Teachers Perception of Training Needs at UABC and their Referents

Beatriz A. Romero Noyola
Universidad Autónoma de Baja California
bea_romero@uabc.edu.mx

Dr. José Luis Arcos Vega
Universidad Autónoma de Baja California
arcos@uabc.edu.mx

Resumen

A research instrument creates two discursive situations in the field of education from the linguistic point of view that shows how teachers perceive a textual referent (name of competency), ordering the list of Tuning America Latina generic competences hierarchically; and an extra-textual referent; perception of self-development in each of a list of Generic Competencies. Taking into account what John Ohala (in Chafe, 1994 pp.16) has named a contrived observation, the act of being in the right place at the right time, so this reflection work is done in the inter-semester period when teachers have less distracters and more desk work to do.

The exercise aims to find out how one's phenomenological experiences compare with others through the use of distance measured from a statistical mean calculated out of 4,558 academics, plus graduates and students pertaining to 186 universities, also considering employers, approached by the National Centers. Collaterally, this procedure will be proposed for training purposes, as a better approach, one that is based in self-perception. For that purpose 40 teachers of randomly selected groups of the Education and Humanities area of the Universidad Autónoma de Baja California (UABC), Baja California State Autonomous University, were requested during inter-semester periods to evaluate their development on 27 concepts

made accessible via two exercises that required them to read the Tuning America Latina generic competences list. Later, utter a measure of self-perception.

Tuning America Latina is a multicultural project that began in 2004 upon invitation of the Tuning Europe group and responds to UN call for a movement on educational models to prevent lagging in a globalized world (Gonzalez & Wagenaar 2003, 2006; Beneitone et al. 2007; Beneitone & Gonzalez 2007; Gardner 2007; Ortega & Minguez 2007).

Introducción

A research instrument creates two discursive situations in the field of education from the linguistic point of view that shows how teachers perceive a textual referent (name of competency), ordering the list of Tuning America Latina generic competences hierarchically; and an extra-textual referent; perception of self-development in each of a list of 27 Generic Competences. Taking into account what John Ohala (in Chafe, 1994 pp.16) has named a contrived observation, the act of being in the right place at the right time, this reflection work was done in the inter-semester period when teachers have less distracters and more desk work to do.

The topic of competences is not new to teachers for they have worked on restructuring the Licensure program in order to adapt it to the competences model recommended by United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), aiming to prevent developing countries from lagging in a globalized world after the destruction of the Berlin Wall, Mao's death and Informational Revolution signaled the beginning of a third millennium (Morales et al., 2001 pp5). This model was sketched by European higher education team leader Jacques Delors (1996) and would be later conceptualized as Tuning Europe. Then, for the meeting held in Spain (2004) an invitation included Latin-American countries, beginning Tuning America Latina (Beneitone & González, 2007, pp. 10).

Generic competences refer to a global performance for success in life, while professional competences refer to an ideal performance in a specific professional field. Generic competences develop during school life and should be consolidated in higher education; they integrate a transversal axis that is common to all areas of knowledge.

Tuning Europe listed 30 generic competences, while some were regrouped in Tuning America Latina, the list added three competences that the team considered needed a special focus in the region: Social Responsibility and Citizenship, Environmental preservation, and Commitment to the socio-cultural environment.

We face an educational change and Gardner (2007) has identified two strong backgrounds; either the model in effect proved to be ineffective or change is required in order to adapt to new situations in a changing world, as is the globalized era.

This exercise aims to find out how one's phenomenological experiences compare with others through the use of distance measured from a statistical mean calculated out of 4,558 academics, 7220 graduates, and 9166 students pertaining to 186 universities and 1,669 employers, approached by the National Centers established in the region by the Tuning American Latina team. Collaterally, this procedure will be proposed for training purposes, as a better approach, one that is based in self-perception. For that purpose 40 teachers of randomly selected groups of the Education and Humanities area of the Universidad Autónoma de Baja California (UABC), Baja California State Autonomous University, were requested during the inter-semester periods to evaluate their development on 27 statements made accessible via two exercises that required them to read the Tuning Latin America generic competences list. Later, utter a measure of self-perception, that is, evaluate their own development as professionals.

It is the means to acknowledge teacher's perception of training needs where national educational policies have relied on teachers voluntary adscription to updating and integrating courses offered all year round on the basis of the needs perceived by the administrative staff, but which are not mandatory, that is, they are not obilgated to attend.

Methodology

In this research teachers perform identification, ordering and a self-evaluation of their experience and perception of referents.

Kind of Study:

This is a descriptive research of the conceptualization of generic competences by teachers in the area of education at the Autonomous State University of Baja California (UABC) Mexicali Campus.

Sample and Population:

The sample was drawn from teachers in five higher education teaching programs: Language Teaching, Mathematics, Spanish and Literature, Psyco pedagogical Assessment and Educational Sciences. There are 40 teachers in 15 groups selected randomly in a stratified sample to evaluate development of Generic Competences on both students and teachers in a PhD thesis work.

Instrument:

A list of 27 statements instructing teachers to read and determine which two generic competences they support in the subject they are teaching that semester.

There are two columns next to the list, where they will give hierarchical order to the statements then self-evaluate themselves each on a 0-100% basis.

Procedure:

First, teachers made a private observation: introspecting when they reviewed the list of generic competences to find the two enhanced in their subject or learning units. They are told these two competences are the contribution to the professional profile of teachers. This is the first step to make information structure accessible –textual information that will allow them to follow better the instructions given in the instrument (Chafe, in Tomlin 1987, pp. 22).

Second, they would hierarchically order said generic competences, and this exercise serves two purposes, being the concepts inducted so they become accessible and the participants aware of the referents which are important characteristics that a professional teacher must have, that is, they are coherent and contained by the super topic of generic competences of education professionals, which in turn belongs to the super super topic of the Competences Educational Model they have worked on previously. However, from the social representations point of view, recency of the competences model in the locality does not infer that a collective elaboration of this social objet has been already construed, one that will impact behavior and communication (Moscovici, 1963 pp. 231-260)

Categorization or hierarchy is intended to help shape a mental representation suitable for their own processes, since we are different in the way we make sense of experience, not existing a pre-conceptual category structure for emotion or thought (Moscovici (1963 pp. 231-260), Lakoff (1987 xi)). Some of the teachers expressed that they preferred to do the self-perception exercise first, even though the aim was that the ordering exercise would give more identifiability to the referents, and they were allowed under the inference that she or he declined to be under pressure after knowing the importance of the referents or concepts prior to self evaluation, as a possible explanation, or, that they found this a more interesting activity. Finally, they were asked to perform a self-perception of their own development in each generic competence as professionals.

Consciousness here has a focus, it is the activation of a small part of the experiencer's model of the education realm not the complete model, being an internal phenomenon only observable to him/her, that in turn will allow them to achieve a total view of the use of language (Chaffe, 1994).

Analysis:

Description of most and least important competences for UABC teachers then compared to Tuning America Latina project results.

Multi Dimensional Scaling with SPSS 15 to appreciate similarity of judgments. This applies to spatial representations of different complex objects on which people issue a judgment, used with ordinal data. Mean stress resulting was $r^2 = .90781$. This implies that a large proportion of variance is explained by the distance, and asymmetry was .000 which tells data are drawn from a normal population.

Alfa Cronbach applied to teachers self-evaluation was .950, showing a high reliability of their answers. A T-test showed utmost (.000) significance for both self-evaluation and hierarchical ordering of the Tuning America Latina Generic Competences list.

Results:

Different perceptions were found upon comparing the prioritary and the least regarded competences by both groups. Table No. 1 shows the distance between perception of UABC academics and the mean macro hierarchical order given by academics, graduates, students and employers reported by the Tuning America Latina Project.

UABC academics rated high:

Commitment to quality (25+ points difference); and Ethical commitment (25+ points difference), Appreciation for Diversity and Multiculturality (17+ points of difference); showing polarized judgments with the project ordering, first places of importance for UABC teachers.

Ability to apply knowledge in practice (-2), Knowledge of area and profession (2-), Social responsibility and citizenship (-2); showing a similar position, slightly more important for the Project sample.

UABC academics rated low:

Ability to communicate in a second language (20-points difference), which needs more interpretation, for they live in border cities with an English speaking country.

Ability to organize and plan time (19- points of difference), Capacity to research (-15 points of difference), Skills to use technology (13- points of difference); These last three competences are particularly important for an active, autonomous and updated teacher. It is necessary to increase their importance in the eyes of the teachers.

Ability to work in international contexts (3- points of difference) and Project design and management is similar for both samples, they rated them low.

Table No. 1 Hierarchical Order of Generic Competences

Competences	Hierarchical order in Latin America	Hierarchical order UABC academics, Mexicali	Differences
Capacity for abstraction, analysis and synthesis.	1	19	-18
Ability to Apply Knowledge in practice	2	4	-2
Cap. organize y plan time	3	22	-19
Knowledge of área and profession.	4	6	-2
Social resp. and citizenship	5	3	+2
Oral and Written Communication	6	16	-10
Communication in Second Lang	7	27	-20
Skills for Technology use	8	25	-13
Capacity to Research	9	24	-15
Capacity to learn and update	10	7	+3
Information management Skills	11	12	-1

Critical and self-critical abilities	12	23	-6
Cap. To adapt to new situations	13	14	+5
Creativity	14	20	+7
Problem solving skills	15	10	+9
Decision making	16	9	+7
Teamwork	17	8	+6
Interpersonal skills	18	11	+2
Cap. to motivate and succeed	19	13	+6
Environmental preservation	20	18	+2
Socio cultural milieu compreh.	21	15	+6
Appreciation of diversity and the multicultural aspect	22	5	+17
Ab To work international contexts	23	26	-3
Ab. to work autonomously	24	17	+7
Project design and management	25	21	+4
Ethical commitment	26	1	+25
Concern for quality	27	2	-+25

Self-Evaluation:

In relation to the self-evaluation performed and gender, there were no significant differences found, however, for Capacity to communicate in a Second Language both scored the lowest, with an average for men of 70% and 58% women.

Teachers also scored low in Ability to work in international contexts, 73% and 68% respectively; Skills to use technology were 77% and 79%, which is congruent with the fact that they considered these competences less important in the hierarchical order exercise.

These results support the need for training these competences and a strategic set of actions to empower teachers since the institution provides enough mechanisms for mobility to both national and international events.

Differences by program at UABC:

As to differences by program, Communication in a Second Language has a higher mean for the BA in Languages Teaching, with 73% mean, while other programs range between 53-62%. It does however require action.

In respect to the ability to work in international contexts, the BA in Language Teaching has a mean of 83, other programs range between 61-76%, this is understandable because of the content of the programs and the fact that Second Language Acquisition events are usually held in a Second Language.

Finally, skills to use technology range 82-88% except Psycho pedagogical Assessment where tests by Internet are not widely available yet in Mexico, and procedures call for interview and conversation; they nonetheless have to work in the teaching profile they hold.

Conclusión

It is important to mention that teachers have not yet worked in a common definition both of the statements researched as generic competences, and have only started to plan the design of a net of these competences to be assessed in three levels at least with boundaries that will give teachers a better and common idea of their own performance and will at the same time trigger their own development.

This statement takes in consideration that a self-evaluation is a judgment a person does on her/himself and it starts a process of identification, recognition and measurement that will impulse change in the direction proposed (Ponce, 2005).

On order of competences drawn from the Tuning America Latina project, teachers consider unimportant Communication in a Second Language and the Ability to work in international

contexts which may be reflecting their own experiences, this was so regardless of the focus given by the university to movility and multiculturality, sponsoring attendance and organization of international events.

The three competences added by the Tuning America Latina team were ordered in a higher position by the UABC team, showing they are very important. Teachers scored high on self-evaluation too. This may be due to the fact that these concepts are common ground topics for discussion in the education sector in Mexico.

This research therefore allowed for a multicultural exercise since Tuning America Latina is a multicultural project, and allowed preservation of the local at the same time. Further more, it is a basis for teacher training upon the needs expressed by the participants.

Bibliografía

Beneitone, P. y González, J. (2007). *Informe Final Proyecto Tuning América   Latina 2004-7.* España. Deusto.

Chafe, W. (1994) Discourse, Consciousness, and Time: the Flow and displacement of Conscious Experience in Speaking and Writing. US. University of Chicago Press

Creswell, J. (2008) Educational Research. NJ. Pearson Education Inc.

Delors, J. (1996) La Educación Encierra un Tesoro. Madrid. UNESCO/Santillana.

Frederick, T. James, C. & Rush, I. (1998). The Bases of Competence: skills for Lifelong Learning. San Francisco. Jossey-Bass Publishers.

Gardner, H. (2006). Five Minds for the Future. US. Harvard Business School Publishing.

Gonzalez, J. & Wagenaar, R. (2003). Tuning Educational Structures in Europe. Spain.   Deusto University.

Lakoff, G. (1987). Women, Fire and Dangerous Things: What Categories Reveal about   the Mind. Chicago. University of Chicago Press.

Maldonado, B. ((2007). Memorias del Encuentro Tuning. Consejo Nacional de   Educación Superior. Manta, Ecuador.

Morales, F. (2002). Psicología Social. México. Prentice Hall.

Moscovici, S. (1963). Attitudes and Opinions. Annual Review of Psychology, pps. 231-   260.

Ortega, P. y Mínguez, R. (2001). La educación moral del ciudadano de hoy. Barcelona.   Editorial Paidós.

Ponce, M. (2009). Evaluación Dinámica del Aprendizaje. México. Ediciones Letec.

Tomlin, R. (1987). Linguistic reflections of cognitive events. In R. S. Tomlin (d),   Coherence and groundig in discouse (pp. 455-479). Amsterdam.John Benjamins.