

Review of: "Generic Competences in University Students from Barranquilla, Colombia"

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I have reviewed the paper and have some comments about it that I present here hoping they are helpful to the authors. To start with, the paper is mostly well written, although sometimes, where italics letters initiate, the space between words disappears. I would suggest the abstract to start with 'This study', 'The study (presented here)' instead of simply 'Study', and to rewrite second paragraph in page 3 that includes text from UNESCO's declaration.

Despite the focus on *generic* competences, for which the authors provide a definition, from time to time they speak also of *transversal* competences, distinguishing them from the former but without providing further details on what the differences are.

On the second paragraph of page 4 the authors classify knowledge, skills, attitude and information as *educational resources*, and this is quite uncommon, as they rather considered as educational goals, being elements of competences to be develop by students. The authors should clarify in what (unusual) sense they are regarded as resources.

In the next paragraph, they pose Ciria Cosculluela's question, emphasizing its importance: *are students really learning the competences the labor world demands from them for the social, professional, globalized and changing society of knowledge?* After that, they say it is necessary "to propose new paths and ideas..." to answer the question, but the need for new paths and ideas depend on whether the question has a positive or a negative answer.

Along the presentation of the study and its results the authors refer to a *University of Barranquilla*, and once to *the University of Barranquilla*. If they are referring to the Universidad de Barranquilla, then the later wording is right, and the others should be fixed. On the other case, if they are referring to *a university in Barranquilla*, they should use that wording and case.

Another issue in the presentation of the study and its methodology is to the lack of a proper goal, particularly if what it is done is a comparison of the study results (324 participants) to those of Alfa Tuning (9,000 participants). That is, what is the point of repeating the study with less participants and in a region of Colombia?

At presenting the results, obtained from a Likert scale of four points (from few to plenty), the authors use fuzzy terms as "very important", "quite important", "a lot", "a few", and "many" without establishing the criteria to translate numerical points to fuzzy terms.

The authors speak of 'the *coincidence* in the answers of more than 9,000 students in Latin America and the 324 students

surveyed in this study' but it is not clear how they measure coincidence in order to assert that there is some. There non parametric statistical methods to compare rankings, and they should be used to make the comparison —particularly if the research is described as “ Positivist approach, of an analytical empirical type”.

Furthermore, when the authors comment coincidence, they say it is about ‘theability to apply knowledge in practice, or to apply knowledge in the area of study or profession; along with the *ability* to identify, propose, and solve problems —with the *ability* to abstract, analyze, and synthesize’, when they have been talking about competences all the way long. They need to maintain congruence.

The readers would benefit from a graphical representation (e.g. bar chart) of the data shown in Table 1 and Table 2. It would be interesting to carry out a correlation analysis of importance vs development, and discuss the significance of it — are students regarding of importance of competence being influenced by they perceived level of development? Further analysis in relation to sex, semester, and educational program, is quite relevant.

In the discussion, the authors start commenting that ‘ At present, the current education has become a student-centered education, an inclusive education to endure throughout life; to incorporate citizens into a developed society, to be productive and to be able to enjoy in it.’ So, is it a reality? Where? Certainly not in Colombia —the study would not make sense— nor in the rest of Latin America, given previous comments on the teacher-centred and information-accumulation orientation of Education in the region. So, what they are talking about? In the next paragraph, they seem to imply that it is not necessarily real, but only ‘new currents of thought, of debate, of culture and innovation’, but then the text shows incoherent.

Finally, I have difficulties visualizing ‘commitment to the environment’ as a competence, as I see it more like an attitude, part of larger competence such as ‘sustainable problem solving’, yet I understand it has been proposed by the Alfa Tuning project and the authors have assumed it without questioning.