

Employability Competencies of Future Primary Education Teachers: A look at their Social and Labor Insertion Process

Cristina González Lorente*

<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7211-3862>

Departamento de Métodos de Investigación y Diagnóstico en Educación, Facultad de Educación, Universidad de Murcia, Murcia, España.

Nuria Rebollo-Quintela**

<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9026-0794>

Departamento de Didácticas Específicas y Métodos de Investigación y Diagnóstico en Educación, Facultad de Ciencias de la Educación, Universidade da Coruña, A Coruña, España.

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Abstract

In the learning society, one of the challenges for teachers in training is the need to define and develop a set of professional skills in their initial training, essential for their subsequent entry into the labor market. In this work, the aim was to delve into the employability skills developed by students in the Primary Education undergraduate study program, their relevance for their process of socio-labor insertion, as well as their global perception to face it. An inter-university study was carried out with a total of 210 students in their final year at Universidad de Murcia and Universidade da Coruña, both Spanish. The collection of information was carried out on the basis of the previously validated Labor Counseling and Insertion Questionnaire. The results showed few differences between the assessments of the students of both universities, which coincide in pointing out to a greater relevance of the competencies as opposed to the level of development in the classroom. In short, attention should be directed to joining efforts by the Spanish government in the initial training of primary education teachers, so that they can acquire a set of competencies that will allow a continuous improvement and updating in their professional, social and personal performance, in addition to their career inception.

Keywords:

competence, primary education, teacher, social and career insertion

Competencias para la Empleabilidad de los Futuros Maestros de Educación Primaria: Una Mirada a su Proceso de Inserción Socio-laboral

Resumen

En la sociedad del aprendizaje, uno de los retos para los maestros en formación es la necesidad de definir y desarrollar un conjunto de competencias profesionales en su formación inicial, esenciales en su entrada al mercado laboral. En este

trabajo, se tuvo como objetivo ahondar en las competencias para la empleabilidad que desarrollan los estudiantes del Grado en Educación Primaria, la relevancia que le confieren para su proceso de inserción socio-laboral así como su percepción global para afrontarlo. Se realizó un estudio inter-universitario con un total de 210 estudiantes de último curso en la Universidad de Murcia y la Universidade da Coruña, ambas españolas. La recogida de información se realizó a partir Cuestionario de Orientación e Inserción Laboral, validado previamente. Los resultados mostraron escasas diferencias entre las valoraciones de los estudiantes de ambas universidades, que coinciden en señalar una mayor relevancia de las competencias frente al nivel de desarrollo en aula. En definitiva, la atención se debe dirigir a aunar esfuerzos en el estado español en la formación inicial de los maestros de educación primaria, para que puedan adquirir un conjunto de competencias que les facilite, además de su incursión laboral, su continua mejora y actualización en el ejercicio de su desarrollo profesional, social y personal.

Palabras clave: competencia; educación primaria; maestro; inserción socio-laboral.

Competências para a Empregabilidade dos Futuros Mestres do Ensino Básico: Um olhar para seu Processo de Inserção Social e no Trabalho

Resumo

Na sociedade do aprendizado, um dos desafios para os professores em formação é a necessidade de definir e desenvolver um conjunto de competências profissionais em sua formação inicial, essenciais na sua inserção posterior no mercado de trabalho. Neste estudo, teve-se como objetivo aprofundar nas competências para a empregabilidade desenvolvidas por estudantes do curso de Ensino Básico, a relevância conferida para seu processo de inserção social e no trabalho, assim como sua percepção global para enfrentá-lo. Realizou-se um estudo entre universidades com um total de 210 estudantes do último curso na Universidade de Múrcia e a Universidade da Corunha, ambas espanholas. O levantamento de informação foi realizado a partir do Questionário de Orientação e Inserção no Trabalho, validado previamente. Os resultados mostraram poucas diferenças entre as avaliações dos estudantes de ambas as universidades, que coincidem em apontar uma maior relevância das competências diante do nível de desenvolvimento na sala de aula. Em definitiva, o foco deve-se dirigir a unir esforços no estado espanhol para a formação inicial de professores de ensino básico, para que possam adquirir um conjunto de competências que lhes facilitem, além de sua incursão no mundo do trabalho, sua melhora contínua e atualização no exercício de seu desenvolvimento profissional, social e pessoal.

Palavras chave:

competências; ensino básico; professor; inserção social e no trabalho.

Introduction

When thinking about the possibilities of entering the workforce as a primary school teacher, “public examination” comes immediately to the mind of many future graduates of these programs. It is true that this is a regulated profession, with a large number of jobs in the public sector and among the most significant alternative to the labor market, but it is currently observed that the effects of the strong socio-economic crisis that occurred during the last decade attenuate a new scenario of uncertainty and instability when entering the job

market that affects the young population at an incipient stage, including those with a university degree of a professional nature, such as teachers.

The transition from university to the workforce occupies increasingly long periods of time and represents one of the most critical moments in the career development of any university student (Helyer & Lee, 2014; Pineda, Agud & Ciraso, 2016; Stiwnne & Alves, 2010). Far from it, as Contreras (2014) points out, is the traditional pattern of previous generations in which, briefly and directly, one went from “a starting situation with complete dedication to study within the educational system, to a position of arrival at a stable full-time

job” (p. 74). This change of scenery is full of obstacles for such transition among young people, including those who have devoted much of their time and effort to higher education studies and acquires special relevance with the introduction of Spanish universities in the European Higher Education Area (EHEA). From now on, it is essential to promote the development of skills so that future graduates can adapt continuously to a social and economic environment in constant imbalance and, at the same time, increase research to better understand the perceptions and beliefs held by academics towards employment and thus understand their influence on how to approach the transition to working life.

In the case of primary education students, this complex process towards socio-labor insertion is accompanied by the appearance of new curricular structures, continuous updates in teaching methodologies centered on the student body as the protagonist or new educational projects that work directly on the interdisciplinarity of knowledge, without forgetting the “widening of the teacher’s gaze towards the social to cover facets neglected by society and by families” (Prats, 2016, p. 22). All these and other phenomena provoke an unprecedented comparison in the traditional history of teacher training, which, as Hudson, Zgaga & Astrand (2010) point out, demands new and changing pedagogical-didactic demands, both inside and outside the classroom.

These great challenges and demands to be assumed by new teachers justify the need to define and develop a set of essential professional skills for their initial training and subsequent entry into the labor market. Skills that, beyond the technical and methodological mastery of the teaching-learning process, promote insertion, continuity and professional improvement throughout the teaching career. Rosales (2013) indicates that it would be utopian to think of the absolute development of each and every one of the competencies included in the university curricula after completing initial training. In fact, in an educational framework such as the current one, based on the acquisition of skills, there are still today many teachers who, paradoxically, do not feel competent to undertake professional work as teachers after the end of the initial training period (Herraiz, 2015).

Over the last few years, different research studies have directed their efforts towards the analysis of the competencies that a teacher should really possess, among others, Mendoza & Covarrubias (2014), Grover (2015), Rodríguez-Gómez, Armenigol & Meneses (2017) or Rosales (2013), with many and diverse attempts to answer the questions about what should be learned and what competencies should be developed in this university degree, but as Medina & Pérez Cabrera (2017) point out, rarely do we have the opinion and experience of the main people involved to answer them, that is, future graduates.

For this reason, this research aims to delve a little further into the skills for employability developed by students in the primary education degree, from their own beliefs and perceptions, based on the classification of competencies made by Martínez Clares & González Lorente (2018); a proposal that brings together a systematized and contrasted set of professional action skills that can be considered common and transversal to all professionals in the twenty-first century. This classification emphasizes the applicative and contextualized character of the competencies in the current labor market, independently of the academic discipline. It is, therefore, a horizon rather than a consolidated experience or model, whose objective is, through a set of skills, to guide the transition to the workforce and promote the employability of university students in a socio-labor context with constant variations.

From this general approach on skills for employability applicable to university education in any degree or branch of knowledge, an inter-university study is carried out that allows us to delve deeper into this topic, both in the *development of skills* during their study and in their *relevance* for the process of entering the workforce, finally showing a global vision to face this process from the perception of the students of final year, primary education undergraduate students of two Spanish universities, the Universidad de Murcia (UM) and Universidade da Coruña (UDC). This approach can be summarized in a threefold objective:

1. To know and analyze the development and relevance that the final year primary education students of the two universities analyzed (UM and UDC) give to a set of

competencies for their entry to the workforce.

2. To identify and contrast possible significant differences in the development and relevance of these competencies according to the university in which the primary education degree is carried out.
3. To consider and evaluate the perception expressed by the students regarding their preparation to face the job market in both universities.

Method

Design

This work is based on a quantitative methodological approach, studying the development and relevance of a set of competencies as quantified variables. Within this approach, a non-experimental research design is used, in which the participants belong to the primary education undergraduate degree as a determined group, without intentional manipulation of the variables or random assignment (Hernández, Fernández & Baptista, 2007). More specifically, this design is also transversal and descriptive, according to the specific time of information gathering and the nature of the proposed objectives.

Participants

This research involves a total of 210 students in the final year undergraduate students distributed between Universidad de Murcia (UM) and Universidad da Coruña (UDC) who are studying primary education at the faculty of education sciences of both higher education institutions. The choice of the sample to be studied is based on two fundamental aspects: on the one hand, they are the

ones closest to entering the workforce and on the other hand, due to the training background accumulated during four years of experience that gives them, a better perspective to evaluate the development of competencies in their degree.

Regarding the characteristics of the sample, the distribution is similar both in number and gender (Table 1) since, in both cases, more than 70% of the students surveyed are women. The age of the participants was between 20 and 47 years old, with an average of 22.96 years (SD=3.80) and most frequently between 20 and 25 years old (82.9%). If we go deeper into its description, we find that it is a student body with a good academic record, since 93.4% of the students at UDC and 81.7% at UM have an average grade of notable. Finally, if we look at their employment situation at the time surveyed, 38.7% of students in the UDC and 50% in the UM had full-time occupation studies, and the rest of the sample surveyed was combining them with jobs.

Instrument

For the collection of information, the Career Guidance and Labor Insertion Questionnaire (COIL) by Martínez Clares & González Lorente (2018) with a high confidence or internal consistency index (Cronbach coefficient $\alpha=.898$) is used. The purpose of this instrument is to collect the impressions and assessments of students in the final year of their degree in relation to the transition into the workforce, based on the following three large blocks of content (see Table 2).

Throughout the different blocks, qualitative and quantitative assessment questions are included as part of the mixed methodological approach of the broader research. In particular, it focuses only on the second block on the experience of students in relation to their university education and preparation for their transition into the workforce. Within this block, there includes the scale

Table 1

Distribution of the sample by participating university and gender

	Men (n)	%	Women (n)	%	Other (n)	%	Total
Universidad de Murcia (UM)	29	27.9	75	72.1	0	0	104
Universidade da Coruña (UDC)	22	20.75	82	77.35	2	1.9	106

Table 2
Structure of the Career Guidance and Labor Insertion Questionnaire

1st Block: General Information	7 questions (open and closed) to know generic personal data (age and gender), as well as their current training and employment situation.
2nd Block: University Education	A Likert-type employability competence scale with five estimation levels (1=Not at All; 5=A Lot), where both <i>Development</i> and <i>Relevance</i> are valued.
	A scale of university training satisfaction for their transition into the workforce) type Likert (1= Not at All; 5=Much).
3rd Block: Interests and Job Search	Five semi-closed questions on the interests, expectations, and resources related to the process of entering the job market.

of competencies where a total of 19 elements are incorporated based on the classification provided by Martínez Clares & González Lorente (2018) from a double dimension analysis of the development and the relevance of these competencies. In this sense, it is worth mentioning that the *Development* dimension allows an approximation to the level of work on these competencies during the undergraduate training, while the *Relevance* dimension is understood as the importance that the students give to each one of them for their future entry into the job market.

Procedure

The research process addressed in this paper is defined by a series of sequential and systematic phases that begin with the research problem. This problem is accompanied by the situation of confusion and uncertainty that university graduates currently experience when facing the workforce. In order to better understand this situation and to propose career guidance programs that respond to such moments of change, this study begins with an in-depth search for information that leads to the definition of the objectives to be achieved. Next, the Career Guidance and Labor Insertion Questionnaire (COIL) is designed for the collection of information. During the 2016/2017 academic year, a pilot test of the questionnaire was carried out, which was also subjected to a complete process of content validation (through an expert critique technique) and construction (through the development of a model of structural equations) to guarantee its validity. After the design and validation of the COIL questionnaire, the teaching staff was contacted at the UM and the UDC, in or-

der to agree on the most suitable class schedule for the collection of information during the academic year 2017/2018. Students who wish to participate in both universities are reminded at all times of the voluntary, anonymous and confidential nature of the data collected, which are subsequently analyzed with the help of the SPSS v23 statistical program. Descriptive statistics (arithmetic mean and standard deviation) and inferential statistics are used to detect significant differences between the dimensions studied, as well as between students in both universities, assuming a level of significance of $p < .005$ in the inferential calculations. Finally, the results are interpreted and discussed in order to present this research work.

Results

For a greater understanding and deepening, the results will be presented in relation to each of the initially proposed objectives.

In order to respond to the first objective, *to know and analyze the development and relevance that the final year primary education students at the two universities analyzed (UM and UDC) give to a set of competencies for their entry to the workforce*, the two higher education institutions are studied separately.

Firstly, the degree to which the skills for entering the workforce that make up the designed instrument have been developed in the degree taught at the UM is analyzed, based on the perspective of the learner. It is also determined to what extent they consider them to be important for their transition into the job market. It is obser-

ved that, both in the case of the relevance granted and in the level of development of competencies in the classroom, at the Universidad de Murcia, there is a high degree of homogeneity in the responses given by the students, since the standard deviation in all the items analyzed is close to 1.

The results show a high level of development of all competencies, with averages equal to or higher than 3.25, being "teamwork and cooperation" ($\bar{X}=4.36$) which they consider they have addressed most, followed by "responsibility and perseverance" ($\bar{X}=3.78$), "decision making" ($\bar{X}=3.75$), "self-awareness" ($\bar{X}=3.71$) and "communication skills" ($\bar{X}=3.71$). However, the competencies that they perceive as less developed throughout their studies are "leadership" ($\bar{X}=3.25$) and "commitment to the organization" ($\bar{X}=3.25$) and the "pursuit for excellence" ($\bar{X}=3.28$).

The analysis of the level of relevance given to these employability competencies shows averages higher than 4. Within this, the importance of "teamwork and cooperation" ($\bar{X}=4.56$), "the ability to learn and adapt" ($\bar{X}=4.57$), "communication skills" ($\bar{X}=4.62$) and "responsibility and perseve-

rance" ($\bar{X}=4.62$), while "leadership" ($\bar{X}=4.05$) and the "commitment to the organization" ($\bar{X}=4.12$) are the competencies with the lowest value in relation to the importance for their transition into the workforce. However, as can be observed in Table 3 for all the competencies studied, the average obtained in the case of relevance is always higher than the level of development in the classroom in the primary education degree at the Universidad de Murcia.

When applying the Wilcoxon test, a nonparametric test for two related samples, it is noted that this difference observed between the level of development and relevance is statistically significant ($p<.05$), in all the competencies analyzed (Table 3), in the case of Universidad de Murcia.

A detailed analysis of Universidade da Coruña shows, as in the case of Universidad de Murcia, that there is a high degree of homogeneity in the responses given by the students, this being higher in the assessments related to relevance.

Professional competencies have been developed in their entirety throughout the degree, the student body gives a higher score to "teamwork"

Table 3

Development and relevance of the competencies at the Universidad de Murcia

Professional Competencies	Development		Relevance		Sig (p) Wilcoxon
	Mean	Typ. dev.	Mean	Typ. dev.	
Self-consciousness (C1)	3.71	0.966	4.44	0.774	.000
Analysis, synthesis, and critique (C2)	3.37	0.904	4.13	0.789	.000
Organization and planning (C3)	3.62	0.894	4.46	0.637	.000
Communication skills (C4)	3.71	0.921	4.62	0.671	.000
Responsibility and perseverance (C5)	3.78	0.965	4.62	0.612	.000
Decision-making (C6)	3.75	0.953	4.46	0.667	.000
People-oriented (C7)	3.34	1.171	4.32	0.804	.000
Teamwork and cooperation (C8)	4.36	0.835	4.56	0.708	.047
Ability to learn and adapt (C9)	3.56	1.050	4.57	0.707	.000
Flexibility and change orientation (C10)	3.42	0.921	4.30	0.811	.000
Motivation for achievement (C11)	3.42	1.146	4.49	0.724	.000
Commitment to the organization (C12)	3.25	1.022	4.12	0.896	.000
Ability to work under pressure (C13)	3.67	1.242	4.18	0.932	.002
Conflict resolution and negotiation techniques (C14)	3.31	1.115	4.47	0.763	.000
Pursuit of excellence (C15)	3.28	1.144	4.25	0.797	.000
Innovation (C16)	3.37	1.116	4.52	0.623	.000
Entrepreneurship (C17)	3.31	1.124	4.48	0.724	.000
Leadership (C18)	3.25	1.121	4.05	0.959	.000
Capacity for resilience and tolerance to frustration (C19)	3.32	1.151	4.34	0.832	.000

Table 4
Development and relevance of the competencies at the Universidade da Coruña

Professional Competencies	Development		Relevance		Sig (p) Wilcoxon
	Mean	Typ. dev.	Mean	Typ. dev.	
Self-consciousness (C1)	3.67	0.973	4.26	0.865	.000
Analysis, synthesis, and critique (C2)	3.43	0.905	4.19	0.906	.000
Organization and planning (C3)	3.72	0.964	4.42	0.716	.000
Communication skills (C4)	3.75	1.005	4.55	0.678	.000
Responsibility and perseverance (C5)	3.79	1.049	4.37	0.876	.000
Decision-making (C6)	3.52	0.997	4.27	0.811	.000
People-oriented (C7)	3.33	1.075	4.24	0.879	.000
Teamwork and cooperation (C8)	3.99	0.961	4.39	0.890	.000
Ability to learn and adapt (C9)	3.64	1.016	4.49	0.693	.000
Flexibility and change orientation (C10)	3.58	1.042	4.27	0.846	.000
Motivation for achievement (C11)	3.37	1.072	4.20	0.920	.000
Commitment to the organization (C12)	3.52	1.007	4.02	0.884	.000
Ability to work under pressure (C13)	3.62	0.980	4.04	0.985	.000
Conflict resolution and negotiation techniques (C14)	3.38	1.046	4.34	0.850	.000
Pursuit of excellence (C15)	3.43	1.087	4.09	0.921	.000
Innovation (C16)	3.21	1.058	4.38	0.774	.000
Entrepreneurship (C17)	3.15	1.178	4.08	1.006	.000
Leadership (C18)	3.22	1.042	3.89	1.017	.000
Capacity for resilience and tolerance to frustration (C19)	3.18	1.209	4.20	0.899	.000

(\bar{X} =3.99), followed by “responsibility and perseverance” (\bar{X} =3.79) and “communication skills” (\bar{X} =3.75). On the contrary, it considers that “entrepreneurship” has been worked to a lesser extent (\bar{X} =3.15) and the “capacity for resilience and tolerance of frustration” (\bar{X} =3.18).

When examining the importance given to these competencies when entering the workforce, it is observed that with the exception of 1, the rest obtain averages higher than 4, being those that obtain greater recognition on the part of the students “the communication skills” (\bar{X} =4.55) and the “ability to learn and adapt” (\bar{X} =4.49); however, “leadership” (\bar{X} =3.89), the “commitment to the organization” (\bar{X} =4.02), “the ability to work under pressure” (\bar{X} =4.06) and “entrepreneurship” (\bar{X} =4.08) are the least valued.

There are differences in the student body at the Universidade da Coruña in terms of the two aspects under study, that is, between the relevance given to professional skills and the degree of development of the same throughout the degree, always being superior the importance given. To determine the extent to which these differences

are statistically significant, the Wilcoxon nonparametric test is applied. The results obtained show statistically significant differences ($p<.05$), for the set of competencies being the relevance, as in the case of the University of Murcia, superior to the development (see Table 4).

With regard to the second objective of *identifying and contrasting possible significant differences in the development and relevance of these competencies according to the university in which the primary education degree is studied*, it is stated that there are differences (see Figure 1).

In order to determine whether these differences in the level of development of professional competencies in the UM and the UDC are statistically significant, an in-depth analysis is carried out through the Mann-Whitney U test for 2 independent samples, which determines that there are only statistically significant differences ($p<.05$) in the level of development in competence “teamwork and cooperation” ($Z= -3.048$, $p=.002$) (Table 5).

Similarly, it is stated that there are differences between the perception of the students from the Universidad de Murcia and Universidade da Coru-

Table 5
Development of Professional Skills at the UM and the UDC

Professional Competencies	University	Average Range	Sum of ranges	Z Sig. asymptot. (bilateral)
Self-consciousness	Universidad de Murcia	106.97	11018.00	-.490 .624
	Universidade da Coruña	103.08	10927.00	
Analysis, synthesis, and critique	Universidad de Murcia	103.71	10785.50	-.449 .653
	Universidade da Coruña	107.26	11369.50	
Organization and planning	Universidad de Murcia	102.85	10696.00	-.660 .510
	Universidade da Coruña	108.10	11459.00	
Communication Skills	Universidad de Murcia	103.76	10791.50	-.430 .667
	Universidade da Coruña	107.20	11363.50	
Responsibility and perseverance	Universidad de Murcia	104.36	10853.00	-.283 .777
	Universidade da Coruña	106.62	11302.00	
Decision-making	Universidad de Murcia	112.11	11659.50	-1.631 .103
	Universidade da Coruña	99.01	10495.50	
People-oriented	Universidad de Murcia	105.94	11017.50	-.107 .914
	Universidade da Coruña	105.07	11137.50	
Teamwork and cooperation	Universidad de Murcia	117.50	12219.50	-3.048 .002
	Universidade da Coruña	93.73	9935.50	
Ability to learn and adapt	Universidad de Murcia	103.08	10720.50	-.594 .552
	Universidade da Coruña	107.87	11434.50	
Flexibility and change orientation	Universidad de Murcia	99.99	10398.50	-1.365 .172
	Universidade da Coruña	110.91	11756.50	
Motivation for achievement	Universidad de Murcia	107.08	11136.00	-.387 .699
	Universidade da Coruña	103.95	11019.00	
Commitment to the organization	Universidad de Murcia	98.63	10257.00	-1.697 .090
	Universidade da Coruña	112.25	11898.00	
Ability to work under pressure	Universidad de Murcia	109.20	11356.50	-.906 .365
	Universidade da Coruña	101.87	10798.50	
Conflict resolution and negotiation techniques	Universidad de Murcia	104.20	10836.50	-.321 .748
	Universidade da Coruña	106.78	11318.50	
Pursuit of excellence	Universidad de Murcia	102.06	10614.50	-.843 .399
	Universidade da Coruña	108.87	11540.50	
Innovation	Universidad de Murcia	110.79	11522.50	-1.299 .194
	Universidade da Coruña	100.31	10632.50	
Entrepreneurship	Universidad de Murcia	109.19	11356.00	-.902 .367
	Universidade da Coruña	101.88	10799.00	
Leadership	Universidad de Murcia	107.60	11190.00	-.514 .607
	Universidade da Coruña	103.44	10965.00	
Capacity for resilience and tolerance to frustration	Universidad de Murcia	109.52	11390.50	-.980 .327
	Universidade da Coruña	101.55	10764.50	

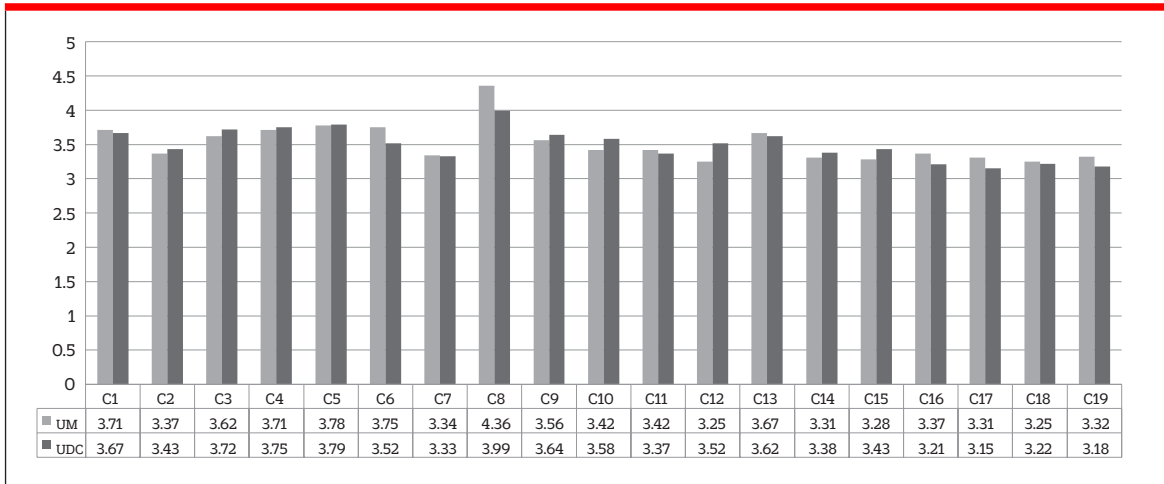


Figure 1. Development of Professional Competencies at the UM and UDC

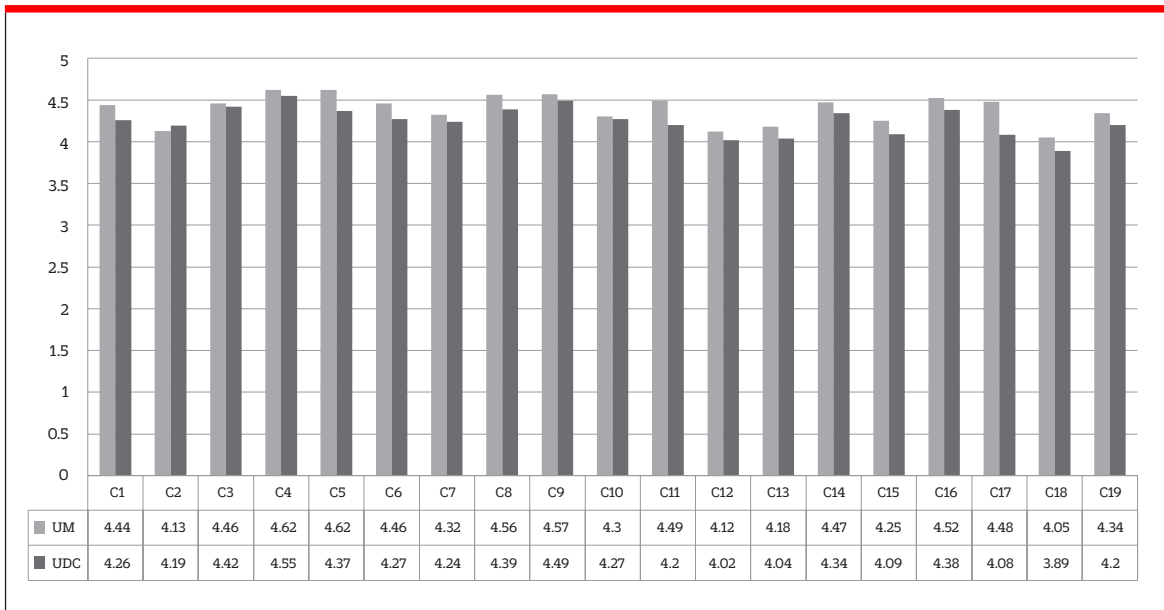


Figure 2. Relevance of Professional Competencies at the UM and UDC

ña in terms of the relevance given to professional competencies for their future entry into the workforce see Figure 2).

However, although these differences are observable, it can be determined that in most of them there is agreement among the students when considering them important for entering the workforce, since the Mann-Whitney U test for 2 independent samples does not offer statistically significant differences for 16 of the 19 competencies analyzed. This significance ($p < .05$) is found in relation to “responsibility and perseverance”

($p = .043$), “motivation for achievement” ($p = .019$) and “entrepreneurship” ($p = .003$), competencies that the students of the Universidad de Murcia give greater relevance (see Table 6).

Finally, the third objective is to consider and evaluate the perception expressed by students regarding their preparation to face the process of entering the workforce in both universities. In order to do this, we take into account the answers given by the students to the question, “Do you feel ready to face the job market? The results allow us to affirm that, both in the sample surveyed at

Table 6
Relevance of Professional Skills at the UM and the UDC

Professional Competencies	University	Average range	Sum of ranges	Z Sig. asymptot. (bilateral)
Self-consciousness	Universidad de Murcia	111.41	11587.00	-1.548
	Universidade da Coruña	99.70	10568.00	.122
Analysis, synthesis, and critique	Universidad de Murcia	101.88	10596.00	-.916
	Universidade da Coruña	109.05	11559.00	.360
Organization and planning	Universidad de Murcia	106.23	11048.00	-.194
	Universidade da Coruña	104.78	11107.00	.846
Communication Skills	Universidad de Murcia	109.18	11354.50	-1.057
	Universidade da Coruña	101.89	10800.50	.290
Responsibility and perseverance	Universidad de Murcia	112.87	11738.50	-2.021
	Universidade da Coruña	98.27	10416.50	.043
Decision-making	Universidad de Murcia	111.81	11628.50	-1.655
	Universidade da Coruña	99.31	10526.50	.98
People-oriented	Universidad de Murcia	107.76	11207.00	-.582
	Universidade da Coruña	103.28	10948.00	.561
Teamwork and cooperation	Universidad de Murcia	110.81	11524.50	-1.457
	Universidade da Coruña	100.29	10630.50	.145
Ability to learn and adapt	Universidad de Murcia	109.10	11346.00	-.998
	Universidade da Coruña	101.97	10809.00	.318
Flexibility and change orientation	Universidad de Murcia	106.10	11034.00	-.154
	Universidade da Coruña	104.92	11121.00	.878
Motivation for achievement	Universidad de Murcia	114.45	11902.50	-2.342
	Universidade da Coruña	96.72	10252.50	.019
Commitment to the organization	Universidad de Murcia	109.13	11349.50	-.920
	Universidade da Coruña	101.94	10805.50	.357
Ability to work under pressure	Universidad de Murcia	109.81	11420.50	-1.086
	Universidade da Coruña	101.27	10734.50	.277
Conflict resolution and negotiation techniques	Universidad de Murcia	109.93	11432.50	-1.179
	Universidade da Coruña	101.16	10722.50	.239
Pursuit of excellence	Universidad de Murcia	109.75	11414.00	-1.075
	Universidade da Coruña	101.33	10741.00	.282
Innovation	Universidad de Murcia	109.55	11393.00	-1.080
	Universidade da Coruña	101.53	10762.00	.280
Entrepreneurship	Universidad de Murcia	116.92	12160.00	-2.958
	Universidade da Coruña	94.29	9995.00	.003
Leadership	Universidad de Murcia	110.19	11459.50	-1.165
	Universidade da Coruña	100.90	10695.50	.244
Capacity for resilience and tolerance to frustration	Universidad de Murcia	109.88	11428.00	-1.128
	Universidade da Coruña	101.20	10727.00	.259

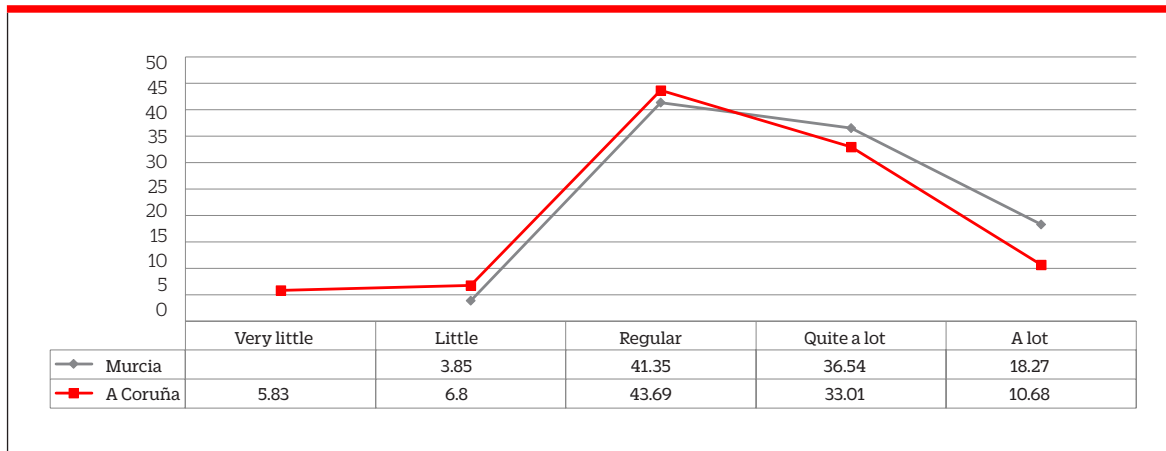


Figure 3. Do you feel ready to face the job market?

the UM and at the UDC, there is a certain degree of uncertainty regarding this future and entering the workforce, which means that around 40% of the students of both institutions do not feel accurately prepared. However, it can be said that the positive values of the scale adhere to 54.81% of the answers in the case of the UM and 43.7% of the UDC.

As shown in Figure 3, there are differences between the assessments made by the students of the Universidad de Murcia and the Universidade da Coruña, the latter being those with a more negative perception since 12.63% of them feel very little or little prepared. These differences are corroborated by applying Mann-Whitney U test, which shows that UM students have higher expectations of their entry into the workforce ($p=.024$).

Discussion

Through the results obtained and the analysis of the data provided by a sample of final year undergraduate primary education students from the Universidad de Murcia and the Universidade da Coruña, a series of conclusions can be drawn as a result of the objectives pursued:

- The students consider, and agree in it in both institutions, that throughout the four years, they have developed to a great extent the professional competencies when entering the workforce, being “team work and cooperation”, together with the “de-

cision making” and the “communication skills” and least being the “leadership” and the “commitment to the organization”. Likewise, the sample has assigned the highest degree of importance to “teamwork and cooperation” and the lowest to “leadership”. The results obtained, both in terms of competence development throughout the degree and relevance, coincide with the study carried out by Alonso-Martín et. al (2011), with students from the Universidad Complutense de Madrid and the Universidad de Huelva. Similarly, the research carried out by Lluch Molins, Fernández-Ferrer, Pons Seguí & Cano García (2017), with a sample of graduates from the universities of Barcelona, Politècnica de Catalunya, Rovira i Virgili, Autònoma de Barcelona, Islas Balears, Granada, and Oberta de Catalunya, showed that the competencies they considered most important for their professional careers and at the same time had been developed to a greater extent were “teamwork” and “communication skills.”

- Students at the UM and the UDC perceive a level of development of professional competencies for employability lower than the relevance it has given, results in the line of research of Muñoz Cantero, Rebollo-Quintela & Espiñeira-Bellón (2014) with final year primary education undergraduate students at UDC in the academic year

2012/2013 and the study by Alonso-Martín et. al (2011). Likewise, Lluçh Molins, et al. (2017) stress that “graduates do not become aware of having developed certain competencies until they come into contact with the workforce” (p. 57), a reason that motivates students to give a higher level of relevance than development. This idea supports what has been stated by various authors (Prats, 2016; Rodríguez-Gómez et al., 2017; Rosales, 2013), who agree that the acquisition of competencies does not happen only during the initial training, but requires access to teaching and professional projects.

- Taking into account that the primary education degree leads to a regulated profession and that universities design their curriculum based on the requirements of a Ministerial ECI order, specifically ECI Order /3857/2007 of 27 December, which establishes the requirements for the verification of official university degrees that qualify for the exercise of the profession of primary education teacher, was determined to what extent differs the development of skills demanded by the job market depending on the higher education institution of membership. It can be seen that there are real differences between the Universidad de Murcia and Universidade da Coruña, but when Mann-Whitney U test is applied, we can see that they are only statistically significant in terms of teamwork competence and cooperation at their level of development, being higher at the University of Murcia. This lack of significance confirms that the level of competency development among students who study in different centers must be the same when it comes to a profession regulated by the Spanish state, such as that of primary education teacher.
- In relation to the relevance given by the students of both institutions, there are differences in all competencies, and they are statistically significant for “responsibility and perseverance,” “motivation for achievement” and “entrepreneurship.” This di-

ference between the students at the UDC and the UM may be due in part to the fact that although perceptions of the teaching role are forged by individual students, they may be influenced by the conceptions transmitted from universities, and also conditioned by the inherent characteristics of the workforce of each community. In order to determine which aspects are involved, it would be advisable to expand research with focus groups in both institutions.

- Finally, the data extracted from the present research show that a future teacher certainly does not feel prepared for the professional exercise, demonstrated in both Universities, but more notorious and statistically significant in the case of the Universidade da Coruña, in which only 43.7% of the sample is considered sufficiently or very prepared to face the job market. These results are in line with Herraiz (2015) and Bozu & Aránega Español (2017) in which students perceive that they do not have “the level of preparation that would be required to give answers to the current and challenging problems of society and of the teaching profession” (p. 158), to which they add the urgent need for a modification in the curricula and professional competencies in order to face today’s society.

A society characterized by globality, complexity, uncertainty and constant change, which embodies all its particularities in the workforce, cannot expect higher education institutions to train professionals with pre-established job profiles and with defined and immutable roles over time, thus ensuring a perfect match between jobs and workers.

Universities, and more specifically faculties of education sciences in charge of teacher training, have to train the teacher who will be “conceived as a teaching professional who moves in complex, changing, uncertain and conflictive situations, which make him a researcher in the classroom” (Baelo & Arias, 2011, p.116). Their mission must be none other than to act proactively, and thus the initial training tends to develop skills that enable them not only to access the job market, but also to

enable them to continue acquiring the skills necessary for their professional and personal development in a society certainly volatile, empowering them for lifelong learning.

The EHEA assumes training based on competencies, that is, decision making to convert knowledge (technical competence) into know-how (methodological competence) with doses of knowing how to live together (participatory competence) and knowing how to be (personal competence), so that higher education has a link with the demands of the current workforce, and more specifically, with the transition from student to employee, since competence is a demonstration of the knowledge, skills, behaviors, and attitudes required to perform a professional function or role effectively.

In the teaching and learning model proposed in this common European space, what is important is not what the teacher knows or does (traditional conception of teaching), but what students learn and how they learn it (the learning of competencies).

In this way, it will be possible to affirm and not leave it in a mere supposition, what was collected more than a decade ago by the Ministry of Education and Science (MEC, 2006) "the degrees must prepare for access to professional practice, that is to say, they must have the broad employability of their graduates as an objective" (p. 7), without forgetting that the primary school teacher can not only have the school placement as the only horizon, although this is the most frequent, but can also cover other professional fields (Bozu & Aránega Español, 2017) and rethink their professional role.

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