on fractions.

They began their tutoría. Lina began, “Okay Toño (Antonio), which one do you want to do? The one on cakes or the one about cars?” They were two different math problems taken out of a sixth grade math textbook. Toño looked at Lina and said, “Ah I don’t want to do it anymore.” He sat with his arms folded on the seat. Lina took a breath and let him look at the two problems. Toño took a moment and said, “Ahh okay, this one,” and pointed to the one about the cakes. They began the tutoría. The next day, when Toño was back with the rest of the students in the primary school, he asked, “When are we going to be back with the secondary school?”

We were walking back home when I interviewed Lina on the day’s work. She explains some of the changes in Antonio’s work attitude through the tutoría.

Lina said, “They always say that Toño (Antonio) was very restless, lazy and doesn’t know anything but I was surprised because he worked and finished with me. I was truly surprised.”

From the case of Antonio, someone completely new to the tutoría, having the freedom to choose what to work on as opposed to being forced to work on a specific subject was liberating. This garnered interest in Antonio, someone who traditionally is opposed to doing any schoolwork. At the end of the session, Antonio was hungry for more of this kind of learning. He said, “I’ve learned more in this tutoría than in all my time in primary school” and even was looking forward to working more with the secondary school and in comunidades de aprendizaje. The freedom of choice on the part of the tutee on the level and kind of academic material completely changes the dynamics in the classroom as the students have a say in what they want to learn and are hence more driven to study and complete their work.

Another example comes from Head of Region of Villanueva, Professor Pablo Cabral, who recalls a student who refused to do any work. It was only when they found something that was of interest to him that the student entered into the learning process and began to show more effort in his schoolwork.

I remember a kid who came with extreme violence tendencies and didn’t want to do anything at school. So, I talked to the teacher and asked him, “Okay Gabriel, I want you to find out what this boy likes.” “Ay, I already know what he likes- roosters.” “Very good.” I went to find a magazine about roosters, where they talk about the races, how to take care of the, the food they eat, the colors, their origins and we got down to study the history, the physiology, the genetics and when we least believed that this boy was going to study, a boy who didn’t want to do anything, with the roosters, began to study. Why? Because it was what he was interested in. It’s something that is discovered along the way.

As Pablo Cabral mentions in his recount, the key for this student was learning what he was interested in- roosters. The ability to study about roosters, their genetics and species, opened up a whole new perspective on learning and he was willing to begin learning

again, starting with something that drew on his personal interests. It was the liberty to choose and study something of interest that was a real turn-around for this student and opened up even other doors for learning.

A ripple effect in the community is increased genuine interest in learning that the students often bring home. Parents see increased motivation to study in school and this is just the beginning of a new spark in students who have “rejected” school already. Yohancarlo is an example of this. Currently, Yohancarlo is a student in his final year of secundaria in Pedro Vélez. He was expelled out of his previous school in another ranch called “El Fuerte” and repeated his first year of secundaria in Pedro Velez. He initially was adamant and refused to attend Pedro Vélez, but as time passed, he began to enjoy learning again and even involves the whole family in the learning process at home. In an interview with his mother, Carmen, she recounts the difficulties he had at school and how different Yohancarlo is now after 3 years in tutoría. Carmen talks about the increased learning at home and the changes in her son, both academically and personally due to working in comunidades de aprendizaje. She speaks of how she has changed through him and how he has involved other members of his family in the learning.

Meixi: Have you changed through the school?

Carmen: Well yes, at best, yes I have changed in the way I now look at his work in his notebooks. “My son, what are you doing?” Sometimes he brings the work that they give him. Sometimes I’m making lunch and he says to me, “Look mom at what I’m doing.” “Yes son.” Sometimes I don’t understand many things that are new and don’t understand what they mean but his dad helps him with his homework. Sometimes he doesn’t understand English and his dad would say, “Well let’s find it in the books” because we have some books that I bought. Sometimes his brothers too; sometimes among all of them, they are with those books, all of them with the books.

Yohancarlo, with the restlessness that he has, now works more... but now it seems to me that he knows more, is a little more intelligent. There were many changes when he went to that school (Pedro Vélez). Yes, he has learned more and also, yes, he has changed the way he is; yes, he has changed a lot because if I said something to him, no no no no no, he would explode very quickly. “Son, can you do this for me, son this...” “I don’t know! Why are you asking me?” No, totally, the change has been big. Now he’s different. Sometimes I say to him, “Hey son, help me do this”... “Yes mom, in a second.” Or he asks, “Mom, what are you doing?” “Oh I’m doing this, why?” -You see, I have a bit of a kidney problem.- He’ll say, “No, let me mom, I’ll get to it in a minute.” Or in the morning when he goes to school, sometimes he doesn’t make his bed and I tell him, “Son, I’m not going to be able to get to making your bed today.” “No mom, let me make my bed and my brother’s. Leave the beds like that for me.”

For Carmen, the change she notes in him is not only increased interest in his academic work, but also a change in his behavior at home. He is more understanding, more helpful at home. Yohancarlo through a new found interest in school is more motivated to work at home and has even involved his family in his journey. From a personal change, this has

spilled over into the home and even stirred up interest in the family as they all take part in the learning and investigation process.

2) Research – Learning to Learn

In tutoría, be it in Spanish or Mathematics, research and reflection on one's learning processes are key components in one's journey. The end goal for every student is autonomy in learning where students ultimately learn how to learn for themselves. In tutoría, learning is self-directed and there is a sense of self-ownership of the learning process. Often, one key principle of the tutoría is that the tutor never gives out the answers but instead gives examples and allows the tutee to come to their own epiphanies throughout the learning process. Research is an important part of this journey of self-discovery and the tutee learns the tools to investigate an issue using resources and problem-solve on their own. The sense of accomplishment when we learn for ourselves is powerful, and especially powerful for those who have given up on their own abilities to learn.

Returning to the story of Yohancarlo, he recalls of his initial resistance to going to Pedro Vélez but after a few days, saw how the teachers were different here. In his interview, Yohancarlo explains how he learns now after working for three years in tutoría and how he feels more capable of his own abilities and bringing his community forward.

I asked Yohancarlos how his teachers were and he responds, “The teachers now? They’re cool because they put in a lot of effort just so I can learn. They explain things well to that I understand better. One time, I was doing a problem and I didn’t know how to resolve it. A teacher gave me an example of how I could do it and I figured it out with the help of books. I like this method more because I feel more capable and now know a little more than what I used to.”

Yohancarlo reminded me of the power of learning. I asked him what is the role of students in bettering their community. He said, “To study to gain a good job to get ahead. If we don’t learn, well, the community is never going to move forward.”

Through tutoría, Yohancarlo's changed personally as he felt more sure of his abilities as a learner. He has learned the skill set to be an investigator in the classroom and at home, to discover the answers and solutions with the help of books and construct his own learning. Furthermore, he saw clearly how his learning was intrinsically linked to the betterment of his community.

This is echoed in another community, in San Ramón, where Patricia, the mother of Carolina, explains how the students have become enthused with being researchers. She speaks of the example of her own daughter and how she is more interested in her studies now through the opportunity to take ownership of her own learning.

It's seen in the students, that they too are more focused to do research. They are more enthused with her (the teacher, Sara Moran), she like injects into them this energy to investigate, to be more like researchers. Because I imagine when they want to overcome a problem, they, all by themselves, begin to search for answers, and few students do that, they just want someone to give them the solution for everything. But no, she teaches them how to resolve problems. I saw Caro (her daughter), as being a slow learner, but now, I see is that she is more interested in her studies.

Caro's case is a clear example of how the liberty and accountability given to the students trains them to resolve problems on their own and entuses them to be life-long learners. Students are more passionate about their own learning because they own it. Each tema is there to impart skills of analysis, research and autonomous learning. Students use these skills at home, ask more questions, show more interest in school and see themselves as researchers in the classroom and throughout their lifetimes. This is a source of pride for the families.

In San Ramón, Sara Moran, recounts a story of how one student, Celia, in her first year of secondary school, learned the tools to create her own tema. Sara speaks of the struggles and the long process of teaching skills, but how at the end of the day, it is worth all the effort to learn these skills that will be useful for life.

They learn tools for life or to continue learning. You learn in this moment, but more than that, it's like the first step to keep learning. Now I think of Celia, She wanted a different tema and said to me, "And if I did one?, that if she studied one and then shared it. I told her, "What would you like?" "Something in biology," she told me. She went and brought me what she wanted to study. So, I accompanied her, to build, to study, to go beyond - how to create a tema. To me, I like how now, what she can also see is that it's not easy, it's not just anything, that me being a teacher, I too have to invest. She now knows all the time I invest for one tema that I bring to them. She now sees it. And yes, at times I see that she's tired of writing and finishes bringing me very little written. Now that's she's finished, her product has cost a lot. But also I know that her work will have great value for all the time she has invested, for all the effort that she has given. And something that I believe is that she too is going to see when she offers the tema in tutoría, that, as Dr Cámara says, when one teachers, they learn twice. So now, perhaps many things still aren't polished but when she starts to give tutoría, she is going to see that she will face things that she didn't see and she knows it; things that we have left for the bibliography, probably that someone chooses. And now she's creating her guide and says, "I'm going to put the questions that I asked myself, but other questions can come up, right?" "Yes, others that you don't have can come up." "And what am I going to do then?" "Are you going to help me?" "Well, yes, I'll help you."

As Sara puts it, she is teaching them skills of research and self-reflection and these will carry them throughout secondary school, preparatory and university, and even for life. With Celia, she was training her to be a creator of her own tema, guiding her and arming her with the skills to continue learning in this way. It was rigorous but the tema has

increased value because of all the effort that Celia has put into it and now is even more prepared when she created her next tema to share with the rest of the class.

On the part of the teachers, this calls for a genuine placing of the ownership of one's learning on the student and giving them the responsibility to be the directors of their learning not just of the content, but to master the skills needed for them to be life-long learners. The moment when Celia asked to create her own tema, Sara Moran did not doubt her, but immediately asks, "What would you like?", placing complete trust in her student and believing in her abilities to create her own tema. In this next excerpt, Pablo Cabral talks about how this ownership, new skills to take charge of their own learning and new-found belief given to the students by their teachers in tutoría is powerful.

And this way, we went discovering boys and girls, that in spite of their places, the remoteness, that there is no technology, that where they live includes places with much poverty, that they are capable, through the tutoría, and the liberty. Similarly, this freedom that the tutoría gives you to investigate, well that you are capable of creating a consciousness in an extraordinary way. They do it with their own interests and the teacher's uses less effort to express this interest. Moreover, at the moment that a kid goes discovering that he is able to build his own knowledge, he generates something impressive and indispensable that makes every human being grow. He is made responsible for his own learning. That is what the "learning community" gives us. This is one of the most important points in the formation of the networks of tutoring, that every one is made responsible for his own learning. There are other factors, but this is fundamental.

One of the most important roles of the students is the responsibility of his own learning, the lifting of his self-esteem, the formations of values which is the respect for the rest that is one of the most important because here, every student carries his own rhythm and each one is respectful of the other. This makes then, that they are doing here, not with the same intensity as the community because there you have other types of people that are not involved in this. To increase the well-being of the relationships, the students relate more to each other easier but with less incidence of violence or aggressiveness. This is what we have noted in the students: they greet each other more, respect each other more, take more care of their school, take more care of their community. After they take on these responsibilities, regularly there is a higher tendency to continue studying, a lot stronger than before... in the fact that we have now more students in the preparatory and before there weren't. They didn't go out to study. And when we have students in the preparatory, you have a bigger possibility to be a professional or that the people go out to find other kinds of relations, and at best many or some of them will come back and invest here, construct something, help their families, that is important.

It is clear from Pablo that it is this responsibility that one gives to a student that makes the magic happen. Through this new responsibility by working in tutoría, students are uplifted in their self-esteem, begin to respect their peers more and have bigger hopes and opportunities to improve their own communities.

3) The Dialogue - Questioning and critical thinking to apply temas to real-life

The liberty and tools for research and reflection as mentioned in the point above is what enables and drives the students to achieve high-quality academic learning. In this third part, we examine how through personal dialogue, questioning, and self-reflection, students go deep in their temas. This depth helps push boundaries and help the tutee to think differently and deeply about the world around them. This deep learning- the real academic dominance is fundamental to building one's self-confidence and is the base that allows them to then create their guide and begin to tutor. A real learning experience is a great achievement in itself and is what spurs students on to continue learning and even share their new found knowledge with other students, teachers and even academic authorities.

In the following case with Mario, a first year student in Pedro Vélez, he demonstrates how sound and deep academic learning gives students the self-confidence they need to keep learning. Mario is a student that has always been characterized as a "slow learner". He battles with simple math problems and had been constantly skipping school. I had the opportunity to work with Mario and bring him through a poem called "The Harvester" or "El Segador" in Spanish. He finished the work with an impressive analysis of the poem and this security of a work well done was inspiring for him.

Mario hadn't been coming to school for weeks and for about four months, he refused to do any academic work. During the first week during my time here, we had one trial run of the demonstration and he refused, just simply refused to stand up in front of the class to present his work. After nudging from his friends, he still remained silent and seated in his corner. He wouldn't even say his name up front. Nothing. After every one went out for recess, I asked him why he didn't go up. He just told me, I've never gone up to present. I won't do it. I dropped the subject.

The next week, after Profe Gabriel tutored me in a poem called "El Segador", I saw that Mario was working on the poem too and I asked if he would work with me. So for a whole week we worked on it. It was slowly, sometimes painfully slow as he would remain silent for about 10 minutes and after tell me his head hurt from thinking. But he was thinking, he was analyzing. And during those moments of need rest for our brains, we talked about how many bicep curls he did the night before and by the end of the week, Mario had done one of the best analysis of the poem I had seen. I was left impressed.

After a month, the time came for another round of demonstrations. And again, Mario was the last to go and didn't want to. He refused to get up from his seat and in his place, went Israel, another student in first grade of secondary school. As Israel took his turn, I moved to sit next to Mario. He was working on another tema in English. I asked, "Mario, if you were to go up to do the demonstration, what would you say?"

Slowly, he looked at his piece of paper and told me each step of his process. It was good. "You've got it. Why don't you go up?" Israel finished his public demonstration and it finally came to Mario's turn again. After another nudge from his classmates and Profe Gabriel, Mario stepped out of his corner and made his way up to the front of the class. I thought he was going to talk about his new text in English, the one he was explaining to me. But he began, "I worked on the poem, El Segador..." I was so surprised and was so filled with pride at Mario's work. He explained the poem beautifully, with his analysis that the work of the harvester was a dignified job and how we worked through it.

The cherry on top: I just interviewed Mario last Friday and he told me over the last weekend, he went to a cyber café to download the poem, El Segador, so that he could revise it one more time, so that when he tutors it, it would be good. He shared the poem with his family and just kept saying, "It's a beautiful poem." That's what a deep academic understanding and the opportunity to share it does to a person, it makes you want to re-read and re-read a work, it gives you the confidence to stand up in front of the class and the confidence to believe in yourself, it makes you want to keep learning.

For Mario, a student that is traditionally weak in his academic work, completing a deep analysis of a poem was a big and significant accomplishment. It was only through the thoroughness of a job well done that gave him the confidence to first complete his demonstration in front of the class for the first time, and furthermore to prepare his guide so that he could share his new found knowledge with someone else. The real academic dominance of a tema gives students the confidence to take even bolder risks and open up to try and learn new things. This deep academic learning was what helped Mario regain his joy of learning again.

Furthermore, in another school in Río Grande and in Tlaltenango, students were given the liberty to explore a tema that they were interested in. This was not only fascinating for them as they could go very deep into a tema and research it extensively, but this helped them frame the way they saw the world and their lives as well. There was a real applicability of the tema of human reproduction and kidney failure, as demonstrated below and this went on to inspire the families of these students.

I saw students in the community create their own lines of investigation and seeing their world differently through their scholarly work. One tema called "You are a miracle" caught me attention. I observed Axcelia, a student from José Ma. Morelos y Pavón, the school that hosted us, begin her tutoría with a startling but beautiful question: Why are you a miracle? And with that question, Axcelia and her tutee began to explore the human reproduction process and life, why we were indeed living miracles. Axcelia chose this tema because her mom was pregnant with her baby sister and wanted to know about the stages in pregnancy. How wonderful it is to learn something that has a direct link to what we are living.

In Tlaltenango, I had the pleasure of working with Luis Álvarez González, a boy in his second year of the telesecundaria called Independencia y Libertad, in the community Los Reales. He was small and skinny and had clear, green eyes with a small Mohawk from where he molded his hair... And this Luis moved us with his demonstration on kidney failure. For the first time, I saw a demonstration that hit a perfect blend of raw and rational, a demonstration that moved something inside of me.

He began, "I created this tema because of what I lived, and what my family is living." I sat up. He began to explain kidney failure and what this means, how it is caused and ways to treat it. In a small bag, he brought a home dialysis kit, and with careful detail showed us how to use it at home and what it does. He ended his demonstration like this: "Now the personal side to my tema. My brother, at 18 years of age had kidney failure." He talked about the fearful and painful decision-making, how his sister became the kidney donor and the slow recuperation process. There was an unusual courageous and maturity coming from Luis, an earnest quest for learning that intricately united the theories and academic learning of body systems to shed light on life. Through Maestra Mireya Contreras Marquez's complete openness, trust and belief in her students and the liberty she gave them to explore any issue or a subject, Luis was not only able to go deep in his learning, but gained a special courage and confidence to be a part of the change in his family and a source of awareness in the community as he shared.

In both Axcelia's and Luis' case, the opportunity to create their own lines of investigation helped them understand their world better. They could apply their temas to what they were living at home. And as Axcelia's mother went on to share with me, Axcelia's tema helped her discover things about pregnancy she didn't know and moreover, gave the school relevance to life at home.

Another example is Max, a former student from San Ramón. During his interview, he explained that through working with the temas, he was able to be a researcher, a critic of the world around him and this was for him, the biggest change in his life.

Before I didn't take the things into account, I wasn't conscious of what I did, or that it was of that much importance. Now the moment has come to be a researcher, a critic, and this for example, take us in the field. Well, the people who are involved in the camp, plant the same way all the time, like empirically, to me, I made a change because one hectare of produce so much, but one can produce even more, one can put more plants, more seeds and that is what I have changed. I saw the world differently before. For example, with math, well basically everything is made by mathematics, everything. Everything is related to math, everything practically. To me it seems impossible to take two numbers and that we can do more with those two numbers, things that we don't know, we can get to know and that is used here.

Max here talks about how through the temas, specifically in mathematics, helped him view the world differently. He came to the realization that everything we use- everything

is related to math and through math, we can come to know more about things we don't know. Furthermore, he was able to relate mathematical concepts to life in the community. He draws on the example of the agriculture fields and the ability to maximize land usage with the help of mathematics. Max was not only able to view this world differently, but able to be part of a practical change and betterment of the economic activities in his community.

Overall, this deep learning has not only secured increased learning in the classroom for every single student, it has uplifted communities like Presa de Maravillas and San Ramón with a significantly higher number of students entering preparatory school and excelling in it. Out of the graduating class in Presa de Maravillas this year, 100% are moving on to the preparatory school. All 8 students have taken the placement test in a preparatory school, including three students who were previously expelled from other schools. In La Laguna del Carretero, 90% are moving on as well. This is a trend only began with work in tutoría. Before, only one or two would enroll in the preparatory. Many students have been placed in first or second place in class and as Gabriel de León mentions, the preparatory teachers are always delighted but surprised to have students so well-prepared from these tiny telesecundarias. Gabriel notes,

The teachers (from the prepa) would be surprised that from here, in this tiny community, come students prepared for the preparatory. 20 or 30% would go to the preparatory before comunidades de aprendizaje. And now, all, all go to the preparatory.

A mother from the first generation of students in San Ramón, speaks of the pride she felt in her daughter, Nubia and how working in tutoría has adequately prepared the students for further education.

But I saw that my daughter was really good, with good results. For me, it was such a satisfaction when she was in school. Because at the beginning she didn't want to (enter into the tutoring) and later it gave me great pleasure when she finished. Happiness because even though I wasn't there, I knew she was going prepared, going prepared to another school, going well prepared and sure of where she was going.

Nubia and many others that graduated from San Ramón left well prepared for what life had in store for them next. Almost all of that generation went on to study in the preparatory school and excelled in it. Parents could see the difference in their children and there was much more security about their children's abilities and what they could achieve in the future.

During an interview with two former students from Presa de Maravillas, now currently in the preparatory school, they tell me, their formation and training in the secondary school has prepared them directly for the rigor in the preparatory. One student, Tali, who had previously went to school in "El Fuerte", barely thought about going on to preparatory school until she came to Presa de Maravillas. She said,

When I entered the preparatory, many things that we saw in the preparatory, I had already seen here. Math operations, things, temas that I have chosen in English, I saw them in the prepa.

When I was in school here (El Fuerte), I didn't want to carry on (to the preparatory) because they were not explaining the things well to us and thus we were really low in our grades, we didn't know anything. And when I entered here was when I said, yes, why not (go to preparatory)? I realized that I wanted to go to the preparatory when I started to learn more. The idea only came in Pedro Vélez, when I was learning more.

Working with quality temas not only helps students change their life plans and think about continuing to study but also equips them with the real skills needed to excel academically. Tali is able to do well in the preparatory because she went well-prepared due to her formation in Pedro Vélez. She had seen and worked on the math concepts before and was trained in the exact skills required at higher levels of education.

Through working in tutoría, students are prepared with both the content and skills to excel in school and in institutions beyond secondary school. They are able to apply the temas to their daily lives, think critically and gain a fuller and deeper understanding of the world around them. From two recounts from parents of students in Malpaso, they decided to send their students to a different community to study because they saw the quality of the education in the telesecundaria, explaining the trend of the majority of students from outside the community coming to study in Pedro Vélez. This is also mirrored in San Ramón. Despite having technical schools like the one in Malpaso or in Villa de Cos, parents choose to take the extra burden and cost of sending their children to another community for the quality of learning they have seen and heard.

The effects of the high-quality academic learning of the students in school spills onto the community. Gabriel talks about the new unity in Presa de Maravillas due to the work in tutoría. He attributes this unity to the changes that the parents see in their children, that they are more prepared, that they are learning more. The academic learning inspired the families to do more for the school, to come together as a community to support and continue the good work of the school for their children.

When I arrived here, it was a completely divided community, each one with their own ideology. They had a lot of pride, a lot of arrogance, and that imposed a lot on them. It was so bad that when I had a meeting, I had to use the help of my supervisor, because they would bring up problems against me, against themselves, and I couldn't control it. I always told Professor Pablo, help me, I'm going to have a meeting. And he, would talk to them, and always helped me out. And I could never change this Meixi, until we entered into comunidades de aprendizaje. Comunidades de aprendizaje has given me this marvelous experience of seeing how we went uniting the mother's criticisms, how they united, and now how they work together for the academic exchanges, how the mothers arrive with that interest of sharing their bread and salt with the teachers, with the students. Look at the mothers who come from Malpaso sometimes by foot, with their pot of food to share with everyone. That is

what we have won. But you know how we got that? Working with devotion, with dedication. This support that we've won, we've won it using the work as our base with the students, the base as delivering results with the students, with the base of seeing the neighbors talk to each other. But we have done that only with the work: the dedicated teacher in body and spirit, to the learning of the students.

For Gabriel, it's clear that the unity of the community and the closeness between the community members and school can be attributed to the work in comunidades de aprendizaje. It was the academic work and the real results seen in their children that made the parents see both themselves and the role they could play in the school differently. There was a union and harmony between the school and the community now that Gabriel could not achieve before. Sergio, a student in the third year at Presa de Maravillas said, "The tutoría is changing my family by inspiring them." I didn't understand how that happened and he explained, "They see I'm learning, and that is an inspiration for them." Real academic learning is inspiration for the community. It gives parents new hopes and strength when they see their children learn.

Other than just creating unity in the school and community, in San Ramón, the school became a source of pride for the people in the community, because of the work in tutoría and the deep learning in the students. Elisa, a mother of Nubia, tells of how the community is better because of its school, and how the school is an emblem of pride for many in San Ramón.

Yes, there were changes, as much as the people that came, something caught their attention, people from the government that also came to know more, and more help, because yes, there were trips and everything. This was because this ranch was not any other ranch, instead, there was something that was calling the attention of the rest, that was the program, the attention of the students, how they worked. These were the changes that one saw, that there was something that was good.

Distinguished people come, that there is something in the community that called out for attention and the effort of the Maestra Sara was reflected. Because to be able to move forward, a good job needs to be done. For me, that's it, a teacher that wants to uplift her students. Despite the many difficulties of transportation in coming because it's not easy, she has brought up the community, because she wants to bring them up. It's not for the money, it's for the teaching that she wants to give; she wants to leave something good behind, that takes (people) and continues this wellbeing. You can see that there's someone who's attentive here.

The excellent work and real learning created by working in tutoría caught the attention of very distinguished people, and even the Secretary of Education himself paid a visit to see the work in San Ramón. There is something different in this school and people notice it. Academically, this school is something to see. From high up in government and around the country, the high-quality academic learning and changes in the students and the community are noted and it is clear to the community members that they have something

very special in their hands. The school was a source of great pride for them and this in itself uplifted the community.

4) Personal attention for individualized learning and flexibility of time

One of the most human and fundamental parts of the tutoría is that each tema and learning experience is a personalized dialogue, making sure each student reaches a level high quality analysis and understanding in each tema. This individualized attention, dialogue and pace is the human part of education that has been lost in many schools and classrooms. The ability for one-on-one attention in tutoring and debating ensures every single one is learning and understanding the material before they are able to move on.

The ability to go at one's own pace allows for an equality of depth in academic learning regardless of one's academic ability. This equality for Sara Moran is of utmost importance both inside and outside the classroom. Here she explains how she holds the same expectations of all her students, and brings them to achieve the same depth of understanding in a given tema while respecting each one's rhythm and challenges in learning.

As a tutor, they can speak of, but although they can't write in the same way, it's just as valid. You as a tutor, want all to write, but then there's Ivan, who doesn't find it so easy to write. So I have to go, respecting his rhythm and what he can do, while still demanding quality work. I ask the same that I am asking of Paulina and they are both in the same tema, no? But I know that Paulina can write while with Iván, I will have to accept a little less, without him feeling that he can give less, that he can do the same work.

As Sara mentions, she wants to bring every one to reach the same level of academic knowledge while still maintaining a respect for the time needed for each one. Max, another former student reflects on his own learning process. He says that the key to his ability to excel so well in the secondary school was the time he was given to complete his work and fully understand what he was doing.

Well, the detail that I see in the other (program) is that I had a certain time to finish the subject, nothing more than an hour. And in that hour, I had to complete various themes. Perhaps a student didn't understand something and to not ask the teacher, he let the doubt remain and didn't learn. And now with this other new one, there is time, they give you sufficient time to clear all your doubts to understand well. What happened is that to me, school was no good, good, not in the primary school. I wasn't at the bottom nor at the top, more or less in the middle. And thus, when I entered the secondary school, with this new program, I started to see a change in me, I was going to learn more. I did things that I didn't imagine could be done. At that moment you see it and say, "That's really hard", and you really don't understand it but then it always becomes easy.

Because of the ability to take his time, Max has excelled tremendously in his studies and is a model for the community of San Ramón. He even went on to be one of two students from San Ramón that trained the very first group of teachers across the country in México to work in tutoría. He is the first in his community to go onto university in the coming year to study Chemical Engineering. While he came in not a star-student, working with this flexibility of time was critical for securing deep learning and understanding in his work.

The benefit of the flexibility of the tutoría is that the tutor or teacher can adjust the level of difficulty of work for a student to keep their interest going. The learning process is flexible enough so that it is completely tailored to not just the level of the student but also the state of the student and how they are feeling. Sara gives an example of these very popular math problems in her class that are very simple, but act as a break for her students and a way to peak their interests again in mathematics.

Yes, the idea is that there always is a bigger challenge, but going back to what the rest are doing also, when I see resistance, I have to lower the level. And other times, I will have to increase the level or increase the level of difficulty with some. It's precisely the flexibility of working in comunidades de aprendizaje is that you can attend to those who want more, as much as those who resist and need less. This is what I believe is great, you can lower the level as much as raise it, there is something for everyone. For example, the problems that are very popular now or that there are many who are working on them, but not all are interested in it. Some say, I would rather have something more difficult, a bigger challenge and yes, I give it to them.

Here, we can see that the flexibility of the temas allows for everyone, even the weaker students, or students who are more resistant to work, to enjoy learning and learn at their own pace. As one enters into this relationship, as a tutor, one has to respect the rhythm of each student and gives importance to the thought processes of the tutee. The tutee and their learning is the center of the learning trajectory again and tutor is able to guide the students according to their specific needs and gaps in knowledge. Moreover, the individualized attention provides a way for increased interaction and dialogue between students and teachers and among the students in the classroom. The respect, quality of attention and time given to the tutee helps teachers build strong relationships with their students and this has shown to be critically important for students coming to school with difficulties.

Professor Gabriel from Presa de Maravillas gives an example of Manuelito, a student in his third grade in the telesecundaria who would come to school with red eyes from the worry at home and the hunger he brought to class. The personal attention and the ability to work one-on-one with him helped Gabriel understand more of his daily situation and what Manuel was going through at home.

It's because of this that I always say that the tutoring relationships bring an opportunity for one to know about the daily lives of the students. And from that, I

found out about Manuelito. And said to Manuelito, “Manuelito, why are you not learning? We only have so much time.” Then he said, “No, Profe, it’s that I have many problems in my home. Look, my dad and mom, the first thing they throw are the beams in the house and grab each other by the hair. And I don’t even have breakfast and come here and you believe that I’m going to want to study when I am thinking that my dad has at best given my mom a bad beating and hit her and everything?” So it’s been very difficult... This change happened since I entered into comunidades de aprendizaje. I have only been a teacher for a very short time. Now I consider myself a teacher, not any other teacher or professor, because now I do know that a student is of value, a student is human, a student feels. Now I am aware of the real necessities of the student, I realize that this work, with the freedom that it has, is beautiful.

Working in tutoría one-on-one while building deep knowledge and competencies in his students as mentioned above, Gabriel has entered into a different kind of relationship with his students. He now sees them differently and is acutely aware of the personal and real necessities of each one. Even though he has worked as a teacher for 20 years, it is only with tutorial relationships that he now truly considered himself a *teacher*. This made him change who he is and how he worked. Now he understands the real role of a teacher and this motivates. Gabriel says, “I feel something so beautiful here (touches his chest), something that has no price. I have insomnia because I think of the temas, of my students.” There’s no other method that allows for this kind of closeness with each and every student to form a true community in the classroom. He says, “They share their own issues and feel less alone in the midst of struggles in their lives and at home. Gabriel explains more here:

I have not come across another method that allows you to get so close to the students... that at times, even they themselves with their own problems, begin to talk. “Ah look, I have the same thing. I don’t even have a dad, he left me.” “Hey, we’re the same.”

School is thus a place of refuge and comfort for students as in the actual practice of the tutoría, there is time to share and listen to one another. Many students are deprived of this personal attention at home. More than just attention, it is the human aspect of education that many schools have lost. In my interview with Pablo Cabral, we were talking about the first generation of students that came expelled from the secondary technical school in Malpaso and how in contrast, the quality of attention in Pedro Vélez for each student through working in tutoría brought great changes in them.

We noted that the kids (those that were expelled from Malpaso) came here with gang-like characteristics. And in the course of the work, they went discoloring their hair, fixing their hair to a normal hair, a normal cut. Because they arrived here with a thousand colors, a dressing typical of the gangs, baggy, torn pants, stripped with symbols with tattoos with sticks – piercing or something – in their eyes, in their tongue. And we noted that with the passing of time and with the personal treatment that they got, these kids, these youth, changed. And it was all of them, not just some

and others no. They changed in their attitude. But something important that we noted was that they began to have higher self-esteems. Because they realized that they could be other kinds of people, despite their problems, they could be another kind of person, someone useful, useful to themselves and to the rest. One of the reasons is the attention that the teachers give them. After they were trained and were made to be tutors, they too felt that there was another way to do things with better results. Also it was that the teacher dedicated even more effort to find strategies for each student. The personal attention of each one and the good treatment make the people change. No one resists a dosage of being treated well. They change. So it has something to do with how the teacher behaves and works.

It was the human treatment of these students, the belief in their abilities and the personal attention that was key to helped them realize their own potential. This was the catalyst that sparked a change in them. Sara also speaks of the closeness she feels to her students through working in tutoría and this for her is satisfying.

It's very satisfying. The comunidad de aprendizaje allows for a closeness with every child, with each one. And I scold them and you have seen me shouting and telling them, okay, What happened? What did you do that made you fall? Why not? But at the same time, I feel that there is a relationship that goes beyond that of a normal teacher, or at least I feel that has happened. Because I was working not in relación tutora, in another time I was a "normal" teacher, but now I don't feel I'm a normal teacher. So, I don't know, I feel closer to them and they know that I'm closer too. Also, they know what is my role and that I have to use the baton no? It's not that I'm there always asking more of them, but there's always a collaboration. Like they collaborate and they are worried- it's not like the school is distant either, they feel part of the school and the school is theirs. And the moms, the same, always collaborating, always close, always attentive and this I believe is what the comunidad de aprendizaje has given. I'm convinced of this, and not that it's just for a day or another, but for the future. But this has to do with this base, this solid tutorial relationship in the classroom that then impacts the school. I believe we're at this level, o as a school, I feel that we're a very solidified group.

For Sara Moran, using the tutorial relationships as a base, this has brought the school and the parents even closer to the school. The quality of attention often lacking at home makes school a refuge and an oasis for the students. The equality and the insistence that all students are retreated with the same kind of respect transmits out into the community and students and families begin to respect each other outside the classroom. Through this respect there is a new closeness and solidarity between the community and school, creating an even healthier and more conducive environment for great learning to take place.

5) Public Demonstration

Every tema ends with a public demonstration, an opportunity for the tutee to share what they learned with a larger learning community usually consisting of classmates and

family members, sometimes including academic authorities or other visitors. The demonstration can seem a daunting process at the beginning but slowly students garner more confidence and courage to speak in front of the public. The demonstration for a tutee is a mark of accomplishment at the end of each tema and plays an important role in building the self-confidence of a student. It teaches a student to organize his or her thoughts and build up interest in the class as learning and passion are shared. This is an important part in creating firstly a community of learners and a shared learning experience in the classroom and also at home.

Again with Mario's case in Pedro Vélez, it was only through a high dominance of the content of a tema that gives one the confidence to share this knowledge publically. Another student, Osvualdo in his first year at Pedro Vélez, is a very quiet and timid boy. He did a demonstration during the student week celebrations in the technical secondary school in Malpaso and was so encouraged by the responses.

Osvualdo came out to greet me and immediately said, "Maestra, maestra! I did a perfect demonstration in Malpaso! All the teachers came up to greet me and some were even crying. It felt so good. I was so happy." I could see the real pride on his face.

The demonstrations were a way for students to share their knowledge and learn skills of public speaking in front of a crowd. In the técnica, there were about more than 100 people watching. Osvualdo's accomplishment of doing a demonstration well after many practices in class, gave him even more courage to keep working and learning.

The opportunity given to students to demonstrate is also an opportunity to share their learning at home. In a community in Río Grande, two mothers explained how their daughters would come home and ask to practice their demonstrations with them, sharing the learning with their families as well.

My daughter would come up to me and say, "Mom can I try out my demonstration on you?" So they practice with us at home before they do it in school because their demonstration is their exam right? And this helps them get rid of their timidity and we get to learn too.

Practicing the demonstrations at home was a way to share the knowledge outside the walls of the school and for the mothers, was a time to support their children and learn from them too. Furthermore, the demonstrations are a source of pride and learning for the families. In Presa de Maravillas, they had demonstrations about bi-monthly, where all parents invited to come and be a part of the audience. Pablo Cabral recounts the very first public demonstration in Presa de Maravillas. For some parents, this demonstration gave them a sense of hope that helped dispel prejudices and preconceived notions of their own children and mend relationships in the family.

Then we convinced them that we were going to change the model of education for their children. I remember the first demonstration, in about a month, we had our

first demonstration, a public demonstration and the classroom was once again filled with parents. I remember a child who came from Malpaso, that for his characteristics, was a suppressed child, and sometimes very quiet, and sometimes very active, played too much and after would sit and be very quiet and not do anything. He did a demonstration on a tema in English. It wasn't complicated, but yes, it was a translation in English. This act made his mother stand up, hug him and cry and tell him, tell everyone that she always believed that her son was not good for anything but now, seeing this, she told him that he was her biggest treasure, that he was a jewel that she had never discovered.

In this powerful example, we can see how community participation in the school and in the academic learning of their children dispelled preconceived notions of their own children. There was an awakening to the newly discovered gifts and talents of the students. This brings a new closeness between the school and the community, and more than that, a new belief in the parents in the abilities of their children again.

6) Creating the tutoring guide

Probably the most exciting and radical part of comunidades de aprendizaje is that the call of every student or tutee is to then become a tutor. Every one in the network plays and shifts between the two roles of tutee and tutor at the same time. This is a critical aspect of the tutoría because of the unadulterated belief in the ability of a student to be a part of the teaching force. This truly places a great responsibility and trust in them to not just take charge of one's own learning but also the learning of their school. They begin to worry that the other learns. The expectation of every tutee is much greater; their role is not just to learn, but to learn well enough so that they can share and teach it to someone else. As Dr Cámara always says, to teach is the best opportunity to learn. Thus students take more pride in their work and learn so they can teach and teachers have a higher goal of making each student a great tutor. Robert Fried states (2001, p. 243), "But if you believe that adults can 'make' children learn well – in the absence of or in defiance of a child's inner sense of confident engagement with the power of discovery and mastery – then, in my view, you are placing that child at great risk of failure as a learner." Along with the ability to be researchers and take charge of their own learning, this shared responsibility to learn and teach recognizes the inner capacities of each child and makes them great learners for life.

Blanca is a student in her final year of secondary school. After staying back a year in primary school and dropping out of the technical school in Malpaso she came to Pedro Vélez and blossomed as a tutor and tutee working in comunidades de aprendizaje. Here is explains why she enjoys tutoring, her first tutoring experience and how she slowly came to understand what tutoring was about.

I like being tutored and being the tutor. Mainly why? Because if I tutor, being tutored and tutoring, sometimes one learns as much as the tutor as the tutee. Both learn new things. Like someone who tutored me in a problem and I tutor someone

else, I realize that there is something that I haven't learned or did not research and I have to research it with the tutee and I learn something new.

My favorite time tutoring was my favorite. You know why? Because I felt like I had become a teacher and the tutee had to do what I told him to. So I felt like a teacher but later saw that it wasn't all that, instead, it was having the enthusiasm to teach him and one learns too, that he learns and that we too learn things that we haven't seen.

Blanca learns just as much as a tutee and as a tutor and every time in tutoría one has the opportunity to learn something new. Erika, a mother in San Ramón explains how the opportunity to teach has been a real source of motivation for daughter, Liz.

She comes and tells me, "Mom, I am tutoring!" Her motivation is that "I am now tutoring Daniela or Paulina." Well, it gives her great pleasure because before they were the students in first place at school. Now she likes to say that "I'm tutoring her" because before they were just tutoring her. She wasn't motivated. Now she is, and feels more confidence. Now she says, "I'm already tutoring what she wants or what I want to tutor." But yes, there have been many changes.

The opportunity to finally tutor was motivating for Liz. Through being tutors, the students begin to gain a sense of pride in their work and in themselves. Moreover, they begin to care about doing a good job tutoring so that others too can learn well. Blanca, due to her excellent work ethic, has had a few experiences going to academic exchanges. She shares about her time in Queretaro, tutoring a teacher who was initially reluctant to enter into the tutoría. She shares her desire for others to learn how to work in tutoría, so that other students and teachers can benefit just as she has. She responds to this teacher in Queretaro and finally convinces her to work with her in tutoría.

"Look Maestra, you came here to learn this method that we work in and so you come here to teach it, teach it in another place, where you are going to teach. If you didn't pay attention, if you weren't enthusiastic if you didn't work, what will you teach there? What you teach there won't be good and me, being your tutor will have done a bad job. I am interested that you learn this method well, that you learn, and maybe I too can learn from you..." Then she thought and said, "Well, what's next?"

Well she is a teacher and comes knowing how to teach in a normal secondary school right? So I was interested that she realize that, well for me, that using this method, one learns more. So if it's true that one learns more in this method, it is better to use it for her students so that they can learn better and develop their system of work, so they can advance more than before. The students are going to learn more and maybe even the teacher herself too.

Blanca not only felt the responsibility to do a good job as a tutor but the burden of transferring this knowledge so that other students in a different part of the country can

benefit from it. It is this responsibility that one learns as a tutor, to care and be deeply concerned about the learning of others.

Sara Moran also explains this phenomenon as students as a whole learn to be accountable to their fellow schoolmates. This in itself creates a different kind of school culture and students begin to think of themselves as a collective whole, a real community that learns together.

Whoever doesn't want to take a tema- there is a very popular tema: Water is a precious substance, a text in English, where each line calls for research- the group took it but someone doesn't. Some will go and say, "Why don't you work on this tema? No, take it, I'll help you. It's not complicated." They are concerned that the other do that which they did. Whoever who doesn't do the demonstration, the majority demonstrates their temas but when there are some that pass two or three times not doing the demonstrations, the other will begin to say, "Come on, we will help you, we'll collaborate until you do make the Powerpoint of your work, it's that we don't want you to be left behind." I like this a lot. It's this part, to feel that we are all part of each other and I can't leave you behind. I see very clear cases like Efen, his work with Adrian seems so noble, because he is like that, "You can't stay behind, you have to be with the group."

It caught my attention how they began to not only think of their well-being, which before was very common. I believe it happens to everybody. We think only in ourselves, that we are the beneficiaries, that I have the benefits, that I'm fine, in me, me, me. And I note now that they begin to think in the other. If I do something, yes that I'll be good but also because my friends are going to be well. I imagine it's this, that we see a community. Imagine it, to think no just in my well-being, but the well-being of the other, like a community. So I feel too that the collaboration of the parents is more now. They are closer to the school and its necessities.

The tutoría is creating an entirely new culture in the school, where students begin to think in the good of the other through working in tutoría. There is a real concern among the students for the learning of each other and this spills over into the communities as the school and all its entities are now working in solidarity. Sara Moran elaborates further how this new culture in school has allowed for a different kind of collaboration on the part of the mothers with the school in the community of San Ramón.

There are differences between certain families o there are mothers that have problems in the past and later it results that they both have students in the school. But in school, it's not noticeable, these differences that the mothers have with each other, there, no. They can coexist and work together and I don't notice that the students are enemies because their mothers are. This too is really cool, that there, the differences are erased.

The students, the work that they do in the classroom daily, makes it clear to them that we all need each other, that my work or that the work that is done with one of

my classmates is done through solidarity, I am in solidarity with the other, I make myself responsible of the other in a way, it's a huge commitment. So, this is what I believe is what the students share at home, I think. This is what I imagine that happens. It makes them see, that another child is helping my son and my son or daughter can help another. Thus creating a different idea- that we all need to help, we all need to support. So when I need something and I don't even say it and they surprise me, that I'm not even pushing for many things, I don't say it, they say that we need to do this and we do it. I arrive in a bit and everything's clean, everything's done. A lot of it is what the students bring to their homes, a new idea, a new way of working.

In another time, it was the teacher that was telling them, please come and do. Now, it's them that say, we're missing something, let's do it. Like the cement that was in the school. The mom saw it and said, we have to get rid of it. One meeting, there was a day and they had already removed it. Now they organize, let's do that thing. I feel that it's what I do daily in the class with the kids that start to reflect outside. This collaboration, this concern for the other, what you do when you work in tutoría, my worry that the other learns what I already know. What Jesus says, it's greater to give than receive. You start to feel that when you give, it's not that you become poorer, but that it makes me bigger and this happens through the tutoría. Far from losing, I gain more.

In San Ramón, the work that the Maestra Sara was doing daily in the classroom was beginning to reflect in a new way of treating others, a new way of living and a new kind of partnership between the school and community. Students and the community members are concerned for the good of the other and come together to make sacrifices for the school, for the good of all. This solidarity is a reflection of the relación tutora and has transformed the fabric of the community in San Ramón.

7) Academic Exchanges

I cannot stress enough how important academic exchanges are in strengthening the network of tutors and tutees. Here, students have real opportunities to share their knowledge and become part of the solution to a broken education system. Most of all, these are a great motivating force for both teachers and students as their work in the classroom is validated externally. These academic exchanges are real opportunities to first, spread and strengthen the tutoría, share values through it and feel part of a larger movement as we build a community of learners who are united by the practice of tutoría.

In the municipality of Villanueva where there are about 4 telesecundarias, in La Laguna del Carretero, Presa de Maravillas, Santa Rosa and San Diego, working in relación tutora, the academic exchanges and study group sessions between teachers have been hugely important for the expansion of the work in the region. Just this year, they have incorporated the technical secondary school in Malpaso as part of this regional network or coined "Sister Schools". In a group interview with Pedro Pitones, teacher-coach for the region (asesor tecnológico pedagógico or ATP) Laura Mayorga, principal and teacher in

La Laguna del Carretero and Antonio Felix, principal and teacher in Santa Rosa, they explain why they enjoy these academic exchanges and how it has served their students.

If we don't have these academic exchanges, all that we do in the classroom stays anonymous, nothing else but inside the school. But when we've gone out to other communities, and go to other places, the students have developed a lot more capabilities. They lose the fear of speaking in front of an auditorium, they communicated with more ease with people they don't know. And something that is very important is their desire to continue studying because they get so excited.

Professor Pedro Pitones adds: We tested this out when we went to Mazatlán, for them, when they tutored a student there, it was like they were tutoring one of their own classmates. It (the exchanges we have) has served them a lot in terms of being able to relate to any person. It doesn't matter to them if they are tutoring a student, a teacher, an academic authority, they don't take it into account, they already know what they are going to do and they do it with pleasure.

When their students go out to partake in the academic exchanges, this gives external validity to their work, trains them to be better tutors, to be able to relate to anyone and motivates them to keep working. Furthermore, for many students the opportunity to fellowship outside on their own community is almost consistently one of their favorite parts of being part of the tutoring network. Braulio, a student in his first year usually complains about school, and is often absent. However, his eyes lit up when I asked when was his favorite time in Pedro Vélez. He recounted an academic exchange with the other three telesecundarias in Villanueva where it was a time to learn and enjoy the company of others in the region.

Well the day that they came from Santa Rosa and La Laguna del Carretero was my favorite. That day. Why? Because it was good, cool. Because we were playing, tutoring and demonstrating.

For Braulio, a student that traditionally does not enjoy coming to school, looks forward to fellowship with other students and this motivates him to study his temas well so that he can offer it to someone else. Maestra Laura Mayorga explains how students learn to socialize more through these experiences and how this helps students grow.

The motivation that the students have to keep bettering themselves and continue growing is through having these relationships with other friends from the sister schools, through getting to know more, through exchanging ideas, interests, likes, and I consider that one the important aspects for the students with these academic exchanges in the schools.

Students were able to see how they could be better and know more through interactions with others from the region. They were constantly improving and sharing. Through local academic exchanges and nation-wide ones, students and teachers are able to be a part of a movement, a movement to change hearts and minds through the tutoría. In one event in

Pinos, students from nearby regions were invited to be part of a training force in a new region where the state team wanted to expand the work. Here in my fieldnotes, I write about the event and how this was indeed one of the most radical yet rewarding events that motivated both students and teachers in the communities.

On Tuesday, I saw this social movement with incredible clarity. We had a teacher training session with about 143 supervisors, teacher-coaches, principals, and teachers who came from the region called Pinos. Instead of bringing foreign speakers or bringing the Secretary of Education or some other big shot to do the teacher training, guess what they brought? An army of 53 students from surrounding schools, ready to tutor. Each student was paired up with about two teachers, principals or school supervisors and from 9am - 1pm, we worked and worked and worked. Every trio took up a spot in the beautiful cultural center in Pinos, completely immersed in the tutoría. The students woke up at 5am just to travel for about two hours to get to Pinos and we only got home around 6pm. But on the bus back, they were so satisfied with their work – both students and teachers - that that energy carried us through.

It is in events like the one in Pinos that prove how collaborative working in tutoría really is. Students travel across the state to share their knowledge and every time it is shared, the work is strengthened and enhanced. Instead of having schools competing with each other, the relación tutora allows for an intimate and powerful sharing of knowledge, where there is mutual support between schools, between regions, and even between states. As we heard from Blanca before, this is an opportunity for students who are completely convinced and excited to change mindsets, especially of teachers so that more can learn. Maestra Laura from the primary school teacher in Santa Rosa explains how this happens.

This change happened in the moment that I had to take a role in the tutoría... When I had to work through a problem, I felt like a student. I said: Wow, a student goes through what I am going through right now and my students feel exactly how I feel. I don't want to learn this, I'd rather play. I felt in the place of a student... and this makes me understand how my student is feeling, what he or she is thinking, what they need so that they can do what they need to, how they are and what they're interested in.

Through the dialogue in tutoría, students are a vital part of transforming the way teachers teach and work in their classrooms. The boundaries between the roles of “teacher” and “student” are blurred in tutoría. By being in a student’s shoes, teachers remember what it means to learn and how lead someone to learn. This radical shift in perspective is a sharp lesson that humbles and moves. These academic exchanges create more interactions and reversal of roles between students and teachers and are a key part of creating equality between those roles to build a community of learners throughout México, a comunidad de aprendizaje that imparts values through the work.

In Santa Rosa, this excitement for learning and the concern that others too learn, spreads from these academic exchanges to their own communities. Professor Pedro Pitones shares

how the expansion of the work to the primary school in Santa Rosa took place thanks to two students from the telesecundaria there who, after representing their community in other regions and states, felt they needed to bring what they bring outside in the academic exchanges to their own primary school.

The work in the primary school emerged from the worries of two students in the telesecundaria. They said, “Mr Toño, why are we giving tutoría to people of other schools in the state, to people from different parts of the country, and other parts of the world but our own primary school, we’ve never visited? What do you think if we go and ask for permission from the teacher to give us the opportunity to work with the students in sixth grade? And they went, talked to the teacher and she liked the idea.

In this clear example in Santa Rosa, students because of their experiences in the academic exchanges, their worry and concern for the learning of the other was brought back home to their own community. It was the pride they felt being part of this movement, this change that made them want to be agents of even more change in their community. Gabriel from Presa de Maravillas explains this pride.

With these academic exchanges, for the students, it’s a pride to go out and share this new method to other institutions, be it the same state or to other states, because they feel so proud to teach something that’s working for them, something that fills them, the reasoning and knowledge.

The students who have these opportunities to go and be tutors, to be part of changing the educational system, teachers and the way they work, there is a sense of overwhelming pride for them and their parents. Nubia was one of two students selected from San Ramón to train more teachers when the project comunidades de aprendizajes was to expand to the rest of the country. Elisa, her mother explains the pride she felt as a parent and how this has motivated her to support her children even more in their education.

Sometimes when she went to Zacatecas (the capital city), she didn’t have shoes... but she had the enthusiasm, even though she didn’t have the clothes. But it was an enthusiasm more than anything because she was going to learn from many teachers. They were both young. Take into account that it was a very beautiful experience for her because she was fellowship with many teachers. She being a student, showed them how to tutor and how they were working. How they tutored their classmates and they liked the work. Many teachers came from all over the Republic and it was a beautiful experience. It marked a lot. It left a significant mark on one, being a parent, it leave a mark because one’s child, she was more than anything, teaching them what they knew. This was our best era. It was a beautiful stage in life for us. The pride that one feels, because they came and gave us the recognition. A lot of enthusiasm with many experiences, as a mother, I got to have many beautiful experiences... That’s what the role is of a parent in the family, to support them in this way, so they succeed.

Elisa saw her daughter learning and not only that, able to be in academic exchanges as a tutor for other teachers from all over the country. She recalls this period in her life with

much pride. As a mother, because of this experience, she now understands her role as a parent and how to support her children in their academic journey and life. Visits to schools like San Ramón have, as mentioned above, made the school a source of pride for both the parents and the larger community. Students, parents, teachers and academic authorities know that they are part of a larger movement, a movement of the academics that keeps multiplying in strength as it is shared. I call it an exponential equation, when the power of the comunidades de aprendizaje and the changes we have seen in students, teachers and their families is doubled each time it is shared through the practice of the relación tutora. Academic exchanges are an important part of that equation and we must continue to build learning that is constantly shared and strengthened, one tutoría at a time.

Recommendations

Some take-aways from this research and my experience in general in the state of Zacatecas is below. These are made observing the classroom work and through the interviews with each student, ex-students, a parent in the family, teachers, ATPs and academic authorities. Knowing that each state is different, these are some of the most outstanding recommendations specifically referring to how the tutoría has been powerful in changing the social fabric of communities.

1) Individuals change others and communities

The change starts from the person and only people who are truly committed and convinced can really catalyze the work and spread this movement. The movement has only been so strong in Zacatecas and spread so organically because of the dedication and passion of the team of students, teachers, ATPs, community members and academic authorities. We need to focus on personal change and through that, the change will multiply. Sara Morán of San Ramón said that she was more and more convinced working in tutoría because of Álvaro's enthusiasm as her assessor. She caught his contagious energy and that then infected her students. In the trainings be it in programs of Tejido Social or Calles or Básicas Sin Fronteras, we need to use people who are convinced of and in love with this work to then convince others.

2) Teamwork between teachers, students and community

These three groups of people are a team and a teacher needs to be involved and lead work in the community. Even if the family sees changes in their children but are not welcomed into the school by the teacher or do not have an open communication with the teacher, there is only so much that can happen in the families. The role of a teacher, be it in a telesecundaria, a technical or general secondary school, is of utmost importance and the openness, confidence and dignity that the community members feel with the teacher is key. The way the teacher treats the community members speaks volumes of the person and determines how the community will be involved in the school and its activities, another important factor for success in academic achievement and strong work in tutoría. The change begins with us.

3) Demand quality temas

If there was anything clear about how people changed, the dominance of the academics was crucial. We need to take care of every single tutoría, both in trainings and also in the

classroom, especially in temas in Spanish literature as that was weaker overall in the regions. In San Ramón, la Maestra Sara still reviews every single tema that is done by her students even if she did not tutor it. We need to learn to strike a balance between maintaining the respect we have for their rhythm of learning but also to not give up on expecting quality work from each tutee. In particular, we must take care of the quality of temas in Spanish and English to develop more competencies in comprehension, basic analysis, argumentation and writing.

4) Structure is key

Classroom organization is key for a network of tutors to work well. In the US, there was a movement for critical-thinking schools where students were just allowed to research anything they liked. This movement failed because there was no structure to the work. This is why the role of the tutor and teacher is of utmost importance, and furthermore, the teacher's classroom organization is key. In San Ramón, la Maestra Sara has her school year planned out, the students know that Tuesdays and Thursdays are for physical education, that the demonstrations are held every two months when grades are submitted, exactly who is working with whom and where each person is in their learning trajectory. We need to start thinking about how to organize the classroom, the rules among the students so that a conducive environment is created for the students to work at their best in tutoría. See Appendix A for how Sara Moran organizes her classroom.

5) Believe in our teams

Often this work is tiring and draining as a teacher or an ATP as every day can seem like an uphill battle. While the teams often look for inspiration outside, I am reminded again and again that the real power of this movement is within. We need to make sure that teachers know and are reminded that they have the power to build this movement, and that this movement begins in with their students, in their classrooms.

6) Plug into a network

One of the incredible strengths of the team in Villanueva is being part of a "community of learning" or comunidad de aprendizaje. Everyone is in sync with the other and the 4 telesecundarias (Santa Rosa, Presa de Maravillas, La Laguna del Careterro and San Diego) and now the one technical school in Malpaso have consistently supported each other in so many different ways. For a week each, two groups of three students from the técnica in Malpaso came to be students in the telesecundarias to learn how to work in tutoría in the classroom and how to go back and strengthen the work in Malpaso. The dance teacher from the técnica helped Professor Gabriel teach a dance class for the Mother's Day performance; all five schools were together working in tutoría during the student's day week. Any opportunity that presented itself was taken to share and keep strengthening the work. These academic exchanges were self-organized and gave their students even more opportunity to tutor and learn from a variety of tutors. The teachers along with their ATP, Pedro Pitones took charge of creating that community on the basis of the shared work in tutoría and strong friendships. Even with just one ATP in the region, the community was so lively and active. Building a community is constant work and we should encourage the teachers to take ownership of these exchanges, provide support for expenses like transport and give them the space to think of more collaborative

ideas. Most recently other teachers have been attacking those who work in tutoría, saying that they aren't even working, mocking them. What holds and encourages these teachers is precisely the community they have in each other. In comunidades de aprendizaje, this is crucial and more regions should be working to consistently build community in this way.

7) Academic exchanges

Everyone should have an opportunity to be at an academic exchange as this is truly a real motivating factor for learning for the students. More often than not, the best students are chosen for academic exchanges organized by the states while the students who are weaker do not. I believe a goal should be to try to give all students at least one opportunity to be part of these academic exchanges. Another benefit from the point above about having a network is that when the regions come together to work, this usually does involve all students in the school and is always of great benefit to both the students and teachers. Furthermore, we have seen how the students have been a great force of change and we need more opportunities for them like the one in Pinos, where the students are part of the training force for the state and/or region.

8) El sistema educativo

I am more and more convinced that the education system in México and other countries was created without taking into account the real needs of students for learning. For example, the 50-minute classes in the general and technical secondary schools don't allow for the flexibility and dept of real academic learning. Furthermore, there are policies that take away the motivation of professionals to become teachers. For example, in some public schools, the children of teachers are excluded from receiving scholarships because their parents are teachers. This is not only a deterrent to become a teacher, but also is discouraging and prevents one from doing a good job as a teacher. We need more policies and structures in the education system that facilitate great learning in every child and promote favorable economic and social conditions to attract and maintain more teachers who are able to bring real learning to the schools.

Conclusion

In my time in the various regions in Zacatecas, I saw how the combination of powerful academic learning through a humane process changed individual lives. It first changed the lives of students, teachers and from these personal transformations, spread and rippled out into the community and to other regions.

I have learned that the work in tutoría must change the way we lives our lives and must change who we are as people, as parents, siblings, friends, and this takes time. The teachers who are in love with the tutoría and 100% convinced of its power like Professor Gabriel de León and Maestra Sara Moran, have in their own personal way have gone above and beyond their call as teachers. While personalities and personal values play an important role in the healing process, working in tutoría changes the person for the better and deepens one's passion for the work. This in turn has tremendously shaped and contributed to transformation and healing in their communities. But there are stages of advancement personally and professionally and in the work of the school; we are always

in the journey to improve our practice, to improve our work. What I have tried to do in this paper is extract the core work in tutoría and see how that is linked to the changes we see in the people. While for example Professor Gabriel and Maestra Sara have very different teaching styles and different personalities and the contrast between them help give this study even more validity as what is common between the two was the real practice of the tutoría and we could see very similar changes because of working in comunidades de aprendizaje. Thus what is key and essential are these seven moments in tutoría, the actual practice of the daily work in the classroom and how this is created an impact in the people and their communities.

Furthermore in both communities I could combine the experiences of present students and former students and was able to capture these changes over an extended period of time. It takes time to truly create deep change in individual people and then in the culture of the school and the community. In San Ramón for example, they only started working in tutoría again two years ago. The changes that we see here required those two years of constant work in tutoría, and constant care from the Maestra Sara of the school and community. Every day is still a battle and many times the conditions in the community and the surrounding neighborhoods make it even harder for the good work of the tutoría to create an impact in the families and in the culture of the people. Every community is also different, facing a variety and combination of social, emotional and economic challenges. In some real culture shifts, like the role of women in society or a girl's need to marry young, it often takes generations to see lasting changes. Here, I deliberately chose the best anecdotes and personal reflections to show that the relación tutora in spite of these odds, still has been powerful in communities crippled by issues of violence and immigration.

This paper is focused on the actual practice of the tutoría and how that has healed communities. While each part of the tutoría as organized in this paper plays an important role, *all* parts must be present and must work together in cohesion to bring about this deep transformation and healing in individuals and in community. Only together, building upon each other as a whole and complete practice, does the tutoría truly have its magic.

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APPENIX A: CLASSROOM AND WORK ORGANIZATION OF SAN RAMÓN

Diario

- **La puntualidad:** Los alumnos llegan puntualmente a la escuela a las 8am, salen a recreo a 11am y regresan a las 11.40am.
- **Respecto:** Cada grosería cuesta 10 pesos, hablando demasiado su nombre va a estar en el pizarro para echar agua al árboles durante recreo.
- **Responsabilidad:**
 - Si necesitan más hojas, cada hoja cuesta 1 peso.
- **De trabajos:**
 - Sara tiene una lista del trabajo de cada quien, con quién están trabajando, en cuál tema
 - Les permite trabaja dos temas a la vez pero que tienen que terminar cada trabajo que uno empieza
 - Cada día Sara revisa el trabajo de cada quién, hacen preguntas aunque ella no fue el tutor de este alumno; revisa el trabajo de cada tutor también
 - Si necesita, les pide ayudar a alumnos que han terminado un tema que Sara está trabajando con su tutorado

Semanario

- **Aseo:** Hay grupos de alumnos que hacen el aseo cada día y ella es muy particular de la calidad de cada aseo.
- **Asignaturas:** Martes y Jueves en la mañana tiene educación física por una hora

Anual

- **Demostraciones:** Cuando entregan las calificaciones cada dos meses, hacen un ensayo con cada quien y después la demostración pública.
- **Festivales:** Celebra con sus alumnos, como el día del estudiante, fueron a pasear