

The Use of Bloom's Taxonomy to Develop Competences in Students of a Business Undergraduate Course

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Abstract. The six categories of Bloom's taxonomy are not just a scheme of classification, but are a hierarchical organization of cognitive processes according to levels of complexity for the development of expected cognitive objectives. This paper aims to report the experience of planning the educational objectives, instructional activity, assessment and their alignment to develop competences using Bloom's taxonomy in a university located in the São Paulo region, Brazil. This is a descriptive study with the use of action research as research design. This paper describes four steps of development: (1) engaging and training professors; (2) aligning Bloom's taxonomy to competences; (3) formulating educational objectives for competences; and (4) planning instructional activities and assessment criteria. Previously, Bloom's taxonomy had not been used to develop competences in a business undergraduate curriculum. This was the gap found in the literature and the contribution of this paper. The results showed that the students' average scores improved and that they all recognized that the taxonomy enabled them to apply the acquired knowledge in new situations to help to solve problems. The professors clearly saw improvements in the students' performance as well as their higher levels of engagement.

Keywords: Bloom's taxonomy, competence development, business course.

1. Introduction

In the November/December 2013 issue of *Brazilian Business Magazine* (RBA), Federal Business Council (FBC) maintained that the professor should become a mentor or mastermind and not just a mere knowledge transmitter. At the same time, the role of the student should be developed from that of supporting to that of becoming a leader. The FBC suggested that the higher education model must move from teaching to learning. Professors should then apply different learning methodologies and/or use activities that aim to bridge the gap between schools and industry, and between theory and practice. This could be achieved by employing case studies, group assignments, discussion of solutions to simulated business problems or situations to develop the competences required in the real world. Antunes (2002) states that in the classroom effective competency-based education is materialized in the way the information is treated, giving it a

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contextual meaning and linking it to the student's professional life, and building that knowledge with him/her.

Nunes and Barbosa (2007) carried out research with 8 coordinators and 2 professors from 66 business courses in 26 universities in the Belo Horizonte region, Minas Gerais, Brazil. Their findings were: (a) there was no formal competences guideline for supporting and orienting professors; (b) the focus was on knowledge teaching; and (c) professors did not have the necessary qualifications for teaching under the competence perspective. Recognizing this new educational requirement, together with a business environment that requires employee qualifications based on competences, our university located in São Paulo, Brazil, implemented a competency-based curriculum in its business course in 2014. Pedagogical projects by competence is not something novel in Brazil as attested in Oliveira and Chamberlain's study (2011), who applied it to engineering courses. In other parts of the world, for example in the UK, a university introduced competence modules in its Department of International Business and Accounting (Hill and Houghton 2001). In the USA, McEvoy *et al.* (2005) designed and implemented a competency-based curriculum in the context of a graduate degree in Human Resource Management.

Competences are a repertoire of behaviors that some people master more than others and make them effective in a given situation (Koc 2012). For ILO (2012), a competent person is someone who: (a) possess certain knowledge, skills and attitudes (KSA) which she or he can use, (b) performs specified tasks to (c) a standard of performance expected in (d) a specified workplace under (e) conditions of uncertainty and change.

For the development of competences in the business course in São Paulo, three sets of documents were researched: (a) National Curricular Guidelines (NCG) from the National Education Council NEC (Brasil, Resolução 04/2005); (b) National Research carried out in 2011 for the FBC; (c) and material from a talent development consultancy company. The course formulated twelve key competences in proper sequence for student learning as they progress through the course. This formed the itinerary of the competences. This sequence was determined as follows: communication; negotiation; logical, critical and analytical thinking; creativity and innovation; adaptation and flexibility; knowledge management; systemic view; business and market view; decision making; result driven, interpersonal relationship; and customer driven. The definition of these competences can be seen in Table 1.