

Evaluación de la competencia comunicativa del futuro profesional de la educación

Evaluation of communicative competence of future education professional

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RESUMEN: Insuficiencias teórico-metodológicas en la evaluación de la competencia comunicativa, limitan la obtención de información caracterizadora y valorativa sobre su desarrollo en los futuros profesionales de la Educación. En tal sentido, el objetivo es precisar fundamentos de este proceso para coadyuvar a la mejora continua de los cambios que desarrolla la Universidad Técnica Luis Vargas Torres de Esmeraldas en el empleo del enfoque de competencias para el proceso de formación. Se utilizaron métodos como el análisis-síntesis, el análisis de contenido y la revisión de documentos. Los resultados explican un componente que retroalimenta la calidad de la formación de la competencia comunicativa.

Palabras clave: Enfoque de competencias; Evaluación; Competencia; Competencia comunicativa

ABSTRACT: Theoretical-methodological insufficiencies in the evaluation of communicative competence limit the obtaining of characterizing and evaluative information on its development in future education professionals. In this sense, the objective is to specify the foundations of this process to contribute to the continuous improvement of the changes developed by the Luis Vargas Torres de Esmeraldas Technical University in the use of the competency approach for the training process. Methods such as analysis-synthesis, content analysis and document review were used. The results explain a component that feeds back into the quality of the formation of communicative competence.

Keywords: Competency approach; Evaluation; Competence; Communicative competence

Introduction

The Technical University “Luis Vargas Torres” of Esmeraldas (2018) considers necessary, from its Institutional Strategic Plan, “...the fulfillment of the principle of relevance of higher education” (p. 9). To this end, it articulates its academic, research and linkage offerings to the needs of students and local and national development. An evidence of the fulfillment of this principle is the monitoring that this institution makes to the various exercises of evaluation of learning

achievements in the preceding educational levels, where future education professionals will work, in order to adapt their training process.

Among the exercises that are significant for their interpretation of the quality of Ecuadorian education and their relationship with those achieved by other nations in the region, the one developed by the Latin American Laboratory for the Evaluation of the Quality of Education (LLECE) of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) stands out. The Regional Comparative and Explanatory Regional Study (ERCE) applied in 2019 was the fourth version of such studies, which included students from 16 countries in Latin America and the Caribbean.

The study was applied to a sample of students in the fourth and seventh grades of General Basic Education (EGB). In the fourth grade of EGB, Reading and Mathematics were evaluated, while in the seventh grade, Reading, Mathematics and Science were evaluated. This evaluation "... shows the urgent need to focus on the development of students' learning achievements and, for this purpose, it is important to intervene structurally in the national education system." (Ministry of Education, 2023, p. 25)

In order to achieve the development of these learning achievements, it is vital to foster the necessary competencies in teachers trained in university institutions, which in the case of the results obtained in the ERCE in Reading reveal, as possible causes, insufficiencies in the communicative competence of educators in their professional pedagogical activity. Hence, it is necessary to obtain value judgments on the state of the elements that make up this competence as inputs for the curricular redesign taking place at the UTLVTE.

This made it possible to identify the following **problem**: Theoretical-methodological insufficiencies in the evaluation process of the communicative competence, limit the obtaining of characterizing and valuative information of its development in the future professionals of Education. In this sense, the objective of this article is to specify theoretical and methodological foundations on the evaluation of communicative competence to help obtain information that will make possible the assessment and continuous improvement of the changes developed by the UTLVTE in order to introduce the competence approach in its training processes. Thus, for the fulfillment of this purpose, materials were identified that address the background of the object of

research related to the identified object of study, as a premise for the use of documentary review and the theoretical **methods** of analysis-synthesis, induction-deduction and content analysis.

Development

A conceptual analysis of the evaluation of the communicative competence of the future professional of Education presupposes elucidating the understanding of the authors of this work in relation to what is understood by competences, how communicative competence is defined, what are its dimensions or elements. Likewise, to specify what evaluation is, some taxonomies associated with its purpose, main moments of realization and how to do it in the context of the undergraduate training process at UTLVTE. These ideas make it possible to specify some guidelines for the implementation of the evaluation of communicative competence in this university.

The bibliographic review made it possible to systematize the assumptions inherent to the aforementioned foundations and focused on works published in journals indexed in databases such as SciELO and other materials. The proposals of Arone *et al.* (2018); Arreola (2019); Bórquez *et al.* (2023); Cano (2008); Cruz-Palacios *et al.* (2018); Ministry of Education (2023); Pino *et al.* (2019); Tobón (2005); Valiente *et al.* (2021) were consulted.

Competencies

The inclusion of the competencies approach for several decades in the curricular design of teacher training, makes it a relevant orientation reference for the definition of the objectives and the content to be considered in the curriculum of the future education professional, since in the modeling of competencies it includes important qualities that must be met and that must be addressed for the sake of an increasingly comprehensive and relevant training. But what do we understand by competency?

In this sense, Arreola (2019) assumes it as “...the set of socio-affective behaviors and cognitive, psychological, sensory and motor skills that allow adequately carrying out a performance, a function, an activity or a task” (p. 3).

He also points out that a competency is defined as “...an adaptive, cognitive-behavioral, specific capacity that is deployed to respond to the demand that occurs in a given environment in a socio-historical and cultural context.” (Frade, 2008, as cited in Arreola, 2019, p. 4). In summary, this author considers that “...competencies integrate knowledge, skills, abilities, skills and attitudes, but

also the ability to be able to think, solve problems, adapt to the modern world and develop all those higher thinking skills that were not considered before.” (Arreola, 2019, p. 4)

Likewise, Tobón (2006, as cited in Bórquez *et al.*, 2023) defines competencies as “...complex processes that people put into action-action-creation in solving problems and performing activities in diverse contexts, requiring the integration of knowing how to be, knowing and doing, when considering the demands of the context and thus assuming the consequences of the acts, seeking human welfare.” (p. 3)

It is of interest the proposal of Valiente *et al.* (2021) that defines competencies as “complex and holistic formations, which are shaped from the functional integration of qualities, attributes, elements that have been established and consolidated in the subject. According to these authors, competencies are configured from: “conceptual and procedural elements, attitudinal elements, motivational elements and other traits and characteristics of the subject's personality” (Valiente, 2010, as cited in Valiente *et al.* 2021, p. 237).

Similarly, it is agreed with (Valiente *et al.* 2021, p. 237 and 238) that:

- a) Competencies have a contextual character, which is explained by their direct relationship with a specific function or activity and with the result required in a given job or work environment.
- b) There is a dialectic relationship between competencies and performance (professional, teaching); since, on the one hand, the level of development of competencies ensures the level of quality of performance and, on the other hand, competencies are only evidenced and can only be evaluated through performance.
- c) Competencies have a transversal character, since they affect the set of functions, responsibilities and roles to be performed by the subject.
- d) They have an acquired character, since they are achieved through experience: in the course of training and in the subsequent development of the activity (professional, managerial, teaching).
- e) They are useful to the extent that they allow the individual to set challenges for self-improvement appropriate to his/her possibilities and contribute to a better performance of the tasks inherent to the job position.

- f) They are objective, since they are manifested in observable behaviors, but also subjective, since they depend on human perception.
- g) They are not directly observable. They are an abstract concept, an inference arrived at after observation of behavior in relevant situations.

Communicative competence and its understanding in the training of education professionals.

For Ortiz (2007, as cited in Arone *et al.*, 2018) communicative competence is “...the teacher's ability to establish effective and efficient (optimal) pedagogical communication with his students, by developing in his personality a flexible communicative style and achieving the desired educational results” (p. 3). Similarly, she cites Rey (2005), who recognizes it as “...a state of readiness of the subject that ensures the successful planning, execution and evaluation of communication in line with the characteristics and demands of the contexts and participants” Rey (2005, as cited in Arone *et al.*, 2018, p. 3)

On the other hand, Cruz (2013, as cited in Cruz-Palacios *et al.*, 2018) defines communicative competence as “...the potentiality that a student (subject) has to understand, interpret, organize and produce acts of signification through different linguistic and non-linguistic sign systems, as well as to achieve adequate communicative interaction from the mastery and integration of knowledge about the human communication process, communicative skills, principles, values and attitudes to perform efficiently in different contexts.” (p. 91)

Likewise, Fernandez (2002, as cited in Arone *et al.*, 2018) defines communicative competence as: “[...] psychological orientation favorable to the human relationship and the mastery of scientific knowledge, skills, procedures and techniques that facilitate efficiency in the process of interpersonal communication” (p. 3). It is also valuable the contribution made by Ventura (2018, as cited in Arone *et al.*, 2018) in limiting this concept, from the formal logic, with the term pedagogical communicative competence and defining it as a

process of a complex nature that integrates the cognitive, the procedural and the attitudinal, in order to regulate the pedagogical communicative performance of the teacher in the educational process of the institutions (...), fostering an appropriate work climate that contributes to their integral development. (p. 4)

As a culmination of the systematization of these definitions, there is a remarkable variety of categories to characterize this concept, such as: process, favorable psychological orientation,

abilities, capacities, a potentiality, a complex psychological configuration, a state of preparation, among others, which demonstrate the lack of consensus on its understanding. However, due to the conglomerate of elements of competence that are supposed to make it up, the authors assume it to be a complex psychological configuration.

The evaluation of competencies. Conceptualization. Ideas for its realization.

As a general concept, the features of evaluation proposed by Pino *et al.* (2019) are assumed when summarizing the following characteristics: 1) It is a process of collecting and obtaining data; 2) It is a result; 3) It has a systemic and systematic character; 4) It is oriented to the fulfillment of objectives; 5) Its realization allows obtaining value judgments, through the application of research methods and obtaining evidence and; 6) Its purpose is associated to corroborate the degree of fulfillment of the assignment assigned to the evaluated object. (p. 5).

Cano (2008) suggests that each competency should be promoted from different courses and fields of knowledge, designing a sort of “... scale in the progression of such competency, establishing levels of competencies. To this end, I can use rubrics or assessment matrices and think about what level of the rubric scale it would be desirable for students to reach...” (p. 8).

For Cano (2008)

is at the didactic “crossroads”, in the sense that it is an effect but at the same time a cause of learning, it also assumes that it orients the curriculum and can, therefore, generate a real change in the learning processes, it cannot be limited to grading (but this is a subset of assessment); it cannot focus on recall and repetition of information (but must assess higher order cognitive skills) and it cannot be limited to “pencil and paper” tests, but requires complex and varied instruments. (p. 9)

Similarly, with regard to the assessment of competencies, the following ideas are assumed from Cano (2008) proposal:

- Assessment should constitute a learning opportunity and should be used not to guess or select those who possess certain competencies, but to promote them in all students.
- Use a variety of instruments and involve different agents. Sample student performance and use observation as a systematic information-gathering strategy. This may be accompanied by closed records (check-lists, scales, rubrics) or open records, and may be based on

heteroassessment, co-assessment or self-assessment, but in any case provide information on the progression in the development of the competency and suggest ways of improvement.

- The evaluation must be coherent with the rest of the elements of the formative design, it must be integrated in it.
- To make students aware of their level of competence, of how they solve the tasks and of what strengths they should strengthen and what weaknesses they should correct in order to face future learning situations. This process of self-regulation will be essential to continue learning throughout life and, in itself, constitutes a key competence.
- Diagnostic evaluations take on great importance in competency-based evaluation, which should be carried out fundamentally through self-evaluation.

Regarding its purpose, Arreola (2019), in the case of teacher evaluation, specifies that it is aimed at “...strengthening the profession and reflecting on one's own performance, with the purpose of achieving better results in their students.” (p. 15)

As stated by (Bolívar, 2008, as cited in Cano, 2008)

The best way to assess competencies is to put the subject before a complex task, to see how they manage to understand it and solve it by mobilizing knowledge. The evaluation instruments used cannot be limited to tests to see the degree of mastery of contents or objectives, but propose complex situations, belonging to the family of situations defined by the competence, which will also require a complex production by the student to solve the situation, since it requires knowledge, attitudes, metacognitive and strategic thinking (p. 12). (p. 12).

The assessment of communicative competence

The assessment of the communicative competence of future Education professionals implies, first of all, the definition of the elements of competence (dimensions, areas, among other denominations) that make it up. Arone *et al.* (2018) propose three dimensions (cognitive, procedural and attitudinal) made up of 14 indicators and by means of questionnaires, interviews and other instruments carried out the fieldwork and the collection and processing of information.

The **cognitive dimension** was operationalized in four indicators: 1.1. Level of knowledge about communication as a means of interaction between people; 1.2. Level of knowledge about the subject taught, its technical vocabulary and its didactics; 1.3.

The **procedural dimension**, with four indicators: 2.1. Level of development for expression: associated with the practical mastery of oral discourse (clear, precise, concise), monologue and dialogue, written discourse, attentive and respectful listening and the use of non-verbal language; 2.2. Level of development of the empathetic relationship in communication with students; 2.3. level of development of assertive communication and; 2.4. level of development of listening.

The **attitudinal dimension**, with six indicators: 3.1. Level of willingness to communicate; 3.2. Level of satisfaction in communicating with students; 3.3. Level of commitment to educational work; 3.4. Level of fair and equitable behavior with their students; 3.6. Level of development of respect for others.

For their part, Cruz-Palacios *et al.* (2018), for the determination of the current state of development of the communicative skills of students of pedagogical careers, used instruments such as the interview, non-participant observation, questionnaire, composition and linguistic test and operationalized this competence in four linguistic areas: the active-receptive areas of listening and reading and the active-productive areas of speaking and writing. These areas were broken down into six variables and 18 indicators: (**Reading variable**, with four indicators: 1) Comprehensive attention (attentive listening); 2) Reading mechanics (correctness, expressiveness and fluency, voice intensity); 3) Reading comprehension (translation, interpretation and extrapolation); and 4) Reading habit (reading to fulfill a teaching task, reading for pleasure).

Oral communication, with four indicators: 1) Phonic aspect (pronunciation, intonation, fluency, voice intensity, word stress); 2) Lexical aspect (vocabulary accuracy, variety and lexical richness in correspondence with the cultural level); 3) Syntactic aspect (clarity and organization of ideas, discursive unity and coherence, correctness of the grammatical structures used); 4) Grammatical aspect (clarity and organization of ideas, discursive unity and coherence, correctness of the grammatical structures used); 5) Vocabulary aspect (vocabulary accuracy, variety and lexical richness in correspondence with the cultural level).

grammatical structures used) and: 4) Other aspects committed to the effectiveness of communication (adjustment to the purpose, purpose and communicative situation according to the characteristics of the interlocutors, use of strategies to deliver the message in a natural way and use of appropriate non-verbal codes)

Variable 3: Written communication with three indicators: 1) Linguistic aspect (correct delimitation of sentences and paragraphs, use of connectors, concordance, adequate use of lexicon and grammatical structures); 2) Semantic-pragmatic aspects (adjustment to the topic, sufficiency and quality in ideas, unity, coherence, logical organization of meanings, relationship text-communicative intent, adjustment to the structure according to specific typology, use of the appropriate register) and 3) Formal or external aspect (handwriting and legibility, presentation and cleanliness).

Variable 4: Vocabulary, two indicators: active vocabulary and passive vocabulary. Also, **variable 5: Spelling** with three: 1) Writing of words subject to rules; 2) Accentuation and 3) Writing of words not subject to rules. Finally, **variable 6: Communication styles**, with two indicators: 1) Degree of communicative satisfaction and; 2) Relations between interlocutors (teacher-student, student-student). According to these indicators, the three communication styles were evaluated: aggressive, passive and assertive.

In the two systematized proposals, as an example in this work (Arone *et al.* 2018 and; Cruz-Palacios *et al.* 2018), performance criteria were defined that allowed grading the behavior of the operationalized variables, as a requirement to be able to obtain the necessary information in terms of making decisions to improve the training process.

As a conclusion of the study carried out, some guidelines were identified for the implementation of the evaluation of communicative competence, based on the proposals of authors who address this object of research in the university training of Education professionals, which will contribute to the assessment and continuous improvement of the changes developed by the UTLVTE in order to introduce the competence approach in its training processes, namely:

- Competencies can be built, didactically, from a structure configured by its competency elements, which are defined as “...specific performances that make up the competency”, and the “ideal performance criteria”, as results that a person must demonstrate in real situations of work, professional practice or social life, based on certain quality requirements in order for the performance to be suitable. In this sense, the structure of competence proposed by Tobón (2005, p. 72) should be assumed as a presupposition for the elaboration of communicative competence.

- Communicative competence is assumed as a complex psychological configuration that is formed from the functional integration of qualities, attributes and elements that have been established and consolidated in the future education professional, with which he/she evidences an efficient understanding, interpretation, organization and production of acts of meaning through different systems of linguistic and non-linguistic signs, as well as an adequate communicative interaction, based on the mastery and integration of knowledge about the process of human communication.

The value of an optimal communicative competence of the future education professional in the teaching-learning process, will have a more likely impact on their students, since it will revert in the development of their own competence, that is, they will be reaching a set of linguistic, sociolinguistic, strategic and discursive knowledge that as speaker-listener, writer-receiver will put into action to understand discourses conforming to the situation and context of communication. (Cruz-Palacios *et al.*, 2018)

Conclusions

Social demands constantly push their universities to adapt their training models in terms of socio-labor competencies conducive to success in the work performance of the professionals they need. Such is the case of communicative competence, whose integral nature concerns all activities developed by future teachers and whose efficiency has an impact on the learning of the students they serve in their educational institutions.

The promotion of mechanisms for the evaluation of communicative competence in the training process of future education professionals makes it possible to obtain characterizing and evaluative information for decision making and the improvement of the implementation of the competence approach carried out at the UTLVTE. The elaboration of such competency, its elements and performance criteria, should consider the proposals systematized from the consensus of specialists through a consultation process.

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