

Propuesta de Innovación docente: La inclusión de las competencias transversales en enseñanzas universitarias oficiales de máster y el fortalecimiento de los valores democráticos

Teaching Innovation Proposal: The Inclusion of Transversal Skills in Official University Studies of master's degrees and the Strengthening of Democratic Values

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RESUMEN.

El presente estudio es fruto de una propuesta de innovación docente llevada a cabo en la Universidad Pablo de Olavide (UPO) que nace del equipo de trabajo del Centro de Estudios de Postgrado (CEDEP), órgano encargado de organizar y gestionar todos los programas de postgrado que ofrece esta Universidad. El objetivo de esta investigación de carácter exploratorio de tipo cualitativo trata de analizar la realidad actual de las enseñanzas universitarias oficiales de Máster en el ámbito competencial. Mediante la técnica de interpretación de datos del análisis de contenidos documental de 135 informes emitidos por la Dirección de Evaluación y Acreditación de la Agencia Andaluza del Conocimiento (DEVA), se detecta la necesidad de implantar unas competencias transversales a nivel de máster comunes para todos títulos ofertados y unidos a unos complementos formativos que garanticen su adquisición, es por ello que se procede a la inclusión de seis competencias transversales en las titulaciones de Máster y el fortalecimiento de los valores democráticos, a través de métodos de enseñanza innovadores.

PALABRAS CLAVE.

Enseñanza universitaria, competencias transversales, Máster, innovación educativa, curriculum.

ABSTRACT.

The present study is the result of a teaching innovation proposal carried out at Pablo de Olavide University (UPO), which was born from the work team of the Postgraduate Studies Centre (in Spanish, CEDEP), an organ in charge of organizing, managing and supervising every postgraduate program offered by this University. The objective of this qualitative exploratory research is to analyze the current reality of the official university studies of masters' degrees in the field of skills. Through the data interpretation technique of the documentary content analysis of 135 reports issued by the Direction of Evaluation and Accreditation of the Andalusian Knowledge Agency (in Spanish, DEVA), a need to



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implement transversal skills at the master level, common to all degrees offered, linked to some training complements to ensure their acquisition, has been identified. That is why, through innovative teaching methods, six transversal skills in masters' degrees have been included, strengthening democratic values.

KEY WORDS.

Higher education, cross curricular skill, master's degrees, teaching method innovations, university curriculum.

1. Introduction.

The present study is the result of a teaching innovation proposal carried out at the Universidad Pablo de Olavide (UPO), which was born from the work team of the Postgraduate Studies Centre (in Spanish, CEDEP), which is responsible for organizing and managing all postgraduate programs offered by this University.

The skill-based approach in the knowledge and information of society concentrates on different vision in the educational field. Adaptation to the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) has led European universities to a great transformation (Krücken, 2014, Moreno-Murcia, Silveira-Torregrosa & Belando-Pedreño, 2015). This has led to a radical change in the conception of university degree curricula based on competencies, which are part of a paradigm shift in the university environment propitiated by the substitution of traditional teaching, which establishes a methodology centered on the teacher, to rethink an academic perspective supported by the learner (Jaén & Sirignano, 2016). All this without losing sight of the fundamental mission of the university of service to society and contribution of value to the common good.

Currently, the work team of the CEDEP, which is in charge of organizing and managing all the postgraduate programs offered by this University, participates in different research lines oriented to the quality of one of them is the analysis in the domain of the same ones (Ordóñez, Caballero & López-Meneses, 2016).

In the following lines, that constitute the present descriptive-exploratory study, we describe the need to implant transversal competencies in symbiosis with a series of formative complements for the improvement of the university educational circumscribed to the skill scope of the official qualifications of master for an optimal one is glimpsed EHEA and the sustainable development of a democratic global citizenship. Ultimately, it is derived from an innovation project that emerged in the University itself.

Regardless of the methodological change in the teaching - learning process required by the university education system, this research focuses on the need to reorient the curricular model and the educational methods in the training by skills, including those of a cross - Bologna Declaration of 1999 marked the beginning of the process of convergence towards the EHEA in 2009 with the entry into force of Royal Decree 1393/2007.



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Nevertheless, following the guidelines prescribed by the Agency for the Qualitat of the Universitat de Catalunya System (AQU) (2009), transversal competencies are common in any title of the same center, which are not associated with specific subjects, but to the way of raising and orienting any particular subject and the curriculum in general to carry out the acquisition of the other types of skills. It should be mentioned that the transversal competencies have gained relevance in Andalusian university education since 2015, perceiving a change in the requirements of the Evaluation and Accreditation Department of the Andalusian Knowledge Agency (DEVA, in Spanish) during the evaluation process of the proposals for new curricula. On the other hand, basic, general and specific competencies have been taken into account in the planning of the official master's studies since the beginning of the adaptation of the curricula to the Bologna Plan.

Finally, the acquisition of skill is defined as the ability to integrate skills and knowledge (Gutiérrez, 2016), in order to give an efficient response to the task being performed. It is for this reason that, to achieve the success of the curricula, a series of skills are required, among which the so-called transversal ones, which have the function of complementing the knowledge raised in the university curriculum with the intention of fomenting an integral formation of the person, not limited to the simple accumulation of academic knowledge.

1.1. Background of the study.

An important mission intrinsic to the nature of university is its role in generating knowledge and intellectual creation (Loaiza, Andrade & Del Cisne, 2017).

The present teaching model, the backbone of the EHEA, shows an interest in the student body, proposing a competency-based learning methodology. With this, teachers are expected to have a guiding role within the education system, providing the learner with all the necessary tools to learn to be autonomous, through a more active working class methodology, using group dynamics, practices, informative seminars, favoring an approach where the interaction between equals is predominant. In this sense, the most relevant contribution to achieve the learning of the proposed competencies derives both from the training activities and from the teaching methodologies.

On the same line, it should be noted that the biotic system of the European space aims to improve education through evaluation, initially proposed to verify that the learning outcomes proposed on the basis of competencies, are evaluable and evaluation systems are consolidated with a formative evaluation, with the intention of facilitating the follow-up of the students' learning (Gutiérrez, 2016).

However, it is not enough to define competencies. It is necessary to determine what methods will be used for students to develop them and to assess the level of their acquisition throughout the curriculum (Baños & Pérez, 2007). The evaluation must assess what knowledge the student has acquired and verify that they know how to transfer them, and not settle for the mere accumulation of knowledge (Coll, 2007, Zabala & Arnau, 2007, Perrenaud, 2008).



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The proposals to develop transversal competencies, included in most of the university degrees currently offered in our country, are too complex to transfer them directly to educational praxis (García-Cascales et al., 2014). This innovative proposal is based on the skill group derived from the Tunning Project (2001) that promotes the guidelines given in the Bologna Process (González & Wagenaar, 2003). Subsequently, the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) presents the Project Definition and Selection of Competencies (DeSeCo, 2000; 2003; 2006) that defines professionalization as the regulation of a list of competencies for teaching, which students have to acquire to obtain the university title of postgraduate (Brunet & Catalán, 2016).

Likewise, in 2006 the Spanish Ministry of Education and Science promoted a new educational change regulated by Organic Law 2/2006, of 3 May. Assuming what was agreed on the Commission and the European Parliament, the incorporation of the basic competencies as a new pedagogical approach and new component in the curriculum. For practical purposes, each autonomous evaluation agency has generated a requirement related to the incorporation of competencies and planning of the lessons that lead to their acquisition. In our case, the Andalusian Agency for Quality Assessment and Accreditation (AGAE) and subsequently the DEVA has raised the criteria to follow in the Support Guide for development of the verification report of Official University Degrees (AGAE, 2011; DEVA, 2016).

The EHEA establishes certain principles (competitiveness, cooperation, mobility and quality), aimed at achieving, inter alia, two strategic objectives for the improvement of the university education system: on the one hand, the conversion of the European System of Higher Education (ESHE) as a reference model for the world; and on the other hand, the increase in employment in the European Union with better qualified and competent graduates in their field of study and work (MEC, 2006).

In accordance with the above, the competencies that the students must acquire in order to successfully reach beyond the university master's degree that they are studying, are classified by different levels of concretization that, taking as a reference (AQU, 2009), can be classified in:

- Shooting basic competencies: are determined fairly and common (MEC, 2011) to level master's degrees by Spanish Qualification Framework or high education (MECES, in Spanish).
- General competencies: be generalized for most to qualifications, although with a different incidence and contextualized in each of the degrees in question or not.
- Specifics competencies: are specific to each of the disciplines, depending on the COPE and branch of study that each master's degree to be established or they have the intention of delimiting the graduate profile (Ordóñez, Ramírez & Rey, 2016).



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- Transversal competencies: are common to any title of the same center, which are not associated with specific subjects, but how to raise and guide any particular subject and curriculum in general to carry out the acquisition of other skills as typology.

Finally, the European Reference Framework, which is the basis for the formulation of the six transversal competencies that appear in this teaching innovation proposal, alludes in its literature to eight key competencies for lifelong learning, which give sustainability to the systems of education in order to offer students real opportunities to learn and maintain those skills and competencies that consolidate lifelong learning (European Commission, 2007).

1.2. Objectives.

The general objective of the research is to implement in all the masters' degrees that are in the process of verification or modification the transversal competencies necessary for an optimal evaluation in those processes and for the improvement of the quality of the educational education in matters of skills in the master's degrees, in order to achieve an effective adaptation to the EHEA while strengthening democratic values. For which it is necessary that the transversal competencies are defined without losing sight of the fundamental mission of the University of Service to society and contribution of value to the common good.

In order to achieve this general objective, the following specific objectives have been proposed:

- Documentary to perform an analysis of all reports issued by the DEVA the degree of master's degree to the UPO from 2009 to the present.
- Examine the regulations in force regarding skills.
- To review all sets esters with this University on transversal competencies, to take them as references.
- Valuing opinion of the evaluators of DEVA to the transversal competencies proposals.

2. Material and Methods.

Descriptive research of an exploratory nature and of a qualitative type oriented to the analysis of the current reality of the official university teachings of master's degree in the UPO was implemented by the CEDEP work team. For this purpose, the data interpretation technique of documentary content analysis was used, along the lines suggested by Krippendorff (1990), to formulate, from certain data, reproducible and valid inferences that can be applied to its context and help to make decisions. It was also transcribed and categorized the section referring to the area of skill taking as a frame of reference the guidelines established by different authors (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992; Miles & Huberman, 1994): reduction of data for the categorization and codification of information, identifying and discriminating the units of meaning, categorizing the data, selecting information and finally performing the interpretation and inference.





At first instance, the team collected all the official reports issued by the DEVA, both provisional and final, from 2009 until the present time of all official UPO Masters' degrees that have undergone verification, modification or renewal of accreditation. And since December 2015, the documentary analysis has been carried out with a total of 66 curricula requested since 2009 through the DEVA and in particular of the 39 Masters' actually in progress during the academic year 2016/2017, which are observed and distinguished by branches of knowledge **Table 1**.

Table 1

Masters UPO 2016/2017

Branch of Arts and Humanities
Art, Museums and Historic Heritage Management
International Communication, Translation and Interpretation
Bilingual Teaching
Teaching Spanish as a Foreign Language
History of Latin America. Indigenous Worlds
History and Digital Humanities
Science Branch
Organic Agriculture and Livestock
Biodiversity and Conservation Biology
Environmental, Industrial and Food Biotechnology
Climate Change, Carbon and Water Resources
Science and Technology of Fermented Oils and Beverages
Diagnosis of the State of Conservation of Historical Heritage
Health Sciences
Physical Activity and Health
Health Biotechnology
Neuroscience and Behavioral Biology
Branch of Social and Legal Sciences
Advocacy
Agroecology: An Approach to Rural Sustainability
Social Anthropology: Advanced Ethnographic Research
Consulting and Labor Auditing
Criminology and Forensic Science
Right of Recruitment and Civil Liability
Law of New Technologies
Human Rights, Interculturality and Development
Strategic Direction of Human Resources
Business Management
Directorate of International Business



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Environmental education
Education for Development, Social Awareness and Culture of Peace
Finance and Banking
Gerontology and Management and Management of Gerontological Centers
Administrative Management
Gender and Equality
Social Intervention, Culture and Diversity
Compulsory Secondary and High School Teachers, Vocational Training and Language Teaching
International Relations
Physical and Sports Performance
Society, Administration and Politics
Engineering and Architecture Branch
Informatics Engineering

Note: Master's degree in UPO enforcement in 2016/2017. Source: <http://www.upo.es/postgrado/master>

The **Figure 1** show 82.05% of masters of the list shown above are coordinated and taught by Pablo de Olavide University. 17.95% belong to interuniversity degrees, with a 12.82% share of masters' degrees shared with the University International de Andalusia (UNIA), in addition to 2.56% of masters' degrees jointly implemented with the University of Granada (UGR) Finally, the remaining 2.56% refer to titles coordinated by the University of Cádiz (UCA), and co-organized by the Universities of Almeria, Córdoba, Granada, Huelva, Malaga and Pablo de Olavide.

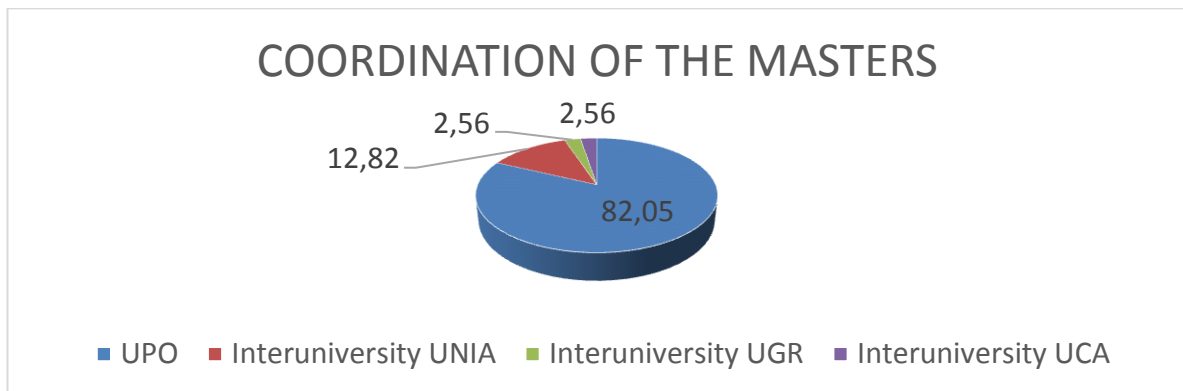


Figure 1. Coordination Masters 2016-17. Source: Made by myself.

It is highlighted that 42% of the reports analyzed show the need for a clear modification in the quality of the university's official university master's degree curricula, which have been reviewed through the reports issued by the DEVA. Planning of the teaching in the third section of the verification reports, referring to skills of any typology, nevertheless, the data



shown are limited to the objections made specifically to transversal competencies. In the same vein, 58% of the inspected reports contemplate a recommendation for improvement in the section on transversal competencies **Figure 2**.

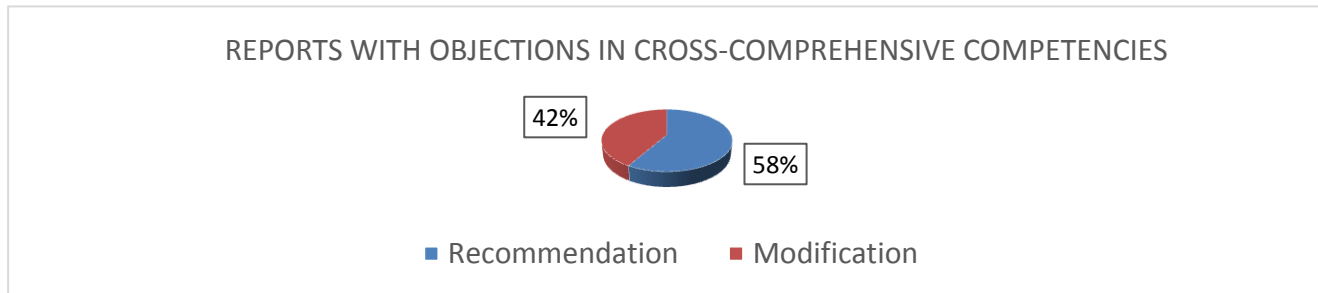


Figure 2. DEVA Reports 2016-17. Source: Made by myself.

3. Results.

The selection of the six competencies that make up our teaching innovation proposal is done taking into account the following regulatory framework:

- Royal Decree 1393/2007 of 29 October, the order of teaching the official university, decreed by Royal Decree 861/2010, of July 2.
- Royal Decree 1027/2011 of 15 July, to level master's degree by Spanish Qualification Framework or high education (MECES, in Spanish).
- Handbook support for elaboration official titles (Grade and master degree). (ANECA, 2012).
- Handbook to verifying or Official University titles (Grade and master degree), (DEVA, 2016).
- Handbook for elaboration or verifying proposals for university degrees and master degree of the Agency for the University System of Catalonia (AQU-Catalunya, 2009).
- The documents of European and national institutions, cited above.
- The memories verifying or official university titles shared with other universities.

The results obtained after the documentary review of the verification reports of joint master's degrees with UPO coordinated by other universities are presented below.

The University Masters in Physical Activity and Health, International Relations and Human Rights, Multiculturalism and Development, are joint degrees with the UNIA, which do not include in their curriculum any transversal skill. With this same University holds the Master in Agroecology: A Focus for Rural Sustainability, which is also a participant at the University of Cordoba in its curriculum calls generic skill as well as transversal skill, such as mentioned



above, both skills are different, therefore, they are not considered transversal competencies to be taken as a reference.

Instead, the Interuniversity Master in Ecological Agriculture and Livestock **Table 2** coordinated by the UNIA itself presents nine generic competencies.

Table 2

Transversal Competencies in Master's degree Ecological Agriculture and Livestock

Aptitude for leadership.
Ability for oral and written communication.
Capacity for analysis and synthesis.
Ability to organize and plan.
Capacity for critical reasoning, discussion and exposition of own ideas.
Ability to solve problems and autonomous learning.
Ability to make decisions and adapt to new situations.
Encourage the entrepreneurial spirit.
Promote and guarantee respect for human rights and principles of accessibility

Note. Key competencies of the Master Interuniversity *Ecological Agriculture*. Source: Verification Report year 2016.

Then the Master in *Environmental Education* **Table 3** coordinated by the University of Cadiz and the participating University of Almeria University of Cádiz University of Córdoba, University of Granada, University of Huelva University of Malaga and the University of Pablo de Olavide shows only three transversal competencies.

Table 3

Transversals Competencies in Master's degree Environmental Education

To develop civic values and professional participation in the defense of a sustainable future, including a commitment to fundamental rights and equality between men and women, equal opportunities, universal accessibility for people with disabilities, as well as the culture of Peace and democracy.
To work in teams and teams (of the same scope or interdisciplinary) and develop attitudes of participation and collaboration as an active member of the community, promoting the sustainable use of resources and participation in community processes and ethical principles related to the values of sustainability in personal and professional behavior.
Use the information and communication tools that allow posing and solving new problems within contexts related to their area of study, promoting the critical contextualization of knowledge establishing interrelations with social, economic and environmental, local and global problems.

Note: Cross - disciplinary competencies of the Masters' in *Environmental Education*. Source: Verification Report year 2016.



The joint Master in *Social Anthropology: Advanced Ethnographic Research* **Table 4** coordinated by the University of Granada integrates into its curriculum the following four transversal competencies.

Table 4

Transversal Competencies of Social Anthropology: Advanced Ethnographic Research

Analyze and evaluate the impact of the gender perspective on citizenship and the implementation of public policies.
Ability to think and act according to the principles of a universal character based on the value of the person, cultural heritage and is directed to the full personal, social and professional development of the student body. Respecting the right to cultural diversity, dialogue between cultures and societies, valuing freedom of expression.
To demonstrate an attitude that questions things and is interested in the foundations on which the ideas, values, actions and judgments, both own and outside the societies are based. Act creatively, proactively, enterprising and innovative in an integral way in all facets of life. Ensure human rights, values of a culture of peace and democracy, environmental principles and development cooperation that promote ethical commitment in a global, intercultural, socio-economic, free and fair society.
Respect the fundamental rights of justice and equality between men and women, regardless of their culture or country of origin.

Note. Cross - disciplinary competencies Interuniversity Master *Social Anthropology: Advanced Ethnographic Research*. Source: Verification Report year 2016.

4. Discussing.

Once the transversal competencies of the inter-university masters of the University of Pablo de Olavide have been described, we proceed to detail the transversal competencies proposed by the CEDEP work team.

In order to clarify, note that transversal competencies are common to all students of the same university or university center; regardless of the degree they are following (DEVA, 2016).

In order to achieve an optimal transfer of knowledge to different contexts, it is of vital importance an understanding of the explicit knowledge in the skills and the linkage of this with the practical competencies or skills that integrate them.

The transversality of such knowledge in all areas of knowledge is carried out through a teaching-learning process characterized by its dynamism and its integral character. This process of transfer must be approached by the various instances that make up the educational community (Ordóñez, Ramírez, & Rey, 2016).

In our case, it would be advisable to review the educational offer of the University of Pablo de Olavide open to all students of Master's degree, in order to reinforce at this stage the specific learning of its curriculum, contributing to the achievement of the acquisition of the



six transversal competencies that are proposed below Table 5, which are offered since the academic year 2016/2017 in all the titles of this educational level in the UPO.

Table 5
Transversal competencies of UPO

Identification code in the RUCT	Transversals Competencies	Description
Transversal Competence (CT1)	Ability to make judgments and scientific knowledge	Ability to integrate knowledge and face the complexity of making judgments from information that, incomplete or limited, includes reflections and decision-making based on evidence and arguments linked to the application of their knowledge and judgments; Respecting the data, its truthfulness and the ethical criteria associated with science; And being responsible for their own actions.
CT2	Ability to communicate and social skills	Communicate their knowledge in all areas of knowledge, in a clear and unambiguous way, showing interest in interaction with others. They have the ability to maintain a critical and constructive dialogue, as well as public speaking, if necessary. Understand and express written and / or spoken in multiple modalities.
CT3	Skills in the use of ICT	Use Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) as a tool for expression and communication, for access to information sources, as a means of archiving data and documents to create content, for presentation tasks, for learning, Research and cooperative work. Students should know the rights and risks in the digital world and respect their ethical principles during their use.
CT4	Critical skills, initiative and entrepreneurship	Demonstrate a mental behavior that questions things and is interested in the foundations on which the ideas, values, actions and judgments, both own and outside of societies and trade union and business organizations. Foster initiative in analysis, planning, organization and management. Acting creatively, proactively, enterprising and innovative both in private and social life as in the professional.
CT5	Ethical commitment and respect for cultural diversity	Ability to think and act according to the principles of a universal character based on the value of the person, cultural heritage and is directed to the full personal, social and professional development of the student body. Respect the right to cultural diversity, dialogue between cultures and societies, value freedom of expression. Ability to integrate and collaborate actively and assertively in a team to achieve common goals with other people, areas and organizations, in National and international contexts.
CT6	Social skill and global citizenship	Respect the fundamental rights of justice and equality between men and women, regardless of their culture or country of origin. Ensure human rights, values of a culture of peace and democracy, environmental principles and development cooperation that promote ethical



commitment in a global, intercultural, socio-economic, free and fair society.

Note: Self-made.

These transversal competencies are interdependent and, for each of them, although not specified as such, emphasis is placed on: critical reflection, on skills for teamwork, creativity, initiative, autonomy, resolution of problems, mastery of oral and written expression in different languages, risk assessment, decision making, skills, a positive attitude towards learning and constructive management of feelings. In addition, these transversal competencies are translatable in the teaching of any subject of the official university masters' degrees; however, they provide formative complements that provide the integration of the same ones through extracurricular teachings.

There are different activities (training seminars on information and communication skills, linguistic exchanges, innovation workshops on various topics, symposia on society, administration and politics, seminars on Human Rights, labor and social movements, etc. Promoted from the CEDEP of UPO, in order to facilitate the acquisition of the transversal competencies that all the students enrolled in the postgraduate studies of official character must attain. They also represent an ideal complement to the general and specific competencies of this title.

5. Conclusions.

To conclude, the general objective that was proposed in the first section of this research: the implementation in all degrees of masters whose curricula are in process of verification or modification of the transversal competencies necessary for a positive evaluation in those processes for the part of the DEVA and for the improvement of the quality of the education in the matter of competences in the official qualifications of the master's degree, in the way that they achieve an effective adaptation to the EHEA while consolidating the democratic values. Giving evidence that 80% of the tested in the academic year 2015/2016 and 2016/2017 masters have implanted in their curriculum transversal competencies proposed in this article with the approval of the evaluators of the DEVA. To achieve the overall objective a series of specific objectives, which have also been achieved, were raised.

In the first instance, the review and analysis of reports issued by DEVA to the degrees of master's degrees UPO from 2009 to the present. They say that since 2015 have been submitted numerous objections based on the incorporation of transversal competencies to the implanted degrees.

Referring to the next goal, when examining the rules in force on skills, the need is checked, by the institutions responsible, a legislative review that includes the incorporation of transversal competencies as an essential item in all plans studies.

Subsequently, the review of generic competencies included in the curriculum of all sets masters in the UPO, to take them as references, it indicates on the part of the student the



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possible existence of a clear confusion between generic and transversal competencies and how to carry out its implementation to achieve the acquisition of the student.

Finally, in relation to what is already stated in the general objective, the assessment of the evaluators of the DEVA to the transversal competencies proposals shows that they have accepted as suitable, except for the modification posited in one of the titles related to extracurricular activities proposed for acquisition, which requires that this further training "training supplements" should be named and were not within the planning of official university Master. Which does not dispute the competencies defined, but only the location in the curriculum of training activities through which its acquisition by the students is ensured.

In short, this methodological, including transversal competencies in all official masters' degrees requires a learning process - more participatory and democratic learning, with a formative sense that seeks the integral development of the student, and this is a structural change in the traditional methodology (Mayorga & Madrid, 2016). At present the educational approach used is "learning to learn" of the students whose objective during their passage through university education "learning to learn" and conceived as a learning throughout life.

In addition to this, from here we want to value the importance of these skills to provide the most appropriate framework to our knowledge, to provide perfect accommodate the necessary work of the university, but not always contemplated in the fair as the convulsive times we live in require, to strengthen democratic values in due compliance with the provisions of the preamble and Article 3 of RD 1393/2007 which states that "it should be noted that training in any professional activity should contribute to knowledge and development of human rights, democratic principles, the principles of equality between women and men, solidarity, environmental protection, universal accessibility and design for all, and promoting the culture of peace.

We would like to close the present study highlighting the need to assess transversal competencies as enhancer's curricular element for sustainable development of the principles and values of democratic society EHEA.

Ultimately, it can be suggested for future research extrapolation of transversal competencies to all degree courses taught at the UPO or curriculum to other universities transferability.

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