

RESEARCH ARTICLE

The Competency-Based Pedagogical Trend: Towards A New Quality of Education

La tendencia pedagógica basada en competencias: hacia una nueva calidad de educación

A tendência pedagógica por competências: rumo a uma nova qualidade de ensino

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this article is to reflect on the relationship between the competency-based approach and the notion of educational quality. The methodology followed in this research was qualitative, using an exploratory, descriptive, and correlational approach. The methodical exercise was based on the analytical review of the documentary record so that, by this means, the analysis of various documents consulted online was carried out, which allowed to support the direct relationship between the variables examined, regarding their principles, characteristics, applicability, and correspondences. The results show that education in competencies is built in articulation with the socio-pedagogical, cultural, and political realities of the educational context to obtain the quality criterion. It is concluded that current education is oriented around a quality policy that demands a trend of training in competencies.

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Conflict of interest:

The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

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RESUMEN

Este artículo tiene como propósito reflexionar sobre la relación entre el enfoque basado en competencias con la noción de calidad educativa. La metodología seguida por esta investigación fue de enfoque cualitativo empleando el tipo exploratorio, descriptivo y correlacional. El ejercicio metódico se asentó en la reseña analítica de registro documental de modo que, por este medio, se realizó el análisis de diversos documentos consultados en línea, los cuales permitieron sustentar la relación directa entre las variables examinadas, en lo referente con sus principios, características, aplicabilidades y correspondencias. Los resultados evidencian que la educación en competencias se construye en articulación con las realidades sociopedagógicas, culturales y políticas del contexto educativo para obtener el criterio de calidad. Se concluye que, la educación actual se orienta en torno a una política de calidad que exige una tendencia de formación en competencias.

RESUMO

O objetivo essencial deste artigo é refletir sobre a relação entre a abordagem por competências e a noção de qualidade educacional. A metodologia seguida por esta pesquisa foi de abordagem qualitativa utilizando o tipo exploratório, descritivo e correlacional. O exercício metódico assentou na revisão analítica do registro documental para que, desta forma, se procurasse a análise dos diversos documentos consultados online, o que permitiu sustentar a relação direta entre as variáveis examinadas, em relação aos seus princípios, características, aplicabilidade e correspondência. Os resultados mostram que a educação por competências é construída em conjunto com as realidades sócio-pedagógicas, culturais e políticas do contexto educacional para a obtenção do critério de qualidade. Conclui-se que a educação atual está orientada para uma política de qualidade que exige uma tendência de formação em competências.

Introduction

Forming citizens of the world whose foundation is reflected in the ability to handle 21st century issues, in whom innovation, critical thinking, problem solving, creativity, adaptability, initiative, entrepreneurship, technology and leadership, among others, are the tributaries of social improvement, is not an easy task (Gagné, 1970). Having said the above, several research experiences made by Olivares (2015), stated that assuming a formative, taxative and developed approach in competencies is a transcendental, although complex, work, since it connotes the pragmatic recognition in processes of teaching foundation and holistic orientation (comprehensive training) of the learner. It should be noted that studies such as those of Mederos (2016), Biccoca-Gino, Espinoza and Castillo (2017), Zambrano (2018); Swartz (2018), agree that the development of adequate student skills in accordance with the contextual socio-pedagogical structure is essential to achieve educational quality and development in the world of work.

The competency-based approach has become an imperative educational trend and its projective framework is rooted in the supplement of basic cognitive, attitudinal and procedural competencies, in substance, in Latin American countries that try to orbit in the improvement of quality in efficiency, efficacy and effectiveness (Cuba, 2016).

A qualitative study proposed by Ríos and Herrera (2017) had the primary objective of contributing to the reflections and discussions on the functionality of competency education in the educational field, as well as its evaluation process. The need to institute strategies, outlines, executions and systematic advances to establish the impacts of learning in competencies as a way of demonstrating the development of complex integral knowledge is sustained. It is concluded that education in competencies can situate and influence the strengthening of learning and pedagogical practices.

Other research conducted by Villamil (2019), Lizitza & Sheepshanks (2020), converge in the value of curriculum redesign with active educational proposals. From this analytical edge, it is specified that the exponential, structural and cognitive development manifests the approach of new perceptive forms of education, because its applicability incorporates a paradigmatic change of the teaching process for learning.

In Colombia, the educational challenges faced by government policies have been aimed at improving the quality of education; therefore, the challenges embodied in these policies are: to make education profitable, articulate coverage with quality, teaching and evaluation by objectives, competencies, articulate excellence with equity, reconcile pluralism and amoralism with ethical teaching, religion and democracy, strengthening scientific thought, transversalization between the different levels and branches of education (Rivera, 2012). Other challenges are channeled into the permanence of students in the educational system; comprehensive improvement of teachers (Ruíz-Melero and Berbejo, 2021); adequacy of infrastructure; strengthening of research and, in short, pedagogical transformation.

Currently, the competency-based approach can reorder the curriculum after the school emergency resulting from the pandemic. This type of education dynamizes the educational process to strengthen *learning to learn*, which is conducive to the development of a variety of skills such as: autonomy, critical thinking, creativity, assertive dialogue, emotional intelligence, leadership, flexible thinking, reflection, willingness, deliberative participation, among others.

According to Ramírez (2020), the competency-based approach has currently been outlined as one of the contemporary formulas to modulate training processes with the world of work. In fact, without a determined epistemological perspective, the macro concept of competencies has developed in the last decades until achieving a universal notability defined at present. In turn, with the consideration of theoretical constructs such as *occupation and employability*, the competency approach has extended its focus towards transformed and extended contours among which pedagogical ones are underlined, with outlines that defend and rescind it. Similarly, for Mendieta (2021), the current accelerated transformations, forged among other elements by scientific developments, the media, globalization, capitalism, have brought about the dehumanization of man, where man's indifference to the other is notorious. Education has not avoided this situation, and it is evident that there is an indelible concern to train *competent* professionals for the 21st century. Therefore, this type of education has an essential advantage, and this lies in the superposition of theoretical knowledge and practical skills.

Vargas (2021), considers that, the concept of competency-based education has become the official learning model of educational policy in Colombia. For this reason, their study was emphasized as

a mechanism of understanding that, from the political philosophy, allows us to problematize the way in which education in citizenship competencies has been defined in the 2004-2017 period. The research was qualitative with a descriptive and exploratory approach. Weaknesses of the training approach implicit in the model of education in competencies were found, consisting of its standard nature, of operant cut and far from understanding training in citizenship competencies as a social construction. It is concluded that the competency-based learning model should articulate the incorporation of differential approaches, gender and intercultural perspectives.

From another research point of view, Lería (2021) considers that the elementary features of contemporary educational ecosystems, abundant in activities and digital tools, alert the need to provide the learner with a formative balance in the microspace (classroom). Indeed, the objective of this qualitative study was to relate neuroeducation with social development in order to potentiate and regulate skills. Among the results, it is evident that through the development of consciousness and psychological growth a social transformation is established. It is concluded that some implications for competency-based education and the articulation of its practice with the development of procedural competencies are given from an ethical-relational level.

According to Quintal-Berny & Bolaños-Arias (2021), the competency model has failed to summarize a teaching process for learning that approaches the civic approach required in sustainable social development. The study conducted a reflective analysis through a documentary review of different research to discover the primary cognitions why this socio-educational intention has not been achieved. As results, it is revealed that the didactic strategy of socio-education to concretize the development of human talent is given in community and service projects. It is concluded that the socio-educational approach through training projects and collaborative work has the methodology to have an impact on the development of students' competencies.

Another study proposed by Armada (2021), highlights the pedagogical bases that promote education in competences by fostering intercultural dialogue, arising from the dialogical legitimization between the various forms of human beings as a strategy that weaves coexistence. The recognition of the condition of dignity contained in life demands the expression of human rights. The validation of these assets cancels the socio-cultural impositions of the current mercantile globalization, in favor of globalizing the possibility of leading a peaceful life. Thus, it is proposed to educate in capacities that humanize cultural relations in order to realize democratic ways of life.

Considering the above, the following question can be formulated: how can the proposed quality policies in the educational field be carried out with the current challenges of the 21st century? For this reason, this study reflects on the problematic of competency-based pedagogy and the issues that derive from it, in turn, how it is tacitly related to the notion of educational quality. Within this methodological horizon, the issues to be addressed in the paper will be directly related to the competency approach as a possibility to improve educational quality. The indicated variables are supported, explored and analyzed in the state of the art, then, the most relevant particularities are described in the argumentative and theoretical traceability to guide the competency approach around the social and meaningful construct of educational quality.

Educational quality: Principles and characteristics

According to Muñoz (2003) there is educational quality when it is projected in the intentional orientation of integral and social sectors to which it is directed, if, when conceiving it, the objectives demanded by the working world are naturally obtained, if it is forged in culturally contextualized processes cultivating the elementary resources to impart it, ensuring the opportunities for improvement and the socioeconomic benefits coming from it. In Colombia, *article 27* of the Political Constitution mentions: it is a fundamental right that every person has access to education.

In a complementary manner, Decree 1075 - *single regulatory decree of the education sector* - alludes that one of the fundamental objectives of the Ministry of National Education (MEN, 2015), is to guarantee and promote by public and private entities the right and access to a quality and inclusive education system, permanent, with comprehensive attention, sustainable and oriented to increase coverage and access; it is not possible to think about educational quality without the proper correlation of these macro concepts; it is not feasible to conceive a quality education if it is not based on organization, problem detection, solution proposals, satisfaction of the educational community and decision making, but above all, quality depends on people. At the same time, "the cycle (plan, do, verify, and act) is part of the principles of quality (...)" (Rivera 2012, p. 21). In another perspective, the characteristics of educational quality are linked to efficiency, effectiveness, pertinence and relevance.

In general terms, the principles of educational quality can be summarized as follows:

- Relevance: educational proposals are in line with the challenges of the context and educational policies.
- Quality: the educational processes are directed towards the quality policies related to the training profile.
- Teacher's role: teachers need to be active subjects, dynamizers, builders and facilitators of the teaching-learning process.
- Transformation of the pedagogical model: pedagogical change involves constant reflection, reconfiguration, restructuring and deconstruction of pedagogical processes.

Curriculum in Competencies

The nature of the curriculum as a field of research has been a topic of interest to a variety of theorists. In fact, in the genesis of the twentieth century, countries undertook the role of focusing on curricular processes and their impact on learning. Bobbit (1918), from a more hypothetical than practical systematization, glimpses the relevance of establishing a didactic subsoil attached to pedagogical improvement processes. In contrast, Tyler (1998) reflected on the concentric relational aspects between objectives and goals. On the other hand, other scholars related the curriculum to the critical emancipatory, such was the case of the Brazilian pedagogue Freire (2002), who instituted his studies influenced by the Frankfurt School, considering the construction of a curriculum with critical and liberating perspectives.

For Zubiría (2013), the curriculum is a dialogic opportunity to innovate the educational process, but it is necessary that this structural interweaving (design, principles and strategies) be nourished by social elements (sociocultural vision of the agents of the process) and synthetic principles (flexibility, integrality, contextualization and functionality).

Now, if the concept of curriculum is polysemic and multifaceted, that of *competency* shades a historical, etymological and semantic terrain complexified by ideological diversity. Thus, in order to schematize it in an authentic perspective, the notion of competence is sketched in an ability with a philological sense, namely: *quality* from the Latin *competentia* and semantically as *aptitude*. Educational processes based on competencies seem to arise mainly from two origins: a) demanding technicality of the world of work; b) modernization of training systems.

In a historical-philosophical sense, the first meaning of competence is referenced in the Aristotelian *Metaphysics*, where the ontological aspect involves an analysis of the gnoseology of being as *act and potency*. This perspective connotes an influence of the epistemological construct rooted in Plato as the *possibility of being*.

Thus, within a reflective, analytical and sociological framework, especially the theoretical contributions of Weber (1964), Durkheim (1985), Bourdieu (1998) and Bauman (2005), the pedagogical guidelines are channeled to a cultural, critical and constructive scope of the social environment. By virtue of this, the educational functionality of the competency-based approach is modulated in definition to the social demand, in other words, to the society and culture that demands the profile of the man we want to educate; hence the importance of educating human beings who respond to the requirements of the 21st century society.

Weber (1964) exhaustively analyzes the bureaucratic phenomenon of the educational system and the relationships between social individuals and tries to unveil the pedagogical intentions of the competency-based model, distinguishing the technician with the integrated pedagogy. According to the author, the constant socio-cultural and educational changes are driven by the search for a *social logos* reconfigured to the development of the subject, which involves a subordinated vision of rational or charismatic (traditional) education, attenuated in the utilitarian technicality that leads to the humanistic culture. In modern bureaucratized society, what is significant is specialized scientific knowledge or skill, to the extent that it makes possible the development of man in society.

In Durkheim's perspective (1985), the articulation of man and society is the catalyzing social aspect that defines the individual's missionary guidelines. In this analytical scenario, the learner develops his skills in the complexity of a socio-political and cultural context, that dynamism is the *social fact* and includes ways of feeling, acting and thinking, this process is configured in a functional, sociological and cultural way in which the collective exercise (moral action) is established.

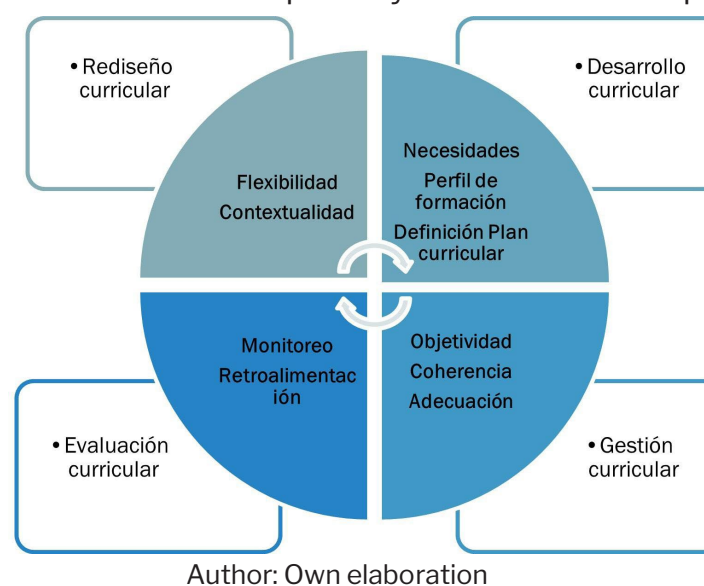
Bourdieu (1998) conceives the competency approach from a micro and macro social perspective that derives in a reflexive and schematized *campus/habitus* relationship in symbolic human configurations, which allows to understand the *practical reason* of the skills to orient them in the situational system. The contribution of this

French thinker is to understand competence as a social action constructed in correspondence between the (institutions), which constitute the external social structures, and the *habitus* (skills) that form the internal development of the agents. Thus, social conditions make competencies possible.

Bauman (2005) points out that the focus on competencies has been conceived from a traditional solid structure that sought the dynamic formation of the subject in skills necessary for society because knowledge and skills are useful and, therefore, more solid; the now *liquid* world needs to resignify itself to sociocultural and educational action. This author considers three decisive challenges in education: massification of knowledge, the vertiginous world and human relations. This leads to conjecture the pragmatic and educational relevance of the competency-based approach as a guide to the teaching process for learning, where knowledge is acquired through solid action.

The competency approach defines the formative dimension in an educational reality, in such a way that the construction of a competency-based curriculum unfolds to the extent that the objectives, strategies and competencies to be developed are identified. Tobón (2013) refers to competencies as a group of performances that support the management of *knowledge, know-how and know-how to be* (Delors, 1995). In dissimilar spheres, and by enhancing the ability to solve issues tinged in diverse circumstances, the development of competencies (skills) is a catalyzing element of the curriculum and an incentive for educational transformation. Consider also, according to Figure 1, that the curriculum process with the competency-based approach can be represented as follows:

Figure 1. Phases of the competency-based curriculum process



The figure shows that the process of articulating the curriculum in competencies is a function of the redesign, development, management, and evaluation of institutional projects. Hence, the competency-based approach is a pragmatic and reflective educational strategy to build society and culture. However, the construction of an educational and innovative proposal that strengthens the management and academic management of an institutional reality does not emerge from ambiguity, but from the dialogic network between the self and the sociocultural environment. Therefore, the competency-based approach redefines the curriculum, giving more meaning to learning and offering an active role to the learner (protagonist of the pedagogical act).

In the competency-based curriculum, the processes are dynamic in accordance with the context (socio-cultural). The performances involve all dimensions of being (physical, emotional, cognitive, spiritual, and social). Quality criteria are based on effectiveness, relevance, efficiency, and appropriation.

All this analytical and descriptive tour implies reflecting that every educational system tends to the development of skills manifested in the fulfillment of performances as orientators of the ontological, epistemological, philosophical, psychological, pedagogical, and sociological formation project of the being. Man as a project rooted in an ethical, cognitive, and social framework is defined by the pragmatic utilitarianism of what he learns and his moral commitment to what he does. Thus, education in competencies transcends from the cognitive to a socio-cultural sphere as an indicator of quality.

For this reason, education needs to build meaningful, autonomous and critical bridges of situational learning. Educating from the context implies interweaving the functional relationship between the being (subject ideal) and the object of knowledge (skills) that concretize the conditions of possibility (valuable indicator for the projection of a competency-based curriculum). That is, the dialogue between the curricular sequence (standards) and the pedagogical model (training horizon) must be strengthened to guide the totalizing and integral processes of the learner.

Methodology

A literature review was carried out from a qualitative study approach with an exploratory, descriptive, and correlational approach. This type of research adapts a connection with the progressive development of the literary, critical and scientific corpus, in order to amplify in depth, the understanding of the topic. This theoretical-pragmatic approach implies correlational lapses of search and choice of the referential material in harmony with the observation and interpretation of data to provide a demonstrative contribution to the investigative functionality. The correlational cycles adjusted a theoretical-conceptual traceability and founded on *descriptive decoding*, systematization, selection, acquisition, and criticality of bibliographic materials. The search began with the contextualization of education in competencies to focus it with four categories. The *GoogleScholar* search engine and scientific journals indexed in Scopus, Web of Science, Academia, Redib, SciELO and Dialnet were used. In total, the first search cycle yielded 2500 hits. The list was processed, eliminating reproductions, and elucidating the research to be channeled into studies linked to the methodological variables.

Following the inquiry, the referential material was traced and categorized to establish a theoretical space from which each work was channeled; the inquiry was schematized with the *analytical review* instrument, and guiding questions were formulated. These issues underwent new phases of exploration and acquisition to gather the information in emerging categories. As a result, this review involved a total of 55 works. This document included 22 books, 20 articles in indexed journals, 1 doctoral thesis, 2 master's theses, and 10 papers from other sources.

Results

The data collected and analyzed were transformed into reliable information to locate the most revealing results that contributed to the study process in connection with the state of the art. Thus, by tracing, triangulating, and classifying the literature, four fundamental correlational categories emerged: pedagogy and didactics from the focus on competencies, the focus on competencies as a transforming element of education, education in competencies is a significant political, social and cultural construction, and learning and educational quality: a look from the current processes and challenges of higher secondary education.

Pedagogy and Didactics from a Competency-Based Approach

This category includes works published with a direct focus on the strategic functionality of pedagogy and didactics, which must be contextualized according to the needs and competencies of students. Then, it is necessary that the educational reality has clarity in terms of curricular contents, which, having been previously selected by organizational guidelines of the Institutional Educational Project (PEI), appropriate the teaching process for learning. Table 1 summarizes the pedagogical angles (knowledge, procedures, and attitudes) correlated with the educational pillars: to know, to do and to be.

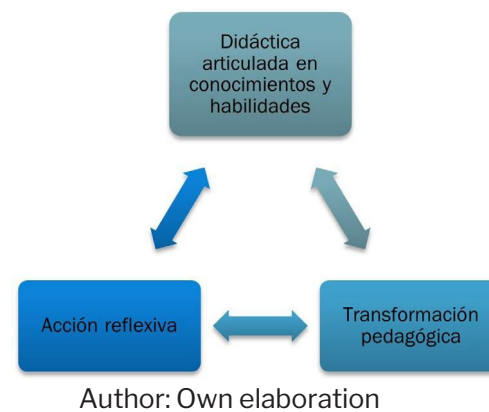
Table 1. Curricular Content

Conocimientos conceptuales o factuales (Saber conocer) Enfoque tradicional	Procedimental (Saber a hacer) Enfoque experiencial	Actitudinal (Saber ser) Enfoque socio afectivo o ética social
Hechos, teorías, principios, leyes, formulas, datos y conceptos	Procedimientos, métodos, estrategias, habilidades y procesos	Actitudes, compromisos, valores, creencias y normas sociales

Author: Own elaboration

From the combination of these elements (knowledge, procedures, and attitudes) are derived the constituents of the training processes. Similarly, guiding pedagogy and didactics based on the competency-based approach not only implies having the framework of the institutional project in agreement with the educational intentionality of the curricular contents, but it is also significant to emphasize it with the teaching for learning process as shown in Figure 2:

Figure 2. Teaching to learn process



The figure shows that, depending on the adequate didactic implementation by the teacher, the pedagogical act is transformed into an educational field coherent with the curricular contents. Similarly, in the process of teaching for learning, it is necessary a constant educational reflection that develops skills. Pedagogy and didactics according to the competency-based approach focus on meaningful (prior knowledge), situational (socio-pedagogical environment) and constructive learning.

Competence is an organizing and structuring principle of the curriculum, which transports the sphere from the classroom to the social sphere. This structure is built based on an *empirical corpus* that involves epistemological, anthropological, psychological, sociological, pedagogical and philosophical principles. For Coll (1994), the approach, being a model of the sociocultural, political and economic reality, establishes what for, what and how to teach, and from this, how and when to evaluate.

Pedagogy and didactics in competencies is a reaction to the traditional pedagogy developed since the 17th century with liberalism, which gives the school its social and cultural value. The school is the sociocultural mediator of the context. However, in the traditional or encyclopedist approach, the teacher is the center of the educational process; the student is a mere receiver of information, which Freire (2002) denotes as *banking education*. This type of transmissionist education develops an accumulated empirical-technicist thinking, where the result is more relevant than the process itself; at the same time, the student advances at the pace of the teacher and evaluation is cumulative. In contrast, the competency-based approach is conceived as a dynamic, transformative, and self-regulating process.

The Competency-Based Approach as a Transforming Element of Education

Considering the above, competency-based education is a pedagogical disjunctive to give gravitated answers to the continuous challenges that challenge the current educational system; it is dialectic and recursive, by means of which, education is transformed for self-realization, and in turn, this training enables the permanence and continuous learning of society (Monarca, 2009; Tobón, 2013).

Chomsky (1986) who, based on the theories of language or biolinguistics, establishes this approach as a process of educational transformation for the changing world. With Holland & Andre (1987), it is channeled into the transforming component of the needs, learning styles and individual potentialities so that the student obtains the skills required by the world of work (Argudín, 2009). In contrast to these approaches, Acosta (2012) shows four transforming aspects related to the competency approach, understood from a sociopolitical and economic point of view (although not exclusively), a *knowing how*; academic and practical knowledge in a *knowing what*; philosophical-gnoseological in a *knowledge of oneself*; finally, starting from a panorama of active pedagogy of the teacher, a totalizing reflective knowledge.

On the other hand, the *World Conference on Education*, held at the headquarters of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO, 1998), underlined the absolute necessity of lifelong learning and the building of proportional competencies to benefit the cultural, social and

economic development of subjects. Similarly, it should be noted that this entity emphasizes that quality education enables the acquisition of basic competencies and calls for inclusiveness, practicality and objectivity in favor of the socio-educational construction of human collectives (UNESCO, 2005). On the contrary, Tünnermann (2002) points out that educational quality takes on an unprecedented category within the processes of globalization and competitiveness, to the point that its inclusion in the educational policies of all countries is a priority. Argudín (2009) considers that globalization and humanity's inherent claim to progress requires rethinking and transforming the educational process in order to develop educational competencies into possibilities for educational improvement.

This assumes that globalization and the processes of economic globalization have had an impact on the competency-based approach, since socioeconomic, political and cultural factors, as representations of values and traditions, demand in practice the development of skills to obtain performance. Upon reflection, it is inevitable to ask: has globalization made skills, knowledge and expertise a capital value?

After having posed the question, we must now contemplate the genesis of the theoretical approach to competencies to point out the intentionality of the study. According to Acosta (2012) and Ramírez (2015) they can be classified into:

- Basic: Fundamental knowledge for life.
- Generic: Pragmatic in the labor field.
- Specific: Adjusted to the subject's job specialty.

To clarify, the focus on competencies is grouped into labor, citizenship and reading and writing competencies. In the first place, labor competencies are those knowledge, skills and attitudes that are imperative for individuals to perform with productive efficiency. Secondly, citizenship competencies are cognitive, emotional and communicative knowledge and skills conducive to the construction of a democratic, participatory and inclusive society. Thirdly, reading and writing skills contribute to the development of communicative and reflective competencies.

According to Delors (1995), there are four pillars that constitute the theoretical-practical integration, learning and integral formation that will be, during a person's life, the pillars of knowledge, the development of skills and competencies:

- *Learning to be*: stages the advent, the recognition of one's own identity and subjection in skills to act appropriately. In this space, the capacity for autonomy, decision making, judgment and personal responsibility are the basis of the social being. Memory, reasoning, aesthetic sense, physical abilities, communication skills are positive consequences of these abilities.
- *Learning to do*: dimensioning creative skills, strategic leadership, analysis organizational, social entrepreneurship and integrates theory with professional praxis.
- *Learning to live together*: enables the development of understanding, otherness and otherness with others, conflict resolution based on respect for values, pluralism, diversity and mutual understanding.
- *Learning to know*: involves *learning to learn* in order to take advantage of the possibilities of continuing education.

Based on the above argument, the following questions are formulated: how to articulate educational quality with competency-based education? and how to apply the competency-based approach? In fact, competency-based education combines three fundamental concepts: knowledge, attitudes and skills that merge logic (cognitive), aesthetics and ethics (attitudinal) and episteme (procedural). These three aspects are the essence of competence. Undoubtedly, to develop a competency it is necessary to teach certain contents. However, a question arises: what content should be taught? It is evident that nowadays, it is almost inadmissible to teach all subjects. For this reason, it is clear that it is essential to keep in mind the idea of *content selection*. Taking this into account, it is necessary to teach the minimum, necessary and sufficient for the operable development of the individual's potentialities. It is ineluctable to allude at the same time, it is not to fall in the *thematic mediocrity*, on the contrary, the topics can strengthen to a great extent the development of the competence. An important fact: the competency-based approach claims that it is not possible to teach in the same way. According to Estrada (2017), the competency approach in the transformation of education lies in the fact that traditional teaching teaches in a theoretical way so that the process is focused on learning in practice.

In contrast, the development of skills orients practice and, from this, theory is constructed (Chomsky, 1986); it does not mean separating theory from practice but represents a reorganization of the priorities of the teaching-learning process, where the curriculum, says Kemmis (1993), is a bridge that integrates theory with pragmatics. Therefore, functionality, applicability, results, and evaluation guarantee educational quality (Romero, 2009).

It is significant to point out that the apodictic conjugation between quality and competence is feasible to the extent that a socio-critical curriculum capable of directing all improvement policies in the development of competencies subject to the reality of the country is built and implemented, in addition, where the existing resources, material and technological, physical and intellectual, cognitive and emotional, in an optimal and rational way, allow the institution of a practical learning atmosphere, capable of enhancing and transforming the human dimension to the maximum and in a positive way (Agray, 2010).

Education in Competencies is a Significant Political, Social and Cultural Construction.

This category includes the works published with a direct focus on the socio-cultural and political perception of competency education. It is evident that competency education cannot be carried out sporadically (Shepard, 2008), but must be conceived within a conceptual framework adjacent to the cultural, social, political and economic context of a country. The educational process involves educational agents that articulate with each other to acquire an *a priori* dynamism of training: society, family, institution (teachers-students); education in the micro space (classroom) cannot be thought of in isolation from the macro space (society), considering that the individual constructs and transforms his learning in correlation with the social aspects that the world of work demands. Education in competence is a sociocultural and political construction that is conjugated with the significant and integrated with cognitive and emotional aspects, among others (Cantú, 2014; Coello, 2008; Parilla, 2018).

In addition, the competency-based approach adapts to social and labor needs (Vallejo 2018; Parilla, 2018). In other words, in such a competitive, positivist, utilitarian and pragmatic world, it is revealing to learn in competencies because it allows applying skills not only in academia, but also in the workplace. Notice, first of all, that contextualizing the issue of *quality* encompasses many strands in the organization of the educational system (García and Muñoz, 2004; Zapata, 2015). A clear example is education in competencies; there cannot be quality if there is no adequate implementation of the educational curriculum according to social and educational needs, interpretation of learning styles, adequate planning (quality and comprehensiveness) of contents, strategies, environments, means and learning resources, execution of coherent pedagogical strategies and above all, pertinent to the needs and contents of the current society.

Learning and Educational Quality: A View from the Current Processes and Challenges of High School Education.

In this category are the papers published with a direct focus on the correlation between learning and educational quality in terms of the new current challenges in higher secondary education.

The traditional academicist education (contents, disciplines and subjects) from which derive a large number of instructional entities that have opened a pedagogical gap concentrating its essence in the question: is it coherent, pertinent and necessary that what is teaching and learning? However, the current educational system has been insisting on a more pragmatic and functional model of education, an education that responds to the needs of the context and subject. In fact, it is evident that there is a pre-existing relevance and recognition for the themes, research and disciplines of knowledge, but it is also understood that education needs to orient its processes to specific contexts, in short, the needs of the world (social, economic, cultural and political). This dynamism of focusing and providing answers to the demands of the environment is what determines the *right middle ground* in competitive education (Cejas, Rueda, Cayo, & Villa, 2019). The relationship between learning and quality lies in the very process of teaching for learning, given that transcendence is the relevance of what is taught and learned, in another language, what is precise, applicable to the various fields and with meaning for life. What is utilitarian for the social subject has its catalytic feature of educational quality.

Current processes and new challenges demand subjects adapted to reality, pragmatic individuals who contribute to the resolution of social problems. The educational reform aimed at improving the quality of learning implies a transformation of the structure, pedagogical model, institutional horizon, among other aspects.

Díaz (2019) considers that certain benefits and challenges emanate from competency-based education. Globalization and the new changes in pedagogical paradigms have made possible a wide but tense field of research, as a result of the resistance to dispel tradition. According to this study, we live in the so-called information society, the digital society, where information is forged, processed and disseminated by the individual and redirected to manage the economic field.

A study by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD, 2019) raises policies to optimize the socioeconomic well-being of individuals around the world. This research suggests that 21st century societies and economies face major challenges, such as the social and human consequences of the international financial crisis, meeting development goals, sustainable growth and responding to climate change, aging societies, and the knowledge economy. Education is an essential part of the response to these challenges. However, education systems still have much to correct in order to provide equitable educational congruencies that begin in early childhood education and last throughout life. These educational proposals must provide people with the knowledge, skills and tools that will enable them to be competitive and committed in the socio-cultural sphere.

Discussion

The pandemic and the new social changes have impacted heterogeneous socio-political, cultural and educational fields. Education has had to reorganize its processes of flexibility and adaptability, as this sudden change coupled the face-to-face with the digital. This move of destiny further evidenced the digital divide, social inequality, poverty, unemployment, accumulated social discontent, among others. At the same time, it generated an uncertainty that still burdens the educational process.

Redefining a pedagogical intentionality, an educational project and the curriculum is not a simple exercise. The new modalities of alternation and attendance have shown the relevance of educating in competencies as an alternative learning. A type of approach that integrates prior knowledge, fundamental skills (digital, cognitive, affective, and metacognitive) and, above all, particular and social actions.

Up to this point, the significance of the competency-based approach as a transformer of the educational process is clear. Even so, it is left to discussion that, although the competency-based approach is a dynamic and potential perspective, there are some considerations that should be formulated:

- Teachers/teaching process: emphasis is placed on the establishment of spaces conducive to meaningful, multicultural, diverse, and inclusive learning. Therefore, how to develop social, critical, and creative thinking in the learner?
- Students/learning process: need for predisposition, attitude, construction of analytical, reflective, procedural, and metacognitive skills. Therefore, how does the learner actively participate (social and formative responsibility) in the development of critical and creative thinking?
- Curriculum/curricula: the educational and curricular process is assumed from a flexible, humanistic, motivational, transversal, and systematic perspective. So, how to guide a curriculum based on critical and creative thinking?
- Socio-cultural, political, and economic context/reality: Currently, society and education are immersed in health problems (pandemic), social problems (inequality, indifference, poverty, digital divide, etc.), political problems (polarization) and axiological problems (crisis of values). Consequently, how to adapt the competency-based approach to the new dynamics being faced?

The focus on competencies in the light of the new educational evolution is indispensable to transcend the traditional, cognitive, positivist and technical model to a real and active climate, allowing a sensitization of the human character and projecting both teaching and learning to flexibility, transversalization and adaptability.

Conclusions

It is considered complex that in the face of such a tangled subject in education so many questions arise, however, in the same way as it was established in its evolution and complexities, the results emerge. The mere term of *competence* reveals confusion, due to the diversity of definitions that many theorists have revealed over time. Thus, it is important to be clear that, in this task of clarification, a complete and functional definition has not been given; the focus on competencies invites to social and labor practice.

Based on this general framework, we can reflect that this model constitutes a counterpoint to the traditional paradigm of educational policies that focus learning on receptivity, passivity and memorization of data and information that are often irrelevant for the world of work. Competency-based learning is a way of cooperating with students in their civic and professional training. In this context, the teaching and learning process forges an atmosphere where participation is the starting point. Therefore, learners cease to be mere receivers of information and become active agents in their own human development process. Similarly, the teacher needs to take a critical and reflective awareness of the progress and developments that germinate every day in the educational field.

In this sense, it is significant to highlight that the teacher is the main actor, mediator and implementer of teaching for learning, aligned with the strengthening of knowledge, learning, acquisition of skills and attitudes that allow the development of the learner according to the ideals of progress, although it is necessary to mention that the student must be an active participant in the learning process (social constructivism).

Together with this, it is preferable to encourage and contribute to the improvement of education through the articulation of educational trends, whether project-based, guided, discovery, inclusive or competency-based learning, which tend to trace a significant advantage in the teaching process for learning, given that "education does not change the world, it changes the people who will change the world (...)" (Freire, 2002, p. 45). (Freire, 2002, p. 45).

The current educational panorama shows that, indeed, among the main challenges facing education are: how to implement and consolidate a quality educational system in a post-pandemic context; and what elements of Colombian culture and society affect competency-based learning?

It is clear that this is an unintelligible problem in the educational context and the factors involved. However, it is insisted that a society oriented to innovation and quality implements trends and functional educational models presented in other social and cultural contexts (Finland, Canada, Singapore, among others), whose structures and directions have developed coherent and adequate educational policies in favor of the improvement of educational quality. To concretize the topic, it is recognized that it is pragmatic that the external and reasoned educational model in competencies is adapted to the socio-political, cultural and economic context of a given country, considering it meritorious that public policies and institutional realities forge together their own structures.

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