

Didactic Strategies to Improve the Competencies in Analytical Reading and Academic Writing of Future Teachers and Teachers in Service

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Abstract

In Mexico, as in other Latin American countries, since near of two decades ago, based on some guidelines made by the OECD, it has implemented an educational model based on the competencies approach. Despite this, they continue to prevail in the different school levels problems in the achievement of their students, in a particular way in the communicative competences: reading and writing. In higher-level schools to train future teachers or teachers in service, we have detected that this problem is also common in this type of students. They present little practice, poor disposition and deficiencies in analytical reading and writing exercises. For three years, a group of three professors-researchers have implemented a series of didactic actions to try to overcome such problems. We have worked with undergraduate and graduate students, some of them aspiring to be teachers and others who are already. In the paper here proposed, a research report of the didactic work done so far, we present the diagnostic process carried out with different groups, the design of the qualitative research, the conceptual framework of the research, in addition to the design, the development and implementation of a didactic intervention in different phases, and the results obtained so far. Part of these are a practical taxonomy of the written academic work of our students and parallel alternative solutions such as tests for concepts review and the didactic strategies of the debate and the dissertation, which strengthen scripture as well as analytical reading and oral argumentation.

Keywords: Analytical Reading; Academic Writing; Competencies Approach; Teacher Training & Update.

Introduction

For approximately two decades, the educational approach in competencies has been implemented in the Mexican educational system, with some theoretical or practical variations at certain times. This has been tried to adopt, by recommendations made by the OECD¹, in the different educational levels, although its implementation in Basic Education has been privileged. Among the main problems that have been mentioned within the Mexican Educational System and its reviewers so that this approach does not end up having favorable results in school performance is to have neglected the updating of teachers in service to have the tools to implement it. (González de la Torre, n.d.). One of the basic areas for the skills and knowledge of students are favored in their development are communicative skills (reading and writing), as these are a transversal and continuous requirement to achieve favor the other cluster of skills that are formulated in the exit profiles of the different educational levels.

As teachers of higher education in the area of teacher training and updating of teachers in service (with Postgraduate Programs) one of the main problems that we have detected in a common way is the lack of practice, the limited disposition and the deficiencies in the students' academic writing to reach the exit profile of students of such programs. Which

¹ Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development.

naturally aggravates the situation that their own students face in the school. This problem has become a constant theme in the work meetings of us academics and collegiate teachers. The willingness to face the problem by teachers and managers is a lot, enthusiastic and strongly supported, but at times the attempts seem to be unsuccessful in a practice that is not learned or managed to develop until reaching a level of acceptable proficiency in the short or medium term, but is part of cognitive and cultural long-lived schemes to which it seems we have not been accustomed to access on a daily basis and egalitarian. The analysis of theoretical texts and academic writing today more than ever, in the Digitalized Societies that we are or pretend to be, would give the impression that it has become an exercise only of scholars or specialist writers.

This problematic is related or implied with others that it is necessary not to leave aside: at a general and social level, for example, it is important to point out that the lack of scriptural practice is proper not only of an academic, professional or private sector like the students described, but it is presented in a generalized manner in most social and even professional strata; besides this, being self-critical, it is a current problem, to a certain extent, of the same teachers who work at a higher level. This lack of practice, returning to the social and global implications, invariably is related to the strong deficiencies in reading habits and the low level of reading comprehension in countries like Mexico, derived directly from the deficiency in processes of readings that have as purpose the reflection and analysis.

Thus, the purpose of this paper –a Research Report– is in its first part, corresponding to the Diagnosis and Formulation of a Research Problem, showing how we managed to build a Practical Typology of the types of academic text that teachers build in service and students, besides exploring the importance of the writing and oral argumentative expression and the practice of this writing and expression, parts of the communicative competences, of our students; then the Review of Theoretical-Conceptual, State of the Art and Methodological Aspects is presented, with a description of the Research Subjects and the Instruments for obtaining empirical data used, to finally present the Results and a series of actions and Recommendations in search of the improvement of these competences, which could later lead the students of our educational programs to reach the level of Academic Essay Writing, exercise of intellectual maturity of people, institutions and societies.

Practical Typology of Academic Writing

In January 2015, a group of Teachers-Researchers were part of the design and application of a Diagnostic Process that made a Sub-System of Higher Education in Durango to their teachers in service. The purpose was framed in presenting a global institutional and individual view, by teacher, on the level of development of the competence in written expression and the needs of strengthening of this one.

The Diagnosis, proposed as an Institucional Academic Evaluation, had a close background to an 8-hour preparation Workshop on January 8 and 9 of this year, "Writing of argumentative texts", attended by approximately 600 teachers. The objective of this Evaluation was: *To identify the level of development of the competence of Written Argumentative Expression in Teachers of Higher Education.*

A central idea that guided the application of this Evaluation Process was that written competence forms an integral part of communicative competencies and alludes to one of the most relevant actions for the realization of tasks for academic purposes. The consolidation of this competence involves cognitive and metacognitive processes that range from the domain of the conventions of written code to the processes of composition. It implies greater challenges, since academic writing, due to its epistemological and reflective nature, demands a specific interest, because writing has the "potencialidad de ser una forma de estructuración del pensamiento"¹ (Carlino, 2010, p.27).

Today, writing is considered a competence because "representa una capacidad de movilizar varios recursos cognitivos para hacer frente a un tipo de situaciones"² (Perrenoud, 2004, p.8). In conclusion, the competency-based approach crosses the whole School Curriculum, as well as the academic trajectories of teachers, in such a way that writing becomes a fundamental tool to build knowledge, to animate learning situations, to analyze texts of structures complex, to make arguments with hypotheses and premises that shed light on relevant issues.

¹ ... potential to be a form of structuring of thought.

² ... it represents an ability to mobilize several cognitive resources to cope with a type of situation.

The Diagnosis was based on the application of a written expression test with a duration of 2.5 hours, which consisted in the preparation of an Argumentative Text based on the individual selection of one of three proposed topics, with a minimum of 800 words, under structure similar to the essay genre and with minimum formal and background requirements for the execution and specification of reflective-argumentative writings of an academic nature.

Participants

The 473 participants in this research were Teachers in Service of a Subsystem of Higher Education in the State of Durango who work in more than 30 Institutions distributed in the state geography. The professional formation of the teachers turned out to be very variable, as well as their years of teaching experience.

The call to present this diagnostic test was institutional, voluntary, low impact (no labor or professional impact for participants) and was extended to the total number of teachers in the Subsystem, approximately 800, with an acceptance close to 60 percent.

Process

In the written exam three skills involved in writing were assessed: *Linguistics* (Conventions of the language, Use and management of language), *Discursive* (Organization, Cohesion & Coherence) and *Sociolinguistics* (Adequacy to the purpose, Argumentation). To evaluate them, five criteria were established:

- a) **Use and Management of the Language (Appropriate to the Scriptural Purpose):** Clear and appropriate use of the language according to the theme and purpose of the writing (25%).
- b) **Organization:** Logical relationship between the main and secondary ideas (20%).
- c) **Argumentation:** Manifestation and defense of a position with arguments and examples (25%).
- d) **Cohesion & Coherence:** Distribution of the information according to the textual sequence and the type of text requested, and correct use of the connectors (20%).
- e) **Language Conventions:** Correct application of Orthographic, Syntactic, Grammatical and Punctuation rules (10%).

These five criteria were assessed in a differentiated way: greater weight was assigned to the Use and handling of language, and to Argumentation; the Organization, as well as the Cohesion & Coherence, had a lower valuation; the last formal aspect, Conventions of the language, was valued with 10% of the total percentage.

As well, four levels of performance were proposed: *Excellent*, when a performance between 91 and 100% is reached; *Good*, with performance between 76 and 90%; *Improvable*, when it is possible to overcome the minimum limit of performance required in the domain of the scriptural exercise, from 61 to 75%; and *Inadequate*, when the participant gets 60% or less. The performance levels in each of the five criteria are shown in Table 1.

Table 1. *Levels of Performance in the Academic Writing Competence*

Criteria	Excellent	Good	Improvable	Inadequate
1. <i>Use and Management of the Language (Appropriate to the Scriptural Purpose)</i>	23-25%	20-22%	16-19%	0-15%
2. <i>Organization</i>	19-20%	16-18%	13-15%	0-12%
3. <i>Argumentation</i>	23-25%	20-22%	16-19%	0-15%
4. <i>Cohesion & Coherence</i>	19-20%	16-18%	13-15%	0-12%
5. <i>Language Conventions</i>	10%	8-9%	7%	0-6%
Total	91-100%	76-90%	61-75%	0-60%

Diagnostic results

The results in the five criteria considered in the rubric are expressed in Table 2. The Organization of the paper, which refers to the logical relationship between the main ideas and the secondary ones, was noted as the main strength.

Table 2. Results of the Five Criteria of Academic Writing Competence

Criteria	Mean	Level
1. Use and Management of the Language (Appropriate to the Scriptural Purpose)	15	Inadequate
2. Organization	16	Good
3. Argumentation	16	Improvable
4. Cohesion & Coherence	15	Improvable
5. Language Conventions	3	Improvable
Total percentage in the exam	66	Improvable

The average of Spelling Errors per teacher evaluated was 28 (*Standard Deviation* = 19.7). Considering that a Written Test of 800 words was requested, on average a spelling error was made for every 29 written words (which is approximately equivalent to two lines written in a computer document).

In the overall assessment of the writing test, the following results were presented: with an *Excellent* level there were 19 professors (4.0%); in level *Good* 70 teachers (14.8%); in level of *Improvable*, 232 teachers (49.0%); and in *Inadequate* 152 teachers were located (32.1%).

Of the three topics to be selected by teachers to develop their writing (1. *Main Challenge of Higher Secondary Education today in the Economic, Social and Political Context of the Globalized World*; 2. *Role of the Teacher in the Face of the Problems of Today's Society and of the Young People*; 3. *Institutional, Social and Teacher Implications of the Constitutional Requirement that all Young People Attend Higher Education*), most had a predilection for the first two, only a few worked with the third theme.

When dealing with the first two topics, the teachers focused on the problems experienced at the level and subsystem where they work, addressing regularly to the figure of the teacher as the main actor of his writing, opposed or ally to the figure of the student. Teachers tend to speak from their own perspective, based on the responsibility they feel when facing, with their students, the most immediate problems.

Most of the teachers who address these first two topics reached only one level of expository / descriptive writing; they made a contextualization and initial considerations about the situation that was presented at that time at the level of Higher Education, then wrote specifically about their subsystem and in some cases to the particular example of their own schools. After that, they listed the most frequent problems, either from the point of view of the teacher or the school in general: Student Sesertion, Use of Technologies and Social Networks, Early Pregnancy, Economic Situation (with Lack of Job Opportunities), Inattention of Parents, Lack of Teacher Preparation to face the Competency Approach, the Violence of Organized Crime (named common and not so pejorative as *Narco*) and the interrelationships between these problems.

The level of analysis of the problems addressed was low; most of the professors were limited to superficial exposure of these problems with some examples recovered, in the best of cases, from their own experience, although they regularly come from the collective imaginary (the preconceived ideas that are held, at a social level and in the teaching profession, about adolescents, the characteristics of the globalized world in which young people are strongly influenced, most of times in a perverse way). The writings that remained at this low level of analysis present affirmations and positions that are not supported, they lack the minimum Critical Apparatus.

The argumentative writing that managed to elaborate only a limited number of teachers raises not only a structure and organization of successful ideas (*Introduction, Development and Conclusion*), but also used argumentative resources as a tool to support their affirmations and positions. In addition to the Normative Theory, they used the Scientific Citation, recovering ideas from canonical authors of the various educational themes, emblematic authors of the Approach by Competences and others that were pertinent to their expositions. Another resource they used effectively was the statistical

data, which also strengthened their ideas and theoretical positions. With the combination of these elements they achieved the levels of excellence expected in the academic writing competition.

Although some teachers tried to use the resources of the Scientific Citation or the Statistical Data as reinforcement to sustain their theoretical positions, they did not incorporate information pertinent to the topic or the ideas presented; a few remained in non-academic writing, making use of colloquial, prejudiced or manichean expressions to speak or describe professional partners or laboral situations.

This information allowed us to propose, with examples coming from the reality that our teachers live, who often become the students of our Postgraduate Programs, a practical typology of the academic texts they write.

Thus, although in educational contexts it is usual to speak of the "Academic Writing", in reality there are few texts that define it broadly and describe in detail the characteristics that it should contain. In a more or less recent effort, Fernández and Bressia (2009) issued a document entitled *Definiciones y características de los principales tipos de texto*, where they described what academic writing should be in the University. They described Academic Writing as:

aquella que se produce en el ámbito universitario y científico. Comprende tanto los trabajos producidos por los alumnos universitarios (exámenes y textos de diversos géneros ya sea que funcionen como trabajos prácticos, evaluaciones, etcétera), así como también aquellos textos elaborados en la academia para la difusión del conocimiento científico. De este modo, el género académico se conforma de textos especializados que circulan en el ámbito científico y que, por lo tanto, guardan ciertas características comunes¹. (2009, p. 1).

As it can be noticed, the main characteristic of Academic Writing is its origin, the University one, but its definition becomes circular when delimiting that it is a text produced from the scope and the scientific perspective; definition that tells us in appearance a lot but when clarifying, it really does not provide more information.

The authors continue their article and mention three more specific characteristics: They speak of the *Pretension of Objectivity* that the Academic Writing must contain, of the *Argumentative Structure* and the *Intertextuality*, referring to it as the "presencia, relaciones y entramados que se tejen entre los textos"² (2009, p.3).

Other attempts to specify the characteristics of this type of writing were not more successful. This, as mentioned, led us to construct the following typology of the writings that are elaborated in the educational field by Teachers in Service:

Not Academic Writing: It does not make use of the verbal, conceptual and/or semantic resources that are typical of the communication codes of a Professional Association (Educational, for example), but it makes use mostly of everyday expressions and ambiguous or not well definable concepts. Example (*text originally written in Spanish*):

"... enseñaba valores que aún usted y yo disfrutamos por cumplir esas enseñanzas y que nos trae felicidad y nos hace ser mejores en nuestras vidas estos, esto es ser un maestro, quien posee todos los atributos que un ser humano puede tener, tal como humildad, paciencia, fe, esperanza, servicio, amor, caridad, diligencia, tenacidad, constancia y usted puede llegar a ser y es una oportunidad formar parte de ésta sociedad, de estos jóvenes que a gritos piden ayuda, usted puede. ¡Cambie es su tiempo!" (*sic*).

Professor M.A.

Academic Writing:

Expositive / Descriptive Writing: It makes a recount of situations, scenarios and subjects that only remain in an exhibition or description of these. Example:

"En un principio las personas que enseñaban, no tenían ningún título, pero sí eran personas letradas empíricamente o las que podrían alcanzar algún grado de estudio eran las que capacitaban a jóvenes o todo tipo de personas que quisieran

¹ ... that which occurs in the university and scientific field. It includes both works produced by university students (exams and texts of different genres, whether they work as practical works, evaluations, etc.), as well as those texts produced in the academy for the dissemination of scientific knowledge. In this way, the academic genre is made up of specialized texts that circulate in the scientific field and that, therefore, have certain common characteristics.

² ... presence, relationships and frameworks that are woven between the texts.

tener un aprendizaje sobre algun tema en especial o del tema que dominara la persona letrada. La problematica de la sociedad siempre ha existido y siempre existira; la pobreza, la ignorancia, etc. Esta problematica se ha tratado de eliminar mas sin en cambio no se ha logrado; es por eso que una persona estudiada hara que la sociedad donde se desenvuelve salga adelante y supere todas las adversidades del mundo actual. Es por eso que los docentes son una parte muy importante de la educación de los jovenes” (sic).

Professor V.

Reflexive Writing: In addition to exposing or describing situations, it has signs of reflecting on the situations that occur, intertwining them with possible meanings in the academic or social field of such events:

“Como dato histórico señalo el hecho de que los alumnos que obtienen mas bajo rendimiento escolar, corresponden a estas familias de clase social que se encuentran limitadas y marginadas económica y socialmente En este sentido, se puede percibir que la condición social esta relacionada con el rendimiento académico del alumno, condición en la cual el docente poco puede apostar” (sic).

Professor R.

Analytical Writing: Not only reflects on the situations and scenarios that are presented in their professional environment, but begins to analyze with some methodical consistency the meaning of these:

“Nuestro papel ante la situación actual de los jóvenes debe ser conciliador; es decir, trabajar en la tarea de asociar clara y llanamente los contenidos de la asignatura con el contexto inmediato del alumno, Digo ‘conciliador’ por la razón de que el alumno tiene un ‘pleito’ con las asignaturas y desde el inicio adopta una actitud de medición de fuerzas con el maestro. Entonces conciliar es provocar que el alumno y la asignatura vuelvan a relacionarse y aquí lo acepte por convicción propia.”

Professor M.A.

Argumentative Writing: There are analysis of situations and scenarios, contrasting this information with what the theory says about such phenomena and defining in a comprehensive and timely manner their concepts and constructs. In addition to making quote of the authors who have spoken about the phenomena that it deals with, it makes use of Empirical, Numerical and Statistical data, and triangulates them with the knowledge of their own personal and professional experience:

“El maestro es, por tanto, solo un apoyo en los procesos de construcción del conocimiento, en el desarrollo de la personalidad, en el ejercicio y desarrollo de las libertades, derechos y obligaciones que como ciudadanos en México y el mundo para con los demás. En este contexto, el profesor debe tener un profundo amor por su profesión y un profundo respeto por los estadios de desarrollo genético de las personas (Piaget, 1968) para asegurar una inserción plena de cada persona en el mundo contemporáneo. Es por tanto, necesario abandonar las posiciones extremas; el docente no es un mesías y por sí mismo no va a reorientar el rumbo del desarrollo de nuestra sociedad...” (sic).

Professor J.I.

Essay Writing: In addition to having the characteristics of Argumentative Writing and adhering to the general approach of its structure, it raises a hypothesis or personal theoretical position of the author, which comes not as the occurrence of a moment, but of a deep reflection on the phenomenon treated from a vision and preparation of a certain intellectual maturity that allows him to widely discuss concepts and ideas related to it:

“Ante los nuevos desafíos, el rol del docente se ha multiplicado para atender los grandes problemas sociales, por lo que, hoy ser un ejemplo como ser humano importa más que antes, ser modelo en la profesión cautivará a los alumnos, mostrar las competencias y dominarlas atraerá su atención y de esa manera pasar del verbo al sustantivo. Coincido con Vigotsky cuando señala que ‘el aprendizaje es una construcción social, nace en la palabra, potencia la zona de desarrollo próximo y se interioriza, para finalmente crear nuevo conocimiento’” (sic).

Professor R.

Writings that we commonly find: Expository / descriptive texts that mention ideas of certain authors or texts but do not discuss or interweave the ideas of the author or the empirical situations faced by the author:

“La educación básica, en sus tres niveles, plantea un trayecto formativo congruente para desarrollar competencias y que, al concluirla, los estudiantes sean capaces de resolver eficaz y creativamente los problemas cotidianos que enfrenten, por lo que promueve una diversidad de oportunidades de aprendizaje que se articulan y distribuyen a lo largo del preescolar, la primaria y la secundaria, y que se reflejan en el mapa curricular.” Plan de estudios p. 44

El mapa curricular de la educación básica establecido en el 2011 se encuentra dividido en 4 campos de formación que nos ofrecen la oportunidad de visualizar la articulación en la que se encuentra fundamentada su creación.

Mi tema de investigación pertenece al campo de formación Lenguaje y Comunicación el cual abarca lo relativo al Campo Formativo del mismo nombre...” (sic).

Professor C.

Contextual Description for the Didactical Intervention

Since 2004 and 2006, several Educational, Undergraduate and Postgraduate Programs were started at the Centro de Actualización del Magisterio. These programs are aimed at Teachers in Training and Teachers in Service, they focus on expanding and deepening knowledge and skills related to reflective practice and effective teaching intervention, based on Diagnostic Research that leads to the design, application and evaluation of Teaching Strategies oriented to the improvement of the learning of their students.

As mentioned, one of the main shortcomings faced by students in Postgraduate Programs is the weak ability to perform Reflexive-Analytical Readings and the scarce scriptural practice that, in very few cases, as we have seen, reaches the argumentative level or essay. In order to understand more clearly this situation, having as antecedent the Diagnosis with Teachers in Service, previously exposed, and having a basis for the design and application of a didactic intervention, we resorted to the information provided through an instrument applied to new students of a Postgraduate Program of this Institution during the 2016-2017 School Year. This was a questionnaire for two Reading Processes and a Rubric for the Evaluation of an Argumentative Academic Paper, and it was applied to 13 students. In the case of Reading, the processes were: for Continuous¹ and Discontinuous² texts. In the case of Writing, three basic aspects were evaluated: *Language, Argumentation & Cohesion*. Both instruments were designed by a faculty member made up of the same teachers who are in charge of School Subjects of the Postgraduate Programs, based on the points that PISA points out for the diagnosis of reading and writing skills.

For the Three Aspects (one of Writing and the two mentioned of Reading) a total average of 52.92 points out of a possible 100 was obtained. In the case of Reading, the final total average of the questionnaire was 14.04 points out of 36 possible for Continuous Texts, and 12.62 points out of 36 possible for Discontinuous Texts.

Facing this type of results has clearly represented a constant challenge for our group of teachers since the Reflexive-Analytical Reading and Writing are essential for the permanent tasks of the various activities of the subjects of educational programs for training, professionalization and teacher update, but above all, for the realization, in its various levels of advancement and concretion, of the didactic intervention proposals that are required to achieve the exit profile of each of these Educational Programs.

Conceptual Referents: Social and Academic Importance of Argumentation

As we progress through the process of problematization and reflect on our own practice, the authors of this Paper begin to review some Theoretical Concepts that will broaden the vision about possible causes and implications of the findings that were obtained. Thus, to conceptualize what is Argumentation we refer to what Tomás Miranda mentions in his book *El juego de la argumentación* (cited in SEP, 2012), is a game, a practice of language subject to rules that occur in a context communicative and through which individuals intend to give reason to others or to ourselves of some of our beliefs, opinions or actions. That is, it is the way we interact. In this sense, it can be said that arguing is the expression of a reasoning whose

¹ Texts that present the information in a sequenced and progressive way.

² Those in which the information is presented organized but not necessarily sequenced in a progressive way and that for its understanding requires the use of non-linear reading strategies that favor the search for interpretation of information in a more global and interrelated way (Sanz Moreno, 2005).

purpose is to influence the thinking and actions of other people, with the purpose of persuading, convincing or demonstrating some idea.

In everyday life, we are familiar with contact with a significant diversity of texts. The communicative function of these is Appellative or Persuasive. In this way, argumentation is understood as a discursive strategy that has as its purpose: "provocar o lograr adhesión por parte de un auditorio (en el caso de un discurso oral) o de los lectores (si el discurso se presenta de manera escrita) a la tesis, hipótesis o postura que se presenta"¹ (Centro de Investigación y desarrollo de contenidos, medios y tecnología educativa, n.d., n.p.).

On the academic field, says Anthony Weston (2013), giving arguments means offering a series of reasons or evidence to support a conclusion or affirmation. In the Contemporary World where it is naturalized, due to the diversity and ease of accessing diverse sources of information, particularly electronic ones, it is necessary that at least in the Academic Area such tendencies should not be followed. The Scientific Method involves venturing, based on experience or theory, to test results and assess actions and interventions, only then will an idea or position of thought have enough importance. This way of building knowledge is the most effective in any area of study, even in Behavioral Sciences such as Education.

The amount of studies, research and essays that we find about the Argumentative Oral and Written Competences in Higher School Studies is considerable. In a detailed but not exhaustive, and of course, conclusive, tracking in the main search engines, we could find about fifty studies covering the last ten years in Latin America, of these approximately 20 percent are from Mexican Educational Institutions. But, when trying to locate this type of work in Teacher Training Schools, the number was reduced considerably, very few are the jobs -three- that focus on this subject. Within these studies the present deficiencies and some strategies, almost always coincident, are approached to improve these competences, although a constant variation is the lack of definition of what we would have to understand by *Essay Writing*; likewise, a Typology of the Writings is not clearly and coincidentally stated, in order to have reference or point of contrast with the one presented here, which the Theoretical-Practical texts produced in European and North American Universities do with regular consistency.

Methodology

The approach for the Didactic Intervention presented here was to base the information on the diagnosis already described, and in a second moment, to carry out an exercise based on reflective teaching practice, limited in the steps of Action Research. This can be considered as the Methodological Framework of Work for the Intervention, although some authors, such as McKernan (1999), evade the term method. He prefers to talk about Action Research as:

una ideología que nos enseña que los profesionales en ejercicio pueden ser tanto productores como consumidores de investigación del *curriculum*; es una práctica en la que no se hacen distinciones entre la práctica que se está investigando y el proceso de investigarla. Es decir, enseñar e investigar en la enseñanza no constituyen dos actividades distintas. El propósito último de la investigación es comprender; y comprender es la base de la acción para la mejora.² (1999, p. 23).

Thus, Action Research starts from a process of reflection by which a professional in practice carries out a study to clearly define the problem, to specify an Action Plan, which includes an examination of Hypotheses by the application of the action to the problem, an Evaluation is undertaken and the effectiveness of the action taken is established (McKernan, 1999).

From this first approach of framing the Didactic Intervention in an Action Research process, linked to the initial questions and to a first simple and extended register analysis exercise, carried out in the teaching practice of one of the authors of this research, the enunciation emerged of a Central Question, guide of the work to be done:

What Didactic Strategies can I apply to favor the competences for the Academic Writing of undergraduate and postgraduate students of an Educational Institution for Teachers in Training or in Service?

¹ ... induce or achieve adhesion by an audience (in the case of an oral speech) or by readers (if the speech is presented in writing) to the thesis, hypothesis or position presented.

² ... an ideology that teaches us that practicing professionals can be both producers and consumers of curriculum research; it is a practice in which no distinction is made between the practice being investigated and the process of investigating it. That is, teaching and researching in education do not constitute two distinct activities. The ultimate purpose of the investigation is to understand; and understanding is the basis of action for improvement.

In the same way, a Central Objective was established:

Apply a series of Teaching Strategies that favor the Academic Writing skills of undergraduate and graduate students of an Educational Institution for Teachers in Training or in Service.

And, anticipating what kind of Didactic Strategies could fulfill the proposed in the general approach of the Didactic Intervention, the following hypothesis was stated:

The strategies of Debate and of Academic Writing Workshop, worked from the frame of the Didactic Sequences, help to strengthen the Academic Writing skills of Undergraduate and Postgraduate Students of an Educational Institution for Teachers in Training or in Service.

Design and Application of the Didactic Intervention Process

In addition to the information gathered from the instruments applied to new students to a Graduate Program and the results already described, and from the one provided by the Analysis of the own Teaching Practice (from 2 Audiovisual Recordings of class taught by one of the teachers authors of this paper, with their respective Transcriptions, Codifications and Data Analysis), worked with various instruments for the collection of empirical information described below.

The students with which the Observation of the Practice and the Didactic Intervention was carried out, with application of previous and subsequent tests, were 11 students (of the 13 who participated in the diagnosis already described) through the first and second semester of a Postgraduate Program in the 2016-2017 School Year; approximately 50% of them with Teacher Training and between 25 and 54 years old.

As Test Prior to the Didactic Intervention (Pre-Test), the students' Academic Writings prepared during class were reviewed; the same Rubric already detailed in the Diagnostic Process was applied in five aspects of Academic Writing, which was already exposed in the first part of this work and which:

- ***Use and Management of Language (Appropriate to the Scriptural Purpose).***
- ***Organization.***
- ***Argumentation.***
- ***Cohesion & Coherence.***
- ***Language Conventions.***

The results obtained in the Test Prior to the Didactic Intervention are presented in the following table:

Table 3. *Results of the Five Criteria in the Pre-Intervention Test for Academic Writings*

Criteria	Mean	Level
1. <i>Use and Management of Language (Appropriate to the Scriptural Purpose)</i>	20 (de 25)	Good
2. <i>Organization</i>	16 (de 20)	Good
3. <i>Argumentation</i>	16 (de 25)	Improvable
4. <i>Cohesion & Coherence</i>	15 (de 20)	Improvable
5. <i>Language Conventions</i>	3 (de 10)	Inadequate
Total Percentage	70	Improvable

Regarding the review of the Teaching Practice, as already mentioned, two recordings were made, one with the Group Object of Intervention and another one with a Group at the Undergraduate Level, as a Complement and Contrast Group, of which Transcription, Coding and Segmentation were carried out, where six types of Oral Interventions of the Teacher were detected:

- a) Indication about the development of Didactic Activities;

b) Verbal Indication of the Teacher to the Students, subdivided into: 1. Invitation to participate; 2. Questioning the Students; 3. Agreement on an idea, summary or conclusion about what was exposed in class; 4. Clarification about an idea or concept; and,

c) Teacher's Oral Presentation: a Complementary Comment about the exposed or the activity that is being carried out.

The one that presented the most frequency was b) Verbal Indication of the Teacher to the Student, Category 4. Clarification about an idea or concept, and secondly the same type of indication, b), but in category 2: Questioning the Students.

In the same way, there were eight types of Oral Intervention categories for Students' Oral Participation:

a) Student's Oral Presentation, subdivided into: 1. General Exhibition; 2. Affirmation or Clarification of an idea; 3. Doubt or Question;

b) Student's Oral Presentation: a Complementary Comment about the exposed or the activity that is being carried out;

c) Conceptual Theoretical Elaboration of the Student based on what was discussed or exposed in the classroom; and,

d) Oral Presentation of the Student to argue an idea, subdivided by Types of Argumentation: 1. From Own or Close Experience; 2. From Statistical or Numerical Data; 3. Scientific Quote.

The most frequent, by far, was a) Student Oral Presentation, category 1: General Exhibition derived from a read text. As for the Oral Presentation to Argue Ideas were only two the number of interventions, without being precisely a Scientific Quote or use of Data, but Exemplifications from Own Experience.

Didactic Intervention

Based on these results, a Didactic Intervention was designed and implemented through October 2016 and February 2017, during 8 sessions on four weekends (Saturdays from 8:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. and Sundays from 8:00 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.), which correspond to a regular class of the Graduate Program. From what was analyzed in the Audiovisual Recordings of the own Teaching Practice, it was found that it is extremely important to strengthen Written Argumentation from the same practice of Oral Argumentation and Analytical Reading, since the Reading-Writing relationship turns out to be irreducible; thus, the authors of this Paper decided to work during the Didactic Intervention based on these aspects. For the Written Argumentation, a self-construction strategy called "Academic Writing Workshop" was developed, in conjunction with the ideas of Doris María Parra Pineda (2003), and for the Oral Argumentation the "Debate Strategy" based on the *Estrategias de enseñanza-aprendizaje. Docencia universitaria basada en competencias*¹, from Pimienta (2012), as well as a Practical Guide for the Analysis of Academic Texts of own construction.

Analysis and Discussion of Results

There were three Debates that were also recorded in Audiovisual Recordings, with prepared activities guided by the teacher, which included Exercises of Analytical Reading of Theoretical Texts related to the proposed topics. Of the Oral Participation of the Teacher, there were clear improvements in the aspect a) Indication about the development of Didactic Activities; in b) Verbal Indication of the Teacher to the Students there were minor improvements in categories 1. Invitation to participate; 2. Questioning the Students; 4. Clarification about an idea or concept. In the aspect c) Teacher's Oral Presentation: a Complementary Comment about the exposed or the activity that is being carried out, there was no improvement, the behavior was similar to that seen in the Audiovisual Recording Exercises prior to the Didactic Intervention.

In the categories corresponding to the aspect a) Student's Oral Participation, visible improvements were presented in the following: In the categories 2. Affirmation or Clarification of an idea, and 3. Doubt or Question; of this same aspect, in category 1. General Exhibition, there was also a considerable improvement in student participation, although this would be entirely attributable to the nature of the Didactic Strategy used. The aspect b) Student's Oral Presentation: a Complementary Comment about the exposed or the activity that is being carried out, as for the teacher, had similar behavior in the students than in the previous results. In the two aspects where there was greater improvement was in those that are essential for the intervention undertaken, the first of these was the c) Conceptual Theoretical Elaboration of the Student based on what was discussed or exposed in the classroom, where the students had moments when they began to build

¹ Strategies of Teaching-Learning. University Teaching Based on Competencies

not only from the Theoretical or Empirical Referents involved, but also in the same discussion that was held with the Pro and Con Positions. The other aspect with a high degree of improvement was d) Oral Presentation of the Student to argue an idea, where there were advances in two categories according to the type of argumentation: 1. From Own or Close Experience, and 3. Scientific Quote; subcategory 2. From Statistical or Numerical Data, behaved almost similar to that presented in the previous results.

Regarding Academic Writing, Argumentative Papers were made for the students at the end of the 8 sessions, specifying that they should aim to achieve the Structure of an Essay Writing (ten pages on average with a common theme related to the purposes of the class in which the process of Didactic Intervention was carried out) and the same Rubric previously described was used. The Academic Writing Workshop consisted in seeing writing as a process of constant Reading and Analysis of Academic Texts, and gradual writing in the process of constant Advancement-Revision. At the beginning of the class the premises and characteristics of the Essay Paper were raised and each sesión at least one student presented individual advances with group reading and comments by it partners and the teacher.

The results in the Five Criteria considered in this rubric are shown in table 4. There is a percentage improvement in the five criteria.

Table 4. Results of the Five Criteria to evaluate Final Papers

Criteria	Mean	Level
1. Use and Management of Language (Appropriate to the Scriptural Purpose)	22 (de 25)	Good
2. Organization	19 (de 20)	Good
3. Argumentation	18 (de 25)	Improvable
4. Cohesion & Coherence	16 (de 20)	Improvable
5. Language Conventions	5 (de 10)	Inadequate
Total Percentage	70	Good

The first criterion rose on the mean of 20 to 22, two percentage points that even in such a small group could be considered representative of improvement. The second criterion, *Organization*, went from 16 to 19 percentage points. *Argumentation* increased equal two percentage points from 16 to 18. *Cohesion & Coherence* rose only one percentage point from 15 to 16 and, finally, the criterion number five, *Language Conventions*, went from 3 to 5 percentage points.

Conclusion

Professors of Training Teachers or Teachers in Service Schools, we have tried to take graduate students from those first levels of Expository / Descriptive Writing to the Essay Writing without worrying about passing them through the intermediate levels of scriptural scope, being essential to put particular attention to the Argumentative Character that the writings would have to reach, since this is the one that undoubtedly would grant a desirable Analytical Level so that a writing can be considered as Academic, that is to say: that writing that can reach the sufficient merits to engage in serious discussions about any area of knowledge, with valid proposals for Improvement and Innovation.

The point in which we considere is necessary to influence, is to work on *How to achieve that students can reach acceptable levels in their Analytical Reading, Oral Expression and Academic Writing*: that is, move from the Descriptive / Expository to the Argumentative. The Strategies used to strengthen the Oral and Written Arguments (it was clear to us that the first of these has to be worked on in order to make the second more viable), the Analytical Reading, the Debate Strategy and the Academic Writing Workshop, presented favorable results for the improvement of Communicative Competences, in particular the one that was the object of the research: the Argumentative Academic Scriptural, based on Analytical Reading. The Academic Writing Workshop was adequate in its dynamics for what the Methodology of Action Research requires,

since we consider them as constant cycles of Didactic Intervention, with adjustments to the Strategy between one session and another.

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