Elaboration of the Competence Profile of the Residential Child/Youth Care Worker

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Abstract

This paper describes the steps used to develop a professional competence profile which allows a residential child/youth care worker to perform his or her tasks in an efficient, effective and confident way. Among the strategic and specific competencies, 11 were selected which explain a high percentage of performance (empathy, planning, resistance to stress, responsibility, problem solving, flexibility, collaboration, teamwork, commitment, expertise and communication skills). Once the list of competencies has been established, the behaviors that reflect them are determined and a questionnaire to evaluate the candidates for the position is elaborated.

Index terms— competencies, work behaviours, professional profile, child care worker, youth care worker.

1 Introduction

he job exigencies profile or professional profile has been established as a resource or essential and basic tool for the management of human resources as its specifications must generate the decisions to be taken in the selection process, performance evaluation, training, promotion and / or layoff policies.

Competencies are defined "as a set of observable behaviours that are causally related to a good or excellent performance in a particular job and in a particular organization" (Flanagan, 1954). In this definition, observable behaviors become important, by which the task or job becomes successful, and they are grouped by similarity in the construct called competence. That is to say, it is not competence by itself -the name-, but the behaviours that constitute it. (Pereda and Berrocal Sanz, 2003). Another important aspect of this definition is that each organization is unique and each work different (Pereda et al., 2003), as the competences and behaviours associated with them will be different in each case. This involves a difficulty because generic profiles or standardized instruments cannot be used.

While, for the profiles requirement of posts until relatively recently (and even today) , the approach used was based on the traits (psychometric profile), today this scheme has been surpassed, being the competence profile the one used due to its operativity and effectiveness. "Nevertheless, its implementation has not been without controversy. Facing the enthusiasm of its advocates, are placed those who question its empirical support, positive results, advantages and even its conceptual bases" (García-Saiz, 2011, p.473). Basoredo (2011) states in his research that competence is a much debated topic and it has led to countless interpretations for over 30 years.

The benefits of this methodology and its widespread application in the field of human resources are explained by the competence approach that establishes a set of observable behaviours that enable effective and efficient performance and are always tied down to a structure, a strategy and an organizational culture in a particular post. This facilitates the orientation of behaviours that seek efficiency, effectiveness and confidence of the people within the organization ??Pereda, Berrocal and Lopez -Quero, 2002).

Meanwhile, in the trait approach, it starts from the idea that people have fixed underlying characteristics (traits) that can hardly be changed. (...). There are researches, such as McClelland (1973), concluding that the

traditional aptitude or personality tests, as well as titles and academic merits, are not the best predictors of job performance or success in life **??**Pereda et al., 2002, p.46). This difference can be observed by comparing the "behavioral iceberg" of one or another approach (see Figure **??**).

In order to delimit the concept that designates the professional of the social education (subject to analysis of our study), it is appropriate to highlight the fact that there are many and varied names for the same in Europe. While in the countries of Latin tradition the literal translation would be Social Educator, in Ireland, for example, the term used is the Social Care Worker. In the UK, meanwhile, it such a profession does not exist, including these workers in the area called Social Work and usually associated with terms such as youth worker, residential care worker, community worker and so on (Calderón, 2013). In the present study, the term used will be that of the social educator or social care worker, to refer to professional in general, and the residential care worker or youth worker, to refer to the social educator working with adolescents and children in care or juvenile facilities.

The reason to choose the social educator or social care worker as the subject for the elaboration of the competence profile is justified by its recent introduction as higher education in Spain. This issue requires research to specify training needs appropriated to the tasks and functions of the Social Care Worker as a professional in their different fields of application (Ortega, et al. 2006). In addition to this, the importance of this profession is growing in most of the European Union states where the situation has been regulated or is in the process of being (Calderón, 2013).

Other authors have conducted researches in accordance with our line of work. One example is Muñoz-Galiano's survey **??**2008), which seeks to identify the competences necessary for excellent performance of social educator working in residencies for the elderly. Meanwhile, Ortega et al. (2006) performed a research in the community of Castilla y León (Spain) in order to develop a coherent plan of studies with the real demands of the professional profile.

Considering the above, the aim of this research has been to implement a competency profile of the social care worker of juvenile facilities in the Centro Asistencial de Melilla (Care Center of Melilla, Spain), given its long history (almost 100 years old) and the fact that it includes 3 areas of work (adolescents, children and infants) with a large staff.

The procedure reported by Pereda, Berrocal and Alonso (2001) has been followed to develop the profile. Most critical steps, along the statistical treatment of results, have been the collecting data on strategic competencies and specific competencies of the job. (See Figure 2)

2   Method a) Participants

Data collection was attended by 4 members of the Strategic Management (manager, head of economic resources, director of one of the juvenile facilities and union representative) and 10 social educators (62.5% of the staff from the building of welcomed adolescents).

3   b) Procedure

Individual meetings took place with the manager, the head of economic resources, one of the directors of one of the juvenile facilities and an union representative, as well as educators, who were asked to choose a number of competencies from a list with their definitions which, in its discretion, were the most important (for the values of the company, in the case of strategic competencies, or to carry out their work, in specific ones). Subsequently, they were asked to rank their chosen ones according to the importance.

Once the selection and ranking of competencies was finished, a new task was to choose and order, using another questionnaire, the behaviours III.

4   Results

5   a) Selected Strategic competencies

From the data provided by the members of the strategic direction and following the statistical processing proposed by Pereda et al. (2001), the results shown in Table 1 are obtained. Since the first 9 competencies explain a high percentage of performance (87.71%), these will be taken as relevant and the rest as important or recommended. In a process similar to the above, educators (10) chose the specific competencies to perform their job effectively, efficiency, with confidence and satisfaction. From the data provided on the 10 questionnaires, the results of Table 2 are released. In this case, the first 9 competencies are selected, as they explain a high percentage of performance (91.37%). The following step was to select the behaviours associated with the chosen strategic and specific skills (11). The selection was made taking into account the data provided by the strategic direction and/or the educators (according to the data of the second questionnaires). The following behaviours were selected (Table 3). IV.

6   Discussion and Conclusions

The procedure was used to develop a list of behaviours that reflect the skills that both management and the workers themselves consider essential to carry out its work with effectiveness, efficiency, confidence and satisfaction. These behaviours are basic to human resource management and decision-making such as selection,

performance appraisal, training planning or development of professional careers. They must be carried out based on the evaluation of the degree of acquisition of these behaviors or competencies. This way, the elaborated professional profile can be the basis for the preparation of questionnaires or as a guide to interviews of competencies.

In this paper a phenomenon has appeared that is not uncommon in organizational practice. This is a partial mismatch between the strategic and specific competencies (only 54.54 % of the strategic competencies are among the specific ones), which means that the worker does not know or endorse the corporate values.

One of the issues of importance in any company is that competencies rated as essential by the entity, i.e., strategic competencies, those that reflect the goals and values of the organization, will be assimilated by workers finally performing the various tasks. It is therefore essential that the downward vertical communication is effective enough to convey these values from the top to the base (see Figure 3), as well as the values that the organization and its representatives want to convey are not merely theoretical ideas that do not match, or even contradict, with the actions taken and the rules set. This was the case of ENRON company and its chairman Ken Lay, in which there was a lack of consistency between the values and the objectives that the company had as corporate values (respect, integrity, communication, excellence...) and actual (benefit) (Carol and Plans, 2012).

In the absence of agreement between the strategic and specific values found, it is proposed, as an improvement measure, a survey and change in the transmission of these values so that the workers know and endorse them observing that the values said to be essential are implemented, valued and enforced.

A second measure would be the inclusion of these strategic competencies among the requirements in the selection of staff, as well as appropriate training to acquire those which the staff lack.

7   Organization.

8   Strategic values

9   Perceived values

The results of this study show data similar to those reflected in other research, such as the work of Muñoz Galiano (2008) who in his thesis, based on the opinion of those who live in residencies of the elderly, finds as most significant competencies to perform the practice of the social care worker: the ability to develop relationships, communicate and actively listen and discover the human, social and cultural potential (ordered by frequency). Regarding the data of our study, some of the significant competencies included within the profile of the residential care worker in the Care Center Melilla are: collaboration, teamwork, empathy and communication and they may be included in the categories of interpersonal relationships and communication and active listening. The appearance in our work of other additional competencies to those found by Muñoz-Galiano may be due to two differences between the studies. The first one is the difference in the scope of work of educators (the elderly/children). The second one is the different sources of selection competencies (in our case, the company and the professional and, in the case of Muñoz-Galiano, the customers).

Other studies, such as Ortega et al (2006), consider the following skills needed to perform the work of the social educator: problem solving, interpersonal skills, teamwork, knowledge of the main types of maladjustment and lines of action on them, and knowledge of the design and use of resources and educational intervention strategies, among others. All these skills match, although some of them are collected with different names, those included in our profile.

Considering the selection of strategic and specific competencies and supported by similar results found in previous studies, a questionnaire has been developed with the behaviours that should be included as a professional profile of this job (see Appendix).

From the results obtained in this study we can conclude that it provides a methodological tool with sufficient guarantees to serve as a guide for assessing the suitability of candidates for the post of social care worker in the field studied.

Finally, it should be noted the need of future similar researches to provide instruments scientifically developed to carry out an eminently practical and necessary task as it is the preparation of professional profiles. [1]

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[1]Elaboration of the Competence Profile of the Residential Child/Youth Care Worker
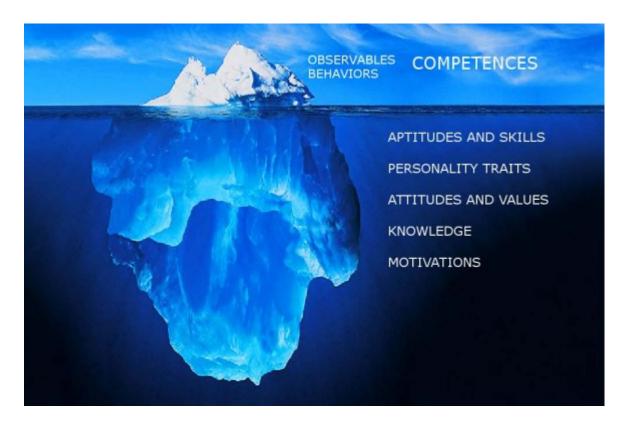
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Figure 1: Figure 2 :

Figure 2:

1

Competencies	Order	Value (%)	Accumulated Value (%)
Teamwork	1	27,05	27.05
Commitment	2	14,75	41.8
Responsibility	3	13,11	54.91
Expertise	4	9,84	64.75
Planning / organization	4	9,84	74.59
Communication	5	6,56	81.15
Collaboration	5	6,56	87.71
Resistance to stress	6	4,10	91.81
Customer orientation	6	4,10	95.91
Loyalty	7	3,28	99.19
Learning	8	0,82	100.01

b) Selected Specific competencies

Figure 3: Table 1 :

2

Competencies	Order	Value (%)	Accumulated Value (%)
Empathy	1	28,426	28.42
Planning	2	16,920	45.34
Resistance to stress	3	10,998	56.34
Responsibility	4	7,614	63.95
Problem solving	5	6,091	70.05
Flexibility	6	5,415	75.46
Collaboration	6	5,415	80.88
Teamwork	6	5,415	86.29
Commitment	7	5,076	91.37
Excellence	8	3,046	94.41
Decision	9	1,692	96.10
Influence	10	0,846	96.95
Communication	10	0,846	97.80
Development of people	10	0,846	98.64
Leadership	11	0,508	99.15
Continuous improvement	11	0,508	99.66
Expertise	12	0,169	99.83
Negotiation	12	0,169	100.00

[Note: c) Selection of the behaviours associated tocompetencies.]

Figure 4: Table 2 :

3

Order	Accumulated Value (%)

Figure 5: Table 3 :

.1 Appendix

Cuestionario de comportamientos del perfil profesional del educador social en centros de acogida.

.2 Trabajo En Equipo SI/NO

Insistir en la necesidad de que los empleados trabajen juntos y colaboren para solucionar las dificultades del trabajo Intentar llegar a acuerdos en los temas de trabajo Acentuar la necesidad de mantener una actitud de equipo ante los problemas Compromiso Desempeña sus actividades invirtiendo el tiempo y la energía necesarios para conseguir los objetivos de la organización. Respeta reglas y procedimientos vigentes de manera correcta y objetiva.

Defiende las decisiones tomadas aunque personalmente no las suscriba completamente. Se comporta de acuerdo con los valores y expectativas de la organización.

.3 Responsabilidad

Definir claramente la primacía del bien colectivo sobre los intereses particulares.

Responsabilizarse del trabajo, comprometiéndose con las funciones de su área de actividad sin necesitar una supervisión directa continua. Cumplir los compromisos adquiridos.

Conocimientos Técnicos Conocer detalladamente las técnicas más adecuadas en su trabajo.

Tener experiencia en el uso de las técnicas más adecuadas en su trabajo.

Entender cómo se llevan a cabo los procesos de trabajo.

.4 Planificación

Identificar y desarrollar los métodos adecuados para la consecución de los objetivos del equipo o del departamento y los de la empresa Prever los recursos (técnicos, humanos y económicos) necesarios para alcanzar los objetivos en los plazos fijados Identificar los factores internos y externos, que puedes afectar a la consecución de objetivos Establecer objetivos ambiciosos, pero realistas, para su equipo o departamento Comunicación Contrastar y verificar las informaciones recogidas. Hablar con compañeros para recibir y/o darles información e instrucciones. Hablar con superiores para recibir y/o proporcionarles información. Comprobar que el interlocutor ha comprendido lo que dice y las consecuencias del mensaje. Colaboración

Insistir en la necesidad de cooperación entre todos los compañeros.

Ayudar a resolver conflictos y desacuerdos explorando las diferencias e identificando los puntos comunes.

Mostrar reconocimiento y valorar las opiniones e ideas de otros.

.5 Empatía

Escucha atentamente a los demás cuando acuden a él o a ella Comprende los sentimientos de una persona en un momento dado Percibe los estados de ánimo de los demás Resistencia A La Tensión Mantener un enfoque lógico y controlado en situaciones problemáticas conflictivas que exigen una acción rápida y precisa. Mantener un criterio, o una decisión, a pesar de las presiones existentes, a no ser que existan razones que justifiquen el cambio. Permanecer amable y tranquilo cuando los demás expresan desacuerdo u oposición ante las propias ideas u opiniones. No implicarse emocionalmente en situaciones conflictivas.

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