

# MENDIVE

REVISTA DE EDUCACIÓN

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## Negotiation competition in Foreign Trade students. A look from the Ecuadorian university training

**La competencia negociación en estudiantes de Comercio Exterior. Una mirada desde la formación universidad ecuatoriana**

**A competência negociação nos estudantes da carreira Bacharelado em Comércio Exterior. Um olhar da formação universitária equatoriana**

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### ABSTRACT

Foreign Trade corresponds to a branch of business that involves the movement of money between people, companies or the State, taking into account the risks that this implies. Therefore, the professionals who are in charge of this

professional area are responsible for the management of suppliers, clients, national and international regulations, logistics, integrated products and services, all processes marked by negotiation. The possibilities offered by international trade are unlimited, so that in order to make the most of them it is necessary to have negotiation skills aimed at achieving the possibility of establishing commercial exchanges. The responsibility to train in skills demands that university careers should think more rationally about the commitments assumed before state audiences. The objective of this research is to diagnose the current state of professional skills in the Foreign Trade career, with an emphasis on negotiation skills.

**Keywords:** professional skills; trade; negotiation.

### RESUMEN

El Comercio Exterior corresponde a una rama de los negocios que involucra movimiento de dinero entre personas, empresas o el Estado, tomando en cuenta los riesgos que ello implica. Por tanto, los profesionales que se encargan de esta área profesional se responsabilizan de la gestión de proveedores, clientes, normativas nacionales e internacionales, logística, productos y servicios integrados, procesos todos marcados por la negociación. Las posibilidades que ofrece el comercio internacional son ilimitadas, por lo que para lograr un máximo aprovechamiento de las mismas se hace necesario contar con competencias de negociación orientadas a lograr la posibilidad de establecer intercambios comerciales. La responsabilidad de formar en competencias demanda que las carreras universitarias deban pensar con más racionalidad los compromisos que se asumen ante las audiencias estatales. El objetivo de esta investigación es diagnosticar el estado actual de las competencias profesionales en la carrera de Comercio Exterior, con

ênfasis en la competencia de negociación.

**Palabras clave:** competencias profesionales; comercio; negociación.

### RESUMO

No Comércio Exterior pertence uma rama dos negócios que envolve movimento de dinheiro entre pessoas, empresas ou Estado, tendo em conta os riscos implicados nesse aspecto. Pelo que os profissionais encarregados desta área profissional responsabilizam se da gestão de provedores, fregueses, normativas nacionais e internacionais, logística, produtos e serviços integrados, processos marcados todos pela negociação. As possibilidades oferecidas pelo comércio internacional são ilimitadas, pelo que para obter o máximo aproveitamento das mesmas, faz se necessário ter experiências de negociação, dirigidas ao logro da possibilidade do estabelecimento de trocas comerciais. A possibilidade de formar em competências requiere que as carreiras universitárias devam pensar com mais racionalidade nos acordos que aceitam ante as audiências estatais. O fim desta pesquisa é diagnosticar o estado atual das competências profissionais na carreira de Comércio Exterior, fazendo ênfase na competência de negociação.

**Palavras chave:** competências profissionais; comércio; negociação.

among which the one that describes them as the effective capacity to carry out successfully a fully identified work activity (Carnoy and Castro, 1997).

Professional competencies constitute an approach to education that has among its objectives to favor the performance of tasks that, despite being anchored to an academic framework, contribute to a better relationship between practice and theory. Thus, it shortens the gap between these components, at a time when graduates, in specific situations, are unable to demonstrate the skills acquired in the training process.

Researchers on the subject address the formation of professional competencies in undergraduate studies, as Lenoir and Morales (2011) value it from an educational perspective; they expose the need for a model of education based on integrated competencies and determine its qualities; refer to the need for modifications in the curriculum, coinciding in highlighting its importance in the quest for quality learning and highlighting how challenging it is for university curricular projects.

In relation to the Foreign Trade career, its competences, specifically the professional negotiation competence, there are various investigations dedicated to defining it and shaping its training and development from the postgraduate level (El Shenawy, Baker and Lemark, 2007). They suggest that negotiation competence is a starting point from which other competences arise that also contribute to the training of the professional. In this context, it is shown as an essential professional competence in the Foreign Trade career, which ensures and guarantees efficiency and effectiveness in future negotiations that will mark the politics and foreign trade of a country.

Interesting is the comparative study of training by competencies in higher education, its scope and limitations, from

## INTRODUCTION

The subject of competences is recent and it is not yet fully extended at the pedagogical level. The competencies appear firstly related to the productive processes in companies, particularly in the technological field, and the so-called labor competencies are born, a concept that presents several definitions,

references of various authors (Leyva and Ganga, 2015; Espinoza, Rivera and Tinoco, 2016; De La Cruz, Feu and Vizuete, 2013; Gutiérrez, 2017 and Torrecilla, Cartagena, Crespo, Oyarzabal and Pérez, 2018) for which the training of competences through *coaching* sets a guideline on how to conceive and carry out the training of professional competencies.

Other authors also refer to essential competence, some relate it to the concept of transversal competence (García, Cuello & Ferrer, 2015), which refers to the professional skills that are necessary, essential for any profession. Luna (2016), Garcia and Miron (2014) and Albert stand out (2017), who value courses and academic postgraduates in this regard as well as the need to redesign curriculum of training of that engineer in foreign trade, particularly in the Ecuadorian university. However, how to form this competence in the teaching - learning process of the career is not outlined with the necessary singularity.

In Ecuador, specifically in the Bachelor of Foreign Trade career, the professional must acquire new knowledge, skills and values, which constitute a contribution at a strategic and tactical level from the commercial and technological areas of organizations, both public and private. In this way, the training of the professional must be oriented towards efficient performance in exporting and importing companies, international organizations, business chambers, logistics companies, consultancies, ports, airports, banking industry, insurance companies, among other management spaces, where the development of negotiation competence is vital.

As a result of the analysis of the bibliography consulted, it is found that there are several studies in the world on initial professional training and skills training. Regarding the training of competencies, more emphasis is placed on the aspects of the components of the

competence, on reflecting it in the curriculum, in the programs, than on how to give it the didactic treatment. In this sense, professional negotiation competence, essential in the Foreign Trade career, requires certain didactic considerations for its training in students.

The objective of this research is to diagnose the current state of professional competencies in the Foreign Trade career, with an emphasis on negotiation skills, to determine the existing conditions for their training.

## MATERIAL AND METHODS

The research was developed in the Bachelor of Foreign Trade career at the Metropolitan University of Ecuador, in the first semester of 2020. We worked with a population made up of the 28 professors that make up the pedagogical group of this career. The dialectical-materialist method predominated as a general method, which made it possible to operate with its laws, categories and principles and integrate the rest of the methods of the theoretical level and the empirical level used.

The historical-logical method allowed penetrating the object of study and knowing the conception of pedagogical competences as a component of the teacher training process, from an integrative approach. Analysis and synthesis, as well as induction and deduction, facilitated the orientation in the search for the theoretical-methodological foundations, in the determination of the results obtained from the applied instruments and their due processing and interpretation, allowing reaching conclusions.

The system approach provided the general orientation for the study of the pedagogical competence category, the

way in which it is conceived and developed in the undergraduate and postgraduate training process of teachers, establishing the corresponding links and their relationships. In addition, it made it possible to conceive the different stages of the strategy as an integrated whole.

A group interview was carried out in order to characterize the level of development of the pedagogical competencies of the teachers of the career, which would allow the strategy to be designed based on their real needs.

On the other hand, class systems were observed for teachers, which made it possible to observe in practice which competencies each one of them possesses and which are shortcomings in their implementation and which knowledge is revealed in said competencies.

From the empirical level, the document review was carried out: strategies elaborated and linked to the continuous training of teachers.

## RESULTS

In the scientific literature, the term training is found as a category of pedagogy, but in its essence it is far from a consensus on the matter. The authors of this research considers that apart from all theorizing about the category formation, polysemy is a consequence of relativity methodological role assigned to it, because sometimes understood as object and others as field research. In a particular way, the analysis that was carried out of the training made it possible the study of different approaches, in the ideas of the following researchers:

Álvarez (1999) specifies that "[...] it is the process and the result whose

function is to prepare man in all aspects of his personality".

García (2002) defines it as [...] "the result of a set of activities organized in a systematic and coherent way, which allows him to act consciously and creatively". This system should prepare you as an active subject of your own learning and development; make him capable of transforming the world he lives in and transforming himself; to train man is to prepare him to live the specific historical period in which his life unfolds.

Chávez, González and Lorenzo (2005) agree that training, as a synonym of education in its broad sense, encompasses the entire educational process as a means between instruction and education in its narrow sense, by moving towards the level reached by the individual in the understanding of itself and the world around it; It constitutes part of their preparation as one of the needs to be satisfied in any society, which demands a process and a result whose function is to prepare them in all aspects of their personality.

Chavez and Perez (2015) and Fonseca (2016) appreciate that, training and development as functions of education constitute a dialectical unity, so that all training involves development that leads, ultimately, to the formation of higher order. In relation to the concept of competences, the specialized literature agrees on the relevance of the study of this variable, at a time that requires a paradigm shift in all spheres and a renewal of teaching.

At present, educational terminology refers to the following concepts: Higher education based on competencies, the model of competencies in Education, curriculum by competencies, the development of competencies, preparation/training for the achievement of competencies, among others (UNESCO-OIE, 2015). The authors of this research consider that the concept of competences is imposed in what refers to

the training and development of human capital, to define and evaluate the capabilities of the worker according to their performance in work situations. This is applicable to the teaching - learning process. Therefore, the determining factor is not the possession of certain knowledge, but the use that is made of them.

As a competence, negotiation brings with it a series of requirements that are inherent to its exercise. Within them we find the values that each professional in this field must manifest.

Some fundamentals as: honesty, the responsibility, the industriousness, the incondicionalidad, the solidarity, the rigor, the effectiveness and the professional ethics, the communication and discipline work permit credibility and customer confidence or negotiating counterparts feel more confident in their decisions or proposals.

Likewise, modesty and simplicity are important and should be manifested in their dealings with the people with whom they interact in professional practices. In this way, it will be essential not to adopt self-sufficient or elitist attitudes, which are motivated by the close link with advanced technologies.

Individual responsibility and collectivism are other values that must be possessed by those who engage in negotiation. This can be achieved through teamwork to critically assess the ethical dilemmas that arise in a negotiation process. In order to achieve the objective evaluation of possible solutions to the events or challenges that occur in the career, another value to cultivate is that of a critical and self-critical spirit, as well as respect for those around you.

Assuming a firm ethical conscience will allow you to avoid incurring in crimes or

delicate situations, and you must attend decision-making at all times. The values of a negotiator must, above all, respond to their fundamental task: to solve conflicts in the most peaceful and equitable possible way, a fact that must always be present in the conduct of those who dedicate themselves to it.

It is observed that convergence points this subject is in the need to mobilize knowledge and values, depending on the optimal professional performance, with results that accrue to social benefits. Establishing a balance between theory and practice, applied to situations, for which the academy often does not prepare students, so that at the time of their insertion into the world of work they find the existing gap between theoretical and practical knowledge and what it must apply, to achieve the end of solving the problem that is presented.

In the opinion of the authors of the present article, the development of professional competence goes beyond simple memorization or application of knowledge instrumentally in given situations. The competence implies the understanding and transfer of knowledge to real life situations; it requires relating, interpreting, inferring, interpolating, inventing, applying, transferring knowledge to solving problems, intervening in reality or acting in anticipation of action and its general contingencies of the Ecuadorian context.

In this sense, for the career in Foreign Trade, professional competencies represent a proposal that integrates knowledge, skills and attitudes, reflected through the performance of graduates and promotes a link between the reality that is experienced when entering professionally and the reality of the world of academia. The professional of the Bachelor of Foreign Trade career must be trained from a competency-based curriculum, which not only endorses the studies of subjects in

theory, but also allows the practical development of this knowledge.

To do this, understanding about the different types, levels and stages of the negotiation process must be increased. It is essential to know how to exchange concessions and counterparts in a beneficial negotiation process for both parties, and to close negotiations successfully, applying appropriate techniques, given the ability to perform in a balanced way in conflict situations. A good negotiator must focus the process on achieving the interests of both parties; hence the ability to negotiate will develop in different situations and contexts depending on the performance of his opponent, as well as the context.

Another element to consider is the curricular training influences that are aimed at offering necessary techniques and tools to satisfy the changing demands in a globalized world. This condition may be specified to the extent that it is possible to provide a scientific-technical education, linked to the practice of values that characterize the Foreign Trade professional, especially in relation to the demands of international negotiation, which requires a responsible attitude and committed to knowledge.

With the aim of characterizing the training of the professional, different documents such as curricular networks and programs of different Ecuadorian universities in which this career is studied were reviewed. It has as a mission the training of competent professionals in relation to professional and occupational profile, with expertise in the field of the international Ecuadorian foreign trade with principled and humanist values; keys to personal, professional and country success and which it declares as an occupational profile.

Within the programs, the implementation of strategies for submission is declared to venture into international markets, and

the negotiation of international agreements and conventions. Professional occupations including professional counseling, business management, training, management, export, agents run as strengthening the national and international processes related with customs stand out; it is required, in addition, as a competition of this professional to be international negotiator.

In relation to the analysis of the content of the subjects, it could be specified that the content of the negotiation competence appears isolated in different subjects of the career. The subject that integrates characteristics of the process and approximates it in a more pertinent way, as it relates to the practice of the profession, is the Negotiation Techniques subject; however, the need to reinforce the contents that require the negotiation characteristics is evident.

He met with a group of academic managers about the competition negotiation, which stated the following:

- The negotiation competence is present in all the acts of the professional in this career, it is identified with the performance of the Foreign Trade professional and it requires that in the Negotiation Technique subject the invariants of content that cannot be missing in the negotiator be introduced.
- They consider that the contents that make up this competence should be promoted from the Negotiation Techniques course, in which the elements that identify the negotiation competence appear.
- They characterize to negotiation with the following aspects: process in which two or more parts take part, communication between the interest parts of each one, conflict, exchange

- information of business to execute exchange, agreements.
- They appreciate the need to seek educational alternatives that make it possible to strengthen the content of competence of negotiation, from the essential features of the negotiation process and from the content of the technical subject of negotiation, given the requirement that this competence manifests in the performance of the Foreign Trade professional.
  - They consider it necessary to organize and systematize the essential aspects that cannot miss in the formation of competition, given the integrator and inclusive of knowledge, skills and values and analysis of the context that demand to form the competitive negotiation in the professional of Foreign Trade.
- Negotiation conditions, context, or the characteristics of the people who negotiate are not taken into account.
  - Negotiation competence is manifested as essential in the Commercial Engineer's mode of action; its content is given only in the third year of the grade.
  - Teachers do not have a structured didactic path in their academic activities that leads them to model professional competence, negotiate in the teaching - learning process.
  - It does not appear, in the content of the technical subject of negotiation, the essential contents of competition.
  - From the studies conducted by surveying graduates of the career failures are detected in their performance as negotiators.

Interviews and surveys to students and teachers of the career in order to know their points of view are conducted. From these results and experiences of the author about the training of professional skills as university professors, the following regularities are needed:

- The process of training professional competencies in the Foreign Trade career is not a function of the social mandate of this career.
- Competencies are carried out more at the level of knowledge than at the level of practice, which limits the formation of skills in this career.
- There are few possibilities to execute the knowledge acquired in practice, since the practices are always carried out only in internal conditions of document domain and regulation, but there is no professional space to negotiate.

The results of the diagnosis show that, despite all the investigations carried out, the theoretical and practical foundations that the student receives for knowledge, know-how and knowing how to be, inherent to this competence in the subject of Negotiation Techniques in the curricular mesh in the Ecuadorian context. It is not supported the formation process of negotiation competition in a pedagogical practice based on content, skills and values that develop in the work life for the future student, elements that threaten against the complete training professionals in the sector.

In daily life, negotiation is part of human relationships and the development of society. Negotiating is an activity that we constantly develop and as such requires skills that can facilitate the achievement of the objectives that we pursue in any organization, for which it is vitally important that the professional who participates in the development of the organization acquires an adequate understanding of Negotiation Techniques and assume values, attitudes and modes

of action based on it, which will enable you not only to be a competent professional, but also committed to the results of its organization.

## DISCUSSION

The notion of competence comes to fill an important space, both for all the implicit elements of the teaching process for learning and for science in general (Rico, Vanegas and Solares, 2013). Through the competencies model, it is intended to determine the set of professional and personal qualities that improve the preparation of the university student and allow their rapid insertion into the labor market (Zabalza, 2007; Van der Hofstadt and Gras, 2013; Miguel, 2014).

In the Foreign Trade career, it is feasible to consider that the competencies are structured by knowledge, skills, values, personal characteristics and the conditions in which they are developed. Hence, the present research is identified with this concept, since it understands the need to establish that current conditions and the characteristics of the labor market and merit a different training, based on new ways that integrate all knowledge and do not follow probabilistic variants or formulas for success, but can be evaluated based on tangible results.

Knowledge of negotiation as a tool for self-improvement or a social process that occurs even at interpersonal levels in our daily life is fundamental (El-Shenawy, 2007). Key are, in addition, the different moments of negotiation, starting from the conflict as the basic origin of the act of negotiating and knowing the ways and styles of influence to negotiate, the types of negotiation described in the literature, the negotiation tactics; all this in line with a comprehensive preparation that serves to generate the most favorable response.

Therefore, the formation of negotiation competence in students of the Bachelor of Foreign Trade is of vital importance. Negotiating is, then, a quality that must be studied deeply and that will allow the resolution of conflicts in a peaceful and effective way. The negotiation is aimed at promoting certain skills that will make the student a more competent and effective professional when facing real situations throughout his career. Form them is the task, both from teachers and students, some as motivators and counselors and others as recipients of knowledge useful for their future (Rojas and Gonzalez, 2016).

International trends coincide in that the training of professional competencies must be in correspondence with the needs demanded by society, framed by the changing influences of the environment that is why importance is given to the approach that must exist towards the labor component of the future student.

Professional skills in the career of foreign trade are analyzed from different perspectives and authors, all concepts analyzed coincide in that professional skills are based on the charge that society demands this kind of professional, which has a mode of action that identifies the professional performance that has been formed as a result of the development of the competencies of this professional.

Negotiation competence stands out as an essential competence, since the characteristics, functions and components that it has includes content from the different subjects throughout the career. It is built with the mode of action of this professional, essentially through the knowledge, skills, values, personal characteristics and conditions in which the negotiation process occurs.

From the diagnosis made, it is determined that the theoretical and practical foundations that the student



receives, inherent to this competence, in the Ecuadorian context, are still insufficient. In addition, the components that structure it are not emphasized in a coherent way in the formation of competencies: knowledge, skills, values, personal characteristics and context conditions, which limits the preparation of future professionals in the current context.

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**Conflict of interest:**

Authors declare not to have any conflicts of interest.

**Authors' Contribution:**

*Walter Luna Álvarez:* Conception of the idea, authorship coordinator, general advice on the topic addressed, literature search and review, translation of terms or information obtained, preparation of instruments, application of instruments, compilation of information resulting from the instruments applied, statistical analysis, preparation of the tables, graphics and images, preparation of the database, drafting of the original (first version), revision and final version of the article, correction of the article, revision of the applied bibliographic norm.

*Blas Yoel Juanes Giraud:* General advice on the topic addressed, literature search and review, translation of terms or information obtained, preparation of instruments, statistical analysis, revision and final version of the article, correction of the article, revision of the applied bibliographic norm.



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