

WHAT METHODOLOGICAL PARADIGM GUIDED THE WORK OF TEACHERS
IN THE CLASSROOM? AN EXPLORATORY STUDY IN HIGHER EDUCATION

*QUAL PARADIGMA METODOLÓGICO ORIENTA O TRABALHO DOS
PROFESSORES EM SALA DE AULA? UM ESTUDO EXPLORATÓRIO NO ENSINO
SUPERIOR*

*¿QUÉ PARADIGMA METODOLÓGICO ORIENTA EL TRABAJO DEL
PROFESORADO EN EL AULA? UN ESTUDIO EXPLORATORIO EN LA ENSEÑANZA
SUPERIOR*



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ABSTRACT: This paper aims to show to what extent a group of professors from the Faculty of Philosophy, Letters, and Educational Sciences of a public University of Ecuador have integrated the methodological change in their discourse as a teacher about what they do in the classroom. For this, a qualitative study was carried out, where the communicative story was used as an instrument with phrases used by 25 university professors collected and, then, an analysis of the content was realized, according to the established procedure by Pérez (2002). The sentences were classified into six categories of the teaching paradigm and six categories of the learning paradigm. The results indicate that most teachers used expressions of the learning paradigm. However, specific research with direct observation is necessary to contrast to what extent the changes have become a reality in classroom practice.

KEYWORDS: Higher level Education. Communicative story. Teaching-Learning paradigm. Qualitative analysis. Methodological change.

RESUMO: O objetivo deste artigo é conhecer até que ponto um grupo de professores da Faculdade de Filosofia, Letras e Ciências da Educação de uma Universidade Pública do Equador, integrou a mudança metodológica no seu discurso como professor durante a prática da sala de aula. Para tal, foi realizado um estudo qualitativo, utilizando a história comunicativa como instrumento de investigação, a partir do qual foram examinadas as respostas de 25 professores universitários. Se realizou um análises de conteúdo, de acordo com as orientações de Pérez (2002), sendo classificadas 6 categorias para o paradigma de ensino e 6 categorias para o paradigma de aprendizagem. Os resultados sugerem que a maioria dos professores usou expressões do paradigma de aprendizagem. No entanto, é necessária uma investigação específica com observação direta para especificar até que ponto as alterações se tornaram uma realidade na prática em sala de aula.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Ensino Superior. História comunicativa. Pessoal docente. Paradigma de Ensino-aprendizagem. Mudança metodológica.

RESUMEN: El objetivo de este artículo es dar a conocer hasta qué punto un grupo de profesores de la Facultad de Filosofía, Letras y Ciencias de la Educación de una Universidad pública de Ecuador, ha integrado el cambio paradigmático en su discurso como docente a partir de lo que hace en el aula. Para ello, se llevó a cabo un estudio de carácter cualitativo, donde se utiliza el relato comunicativo como instrumento, con el que se recogieron frases utilizadas por los 25 profesores universitarios y, a continuación, se realizó un análisis del contenido, según el procedimiento establecido por Pérez (2002), clasificando las frases en 6 categorías del paradigma de enseñanza y 6 categorías del paradigma de aprendizaje. Los resultados apuntan a que la mayoría de los profesores empleaban expresiones del paradigma de aprendizaje. Sin embargo, es necesario realizar investigaciones específicas, con observación directa, para contrastar hasta qué punto los cambios han pasado a ser una realidad en la práctica docente.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Enseñanza Superior. Relato comunicativo. Análisis cualitativo. Paradigma Enseñanza-Aprendizaje. Cambio metodológico.

Introduction

For at least two decades, the current society has been immersed in the process of readjustment, where the industrial model gives way to a knowledge-based society marked by globalization and the accelerated development of ICT. This process, which education sees as both a challenge and an opportunity - to change its goals and teaching methods - favors a step toward a more humane and inclusive society. This represents a paradigm shift that the Latin American University has entered thanks to the Tuning ALEC project (BENEITONE *et al.*, 2007). An institutional framework that has led to the harmonization of Latin American and European universities and the incorporation of competencies into curricula, as they constitute the backbone that supports the curriculum, teaching, learning, and assessment based on a quality reference, providing principles, indicators, and tools for such purposes (TOBÓN, 2006). This model promotes a paradigm shift from a teaching-focused approach to a learning-focused approach, where the concept of science is more open, the curriculum becomes flexible, and the student is at the center of the teaching-learning process, while the teacher acts as a mediator and guide, requiring teacher training in this sense, which favors student learning processes (BLANCHARD; MUZÁS, 2018).

This teaching model favors the development of critical, creative, and innovative students. It positions research and reflection with others as the natural path to contribute to society (SILVA; MATURANA, 2017; ZABALZA, 2007). In this way, we would ensure that traditional Banking Education, as Freire called it, is relegated to the past (FREIRE, 1972).

Discussing teaching at the University today means facing the need for a methodological paradigm shift driven by the competency-based educational model. However, today's prevailing teaching model is knowledge transmission, which places the teacher and their knowledge at the center of the teaching process to administer knowledge while disregarding the students and the management of their learning (SAIZ *et al.*, 2020).

On the other hand, the learning paradigm places the student at the center of the teaching-learning process (they are the main actor). This new student protagonism is reflected in the University through ECTS credits, which measure students' autonomous workload, thus fostering their autonomy and responsibility. According to Fidalgo (2011), this paradigm takes into account different factors to make it a reality, including student participation in the learning process, adapting teachers and the resources they use to enhance student learning, continuous and formative assessment, and the evaluation of competencies (student knowledge, skills, and abilities).

The shift towards a learning paradigm requires reducing expository lectures (teacher-centered) to favor teacher mediation through learning paradigm strategies, such as case studies, flipped classrooms, cooperative learning, project-based learning, and problem-based learning, among others, which can be employed by university professors as alternative pedagogies that promote student learning (DE PABLOS, 2007). The methodological change in the University, from a traditional transmission methodology centered on the teacher as a technician to a student-centered methodology focused on learning, is an excellent challenge for the university community (ORTEGA, 2010).

None of the proposed approaches is a magic formula that can be implemented. It requires the willingness and intentionality of university governments to implement the most appropriate training to make this a reality, as well as the commitment of the teachers themselves, who are the true architects of the changes with their knowledge and determination. In this sense, it is a duty to adequately train teachers to improve their classroom practices and to analyze not only their methods and those of other teachers but also the many ways their students learn (DARLING, 2012). The education of educators must be reconsidered, focusing much more on managing and promoting learning.

What do teachers need to know and be able to do for the change to happen? It is essential to become aware of and identify, in teaching practice, the two methodological paradigms that are addressed within the teaching-learning binomial: the elements of the teaching paradigm, where we come from and where we are starting to move away from, and the elements of the learning paradigm, or the model that we aim to achieve, which also poses a challenge for the University.

Table 1 – Elements of the Teaching Paradigm and the Learning Paradigm

	Paradigma de Ensino	E-A Paradigm Learning Paradigm
Science	Knowledge is concentrated on a few; fixed truths are based on science. Strong hierarchy of knowledge, which must be learned in a certain way.	Knowledge is dynamic. It has an expiration date when other things are discovered. Linked to an open and plural concept. Knowledge is distributed and arrives through many means, it is circulating.
Mode of transmission	Vertical transmission: from those who know to those who need to learn.	Transmission is not as important. Learning happens in all directions: teacher-student and among students. The most important thing is what happens inside the student and in their relationships with peers and adults.

Curriculum	Monolithic, closed approach, treating everyone the same.	Open, contextualized.
Role of the teacher	Technical role. He is the protagonist. Very active. The most important thing is to be prepared to disseminate science.	The teacher is a mediator, guiding, facilitating, providing keys, and asking questions for the student to discover.
Role of the student	Passive, the one who listens and reproduces what the teacher taught.	Protagonist. The important thing is the student and their learning process.
Skills you develop	Cognitive skills.	Those related to multiple intelligences.
Methodology	Deductive, analytical transmission.	Active involvement of students, participatory. Deductive-inductive. Research-oriented, discovery-oriented.
Assessment	Product. At the end of the process.	Initial, formative, final. Throughout the process.

Source: Blanchard and Muzás (2018)

In this sense, ICT (Information and Communication Technology) has favored, to some extent, the change in methodological paradigm, as they provide an opportunity to rethink teaching styles and help teachers take steps in that direction (GARCÍA, 2002, apud FERNÁNDEZ, 2010). Technologies alone do not imply innovative change, as they can be adapted to the traditional paradigm (LANZA, 2011).

This occurs by generating a dynamic within the classroom based on mediated learning, collaborative work, interactive dialogue between teacher and student, and the use of materials, tools, and techniques adapted to the content being taught (ABAD *et al.*, 2019; DE PABLOS, 2007; SILVA *et al.*, 2016).

In this line of thought, Guillén (2016) investigates the paradigm shift in the university through a training process involving 23 university professors and 494 students, comparing the working methods and attitudes of the professors before and after the training and evaluating the results that occurred in student learning after the implementation of new teaching methodologies. After the training, the results show that the professors displayed a greater inclination towards a learner-centered approach and increased their teaching skills. Their attitudes did not change, demonstrating resistance to educational innovations and a sense of overload. On the other hand, the application of learner-focused methodologies improved students' skills.

Simultaneously, Álvarez (2017) investigates interactive teaching in the classroom. Different ways of engaging students in the teacher-student dialogue are highlighted, through which they co-construct the subject they are working on. To achieve this, the study seeks to understand the state of teaching practices based on interaction and communicative roles through in-depth interviews with 50 university students from different faculties. The results show a

scarce presence of interactive teaching and learning methods. In particular, students who experienced interactive teaching point out the following advantages: they learn more, are engaged in their studies, feel like active members of the educational process, have a better understanding of the subject matter, ask questions, focus in the classroom, enjoy the learning experience, challenge their preconceptions, and improve their results.

The work presented in this article is an approach to what teachers are capable of formulating (in the output of the mental act), which allows us to glimpse what is being structured: concepts, vocabulary, experiences from the paradigm they come from, and the paradigm they aim to understand and develop.

This study aimed to understand what teachers were doing in their classrooms and which paradigm they were pointing towards. Likewise, the study aimed to identify their concepts regarding the elements that structure each paradigm.

Method

The research aims to understand how teachers work in the classroom and stimulate individual and group reflection. To that end, a larger study was proposed, framed within an I-A process, with three loops that could not be carried out due to the pandemic. This study is part of the *primer bucle*.

Participants

This study involved 25 teachers from the Faculty of Philosophy, Literature, and Education Sciences at the Technical University of Manabí in Ecuador. Notably, 19 teachers teach in person, and 6 teach virtually. Additionally, 10 of them were men, and 15 were women. They are Philosophy, Didactics, Languages, Elementary, and Early Childhood Education teachers.

Instrument

The instrument used for data collection was the communicative report, which aimed to identify, through the teachers' descriptions in their reports, the methodologies and strategies they discussed, as well as the tendency of their methods, at least based on their discourse: whether it addressed a teaching paradigm or a learning paradigm (or what is called an

interactive Teaching-Learning paradigm). Significant changes could be made based on their formulations if their practices were more related to one paradigm than another.

Specifically, it is an instrument for teachers to describe how they work in the classroom through self-evaluation and metacognition (BLANCHARD; MUZÁS, 2014).

The questions were designed to understand what the teacher does in the classroom, their methodology, and how they organize their students. The format allows each teacher to freely describe what comes spontaneously without forcing the use of concepts (see Figure 1).

Figure 1 - The Communicative Report

Communicative Report
Number:
Department to which it belongs:
Careers in which it teaches:
Courses in which it operates:
Subject for which the communicative report is made:
Stand in front of a group of students you feel comfortable with. Think of a work unit before the topic you will develop with your students for a week, for a day... whatever time unit you have chosen for sharing.
Answer the following questions:
1.- How do you propose the work to your students? How do you organize it, and how do you communicate what they will work on?
2.- What do you do from arriving in the classroom until leaving? Think of a typical day.
3.- What do your students do?
4.- Specify the methodology you use in your work, the organization of groups, the space you use, and how you use time...
5.- When designing your activities, do you consider what your students know and how they learn? Describe how and when you do this.

Source: Prepared by the authors

Procedure

In the first cycle, the starting point of the Faculty was collected through their speech to access the Zone of Proximal Development and the Zone of Actual Development of the participating Faculty. The instrument was administered in person in the classroom, within the Faculty, at the beginning of a formative process.

In the content analysis of the communicative reports, *phrases* from the teachers were used as the unit of registration, classifying them, some previously established and others determined through reading all the stories, considering each communicative report as a whole. Firstly, based on each story, phrases belonging to the teaching paradigm were categorized, and on the other hand, those expressing elements of the learning paradigm indicated each teacher's tendency in their classroom work. The analysis continued until it was possible to determine the group's position regarding the teaching and learning paradigm. The procedure established by Pérez (2002) was used for this content analysis of the communicative reports.

For the content analysis, the model by Blanchard and Muzás (2018), presented in Table 1, was used as a reference. The phrases of the teachers were classified as the unit of registration for analysis.

The percentages of sentences uttered by each teacher were extracted, and then the analysis continued with the entire group until we determined which paradigm the group, as a whole, and each participant, identified with.

The categories used within what we call the Teaching Paradigm were as follows:

- Receptive Student (RS): This student passively absorbs what the teacher conveys and responds to questions about something the teacher explained earlier. They apply what the teacher taught by solving tasks.
- Transmitting Teacher (TT): The teacher is the protagonist of the classroom activity, the expert who organizes the activity and explains what the student should learn.
- Rigid and Closed Curriculum (CC): This refers to the curriculum proposed by the institution, where no changes are made. The teacher adjusts and responds but does not make alterations.
- Collective Methodology (CM): This is the teacher's way of working with the entire group. Each student works individually and attends to the teacher's explanations and corrections. There is no collaborative work among the students.
- Final Assessment (FA): This assessment is done at the end of a teaching process, such as a final exam. There is no intermediate feedback, meaning it only occurs at the end of the process.
- Directive Organization (DO): This refers to keeping students dependent on the teacher's opinions. The teachers have the responsibility of leading the group of students.

And the categories used within the Learning Paradigm were:

- **Protagonist Student (PS):** The task prepares students to take control of their work and be autonomous and responsible. Additionally, the student can make work proposals.
- **Mediating Teacher (MT):** This is the teacher's approach centered on the students so that they take responsibility for the task. The teacher brings intentionality and reciprocity to the learning process, encourages active participation and shared behavior, facilitates the search, planning, and achievement of conduct goals, and helps students relate knowledge to their daily lives and needs.
- **Open Curriculum (OC):** A flexible curriculum can be modified and relates to the student's needs, lives, and future professional tasks. Therefore, it can be subject to revisions by the faculty, and there is room for organizing it according to the student's needs. There is space for creativity and innovation.
- **Participatory Methodology (PM):** The teacher allows students to participate with their peers. The teacher encourages the participation of each student as well as the group.
- **Continuous Assessment (CA):** This refers to an assessment conducted during teaching-learning. It is done regularly, meaning that assessment is carried out periodically to evaluate and improve what students are learning.
- **Autonomous Organization (AO):** This refers to removing the teacher from the center of the teaching-learning process and focusing on the students. The students are the ones who own their learning, create, follow, and take responsibility for their learning trajectory.

Results

The results show that out of the 25 teachers who participated in the communicative report, 88% of the teachers use over 50% of their expressions belonging to the learning paradigm: 48% use between 50% and 89% of their expressions in this paradigm, and 40% use between 90% and 100%; and only 12% use expressions from the teaching paradigm above 50%.

Table 2 – The paradigm in which teachers are involved

Types of Paradigm	% of expressions	n	%
Learning Paradigm	Between 50% - 89%	12	48
Teaching Paradigm	Between 90% -100% Between 50% and 89%	10 3	40 12
Total		25	100

Source: Prepared by the authors

Teaching Paradigm

Regarding the expressions of the total number of teachers who identify with the teaching paradigm, as shown in Table 9.2, it can be observed that 61.11% correspond to the category of the teacher as a transmitter, with phrases such as *"In the classroom, I explain the topic to them and then tell them what activities they should do,"* and *"I present the topic on slides."*

In second place is the directive organization with 13.89%: *"I organize my students in lines so that they don't talk to each other,"* followed by collective methodology with 11.11%: *"I explain to the whole class, and they individually complete the activities, then we correct them all together for efficiency."* The student as a receiver accounts for 8.33% of the recorded sentences: *"The students are very disciplined and listen attentively while the presentation is being made."*

Similarly, expressions related to a rigid curriculum appear with 2.78%: *"We need to cover the syllabus, so there aren't many opportunities to work on other things,"* and a final evaluation with 2.78%: *"I always conduct an assessment at the end to see if the students have learned."* These last two categories are the least mentioned by teachers within this paradigm.

Table 3 – Elements of the Teaching Paradigm Identified in the Communicative Reports

Categories	Number of teachers	Number of expressions counted	%
Transmitting teacher	13	22	61,11
Receptive student	3	3	8,33
Closed curriculum	1	1	2,78
Collective methodology	2	4	11,11
Final evaluation	1	1	2,78
Management organization	5	5	13,89
TOTAL	25	36	100%

Source: Prepared by the authors

Learning Paradigm

On the other hand, about the total number of expressions from teachers who identify with the learning paradigm (Table 4), the highest percentage is 33.49% of teachers mentioning the mediator teacher. They give us an idea of this approach through expressions such as "Students' doubts are addressed, and the given guidance is reinforced" and "Engaging them in a conversation about the knowledge they already have on the subject."

20.93% of the formulated sentences are related to participatory methodology. One teacher states, "I use active and highly participatory methodology, sometimes with dynamics, other times grouping students based on affinity, and constantly adapting to the needs... without going overboard." or "Students actively work through cooperative tasks and various group techniques: affinity, grid... " "Usually, flipped classroom optimizes the two-hour classes." With a slightly lower percentage, some phrases denote the student as a protagonist, accounting for 17.21%. "Some ask questions about what they didn't understand, and some help others." Another teacher says, "Students seek information, learn by doing," and "Since my classes are practical, all students are engaged."

Similarly, continuous assessment appears with 13.02%: "We assess what they have learned through tasks, evaluations, exams, forum work throughout the course," or "The subject is built upon prior knowledge, which serves as a starting point for new learning."

The category of autonomous student organization follows with 10.70%: "They engage in independent work they have researched and share their findings or presentations with everyone, including their teacher," or in this sentence, "The time and place for achieving learning are chosen by the student according to their schedule."

Lastly, we observe that the least mentioned category by teachers within this paradigm is an open curriculum, accounting for 4.65% of the sentences.

Table 4 – Elements of the Learning Paradigm Identified in the Communicative Reports

Categories	Number of teachers	Number of expressions counted	%
Mediating Teacher	6	72	33,49
Protagonist Student	5	37	17,21
Open Curriculum	2	10	4,65
Participatory Methodology	5	45	20,93
Continuous Assessment	4	28	13,02
Autonomous Organization	3	23	10,70
TOTAL	25	215	100%

Source: Prepared by the authors

Therefore, if we conduct a comparative analysis of the categories according to the type of paradigm they are classified in, we can obtain an overview of the expressions used by these 25 teachers.

Considering these percentages, it can be observed that 85.66% of the mentioned sentences are directed toward a learning paradigm, while 14.34% identify with a teaching paradigm.

Table 5 – Percentages of the Two Paradigms

<i>Components</i>	<i>Teaching Paradigm %</i>	<i>Learning Paradigm %</i>
<i>Teacher</i>		
<i>Transmitter/Mediator</i>	61,11	33,49
<i>Passive/Active Student</i>	8,33	17,21
<i>Rigid/Open Curriculum</i>	2,78	4,65
<i>Collective/Participatory</i>		
<i>Methodology</i>	11,11	20,93
<i>Product/Continuous</i>		
<i>Assessment</i>	2,78	13,02
<i>Managerial/Autonomous</i>		
<i>Organization</i>	13,89	10,70
<i>Total</i>	100	100

Source: Prepared by the authors

By way of Conclusions

This study brings us closer to what teachers deal with in their stories about their way of working in the classroom and essential aspects that should be considered, therefore, in the formative processes carried out with them.

In light of the above, the following conclusions can be drawn:

- In this analysis, the categories we used are based on two paradigms: the Teaching Paradigm and the Learning Paradigm, and the categories belong to one or the other paradigm. Therefore, through the analysis, we observed trends in the teachers' discourse, although we cannot determine to what extent these trends are already a reality. Direct observation and other types of analysis would be needed.
- The study did not aim to draw generalizable conclusions for the entire population, neither due to the number of participants in the research nor its objective. It serves the specific group for which it was conducted, which must be the true architect of innovation within the institution.

- The pandemic has been a significant factor in impeding the progress of the action research process. This study sought to identify the direction in which changes were heading and the Zone of Proximal Development of the faculty to promote the next steps. However, it has not been possible to continue the reflection and introduction of methodological tools that facilitate the implementation of a new methodology
- The faculty of this institution expresses, in their own words, a shift, at least in some factors, towards a Learning Paradigm where students are active participants in their learning, and the role of the teacher is more of a mediator in the classroom.
- From the data analysis, we can affirm that slightly less than half of the faculty members use vocabulary entirely within the Learning Paradigm, while the rest are in different stages of transitioning from the Teaching Paradigm to the Learning Paradigm (hybrid modality). None of them use explicit vocabulary from the Teaching Paradigm.
- However, it is essential to note that this study provides data about the beginning of a process at a specific moment, knowing that teachers continue to receive additional training alongside the training they have already received.
- It was observed in the conducted process a positive reception to a way of doing things, that of Action Research, which involves reflection on the actions of all teachers, places teachers on an equal footing, and focuses on the classroom, practices, and what teachers deal with daily. Therefore, it would be important for this to be the working methodology with teachers.
- As essential aspects, we can mention that just over 6 teachers highlighted the "teacher mediator" category and that few teachers mentioned "participatory methodology."
- Similarly, other categories such as "passive student," "closed curriculum," and "final evaluation" were relegated to lower positions, as almost none of the teachers from that university provided data that could focus on any of these categories.
- Therefore, it is evident that these teachers tend to lean more towards the Learning Paradigm, as the majority of the phrases that contributed to this study were classified within one of the categories encompassed by this paradigm, such as teacher mediator, student protagonist, open curriculum, participatory methodology, and continuous assessment.
- However, although the expressions offered by the teachers are focused on a Learning Paradigm, we cannot conclude that this is necessarily their actual way of acting. These teachers regularly receive training courses that equip them with the Learning Paradigm. Therefore, we would need to conduct additional studies using other instruments, such as direct

observation, student evaluations, etc., to confirm that there has been a fundamental change in classroom practice. Additionally, there may be an important issue: teachers, by using expressions belonging to the Learning Paradigm, believe that they have also made changes in practice since they handle the words. However, it is predictable that a deeper understanding of the concepts and the generation of coherent practices may be necessary.

This investigation is complemented by quantitative analysis and can be improved and enriched with future research. Therefore, we present it here as a starting point.

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