

Curricular management of the communicative competence of future teachers

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ABSTRACT

The insufficient management of the communicative competence of future teachers of the Technical University “Luis Vargas Torres” limits the relevance of their comprehensive training. For this reason, the objective of this article is to identify assumptions that support how to curricularly manage such competence, in order to contribute to improve the initial training process. Methods such as analysis-synthesis, content analysis and document review were used. The results provide theoretical and methodological ideas inherent to the current curricular redesign, which contribute to the adoption of the competency approach in the training model of this university.

Keywords: Management; Curriculum management; Competences; Communication; Communicative competence

Introduction

The Technical University “Luis Vargas Torres” of Esmeraldas (UTLVTE hereinafter), Ecuador, assumes as its mission the “comprehensive training of critical, proactive and humanistic professionals, through a current educational process, articulated between teaching, research and linkage with society, for sustainable development based on the

proper construction of universal and ancestral Ecuadorian culture, science and technology” and consensually establishes the Vision of “Being a reference at national and international level of academic, scientific, technological and cultural excellence, which positively affects the equitable and integral development of society” (Technical University “Luis Vargas Torres” de Esmeraldas, 2018, p. 27).

As part of its strategic projection, the Training Subsystem has as its strategic objective “To train undergraduate and graduate professionals of academic and humanistic quality through an educational process articulated between teaching, research and linkage that contribute to the development of society” (Technical University “Luis Vargas Torres” de Esmeraldas, 2018, p. 57).

Such undergraduate and graduate training is expected to be reverted in the quality of education in the educational institutions where UTLVTE graduates work, however, “...the results show that the learning achievements of the student body are not as expected, considering the standards established in the education of the National Education System” (Ministry of Education, 2023, p. 21). This was reported by the sample evaluation called Ser Estudiante, carried out by the National Institute for Educational Evaluation (INEVAL), in which, among other subjects, knowledge, skills and abilities in Language and Literature were assessed.

Similarly, the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA), which is one of the most relevant assessments in the world, and which Ecuador conducted in 2017, included key skills such as Science, Reading and Mathematics, in which the country “...has a high percentage of students below the basic level of proficiency in Reading, Mathematics and Science” (OECD-INEVAL, 2018, as cited in Ministerio de Educación, 2023, p. 26).

Such results point to the need to study the reasons that, as possible causes, provoke the occurrence of this problematic, among which it is identified as a **problem** that: the insufficient management of the communicative competence of future UTLVTE teachers limits the relevance of their comprehensive training, therefore, the performance of their professional pedagogical activity.

In this sense, the **objective** of this article is to identify and specify a set of assumptions that support how to curricularly manage this competence, in order to contribute to enrich the approach assumed at UTLVTE in the initial training process. This constitutes a small

contribution to the process of curricular redesign that is currently underway to implement the competency approach in the training model of this university.

In accordance with the objective of the article, materials were identified that address the background of the research object related to the competency approach, the communicative competence and its management in the training process of university careers, as a precondition for the use of the documentary review and the theoretical methods of analysis-synthesis, induction-deduction and content analysis.

Development

A theoretical analysis of the curricular management of the communicative competence of future teachers presupposes the assumption of definitions of the most general categories contained in this concept from the formal logic. These are: management, curricular management, competence and teachers' communicative competence.

The clarifications made, based on the systematization of the works consulted, contributed to discern budgets that support how to curricularly manage this competence in the initial training process, in order to contribute to enrich the competency approach assumed at UTLVTE and provide it with greater congruence with the social demands of the substantive processes developed there.

The concepts of curriculum management and management. Their definitions.

Despite disagreements about the similarities and differences that may exist between the features that identify the concept of management and others that, indistinctly, are used in the literature, such as administration, management or direction, which ultimately have their origin in the Spanish translation of the term management, there is consensus on the identification of characteristics such as the fact that we are dealing with a process of influences that are exercised through interaction and relationships between leaders and those being led. It is also valid to assume the strategic nature of these objectives and their assumption in a rational way, in which there are stable horizontal and vertical interpersonal relationships.

This process has a social and historically conditioned nature, pursues the achievement of objectives and relies on planning, organization, regulation, control and evaluation, as functions that explain what the leader does. In the case of planning, it is assumed as “a sequential process of decision making that allows to establish in advance what to do, for what, with what resources, how to do it, when to do it and who or who will participate in such realization” (Del Toro and Valiente, 2019, p. 14).

For its part, organization, as noted by Carnota (1985), as cited in Del Toro and Valiente (2019) is essentially a work of combination in which “...to carry out the tasks, material and human means are available. To adequately combine each type of means, and moreover both with each other, to achieve the best results with the lowest labor costs, is to organize” (p. 16).

In the case of the regulation function, which is also known as command, decision making, even some authors name it leadership, although in all functions it is present, due to the systemic nature of each of them, it is assumed that “Deciding is to choose one among several options or alternatives, which implies having sufficient information about them in order to elucidate the one that may be more convenient (advantageous, rational, productive) to achieve the desired result” (Del Toro & Valiente, 2019, p. 18).

It is no less important to specify what is understood by control as a management function. In this sense, it is assumed that knowing whether the results correspond to the proposed objectives, specifying the causes of deviations and implementing the relevant corrective measures is part of the control that is the responsibility of any management process. It implies “...the fulfillment of three essential steps: establishment of benchmarks (standards, objectives, plans, etc.); verification of performance based on those benchmarks and correction of deviations from them” (Del Toro & Valiente, 2019, p. 17).

Once the features that can be used to understand, as a concept, the category of management have been specified, it now corresponds to the analysis of what to understand by curriculum management. In this regard Ariza *et al.* (2024) emphasizes that the university as a complex social system,

promotes and receives emergencies that lead to the search for new order, so that it can face the changes of the social context in which it is located; this leads to review the theoretical foundations on which the governance and curriculum

management is based to meet and raise its social relevance without loss of institutional identity and organizational sustainability. (p. 6)

In this sense, curriculum management is defined by Osorio (2017), as cited in Huaman *et al.* (2021) as “a conglomerate of procedures that are directed to a training purpose, to enable a certain learning” (p. 11893 and 11894). For Giraldo-Plaza and Ovalle-Carranza (2020), curriculum management “...is in charge of the definition of educational processes and practices carried out by various actors around a curriculum in a training institution in order to promote environments of reflection, construction and improvement of the curriculum” (p. 130).

These authors further assume that such management “...comprises policies and procedures that allow planning, designing, evaluating, analyzing and redesigning all aspects of a curriculum in order to achieve continuous improvement, aimed at being relevant to the community it impacts” (p. 130).

Curriculum, according to Osorio (2017), as cited in Huaman *et al.* (2021) refers to:

a historical construct, which encompasses its theory as well as its praxis, which is also established by each educational society based on its understanding of the theory-practice, school-society relationship, as well as the role of each of the members immersed in the educational entities. Therefore, from the perspective of educational praxis, the curriculum is an approach that explicitly details a set of methods and contents, and provides an opening for recommendations regarding aspects that can be inferred relevant and feasible in the teaching-learning process in the classroom. (p. 11893)

The concept of competence

According to Moreno and Cobo (2015), a competency “...is a know-how that integrates diverse knowledge, skills, attitudes and other resources to achieve a successful performance in complex situations” (p. 7). For Tobón (2006) the concept of competencies is not new, but “...has been structured for many years from psychological and philosophical sources” (p. 46).

Likewise, Álvarez *et al.* (2015) emphasize that in the studies on competencies it is necessary to understand them as the set of knowledge, skills, abilities, capacities, attitudes, aptitudes and values of each individual to identify the changing dynamics of the

environment and to be oriented in the search for solutions to problems as a way for their sustainable transformation. The competent professional "...is the one who knows (diverse knowledge), knows how to do (habits, abilities, skills, abilities, capacities), knows how to be and/or knows how to live together (ethical, aesthetic, political attitudes and values) to transform his social reality in relation to collective, social and personal interests" (p. 68).

For this reason they assume this term in its meaning that characterizes it as

a complex psychological configuration of the personality, which, through self-regulation, involves cognitive and motivational formations of the personality in the orientation and execution with quality of the activity and communication, before contradictions of the reality that the subject values as significant, with the goal of contributing to sustainable personal and social development. (Álvarez *et al.*, 2015, p. 68)

The concept of communication

For Fernández (1996), as cited in (Del Toro & Valiente, 2019, p. 20) communication "is a process of human interaction and reciprocal exchange". Teachers use communication with much recurrence, it is their fundamental tool, for which the apprehension of knowledge and skills and values associated with the informative, perceptive and interactive components of the communication process is necessary.

The informative component refers to the messages that are exchanged, their content and their transmission and reception, the perceptive component has to do with the images that one and the other interlocutor form reciprocally and that influence the course of the communicative exchange and the interactive component, the way in which the participants interact, the type of link and relationship they establish among themselves in the communication process. (Fernández, 1996, as cited in Del Toro, 2016, p. 70).

For these reasons, Del Toro and Valiente (2019) propose the inclusion of communication as a node of interdisciplinary articulation in the initial training process, which contributes to the preparation for the management of the educational processes that future teachers will have to lead, with emphasis on the teaching-learning process and, in this sense, they suggest preparing them to:

- apply the rules of diction, intonation, expressiveness, clarity, coherence and correctness that govern oral and written expression;

- know how to use different registers depending on the more formal or informal character of the different communicative situations in which they participate;
- knowing how to listen and dialogue;
- know how to be empathetic and assertive in the communication process;
- know how to use gestures and extraverbal resources in communication;
- know how to identify factors that become barriers to communication in the school context and apply alternatives to neutralize them.

The authors of this paper assume that these elements constitute achievements in the development of communicative competence that should be the object of curricular management in order to contribute to the integral formation of educators graduating from the Faculty of Pedagogy of the Technical University “Luis Vargas Torres” of Esmeraldas, Ecuador.

The concept of communicative competence

According to Hymes (1980), as cited in Tobón (2006), communicative competence refers to the concrete uses and acts given from language, within specific contexts...” In this sense, he emphasizes that, unlike linguistic competence, communicative competence is neither ideal nor invariable; “...on the contrary: it takes into account the specific contexts where interaction takes place. Therefore, a person competent in language is one who uses it to integrate with others, understanding and making himself/herself understood” (p. 46).

In a work on basic competencies in higher education, and specifically on oral and written competencies, Peña (2008), as cited in Gràcia *et al.* (2020) emphasizes that the value of reading, writing and oral expression lies not only in their condition as means to accumulate information or to demonstrate the knowledge acquired at the university, but, fundamentally, “...as powerful instruments to produce and transform knowledge, improve the quality of learning, develop students' critical thinking and make them participants in their training process.”

Furthermore, the ability to communicate ideas in a precise and conclusive way orally, in the case of students preparing to become teachers, “...is an indispensable condition for their professional performance, since they will have to help their own students to develop this ability” (p. 117 and 118).

As a complement to the systematization, which was developed by the authors of this work, assumptions were identified that support the curricular management process of the

formation of the communicative competence of future teachers, which can help the formative process in the Faculty of Pedagogy of the UTLVTE to progressively focus on the comprehensiveness of its graduates, as a way to contribute to the social relevance of that institution. They, in addition to the definitions assumed in previous paragraphs on more general categories that make up this construct, are the following:

- The need to inquire, in the context of the initial diagnosis made to university students of pedagogical careers, about the state of development of the communicative competence, as an input for the design of curricular activities, which are aimed at transversally enhancing the elements of such competence, from the substantive processes of training, research and linkage with society.
- The joint planning, from a transdisciplinary approach, of teaching activities in which students play communicative roles congruent with the processes they will have to develop in the educational institutions where they will carry out their professional pedagogical activity.
- It is assumed from the Conversational Methodology proposal of Gràcia *et al.* (2020), “...to promote students' metalinguistic competence, through reflection on the uses and functions of linguistic constructions in interaction and their adaptation to the context” (p. 120). To this end, teachers encourage students to reflect on how they use oral language during classes and on its appropriateness, through the design of instruments such as rubrics.
- The homologation of the requirements on the contents that must be incorporated as part of the curricular management in the new training model, consistent with those of the preceding educational levels, associated with communicative competence, such as those proposed by the Ministry of Education (2023) for high school students, who will reach the general exit profile established by the national educational authority and for this purpose must develop, among others, the competence called: Communicative and Linguistic Learning (C.L.L.L.).
- This competency is operationalized in competency elements, which are defined by Tobón (2006) as “...specific performances that make up the competency” (p. 72). The Ministry of Education (2023) proposes, for the A.L.C competency, a total of 13 competency elements, among which the following can be mentioned as examples:

- A.L.C. 1. Communicates ideas, feelings, emotions, and thoughts to others assertively, both verbally and nonverbally, in a clear manner, using language rules appropriately.
- A.L.C. 2. Participates in different communicative situations, interprets verbal and nonverbal cues, listens actively, is able to identify key messages, and generates contextually appropriate responses.
- A.L.C. 13. Use conventional citation systems for the production of texts in printed and digital media, applying principles of academic honesty and respecting intellectual property rights. Recognizes the importance of giving credit to the sources used, acting with integrity and honesty in academic and professional communication, which demonstrates a responsible and ethical behavior towards knowledge and originality in intellectual and artistic production.

The formation and development of the communicative competence, which can be classified among the generic competencies, due to its transversal character, should focus on the student's profile to face the activity of knowledge construction, which was proposed as part of the Educational Model by competencies with constructivist-investigative-intercultural approach assumed by the Technical University “ Luis Vargas Torres” de Esmeraldas, UTLVTE (2023), with emphasis on those most related to said competence.

Conclusions

The curricular management process undertaken by UTLVTE, which is based on the competency-based approach, is clearly a permanent analysis of how to align the institutional curriculum from the teaching work consistent with the principles of a comprehensive and humanistic training, consistent with the demands, increasingly growing, to the process of undergraduate and graduate education, imposed by the Emerald society, for the sake of educational excellence and with the uniqueness that imprints the constructivist-investigative-intercultural approach.

The directors and teachers of this high house of studies should ensure that their students become aware that the elements of communicative competence involve being able to manage their dialogues, develop coherent and cohesive texts, substantiate their points of view, counter-argue or refute those of the interlocutors, properly manage conflicts, motivate others and encourage their participation.

With their thoughts and vision focused on their functions as teachers, these strategies will be useful to convert their pedagogical activity into communicative processes that promote the transformation of the results achieved by their students in institutional, national and international evaluations, as evidence of the quality of Ecuadorian education.