Abstract

Education has been constitutionally defined as a right of the individual, which is at the same time considered a public service with a social function, with which access to knowledge, science, technology and culture is sought. This connotation, given by article 68 of the Colombian Constitution, is the responsibility of the State to regulate and monitor in order to guarantee the permanent improvement of education. Currently, Colombia measures the results of the education system based
on the Saber Pro tests, which allow the state of knowledge to be visualized in various areas. Recognizing reading comprehension as a fundamental tool for this purpose, the objective is to assess the level of reading comprehension in the country. For this reason, the results of a descriptive study are shown below, which highlights, among other findings, the need to motivate strategies for the acceptance of reading throughout the education system.

**Keywords**: Comprensión Lectora, Pruebas Saber, Educación, Calidad

### 1 Introduction

Higher Education in Colombia requires the Ministry of National Education (MEN) to establish and design academic programs in order to optimize the educational process and meet the objectives set within the development plans and public policies [1]. For this reason, having a society with high levels of academic quality necessarily involves a series of phases in the training processes of the subjects that compose it. It is widely documented that the levels of development of countries depend to a large extent on the training processes and scientific research carried out as part of a sound educational policy. For this purpose, each of the levels at which the education system is supported adds new knowledge and poses new and complex challenges to the learner and to the institutions responsible for his or her training [2].

In the country, the Saber Pro tests are defined as: official and compulsory academic tests that form part, with other processes and actions, of a set of instruments that the National Government has at its disposal to evaluate the quality of the educational service [3] and are applied voluntarily since 2003 according to the Political Constitution of 1991 and Law 30 of 1992 [4], in the final semesters of the undergraduate programs of the different institutions of higher education. From 2009 onwards, the tests will be compulsory and as a requirement for the degree. These tests, in addition to being a reference point for the student's level of education, are also used as a source of selection for the call for postgraduate scholarships, selection of personnel in different companies, both national and international. In addition to this, educational institutions have made them a benchmark for quality, highlighting the best results obtained by their students, leaving aside the true academic sense that can be analyzed by the results obtained in each of the institutions such as self-evaluation, analyze the results to improve academic performance, among others (León, Amaya & Orozco, 2012).

### 2 Methodology

As stated above, the main objective of this document is to assess the level of reading comprehension currently used in the country. To this end, descriptive/comparative research is being carried out to analyze the results obtained in reading comprehension in recent years according to the Saber Pro tests, in order to suggest
possible recommendations to be promoted in the different areas of education in the country. Descriptive research allows us to give a greater scope to the phenomena, thus executing the necessary dynamics to detail and disaggregate realities of interest and thus generate possible action or improvement plans. By incorporating a comparative component, data and figures can be taken to make contrasts, which in the end facilitates the interpretation of the phenomenon itself [5].

3 Results

The Saber Pro Tests in Colombia, is a national test that seeks to measure the quality of higher education, being a standardized instrument administered by the Colombian Institute for the Evaluation of Higher Education (ICFES) and available to the national government to examine, inspect and monitor the quality of higher education service [6]. The test is organized in modules that evaluate the competencies considered fundamental and coherent with the educational level. These postulates place great demands on Higher Education Institutions (IES) to direct their academic programs towards training in competencies; as the Saber Pro test is designed, the socioeconomic, cultural, productive and scientific needs of the country are taken into consideration [7]. Rodolfo Posada [8] has pointed out that when speaking of competencies, reference is made to "the complex capacity that integrates knowledge, potential, abilities, skills, practices and actions that are manifested in performance in specific situations and in specific contexts" (p. 3), that is to say, they are constantly constructed, developed and evolved. In the same sense, Rychen & Salganik [9], who define competencies as the aptitude that goes beyond the simple possession of knowledge and skills, and implies the mastery of cognitive, functional, personal and ethical competencies, which must allow the individual to handle theories, concepts and knowledge, know how to react to specific situations and possess personal and professional values. In this way, competency-based education can be understood as vocational training that presents "certain characteristics that are reflected in curricular planning, didactic planning and teaching practice. It involves aspects relating to the organisation and management of schools, the teaching role and the teaching and evaluation methods" (p. 89) [10].

The model proposed by MEN, based on competencies, has a cascade effect on institutions, insofar as it requires IES to adapt their curricula and micro-curricula and to develop all their academic activities under this model. In this understanding, the evaluation should be conceived as a follow-up process and not as a control process, which allows us to show the progress in the apprehension of the skills that will be the mark of the graduates of a given program in their professional practice [6].

Thus, training by competencies arises from the need to value the know-how, taking it not only as skills developed by a person, but also to appreciate their ability to use them in solving problems [11], and this is a wise proposal of training by competencies as it gives them a fundamental role in the impact of concrete social
realities. In this context, analysing the most important aspects of competency-based learning undoubtedly requires a brief discussion of the reference point for education based on this approach, which in turn implies a reformulation of strategies that are compatible with the purposes of training required by the current dynamics of higher education.

From this perspective, learning by competencies aims to develop the necessary skills that will help the person to better social and professional development, as well as to integrate into these areas in a critical, constructive and proactive way. At the level of higher education, to speak of learning by competencies implies a conceptual rethinking of what constitutes training in itself, since this is not limited to the simple transmission of knowledge, information or accumulation of both. Skills-based training requires to a large extent the application, knowledge, understanding and appropriate use of such knowledge and information [12].

For the above reasons, it can be said that from the point of view of education by competencies, learning is concentrated on the application of the knowledge and skills acquired by the student, promoting the autonomy and initiative of the learner as the main actor in the construction of his or her knowledge [13], this is why the changes related to competency-based training and learning are a challenge for educational institutions, which, in addition to having to face administrative challenges, must address the reorganization of curricula around the design of teaching, learning and learning assessment activities under the new model to be adopted [14]. That is why reading comprehension and cognitive processing play a fundamental role in the moment when students face the knowledge tests, which has been evidenced in the ICFES reports for both basic and secondary education, as well as for higher education [14]. According to the figures reported by the ICFES between 2000-2014, the results compared to the language competence that includes reading comprehension in higher education are those that are compared in the following figure.

Fig. 1: Language test results at IES 2000-2014 (ICFES, 2014)
As can be seen, the years where the best results were obtained were 2004, 2010 and 2014. It is very representative that the results of 2004 could not be surpassed and in general have been below 50 points in the period analyzed. In relation to the above, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development [16], has stated that reading should be considered a priority by all its member countries as an important indicator of the human development of its inhabitants, which is why the reading training of individuals for effective participation in modern society requires the ability to decode the text, interpret the meaning of words and grammatical structures, and build meaning. Along the same lines, when confirming the result in areas assimilated as communications in the same period, similar results were obtained, which are illustrated in the following figure.

Fig. 2: Comparison of communication skills 2000-2014 (ICFES, 2014)

Thus, reading is one of the most widely used tools for accessing knowledge, it is considered one of the healthiest habits for developing the intellect, and it is also one of the most effective means for the systematic development of the citizen, which expands the possibilities of facing educational barriers, enabling fairer educational opportunities, since the mastery and practice of reading processes are essential factors for the academic success of students in any discipline [17]. According to Golder & Gaonac’h [18], learning to read is one of life's great achievements; at first it is set as an objective in itself (the student reads to learn to read), but it quickly becomes the means to achieve other objectives (the student reads to do exercises, summaries; to obtain learning).

For this reason, reading, from the perspective of the State and the bodies that regulate educational quality, is considered a basic competence, which opens the doors to all forms of personal learning and intellectual growth and offers the opportunity to enjoy the language and the possibilities of creation that it gives rise to. It is for this reason that reading competence is considered one of the most important
achievements to be achieved by students during their first years of study and that conditions many successes or failures in academic and professional life [19]. According to Colomer [20], the comprehension of texts is tied to the teaching of a text, which has now become the real objective of academic practices, thus allowing new academic and research experiences to be experienced and articulated. The author in question maintains that in the programming of the teaching of reading comprehension there is an interrelationship between three factors: the reader, the text and the context. The relationship between these three variables influences the possibility of understanding the text.

It also implies the ability to read between the lines and reflect on the purposes and audiences to which the texts are addressed. Reading skills therefore involve the ability to understand and interpret a wide variety of text types and thus give meaning to what is read by relating it to the contexts in which it appears. Studies have found that 70% of the high school graduates who enter universities in Latin America have flaws in reading comprehension, in expressing their ideas clearly or in writing without spelling mistakes. In Latin America and the Caribbean, several studies carried out between 1998 and 1999 and published in 2000, show the situation of reading skills of basic education students in this region of the world. Such research warns of the critical status of millions of Latin American and Caribbean students in reading [21].

However, not everything is negative, the Pontificia Universidad Javeriana de Cali-Colombia investigated the metacognitive functioning of university students when reading scientific articles, in the aspects of planning, monitoring and evaluation; authors such as Ochoa and Aragón [22] found a significant and positive relationship between the metacognitive functioning of psychology students and the levels of comprehension of articles such as theoretical essays and research reports, so that the higher the metacognitive level, the higher the level of reading comprehension. That is why, at the level of higher education, to speak of learning by competencies implies a conceptual rethinking of what constitutes training in itself, since this is not limited to the simple transmission of knowledge, information or accumulation of both. Skills-based training requires to a large extent the application, knowledge, understanding and appropriate use of such knowledge and information [12]. This has been analyzed by several authors [22] [24], who have identified that the congruence between what is taught and what is really needed depends on multiple and diverse factors, many of them intangible, especially related to quality and effective communication between the academic and training world and the world of work.

In this regard, Marín, Inciarte & Hernández [24] state that there is no correspondence between the education system and the productive system, that is to say, companies do not receive the right people, which has caused that in some cases the students are not prepared to face the new challenges that companies require nor the processes that the dizzying pace of the globalized world offers them. Colombian
studies supported by the MEN and ICFES show the concern to provoke this synergy; Ramírez and Forero [23] investigate the effective insertion of university graduates in the labor markets and their incomes, showing the work to be done in several areas.

4 Conclusion

The information outlined above allows us to state that HEIs should work to establish academic programmes that seek to achieve competency-based training, in order to enable students who have studied higher education to recognise their possibilities for inclusion, identify their strategic competences and carry out introspection processes, with the intention of using all this as truly significant and valuable elements that will enable them to achieve a degree of distinction, the product of a cognitive synergy between a training level and the logical process. To achieve more competitive results in all areas of knowledge, reading comprehension needs to be motivated. If students and future professionals have the resources to carry out complex analyses and deeper learning processes, they will be able to enter the labour market in optimum conditions while at the same time enhancing the dynamics of the entire education system.

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