

EDUHEM 2018
VIII International conference on intercultural education and
International conference on transcultural health: THE
VALUE OF EDUCATION AND HEALTH FOR A GLOBAL,
TRANSCULTURAL WORLD

PROFESSOR'S PERCEPTION ON THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE
COMPETENCES APPROACH IN A CLASSROOM

Miriam Álvarez Mariscal (a)*, Vicente Arámburo Vizcarra (a), Patricio Henríquez Ritchie (a),
Brenda Boroel Cervantes (a)
*Corresponding author

(a) Universidad Autónoma de Baja California, Carretera Federal 1 s/n, Carlos Pacheco 7, Ensenada, Baja California,
México. *Email: miriam3@uabc.edu.mx

Abstract

The competency approach emerges as a response to the concern to build a quality college education. However, the development of such approach shows restricted and complex possibilities. According to “Tobon” (2013), teachers have significant obstacles in implementing a curriculum based on competences, derived from the confusion that still prevails between objectives and purposes corresponding to the traditional and the current training paradigm. The purpose of this study was to evaluate from the perception of university professors the effectiveness of the competency approach in a classroom considering four dimensions: pertinence within the syllabus, knowledge of the approach, its application with regard to use of the teaching strategies and learning assessment instruments utilized, and perception of its advantages and disadvantages of the competency. The study corresponds to an exploratory design of descriptive scope. The study sample consisted of 239 subjects who teach in two faculties of a Mexican public university. Among the results obtained, 30% indicate that there are no clear differences between the effectiveness of the model by competencies compared to the traditional one. 26% are convinced of the effectiveness of the traditional teaching-learning model. 20% think that the main problem is the professor's resistance to change. This research study presents empirical evidence that supports the discussion on the effectiveness of the competency approach and the difficulties for its instrumentation in a classroom.

© 2019 Published by Future Academy www.FutureAcademy.org. UK

Keywords: Competency approach, teaching practices, teaching strategies.



1. Introduction

The educational approach by competences emerges as a response to the concern to build a quality higher education; Most of the Mexican universities have adopted this approach and implemented teacher training policies where a new function predominates: teaching to learn; so that students develop cognitive processes to be applied to changing situations, for which they must develop skills, attitudes and competencies. However, Rueda (2009) points out that the perspectives for the development of the competency approach show restricted and complex possibilities.

The application of the competency-based approach in the classroom is a current challenge which requires, among other aspects, an identification and evaluation of the main teaching competences. According to Tobón (2013), teachers have significant obstacles to implement the curriculum by competences, derived from the confusion that still prevails between objectives and purposes, corresponding to the paradigm of traditional and current training, respectively.

This article reports the results of a study conducted at a Mexican state public university; La Universidad Autónoma de Baja California, UABC (The Autonomous University of Baja California (UABC) whose main purpose was to analyze from the perception of university professors the effectiveness of the competency-based approach to its application in the classroom, considering four dimensions: relevance to the curriculum; knowledge of the approach; application of the same in relation to the teaching strategies they use and the learning assessment instruments they apply; and perception of advantages and disadvantages of the competency approach.

2. Problem Statement

The training of teaching staff has been a critical issue based on the mission assigned to these professionals and the transformations suffered by the functions of higher education institutions depending on the social context, technological development and currently, the phenomenon of globalization that allows the integration between different cultures, idiosyncrasies and social groups. It is in this context, the school must prepare man for life, develop his ability to learn new content and solve problems and unprecedented situations with creativity as well as promote its resolving power (Soler, 2004).

The study of the approach by competences in educational matter, has formulated diverse reasonings, that go from the assurance of the congruence of the formal educative system to the necessities of the productive and social sector, until the idea of contributing to the formation of individuals to cover a set of fundamental needs, identified by groups of experts and international organizations that underpin the effective performance of the professions (Rueda, 2009).

In the international context, countries such as the United States, Canada, the main European and Latin American countries, consider the competency approach as a device for the change of educational institutions in the knowledge society (Luna, Rueda, & Arbesú, 2006); considered as a complex combination of knowledge, attitudes, skills and values, which are manifested in the context of the execution of a task (Gonczi & Athanasou, 1996, in Rueda, 2009).

In such a way that the competence is not reduced to a trained behavior, but to the reflective capacities that occur throughout a development process.

The study of teaching competences poses an effective teaching, comprehensive and aware of the role of affectivity, therefore, it is necessary to differentiate the educational practice in three levels: cognitive, procedural and attitudinal. Educating with a focus on competencies involves creating learning experiences for students to develop skills that allow them to articulate, in a comprehensive manner, strategies that are considered essential to positively perform the activities demanded.

According to Argudín (2005), the basic skills that teachers should desirably have are: academic, didactic and administrative, which, in turn, are enriched by teamwork, leadership, rational use of information technologies and communication and information, ethics, use of effective communication and continuous professional development.

The teaching work plays a fundamental role to enable the development of the competency-based approach, since it is expected that this contributes to the student's acquiring the specific competences of his / her graduation profile. In this way, the competencies construct entails a relationship between the different activities carried out by both the teacher and the students. Hence the need to identify which activities favor teaching and learning based on the competency approach. Rueda (2009) presents a set of teaching competences, own and of other authors, that serve as indicators of a teaching based on the competences approach, which must be redefined in the institutional context to which the teachers belong. The institutional context plays an important role in the competencies approach, since educational institutions must evaluate the advantages and disadvantages that this approach offers (Barriga, 2006).

The UABC is one of the 22 Mexican universities that participated in the Alfa Tuning Project - Latin America, derived from the original project of 135 European universities that, since 2011, took on the task of creating the European Higher Education Area (EHEA). In October 2004 the representatives of the 47 European countries met, with the 15 non-European countries that had requested to participate in the Tuning Project, including Mexico among them. As a result of this meeting, a declaration was signed committing these countries to carry out activities aimed at improving higher education. One of these activities was the creation of the Tuning Project, whose purpose was to resolve the lack of harmony between the study programs offered and the training needs of professionals in the labor market (Stockwell, Bengoetxea, & Tauch, 2011; Beneitone, et al., 2007).

As a result of Mexico's participation in the Tuning Project, a significant number of the country's universities began the process of modifying the study programs. The UABC, being one of the 62 Mexican universities that participated in this project and, taking as a reference the specific initiatives established in the Institutional Development Plan 2003-2006 made the University reform for the implementation of the Educational Model. Gradually, all the schools and faculties were migrating their study plans towards the competency model. Currently, all the courses taught at the UABC are focused on the competency-based approach.

After more than a decade of the instrumentation of the model by competences in the UABC, there remain doubts about the way in which teachers are taking to the classroom the principles and methodology of the model. It is necessary to carry out research to know how the teaching staff conceptualizes the educational model by competences and what are the main obstacles to make available to the students the knowledge they must learn. Finally, it is important to know how teachers proceed to facilitate students to learn to use the skills developed in different contexts.

The discourse of the educational model by competences emphasizes that the center of education is the student, but in a similar way to what happens with teachers, students do not seem to be taking advantage of the opportunity to take responsibility for their own professional training and hope that the Professor who decides the important contents and teaches them, as in the traditional model.

You can only know how it is that the UABC's competency-based approach is being taken to the classroom, if one of the main actors is the teacher.

3. Research Questions

Do the teachers consider that the curricula of the Educational Programs where they teach correspond to a design by competences? What is the degree of knowledge that teachers have about the model by competencies offered by the UABC? What are the main teaching strategies and learning assessment tools used by teachers and to what extent do they correspond to a competency-based approach? What is your opinion about the advantages and disadvantages of applying the competency-based approach in the classroom?

4. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the present investigation was to evaluate from the perception of the university professors of the Faculty of Administrative and Social Sciences and those of the Faculty of Engineering, Architecture and Design of the UABC, the effectiveness of the competency-based approach regarding its application in the classroom.

5. Research Methods

The present study is of a quantitative nature, corresponds to an exploratory, cross-sectional design with a descriptive scope. The sample is intentional non-probabilistic type, which was made up of 239 professors who teach at two faculties of the UABC: the Faculties of Administrative and Social Sciences where 124 were surveyed and the Faculty of Engineering, Architecture and Design where 115 teachers participated.

5.1. Sources of information and analysis of results

An instrument designed *expofeso* was used for the study that includes four dimensions: pertinence with in the curriculum; knowledge of the approach; application of the same in relation to the teaching strategies they use and the learning assessment instruments they apply; and perception of advantages and disadvantages of the competency approach. Descriptive analyzes were carried out where frequencies and percentages of each one of the studied variables were obtained.

6. Findings

The results are presented according to each of the dimensions that are explored in the study: a) in relation to the curriculum most teachers consider that the profile of entry and exit, as well as the subjects

in which they teach, they are aligned to the competency approach. Nevertheless 30% think that in the programs of the subjects; Methodological teaching strategies are not clearly established, nor are the forms of evaluation that correspond to this approach.

b) According to the degree of knowledge that teachers have of the approach, 32% said they have a high level of knowledge, while 55% regular and 11% have a low level. When evaluating their knowledge of the basic definitions of generic, specific and professional competences, approximately 22% answered incorrectly.

c) Regarding the main teaching strategies and learning evaluation instruments that they use in their teaching practice, the results show: 36% of the teachers state that the main teaching strategy is the teacher's exposure; followed by learning based on problem solving with 29%; and with a 20% the diagnosis of the previous knowledge of the students and adequacy of the contents. The evaluation instruments that most use are: multiple choice exams with 33%; research work with 24%; and student exposure 14%.

d) Teachers' perception of the advantages and disadvantages of the competency-based approach compared to the traditional one, teachers believe that 60% work with teaching and learning strategies regardless of whether they correspond to the competency-based approach; However, 70% consider that the training of students under the competency model is better than that of the traditional model. On the other hand, 67% estimate that teaching methodologies are clearly defined in the competency model; and 59% consider that the learning evaluation process has less complication in the competency approach than the traditional one.

e) Of the main problems to apply the model by competences in the classroom: 30% indicate that there are no clear differences between the effectiveness of the model by competences compared to the traditional one; 26% have the conviction about a greater effectiveness of the traditional teaching-learning model; and 20% think that the main problem is the teachers' resistance to change.

7. Conclusion

The purpose of the present study was to evaluate, from the perception of university professors, the effectiveness of the competency approach with respect to its application in the classroom. It is striking that more than a decade after its implementation the competency-based approach at UABC, 22% of teachers do not identify the basic differences between generic, specific and professional competences; for 60% it is indifferent to work with teaching and learning strategies regardless of whether they correspond to the competency-based approach or the traditional model. Another of the limitations expressed by teachers is that teaching methodologies and forms of evaluation in the competency model are not clearly defined. These results, among others, account for the complexity of implementing new educational approaches and landing them in the classroom; The importance of educational institutions evaluating the impact of this approach on student learning is highlighted. The development of this research, among other contributions, presents empirical evidence about the difficulties and possibilities in the instrumentation of the competences approach in the classroom; fundamental evidences that pay to the education on the possible improvement of the quality of the education.

References

- Argudín, Y. (2005). *Educación basada en competencias: nociones y antecedentes*. Editorial Trillas. México.
- Barriga, D. A. (2006). El enfoque de competencias en la educación. ¿Una alternativa o un disfraz de cambio? *Perfiles Educativos*, 28(111), 7-36. Retrieved from: http://www.scielo.org.mx/scielo.php?pid=S0185-26982006000100002&script=sci_arttext
- Beneitone, P., Esquetini, C., González, J., Maleitá, M., Siufi, G., & Wagenaar, R. (2007). *Reflexiones y perspectivas de la educación superior en América Latina. Informe final. Proyecto Tuning 2004-2007*. Universidad de Deusto, Universidad de Groningen.
- Luna, E., Rueda, M., & Arbesú, I. (2006). Constitución y desarrollo de una red de investigadores sobre evaluación de la docencia. *Revista Mexicana de Investigación Educativa*, 11(30), 971-993. Retrieved from: <http://www.redalyc.org/pdf/140/14003012.pdf>
- Rueda, M. (2009). La evaluación del desempeño docente: consideraciones desde el enfoque por competencias. *Revista Electrónica de Investigación Educativa*, 11(2) 1-16. Retrieved from: <http://redie.uabc.mx/vol11no2/contenidorueda3.html>
- Soler, M. C. (2004). Reflexiones acerca del término competencias en la actividad docente. *Educación Médica Superior*, 18(1), 1-7.
- Stockwell, N., Bengoetxea, E., & Tauch, C. (2011). El Espacio Europeo de Educación Superior y la promoción de la cooperación académica y de la movilidad con México. *Perfiles educativos*, 33(133), 198-205.
- Tobón, S. (2013). *Metodología de gestión curricular. Una perspectiva socioformativa*. México: Trillas.