



TRAINING OF GENERIC COMPETENCES IN HIGHER EDUCATION

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Abstract - *The formation of generic competencies in pedagogical students is essential for preparing them to excel in the multifaceted role of an educator. These competencies encompass a diverse range of skills, including effective communication, critical thinking, adaptability, and digital literacy. By nurturing these skills, educational institutions ensure the holistic professional development of pedagogical students, equipping them with the tools needed to navigate diverse educational contexts and address the evolving needs of students. Moreover, the cultivation of generic competencies enables pedagogical students to adapt effectively to changing educational landscapes, staying abreast of emerging trends and integrating innovative teaching methodologies. Ultimately, prioritizing the development of these competencies contributes to educational excellence, as educators armed with a comprehensive skill set are better positioned to foster meaningful learning experiences, promote student engagement, and drive positive societal change. Thus, the formation of generic competencies in pedagogical students is crucial for shaping the future of education and preparing educators to meet the challenges of the 21st century.*

Keywords: *generic competences, society, higher education, formation*

INTRODUCTION

The formation of generic competencies in higher education has emerged as a central theme in contemporary educational discourse. These competencies, also known as transversal skills or core competencies, are the skills, knowledge, and attitudes that enable individuals to effectively navigate various professional, social, and personal contexts. As the professional and social environments become more complex and dynamic, the need to cultivate generic competencies becomes increasingly imperative to ensure the employability, adaptability, and holistic success of graduates from higher education. (Chan et al, 2017)

This process of developing generic competencies extends beyond the acquisition of theoretical knowledge; it involves a holistic integration of cognitive abilities, interpersonal skills, intrapersonal skills, and ethical values. Thus, higher education seeks not only to provide specialized knowledge in specific fields but also to develop autonomous, critical, collaborative, and ethically responsible individuals who can confront the challenges of an ever-evolving society.

In this introduction, we will delve deeply into the concept of generic competencies, their importance in higher education, pedagogical approaches for their development, as well as the challenges and opportunities associated with their effective implementation. Additionally, we will examine how various educational institutions and higher education systems around the world are addressing this issue and adapting to the changing demands of society and the job market.



Generic competencies, a multifaceted array of skills, knowledge, and attitudes, transcend disciplinary boundaries and hold relevance across diverse contexts. Integral to personal, academic, and professional spheres, these competencies equip individuals with the versatility needed to navigate the complexities of modern life. At the core of these competencies lies effective communication, enabling individuals to express themselves articulately and understand others' perspectives, thereby fostering meaningful interactions and collaborations. Moreover, critical thinking and problem-solving skills empower individuals to navigate ambiguity, analyze information critically, and devise innovative solutions to multifaceted challenges encountered in both professional and personal realms. (Tuononen et al., 2022)

(Boni & Lozano, 2007) In addition to communication and critical thinking, teamwork and collaboration represent foundational competencies essential for success in today's interconnected world. The ability to work effectively within diverse teams, contribute insights, and navigate interpersonal dynamics fosters collective synergy and propels initiatives towards fruition. Furthermore, competencies related to time management and organization play a pivotal role in optimizing productivity and achieving goals. Individuals equipped with these skills can effectively prioritize tasks, allocate resources efficiently, and adapt to shifting demands, thereby enhancing their efficacy in both personal and professional endeavors.

Beyond individual proficiency, the digital age necessitates a robust foundation in digital literacy. Proficiency in leveraging information and communication technologies not only facilitates access to a wealth of knowledge but also enables individuals to engage meaningfully in the digital landscape. Moreover, embracing self-management and lifelong learning fosters adaptability and resilience in the face of evolving challenges. By nurturing competencies such as intercultural understanding and appreciation of diversity, individuals cultivate empathy, respect, and inclusivity, contributing to the promotion of social cohesion and sustainable development in an increasingly interconnected world. In essence, the cultivation and application of generic competencies are pivotal in shaping well-rounded individuals capable of thriving amidst the complexities of contemporary society. (Melnyk, 2017)

Importance of Generic Competencies in Higher Education

Higher education plays a pivotal role in shaping and honing generic competencies among students, extending beyond the impartation of specialized knowledge to prepare them for the multifaceted challenges of a dynamic world. Within the educational curriculum, generic competencies take centre stage, equipping students with indispensable skills to navigate diverse contexts and excel in various scenarios.

The significance of generic competencies in higher education is evident across several dimensions. Firstly, in an increasingly competitive job market, employers highly value skills such as effective communication, critical thinking, teamwork, and problem-solving, viewing them on par with, if not more important than, technical expertise. Graduates equipped with these competencies enjoy a distinct advantage in their professional pursuits, poised to tackle complex challenges with confidence and competence. (Gallifa & Garriga, 2010)

Moreover, the rapid pace of societal and technological evolution necessitates individuals' ability to adapt and engage in lifelong learning. Generic competencies like self-management, resilience, and a commitment to ongoing development are essential for navigating this ever-changing landscape and seizing opportunities for growth and advancement.

Furthermore, in an era of global interconnectedness, fostering global citizenship is imperative. Generic competencies such as intercultural understanding, empathy, and critical thinking empower individuals to comprehend and address global issues while promoting respect, tolerance, and inclusivity across diverse cultures and perspectives.

Beyond professional and social realms, generic competencies also foster personal development and individual well-being. Skills like time management, goal-setting, and collaborative teamwork contribute to personal fulfillment and holistic growth, enriching students' lives beyond academic achievements.



Finally, promoting generic competencies enhances institutional effectiveness, elevating the reputation and impact of higher education institutions. By nurturing autonomous, critical-minded, and socially responsible individuals, institutions contribute to societal progress while enhancing the quality of teaching and learning within their academic communities.

In essence, the cultivation of generic competencies is indispensable for students' holistic development and future success. Therefore, educational institutions must adopt effective pedagogical strategies to systematically foster and evaluate these competencies within their academic programs, ensuring students are equipped to thrive in a rapidly evolving world. (Jääskelä et al., 2018)

Pedagogical Approaches to the Development of Generic Competencies

The development of generic competencies within higher education requires a departure from traditional instructional methods towards innovative, student-centred pedagogical approaches. Academic programmes must be designed to incorporate activities and experiences explicitly aimed at nurturing these competencies, providing students with ample opportunities for reflection and practical application. Such approaches are pivotal in equipping students with the skills and attributes necessary to thrive in the complexities of the modern world. (Fortin & Legault, 2014)

Several effective pedagogical strategies have emerged as instrumental in fostering the development of generic competencies. Problem-Based Learning (PBL) stands out as one such approach, where students collaborate to solve authentic, complex problems within their discipline. By engaging in this method, students cultivate critical thinking, collaboration, and the practical application of knowledge in real-world scenarios, thereby enhancing their ability to navigate multifaceted challenges.

(Yusof et al., 2015) Cooperative Learning is another valuable approach that encourages students to work together in small groups to achieve shared academic objectives. This collaborative environment fosters teamwork, effective communication, and shared responsibility, all of which are essential skills for success in diverse professional settings.

Experiential Learning, emphasizing learning through direct experience and subsequent reflection, offers yet another avenue for competency development. Through practical activities like internships, community service projects, or simulations, students apply and contextualize classroom-acquired knowledge in real-world contexts, solidifying their understanding and skill application.

Competency-Based Learning (CBL) shifts the focus towards the acquisition and assessment of specific competencies rather than mere knowledge accumulation. Guided by clear and measurable learning objectives, students are evaluated based on their ability to demonstrate these competencies in relevant contexts, ensuring tangible skill development outcomes. (Lozano et al., 2017)

Lastly, Integrated Learning enhances competency development by integrating diverse disciplines and knowledge areas to tackle complex issues from a multidisciplinary perspective. This approach fosters critical thinking, creativity, and problem-solving skills, while also highlighting the interconnectedness of various fields of study. By embracing these pedagogical approaches, higher education institutions can effectively prepare students to excel in an ever-evolving academic and professional landscape.

Challenges and Opportunities in the Formation of Generic Competencies

The development of generic competencies within higher education presents a gateway to the comprehensive growth of students, yet it grapples with multifaceted challenges demanding meticulous attention to ensure its effectiveness and pertinence. One of the foremost challenges lies in integrating these competencies into academic curricula seamlessly. Resistance to change, coupled with issues like curriculum overload and inadequate resources and training for educators, impedes the smooth assimilation of generic competencies. To surmount this, educational institutions must adopt a coordinated approach to curriculum design, striking a balance between disciplinary and generic competencies. (Boelt et al., 2022)

Another significant hurdle is devising authentic and valid methods to assess generic competencies. Due to their multifaceted nature, conventional assessment methods often fall short in accurately gauging students' mastery of these competencies and providing meaningful feedback. Nurturing a cultural shift within institutions is equally imperative, necessitating a commitment to pedagogical



innovation and ongoing professional development among academic staff. Cultivating a culture that places equal value on generic competencies alongside traditional academic achievements is paramount. (Bernate & Puerto, 2024)

Equally crucial is ensuring equitable access to competency development opportunities for all students. Inclusive and diversity-sensitive approaches are essential to provide students from diverse backgrounds with equal access to resources and support for their holistic development. Despite these challenges, the formation of generic competencies presents numerous opportunities for innovation, academic excellence, and social inclusion. (Kuzminov et al., 2019)

Active learning emerges as a pivotal strategy in fostering a student-centered approach, thereby enhancing the quality of education, motivation, and engagement. Moreover, instilling adaptability, resilience, and critical thinking equips students to navigate an ever-evolving, globalized world with confidence and efficacy. Furthermore, promoting generic competencies enhances graduates' employability by equipping them with transferable skills highly valued by employers.

Beyond professional success, the cultivation of generic competencies fosters personal development and active citizenship. Acquiring skills such as critical thinking, problem-solving, and empathy empowers students to meaningfully contribute to society's common good and sustainable development. In conclusion, the formation of generic competencies in higher education is indispensable for students' holistic development and future success in a complex and dynamic world. (Star & Hammer, 2008)

Hence, educational institutions must embrace effective pedagogical approaches and robust institutional commitments to ensure equitable access to competency development opportunities. This enables students to unlock their full personal, academic, and professional potential, thereby shaping a more inclusive and thriving society.

1. METHODOLOGY

The methodology of the article is grounded in the reflective qualitative method. Sánchez Silva (2005) defines it as follows: "The reflective tradition privileges values, norms, and creates behavior patterns that favor an analytical and critical attitude aimed at reviewing and evaluating ideas, assumptions, theories, and conventional methods" (p.116). Moreover, according to Edmund Husserl (cited by Menéndez, 2012), reflection is fundamental in phenomenology, analyzing experiences in an organized way as one of its main tasks.

2. Contributions of citizen generic to pedagogical training

The concept of generic competencies encompasses fundamental skills, knowledge, and attitudes that apply in various contexts and situations. These competencies transcend specific disciplines and are useful across multiple personal and professional domains.

(Grossman, 2011; Fonseca et al., 2024) In the field of pedagogical training, it is crucial to consider the integration and strengthening of these generic competencies in the preparation process of future educators. Some of these competencies are particularly relevant in education:

Effective communication is essential for teachers to express themselves clearly and coherently, both verbally and in writing, with students, colleagues, and parents. This involves not only expression skills but also the ability to actively listen and understand the needs of others.

Teamwork and collaboration are fundamental aspects of educational work, as educators often work in teams with other teachers, administrative staff, and education professionals. It is vital that they can collaborate effectively, contribute ideas, and commit to common goals.

Critical thinking and problem-solving are essential skills for educators, who must be able to critically analyze information, evaluate different pedagogical approaches, and find creative solutions to the challenges they face in the classroom.

In the digital age, digital skills are essential for educators, who must become familiar with the use of technology in the classroom and be able to integrate digital tools effectively into their teaching practice.

Empathy and interpersonal skills are crucial for teachers to understand the emotional and social needs of their students, as well as to establish positive and supportive relationships with them.



Time management and organization are indispensable skills for educators, who must deal with multiple responsibilities. It is crucial that they can manage their time effectively and stay organized to meet their tasks and commitments.

Continuous learning is fundamental in an educational environment that is constantly evolving. Teachers must be willing to continue learning and updating their knowledge and skills throughout their professional careers.

Integrating these generic competencies into pedagogical training can prepare future educators to face the changing challenges of the educational world and provide them with the necessary tools to be effective and reflective professionals. This can be achieved through active teaching strategies that promote the development of these skills, as well as through practical experiences, such as supervised teaching placements, that allow them to apply and refine these competencies in a real work environment.

3. Training of generic competencies in pedagogy students

The development of generic competencies in pedagogy students is a fundamental aspect of their comprehensive preparation as future educators. These generic competencies, applicable in a wide variety of contexts and situations, are essential for students to tackle the ever-changing challenges of the educational world and to perform effectively in their roles as teachers. Therefore, it is imperative to implement strategies that promote their development throughout the educational process.

In this regard, an integrated curriculum design stands as a fundamental pillar. It is crucial that the development of generic competencies is present in all subjects and academic activities of the pedagogy program. This ensures a holistic education that addresses the multidimensional needs of future educators and promotes their preparation to face the complexity of the educational environment. (Tynjälä et al., 2016)

The promotion of active and participatory learning constitutes another key strategy. By promoting teaching methods that encourage active student participation, teamwork, critical reflection, and problem-solving, the development of practical skills and the acquisition of essential competencies for teaching are stimulated. (Bernate & Vargas, 2020)

Additionally, supervised teaching practices play a fundamental role in the development of generic competencies. These practical experiences provide students with the opportunity to apply and develop their skills in a real environment, under the supervision and guidance of experienced professionals. In this way, theoretical knowledge is integrated with practice, preparing future educators to face the challenges of professional practice with confidence and competence.

(Suciu & Mata, 2011; Bernate et al., 2020) Furthermore, emphasis on communication skills emerges as an indispensable strategy. Providing opportunities for students to develop effective communication skills, both verbally and in writing, allows them to express themselves clearly and coherently with various educational stakeholders, thus strengthening their ability to establish solid interpersonal relationships and transmit knowledge effectively.

Likewise, the development of digital skills emerges as a relevant aspect in the development of generic competencies. In the digital age, educators must become familiar with the use of educational technologies and be able to integrate digital tools into their teaching practice. This includes training in the use of online learning platforms, educational apps, and digital resources, preparing students for the 21st-century educational environment.

Lastly, the promotion of critical thinking and reflection constitutes an essential element in the development of generic competencies. Fostering students' ability to critically analyse information, question assumptions, and evaluate different perspectives enables them to approach educational challenges with an open mind and a reflective attitude, enriching their pedagogical practice and professional development. (Nikolai, 2021; Bernate et al., 2024)

In summary, the development of generic competencies in pedagogy students involves a combination of strategies ranging from curriculum integration to supervised teaching practice, preparing them comprehensively for the demanding and relevant profession of education.



4. Generic competencies and their impact on university social responsibility

Generic competencies, which encompass a broad range of skills, knowledge, and attitudes applicable across various contexts, serve as foundational elements in shaping the social responsibility of universities. These competencies are crucial tools in preparing students to navigate complex societal challenges and contribute positively to their communities. As universities strive to fulfill their social responsibility mandates, it becomes imperative to cultivate and integrate these competencies into academic programs effectively. (Cabedo et al., 2018)

One of the primary impacts of generic competencies on university social responsibility lies in their role in fostering active citizenship among students. Competencies such as critical thinking, communication, and teamwork empower students to engage meaningfully with social issues, advocate for social justice, and participate in community development initiatives. By nurturing these competencies, universities play a pivotal role in shaping a generation of socially responsible citizens who are equipped to address pressing societal concerns and effect positive change.

(Osagie et al., 2016; Fonseca et al., 2022) Moreover, generic competencies facilitate interdisciplinary collaboration and innovation, essential components for addressing multifaceted social challenges effectively. By encouraging students to draw upon diverse perspectives and disciplinary knowledge, universities can foster innovative solutions to complex societal problems. This interdisciplinary approach not only enriches the learning experience but also enables universities to make meaningful contributions to the advancement of knowledge and the betterment of society at large.

Furthermore, the development of generic competencies enhances students' employability and readiness for civic engagement, furthering the university's social responsibility agenda. Skills such as adaptability, digital literacy, and intercultural competence equip students to thrive in diverse professional environments and contribute positively to society. As graduates enter the workforce, they bring with them the capacity to drive social change and promote ethical leadership within their respective fields.

(Алексеева et al., 2023; Fonseca et al., 2023) Additionally, by embedding generic competencies within academic programs, universities foster a culture of lifelong learning and continuous improvement. This commitment to ongoing skill development and personal growth not only benefits individual students but also contributes to the broader social fabric by promoting a culture of innovation, resilience, and adaptability.

Furthermore, the integration of generic competencies into university curricula serves to enhance educational equity and inclusivity. By ensuring that all students, regardless of background or circumstance, have access to opportunities for competency development, universities can help address systemic inequalities and promote social justice. This inclusivity extends beyond the classroom, empowering students to become agents of change within their communities and advocate for equitable policies and practices.

Moreover, the cultivation of generic competencies fosters ethical leadership and responsible decision-making among students, further contributing to university social responsibility. Competencies such as ethical reasoning, empathy, and social responsibility equip students with the skills and values necessary to navigate ethical dilemmas and make principled decisions in their personal and professional lives. (Vasilescu et al., 2010; Betancourt et al., 2020)

Finally, generic competencies are instrumental in advancing university social responsibility by empowering students to become active, engaged citizens, fostering interdisciplinary collaboration and innovation, enhancing employability and civic readiness, promoting a culture of lifelong learning, fostering educational equity and inclusivity, and cultivating ethical leadership. By prioritizing the cultivation and integration of these competencies into academic programs, universities can fulfill their commitment to social responsibility and make meaningful contributions to addressing the complex challenges facing society. (Bernate & Fonseca, 2022; Puerto et al., 2024)

CONCLUSIONS

The formation of generic competencies among pedagogical students yields several noteworthy conclusions that underscore their significance in shaping the future of education. Firstly, by nurturing



skills such as effective communication, critical thinking, and adaptability, pedagogical students are better poised to navigate the complexities of the teaching profession. These competencies enhance their teaching efficacy, enabling them to engage with diverse learners and address the dynamic challenges present in educational settings.

Moreover, investing in the formation of generic competencies ensures the holistic professional development of pedagogical students. Beyond the acquisition of subject-specific knowledge, these competencies encompass interpersonal skills, digital literacy, and problem-solving abilities, which are indispensable for success in the multifaceted role of an educator. Thus, pedagogical students emerge as well-rounded professionals equipped to excel in various aspects of their profession.

Furthermore, the cultivation of generic competencies prepares pedagogical students to thrive in diverse educational contexts. Whether teaching in mainstream classrooms, special education settings, or multicultural environments, educators armed with a diverse skill set can effectively cater to the varied needs of students and foster inclusive learning environments. This adaptability is essential for promoting equitable access to quality education for all learners.

In addition, as educational landscapes continue to evolve amidst rapid technological advancements and shifting pedagogical paradigms, the formation of generic competencies equips pedagogical students to adapt effectively to these changes. Competencies such as digital literacy, flexibility, and a commitment to lifelong learning empower educators to integrate innovative teaching methodologies and stay abreast of emerging educational trends. Thus, they remain at the forefront of educational innovation and progress.

Ultimately, the prioritization of the development of generic competencies in pedagogical students contributes to the attainment of educational excellence. Educators equipped with a comprehensive skill set are better positioned to facilitate meaningful learning experiences, foster student engagement, and promote academic success. By fostering the growth of highly competent and impactful educators, educational institutions play a pivotal role in shaping the future of education and driving positive societal change.

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