THE CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES OF USING A COMPETENCY BASED EDUCATION MODEL IN SOCIAL WORK EDUCATION

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In
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Nelida Ramirez, candidate for the degree of Special Case Doctor of Philosophy in Social Work, has presented a thesis titled, *The Challenges and Opportunities of Using a Competency Based Education Model in Social Work Education*, in an oral examination held on December 16, 2011. The following committee members have found the thesis acceptable in form and content, and that the candidate demonstrated satisfactory knowledge of the subject material.

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ABSTRACT

The ongoing expansion of neo-liberal globalization is affecting the milieu of both social work education and its practice and, in some countries, is actively promoting the adoption of Competency Based Education (CBE) models for education. To date, research addressing the question of whether CBE provides a useful theoretical framework in designing and implementing a curriculum for a Bachelor of Social (BSW) Work program has been sporadic. Given the importance of the ‘CBE question’ for education in general, and social work education in particular, the nature and process of current CBE curriculum designs for social work programs needs to be well understood, and the research-base on this subject needs to increase.

Considering the lack of research on the topic, this dissertation focuses on ascertaining why CBE models have been adopted in social work education internationally and analyses how the process of applying those models to curricula design and implementation has been carried out. Thus, the research seeks to answer the question: Does the CBE model serve as a useful theoretical framework to design and implement a Bachelor Social of Work program curriculum? The overall goal of this research is to advance to the dialogue and debate about the CBE issue within the social work academic community. It is, therefore, important to consider the views and opinions of professors who support utilizing CBE models and those who oppose it as well.

The research also provides a conceptual framework concerned with key terms used throughout the dissertation. As well, the study presents theoretical
information related to the major conceptual underpinnings of topics and contents related to the postsecondary education environment including its learning process, and approaches to curriculum development. The theoretical and philosophical foundations of CBE and classifications of competencies, CBE curriculum’s challenges, and criticisms of the CBE model are provided. Finally, an overview of the history of social work education in different countries is included.

The research approach must be identified as a generic qualitative study. The methods used to gather research data included document analysis, face-to-face interviewing, and Information Communication Technology (ICT) tools, including e-interviewing or interview conducted by e-mail and a website blog. The data results were formally conceptualized and coded in several categories. These categories were created by scrutinizing and reflecting on the practical experiences furnished by social work educators who detailed the implications, challenges, and opportunities of using a CBE model for social work curriculum design.

The conclusions of the research indicate that many factors are pressuring or providing the impetus for the use of CBE in curriculum design and implementation for social work programs. Given this context, it is vital for academics within social work faculties to analyze and discuss the opportunities and challenges presented by the need for curricula change and renewal. Such a proactive approach to meeting the challenge of change is in sharp contrast to a
passive strategy of responding to both external and internal pressures for curriculum change and renewal.
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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my wonderful and kind partner Luis and our two lovely angels, Trinidad and Catalina. Thank you for your wonderful caring and patience.

To my parents Victor and Berta who have been my inspiration and support from the beginning of my studies, thank you for your unconditional love.

To all my relatives and friends who offered me their support and encouragement throughout this long journey, I love you all.

Finally, this thesis is dedicated to all those who believe in the richness of learning.
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<table>
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<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AASSW</td>
<td>American Association of Schools of Social work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ABDP</td>
<td>Association of Baccaulaurate Program Directors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ANECA</td>
<td>Agencia Nacional de Evaluación de la Calidad y Acreditación</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BSW</td>
<td>Bachelor of Social Work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CASSW</td>
<td>Canadian Association of Schools of Social Work</td>
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<tr>
<td>CASWE</td>
<td>Canadian Association of Social Work Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CASW</td>
<td>Canadian Association of Social Workers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CBE</td>
<td>Competency Based Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CCP</td>
<td>Competencies Certification Process</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COS</td>
<td>Charity Organization Society</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COCEI</td>
<td>Commission on Curriculum and Education and Innovation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COA</td>
<td>Commission on Accreditation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CSWE</td>
<td>Council of Social Work Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DeSeCo</td>
<td>Definition and Selection of Competencies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EPAS</td>
<td>Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GDP</td>
<td>Gross Domestic Product</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HEIP</td>
<td>Higher Education Improvement Program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IASSW</td>
<td>International Association of Schools of Social Work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IFSW</td>
<td>International Federation of Social Workers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICT</td>
<td>Information and Communication Technology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NADD</td>
<td>National Association of Deans and Directors</td>
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<tr>
<td>NASSA</td>
<td>National Association of Schools of Social Administration</td>
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<tr>
<td>NASW</td>
<td>National Association of Social Workers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NLPCC</td>
<td>The National Labour Project of Competencies Certification</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OECD</td>
<td>Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PLA</td>
<td>Prior Learning Assessment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PISA</td>
<td>Program for International Students Assessments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PM</td>
<td>Progressive Movement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RPL</td>
<td>Recognition for Prior Learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RUFUTS</td>
<td>Le Regroupement des unités de formation universitaire en travail social du Québec</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UAS</td>
<td>Universidad de Alicante in Spain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UCM</td>
<td>Universidad de Colima in México</td>
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<tr>
<td>UVS</td>
<td>Universidad de Valladolid in Spain</td>
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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION, RATIONALE AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Introduction

The twenty-first century has resulted in many challenges for educational systems. One such challenge is the difficulty of integrating learning experiences in educational institutions with practical realities and requirements in the field. This difficulty is often underestimated, but the differences between educational and practical realities need to be recognized. Many educational policy makers (Biemans, Nieuwenhuis, Poell, Mulder, and Wesselink, 2004) now argue that the gap between theoretical knowledge acquired in the educational system and experience in labour markets would be reduced by the implementation of CBE (Competency Based Education) models in curricula design for various disciplines, including social work (James and Tranter, 2003).

The historical tenets of social work education, research, and practice are increasingly being challenged by globalization and new forms of cross collaboration both internationally and between disciplines (Campbell and MacDonald, 2008). Within this international context, questions arise as to what is appropriate for use as curriculum in social work education, and what pedagogical methodology to use for teaching and learning. Given its importance, the nature and process of curriculum design for social work programs needs to be better understood and the research-base on the use of CBE in such curriculum design expanded.
Utilizing a generic qualitative design, this study seeks to understand and analyze the suitability of the CBE model as a useful theoretical framework for designing and implementing a BSW program. A research process was carried out to answer three questions:

(1) What are the current design and implementation processes of CBE curricula in Bachelor of Social Work programs?

(2) Is the design and implementation of CBE curricula appropriate for Bachelor of Social Work programs?

(3) What are the challenges and achievements in the design and implementation of CBE curricula for Bachelor of Social Work programs?

Previous research on social work education and CBE in different countries has not provided an in-depth analysis of the opportunities and challenges in selecting and implementing CBE models in social work education because this topic was not relevant. Thus, describing, analyzing, and reflecting on the process of design and implementation of a CBE model in social work curricula are the key elements in this study. As well, the recommendations and suggestions for future applications of a CBE model in social work and other professions will be helpful in guiding the challenging process of utilizing CBE model in social work education.

This dissertation highlights the main components in the process of designing and implementing a CBE curriculum. This includes a variety of ideas and opinions from social work professors holding both favourable and opposing
views on the appropriateness of utilizing CBE in designing and implementing a BSW curriculum. Including different perspectives is essential for this study because it not only enriches and advances the dialogue and debate about the CBE model, but presents a balanced and unbiased report to the reader.

Chapter 1 presents the study’s rationale and the conceptual framework that includes the definition of key concepts used through the dissertation.

Chapter 2 reviews key topics that provide an overview of theoretical references dealing with the postsecondary education environment, the learning process, and approaches to curriculum development, followed by the conceptual definitions of competence and CBE, as well as CBE theoretical and philosophical foundations. Competency categories, characteristics of CBE curricula, challenges for and criticisms of the model are provided. The chapter ends with an overview of the history of social work education in different countries.

Chapter 3 presents the research methodology. This study is based on a generic qualitative design (O’Leary, 2004), the method used to collect information included document analysis, face-to-face interviewing, and Information Communication Technology tools such as e-interviewing or interviews conducted by e-mail and a website blog.

Chapter 4 details the research findings, presents a brief analysis that highlights the major contextualized thoughts of social work educators, and points out the discussed implications, challenges, and opportunities of using CBE models to design social work curricula. The research findings are the result of the description, analysis, and reflection on CBE’s practical applications. The
categories of the analysis created for my research consider the views and opinions of academics who are in agreement with CBE as well as those who represent dissident voices in the debate about the appropriateness of the CBE model. The discussion of the findings in this chapter enabled the researcher to enter more fully into the study by making interpretations, noting linkages, and relating the findings to the theoretical framework, previous research, and from personal experiences of participants. With the data, it should be possible to identify both the positive and negative implications of using CBE. Most importantly, it should also be possible to answer the question: Does the CBE model serve as a useful theoretical framework to design and implement a Bachelor of Social Work curriculum?

Chapter 5 addresses the conclusions, contributions, limitations and recommendations of this study. The conclusions were based on the connection between the study findings and the contents of the literature review. The recommendations identify the interdependent, interrelated, and interacting components that provide the basis for making an informed and responsible decision about whether or not to utilize CBE models in social work education. The main contribution of the study is the significant new information regarding ongoing dialogue about CBE and social work education from an international perspective. Given the paucity of data on this subject, this study establishes a guide that can be utilized in future research and specifies the steadily growing interest in CBE models. The limitation of my research results from the inability to generalize on this subject. Although the number of participants is somewhat
limited for making broad generalizations, the data generated by the study should support future in-depth research that no doubt will engage more participants. The research design was not intended to produce or predict results applicable to a wide range of social work faculties. Therefore, this study generated relatively clear and specific data; its findings should be relevant to some social work departments, schools or faculties considering using a CBE approach in its educational programming and, further, will offer guidance about how to proceed once any decision to adopt the CBE approach is made.

1.1 Rationale

A growing number of educational leaders, administrators, and policymakers agree that postsecondary education needs to develop and implement pro-active educational programs that will respond positively to challenges in the global environment. As well, it is necessary to consider and re-evaluate ways of harmonizing interdependence and collaboration between postsecondary education and workplace settings (Gonczi, 1997). Consequently, universities are planning for continual improvements in the teaching and learning processes, whether that learning relates to critical thinking, problem solving, communication skills, information literacy or other relevant educational goals. In response to these challenges, some universities are adopting strategies related to the CBE model.

The initial motivation for this research was provided by the development of a new postsecondary education policy in Chile, which seeks to improve the quality and integrity of the educational process. Thus, the results of this research
should have an effect on the understanding of how the design and implementation of the competency approach will be applied in future CBE programs at the Technological Metropolitan University (UTEM) in Chile, and other Chilean and Latin-American universities.

An international generic qualitative study was implemented to respond to the question of whether the CBE model serves as a useful theoretical framework for the design and implementation of a Bachelor of Social Work curriculum. The goals of the study are to:

1. describe the design and implementation processes of CBE curricula in Bachelor of Social Work programs;
2. analyze the appropriateness of the design and implementation of CBE curricula in Bachelor of Social Work programs; and
3. reflect on the successes and challenges in the design and implementation of CBE curricula in a Bachelor of Social Work program.

The research opens new avenues in understanding the meaning of the design and implementation of a CBE curriculum in a BSW program. Consequently, this information can be used by all those considering using the CBE model in social work education because it provides those professors with a basis on which to make decisions about curriculum change. In addition, the research will assist decision-makers in deciding if CBE is an appropriate direction for social work education. In other words, the study’s primary focus is on describing, analysing, and reflecting on the practical experiences of social work institutions currently using CBE.
Consistent with the generic qualitative research paradigm, the analysis and discussion of the research findings focus on participants’ opinions, experiences, thoughts, and viewpoints regarding the opportunities and challenges presented by CBE. As a result, the assessment of the research and analysis of its significance is related to the findings from previous research, taking into account the personal experiences and opinions of the participants. After six years of researching this topic, and considering the results of the research, my conclusion is that the study should serve as an initial guide to assist those who may be considering the implementation of CBE or seeking further information on how to proceed with such an approach.

The information included in this study seeks to serve as a resource for social work educators developing, implementing, or redefining their CBE strategies. This is especially appropriate for faculty members who are designing curricula and looking for connections between the CBE model and accreditation processes and regulatory bodies.

1.2 Conceptual framework

Clear communication requires precise and accurate definitions of the concepts being communicated. Concepts may have different connotations, denotations, and shades of meaning. Often these nuanced variations in meaning reflect the differing viewpoints and opinions of the relevant authorities and authors. This section presents and defines the meaning of some concepts used in the course of this research. More detailed information regarding these concepts is included in Chapter 2 of this thesis.
**Competency - Competence**

Historical and contemporary literature reveals the existence of various conceptualizations or definitions related to the concept of competency.

After researching the theoretical foundations of competency, I would like to introduce a concept which represents a broader, more up-to-date meaning and considers competency as an integrated combination of knowledge, abilities, talents, aptitudes, and values that need to be internalized by the individual for optimal personal, social, and work-based performance. Whereas the older, original concepts of competency were only related to a certain list of behaviours that an individual must perform without considering situations that occur outside the workplace. My definition sees the individual through a much broader, integrated, and social perspective.

**Competency-Based Education**

According to many authors, competency-based education is far from homogeneous in its epistemological foundation (Velde, 1999). Some authors argue that the origin of the CBE model comes from an external perspective beyond education itself (Preston and Walker, 1993). This makes the CBE model somewhat controversial because it may sometimes be linked to competency based training focusing exclusively on workplace and technical competencies (Raylatt and Lohan, 1995).

For the purpose of this research, CBE is defined as a model that aims to identify and nurture the unique intellectual, emotional, and physical abilities and
talents of all students. According to Gonzalez and Sanchez (2003, as translated by the author of this thesis) the main features of the model include:

(1) helping to develop the potentials of individual students in the classroom through learning activities;

(2) organizing opportunities to gain a diverse range of experiences in the field; and

(3) working to develop the talents and abilities of all students instead of trying to fit them uniformly into a standardized, subject-based evaluation.

Curriculum

The purpose and meaning of a curriculum is directly connected to different theoretical learning approaches. For instance, curricula should emphasize domain knowledge and consider learning as a cognitive process or one involving practical knowledge (Flinders and Thornton, 2004).

From my point of view, the essential value of a curriculum is determined by how well it promotes creativity as well as being able to re-invent and transform domains, methodologies, materials, and other tools in order to confront the realities of both the classroom and real life. Thus, a curriculum must be in a form that can be communicated to those associated with the learning institution. It should be open to evaluation and criticism, and be able to be readily transformed into practice as and when required. Crucial elements in the curriculum development process include student involvement, the active and meaningful construction of content, ideas, concepts, theories, and experiences in a multicultural framework.
A curriculum is the result of human action. It is always based on a set of values and beliefs about what students should know and how they come to know or learn. The curriculum of any discipline or institution must be proactive and lead transformation in its field. In post-secondary education, it is argued that the curricula should be in a symbiotic relationship with any services and communities that the students will use or serve. To remain viable, the curriculum must be responsive to the changing values and expectations of society itself (Flinders and Thornton, 2004).

In the process of a curriculum design, the institutions consider each program as a formal educational structure that includes both an explicit and implicit curriculum. The specific courses and the curriculum architecture constitute a program’s explicit curriculum. The actual educational environment in which the explicit curriculum is implemented represents the implicit curriculum. The specification of the connections and commonalities among all the actors and sources involved in the learning process should improve the quality of the social work programs. In addition, such work also facilitates and enhances the introduction of adjustments to meet ongoing, ever-shifting demands.

Professional education

To understand the proper meaning of professional education, it is first necessary to take note of certain elements that are regarded as characteristic of a profession. According to Greenwood (1957), first a profession must have a reasonably identifiable area of practice where knowledge associated with that profession is applied. Second, the profession must have a training and
educational structure in place to both expend and refine that knowledge, and to disseminate it to current and future practitioners of the profession. Third, a profession must exercise a degree of control over the application or practice of the profession by means of credentials tied to licensing or certification processes that, in turn, are recognized through legal or conventional agreement. Therefore, a profession is a group of people who have committed themselves to the acquiring, refining and expansion of a body of specialized knowledge in conjunction with the ethical application of that knowledge in order to advance both the welfare of individuals and the social order in a given community.

Essential to the fully professional character of social work is the educational structure and its base in the universities and colleges. The reason for this rests in the belief that professionalism involves the application of specialized knowledge in a well-defined societal setting. Thus, social work’s view of itself is that of a profession implementing a system of practice based upon a body of knowledge that is continually being expanded, refined, and applied to the widest range of human and social issues in a myriad of contexts. If this is indeed the nature of the profession, then its very existence and meaning rests upon a body of knowledge verified by research and testing that is applied by the professional practitioner to help individuals and communities. The post-secondary education is the natural home for the acquisition and refinement of such knowledge, as well as for its testing and application. For me, it is necessary that social work maintain a permanent connection and dialogue with places where its professional
knowledge is applied. In other words, it is necessary to create and maintain a
dialectic relationship between theory and practice.

*Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards (EPAS) Council of Social
Work Education at the United States*

EPAS was drafted in the CSWE Commission on Educational Policy and
adopted by the Board of Directors in 2002. It replaced the Curriculum Policy
to standards growing ever more complex, EPAS has called for numerous
mandates for new curriculum content, and for such administrative processes as
admissions policies, credentials of faculty, and resources.

As drafted, the intent of EPAS was to increase flexibility and soften
mandates. While this extends across many areas, an example of this flexibility is
provided by the new EPAS standard on diversity and vulnerable populations that
states:

Social work programs integrate content that promotes understanding,
affirmation and respect for people from diverse back-grounds…Programs
educate students to recognize diversity within and between groups that
may influence assessment, planning, intervention and research (CSWE,
2002, 4.1).

Not all of the initial proposals to increase flexibility were adopted in the
final version. First drafts of EPAS dropped the word generalist from the
requirements for foundation content in social work practice. Pressure from
undergraduate educators resulted in reinstatement of this language.
**Signature Pedagogy**

EPAS notes that:

signature pedagogy represents the central form of instruction and learning in which a profession socializes its students to perform the role of practitioner...it is basic precept of social work education that the two interrelate components of curriculum – classroom and field – are of equal importance within the curriculum (CSWE, 2008b, p. 8).

Shulman (2005) asserts that:

the signature pedagogies are important because they implicitly define what counts as knowledge in the field and how things become known. They define how knowledge is analyzed, criticized, accepted or discarded. They define the functions of expertise in the field, the locus of authority and the privileges of rank and standing (p. 54).

**Bologna Agreement**

In 1999, representatives of 29 European countries had signed a declaration in Bologna committing their countries to the development of a common space of higher education by the year 2010 (Bollag, 2003). This common space required a thorough reform of higher education in many countries and is the first reform ever undertaken in Europe as a whole. The Bologna reform proposals seek to outline and order degrees so that each level has both academic integrity and public application. As well as, this reform is also intending to harmonize academic credits and degrees across the European states.
This chapter presents an overview of the organization of the contents of this study. The thesis rationale at the outset explains why the study was undertaken and how its research data have been gathered. Also included is the conceptual framework defining some of the terms that are used throughout the thesis.

In the following chapter, selected topics related to the research questions are identified. The results of the literature review situate the study within the theoretical and empirical context of what we know, the gaps and limitations in what is known, and current debates surrounding the topic. By providing a theoretical and empirical context for the study, the literature review also helps to inform or enlighten the research findings.
CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

Research findings, developed in 2003 at the University of Canberra by James and Tranter, shows that higher education does develop a broad range of generic skills necessary for successful participation in any area of the workplace and, as well, in dealing with new situations arising in their personal and working lives. The underlying idea is that education should assist students in acquiring the skills and abilities needed in their future professions, and in society as a whole. Additionally, while working as professionals, students will need to develop their competencies continually throughout their lives. Hopefully, they will not only be able to anticipate and pro-actively respond to future developments but, as well, help to manage and promote change in their professional and personal lives (Biemans, et al., 2004).

Related to the assumption that higher education should allow students to successfully participate in current and future societies, Delors (1999) points out that the concept of “learning throughout life thus emerges as one of the cornerstones of the twenty-first century concept of education” (p. 20). Lifelong learning can be defined as:

a continuous, stimulating and supportive process, initiated in regular education, supporting needs, possibilities and experiences of persons, to develop their abilities to acquire competencies necessary for personal development, and professional functioning in their own organisations and the rapidly changing society (Biemans et al., 2004, p. 524).
The acquisition of competencies is not only essential for effective participation in work, but is also essential for effective participation both in further education and in other facets of adult life. As well, competencies are not seen as automated, trained behaviors but, rather, as mindful and thoughtful capabilities, involving the skilled application of underlying understandings (Guthrie, Harris, Hobart, and Lundberg, 1995).

Throughout this chapter, 10 themes related to post-secondary education and CBE will be developed in the following order:

1. an overview of the forces that are challenging universities is presented;
2. the learning process at post-secondary education is reviewed;
3. an overview of curriculum perspectives are outlined;
4. a chronological overview of the concept of competency and the CBE model, related to the main learning theories, is provided;
5. the philosophical and theoretical and foundations of CBE from several different viewpoints are presented and described;
6. various competency categories are identified;
7. CBE curriculum characteristics are outlined;
8. challenges using the CBE curriculum model program are reviewed;
9. criticisms of the competency model are given; and
10. an overview of the history of social work education in five countries is presented.
2.1 Overview of the forces that are challenging post-secondary education:

Why is change necessary?

The literature reveals four interrelated factors that are exerting pressure on post-secondary education to adopt new missions and strategies:

2.1.1 Globalizations trends

The post-secondary education environment around the world is constantly changing. This environment of change is affecting both current conditions and potential future roles for universities. As a result of this ongoing change, post-secondary education is facing unique opportunities and challenges.

Aubrey (2005) indicates that globalization trends and innovations in instructional technologies are the two main factors currently influencing higher education systems. The analysis and understanding of these two factors will illuminate or inform educators and administrators and thus help them lead change in the most desirable direction within their own specific post-secondary contexts. As well, the complexities and implications of globalization may also influence the missions of universities in a variety of new ways. First, however, it is necessary to understand how Aubrey defines globalization. He says:

In the context of higher education and one of its main functions, teaching students, the [globalization] phenomenon is often described as a process of opening closed or semi-closed as well as expanding markets for educational services. Market forces alone, however, do not further globalization; there are also influences of technological advents, including the Internet. Higher education institutions are also undergoing
organizational and behavioural changes as they seek new financial resources, face new competition, and seek greater prestige domestically and internationally (Aubrey, 2005, p. 1).

There are a variety of trends which demonstrate the influence of the globalization process on post-secondary education. For example, global networks for academics and researchers have grown significantly. Internationally, efforts are being made to harmonize and standardize undergraduate and graduate degree programs. This has occurred in the European Union over the last two decades through the Bologna Agreement. Many higher education institutions are recruiting relatively new pools of students outside their own national borders. Globalization has also “encouraged the worldwide spread of an assessment and quality assurance movement in higher education...and introduced new challenges and opportunities for members of the academic profession” (Altbach and Forest, 2007, p. 2).

Giddens and Castell (cited by Aubrey, 2005) argue that “the process of globalization is a force more powerful than industrialization, urbanization, and secularization combined” (p. 3). Developing the same idea, Friedman (1999) points out that globalization is “the inexorable integration of markets, nation-states and technologies to a degree never witnessed before” (p. 3).

On the other hand, some groups of scholars and activists view globalization not as an inexorable process but, rather, as a deliberate ideological project of economic liberalization that subjects states and individuals to ever
more intense market force pressures (McMichael 2000; Hirts and Thompson 2002). In that vein, Petras and Veltmeyer (2001) contend that:

Globalization was created by deliberate policies put in place by powerful states under the control of dominant classes, and that it is not a structural part of the capitalist system-it is instead an ideological smokescreen used to divert attention away from the resurgence of imperialist powers (p. i).

According to Cox and Light (2001), post-secondary “no longer simply resides in society, it is of society, and being of society it has increasingly become subject to each society’s prevailing ideologies” (p. 2). In other words, post-secondary education no longer simply shapes society through the contribution of knowledge but is, rather, shaped by society through the specification of what constitutes knowledge (a dialectic relationship/process).

To present a more complete overview of the complexity of globalization in influencing the future of post-secondary education, Vincent-Lancrin (2004) developed a framework for six university settings. Their framework summarizes and includes key dimensions and settings that may serve to clarify some possible misunderstandings in identifying the driving forces and interrelated factors currently affecting universities in countries which belong to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). Two dimensions Vincent-Lancrin (2004) use in designing and organizing the six university settings are the range of programs offered and the range of educational participation (see Appendix A).
Related to the range of programs offered, at one end of the continuum a limited number of institutions grant degrees and have regulatory bodies to determine the kind of knowledge deemed sufficient to warrant awarding a degree. At the other end of this continuum, a variety of institutions grant degrees and diplomas without following any regulatory body guidelines. As a result, these institutions may organize and offer a wider range of programs and knowledge content within those programs.

The second dimension, educational participation, is concerned with the age and composition – the demographics – of the student population. At one end of this continuum, initial education refers to universities focusing on the first levels of education for young students coming directly from high school. At the other end, lifelong learning refers to situations characterized by adults attending university periodically throughout their lives.

A summary of six different university settings follows (Vincent-Lancrin, 2004):

Setting 1: Traditional

Universities traditionally cater to a relatively large percentage of the younger population who attend for the purpose of obtaining certificates, degrees or other forms of accreditation for their learning. Universities pursue both teaching and research without excessive dependence on, or involvement with, the private sector. In OECD countries, governments continue to play a prominent role in funding, regulating, and managing universities. In other words, the
universities are still autonomous in most decision-making areas related to academic standards and the accreditation process.

Setting 2: Entrepreneurial Universities

These institutions have a more mixed public-private sector funding model, with university resources coming from a wide variety of sources. Along with the return from the intellectual property rights that it secures, research is seen as a very important and lucrative activity. Such universities take a market-oriented approach to operations without sacrificing basic academic values and the three missions of the university—teaching, research and community service—are well balanced, although there are differentiations among institutions based on their degree of autonomy and particular responsibilities or mandates. In addition, commercial dealings with international markets and the utilization of e-learning are important.

Setting 3: Free Market

Market forces are the main drivers of free market universities. Higher education is funded and regulated by private companies. As well, quality assurance and accreditation are usually linked to market mechanisms.

Market forces give rise to institutions that become specialised by function (teaching, research), field (business, humanities, etc.), and student populations (young students, part-time students, distance education students, adult education students, etc.). At the same time, business firms may grant certificates to their employees upon completion of internal corporate training programs and professional development activities.
With increasing student choices, there is greater competition to attract students, and tuition revenues make up a larger proportion of overall university income than for other types of universities. Such setting characteristically uses technology as a tool in their teaching and learning processes. Because the international dimension of the market is more important, research becomes more demand-driven and specialised, and yields important financial returns from intellectual property rights.

**Setting 4: Lifelong Learning and Open Education**

These universities are marked by universal access at all ages and there is much less emphasis on research than at free-market universities. Because the knowledge economy has flourished, higher education has become an important source for recurrent professional development financed by companies, governments and often individuals themselves seeking recognised skill upgrading. In the aging society of developed countries, more retired people enrol for non-professional reasons. Universities become learner and demand-centered, and also grow to be more teaching oriented through the provision of more short courses, distance education initiatives, and e-learning that usually take place away from traditional postsecondary settings. Governments or independent accrediting bodies are responsible for quality assurance and accreditation. Most research is done outside the formal higher education system and the best researchers usually move to private companies, specialised institutes or one of the few remaining elite universities. Corporations and corporate universities have a great influence in these settings because responsiveness to market forces is
very important in this scenario. Consequently, there is considerable business-sponsored investment in e-learning in such environments.

**Setting 5: Global Networks of Institutions**

Post-secondary studies in global networks become primarily market and demand-driven. The two main innovations here are that:

(1) learners define their own courses of study from among all available courses throughout the global post-secondary education network and design their own degree paths; and

(2) the higher education institutions increasingly seek to form partnerships with private and public institutions, and other sectors, including industry.

In such settings, the training content becomes more standardized and, possibly, embedded in technology and media (e.g., modular learning developed through partnerships with the computer games industry). The provision of, and market for, lifelong learning becomes more important, especially as education assumes a multiplicity of new forms. Most research in global networks is carried on outside the higher education process. There is a strong polarisation in academic status, with academic superstars and developers of learning tools achieving a (much) higher status than the average members of the teaching staff who tend to be less qualified and thus achieve a lower status. Programmes and courses matter more than institutions themselves and intellectual property rights for content and substance, as well as for teaching methods, yield high returns to their owners.
Setting 6: Diversity of Recognised Learning – the disappearance of universities

In this setting, the formal tertiary education sector disappears. People learn at work, at home, or elsewhere (e.g., libraries, computer centres) and are motivated by personal and professional considerations. Such learners learn throughout their lives while they become more and more independent by increasing their adeptness in the sharing of expertise with other people interested in the same field. The learning process itself becomes less rigid or formal. As with any skill, professional education requires hands-on practice, and may be transmitted within businesses through an apprenticeship system or by new sophisticated information technologies (e.g., on-line courses and e-learning).

Such technology is an enabler for the generation and dissemination of information and knowledge outside traditional educational settings. Thus, global networking becomes even important and extends beyond the institutions themselves. People learn in different ways, and learning takes the model of open course education (mostly free and non-commercial) involving multiple partnerships between individuals and institutions. Relevant knowledge and experience acquired in all life situations is acknowledged through the formal assessment of that knowledge and experience by specialised assessment bodies.

To complement the Vincent-Lacrin (2004) analysis, Aubrey (2005) suggests that the globalization process is, at the same time, also local and therefore “delineating the experience and responses of differing institutions may
help [one] readily understand the true influence of globalization and the future path for higher education” (p. 2).

Given the reality and influence of globalization on approaches to higher education, there are interconnected factors that need to be scrutinized through a systematic analysis. Some questions may guide this reflection at the universities are: What are the possible missions of universities? What are their potential sources of new or increased funding? How can the responsibility of the university to society in this rapidly evolving context be reinforced? How might the changes being considered affect the learning and teaching processes, as well as the role and the position of the university in society? and What might be the impact on learners, academics, the society and the economy?

2.1.2 Knowledge society

The development and transmission of knowledge has, and is expected to, become increasingly important for growth in developed, transitional, and developing economies. In other words, knowledge intensive activities represent an important aspect of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP). The continuous development of ICT is often considered one of the drivers of the knowledge economy (Vincent-Lancrin, 2004).

The role of ICT in higher education is already well established and will likely continue to grow in importance during the coming decades, especially in university teaching, research, and administration. Based on web, mobile or other technologies, e-learning is becoming a major method to deliver distance education and is increasingly used to complement traditional face to face
educational instruction (OECD, 2005). Aubrey (2005) indicates that instructional and computer technologies are perhaps the most significant source of a coming revolution in the higher education sector.

For Aubrey (2005) instructional and computer technologies are opening new markets and fostering a revolution in the traditional university organizations “on-line distance education, fundamentally alter the delivery of higher education courses and degree programs” (p. 6).

Altbach and Forest (2007) argue that technology is “a second key which is shaping the higher education landscape of the 21st century” (p. 2). Currently, the internet offers an array of information resources previously available only in a few university libraries and laboratories. This has very significant implications for productive research collaborations among faculties across borders. In addition, immediate access to the perspectives and cultural values of other teachers and learners around the world has been dramatically expanded and enriched.

In order to foster a greater understanding of such rapid technological change the following questions might assist reflection on this new reality in the near future: (1) What kind of curricula best prepare students for participation in a knowledge society?; and (2) Will ICT lead to changes in the provision of research and teaching processes?

2.1.3 Demand, access, and funding in post-secondary education

In the field of demographics and participation, Vincent-Lancrin (2004) suggests that in most OECD countries there has been increasing demand for post-secondary education resulting in mass education. In addition, demographic
changes in school age populations show a continuous decline in the number of young people enrolled. There is a corresponding increase in demand for post-secondary education coming from other, non-traditional types of students, such as older students, retirees and international students from countries in stages of transition and development.

Although considerable progress has been achieved in access to, and participation in, educational systems in developing countries, educational opportunities remain limited. This is particularly evident at the post-secondary level and is a critical, limiting factor in economic development in those countries (World Bank, 2002).

Aubrey (2005) argues that “the international market for students has existed for centuries, but it is now a growing factor which is driven by demand and by institutions’ market desires” (p. 4). Increasing international student enrolment is related to both academic and economic concerns. Considering the factors related to demographics and participation, the following question might be useful to initiate reflection on this topic: How would or should the pedagogy and organization of curricula be affected by change in the number, age, and origin of the student population?

Systems of higher education vary considerably within the OECD countries in terms of pedagogy and curricula organization. These university systems display different mixes of public and private funding for educational programs and research. In most OECD countries, where higher education is largely publicly funded, there are:
only six OECD countries where private incomes exceed 30% of the total income of universities: Korea (77%), the United States (66%), Japan (55%), Australia (49%), Canada (39%) and the United Kingdom (UK) (32%)...at the same time in non-OECD countries: Argentina (33.8%), Israel (43.5%), Indonesia (56.2%) and Chile (81.7%)” (Vincent- Lancrin, 2004, p. 249).

In respect to university research, there are two trends:

(1) a drop in research undertaken by the government sector and in government funding for research in university settings; and

(2) a corresponding increase in research carried out and financed by the private sector.

According to Aubrey (2005), international networks of academic research are replacing nationally driven and institutional research cultures. This is the result of a desire by many academics to interact collaboratively with colleagues around the world, Aubrey (2005) also expresses the view that the rise of new, non-traditional and alternative competitors “is being facilitated by the movement of national governments to deregulate higher education” (p. 6). Altbach and Forest (2007) noting the diversification and privatization of institutions of higher education, assert:

the private sector, in many countries, has expanded dramatically over the past several decades. Private colleges and universities have grown in size and importance in parts of the world where the public sector traditionally
dominated, such as in Latin America and Eastern Europe (Altbach and Forest, 2007, p. 1).

Aubrey (2005) states that the change in recruitment markers for students and faculty is related to the fact that “some individual students seek the academic quality and credentials of programs offered by foreign universities…others look outside their local and national networks” (p. 4). Thus, there is a repositioning of existing institutions as they move into new markets and mergers “through the generation of new programs consolidating administrative structures and capital cost to bolster the market position of one or more institutions in order to recruit students and garner research funds” (Aubrey, 2005, p. 6). The international frameworks related to educational services provide new opportunities in that “students may enrol at any public university and at tuition rates reserved for domestic students” (Aubrey, 2005, p. 6).

Altbach and Forest (2007) indicate that one of the emerging trends in an international comparative view of contemporary post-secondary education is a worldwide growth in the demand for, and the provision of, access to higher education. This trend “has played the most prominent role in shaping higher education over the last half century. Demand for access to higher education is inevitable, as a postsecondary degree or certificate is seen as a key to social and economic success in many corners of the globe” (p. 1).

In the context of relevant modifications in funding for universities, it is important to ask what kind of influence market forces will have on universities? Will the university become more clearly demand-driven, leading to changes in its
internal management and teaching practices? To what extent, and how, should the curriculum adapt to changes in knowledge development where knowledge is being produced at the sites of application rather than at the universities? Are market forces the most appropriate determinant of what programs and courses are best suited to meet the practical needs of the professional, its practitioners, and the communities they serve?

2.1.4 Diversification and the privatizations of post-secondary institutions

The fourth factor to consider is the appearance of new actors in the higher education sector. Drucker (cited by Aubrey, 2005) points out that “old universities will soon be relics of the past” (p. 2). Corporate universities, consortia, and virtual universities have entered higher education and are changing established, traditional borders between institutions. The borders between different types of educational institutions are changing and becoming less clear cut. Universities no longer need to confine themselves to degree granting activities, but can move towards providing professional training in practical fields.

Partnerships between traditional universities have always existed for academic, as well as for research purposes. New scenarios see the inclusion of a greater number and variety of partners (educational institutions, providers, and even corporations) and increasing emphasis on partnerships, including commercial initiatives (Beerkens, 2004). According to Aubrey (2005), there is a trend toward organizational convergence: “the Bologna agreement marks a significant attempt at convergence, in part to facilitate cross-border articulation of
degree requirements, as well as to help foster a greater international flow of students and scholarly activity” (p. 5).

For Aubrey (2005), international networks of academic researchers replacing national and institutional cultures “is a critical phenomenon for the advancement of research and knowledge… international recognition has become the ultimate standard for assessing the research and scholarly quality of individual faculty and academic departments” (p. 4). Aubrey (2005) indicates that international collaboration is necessary because “many institutions are seeking association with other universities… these constitute formal agreements between academic institutions to offer new degree programs” (p. 5). As well, it is possible to identify a trend toward organizational convergence that means “those institutions and national systems that move toward convergence, particularly in degree requirements, will be significantly more competitive internationally” (Aubrey, 2005, p. 5). The result is increasing global interaction and interconnectedness that is related to the increasing importance of global links among academic institutions that accommodates arrangements among those institutions in different countries and offshore branch campuses.

After reviewing different but, at the same time, complementary views and ideas related to the driving forces that are challenging post-secondary education, it is apparent that post-secondary education finds itself situated in an increasingly complex environment throughout the world. The description of the main characteristics, trends, and factors in the university environment represents the first step toward understanding the intricate, new reality of contemporary higher
education and to identifying various motivations for improving, updating or otherwise reforming and renewing educational programs.

All the complex factors presented here will have profound implications for academics who are leading programme design and development at universities. It is possible that while the mechanisms to ensure appropriate quality (accreditation and regulatory bodies) are being implemented, the post-secondary institutions will face an identity crisis.

Aubrey (2005) argues that “there is a sense that higher education tends to be extremely conservative and generally unwelcoming of curricular reform” (p. 5). However, as indicated above, there are ongoing external factors and considerations pressuring post-secondary education institutions to restructure their academic programs. Curricula design must have a framework that considers the values and principles of each profession, as well related socio-cultural, political, and economic factors. This framework should support disciplinary integration and collaboration.

Overall, as each university defines its mission statement and strategic plan, its plan should specify what kind of post-secondary institution it aspires to be and, consequently, also articulate a specific ideological and political position. Thus, programs and curricula would need to consider, reflect on, and address the external forces exerting pressure for change, and their implications for the post-secondary education’s programming. To this end, all programmes, curricula, and pedagogical strategies would generally be rooted in a reflective representation of the institution’s vision and mission.
2.2 The learning process at post-secondary education

2.2.1 Learning gaps

Student learning has always been an area of concern for researchers. In discussions on student learning in higher education, Cox and Light (2001) point out a schema of learning gaps that “characterize the present and future professional lives of our students” (Cox and Light, 2001, p. 46). These gaps exist among different areas of the teaching and learning processes.

There is a substantial body of empirical literature on university students' self-perceived approaches to learning, but evidence on instructors' perceptions of the way they facilitate their students' learning is less prominent (Cox and Light, 2001). According to Hughes (1999), the learning gap is “the difference between what we know about effective learning and what is currently happening in the classroom” (para.1). Simply put, there is difference between the theoretical goals and expectations of the teaching and learning processes, and the reality of what is actually happening in the classroom.

Cox and Light (2001) investigated the nature of the gap between the students' learning approaches and their instructors' teaching orientations and practices aimed at facilitating those approaches. After reviewing relevant research and literature in terms of how learning might occur, Cox and Light (2001) classified the gaps under the following categories:
Recall and understanding

To explain the meaning of the recall and understanding gap, it is first necessary to review differing approaches to learning. Entwistle (1997) identifies three different categories of learning.

First, the deep approach to learning suggests that students may be able to understand ideas on their own. This implies that ideas being considered are personally meaningful to each student. As well, students draw upon their own experiences and previously acquired knowledge while engaging in an interactive process with these ideas. Some of the components of this transformative process are: relating ideas to previous knowledge and experience, looking for patterns and underlying principles in the ideas and concepts they study, verifying and analysing evidence, and formulating possible conclusions.

Second, the surface approach to learning is intended to meet course requirements. It implies studying through the memorizing of facts and routine repeatable procedures. There is little reflection on the knowledge gained using this approach, and learners often experience frustration when trying to make sense of new ideas and/or apply their knowledge in new situations.

Third, in the strategic approach to learning, students seek to achieve the highest possible grades through a consistent, proactive study effort that includes finding the right conditions and materials for studying, managing time and effort wisely, and being alert to assessment requirements and criteria (Entwistle, 1997). In considering the strategic approach to learning, it is important to reflect on the applicability of pedagogical strategies, and the teaching and the learning
environments, which might help or hinder students struggling to close the learning gap (Cox and Light, 2001).

**Understanding and the ability to practice effectively**

The nature of the gap between understanding and the ability to practice effectively is critically important for learning. Kolb (as cited by Cox and Light, 2001, p. 5) defines learning as a “process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience”. This implies that the learning process should occur in every moment because learning is facilitated in an environment where there is a dialectic tension between immediate experience and analytical reflection.

There are three important features in the learning process. First, meaningful experience that requires an initial body of knowledge, abilities, attitudes, and values shared between the student and the teaching professional in a learning environment. Second, reflection on experience refers to reflection in action, as might occur when the student is involved in experiences that simultaneously require a consideration of both knowledge and practice. The third factor is a learning environment or learning situation in which students have the opportunity to develop abilities and skills and to put their understanding into practice.

Cox and Light (2001) explain that the experiential learning cycle incorporates a feedback process directed towards active experimentation and the application of particular abilities that are required. These abilities differ according various curricula, but include the basic, generic activities such as writing essays,
giving presentations, engaging in a discussion and research, and undertaking projects (Cox and Light, 2001).

Having the abilities and wanting to use them

The gap between having ability and being motivated to use it represents the challenge to students to apply their acquired knowledge and recognize that the experience of learning needs to be a part of a lifelong professional development process. It is necessary that people willingly engage in this process throughout their professional lives. The motivation to use this knowledge is based on personal feelings, commitment, and self-confidence.

Students might understand and construct the social and emotional context for wanting to make commitments. The combination of intellect and efficient teaching practices alone are not sufficient to enable students to put understanding into practice. A successful teaching process that supports the development of knowledge involves deconstructing some of the intensely dualist and purely relativist positions that do not consider the application of the knowledge (Cox and Light, 2001).

Wanting to use the abilities and actually doing

The key elements to overcoming the gap between wanting to do and actually doing are related to the concept of a learner who is self-directed and takes responsibility for his or her own learning experience. Thus, the student's knowledge and understanding might be a rich resource for him or her personally as well as for others. Learners need to have the motivation and readiness to learn that recognizes a need to know or to do something in order to perform
successfully. All of these central elements should be stimulated and grow when students have the opportunity to take responsibility for, and control of, their learning. More specifically, methods and procedures provide the foundation for the learning environment (Cox and Light, 2001) required to bridge this gap.

_Actually doing and ongoing change_

This dynamic refers to using skills and abilities, and deciding to change. Change is an ever present and a defining feature of the 21st century. It involves the ability to operate within, and switch between, different synchronous perspectives and frameworks of thinking and action. According to Cox and Light (2001) some of the most important considerations in overcoming this gap are that students:

(1) might be able to make a series of ongoing commitments to reach a goal and to overcome challenges;
(2) require capabilities to performs different or multiple roles which can be sustained simultaneously;
(3) require capabilities for the practice in multiple frameworks of knowledge and responsibility to critique and reflect;
(4) require capabilities for the management of this multiplicity and synchronicity of thought and action; and
(5) require capabilities for the continuous integration, critiquing, and development of the synchronous multiplicity in future learning (Cox and Light, 2001).
These descriptive schemas of different areas of learning may be useful when examining and analyzing learning processes at universities. Without doubt, it is possible to say that students and educators are the principal actors. Both are connected in an interactive and dialogical process where meaningful integration of knowledge, understanding and practice are key elements. These elements do not exist in isolation, but are inherent in the learning environment. Students do not suddenly become deep thinkers, and possession of knowledge does not by itself guarantee effective practice. In other words, teaching must create a learning environment where students can incorporate holistic, complex and epistemologically sophisticated strategies at every level of the learning process.

2.2.2. Critical reflexive thinking

To address the issues raised in the Cox and Light (2001) proposal, higher education must focus on developing critical reflective thinking, that is, the capacity to understand how individual and world views and values relate to (and affect) one another. The development of a critical reflective thinking facility provides graduates with the capacity to evaluate information and organizational practices, rather than simply accepting them at face value. Developing the ability to continually evaluate and to adapt to change in a flexible and proactive way is crucial.

Critical reflective thinking is an important dimension within this process that needs to be included and evaluated in any assessment of generic and specific competencies developed and utilized in higher education. This dimension defines a type of learning that has been called transformative since it
describes a graduate who has ‘learned how to learn’ and is thus able to both anticipate and lead change (James and Tranter, 2003). The ability to lead change may develop more fully after some years of on the job practice.

Complementary to this, Schon (1983) challenges the conventional technical rational view of professional practice. Schon argues that practitioners not only apply formal or technical knowledge to solve problems but, in reality, also use a form of tacit knowledge, that is, knowledge linked to specific activities that he calls knowing in action. In addition, practitioners develop repertoires of solutions and learn how to reframe difficult problems in order to be able to deal with them more readily.

As a result, their professional practice can be seen more as a form of “artistry” than “applied theory.” For Schon (1983) the critical competence for all professionals is “reflection.” This is important for initial skill development, practice and continuous improvement. Two types of reflection include “reflection in action” that occurs during an activity and “reflection about action” that occurs following an activity. Schon views these concepts as the key to both acquiring all other competencies and to maintaining a process of continuous improvement (Schon, 1983).

Another important consideration is the incorporation of the idea that students can also learn in different environments. This concept is recognized as the ‘informal’ learning process and includes “anything we do outside of organized courses to gain significant knowledge, skills or understanding. It occurs either both independently or with other people” (Livingstone, 2002, p. 2). According to
Livingstone (1999), if there is to be recognition that we are now living in permanent learning culture which constitutes a knowledge society, education and workplace gaps should be overcome.

2.3 Overview of curriculum perspectives

Scott (2008) in the book *Critical Essays on Major Curriculum Theorists* indicates that the development of a curriculum strategy can be treated as a series of episodes. According to Scott (2008), there are seven episodes in the history of a curriculum: “scientific curriculum-making; intrinsic worthwhile knowledge; innovative pedagogical experimentation; socio cultural learning; critical pedagogy; instrumentalism; and school effectiveness school improvement” (Scott, 2008, p. 5). Scott (2008) further indicates that the episodes or moments in the history of curricula should be reiterative, not sequential, but overlapping, reconstitute themselves in different guises, and assume different forms in practice.

Flinders and Thornton (2004) assert that “curriculum studies is a complex, sometimes messy undertaking” (p. x). It is also important to note that any curriculum is subject to cultural and political influences, economic trends, philosophical concerns and orientations, and social concerns. In addition, contemporary models of curriculum theory and research are based on increasingly diverse disciplinary perspectives and inquiry methods.

According to Flinders and Thornton (2004), from a chronological perspective, the curriculum development process should be organized taking into account the work of prominent figures in the following areas: (1) early traditions in
curriculum scholarships, including the work of authors such as Franklin Bobbitt (1918), John Dewey (1929), Jane Addams (1908), and George Counts (1959); (2) the second notion sets to illustrate the optimism and contradictions of an era marked by unparalleled national support for curriculum reform, as illustrated by authors such as Ralph Tyler (1949), John Goodlad (1964), James Popham (1972), Elliot Eisner (1967), and Philip Jackson (1968) who analysed and debated the nature of curriculum development in the new era ushered in by the launch of Sputnik I in 1957; (3) reconceptualizing the curriculum theory that brought into focus the socio-cultural and personal dimensions of curriculum, drawing upon the work of writers like Paulo Freire (1970), Maxine Green (1971), William Pinar (1978), Mortimer Adler (1982), Nel Noddings (1983), Milbrey MacLoughlin (1976), and Michael Apple (1986) who represent this political and reconceptualist movement; (4) recognizing the various streams of both change and continuity in current scholarship on curriculum development, noting the work of contemporary authors like Jonathan Silin (1995), William Doll (1993), Peter Hlebowitsh (1999), Linda McNeil (2000), David Flinders (1996), Elliot Eisner (2001), and Geneva Gay (2003) who are making major contributions to the discussion of a great many topics such as the rise and results of scientific methods used in curriculum making, public schools and immigrant children, challenges for schools to build new social orders, orientation of the curriculum-maker, theory of the curriculum and modern education as well as scholarly circles, including journals.
This summary of ideas and views from some prominent figures mentioned by Flinders and Thornton (2004) represents different curriculum genres and should clarify the types of learning processes connected to learning theories such as behaviouristic, cognitive, and constructivist that are intended to take place in schools and classrooms.

2.3.1 A prologue to curriculum studies

In the first stage, Bobbitt (cited by Scott, 2008) was convinced that professional knowledge applicable to curriculum could be found in the logic of scientific management. For Bobbitt (cited by Scott, 2008) curriculum development is a linear process that starts with the development of clear objectives or goals, is followed by the selection of content (specified in behavioural terms), and finishes with the evaluation of that process to see if all the objectives have been met. According to Bobbitt (cited by Flinders and Thornton, 2004) diagnostic testing and other procedures proposed by behavioural psychologists would make possible predictions of the kinds of errors students typically make. He saw the school as an agent of social reproduction (Flinders and Thornton, 2004).

Bobbitt’s work was contrasted by the ideas of Dewey (cited by Flinders and Thornton, 2004) who believed that all education proceeds by the participation of the individual in the social consciousness of the race. Dewey (cited by Flinders and Thornton, 2004) indicates that “the only true education comes through the stimulation of the child’s power by the demands of the social situations in which he finds himself” (p. 17). For Dewey, the school was an
integral part of community life, and it was also an instrument for social change (Flinders and Thornton, 2004).

2.3.2 Curriculum at education’s center stage

Flinders and Thornton (2004) identify the second stage of curriculum development as one that “witnessed unprecedented federal and private support for curriculum development projects” (p. 47). The work of Tyler (cited by Flinders and Thornton, 2004) identifies four design elements of curriculum:

(1) all aspects of the educational program;
(2) critical knowledge;
(3) suggestions from subject matter specialists; and
(4) educational objectives.

On the other hand, Goodlad (cited by Flinders and Thornton, 2004) critiques the national curriculum reform in the United States from the viewpoint of a curriculum generalist. For Goodlad, two important considerations in the reform process were the focus of the project on subject-centered curriculum and the top-down approach to curriculum planning. These two elements were not enough to address the fundamental questions in curriculum planning: “What determines content worth learning? How should that content be taught?” (Flinders and Thornton, 2004, p. 49). Both Tyler’s rationale and Goodlad’s critique of national reform serve to underscore questions of educational purpose. In this context, Popham (cited by Flinders and Thornton, 2004) argues that:

Pre-specified, clearly stated, and measurable objectives are essential to curriculum planning for at least two reasons. First, educators without such
objectives would not know the outcomes they seek to realize, and thus have little basis for deciding how to select or organize classroom activities. Second, without objectives, an evaluator would not know what to look for in determining a program’s success or failure (p. 49).

A dissenting position to the objectives movement is represented by Eisner (cited by Flinders and Thornton, 2004) who questions both the practicality of predetermined objectives and the underlying assumptions on which they are based. Eisner argued that “the rationality of teaching is more dynamic, more interactive, and less mechanistic than the proponents of behavioural objectives had assumed” (Flinders and Thornton, 2004, p. 49). Scott (2008) identifies this approach as intrinsically worthwhile knowledge. Curriculum theorists were concerned with knowledge and, in particular, transcendental knowledge that provides a rational or justification for the school’s curriculum. Some aspects of the knowledge domain need to be acquired before others (i.e., sequentially) and to be arranged in a reliable hierarchy. In addition, theorists suggest that a curriculum is always selected from a range of human activities. From these ideas, three types of curriculum result:

1. logical delineation between domain of knowledge;
2. distinctive mental or cognitive operation; or
3. cross cultural social distinctions (Scott, 2008).

2.3.3 Reconceptualising curriculum theory

The third stage in curriculum theory is represented by the Reconceptualise Movement. Their new ideas underlying curriculum design and development are
related to the student-centered view. In this view, “students have some significant say in what they have to study and how they study or both” (Flinders and Thornton, 2004, p. 120).

This perspective presents the curriculum as an innovative pedagogical experiment. Because social change is constant and difficult to predict, curriculum design should recognize that reality is dynamic and complex. The implications of understanding the curriculum as an innovative pedagogical experiment presuppose a view of society as a community of educated people opposed to technical and market oriented approaches (Scott, 2008). At the same time, curriculum development focuses on pedagogy and the development of socio-cultural models of learning.

The theorists of the reconceptualist movement see society and culture as key dimensions of learning that are contradictory to imitative and didactic forms of pedagogy. From this perspective of learning, the person and her or his environment are seen as mutually constructed and mutually constructing. The learners act with and on the environment, shaping and modifying themselves and, at the same time, their environment (Scott, 2008). As well, this perspective supports the idea that schooling and the curriculum always represent an introduction to, preparation for, and legitimization of a particular form of power structure. This critical pedagogy unmasks hegemonies and critique ideologies with the political and ethical intent of helping to empower students and social groups. Prominent supporters of critical pedagogy have been concerned with understanding social reproduction or the status quo, student socialization, the
hidden curriculum, inequality in all its various guises, and curriculum knowledge (Scott, 2008).

Due to the fact that critical pedagogy plays an important role in the educational process in Latin America, it is important to present and clarify the influence of this approach on that continent. This reflection includes the epistemological, theoretical, methodological, practical, and political fundamentals of popular education. These elements are based on the work and legacy of Brazilian educator Paulo Freire.

In Latin America, one of the main developments in educational reform over the past two decades has been the rise of popular education and participatory research. Popular education and participatory action research are two central traditions of informal education in Latin America. Popular education is highly critical of mainstream education, and seeks to empower the marginalized, the disenfranchised, and the poor (Torres, 1992).

For Freire (2000) the principal concerns of adult education are not pedagogical or methodological in the strictest sense but are, rather, its political application as a form of advocacy for oppressed social groups. Freire (2000) suggests that adult education constitutes pedagogy for social transformation and, in this sense, should be described itself as a form of “cultural action.” The central objective of cultural action can be described by the term “consciousness-raising”.

For Freire (2000) knowledge is a social construct which constitutes a process of discursive production and is not merely focused on an end product consisting of an accumulated cluster of information or facts. Freire’s pedagogy
emerges as a critique of the traditional (authoritarian) educational paradigm, and also of its competitor in Latin America, positivist pedagogy, that was an important approach in the region during the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s.

Freire proposes a non-authoritarian and directive pedagogy of liberation as an overt challenge to existing pedagogical models. He regards existing pedagogical models as a form of banking education that treats knowledge as isolated, non-historical facts to be simply deposited into the minds of students as a banker might deposit funds into an account. Freire's conceptions of pedagogy hold that the teacher is, at the same time, a student and the student is a teacher (Freire, 2000).

Popular education projects first arose from a political and social analysis of the living conditions of the poor and their most pressing problems, including unemployment, malnourishment, and poor health. Efforts were made to engage the poor and foster in them an individual and collective awareness of those conditions among them. Second, these people base their educational practice on collective and individual previous experiences (as previous knowledge), and they work in groups rather than on an individual basis. Third, the notion of education provided by these projects is related to the concrete skills or abilities that they try to actualize in the poor. Thus, these projects strive to encourage and increase self-reliance among the participants (Freire, 2000).

In association with Freire's ideas, Green (cited by Flinders and Thornton (2004) indicates that:
the curriculum must engage students interior journey... it may result in the effecting of new syntheses within experience; it may result in an awareness of the process of knowing, of believing, of perceiving. It may even result in an understanding of the ways in which meaning has been sediment in an individual’s own personal history (p. 121).

According to Flinders and Thornton (2004), authors such as Pinar and Apple suggest that two important elements of reconceptualist curriculum theory are its “value-laden perspective and its politically emancipatory intent” (Flinders and Thornton, 2004, p. 121). Flinders and Thornton (2004) consider Pinar a leading light of the reconceptualist movement. Pinar (cited by Flinders and Thornton, 2004) observes that the two main curriculum perspectives – the traditionalist and the conceptual – empiricist – were both inherently incomplete. He thus advocates for more politicized curriculum theories and curricula development that examine and analyze how the contemporary socio-political order is structured and maintained. Reconceptualists advocate for the suppression of or liberation of traditional and prescriptive perspectives in the knowledge building process. Complementing this view Adler (cited by Flinders and Thornton, 2004) holds that the traditional intellectual foundations of the best knowledge framework are an insufficient basis for curriculum theorizing. Most importantly, the best knowledge was static and unconcerned with the important question: “What is the nature of the justice?”

In fact, the best curriculum has been traditionally preserved for the elite instead of being used to promote social equality and to ensure a good quality of
life for all. This limiting of the best curricula to an elite is totally opposed to Adler’s thoughts and ideas related to a politically classless society. Adler believed that the best education has to be the best for all. In addition, the curriculum needs to be taught well and take into consideration the fact that the children are educable in varying degrees.

2.3.4 After a century of curriculum thought

As a final stage, Flinders and Thornton (2004) present some contemporary issues in curriculum study. Their range of topics takes into consideration the influence and contributions of curriculum scholarship as articulated by current authors. As well, Flinders and Thornton (2004) consider the inseparability of change and continuity in the field’s contemporary context. Some of the topics considered by the scholars are: gender and equity; HIV/AIDS; post-modern perspectives on curriculum; voluntary national tests to improve education; the effects of accountability in education; school reform; multicultural education; and cultural literacy and curriculum integration.

2.4 The concept of competency and Competency-Based Education: A chronological overview

2.4.1 Conceptual review of competency

The term competency is used in several contexts and has a range of meanings ascribed to it. As well, the literature reflects a debate about the nature of the concept of competency. In order to clarify and understand the origins of this controversy, it is first necessary to encapsulate relevant information related to the concept of “competency” and the “competency-based education” model.
Guthrie et al., (1995) explain that the concept of competency “is being shaped and moulded as it travels along its exploratory way” (p.5). Consequently, both historical and contemporary literature reveals the existence of various conceptualizations of just what constitutes competency. Writers in this field acknowledge the difficulty in framing a single and comprehensive definition of competency and CBE (Hackett, 2001).

Gale and Pol (1975) point out that competency, by definition, is tied to a specific position or role. The ligatures binding the two are abilities, knowledge, skills, judgment, attitudes and the values required for successful functioning in the specified position or role. Spady (1977) defines competencies as “indicators of successful performance in life-role activities, as distinguished from the discrete cognitive, manual, and social capacities” (p. 10).

Chickering and Claxton (1981) state that “competence is internal and external, situational and personal; competence is limited by a person’s perceptions, neurological system, and character; achieving competencies requires diverse learning styles; competence itself is a motivational force” (p. 11). Ewens (as cited in Chickering and Claxton,1981) suggests that “competence is what the Greeks called Arete, a power which has been trained and developed so that it has become a characteristic of the person who has it” (p. 9).

Raylatt and Lohan (1995) take the view that “competencies are a description of the essential skills, knowledge, and attitudes required for effective performance in a work situation” (p. 47) while Bridges (1996) suggests that one of the features common to all forms of competence is the highlighting of what
people do and how they perform appropriately in a range of settings. In the same sense, Pithers (1998) observes that “competency is about what attributes underlie successful performance” (p. 2). In the view of Carraccio, Englander, Ferentz, Martin, and Wolfsthal (2002) “competency is a complex set of behaviours built on the components of knowledge, skills, attitudes, and competency as personal ability” (p. 362).

The report of the National Post-Secondary Education Cooperative Working Group on Competency-Based Initiatives in Post-Secondary Education (NPEC) at the United States (2002) states that “competencies are the bridge between traditional credit hour measures of student achievement and the learning revolution... a competency is defined as a combination of skills, abilities, and knowledge needed to perform a specific task” (p. vii).

In 1997, the OECD created the DeSeCo Project (Definition and Selection of Competencies) with the goal of providing “a sound conceptual framework to inform the identification of key competencies and strengthen international surveys measuring the competence level of young people and adults” (DeSeCo, 2005, p. 5). Under Switzerland’s leadership and in collaboration with the Program for International Students Assessments (PISA), experts from a variety of disciplines, stakeholders, and policy analysts were brought together to produce a framework of competencies. This ongoing project recognizes the importance of diversity in values and priorities across countries and cultures. It has also acknowledged the increasing challenges of the global economy.
The DeSeCo framework of key competencies provides a concrete explanation and definition of competency and is in accord with my view that the concept of competence should be rooted in a holistic vision of the nature of competency. According to DeSeCo (2005) a competency is “more than just knowledge and skills. It involves the ability to meet complex demands by drawing on and mobilizing psychosocial resources (including skills and attitudes) in a particular context” (p. 4). In the 21st century, individuals face collective challenges, such as balancing economic growth with environmental sustainability, as societies. In order to meet these increasingly complex challenges, individuals will need an ever-wider range of competencies. In other words, to meet their goals, individuals need competencies which require more than just the mastery of certain narrowly defined skills” or, as DeSeCo says “sustainable development and social cohesion depend critically on the competencies of all of our population – with competencies understood to cover knowledge, skills, attitudes and values (DeSeCo, 2005, p. 4).” These relational competencies would provide individuals with a strong foundation on which they can face and effectively deal with societal challenges

Storey (2001) asserts competence is “a dynamic process that changes as experience, knowledge and skills develop through and in practice, and such should be viewed as a continuum” (p. 1). Edwards, Sanchez, and Sanchez (2004) indicate:

In the project “Tuning Educational Structures in Europe”, coordinated by the University of Deusto in Bilbao (Spain) and the University of Groningen
competence is defined as a dynamic combination of attributes with respect to the knowledge and its application, to the attitudes and responsibilities that describe the results of learning a determined program, or how the students will be able to develop at the end of the educative process (p. 8).

From these definitions, it is important to recognise that there are two generally contrasting views of competency. Chappell, Gonczi, and Hager (2000) name these views “narrow and broad” (p. 192). The narrow view presents competencies simply as standardized training outcomes or behaviours. Thus, this view is solely concerned with the achievement of pre-specified training goals and meeting certain, pre-defined skill standards. On the other hand, the broad view does not separate performance from competency, and argues that there are a large range of attributes that underpin competencies, including social, intellectual, and emotional factors.

This broad view tends to support my perspective related to the identification of two opposite poles on a continuum. One pole sees a competency as a standardized skill (static and minimalist), while the other pole promotes a developmental and elaborative construct interrelated with its social context.

It is reasonable to view competency as the connection between various types of knowledge. This includes not only pragmatic knowledge oriented to the production process, but also knowledge that articulates concepts of learning to be, learning to do and learning to interact; all of which promote understanding.
The concept of competency is linked to, or interdependent with its application to real life situations and its relation to other knowledge. This interdependence implies that knowledge makes the best sense in relation to the whole.

The elements of competence may be fragmented, and those individual elements do not constitute competency in and of themselves. For me competency is learning to do in a state of conscious awareness that one is, in fact, learning to be competent at something. Competency is learning to do in an active and shifting paradigm and, as such, it is knowledge in action that seeks not only to describe reality, but also to foster change. Competency not only identifies problems, but initiates a process that moves towards solutions. As a result, competency provides opportunities or windows to initiate transformations.

Competencies are developed through both formal learning and life experiences. According to DeSeCo (2005) a competency integrates three kinds of knowledge:

1. conceptual (learning to know);
2. procedural (how to do); and
3. interpersonal knowledge (how to relate).

The knowledge necessary to solve problems is not a mechanical transmission. Competencies allow the use of past experiences in new context. Some authors call this indefinable knowledge that suggests interdependence exists between previous knowledge and concrete experience, acquired and ongoing, in a person’s personal and work life (Whitty and Wilmott, 1991).
2.4.2 Historical foundations of Competency-Based education model

Several prominent authorities have written that the concept of CBE and its initial usages and applications are the most influential development in education in the second half of the 20th century (Gonder, 1978). According to Guthrie et al. (1995) the earliest quoted definition of CBE was put forward by Elam in 1971 at the American Association of Colleges of Teacher Education Conference. The definition included three levels of descriptions, namely:

(1) Essential elements competencies (knowledge, skills, behaviour) to be demonstrated by the learner, criteria to be employed in assessing competencies, and assessment of the student’s competency;

(2) Implied characteristics includes instructions is individualized and personalized, the learning experience of the individual is guided by feedback, the program as a whole is systemic, the emphasis is on exit, not on entrance requirements, and instructions is modularized; and

(3) Related or desirable characteristics involve the program is field centered, there is a broad base for decision-making, the materials and experiences focus on concepts, skills, knowledge, both teachers and learners are designers of the instructional system, the program includes a research component and is open and regenerative, preparation is career continuous (Elam, 1971 cited by Guthrie et al. 1995, pp. 18-19)

Velde (1999) indicates that the competence model “has been and is currently being perceived as one answer – some would argue the right answer and some would argue the wrong answer – to the complexities and difficulties of
reform in education” (p. 443). In the literature, it is easy to see why CBE is the subject of an intense controversy in Australia, Great Britain, Canada, and United States (Jacobus, 2007).

Although a CBE model has been adopted and practiced widely in these countries, due to a rich variety of positions about how CBE should be defined, there is an ongoing, vigorous discussion of what, exactly, CBE really means. Often this variation in understanding is a result of the differing contexts in which CBE is applied and, as well, as protocols for its application.

The competency model has a long history and is linked to the philosophical foundations and approaches of educational and learning theories. Three of the most important learning theories are Behaviourism, Cognitive Theory, and Constructivism.

According to Schuman (1996), behaviourism is based on observable changes in individual behaviour. New behaviours need to be repeated until they become automatic responses, that is, internalized. The learner is focused on a clear goal and can respond automatically to the ordered cues that trigger the appropriate response for reaching the desired goal. In reality, however, learners may find themselves in situations where the learned or internalized stimulus for a correct response does not occur and, consequently, in such a situation, the learner may be unable to respond appropriately. For example, a worker who has been conditioned to respond to a certain cue at work will stop production when an anomaly occurs because he has not been trained to respond to the new situation.
For Donaldson (1984) cognitive theory focuses on the thought processes behind the behaviour. This process is psychological in nature and attempts to explain human behavior by understanding cognitive processes. The underlying assumption is that humans are logical beings making choices that are, or at least appear to be, most sensible to them.

Any observed changes in behaviour reflect something happening inside the learner’s mind. The goal of education is to enable learners to do a task consistently. The learner learns a way to accomplish a task, but it may not be the best way, or the most suited to the learner and his or her circumstances. For example, logging onto the internet on one computer may not be the same as logging in on another computer. In a new situation with a different computer, the learner should have the ability to construct potentially correct strategies for logging on with the different computer based on his or her previously acquired knowledge gained by means of a similar experience (i.e., logging on) with a different computer.

According to Schuman (1996), constructivism is based on the idea that individuals construct their own perceptions and perspectives of the world from both previous and ongoing individual experiences and circumstances. This adaptability and flexibility prepares the learner to solve problems in new and unpredictable situations. The learner is thus better able to interpret multiple realities and to deal creatively with real life situations. If learners can problem solve, they are better positioned to apply their existing knowledge to novel
situations. In a situation where conformity is prescribed, divergent thinking and action may cause conflict.

Through a review of the historical foundations of CBE, it is possible to recognise connections between CBE and various learning theories. Authors such as Achtenhagen and Grubb (2001) point out that the first task analysis model emerged in Moscow in the 1860s when Victor Della Vos developed the methods for task analysis based, in part, on the conditioning theory of Pavlov.

Soon after, these methods were used in the American movements for manual and technical training. Biemans, et al., (2004) relate a long history of competency-based education, including referencing to Bobbitt's approach in the 1920s. Bobbitt initiated a scientific analysis of human actions to identify the underlying abilities needed for higher performance. In the 1960s, a behaviourist approach for directly translating task descriptions into behavioural attainment targets triggered responses in instructional program design.

In the United States, interest in competence-based education and training developed during the 1960s and 1970s in the context of educational and curriculum reform, and various publications on competence-based organizational training and competence-based teacher training appeared (Biemans et al., 2004). The beginning of the modern CBE movement is related to the work of David McClelland, who argued that traditional academic examinations do not predict job performance or success in life (Brundrett, 2000).

Thus, during the 1970s, a cognitive approach led the change from the automatic behaviourist instructional models to a process that emphasised the
inner processes and structure of the mind as a person learns. The cognitive view of competencies includes attitudes and values as essential parts of student performance (Guthrie et al., 1995). It places emphasis on the person as a holistic being and allows for the considerable individual differences that characterise learners. As well, the movement to a cognitive framework poses questions about the purpose of knowledge, and highlights the importance of a more dynamic, rather than static, concept of competency (Fleming, 2006).

A study by Wood and Power (cited by Norris, 1991) considers competency from a developmental perspective. The authors view this perspective as resting both on an integrated deep structure of understanding and on the general ability to coordinate appropriate resources (internal cognitive, affective, and other) necessary for successful adaptation. Norris (1991) suggests this represents a very real shift in approach because the developmental approach to competency is not focused on measurable operational definitions. Currently, according to Guthrie, et al., (1995) CBE is being implemented in a multitude of forms in many and varied educational programs throughout the world.

A historical review of CBE further reveals that, initially, CBE features were influenced by vocational training and qualifications. This led to a narrowing of skills, knowledge and occupational focus. Criticisms of a limited view of CBE, increasing experience with CBE in differing educational contexts, and a variety of philosophical foundations for CBE are three major factors that have influenced the understanding and development of CBE over the years. The proponents of competence have helped to foster a richer conception of what CBE is than was
first utilized, based on more inclusive and holistic language when describing and applying the model.

2.5 Philosophical and theoretical foundations of the competency model

Norris (1991) presents an overview that demonstrates the range of philosophical foundations used to justify the competency model. He provides three different theories or constructs of competence:

(1) A behaviourist construct: Competence is treated as something a person is or should be able to do. It is a description of action, behaviour or outcome capable of demonstration and assessment;

(2) A cognitive construct: Competence as what a person knows and can do under ideal circumstances; and

(3) A generic construct: The generic competence approach favours the elicitation, through behavioural event or critical incident interviewing, of those general abilities associated with expert performers (p. 332).

Another exploration of the philosophical foundation of competency was presented by Gonczi in 1997. He distinguishes between three basic conceptions of the nature of competency: the behaviourist, the generic and the holistic.

In the behaviourist view, competence is conceived in terms of the discrete and observable behaviours associated with the completion of specific tasks. Evidence of possession of the competency is based on direct observation of performance. One advantage of conceptualising competencies in behavioural terms is that it facilitates course design, especially when the emphasis is on practical tasks (Gonczi, 1997). The behaviourist approach is not concerned with
the connections between the tasks, and ignores the possibility that the coming
together of tasks could lead to their transformation. This approach also ignores
underlying attributes, group processes, and their effects on performance.

The generic conception includes underlying attributes, such as knowledge
or critical thinking capabilities, and provides the basis for transferable or more
specific attributes. In this model, competencies are thought of as general
attributes, with little concern for the context in which they might be applied
(Gonczi, 1997). Generic competencies are perceived as important by several
professions (such as nursing, education, law, and health) and the names of
competency domains are similar. Gonczi (1997) however, argues that generic
competencies are limited by the fact that they teach and assess those general
attributes in isolation from actual professional practice. Thus, they are somewhat
disconnected or removed from future professional performance and tend to
ignore specific competencies which are exclusive to the professional area of
expertise, they support specific performance in the practical field.

Combining the generic and broad approaches creates a more holistic,
integrated competencies in terms of knowledge, abilities, skills and attitudes
displayed in the context of a carefully chosen set of realistic professional tasks or
intentional actions that are at an appropriate level of generality.

Velde (1999) indicates that, traditionally, competence has been perceived
in terms of individual attributes or a discrete set of tasks to be performed. To
Velde (1999), it remains somewhat confusing as to what a competency actually
is. Is it a personal attribute, an act or an outcome of behaviour? The author further suggests that the concern for defining competence has been expressed in a need for a more holistic approach. She presents an alternative idea of competency – from an interpretative, relational perspective. Velde (1999) also suggests that it is necessary for students and workers to have the opportunity to reflect on their practical experiences. If learners are actively involved in gaining a personally more useful understanding of their experiences, then they will be able to adapt learned competencies, as well as developing new ones, for dealing with the rapidly changing world.

Another analysis of a philosophical foundation for CBE is provided by Chappell et al., (2000). Their approach discusses four different interpretations of the concept of competency: positivist, humanist, critical, and postmodern. Human reason and objectivity are central elements in the CBE approach envisioned by these authorities.

A positivist perception of competence focuses on the technical aspects of work. The emphasis is on the measurement of directly observable performance, measured against specified and objectively developed criteria. Chappell et al., (2000) suggest that competencies are simply behaviours applied to the components of the work. One consequence of this view of the educational system is the development and implementation of highly mechanistic and task oriented curricula that the focus on skills and outcomes.

The humanist orientation provides the opportunity to integrate social and cognitive aspects in the definition of competencies. In this context, the concept of
competency is attractive to those looking for a more accessible and equitable way to design learning goals and assessment criteria. In this approach, competencies are seen as more than “a long list of tasks which fragment the occupation and ignore the relationship between the knowledge, skills, and attitudes” (Chappell et al., 2000, p. 199). The humanistic approach promotes the integration of both generic and specific attributes and thus also makes it possible to integrate social contexts.

The critical perspective suggests that competency-based education operates within social, political, and economic environments characterized by an oppressive set of power relationships that shape learning. For critical theorists, any competence analysis must analyse and investigate power relationships as constituted, including those that govern specific work settings. In addition, some critics suggest that the concept of competence is linked to a positivist policy framework of economic rationalism.

Opponents of CBE also emphasize that the world view of competency as simply a series of learned behaviours related to the training process appears to contradict the actual experiences of workers, learners and educators. This is demonstrated in the tension that exists between knowledge acquired or learned in an educational settings and the knowledge acquired by the learning process in the practical field (Chappell et al., 2000). It seems clear that, in reality, many workers who try to solve problems and make decisions work autonomously, think creatively, and communicate effectively, but are often confronted by inflexible organizational structures and equally intransigent power relations.
Post-modern literature in the last 30 years suggests that competencies need to be recreated or reconstructed. From this perspective, the ongoing discourses on CBE act as powerful and influential devices that design and construct learning in a particular way. Competency standards are generally designed to be applicable in the different contexts and circumstances in which learners and workers exist (Chappell et al., 2000). CBE legitimizes and supports particular meanings or concepts of learning. All learning is constructed as instrumental and pre-formative, and is closely associated with the requirements of work.

After this review of different interpretations of the concept of competence, it is appropriate to present a comparison of behaviourist and holistic approaches within CBE. Preston and Walker (1993) indicate that the nature of competencies and the relationship between them in the behaviourist approach is individualistic, specific, discrete, and defined in terms of behaviour only, while, in the holistic approach, competencies are complex combinations of personal attributes, enabling the performance of a variety of tasks. In the behaviourist view, the evidence of competencies comes from or is based on direct observation of the satisfactory performance of relevant activities according to predetermined standards. The goal is to give direct and clear indications of whether or not a specific competency is held by a person (Preston and Walker, 1993). In contrast, within the holistic approach the evidence of competencies is seen in the formation of coherent structures of competency, and each attribute or

1 According to Smith, 1986 behaviourist traces its historical roots to the philosophical movement known as logical positivism.
competency has a distinct and unique shape. The behaviourist approach bases the relationship between knowledge and competencies on the idea that required knowledge is inferred directly from behaviourally defined competencies while the holistic view holds that knowledge exists and can be understood separately or independently from the exercise of competencies themselves. Knowledge and understanding can be seen as having a complex and coherent structure. A relationship thus exists between competency statements and the education or training program (Preston and Walker, 1993).

From the behaviourist viewpoint, competency statements relate directly to the content, structure, and assessment criteria of education and training programs, while having little diversity, flexibility, application, or development. In contrast, the holistic approach takes the view that there are strong, coherent connections between structures of competence and education and training programs. Programs can, however, be diverse in their structure and curriculum, flexible, and involve experimentation and research (Preston and Walker, 1993).

It appears that the holistic approach allows a wider perspective than the individual behaviouristic performance models. The holistic approach takes the effect of group processes and culture in the development and performance of competencies into account. My view is that the holistic approach to competency is connected to the four pillars of education identified by Delors in 1999: learning to live together, learning to know, learning to do, and learning to be. These four elements are part of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) proposal to guide the education in the 21st century.
Delors (1999) states that it is necessary to consider some important factors that are influencing the education, namely:

(1) the tension between the global and the local that exists as people gradually recognize the need to become world citizens without losing their roots, and while continuing to play an active part in the life of their nation and local community;

(2) the tension between the universal and the individual over the concern that as cultures are being steadily globalized (i.e., homogenized), there is a consequent risk of losing the unique characteristics of individual human beings embedded in their own individual traditions and cultures;

(3) the tension between tradition and modernity that focuses on how to adapt to change without turning one’s back on the past, how to maintain autonomy in a way that compliments the free development of others, and how to assimilate scientific progress;

(4) the tension between long-term and short-term considerations that has always existed, but that today is strongly oriented or tilted to the predominance of the temporary and the production of instantaneous information;

(5) the tension between, on the one hand, the need for competition and, on the other, the desire for equality of opportunity. This is a classic issue that has been facing economic, social, and educational policy-makers since the beginning of the 21st century and has necessitated a rethinking and new development of the concept of lifelong education in order to reconcile three forces: competition that
provides incentives, co-operation that gives strength and solidarity that provides unity;

(6) the tension between the extraordinary expansion of knowledge and human beings' capacity to assimilate it. This includes topics and issues such as self-knowledge, better ways to ensure physical and psychological well-being, and ways to improve both our understanding of the natural environment and our ability to preserve it more effectively than has traditionally been the case. This already increasing pressure on curricula, any clear-sighted reform strategy, providing ways that the essential features of a basic education can enable students to improve their lives through knowledge, through experiment and through the development and preservation of their own personal cultures;

(7) the tension between the spiritual and the material that presents education with the noble task of encouraging both while acting in accordance with students traditions and convictions in the finest tradition of pluralism in order to lift their minds and spirits to the plane of the universal and thus, in some measure, to transcend themselves (Delors, 1999).

Having presented these factors that identify the need, and provide a foundation, for necessary changes in education, the four pillars identified by Delors need to be considered further. Delors (1999) indicates that 'learning to live together' is a competency developed through an understanding of others and their histories, traditions and spiritual values. It is guided by the recognition of a growing interdependence, and a common analysis of the risks and challenges of the future, that would induce people to initiate and implement common projects,
or to manage the inevitable conflicts in any community in an intelligent and peaceful way (Delors, 1999).

For Delors (1999), ‘learning to know’ is a competency that has evolved due to the rapid changes brought about by scientific progress and new forms of economic and social activity. The emphasis is on combining a sufficiently broad general education with episodic in-depth work on a select number of subjects.

Delors (1999) states that ‘learning to do’ is a competency involving the acquisition of a competence enabling people to deal with a variety of situations, often unforeseen, and to work in teams that are an important aspect of ‘real’ life, but one to which educational methods do not at present devote enough attention (Delors, 1999).

‘Learning to be’ is a competency that individuals will need to exercise greater independence and judgment, and to combine with a stronger sense of personal responsibility for the attainment of common goals such as eliminating poverty, protecting the environment, and promoting social justice. Consequently, it is imperative to recognize that talents, which are hidden like buried treasure in every person, must be tapped or realized through effective education. Some of these talents include memory, reasoning power, imagination, physical ability, an esthetical sense, the aptitude to communicate with others, and the natural charisma of the group leader, all of which require the need for greater self-knowledge to be maximized (Delors, 1999).

As a final element in this overview, it is necessary to present a brief review of how various philosophical foundations for CBE both affect and direct the
process of curriculum development. Spady (1994) indicates that there are three main variations in CBE curriculum models for professional education (Sharp, 1995; Husband, Banks-Howe, Boal, and Hodgson, 2000; Handley and Higgins, 2005).

First, the traditional model defines curriculum and learning in terms of subject content. It is a system of education based on behaviouristic learning, and is theory-oriented and bureaucratically managed. To be successful, learners have to engage mentally with content at lower cognitive levels by means of memorization or the role learning process. Thus, competencies, defined as the ability to complete a wider range of tasks, receive little attention.

Second, the transitional model focuses on competency and higher cognitive levels of learning. The curriculum utilizes an interdisciplinary and thematic approach to content selection, organization and delivery. Exit and learning outcomes that cut across disciplines exist. As well, creative learning and various projects provide opportunities to develop understanding, competencies and accountability learning (Spady, 1994, Sharp, 1995; Husband, et al., 2000; Handley and Higgins, 2005).

Third, the transformational model of CBE represents the most developed and complex of the education models. The outcomes capture or yield understanding and competencies beyond pure subject content, which are critical for the long term well-being of individuals and society. A focus on such broad life skills implies that the transformational model prepares learners not only to fit into current contexts, but also to create new domains. Thus, the transformation refers

2.6 Competency categories

Throughout the literature, it is possible to find different classifications of competencies. The most common categories identify general or basic competencies and specific competencies. Gonzalez and Sanchez (2003, as translated by the author of this thesis) grouped competencies into categories, including:

(1) basic competencies that are the foundation for the learning process;

(2) personal competencies that allow individuals to be successful in different life experiences; and

(3) professional competencies that guarantee that the tasks and responsibilities are successfully met.

Hearn, Smith, Southey, and Close (1995) divide competencies into two classes: technical competencies that are unique to each profession and non-technical competencies, such as abilities, attitudes, and knowledge that are generic to all professions. According to Echeverria (2001, as translated by the author of this thesis) however, professional competencies are technical, methodological, participatory and personal.
Other authors such as Cheetham and Chivers (1998) present some
cOMPETENCY categories, including: (1) meta-competencies or trans-
cOMPETENCIES, including communication, reflection, creativity, problem solving,
learning/self development, and analysis; (2) knowledge/cognitive competencies
that include a formal knowledge base for each profession, tacit-practical
knowledge, contextual knowledge, and knowledge application; (3) functional
competencies that are related to the full range of profession-specific tasks,
planning, monitoring, implementing, evaluating, and self-time management; (4)
personal competencies which incorporate self-confidence, persistence,
interpersonal skills, and empathy; and (5) values/ethical competencies employed
in such areas as adherence to professional codes, sensibility to needs and
values of others, adopting appropriate attitudes, self-regulation, environmental
sensitivity.

According to Parra (2006) competencies should be classified as:
(1) basic abilities that students develop independent of their academic
program including socio-cultural, problem solving, team work, leadership,
entrepreneurship and communication;
(2) professional competencies which are the basis of the profession,
common to the professional action and knowledge base in each
profession; and
(3) specific competencies which are exclusive to the professional area of
expertise, they support specific performance in the practical field (pp. 5-6,
as translated by the author of this thesis).
The DeSeCo Project’s conceptual framework for key competencies classifies competencies in three broad categories. Each category, with a specific competency focus, poses a challenge in developing and implementing educational programs.

First, individuals need to be able to use an extensive range of knowledge and abilities for interacting effectively with their environment. This suggests that students need to understand how to use their knowledge and abilities interactively. Second, in an increasingly mutually interdependent world, individuals need to be able to engage with others from different cultures and traditions because they will meet people from a wide range of backgrounds over time. Third, individuals need to be able to take responsibility for managing their own lives, for adjusting their lives within a broader social context as needed or desire, and for acting autonomously (DeSeCo, 2005).

In identifying key competencies, it is necessary to consider psychosocial pre-requisites for a successful and a well-functioning life. There are specific key competencies necessary for adapting to a world characterized by constant change, complexity and interdependence (DeSeCo, 2005).

According to DeSeCo (2005), a framework of key competencies consists of a set of specific competencies connected in an integrated approach. Consequently, the underlying features across the categories of competencies are:
Moving beyond taught knowledge and skills

In many OECD countries, the value of the educational system is based on flexibility, entrepreneurship, and personal responsibility. Not only are individuals expected to be adaptive, but they must also be innovative, creative, self-directed and self-motivated. As a result, key competencies involve the mobilization of cognitive and practical skills, creative abilities, and other psychosocial resources, such as attitudes, motivation, and values (DeSeCo, 2005). The critical component in this category is “the ability of individuals to think for themselves as an expression of moral and intellectual maturity and to take responsibility for their learning and for their actions” (DeSeCo, 2005, p. 8).

Reflection: the heart of key competencies

Reflective thought and action is an underlying feature of this category. “Thinking reflectively demands relatively complex mental processes and requires the subject of a thought process to become its object” (DeSeCo, 2005, p. 8). Therefore, reflection involves the use of meta-cognitive skills “creative abilities and taking a critical stance. It is not just about how an individual thinks, but also about how an individual constructs experiences more generally, including thoughts, feelings and social relations” (DeSeCo, 2005, p. 9).

Combining key competencies

The special characteristic of diversity in the socio-cultural context demands a further link between specific competencies. Consequently, “any given situation or goal may demand a constellation of competencies, configured differently for each particular case” (DeSeCo, 2005, p. 9). Individuals confronting
different situations will apply a variety of competencies depending on the specific situation. Some factors affecting the development and implementation of new competencies include cultural norms, technological access, and social and power relationships (DeSeCo, 2005).

The above categorization of key competencies demonstrates that each competency involves knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values. Beckett and Hager (1995) indicate that, from a relational and integrated view of competency, these attributes are not discrete and independent. As well, all competencies are developed and practiced in different contexts. It is important to emphasize that the competency of reflection is best viewed as an opportunity to constantly review, evaluate, and incorporate new competencies that allow the individual to better respond to continuous and inevitable change.

2.7 Characteristics of the Competency-Based Education curriculum

The National Post-Secondary Education Cooperative Working Group on Competency-Based Initiatives in Post-Secondary Education at the United States (2003) indicates that “research into competencies has not been reported extensively in higher education. Nevertheless, there are useful and thoughtful resources about how to implement competencies” (p. xi). For example, the competency model has been adopted at universities in the United Kingdom, Europe, Asia, United States, New Zealand, Australia, Mexico, Cuba, Venezuela, Costa Rica, Colombia, and Chile. In these settings, a CBE approach is the basis for the curricula in numerous professions, including medicine, nursing, law, business administration, education, engineering, and social work.
In the last twenty years, the questions of how to learn and how to know have been challenging educational paradigms and, as a result, have produced a series of changes in viewpoints, processes, and educational practices. CBE recognizes or acknowledges the results of learning acquired both from formal educational processes and recognizes relevant knowledge, abilities, and capabilities that have been acquired outside of school in other contexts (Gonzalez and Sanchez, 2003, as translated by the author of this thesis).

After examining the concept of competence its historical, international and contemporary Australian contexts, Guthrie et al., (1995) present three main characteristics that capture in their thinking on CBE. First, CBE is no longer the narrow, task-based concept that it once may have been seen to be in some countries only a decade or two ago. It is, rather, a much more dynamic, humanistic and holistic concept than it was first thought to be. Second, CBE is more context-bound than is often acknowledged. Third, CBE programs themselves are constantly changing. In fact, one of the principles of the systemic approach is that program shape and texture is continually being refined based on feedback. The essence of CBE is “essentially good practice” (Guthrie et al., 1995, p. 5).

The CBE curriculum considers global or general knowledge, professional knowledge, and practical experiences for the purpose of better recognizing the needs, and better understanding the problems, of reality. As mentioned above, each curriculum is more than simply the sum of its knowledge components (domains) and, for this reason, presents the possibility of curriculum designers
combining and complementing different viewpoints during the process of curriculum development.

CBE also defines the methodology for developing and designing a learning process. To do that, the main task is to identify the basic components of the educational processes. In others words, the CBE model attempts to address the following questions:

(1) Who are the beneficiaries of the learning?
(2) What do the students need to learn?
(3) How do students learn and develop abilities and attitudes?
(4) How do students incorporate personal qualities for acquiring competencies?
(5) How and when do students demonstrate the mastery of competencies? (Gonzalez and Sanchez, 2003 as translated by the author of this thesis).

Current models of curriculum design are moving from models that focus on teaching to models that focus on the learners. Such models seek to describe and promote activities that reinforce the capabilities for life-long learning, transferability and self regulation. It is important that the learning process consider how students perceive, decode, and elaborate information; how they transform information into knowledge; and how they apply knowledge to problem solving and the generation of new knowledge. Thus, CBE seeks to support the development of appropriate dynamic, practical and adaptable capabilities that will be applied in future job experiences. In the case of post-secondary education,
there are two main aspects in program design to consider: inclusion of professional competencies and skills in educational programming, and the development of generic competencies such as team work and communication, among others (Gonzalez and Sanchez, 2003 as translated by the author of this thesis).

The CBE curricula model strives to stimulate learning experiences that meet the educational needs of students. As well, it is necessary to consider the opinions and suggestions of students in the planning and organization processes of the class. CBE curricula, as with other curriculum approaches, including constructivism, critical pedagogy and emancipatory, considers each student’s prior learning and recognizes student competencies already attained. Thus, the student’s previous knowledge is the base line of the learning process. This approach allows greater flexibility and self-directed learning for students according to best practices, rather than simply attaining minimum standards of performance.

When CBE is working properly and a student demonstrates a competency, she or he can gain credit for it without necessarily having to follow a course at all. In other words, students might be permitted to enter a program at different levels and/or receive credits without necessarily having to take a specific course for each credit attained (Whitty and Whillmont, 1991). This proposition is related to the Prior Learning Assessment (PLA) process that is defined as:

the process of identifying, assessing and recognizing skills, knowledge, or competencies that have been acquired through work experience,
unrecognized training, independent study, volunteer activities, and hobbies. The PLA process may be applied toward: academic credit, requirement of a training program and for occupational certification (Human Resource Development, Canada (HRDC), 1995, p. 1).

Related to PLA is the concept of Recognition for Prior Learning (RPL). RPL assumes that, in addition to formal education and training programs, real and important learning takes place in many other settings and through many other activities. These other settings include the workplace; family and community life; volunteer work, church and union involvement; and travel and hobbies. Both processes assume that all relevant learning that can be identified, described and documented deserves to be recognized and/or credited. In this approach individual, organizations and communities put together a comprehensive and systematic inventory of what they know and can do. These lifelong learning inventories and the opportunities to expand them through new learning options and challenges, will be increasingly necessary in our constantly changing society.

To summarize the main characteristics of CBE curricula presented above, it is helpful to consider the interrelationships and transformations within CBE approaches. Velasquez (1997, as translated by the author of this thesis) indicates that the learning process is iterative and flexible, and proposes the following sequence for implementing the CBE model:
(1) Stage one, called program immersion, is comprised of initial core classes integrated in four semesters that take the student to a pre-technical professional profile level;

(2) Stage two involves six semesters and is equivalent to a technical profile;

(3) Stage three is a consolidation of learning in 10 semesters and results in a professional profile accreditation.

Flexibility is reflected in the possibility of entering the curriculum structure at any point or stage and in any thematic area (according to the existing skills and knowledge of the student), receiving credits for previous learning, and the validation of knowledge acquired in previous experience. Each thematic module includes practical experiences and specific activities defined according to the professional profile (Velasquez, 1997 as translated by the author of this thesis).

In my experience with CBE as a social work practitioner, it is remarkable how competencies can empower people through the connection of theoretical knowledge and practical experience. In 1999, the Competencies Certification Process (CCP) was implemented in a large construction company in Chile. The goal of this process was to identify the level of theoretical knowledge of carpenters and bricklayers. As a result of the CCP, the company obtained useful information about the training needs of workers.

For workers who achieved more than 80% in the certification test, the challenge was to demonstrate their knowledge in a national construction contest. Four company workers went to the contest and won first place. The experience
was significant and meaningful for those workers and they subsequently decided to take further formal training in the field. The company realized that the combination and connection of theoretical knowledge and practical experience, measured through the certification process, provided highly qualified workers and put it at the forefront of the construction industry.

This experience was part of an important initiative known as The National Labour Project of Competencies Certification (NLPCC), implemented in Chile during the 1990s in the context of continuous learning. The project seeks to improve the quality of the human capital under the supervision of the Ministries of Education, Economy and Finance. In collaboration with educational institutions, the project’s aim is to connect the training needs of each labour sector to more effective and realistic formative opportunities.

2.8 Challenges using the Competency-Based Education curriculum model

Transferring competencies from curriculum objectives to educational practice presents a serious challenge. For the actors in the teaching and learning processes, pedagogical considerations must be taken into account. For example, professors need to be aware that the pedagogy required for encompassing intellectual, cognitive, and attitudinal dimensions is a long and complex process (Velazquez, 1997 as translated by the author of this thesis). At the same time, students need to practise their new skills in order to acquire new competencies.

According to the National Post-Secondary Education Cooperative Working Group on Competency-Based Initiatives in Post-Secondary Education at the
United States (2002), a first step is to provide opportunities for academics to have individual and collective reflections about the theoretical approaches underpinning CBE. Along with these reflections, the educational community needs to be knowledgeable about current challenges in the teaching and learning process, with special attention paid to pedagogical strategies and didactic features. These considerations have implications for teacher training. Teachers cannot be transformed overnight and, as a result, it is strongly recommended that experienced teachers be re-trained in university programs to update their professional competencies.

Whitty and Willmont (1991) indicate that a distinctive competency-based approach implies that competencies play a more significant role than is generally recognized in the planning and implementation of university courses. There are, however, legitimate concerns about the extent to which this approach can undermine existing positive components of programming already in place. All course designs should consider the characteristics of the learners who are expected to benefit from it. Thus, in a competence-based course, it might be expected that those learner characteristics that provide a basis for entry into the course will be identified and articulated in greater detail. Thus, it becomes necessary to take into consideration each learner’s previous knowledge, experience, values and principles. This process should facilitate a common understanding of the skills, knowledge and attitudes that potential students bring to the course, and afford a foundation upon which the program of study will be build.
The process of curriculum renewal in a competency-based education program, and related decisions to strengthen the competency elements in existing curricula, requires shared, ongoing efforts among administrators, teachers, students and other stakeholders.

According to the National Post-Secondary Education Cooperative Working Group on Competency-Based Initiatives in Post-Secondary Education at the United States (2002), there are common practices that can enhance the probability of success for those wishing to undertake CBE initiatives. The key elements in the implementation process are a leader/facilitator to create a culture of institutional change and stakeholders who fully participate in identifying, defining, and reaching a consensus about required competencies.

Competencies are defined at a sufficient level of specificity that they can be assessed. Multiple assessments of competencies provide useful and meaningful information that is relevant in decision-making and policy-development contexts. Faculty and staff participate fully in making decisions about the strongest assessment instruments that will measure specific competencies, including the precision, reliability, validity, credibility, and costs of each such instrument considered. A competency-based educational initiative is normally embedded within a larger institutional planning process and the related assessments of competencies are directly linked to the goals of the learning experience. The assessment results, reported in a clear, meaningful way, are also used in making critical decisions about strategies for improving student learning.
According to Velasquez (1997, as translated by the author of this thesis) the decision to implement CBE is related to improving the interconnections among different educational programs at local levels and the educational system at the regional or national level. CBE avoids the traditional fragmentation found in academic programs focused solely on content. According to Guthrie et al., (1995) some of the characteristics of such traditional programs are “content-focused, time-based, emphasis on inputs, subjects, delayed feedback, narrow range of learning approaches and styles, limited field experience” (p. 29).

On the other hand, CBE considers the previous learning experiences of students and uses a flexible, modular and integral curriculum design. In addition, in the formulation of CBE curricula, it is important to have an integrative axis that considers:

(1) basic, professional, socio-humanistic, and thinking competencies as a part of the curriculum from an epistemological approach. From this perspective, the model must be modular and connected to the contexts, including previously-acquired knowledge and the validation and homologation of courses;

(2) flexibility implying a diversity of programs, widening of accessibility opportunities, and permanency and mobility within the system;

(3) conceptualization and contextualization of the curriculum that incorporates orientation principles, including philosophical, epistemological, ontological, sociological, anthropological, physiological, and legal assumptions or premises;
(4) determination of the problematic nucleus of the program related to its profession, discipline, and practical field. As a result of this process, it becomes possible to identify the problematic nucleus and research areas of the curricula; and

(5) definition of the thematic nucleus, represented by knowledge modules, that is constructed on the basis of the problematic nucleus. The knowledge referents of the modules should be developed from conceptual map integrating the multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary. The articulation of knowledge modules related to the thematic nucleus results in a thematic block (Velasquez, 1997 as translated by the author of this thesis).

One of the main challenges to implementing CBE is the training of academic members (professors and leaders). This challenge is related to the acquisition and development of pedagogical and methodological competencies. In other words, it is necessary to create a program for academics focused on the continuous improvement of curricular qualifications, as well as pedagogical, methodological, and investigative strategies. This approach should provide professors with the opportunity not only to question CBE, but also to do research and develop theories, concepts, methods and innovative pedagogical practices in CBE (Velasquez, 1997; Guthrie et al., 1995).

These ideas illustrate why and how the CBE model could be an option, among several curriculum designs. In my view, the use of the competency model provides many challenges for curriculum review and reorientation, related to the
roles of professors and students, pedagogical strategies, and the evaluation process. The development of participatory strategies is necessary for a more appropriate system of evaluation and for the incorporation of practical educational experiences in program design. The current and potential ways that CBE can be conceptualized and utilized in both post-secondary education and the professions are complex, diverse, and growing in number as ever more educators recognize its adaptability to a wide range of circumstances (Gonczi, 1997; Biemans et al., 2004).

2.9. Criticisms of the Competency-Based Education model

2.9.1 Conceptual pitfalls

As already noted, the concept of competence and CBE has often created controversy and confusion. Jansen (1998) indicates that the language and terminology associated with CBE are too complex, confusing and, sometimes, contradictory. From my point of view, the real issue is not about terminology (a technical problem relating to the imprecise use of language or the assigning of more than one meaning to a term), but about recognising and understanding of the different ideas and viewpoints underlying the terminology (i.e., conceptual considerations about the nature of education).

Ashworth and Saxton (1990) argue that the concept of competency reveals serious ambiguities and inconsistencies because “competences [have] an unclear logical status and the meaning of competence had not yet clearly defined...it is not clear whether a competence is a personal attribute, an act, or an outcome of behaviour”(pp. 3-4). Brown (1994) describes competencies as
traditionally focused and strongly embedded in the rational-positivistic paradigm, as well as being imposed, hierarchical, and deterring emancipation or independent and free thought. In the same sense, Hyland (1993) asserts that the conception of competence “is founded squarely on behaviouristic learning principles and suffers from all weaknesses traditionally identified with such programmes” (p. 59). From Hyland’s perspective, competence is concerned with what people can do, rather than with what they know, and he asserts that the advocates of competence need to explain what sort of knowledge is meant to underpin their approach, and how the connection between knowledge and competence is to be conceptualized.

2.9.2 Ideological and political implications

Theoretical work on competence indicates that competencies “represent the fusion of behavioural objectives and accountability which support a new ideology for those seeking accountability and input-output efficiency in the new economic realism of the 1980s” (Fagan, 1984, p. 5). According to Hyland (1993) in the 1990s, there was a marked movement away from narrow behaviouristic conceptions of competency toward a generic version “which identifies the role played by knowledge and understanding in the generation and development of competence” (p. 59). The confusion and debate about the precise nature of competence has created a situation that is epistemologically equivocal and theoretically suspicious (Hyland, 1993). In others words, CBE exhibits incoherence in both its logical and epistemological basis. Thus, the competency model relies on a crude form of behaviourism that attaches a great deal of
importance to performance over knowledge and understanding, and artificially separates the mental and physical components of performance (Hyland, 1993).

Another apparent risk is the consideration of alternative or broader conception of CBE, such as the generic and cognitive versions identified by Norris (1991). For Hyland (1997) competence strategies cannot carry the weight of alternative models that incorporate understanding, values and a wide ranging knowledge component because CBE is primarily concerned with the assessment of performance, not with learning and development. As well, CBE strategies are more closely associated with techniques and managerial assumptions and, as a result, cannot accommodate the ethical and epistemological foundations of professional practice. Elliot (1993) observes that:

CBE strategies, although now somewhat discredited in the academic domain, continue to linger in the political domain as an ideological device for eliminating value issues from the domains of professional practice and thereby subordinating them to political forms of control (p. 496).

The introduction of CBE approaches have led to widespread de-professionalization by marginalizing the foundational values of professional activity. For Hodkinson and Issit (1995) this marginalization or disconnection of a profession’s ethical values and principles make the profession much more vulnerable to the managerial policies of market-oriented influences.

The critical perspective sees the competency-based education and training movement as embedded within a particular set of existing economic, social, and political power relationships that are anti-emancipatory and
exploitative. From this perspective, competency-based descriptions of work cannot be divorced from the ways that they are used to continue the exploitative nature of work as organised in so-called free market economies (Chappell et al., 2000). From this perspective, CBE is tied to a neoliberal model of education that adopts and utilizes narrow, functional approaches to education.

2.9.3 Educational consequences

Jacobus (2007) analyses criticisms of CBE based on the design and implementation process of the CBE model in education thusly:

(1) early CBE programmes focused on competencies to the detriment of the role of knowledge. Complex professional education could not be completely conceptualized or defined by a list of key competencies;

(2) CBE ignores the educational process and focuses solely on particular measurable and practical outcomes;

(3) criticisms against the behaviourist approach to CBE include the view that a behaviourist-CBE is narrowly utilitarian and uses an instrumental approach that implies a fragmentation of subjects. Behaviouristic CBE is criticized for ignoring: the connections between tasks; the attributes that underlie performance; the meaning and intention, or disposition to act; the context of performance; and the effect of interpersonal and ethical aspects; and

(4) CBE reduces education to a form of human engineering because it views education as instrumental to attain specific, pre-defined ends.

Systematic means-ends programme design thus attracts labels like technical and technocratic because it has an unbalanced focus on competencies
and neglects values and the technical precision of outcomes (atomised list of functions). It presents education as a product rather than a process.

Roberts (1986) argues that the method itself by which a CBE curriculum is implemented carries hidden assumptions about reality and the social order that serve to support the existing socio-economic model, that is, the status quo.

According to Kerka (1998) for the critics, the CBE model is: excessively reductionist, narrow, rigid, atomized, and theoretically, empirically, and pedagogically unsound…the behaviourist breaks down competence into the performance of discrete tasks, identified by functional analysis of work roles. This analysis is the basis for competency statements or standards upon which competence is assessed and toward achievement of which CBE is directed (Kerka, 1998, p. 2).

The emphasis on behaviours and performance, rather than on the mastering of cognitive skills, is consistent with the view that perceives competence in terms of basic attributes. This view not only tends to produce narrow technical skills, but also ignores the students’ and workers’ meaningful experiences in the practical field (Dall’Alba and Sandberg, 1996).

The competency model is classified as a tool that, if defined and assessed too narrowly, can actually work to hinder education and training. In some cases, if the model is used as a curriculum document to teach discrete tasks, or used to assess superficial competency standards, then the resulting curriculum may become narrow in content (Kerka, 1998).
Critics of the competence model suggest that it contains an inappropriate and reductive representation of learning. According to Jacobus (2007), the competence model is educationally and philosophically inadequate and there is no basis choosing any one specific, theoretical definition of competency from the almost unending inventory of competencies.

According to Chappell et al., (2000, competency models pursue, develop and exercise only a reductionist list of behaviours and the competency approach effectively ignores the human capabilities of thinking and reflecting. All competencies are seen as mechanical responses that are built on a behaviourist foundation.

Gonzi (1997) indicates that in recent years there has been an increasing interest internationally in the relationship between education and the workplace. Countries in almost every part of the world, including Scotland, England and Wales, Canada, the United States, Mexico, many South American countries, Australia, New Zealand, Sweden, France, Spain, Kuwait, Indonesia, Korea, and Thailand, have all undertaken, or are about to undertake, substantial reforms of their educational post-secondary systems (Gonzi, 1997). To implement this systemic reform, many of the countries mentioned are committed to selecting a particular curriculum approach, and the adoption of the CBE model is one option. Adopting a CBE model, however, constitutes a risk if the decision does not entail a vigorous debate and full discussion of both the conceptual issues underpinning CBE and the practical problems involved in the implementation of a CBE model (Gonzi, 1997).
According to Gonzi, (1997), one way to address the complex range of risk factors associated with CBE and the practical application of using the model, is to ask important questions like:

(1) Who are the main actors on the learning process?
(2) What are the values and principles underpinning the educational program?
(3) Are the pedagogic and teaching models responding consistently to the curriculum approach?
(4) How does the educational program ensure quality?

These questions, and many others, are indispensible in the discussion of a rationale for the selection of CBE as an alternative to guide curriculum change. CBE curricula have been adopted by both radical conservative policy makers and progressive educational reformers (Gonzi, 1997). To understand this seeming contradiction, Gonzi (1997) indicates that it is necessary to consider the following factors:

(1) the conjunction of an agenda that simultaneously includes authority control on the learning process and meets the requirements of industry standards;
(2) the dominance of educational curricula by disciplinary and professional boundaries;
(3) the reduction of the gap between practice and theory; and
(4) the breaking down of the dominance of institutional learning and the consequent democratising education.
These considerations illustrate the complexity of the debate on CBE. While opponents claim that CBE is just a manifestation of a conservative political agenda, its supporters see CBE as a potential tool to change such agendas. There is no doubt that analyzing and reflecting on the consequences and benefits of CBE is a necessary task before selecting or rejecting the approach. Identifying the weaknesses and pitfalls of the CBE model at the beginning of curricula design or renewal provides an opportunity for those who are leading the curricula change to avoid mistakes. Analysing and reflecting on the issues associated with the selection and implementation of a CBE curriculum is an indispensable part of responsible and thoughtful decision making.

Considering the overview of the philosophical and theoretical foundations of CBE presented in section 2.5 of this chapter, it is possible to say that the vision of contemporary CBE advocates appreciates and acknowledges that learning objectives should cover the whole spectrum of knowledge, skills, capabilities, attitudes, and values. This means that a richer, more educationally attractive conception of competency is indeed necessary.

2.10 The history of social work education

This section presents an overview of the evolution of social work education in five countries: Canada, the United States (US), Spain, Mexico, and Chile. The countries were selected because the participants in the research are members of the social work post-secondary institutions in those countries. As with other professions, social work education’s relationship with academia has been critical both in the definition of the profession and the development of the
practice of social work itself. Consequently, the discussion now turns to the
development of the discipline of social work and its association with the colleges
and universities that provide the instructional and research support for the
profession. Thus, it is necessary to outline how the history of social work as a
profession has influenced social work education in terms of the design and
implementation of social work programs.

2.10.1 Social work education in Canada

Social work education has a long history in Canada. To describe and
understand the roots of Canadian social work education, it is first necessary to
review the development of social work as a profession. There are three eras that
explain how social work has grown into the profession it is today in Canada
(Hick, 2006).

The first era is that of moral reform, while the second is that of social
reform, and the third era is the time of applied social science (Hick, 2006). Each
era is marked by changing Canadian attitudes about the causes of social issues
and how to deal with them. As well, significant events and changes to the
nation’s legal framework also helped shape the welfare state in Canada. In each
era, however, the emergence of new values, legislative changes, and key events
created a demand for more individuals to work with people in need and these
factors, in turn, resulted in the emergence of social work as a profession and the
recognition of the discipline in Canadian post-secondary education.

The era of moral reform is dated from the period when Canada entered
into Confederation in 1867 until 1890 (Hick, 2006). During this era, social work
was not a profession and the term ‘social worker’ was not in use. Social assistance was provided by local charities and the volunteers who worked for these charities delivering their services are the first Canadians to practice social work.

During the moral reform period, the only social assistance that the government provided to the poor was offered in “Houses of Industry”. These workhouses were the result of the British legislation that applied to its Canadian colony prior to 1867.

In 1601, Britain had established the Elizabethan Poor Laws that regulated who would receive aid from charity and who would be employed in the workhouses (Finkel, 2006). Two main criteria governed the conditions required for a person to receive assistance from charities and workhouses. The first criterion was that able-bodied men could only receive aid by working in the workhouses. The other criterion put in place the principle of “local rather than national responsibility for poor relief” (Finkel, 2006, p. 48).

As a result of the Poor Laws, charities were formed to provide aid to the poor with the help of volunteers who saw the poor as the “authors of their own suffering rather than viewing social issues as the source of their problems” (Finkel, 2006, p. 40). These volunteers also thought that teaching the poor Christian morals rooted in the so-called Protestant work ethic that discouraged dependence on others and emphasized prudence and hard work would help them overcome poverty. During the era of moral reform, structural social
problems or related inequities like poverty-level wages were not seen as the root cause, or even as a major contributing factor, to the problem of poverty.

In the early 1880s, a new movement began with the establishment of Canada’s first settlement house, Toynbee Hall, in 1884 (Finkel, 2006). The Settlement House movement was the main event marking the transition from the era of moral reform to the era of social reform.

Rather than viewing the poor as the authors of their own suffering, volunteers in the settlement houses were “aware of the social structures that created poverty” (Finkel, 2006, p. 86). Volunteers in the Settlement House movement had a more professional background than their predecessors in the era of moral reform, and recognized that factors such as the state of the economy and the lack of social aid from the federal government were creating many social issues.

The era of social reform is dated from 1891 to 1940 (Hick, 2006) and witnessed two key events that resulted in the federal government taking more responsibility for providing social assistance and creating important new legislation. The most significant development at the beginning of the era of social reform was the emergence of the Social Gospel Movement in Canada. As an example it is important to mention that Tommy Douglas, elected in Saskatchewan in 1944, was a Baptist preacher of the Social Gospel, and he introduced Canada’s first comprehensive Medicare Plan in Saskatchewan in 1964.
Supporters of the Social Gospel movement came from various Protestant churches and had been influenced by experience of the Settlement House Movement (Finkel, 2006). Social gospel reformers recognized that preaching morals was not going to solve social issues. Instead, they argued that:

the way to combat poverty and ignorance was to have the state pursue policies that guaranteed individuals and families a minimum income and ensured that all citizens enjoyed access to health services and to clean air, water, and milk (Finkel, 2006, p. 85).

In 1907 these reformers established the Moral and Social Reform Council of Canada to attempt to satisfy both moral and social ideals (Finkel, 2006). A major contribution that social gospel reformers made to the emergence of social work as a profession in Canada was setting up “departments of social service to run and coordinate their expanding social welfare and social reform activities” (Guest, 2006, p. 37). Another significant contribution to the development of social work was the coining of the term “social workers” by educator Patten, and its application to Settlement House volunteers.

In 1913, the reformers changed the name of the Moral and Social Reform Council of Canada to simply the Social Service Council of Canada; this change indicates that these reformers saw problems like poverty rooted in social issues rather than a lack of morals or motivation on the part of the poor or unemployed (Finkel, 2006).

During the era of social reform, social workers disassociated themselves from moral-based ideologies and dealt with social issues from a scientific
perspective through the use of empirical evidence and the study of human relations (Moffatt, 2001). They also argued that in order to be able to practice casework effectively, social work should be recognized as a profession requiring post-secondary education (Finkel, 2006). Casework is the process of interviewing clients and “judging their progress towards economic independence” (Finkel, 2006, p. 86).

In 1914, the first Department of Social Service at the University of Toronto was established and the first director, E.J. Urwick, “emphasized the need of social institutions to adapt to individuals’ needs” (Finkel, 2006, p. 87). According to Moffatt (2001), that period was characterized by rapid industrialization, urbanization, and high levels of immigration to Canada. As well, there was a growing belief that social problems such as inadequate housing, poverty, and child protection could be best addressed by people with well developed social work practice skills and knowledge of applied social science. Such beliefs are more congruent with the professional perspective of social work (Finkel, 2006).

In 1918, McGill University in Montreal established its Social Department and this development led to social work being recognized as a profession. In 1926, the Canadian Association of Social Workers was formed to act as the governing body of social workers and to promote professional social work standards (Finkel, 2006).

The third era in the history of Canadian social work, the era of applied social science, began in the early 1940s and continues to the present day (Hick, 2006). During this period, the federal government passed the Canada Assistance
Plan, a federal-provincial “cost sharing agreement eliminating the distinction between employable and unemployable recipients” (Moscovitch and Drover, 1987, p. 30). Thus the debate about whether moral laxity or social conditions were the root cause of social problems that had begun at the time of Confederation nearly a hundred years before was finally settled when the provincial and federal governments decided to share the costs of providing universal assistance equally.

By 1961 in Canada, 10,854 individuals identified themselves as social workers. After Parliament passed of the Canada Assistance Plan that number tripled to 30,535 (Hick, 2006), even though the first Bachelor of Social Work (BSW) degree was awarded in 1966 at the University of Toronto (Hick, 2006). Before the degree only a Social Work Certificate was issued by universities across Canada. In 1962, the Canadian Association of Schools of Social Work (CASSW) was established as the governing body for institutions educating social workers (Hick, 2006).

It is possible to recognize some specific characteristics of social work education that were shaped by the historic evolution and political circumstances in which the profession emerged in Canada. According to Westhues (2005), “the history of social work education in Canada can be characterized as a debate about the mission of social work practice between two perspectives: the “professional” (or function) perspective and the “progressive” (or cause)” (p. 131).

For supporters of professionalism, the purpose of social work education was to ensure that social workers had a vast repertoire of skills and abilities.
Further, the professional perspective stressed social work principles and values emphasizing respect and dignity for the client. Practitioners of social work, it was felt, needed to be knowledgeable about fields of human development and the theoretical frameworks underlying effective interventions (Westhues, 2005). Progressive social workers, on the other hand, go a step further and assert that the role of social work is to promote and advocate social justice. From these perspectives, the purpose of social work education is:

- to ensure that students understand the structural factors that contribute to oppression of marginalized groups such as the poor, people with disabilities, people who are not racially or ethnically part of the dominant culture within Canadian society - whether newcomers, Aboriginal, women, religious minorities, or people who are minority in their sexual orientation.
- It also means that they believe social workers must be trained in advocacy skills, and work from a critical perspective (Westhues, 2005, p. 132).

According to Westhues (2005), social work education is offered at the postsecondary level in Canada. Community colleges (Collège d'enseignement général et professionnel CEGEPs in Quebec) offer diplomas for social service workers (BSS) and more specialized diplomas in areas such as gerontology or child and youth services.

The Social Service Worker Diploma’s statement of purpose recognizes the need for a balance between the professional and progressive visions of social work education. Programs of study at the college level are usually two years and students take core courses in intervention skills and liberal arts. Field work,
considered as a practicum, is required to complete the program as well (Westhues, 2005).

Another postsecondary program is the Bachelor of Social Work degree that can be undertaken immediately following graduation from secondary school. BSW students must complete one or more years of a general bachelor’s degree, most commonly in disciplines such as sociology, psychology, or liberal arts. The courses taken would typically be similar to those at the community college level, but would place more emphasis on critical analysis and theory (Stephenson, Rondeau, Michaud, and Fliddler, 2001). CASSW accreditation standards at the BSW level require that a minimum of 50% of degree credits be for social work courses, 40% for liberal arts courses, and that the practicum must be at least 700 hours (CASSW, 2004).

In Canada, the postgraduate degree program is the Master of Social Work/Social Services (MSW/MSS) that follows completion of a BSW, BSS or other bachelor’s degree. For postgraduate students with a BSW or BSS, CASSW accreditation standards require that there be 18 credits in all social work courses and a practicum of 450 hours or a thesis (CASSW, 2004). Courses taken would typically include advanced clinical social work practice, evaluation of practice, and social policy analysis. Graduates of MSW programs are equipped to undertake more supervisory or management responsibilities than graduates of BSW programs. They also have the option of exploring more complex treatment issues, and working, for example, with women and children who have
experienced physical or sexual abuse, or with people diagnosed with serious mental illnesses.

Westhues (2005) indicates that at the pinnacle of social work education in Canada is the philosophy doctorate program in Social Work (PhD Social Work). The primary purpose of the PhD degree is to prepare graduates to lead research and thus create new knowledge. Some programs also emphasize learning educational theory and how to design courses as well as ensuring that students have the opportunity to gain practical experience teaching before graduation as most will be employed at the university level.

Typical courses in a doctoral program would include research methods, statistics, qualitative data analysis, and epistemology. Some programs require courses in a specific area of practice. The PhD in social work is now required to teach in most schools of social work in Canada and such programs are usually looking for applicants who have at least three years of work experience following acquisition of their MSW degree (Westhues, 2005).

According to Hopmeyer, Kimberly, and Hawkins (1995) social work education in Canada is cognizant of the fact that almost a quarter of the population reports having French as a first language. As mentioned above, the first Francophone social work program was not established until 1942 at the University de Montréal, but others soon followed and several Francophone social workers were among the founding members of CASSW. Thus, Canadian social work education has significant French as well as English sectors.
Furthermore, due to the rising Aboriginal population in Canada, more attention is being paid to Aboriginal issues and needs. The first Aboriginal-focused social work program in Canada at the Saskatchewan Indian Federated College was not accredited by CASSW until 1991. Hopmeyer et al., (1995) noted the "difficulty of maintaining a balance between the concerns for 'quality and standards' and the need for programs that are culturally affirming and relevant to Native people" (p. 35).

As the number of Canadian social work programs increased, CASSW assumed responsibility for their accreditation "in the interests of quality control, equalization, and public protection … educational standards governing the accreditation of BSW and MSW programs were established in 1972" (Hopmeyer et al., 1995, p. 28). CASSW further committed itself to policies that accommodate to English and French languages, acknowledge regional differences, and promote the importance of regional relevance in the development of social work education programs.

In Québec, a separate association, RUFUTS (Le Regroupement des Unités de Formation Universitaire en Travail Social du Québec), acts as an advocate for social work education, but does not accredit programs. RUFUTS has played a major role in ensuring that bilingualism is respected and reflected in CASSW’s official standards and policies.

Current educational standards for social work programs in Canada reflect the attempt to encourage flexibility and regional relevance while ensuring that programs deliver core content. Standards are more prescriptive for BSW
programs than at the MSW level and, while flexibility is encouraged, there are also comprehensive requirements for anti-oppression and diversity content as well as the study of Aboriginal and Francophone issues.

It should also be noted that distance education is increasingly important in Canada, as the geography of the world’s second largest country would suggest. Considerable flexibility is permitted, although schools must ensure that distance education programs are of equal quality to traditional offerings. Discussions continue as to whether additional standards and/or regulations for distance education are needed (Hopmeyer et al., 1995).

2.10.2 Social work education in the United States

According to Edwards, Shera, Reid, and York (2006) over a period of more than one 100 years, social work in the United States evolved from a movement of individual and community-based reformers to a recognized profession. The history of social work in the United States has been characterized by a number of intense ideological and developmental struggles, none of which has addressed the actual meaning of professionalism and its application with reformist intentions to the social work field.

Given that the nature of the social work profession in the United States rests upon a base of knowledge, and the application and testing of that knowledge, the growth and development of the profession itself makes necessary its connection with universities. If social work is a profession, then some part of a post-secondary education’s programming (whether constituted as a program, department, school or college) must be devoted to assembling and
disseminating the knowledge of what has been agreed is necessary to prepare students for the actual practice of the profession. As well, the educational process for social work must also concern itself with the development of new knowledge drawn from research and the refinement of existing knowledge (Edwards et al., 2006).

In the United States, individuals may not engage in the legally recognized professional practice of social work without first having attended an institution of higher education. Further, licensing requirements in every state commit social workers to at least some minimal level of continuing professional education.

Edwards et al., (2006) state that social work in the United States was very much a product of a social engineering mentality that believes social problems can be solved simply by acquiring and applying knowledge. From such a perspective, solutions to social problems are not found in political movements or conflict but, rather, in the application of science, that is the collection of evidence and the consideration of those facts as the basis for drawing conclusions leading to responsible, well-founded interventions (Crunden, 1982).

In the latter half of the nineteenth century the United States experienced massive population growth and rapidly increasing industrialization, urbanization, and immigration, along with a very evident and widely documented explosion of social problems. Homelessness, substandard housing, high infant mortality, poverty, low wages, and brutal working conditions were but a few of those widespread social problems ( Ehrenreich, 1985).
Crunden (1982) indicates that the American professional, educated, urban class asserted control over the definition of social work, what constitutes a social problem, and the proposed solutions to those problems. This process came to be called the Progressive Movement (PM) and it pursued a broad and influential cultural and educational agenda, as well as a specifically political policy. The PM process greatly influenced US government approaches to social problems, both at the local and national levels and redirected universities toward applied science in the service of the public interest. The result was the development of the human sciences and social engineering within universities that, in turn, spawned the professions of social work, nursing, journalism, public health, and public administration and reconfigured American approaches to education and medicine.

Several social welfare developments in this era formed the basis for the emergence of a social work profession that claimed responsibility for, and competence in, dealing with the poor and dependent. Mary E. Richmond first used the term ‘casework’ in 1899 and her landmark book, Social Diagnosis (1917), became the standard reference work for caseworkers.

The detailed identification and classification of what came to be called ‘social casework’ came from the founding of settlement houses in New York City and Chicago, as well as from child welfare efforts, most notably those of the Children’s Aid Society and the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (both based in New York City) and the New York Charity Organization Society. Like the New York Charity Organization Society other Charity Organization
Society (COS) were responding to the rapid growth of uncoordinated relief efforts throughout urban industrialized areas of the United States. These early forms of intervention were widely perceived to be excessive and chaotic. Scientific charity, a term coined by the Charity Organization Society, perfectly expressed its wish to:

apply the methods and rigor of science and do for social welfare what this approach had done for medicine and engineering. Social work, as scientific charity, was to study the problem of dependency, gather data, test theories, systematize administration, and develop techniques that would lead to a ‘cure’ (Edwards et al., 2006, p. 470).

In order to develop this modern, scientific charity, there was a need for social workers who understood the character and organization of the social order, the dynamic and effects of social change, and were able to work with individuals to effect change. There were, however, still problems.

COS agencies initially viewed the causes of poverty and dependence such as vice, indolence, intemperance, and others primarily as the moral failings of individuals. This moralizing perspective can be traced to the nineteenth century religious origins of much social welfare work and its organization (Lubove, 1965). In addition to the non-scientific explanation of problems as moral, it soon became obvious that relying on volunteers for the provision of services was insufficient to meet the growing need. Consequently, it was realized that both of these problems could best be addressed through the development of a systematic educational system to better prepare those doing social work.
In 1893, Anna Dawes published a paper entitled “The Need for Training Schools for a New Profession” in which she argued that a good deal of knowledge and expertise was being accumulated by people with experience doing charity work. Four years later, Mary Richmond followed with a paper entitled “The Need of a Training School in Applied Philanthropy.” As a consequence of the publication of these well-received papers by Dawes and Richmond and the beginning of in-service training by organizations such as Boston’s Associated Charities, formal professional education for social work began in 1898 under the sponsorship of the New York Charity Organization Society in league with Columbia College (Edwards et al., 2006).

The Columbia College program, called the Summer School of Philanthropy, was six weeks long and consisted of lectures, visits to public and private charitable agencies, and supervised fieldwork. In 1903, the program at Columbia College was expanded to include a six month winter course and its name was changed to the New York School of Philanthropy a year later when the program was extended again, this time to a full year. Other cities quickly followed New York’s lead and established professional schools for the training of charity workers.

The development of United States educational structure linked directly to the training needs of agencies in the communities and placed in a university context inevitably led to the call for explicit professionalization of the charity/social work field. Professionalism was a major social concern during this era. Medicine and engineering had already reorganized and repositioned
themselves as professions and their practitioners as professionals. This 
emergence of professions in United States was facilitated by their participation in 
the process of the reform and re-creation of American universities as institutions 
focused on research and application going on at the time (Edwards, et al., 2006).

It seemed quite reasonable at the time to think that the numerous and 
diverse social problems plaguing the new urban society would be proper targets 
for solution by a new profession. Fuelling this desire for professionalism were all 
the practical problems of low wages associated with charity work and the limited 
opportunities for women in the work force in the late nineteenth and early 
twentieth centuries.

By the middle of the second decade of the twentieth century, social work 
in the United States had developed identifiable specialties and had already 
begun to define itself as a new, potentially effective profession whose focus went 
considerably beyond relief for the poor. Social work’s original focus had been on 
the dependent poor but, by 1915 that focus had shifted to more generic social 
functions. Those to be served by the new profession were typically identified as 
children, families, and the mentally ill, with few specific references to the poor 
(Edwards et al., 2006).

Edwards et al., (2006) assert that anxiety about the professional status of 
the field persisted, as did the ongoing debate about the proper sources of 
knowledge and theory for the new profession of social work. One perspective, 
derived from the early settlement house experience, held that the new profession 
should focus on understanding the social causes of dependency. Thus, it was
argued, the profession should be base on social and economic theory orientated to social reform. The other perspective was put forward by those who insisted on the need to establish a social work practice approach or method that emphasized individual work and problem solving through developing the relationship between client and worker. Rooted in the experience of charitable organizations, hospitals and treatment-oriented family agencies, this view emphasized the importance of practical knowledge related to social work practice and the operations of social service programs.

As a part of college and post-secondary education social work programs, professors increased their publication of textbooks and participation in conference activity. A dominant theme in such activities, reflected in the new curricula content, held that casework and, therefore, social work required a singular generic skill set that was independent of particular settings or the specific nature of individual client needs.

As a result of all these activities, by 1929 social workers had narrowed the definition of social work to casework and the organizational context in which it occurred. Drawing on European theoretical developments, casework became increasingly oriented to psychiatry. In the process, schools of social work diminished the place of public welfare, social and labour reform, as well as less professional and scientific techniques, such as liaison and community resource mobilization, for tackling social problems (Edwards et al., 2006).

By 1930, American social work had accomplished something quite worthy in that it had succeeded in gaining wide recognition as a profession that had
established a method of casework practice applicable to a wide range of human problems. Further, an extensive educational and professional structure supportive of social work’s further development as a profession had been created (Edwards et al., 2006).

During the mid-1930s, the Association of Training Schools for Professional Social Work was renamed the American Association of Schools of Social Work (AASSW). Its goal was the development of professional education and uniform standards for training. As a result, schools of social work were required to have university affiliation and, further, to offer two years of graduate study as a condition of membership in AASSW (Beless, 1995, p. 635).

The institutionalization of social work education as requiring graduate-level studies for professional practice was not universally accepted. During the depression of the 1930s that affected the United States and the world, many public social services were created and, for the most part, people without graduate degrees were hired to manage and deliver these services. Professional social work education, as represented by the AASSW and its member schools of social work, was not interested in undergraduate level social work education and was, in fact, hostile to the idea ( Ehrenreich, 1985).

In 1942, out of a desire to prepare bachelor level students for public welfare practice and as a response to being frozen out of membership in the AASSW, several undergraduate social work programs formed the National Association of Schools of Social Administration (NASSA). The AASSW and the
NASSA finally merged in 1952, creating the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) (Beless, 1995).

The huge demand for goods and services caused by the Second World War brought an end to the Depression. The Roosevelt administration’s New Deal programs had enjoyed limited success ameliorating, but not ending, depression-era problems like unemployment and widespread poverty. A new national mood of optimism meant social workers once again felt free to concentrate on the individual causes of distress and on developing knowledge and techniques to deal with these individual problems (Beless, 1995).

According to Ehrenreich (1985), the psycho-therapeutic orientation of social work that had begun in the 1920s and been de-emphasized in the 1930s, once again found wide acceptance in the 1940s and 1950s. Support for this orientation was widespread among both social workers and those who supported public and private social agencies. The psycho-therapeutic conception of social work was further buttressed by evidence, based on the testing of millions of military recruits during the war, that the prevalence of mental health problems was far beyond what had been previously thought. Thus the need for new, improved and widespread mental health services rose to the fore in social work. By the 1950s, 85% of students in schools of social work chose casework or direct practice, often described as psychiatric social work, as their major area of study. The interest in individual counselling was reinforced by the fact that more and more persons above the poverty line (i.e., persons not living in poverty) were also turning to social workers for help (Ehrenreich, 1985).
The early 1960s saw a series of books, articles, and reports documenting the fact that poverty still existed in the US on a massive scale. Notable among these works were “The Other America” (Harrington, 1963), “Our Invisible Poor” (MacDonald, 1962), and the report of the Ad Hoc Committee on Public Welfare appointed by the new Kennedy administration (Edwards et al., 2006).

Ehrenreich (1985) indicates that the cumulative impact of these events provoked a general feeling that the United States had been stagnating and that change was needed. There followed a very great increase in interest in the problem of poverty and public welfare and professional social workers in America became increasingly involved in social welfare policy matters. The impact on social work of increasing national attention to civil and welfare rights, spurred on by the anti-war and feminist movements, resulted in a temporary increase in student and faculty interest in community-based organizing and social action. By the end of the 1960s, however, social work was still a considerable distance from both policy formation and service provision for the poor. This was one result of a choice by the profession to respond in a limited way to the increased demand for trained public social service workers, combined with the apparent failure of its earlier efforts to reduce poverty and decrease public welfare roll.

For a number of years, CSWE viewed bachelor programs as pre-professional and thus restricted accreditation to only graduate level (MSW) programs. Consequently, it was not until 1974 that bachelor programs were accredited (Beless, 1995). The integration of accreditation into one body for both undergraduate and graduate education in social work was much more than the
creation of a logical continuum. It represented the fusion of two professional cultures one more focused on public service and social reform and the other more focused on skill and knowledge development for professional, often clinical, practice (Beless, 1995).

By the mid-1970s, the mood of America regarding social welfare programs had soured and the social work profession fell out of favour as a more conservative approach to social work became popular. The social work profession, as represented by National Association of Social Workers (NASW), opposed a major welfare reform proposal known as the Family Assistance Plan. That decision marginalized the profession in terms of the development of a national policy for the poor in the U.S. and thus further alienated the profession from the central aspects of the US social policy framework and its service delivery system (Edwards et al., 2006).

While the United States’ social work cannot be said to have been a central player in the formation and implementation of public policy regarding the poor in the last third of the twentieth century, it did, nevertheless, take steps to be more inclusive of those workers providing the bulk of American public social services. The NASW changed its long-standing membership requirements in order to allow people with bachelor degrees from CSWE approved programs to become full members. As a result of including bachelors in the profession, and the increase in the number of people receiving the BSW credential, nearly half of the more than 500,000 jobs that the United States Bureau of Labour Statistics now identifies as social work positions are filled by people with professional social
work credentials – a proportion much higher than at any previous time in the profession’s history (Edwards et al., 2006).

Edwards et al., (2006) indicate that another element in the continuing undermining of social work’s role in providing services for the poor is the increasing use of the contracting out of those services. Contracting out means the hiring of both non-profit and for-profit agencies and firms to deliver social services to specified populations on time, and within budget, while adhering to standards set by the contracting organization (often government).

Traditionally, social work had been practiced either in governmental or in private non-profit organizations. In large metropolitan areas, however, a number of social workers began to establish private practices by the 1980s. Private practice refers to a practice organization typical for professionals such as physicians and lawyers, where a social worker provides individualized services, generally counselling or therapy, on an hourly or service protocol basis. These private social work agencies usually provide some type of psychotherapy, mental health, or marriage and family counselling and, in recent years, fee-for-service practice in both non-profit and for-profit organizations has become commonplace (Edwards et al., 2006).

Beless (1995) asserts that an emerging pattern in the United States today is one of social workers delivering individualized services in the context of non-governmental organizations seeking contracts for the delivery of specified services to identified clientele groups. Such practice is not different from the classic hanging out a shingle model of private practice, and involves cost and
profit considerations not previously been present in public service delivery. These cost and profit considerations are significant contributors to the change in the professional culture of social work that has been taking place in recent decades.

Edwards et al., (2006) indicate that the expansion of social work licensing laws or regulations and the inclusion of social workers as eligible for reimbursement in many insurance and government benefit programs have also accelerated the numbers of social workers entering full or part-time private practice. Private for-profit businesses employing or, in some cases owned by, social workers include drug and alcohol treatment centres, nursing homes, eating disorder clinics, adult day care centres, companion services, as well as case management and general mental health service provision.

The development of private practice and for-profit social work has met with a mixed reception in the profession. Many welcome these developments and believe that private practice settings provide social workers with greater opportunities to exercise a degree of professional autonomy that is often quite limited for those employed in agency or public settings. In addition, private practice or employment in for-profit organizations is often more lucrative than in agency-based practices. On the other hand, however, there are a number of people in the profession who view the development and expansion of private, for-profit social work with concern (Edwards et al., 2006). Reamer, Reid and Popple (1993) observe that, “in increasing numbers, social work is attracting practitioners with limited commitment to the profession’s traditional concern with social justice and public welfare” (p. 12). Despite such concerns, many students currently
entering schools of social work express a strong desire to ultimately engage in private practice (D’Aprix, Dunlap, Abel, and Edwards, 2004).

It has been argued for some decades in United States public policy circles that private market allocation of social services, under-girded by various forms of public and private insurance providing the ability to consume, constitutes a more efficient and effective way of delivering services than the old public service monopoly model. Yet, the United States’ social work has renewed its association with traditional areas of service having a strong tradition of public involvement (Reamer et al., 1993).

Through the middle of the twentieth century, child welfare was considered to be a social work specialization, and social work was clearly the dominant profession involved in providing child welfare services. However, in the last half of the last century, a number of developments weakened the traditional alliance between social work and public child welfare. The most notable of these developments was the drive to declassify public positions in order to make the staffing of public agencies easier and cheaper. This declassification of social service positions slowed somewhat during the 1980s and early 1990s as a result of a series of court judgments establishing the principle that children in protective service have a right to receive professional support. Such judicial decisions have commonly required states to greatly increase the number of professionally trained social workers in their child welfare systems (Edwards et al., 2006).

Reamer et al., (1993) point out that in order to meet the needs of the public child welfare agencies for more BSW and MSW practitioners, many state
social service departments and schools of social work have formed partnerships aimed at increasing the number of professionally trained social workers employed in those settings. The result has been a renewed alliance between public child welfare services, social work education programs, and professional organizations, particularly NASW and CSWE that has seen the development of specialized curricula and field placements focusing on public child welfare services in schools of social work.

Consequently, schools of social work are again re-emphasizing the preparation of students to provide public child welfare services as the field is redefined as one designed to provide clinical treatment services to a pathological population regardless of income level. This trend is consistent with the several decades of long progressive medical method of social work such as social diagnostic. Along with the medical method of social work, the profession has also maintained an intellectual and ideological component rooted in its origins in the late nineteenth century settlement house and other community movements, as well as its association with social and political movements concerned with the poor, labour, racial and immigrant groups, and other disenfranchised populations (Edwards et al., 2006).

Today, these 19th century roots of social work are reflected in the continuation of community practice curricula at schools of social work and the involvement of many faculty members in research on organizational, community, and social policy issues. Modern United States, as reflected in American educational institutions, pursues knowledge development and the dissemination
of that knowledge that focuses on broad aspects of social and organizational development, as well as individual change.

2.10.3 Social work education in Spain

Mendez (2005) argues that the emergence of social work as a profession in Spain is attributable to two major societal changes in that country:

(1) First, the social needs of the Spanish population greatly increased because of industrialisation and urbanisation in the last half of the 19th century. These processes caused a rapid growth in the number of people moving to the cities which, in turn, increased the population of urban poor and the consequent social issues.

(2) Second, the Spanish ideological perspective on poverty as a social problem also changed. As a result, poor people were thought to be poor because they did not share the values of the middle class. Thus, while it was necessary to provide for the material needs of poor people, the real solution to the issue of poverty was to teach the poor middle-class values.

In the 1930s, Spain’s social and political context, shaped by influences of social Catholicism and important political changes taking place within the Second Republic, had given birth to the first social work school in 1932. The Social Work School of Women was established in Barcelona under the influence of Belgium and French social work schools (Mendez, 2005).

During this time, great changes, such as political and educational rights for women, were improving the civil rights of the poor in society and of other
social groups. In 1939, however, as a result of the Spanish Civil War and the subsequent emergence of the Franco dictatorship, Spaniards lost their political and social rights, and poverty spread as the gap between the upper and the middle classes began to grow (Mendez, 2005).

In this period, social workers were seen as altruistic and caring. Their goal was to respond to the needs of the poor. The first years of the social work profession and education for social work in Spain show similarities to the development of the profession in other European countries.

Feu (2001) indicates that Spanish social work was carried on by women of the middle-class because both church and the state considered women to be the best suited for helping the poor. These circumstances resulted in women without academic training who were working in charitable institutions for benevolent reasons becoming the first to study social work. Simultaneously, women embraced the new profession a way of expressing and, to a degree realizing, their desire for greater participation in public and social life.

In Spain there was some confusion about the nature of social work as a profession and as a voluntary activity. This situation was reflected in the contract and salary conditions of Spanish social workers. Social workers had neither salaries nor work timetables.

By the end of the 1950s, *Caritas, an organization* run by the Catholic Church, had established a significant number of social work schools in Spain. A Female Section of the fascist party, sponsored by Franco’s military regime, had also created some social work schools with the objective of training its members,
especially those occupying posts of responsibility in the political and military branches of the dictatorship (Feu, 2001).

The Spanish government finally gave official recognition to social work education in the 1960s. The priorities of the profession were to promote the social integration of people, groups, and communities into existing Spanish social, political, and economic systems using, mostly, casework methodologies. By 1977, the twenty-eight social work associations in Spain united to form the Spanish Federation of Social Workers (Mendez, 2005).

The curricula of social work studies in Spain have always been influenced by the institutions that founded the nation’s social work schools. The early years of social work education included much content about social topics and much emphasis on practical placements, but little theoretical social work. In schools created by the Catholic Church, training had a religious bias while in the schools set up by the Sección Femenina [Female section], training was impregnated with an ideological blend of national Catholicism and fascism (Mendez, 2005).

In the 1970s, the curricula of social work programs were also influenced by radical social work ideas coming from Latin America in books published in Spanish that were widely accepted by Spanish students and practitioners of social work. The students and practitioners wanted political changes to make Spain into a more democratic nation. As well, a new movement focused on community work as a political instrument was emerging in the suburbs of big cities. Social Workers were now seen as agents of change who participated directly in social progress organizations. The improving contracts and salary
conditions for social workers also motivated men to begin studying social work (Mendez, 2005).

In 1978, after Franco’s death, a new Spanish constitution marked the inauguration of a democratic system of government. The new administration supported the development of the Social Protection System that established universal rights for all citizens. Social workers participated in the creation of a new Social Service Law that granted all Spanish citizens access to healthcare, education, and welfare. As well, many social workers assumed responsibility for managing social policies in different institutions (Feu, 2001).

Education for social work in Spain was elevated to the university level in the 1980s and training, especially in the areas of methods, psycho-social theories, and social services and policies improved. The main professional concern at this time was focused on the management of public economic benefits and thus the provision of psycho-social help. In order to improve the quality of life in Spanish communities, social workers organized services designed to both provide needed assistance and forestall further social problems (Mendez, 2005).

By the last decade of the 20th century, more theoretical knowledge was being incorporated into teaching and training for social work in Spain. The new curricula content included contemporary social theories, such as perspectives of social ecology, system theory and social constructivism and was made possible by the improved training of social work educators, the translation of books into Spanish, and the increasing publication of social work research.
As well, the number of students of social work increased, and the motivation for studying social work also changed. The majority of Spanish students now wanted university qualifications or certification. Research by the Social Studies School of Zaragoza on the occupational situation of social work graduates in 1999 showed that only 46.9% of graduates had applied to do these studies as their first option (Escuela Universitaria Estudios Sociales, 2003).

Social work training in Spain now takes three years and, as prerequisites, it is necessary to have completed secondary education and to have passed a university entrance examination. Currently, there are about 18,000 students in 34 schools of social work in Spain (Feu, 2001).

Mendez (2005) asserts that Spanish curricula for social work have grown to incorporate theory, skills and attitudes. Theory is provided through lectures devoted to the study of:

(1) society, with subjects related to sociology, economics, law, public health and social anthropology;
(2) the individual, with subjects related to psychology and philosophy;
(3) interpersonal relationships, with subjects related to social psychology;
(4) social policy with subjects related to theories about social policy and personal social services;
(5) social work itself, with subjects related to basic concepts, history, theories and methodologies; and
(6) instrumental subjects such as foreign languages and data processing.
In Spain, practical social work training is very important and is seen as a means of acquiring new skills. To facilitate the learning of new skills, practical lessons and placements are provided as part of social work education at the university level.

Practical courses focused on putting the theories and methodologies of social work into practice are held every week. Practical placements are thus an important part of the learning process. Such placements offer students the opportunity of applying the theories learned in the context of contact with a specific social reality.

Fieldwork is another excellent way for a school to be in contact with the society it serves. Agreements for mutual support among various public, private and nongovernmental organizations have been reached not only in Spain, but also in some Latin-American countries. These agreements provide schools of social work with fieldwork opportunities for their students and, in return, the schools help these organizations carry out social research and projects.

The Spanish experience with social work led social workers and educators there to conclude that three years training was not sufficient to prepare students for full engagement in the profession. Consequently, after finishing their social work studies, many students continue their education by taking other courses such as sociology and social anthropology, and by taking postgraduate classes in social work and the social sciences.

Research on the occupational situation of Spanish graduates during 1999 done by the Social Studies School of Zaragoza, showed that 26.6% went on to
further education, with 11% taking other university studies and 15.6% taking postgraduate courses (Escuela Universitaria de Estudios Sociales, 2003). Some postgraduate courses focus on community work, social work in mental health, gender relations, social gerontology, the management of social economy companies, mediation and family therapy.

Today, schools of social work in Spain are faced with the challenge of harmonising their programs with the provisions of the Bologna Agreement. Change would seem inevitable in the near future. The effect of the Bologna Agreement on Spanish social work education has added a new dimension – and a new urgency – to ongoing dialogue about the nature of social work education and the relationship between the university and professional social workers.

In 1999, representatives of 29 European countries had signed a declaration in Bologna committing their countries to the development of a common space of higher education by the year 2010 (Bollag, 2003). This common space required a thorough reform of post-secondary education in many countries and is the first reform ever undertaken in Europe as a whole. Thus, it may be the most profound change in European education since the middle of the 19th century. It has been proposed, for example, to lengthen the time of educational programs leading to the academic degree, known in Spain as licensure, to five years, made up of two academic periods of three and two years each. The three year program would lead to a degree similar to the North American Bachelor of Social Work (BSW) degree.
The Bologna reform proposals seek, on one hand, to outline and order degrees so that each level has both academic integrity and public application. On the other hand, the reforms also seek to harmonize academic credits and degrees across European states, thus facilitating the movement of social workers from one country to another.

There are many advantages of the Bologna proposal (Bollag, 2003). Standardization has some appeal, especially within the academic community, given the chaos and resistance to scrutiny of purely national systems. As well, there are powerful practical and economic reasons driving the Bologna Agreement. Dividing the educational periods leading to the various European degrees allows students to earn academic qualifications in shorter and more realistic time frames, and is more accommodating to individual student schedules. Harmonisation of European social work degrees would give students greater control over their educational assets and lower the cost of lengthy higher education programs from which there is often a high drop-out rate. From the perspective of the European labour market, educated individuals with competencies that are equivalent from one country to another would enter the labour force earlier.

Other advantages of Bologna include creating a single European consciousness, renewing the content of higher education programs, and responding to changing needs with greater flexibility. Degree harmonization would also allow universities in continental Europe to compete with their British counterparts in attracting Asian students. Asia is a rich source of university
students to which Europe, with the exception of the UK, has limited access (Bollag, 2003).

Harmonization, as the case with many other Europeanization initiatives, is often revisited, particularly in academic circles. Bollang (2003) notes that academics are questioning the value and soundness of a three year degree for preparing students for either entry into the labour market or for a second level degree. The resolution of these challenges will determine both the structure and the nature of the content to be included in pan-European social work programs.

One of the future challenges facing the social work profession in Spain is to improve its university training by, for example, increasing the program from three to four years, teaching more subjects directly connected to social work (for example, group work, communication skills, cooperative methods, community social work) and increasing the time students spend on practical placements. An improvement in education preparation for social work may help Spanish social workers acquire better standards of practice. It may also provide opportunities to do social research in situations where social workers intervene. Thus, Spanish social work could become a profession that has a greater presence in social service policy decision-making processes and responsibility in the public social services system. As well, Spanish social workers need improvements in their continuous ongoing, post-graduate training and professional development since social realities and knowledge change and increase with the passage of time. Spain lacks an effective system of continuous education that would, for example, provide postgraduate courses in specific areas of social work or development of
skills like professional supervision. Further challenges in developing the profession of social work in Spain include increasing the volume and publication of results of social research and raising the profile of the profession with potential practitioners such as students entering university. Until such measures are taken, however, it will remain necessary to translate more publications on social work from other European countries in order to help Spanish education for social work keep pace with developments in social work education in the European Union (Bollag, 2003).

Feu (2001) indicates that it would be useful for the social work profession in Spain to consider how best to respond to new social situations, such as the changing reality of social exclusion for some clients, dependency, intercultural relations, eating disorders, bullying, violence against women and seniors, and other issues. These situations represent an opportunity for Spanish social workers to increase the areas of their professional engagement in the country. Social workers are usually very close to people’s social reality and occupy a privileged position from which to observe, analyse and reflect on changing social circumstances and help find solutions to problematic situations as needed.

2.10.4 Social work education in Mexico

Historically, social work education in Mexico has been connected with social work in other Latin American countries. The exchange of literature, research, and theoretical approaches within Latin American social work education is a function of those nations sharing of a common language, Spanish, combined with availability of text books in that language. Such literature reflects
the influence of liberation philosophies that have developed as a result of the experiences of Latin American countries trying to achieve independence and lessen inequality among their populations. Latin American social work, however, is not limited to that theoretical framework, and the profession in several countries actively seeks ways to work effectively with a variety of populations.

The first Mexican social work school, officially recognized as such in 1933, was the Center for Technological Studies № 7 (Aguirre, 1984). In 1935, the school of Domestic Learning Incorporated became the School of Social Work and Domestic Learning and courses were offered by the National University for those working with children. In 1938, the social work education program at the National Autonomous University of Mexico (Universidad National Autónoma de México, UNAM) proposed a three year course of study in social work that was adopted and located in the School of Social Work and Social Sciences at UNAM. Almost three decades later, in 1969 the School of Social Work at UNAM and the school at the Universidad Autónoma de Nueva León received approval to confer licensure upon students completing their bachelor programs (Aguirre, 1984). In 1973, the university council of UNAM approved the creation of the School of Social Work, an institution independent of the school of social sciences, under its first director, Dr. Manuel Sanchez Rosado.

From the founding of the first Mexican school of social work in the 1930s until the end of the 1960s, institutions offering social work education grew slowly. While there were only twelve schools of social work by the end of the 1960s, the
profession had won legal recognition and was listed in Mexico’s official Directory of Professions.

Between 1970 and 1976, however, the situation changed radically. With the support of Mexico’s first lady, María Esther Zuno, wife of Mexican president Luis Echeverría Alvarez, the number of social work schools multiplied. The Mexican government felt that trained social workers would help with the economic development of the country by reducing social problems (Torres, 1987). Today there are more than 100 schools of social work across 33 Mexican states. Some schools are run as autonomous departments within universities, while others operate as part of schools of law, health sciences or social sciences and administration, and still other schools are state run and operated by the federal department of health (Hernández and Dunbar, 2006).

Originally, schools of social work in Mexico and Latin America reflected a mix of their own ideology and value bases and the influences of both European and United States social work in the development of their own curricula. Since the mid-1960s, however, Mexican and other Latin American social work schools have incorporated more of the cultural, social and political realities of their respective countries in their course content on social work practice.

A 1989 anthology of social work compiled by members of the faculty of the UNAM’s social work school contains several chapters addressing issues related to traditional social work ideology and values (Arellano, 1989). In connection to the anthology, Ander-Egg (1985) reviews the interpretation of social work
principles by various authors and organizations and summarizes those principles as:

1. the respect for the value and dignity of the individual;
2. the potential of all persons to overcome their situation though they may lack the means;
3. the rejection of paternalistic tendencies in favor of a search for the latent potential of individuals, groups or community development; and
4. the assumption of an integral or holistic view that takes into account all dimensions of a person, including spiritual and cultural values and material and economic circumstances.

Historically, three major factors have influenced the values and principles taught in schools of social work in Mexico and Latin America. First was the support for the establishment of such schools offered by the United States; second was the training in the United States and Puerto Rico of the first social work academics; and third was the infusion of American social work values and principles into Mexico’s and Latin America’s social work curricula by these academics (Hernández and Dunbar, 2006).

In the 1960s, when the Catholic University of Chile changed its curriculum to reflect the social reality of that country, a period characterized by the re-conceptualization of social work began in Latin America. Academics used the term intellectual colonization to describe the imposition of one country’s reality on another country through the educational curriculum of the colonized country. Intellectual colonization meant little or none of the curricula content in Latin
American social work programs had been derived from the social realities of Latin American countries.

The re-conceptualization approach to the dealing with economic and political oppression was based on the twin values of self-determination and the participation of the client in the decision-making process. Thus, individual performances do not address a country’s social problems.

Consciousness raising, liberation, oppression, praxis, critical thinking, subjective and objective realities, dialogue, transformation, equality, universality, participation, decentralization, and solidarity constitute the basis or building blocks of social work values in Latin America. While the values of self-determination and self-actualization are very important, realistically such values cannot always be pursued in countries under repressive dictatorships, where the social system most needs change, but is artificially maintained by force or the threat of force (Corvarrubias, 2002).

In the mid-1980s, revision of the curriculum of the School of Social Work UNAM in Mexico City was greatly influenced by Susana García, a faculty member who argued against the exclusive use of the social transformation approach to social work. According to García (1990) the social transformation approach was too narrow. She proposed the construction of an alternate process. In her article “Specificity of Social Work”, García (1990) proposed social work is defined in terms of social problems. Those problems would then become the point of reference for developing knowledge based theories and methodologies. Thus, the social problem itself becomes the object of the
intervention in Garcia’s new orientation which was adopted and replaced the social transformation theory and methods approach that had formerly defined the discipline.

Hernández and Dunbar (2006) indicate that the School of Social Work at UNAM has a large undergraduate program with 3,000 students. Its program curriculum structure covers nine semesters. Admission is based on an entrance exam and students enter the program directly after graduating from another bachelor program. Students learn the theory and skills required to enable or empower people to help themselves. Students also learn to be trans-disciplinary, and to have an ecological perspective.

Trans-disciplinary means that the work a student undertakes goes beyond the narrower confines of specific disciplines or methodologies. Such a conceptualization of the social work vision seems to reflect a communitarian ethic and social change philosophy prevalent in social work practice in many Latin American countries.

The objectives of the UNAM program are that students:

(1) know history, economics, policy and sociology;

(2) are able to understand and work with administrative organizations at all levels;

(3) have the knowledge and skills necessary to work with individuals, groups and communities; and

(4) complete an individually designed research project in a community.
The first three semesters at UNAM are all classroom courses where students attend for the full day. Social work courses begin with the history, development, and philosophy of social work. Other courses in the first three semesters include economics, political science, psycho-social processes, and separate social work methodology classes for work with individuals, families, and groups. Classes taken after the fourth semester include planning, public health, community practice, mental health, social welfare, social psychology, management, family law, identity and culture, and psychology of development (Hernández and Dunbar, 2006).

UNAM’s field practicum begins in the fourth semester. Groups of 10 to 15 students are placed in a neighbourhood. They spend two semesters in that neighbourhood working as a team with the people there to build the community capacity to address community problems. The students also focus on individual and family needs.

The second and third semesters of fieldwork focus on issues of a larger or wider influence, such as a neighbourhood’s organization. The final two semesters of the practicum are devoted to preparing students to influence social policy in such areas as drug addiction, health, housing, and child protection. To receive the licensure needed to enter the profession, students need to pass the courses, including an English exam, demonstrate computer competence, pass a professional exam, complete a thesis or service report, and demonstrate civic responsibility by completing 480 hours of volunteer community service (Midgely, 1997).
Since each social work education program in Mexico is developed somewhat independently, there is some variation. As well, however, there are also considerable similarities to professional programs in the United States and South America. There is some indication that programs in Mexican schools geographically nearer to the United States exhibit a greater similarity to the United States social work education programs that devote more attention to work with individual problems, while those in the area of México City and further south have a greater social reform emphasis and thus are more similar to South American programs (Hernández and Dunbar, 2006).

The growth of new masters programs and the development of a doctoral education in social work have spawned a discussion of the relative importance of maintaining a strong social activist, social advocacy perspective. Historically, the emphasis in Mexican and Latin American social work has been on the activist-advocacy role, but the new, higher level master and doctoral programs have resulted in a new found impetus for a more theoretically driven, research focused emphasis for social work.

Those who favour an emphasis on advocacy tend to argue that only by maintaining a strong social advocacy perspective in the graduate programs will it be possible for social workers to play a leadership role in effecting systemic change in the socio-political climate creating the social conditions affecting the population. Proponents of the theoretical perspective cite the need for social work to become more professional in order to establish itself within the social structures that need to be affected. The debate, while not entirely new, has
gained a new impetus with the recent developments in social work education opening the door to high level degrees (Corvarrubias, 2002).

While Mexican social work education programs typically include the traditional methods of social work practice, such as casework, group work and community development, there is also great deal of diversity and heterogeneity in the theoretical frameworks being taught. This variation may be the result of a lack of national coordination of curriculum due to the absence of an accrediting body. The absence of a national, professional social work association has also contributed to the lack of a common conceptualization of what social work is or should be in the country.

Theoretical approaches to social work that have been identified in Mexican curricula include functional, interpretive, radical humanism, and radical structuralism (Corvarrubias, 2002). Apparently, none of the educational programs have adopted generalist, clinical, or integrative practice as an organizing theme for their curriculum.

Community development curricula most frequently use a consciousness-raising educational, grassroots, participatory approach based on the methods espoused by Paulo Freire in his “Pedagogy of the Oppressed” and in the literature about international community development (Midgely, 1997). These methods focus on fostering a state of political awareness that seeks to fundamentally transform living conditions in the community and individual problems are explained within the context of conditions of the local community.
and the society at large (Hernández and Dunbar, 2006). This movement was associated with the rejection of the United States social work influence.

2.10.5 Social Work Education in Chile

This section illustrates the process of social work education in Chile, reviews Chilean social work education in its historical perspective, and considers variations that have been present throughout the history of social work development. According to Castañeda and Salame (2010), the literature available on this topic describes the different curricula that have driven change in the educational processes.

Chile is the Latin American country with the longest tradition of social work education. The first social work school in Latin America, the Dr. Alejandro del Río School of Social Service, was founded in Santiago, Chile in 1925, 26 years after the creation of the first school of social work in the world\(^2\). As in other countries, the evolution of Chilean social work education is closely linked to the country's social and political context. According to Castañeda and Salame (2010), "the evolution both of social work education and of the social work profession in Chile involves five stages". The stages are:

First stage: from charity to professional intervention (1925-1960)

The first stage in the history of Chilean social work began with the founding of the first School of Social Service in Chile, the Dr. Alejandro del Río School of Social Service, named in honor of the doctor responsible for its creation, on May 4, 1925. Administratively, the first school was founded by the

\(^2\) The first social work school was founded in Netherlands in Amsterdam in 1899.
National Board of Welfare, the predecessor of the Chilean Ministry of Health. The Alejandro del Río school was influenced by Belgian physician René Sand who had promoted the establishment of a social services school because, in his opinion, these professionals would "be effective partners in the health field" (Gómez, 1999, p. 9). Its first director, Belgian social worker Jenny Bernier, was responsible for the selection and admission of students, professional education standards, development of the school’s curriculum and supervision of it, along with selection of faculty members. The school’s program of study lasted two years and each applicant was "to be mature, have completed third-year humanities, possess impeccable moral and personal background, [and be] united in a spirit of selflessness and love for their partners" (Figueroa, 1975, p. 22).

The Dr. Alejandro del Río school 's first curriculum in 1925 included subjects such as law, political economy, prophylaxis and hygiene, protection of childhood nutrition, dietetic care of the sick and wounded, and secretarial practice. It also included a short practice component consisting of visits to institutions so students could make contact with people in need, as well gaining experience in identifying problems and existing resources for dealing with such problems. Inspired by European social work, the contents of the school’s first programs had plenty of medical and legal information, and were usually taught mainly by doctors working for the National Council of Welfare. For students who were practicing in the field, “the supervision was under the school director, who, following the European system of training, gave more importance to the support offered to the understanding of the issues addressed” (Figueroa, 1975, p. 23).
In 1929, the social service school Elvira Matte de Cruchaga was established as part of the Catholic University of Chile. Designed in the United States by Don Miguel Cruchaga, a former ambassador of Chile and author of the country's social laws in the early 20th century, the school's mission was to train professionals who would "exercise an apostolic work, taking the moral approach to promote the perfection of the individual, according to the principles of Catholicism" (Maidagán, 1975, p. 19).

The duration of the study program at the Elvira Matte de Cruchaga School was two years, and the curriculum included increasing levels of case and group work. During the first year, students practiced in the field and observed the work being done by professionals. The practice sites were varied, placing the students in health centers, private companies and government agencies that had a very high demand for social assistance. The student experience involved working in an institution performing the same tasks as professionals.

Chilean social work occupations of the time were shaped by welfare programs and the integration of the needy into the urban workplace. The primary field opportunities for social work students were in social welfare institutions and health and child protection services. Other field experiences for students included working with labour and social assistance programs, and dispensing funds and work (Quiroz, 2000). As well, during this time emerged opportunities for the employment of social workers in education, particularly in teaching and student welfare. There were also potential field positions at the university for social work students. Figueroa (1975) notes that "the field of health – hospitals, drops of milk
and institutions of the National Board of Public Welfare – absorbed most of the students who did primarily medical collaborative roles” (p. 30).

In the late 1920s and early 1930s, a reorganization of Chile’s House of Orphans and the Child Protection Society, required social workers to assume leadership roles. In 1930, a charitable organization, Ollas de Pobres [*Pots for the Poor*], was created to mitigate the devastating effects of the world-wide economic depression. This organization and its administrative structure corresponded to that of a social work department and its social worker director. The first social laws triggered recruitment of social work practitioners in the industrial sector, notably in large companies of the Chilean State (Figueroa, 1975).

In 1932, following the expansion of professional social work fields in Chile and the agreements reached at the First International Conference of Social Service in Paris three years earlier, improved training came into vogue and the duration of the Chilean social work study programs increased to three years. A decade later, in 1942, four new, university-level schools of social work were created in the cities of Concepción, Temuco, La Serena, and, finally, in 1945, in Valparaiso. The new schools were under the supervision of the University of Chile’s faculty of law and social science, as well as the Chilean Ministry of Education. Administratively, the direction of these schools was assumed by professionals trained at the first two Chilean schools of social work (the Dr. Alejandro del Río and Elvira Matte de Cruchaga schools).

To be accepted at these new schools, students were required to understand and recognize the values of the school, pass a personal interview,
and meet the health and vocational standards of the profession. Moreover, the curriculum was extended by a year of additional training, but with no significant changes to its core content for existing subjects. The extra year of study meant that students learned group methodology and increased their practice hours. Another school of social work was established under the Catholic University of Valparaiso in 1956. At the end of this stage of Chilean social work development, motivated by the suggestion of the United Nations that training programs be tailored to fit the needs of individual countries, a seminar was held in Concepción in 1958 to examine "teaching characteristics, investigating, and verifying the quality of education" (Figueroa, 1975, p. 108).

The result of these developments was an increase in, and diversification of, professional fields. For example, one rural social service organization, the Farmers Union of Chile, emerged with the goal of "... improving the living conditions of the Chilean lower class" (Figueroa, 1975, p. 61) and, in coordination with the Elvira Matte de Cruchaga school some years later, this goal evolved into an area of professional practice. Chile had experienced rapid industrial growth, and the government promoted the incorporation of many social workers in its social and welfare services. Another emergent field of work during this period of 1940s and 1950s was in social service housing following the creation of Chile's Housing Foundation "whose purpose was to provide comfortable, hygienic, and inexpensive housing for workers of modest means" (Figueroa, 1975, p. 61). Yet another expansion of the social workers in the labour force followed the establishment of social services to support humanitarian efforts for detainees.
under the responsibility of the Gendarmería de Chile [Chile’s National Prison Guards Services].

Second stage: from welfare to social promotion (1960-1973)

The social service school at the Catholic University of Valparaiso was created in 1956 and, by 1957, the school of social service in Temuco was closed and its students transferred to the schools in Santiago and Valparaiso. Three of the five schools in the country that had been under the Chilean Ministry of Education became part of the University of Chile. These schools formed one administrative unit under the Director General of Schools, using a uniform curriculum and application requirements. In 1960, the University of Chile opened a new social work school in the city of Antofagasta while closing the school of social work in Concepción. Three years later, in 1963, the University of Chile opened another social work school in Temuco. A curriculum reform process was also undertaken in 1963 and, as a result, the duration of the social work programs was extended to be four years, and social sciences subjects were incorporated without substantially reducing content in the area of health studies. In 1965, the University Council of the University of Chile approved the designation of social service schools as colleges. Previously, social works schools were designated only as annexed, giving them a status less than that of a university college (Figueroa, 1975).

In the mid 1960s, influenced by a climate of widespread social and political questioning of the status quo, social work professionals, following a cause that promoted profound changes to existing economic structures, became
involved in popular social and political reform movements of the time. By the end of the decade, the University of Chile had created new schools of social work in the cities of La Serena and Talca (Quiroz, 2000).

During this period, the profession engaged into a process of thorough self-evaluation called re-conceptualization. Re-conceptualization was a process that saw all schools of social work in Latin America countries invited to respond to the climate of social and political reforms at the time. The process strongly questioned the role of financial assistance in the practice of the profession and, therefore, the appropriate methodologies and levels of intervention for professional practice. As well, the character of existing social welfare practices, and the theories, concepts and values underlying frameworks for professional practice also came under scrutiny (Quiroz, 2000).

According to Castañeda and Salame (2010) for the Chilean post-secondary education system, the year 1966 was marked by profound changes. Two of the most significant changes were:

1) The reform of Chilean education under the slogan to democratize education. As a result of the reform process, primary education was extended from six to eight years, thus increasing the enrolment in the different educational levels (preschool, primary school, secondary and post-secondary) within the system; and 2) The reform of post-secondary education examined issues like the creation of new careers, the implementation of an aptitude test for university entrance, highly flexible curriculum, academic leadership, and the politics and
administration of universities with an emphasis on participation of the entire educational community (Castañeda and Salame, 2010, pp. 8-9).

The number of Chilean social work schools had grown to 12 by 1973. As a result of the spirit of continuous change of the era, and the questioning of the status quo through the re-conceptualization process, Chilean social work curricula was constantly being changed and modified. Curricula changes included both the subjects to be studied and their theoretical foundations, along with methods of professional practice. Social work education was profoundly transformed, for example, by the incorporation of new vocational subjects such as techniques for group work, communication skills, cooperative methods, popular education, community social work, and others into curricula. Also swept into the domain of education for social work were areas of the social sciences and social research emphasizing developmental sociology and historical materialism, as well as social and political philosophy. In this period, courses related to health and law topics were removed from social work curricula (Castañeda and Salame, 2010).

The methodologies of both case and group work in terms of their relation to charitable activities were questioned and, as a result, new strategies were adopted by the profession. The organization and strengthening of community development efforts were buttressed by professional courses in emerging fields of professional activity such as housing, social welfare, child protection programs.
During this period, there was significant growth and expansion of work areas linked to municipal departments, unions, and the rural population. The coordination of diverse government social programs dealing with, for example, residential, agricultural, educational and health issues, involved the direct participation of social workers as professionals responsible for carrying out social development programs. Given these new areas of professional practice, it was prudent to include topics like social methods of organization and community development in training and education for social work.

For example, social work professionals articulating public housing plans also educated people about the empowerment of the residential communities by means such as creating new services and community groups. By 1967, the number of social work practitioners in Chile had reached 2485 (Chilean Society of Health, 1967), of whom 1,164 worked in the public sector and 575 in the National Health Service. Approximately half the graduates from schools of social work were employed by the Chilean government.

Towards the end of this period of questioning and reform, new areas of work, including the agricultural sector, continued to expand as a result of the intensification of the processes of social and agrarian reform, and in response to the pressure by social organizations to actively involve people in plans for social housing and community facilities. The Chilean educational system also observed an increase in hiring, stimulated by the creation of the Junta Nacional de Auxilio Escolar y Becas, an organization that supported basic education by providing scholarships to poor students. Thus, a major characteristic of the second stage of
the growth and evolution of social work in Chile was the emergence of new fields for social work practitioners in government structures, such as Provincial agencies and Municipalities, and a wider range of practice opportunities with different groups in society. This expanded scope for social work in Chile was aided by the climate of societal and political reform in which it took place (Castañeda and Salame, 2010).

_Third stage: social work and military government._

The third stage of the development of social work in Chile was ushered in by the Pinochet coup in September of 1973 and lasted for 17 years, until March 1990. All of the processes initiated in the second stage were abruptly terminated by the military dictatorship. As a result, schools of social work were closed - some temporarily and others permanently - teachers and students were expelled and new enrollments were restricted to the number of vacancies in schools that were allowed to operate. In 1974, the majority of schools suspended their academic year. The following year, 1975, some slowly reopened their doors with high school grades and an academic aptitude test as the only entrance requirements. The retooling of social work by the dictatorship was applied more or less uniformly to the eight Chilean social work schools from 1976 until the middle of 1980s (Castañeda and Salame, 2010)

In terms of what was to be taught, a directive from the Ministry of Education ordered the redesign of all existing social work school curricula. The required changes dictated by the new regime included the redefinition of the goals, objectives and methodologies of the social work profession, and the
inclusion of technology training as a central feature of educational process. Further, it was suggested that ideologies of social practice be eliminated and neutrality be promoted as the central value in the intervention process.

The redesigned programs lasted five years and included subjects in the area of law. While maintaining social science subjects in the curricula, reformulated ideological perspectives approved by the Pinochet regime were added. Thus, teaching and learning processes and practice in the field emphasized the only role of the social worker as one of social policy implementation. Social work profession in Chile under Pinochet stepped backwards to the charity and assistance fields models of social care. Group and community work was downgraded and effectively forbidden. New, special programs for students who had initiated their studies before 1973 required such students take new courses in order to obtain their degree (Quiroz, 2000).

Within this context of brutal political oppression, characterized by the rampant abuse of human rights and government-sponsored terrorism (state-sanctioned killings and people disappearing), social work practitioners faced a decreasing number of job opportunities (Figueroa, 1975, p. 173).

Despite the climate of repression and fear, a group of courageous professionals began to build a social work network promoting respect for human rights, defending victims of political repression, encouraging participation, and implementing survival strategies for populations most affected by the economic downturn that occurred in the early 1980s. The intervention strategies of this professional group alternative social work sought to strengthen organizations,
improve social and civic education, and support joint initiatives of individuals and community groups. Simultaneously, they developed training for other professionals, and engaged in analyzing and systematizing experiences and research from the perspective of comprehensive frameworks. These areas of social intervention were mainly supported by international cooperation from non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and the Catholic Church of Chile.

In the early 1980s, the military dictatorship implemented a new educational reform with the main objective of allowing private sector participation in social work education. One of the main consequences of this reform was the Ley Orgánica Constitucional (Constitutional Organic Law) which resulted in the removal of social work education from national post-secondary education such as the University of Chile and its placement with social work education by regional universities. The new law also allowed the creation of post-secondary education universities operated by the private sector, and established a list of programs that was allowed to be taught in academic settings at the university. Social work education was located in this private sector category and the first consequence of this new situation was the increasing number of private sector social work schools without any regulatory bodies or standards (Castañeda and Salame, 2010).

*Fourth stage: continuity and change in searching for a synthesis.*

Beginning with the return of democracy to Chile in 1990, and extending until the turn of the millennium, Chilean professional social workers focused their efforts on building knowledge to integrate the experiences of previous phases
and return of academic freedom that allowed the study of new learning and cognitive intervention methodologies. Initially, discussions concerning the nature of social work in this period were focused on how best to overcome poverty and the relationship of economic development to social justice (Quiroz, 2000).

Since 1990, Chile's new democratic government has supported efforts by Chilean social workers to focus the profession on those two major issues at social work conferences, seminars and in general union activities. Social work education has concentrated on studying the changes occurring in post-dictatorship era as well as new, emerging social problems and their effects on Chile's vulnerable population. Of note in the Chilean social work renaissance is the significant increase in the number of professionals as a result of the reopening of schools at traditional universities and opening of new schools in private sector universities and professional institutes.

The search for a synthesis that recognized and valued the learning and teaching processes from the previous stages failed to find consensus on a central framework for proceeding. As a result, each school of social work developed a specific professional profile supported by a range of independently designed courses. For the various programs offered at these schools, the length of study varied between eight and ten semesters and the emphasis of each program concentrated on those areas of professional practice in which the host institution specialized. Requirements for certification were not uniformly standard. It was possible, for example, for students to obtain certification if they completed
a period of professional practice, or prepared a thesis, or both, depending on the particular institution (Castañeda and Salame, 2010).

Changes in curriculum followed the return of democracy and the removal of restrictions on academic freedom. Curriculum review was driven by the need for social work education to include content and practices that had developed in non-governmental and church organizations that had arisen during the Pinochet’s regime, particularly content and practices related to the defense of human rights and the strengthening of social organizations and civic education. Another important aspect of curriculum renewal was its inclusion of social and political issues on the government’s agenda, including, but not limited to, the overcoming of poverty, economic growth, social sustainability and equity, social participation and environmental protection (Castañeda and Salame, 2010).

The process of curricula revision and renewal began in the first years of the 1990s and, by the decade’s end, virtually all social work schools in the country had updated their curricula. As a result, the variety of social work programs being offered by leading educational institutions during the decade enriched the teaching-learning process and strengthened the relationship between students and teachers. As well, during this time a move from traditional models focused on teaching to learning-centered models is evident.

Quiroz (2000) indicates that another very important influence on post-dictatorship Chilean social work was the return of professionals who were exiled. These returning professionals brought with them experiences, methodologies and intervention techniques learned and practiced in their host countries during
the time of exile. The insertion of these professionals in the social work system is most evident in government agencies, universities and some NGOs.

Concurrent with this return of educated professionals was an increasing number of jobs for social workers, particularly in government agencies. The first experiences in self-employment for social workers – through the creation of consulting companies during this time – contributed to the diversification of opportunities for social workers. As well, the outsourcing of some services related to social research, training, technology transfer, and development and implementation of projects resulting from competitive funding encouraged such ventures.

Fifth stage: professional tradition to professional transformation (2000-present)

The renewal of Chilean social work took place in the context of efforts by the country’s Ministry of Education to introduce the concept of quality in post-secondary education. For the Chilean government, the definition of the concept of quality was the:

co-existence of different programs supported by resources and capabilities; the need to consolidate a culture of evaluation and self-assessment, considering the growing trend towards international practice, the need to improve consistency of the educational system in order to refine the requirements applicable to each level and institutional type, and providing adequate information for decision making (Ministerio de Education, 1998, p. 7).
In practical terms, the concept of quality took the form of a national system of standards relating to consistency and evaluation that applied to education programs. Within the context of self-evaluation and accreditation processes, the concept of quality was understood as the framework that defines the Chilean educational system.

Under new post-secondary education policy, Chilean social work schools undertook new initiatives in the review of their curricula. The new review of curricula was driven by the urgency of the need to account for tensions influencing and challenging their educational endeavors at four levels. According to Castañeda and Salame (2010) those four levels were:

(1) First level: from the perspective of social work, the challenges of globalization, are expressed in the emergence of new and more complex social problems that necessitate the development of new professional knowledge, methodologies and strategies, and intervention techniques;

(2) Second level: increasing the number of schools of social work in Chile has generated a highly competitive higher education market characterized by the need for both more student registrations and a clear differentiation among the various social work education programs being offered;

(3) Third level: Chilean post-secondary education policy driving the processes of self-assessment and accreditation for all universities – public and private – and their undergraduate and graduate programs on the institutional level seeks to optimize the quality and transparency of the educational process; however, as a result of self-assessment processes,
reports emerging from social work schools have identified the need to update their professional profile and review their curricula; and

(4) Fourth level: professional order of social workers (Colegio Profesional de Asistentes Sociales) initiated a national movement to restore social work education to the university level that achieved its objective in 2005 when Chile’s congress returned the social work bachelor degree to the post-secondary education level (Castañeda and Salame, 2010, p. 17). Thus, universities were able to deliver two degrees simultaneously: the professional degree and licensure in social work while other post-secondary institutions offered only a professional degree. This situation resulted in increased diversity among various social work educational programs.

Currently each post-secondary institution in Chile that offers a social work program has its own curriculum responding to different requirements, such as institutional mission and vision, the value framework, and different conceptions of learning processes and training strategies (generic or specialized). All of these aspects of social work continue to exercise a great influence on the nature and definition of social work programs already in place.

Finally, employment opportunities in Chile today for social workers include traditional areas of the social justice system, health, safety, welfare, and housing, as well as new opportunities generated by agencies implementing programs and social projects for promotion of social development with both public and private funding. Chilean social workers provide counseling and therapy for families, individuals, and groups and promote community development. Consequently,
Chile is also seeing continued growth in self-employment opportunities for social workers in projects such as conflict resolution and employee service programs.

The historical review of social work education in five different countries presented here reveals that social, economic and political situations are affecting both the profession and its educational processes. The major factors in these phenomena are:

(1) The conceptual and methodological constructions of areas of professional interest are not unique or static. Social problems constantly change and evolve, both in their nature or makeup and in the identification and conceptualization of the dynamics involved in understanding and dealing with such problems. As a result, the priorities given to different social problems vary according to their differing socio-political contexts.

(2) The role of the social worker in the society has changed substantially over time. Depending on its historical, social, and political context, the role of the profession has changed from its first conceptualization as a professional assistant to that of an advocate for social change and, currently, to that of professionals engaged in the application of social methods and techniques. As well, today there is a tension between the conceptualizations of social work as a discipline based-knowledge on one hand and that of social work as a profession on the other.

Before the historical review of social work education, this chapter offers various definitions of competency and the philosophical and theoretical foundations of CBE which demonstrates that such models have been
controversial. It is also evident that not all CBE approaches are equal. Some current approaches tend to be more integrated and holistic than others, and are thus more suitable for academic teaching purposes. Considering the opportunities and limitations of CBE models in the global age, it is crucial for educators to be proactive in confronting external pressures for change. At the same time, academic communities must analyse and reflect on CBE models in order to determine if they are an appropriate response to particular pressures for change related to the discipline of social work.

Chapter 3 presents the research methodology utilized to answer the study questions. The sections of this chapter first present the paradigm that serves as the foundation for the study, and then articulate the purpose and significance of the study. Finally, the research method to gather data and the methods used to analyze and interpret those data are detailed along with issues related to authenticity and ethical considerations.
CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The first section of this chapter presents the paradigm that is the foundation of this research study, the second section articulates the purpose and significance of the study while the third part details the methodological design that provides the research method used for gathering the research data and the methods used to analyze and interpret those data. Finally, issues related to authenticity and ethical considerations are examined.

In each section of this chapter, I describe and identify the opportunities and limitations of implementing the method used to gather the research data. Considering the limitations, it is important to note that the approach taken might be best described as a generic qualitative study (O’Leary, 2004). Six participants who were familiar with the use of the model were interviewed. These professors were from the Faculty of Social Work at University of Colima in Mexico; the Faculty of Social Work at the University of Alicante in Spain; the Faculty of Education and Social Work at University of Valladolid in Spain; the School of Social Work at Dalhousie University in Canada; the School of Social Work at University of Waterloo in Canada; and the associate director for research from the Council of Social Work Education in the United States. They represented their own particular views and experiences using CBE. This is followed by a systematic analyzing and categorizing of those interviews, meaning was derived from them through individual and collective examination.
One important consideration in social science research that must be kept in mind is the existence of different paradigms. According to Lincoln and Guba (1990) a paradigm is a world view, that is, a set of metaphysical beliefs about reality and the methods for gaining knowledge of reality. To understand the essence of qualitative research, it is important to remember that meaning is socially constructed by individuals rooted in their interaction with their world. Thus, there are a multiplicity of constructs and interpretations of reality that are in a state of flux and changing over time.

The generic qualitative approach utilized in this research seeks to understand and analyze the CBE model as a useful possible theoretical framework for designing and implementing curricula for a Bachelor of Social Work (BSW) program. Thus, the question which guided this research was: Does the CBE model serve as a useful theoretical framework to design and implement curricula for a Bachelor Social Work program?

Every year many faculties of social work participate in the process of program accreditation in order to meet national or international standards. This ongoing process involves a comprehensive review of the programs, and then each faculty receives a number of years of accreditation (Stufflebeam, 2001). Despite this process, not many social work academic communities are able to provide the information to the public researching and documenting challenges related to curriculum design. It is important to consider that in some countries there is a movement to promote the use of the CBE model in social work education.
To be effective, advocates of the CBE model need to identify, discuss, and address misunderstandings about the model and its use. From an international perspective, this study presents arguments both for and against the use of the CBE model in curriculum development for a BSW program. Previous research on social work education and CBE, conducted in different countries, has not provided an in-depth analysis of the opportunities and challenges in selecting and implementing the CBE model in social work curricula.

This qualitative study highlights the main components in the process of design and implementation of CBE curricula. The thoughts and considered opinions of social work professors holding opposing views on the appropriateness of utilizing CBE models both enriches and improves the ongoing dialogue and debate about using CBE.

The discussion of the methodology is an important component in this chapter because selecting an appropriate methodology enhances the value of the research data collected. By reviewing the opportunities and limitations of the research method used to collect information, I provide an overview of the implementation of the generic qualitative design in a PhD thesis. Basically, the idea is to discover if and how the methodology supports and contributes to answering the research question and to increase the understanding of CBE.

3.1 The research paradigm

According to Creswell (1994) a paradigm rests on three philosophical assumptions: the ontological, the epistemological, and the methodological. These three paradigmatic pillars direct a researcher's thinking and actions. The
research process thus begins with both conscious and unconscious questions and assumptions that serve as the foundation for an epistemological position. The researchers’ epistemological stance affects every phase of the research process, including subsequent theoretical and methodological decisions related to gathering and interpreting data.

From the ontological perspective, this research might be termed interpretative because an interpretive qualitative approach considers an individual's experience and how she or he interacts socially with others. The interpretative paradigm refers to contextual research that is less concerned with discovering and analyzing human behaviours and, instead, focuses on a subjective understanding of the meaning of human experience in ‘real life settings’ through inductive inquiry (Ary, Jacobs, and Razavieh, 2002).

The epistemological foundation of my research is related to, and affected by the method selected to access and collect information, that is, how the knowledge is going to be built or constructed is central to my research. Based on an interpretative approach, the research seeks to build broader understanding from the description and analysis of, and reflection on, the different viewpoints of participants in the study. The research data are derived from the responses of those participants already using the CBE model and those who are in disagreement with using CBE models.

In addition to the above features of this study, it is important to emphasize that the research involved a naturalistic inquiry characterized by the use of inductive analysis to discover important categories of data. The inquiry was
holistic in the sense that the phenomenon being studied was viewed and understood as a complex system that is synergistically more than just the sum of its parts. Consequently, the research findings are interpreted in their social, historical, and contemporary contexts.

3.2 Purpose and significance of the research

*Research questions*

The primary question that guided this research was: From the perspective of members of the academic community in post-secondary social work institutions, does the CBE model serve as a useful theoretical framework to design and implement a Bachelor of Social Work curriculum?

*Research sub-questions*

The research question can be further elucidated and contextualized by the following complementary questions that also generate data helpful in meeting the primary objectives of the research:

(1) What are the current design and implementation processes of CBE curricula in Bachelor of Social Work programs?

(2) Is the design and implementation of CBE curricula appropriate for Bachelor of Social Work programs?

(3) What are the challenges and achievements in the design and implementation of CBE curricula for Bachelor of Social Work programs?

These questions are operational throughout the process of describing and analyzing the characteristics of CBE. The responses by the participants may also
provide reflections on the philosophical foundations underlying the use of the CBE model for social work education. Secondly, the identification of different perceptions about the uniqueness and importance of CBE within social work education may contribute to the debate on whether it is a useful method for developing competencies that could influence social work education and professional development in the future. Thirdly, what would constitute an appropriate CBE design and implementation framework for social work education, considering the successes and limitations of CBE curricula to date?

The questions not only direct the nature of the research, but may also clarify the extent to which social work education is a discipline where CBE can be appropriately applied.

Significance of the research

Significance for social work education

Very little raw data or systematic analysis of CBE programmes related to social work education is available in the literature. The primary information from the research data present a contemporary overview or snapshot of CBE in social work today. Reflections on the topic also generated new knowledge to help further the design, development, and implementation new social work curricula using CBE.

The intention of the research process is to present information related to the design processes and implementation frameworks of CBE, as well as to advance the discussion of current strategies being applied in the contemporary teaching and learning processes employed in social work education. In particular,
the primary focus of the research is on the overall curriculum development process currently using CBE. Thus, recommendations and suggestions about future applications of CBE derived from the data may also serve to guide and support those faced with the critical and challenging decision to utilize the CBE model as an alternative to current processes of teaching and learning within faculties of social work.

Thus, one benefit of this research is the opportunity to establish contacts with people directly involved in the design and application of the competency model in social work education.

**Significance for a Chilean University**

As mentioned in Chapter 1, the findings of this research will advance the understanding of how to design and implement future CBE programs at the Technological Metropolitan University (UTEM) in Chile. The initial motivation for this research was provided by the development of a new post-secondary education policy in Chile that seeks to improve the quality and integrity of Chilean post-secondary educational processes.

In 1997, the Chilean government unveiled a new policy – the Higher Education Improvement Program (HEIP) – designed to further its long range development plans for higher education. HEIPs financed by the Chilean government and a loan of US $245 million from the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IRBD), a branch of the World Bank that works with developing countries around the world.
One of HEIP’s principal goals is the improvement of educational services for students. In this regard, a project designed by UTEM’s Social Work Department seeking to create a new curriculum for its BSW program based on a competency model, was adjudicated and approved in 2002. This project is called in Spanish, Programa de Mejoramiento de la Calidad y la Equidad de la Educación Superior.

The objectives of the new UTEM competency-based curriculum require new strategies for both the teaching of, and learning by, social work instructors and students, including the search for new theoretical constructs and methods of CBE. Orientation sessions to enable the academic community to systematically review the new curriculum are a key component in the strategy for the implementation of the new CBE curriculum. Another objective of these training sessions include developing strategies to enhance participation in the teaching and learning processes, new systems of evaluation and accreditation, and mandatory, practical educational experiences in the actual area of study, that is, some form of field work or practical experience by the student in applying his or her learning and/or knowledge.

3.3 Methodological design

O’Leary (2004) in the book ‘The Essential Guide to Doing Research,’ suggests that when engaging in a generic qualitative research project, one needs to identify the components of paradigm, methodology, methods, tools, and the process of analysis in relation to methodological design. Considering the research questions of this study, the paradigm selected was interpretative
because it is not concerned with objective facts but, rather, with the subjective meaning each person has about his or her situation within their own, individual context. Consequently, the approach used is generic qualitative, while the methods selected were focused on social work program at six institutions: Canada (two), Spain (two), and Mexico (one) as well as the CSWE in the United States.

Using the generic qualitative approach my research probed the perspectives and reflections of people in the field who are currently applying the competency model in specific social work education contexts. The objective was to gain some insight into both the perspectives of the participants in that process and how their experiences have affected their perspectives.

3.4 Methods used to gather research data

As already indicated, my research utilized face-to-face interviews, document analysis, and ICT tools such as e-interviews and a discussion forum as methods of data collection. The interview schedules (see Appendix D) included, but were not limited to, open-ended approaches to stimulate reflection on the following questions:

1. What are the features of CBE that make it suitable for use in social work education?

2. Why was the competency model selected for use in your faculty’s curriculum?

3. How was the CBE model used in the development of the curriculum for your BSW program and what implementation strategy was involved?
4. What were the challenges in developing and assessing CBE competencies in your faculty’s social work program?

5. What advice do you have for other faculties interested in implementing the CBE model in their BSW programs?

**Opportunities and limitations of face-to-face interviews**

The face-to-face interview obviously offers the opportunity to establish personal communication with participants in which it is possible both to obtain much more direct information and to obtain clarification of answers to initial questions with follow-up questions. Both these factors encourage full and complete responses.

As mentioned, the research attempted to use face-to-face interviews. Five interview requests were made to professors involved in the dialogue and debate about the use of CBE in social work education. Some favoured the application of CBE and some opposed it.

During the course of the research, only one face-to-face interview could be arranged. This interview took place at the 2009 Congress of the Humanities & Social Sciences on Social Work Identity in the Age of Interdisciplinary and Globalization during the annual meeting of the Canadian Association for Social Work Education at Carleton University in Ottawa from May 27-29, 2009. The five research participants originally invited were not able to take a part in a face-to-face interview because of other commitments. Subsequently, I was able to contact two other professors and invited each to do a conference interview or a
one on one telephone interview. Only one professor responded and declined the invitation, but did refer me to other possible participants (see Appendix E).

Document analysis: opportunities and limitations

A second technique used in this research was that of document analysis. This is an indirect data gathering method, as opposed to direct techniques such as interviews and questionnaires. The aim of the document analysis is to outline current thinking on the CBE and to critically analyse it in order to determine the appropriateness of CBE models for social work education.

A comprehensive document analysis of books, journal articles, case studies, and internet publications were the primary sources of information examining the philosophical and historical foundations of CBE and social work education.

Other important sources of information are public documents produced by social work faculties, including reports, articles and strategic programs. The objective here is to reveal and explain the processes for the valid design and implementation of CBE in social work education. These documents were found in the literature and provided by research participants. The aim of the document analysis for this study was to obtain and provide an understanding of the knowledge base for, and current trends in, CBE and social work education. As such, it is essential to critically analyze and interpret the concepts, arguments of CBE put forward by both proponents and opponents of CBE.

Data gathering through document analysis provided the researcher with an opportunity to review current information on the competency model from
information available in the literature as well as documents received from research participants. The main limitation of this method was insufficient information related to CBE and social work education.

**E-interviews and discussion forum: opportunities and limitations**

The third technique to collect information for this study was the use of ICT tools (e-interviews and discussion forum). The goal in using these ICT tools was to improve the quality and precision of the research information, and to generate new, networking connections among people currently working in the CBE field. One of the main characteristics of the so-called “information society”³ is the creation of new, dynamic or synergistic connections between people and the establishment of networks among them. ICT tools provide opportunities to contact people in different cities, provinces, and countries, while minimizing problematic factors such as time and distance.

After three decades of increasing use of ICT in every major sector of society, electronic mail (e-mail) has become one of the most popular tools for the exchange of information and ideas. Robson and Selwyn (1998) indicate that the relative simplicity and effectiveness of e-mail has resulted in its quickly being integrated into different communities, including those of business, academics, sport and culture. There is an emerging body of literature surrounding the use of e-mail in education and its applications include undergraduate teaching, student teacher mentoring, and scholarly discussion groups (Robson and Selwyn, 1998).

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³ Or the Information Age. This concept has been investigated by authors such as Drucker (1969), Bell (1976), OECD (1986), Touraine (1988), Dawson and Foster (1998), Castell (2000), and Fuchs (2008).
The principal attraction when using e-interviews as a research tool are the speed
and immediacy it offers that can result in almost instantaneous dialogue between
researchers and participants. A remarkable advantage of using e-interviews to
collect information was noted by Boshier (1990) who states that electronic
communication sets up a democratisation of exchange that eludes more
conventional, less personal research methodologies.

Another important benefit of e-interviewing used as a research tool is its
potential for asynchronous communication. Participants are not constrained to
synchronous communication but, rather, can respond when they feel comfortable
or available or simply ready to do so, whatever the time of day (or night). As
well, researchers can invite participation from people who are geographically
dispersed (Lokman, 2006). In short, e-mail's primary advantage is its friendliness
to the respondent (Robson and Selwyn, 1998) and, I would add, its ability to
reach across continents without the research having to incur the expense and
other difficulties associated with travel.

A fundamental restriction on the use of e-mail is that it is self-selective, that
is, limited to those individuals with access to a computer and email. As well, non-
verbal communication such as body language, facial expressions and voice
inflections are lost in an e-interview. As e-mails are often brief, the researcher
will try to stimulate more lengthy answers with techniques like asking participants
open-ended questions to encourage an expanded discussion related to CBE.
Following the guidelines for conducting effective e-mail interviews discussed by Lokman (2006), the successes and limitations in the process of conducting an e-interview can be summarized as follows:

(1) Invitations: Solicit people to take part in the study individually rather than via a mailing list or message board as this technique communicates to potential participants that they are important and thereby encourages them to participate;

(2) E-mail subject line: Use a descriptive, truthful subject line, such as Research Interview Request, for the first contact with prospective interviewees as this will improve the chances that the e-mail will be opened and read, rather than being mistaken for junk mail or spam and deleted;

(3) Self-disclosure: provide up front information about the researcher’s professional and/or academic background;

(4) Interview request: state the request succinctly and professionally (see Appendix F for details);

(5) Be open about the research: while doubt can exist when online researchers contact participants, the researcher can establish trust and create rapport by being as open as possible about the purposes and processes of the research: It is important for participants to know what types of questions to expect, how much time is required of them, and how many times they will be contacted (see Appendix G);

(6) Incentives: consider providing non-traditional incentives, such as online bibliographic searches and personal citation searches, for people willing to
participate in the study. Offering participants a copy of the study results may also help encourage participation (see Appendix H);

(7) Interview questions: as participants are not being interviewed face-to-face, make sure that the questions to be asked are clear and precise enough both to avoid misinterpretations and to motivate participants to think more deeply about the topic at hand;

(8) Instructions: include clear, brief instructions to participants for answering the questions with the initial interview questions that include such considerations such as how or where to place the answers; that more detailed responses are encouraged (at least for open-ended questions); that spelling and/or grammatical errors are of no concern; that acronyms, symbols and the like that communicate feelings and emotions are welcome; and that there are no wrong or incorrect answers;

(9) Deadlines and reminders: when inviting individuals to participate, state the date by which the participant is expected to complete his/her answers to the interview and be sure those dates provide ample time for participants to respond. Send reminders of the due date at least a week ahead of time to increase the response rate;

(10) Follow-up questions: When further clarifications, illustrations, explanations, or elaborations are sought, send the follow-up questions with the request for more feedback. Check for messages from interviewees regularly and if necessary or desirable, summarize the interviewee’s responses to previous
questions and send the summary to the interviewee for verification or when requesting further clarification or elaboration;

(11) Participants and data quality: a highly committed or motivated participant can be very helpful in terms of providing detailed, in-depth answers to questions while potential participants who lack commitment to the project may not be worth the extra energy and possible time delays they required for follow-up questions.

It appears that the use of the Internet and the Web 2.0 features are relevant and complementary options that both maximize and more effectively facilitate student learning while providing research support. In this study’s research process, the e-interview plays an important role because the utilization of e-interviewing enabled the researcher to establish contact with professors from different social work faculties in different countries on different continents.

During the 2009 winter semester, thirty-seven personal invitations to potential participants were sent (see Appendix I). Seven responses were received and, in the end, six professors took part in the research. Five of them through e-interviewing and one professor participated in a face-to-face interview. The e-interviews enabled the process to become international and thus was enriched by professors unfamiliar with one another (and thus not biased by knowing each other) whose reflections and opinions made a significant contribution to this study.

A second ICT tool used in my research was the discussion forum. Discussion forums allow a discussion among the participants in a study without
the need for all of them to be connected to the Internet or on-line at the same time. The forum allows participants to post their thoughts and to discuss or ask questions about the comments posted by others at a convenient time for each participant. Given this flexibility in an e-interview, it is possible to obtain a deeper, richer, and more fully or better articulated discussion of the issues at hand.

Another important feature of the e-interview technique is that it allows one to printout the entire sequence of comments and responses for future reference and documentation (Farren, 2002). This study employed Web 2.0 technology that utilizes key tools of the new web, including blogs, wikis, and podcasts. Blogs can be used for publishing information, organizing and managing one’s thoughts, for contacting and discussing issues with many other thinkers. Wikis are excellent tools for the creation of collaborative knowledge (Couros, 2007).

For this study, a blog was designed and published using an online, free service⁴. There are many different options for establishing a blog on the Internet, including the reliable service provider wordpress.com. Every person involved in this research study was invited to contribute to the blog in order to enrich the reflections about CBE in social work education.

*Website blog: opportunities and limitations*

With the idea of sharing and building knowledge collaboratively, I designed a website thematic blog. Its primary goal was to establish a connection and foster networking among people interested in the CBE model. Thus, this blog has the

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⁴ [http://cbeandsocialworkeducation.wordpress.com/](http://cbeandsocialworkeducation.wordpress.com/)
potential to create a community of people having a shared interest in CBE and social work education.

The information posted on the blog was derived from the abstracts of two comprehensive papers prepared by the researcher. From January to October 2009, this blog has had more than 160 visits. Several participants visited the blog site, but no direct comments were posted on it. Thus, the hope of considering reflections and opinions from blog visitors as information to further enrich the research was not realized.

Using ICT tools was a relevant support for this research because the asynchronous media gives the public time to reflect on the information and use it in an ongoing manner.

3.5 Methods of analysis and interpretation of data

According to Rallis and Rossman (2003) qualitative data analysis requires that the researcher approach the texts with an open mind, accepting the meanings and structures that emerge from it.

The common elements in analyzing interview data are the focus on the development or identification of themes. Rallis and Rossman (2003) present four strategies of analysis: meaning condensation, meaning categorization, narrative structuring, and meaning interpretation.

The strategy selected for this study was meaning categorization, and that requires the researcher to codify long interview passages into categories. These categories could exist in advance and be identified from related literature review, or could develop from the language used by participants.
Categorization thus provides an organizational structure that summarizes or records the views and opinions of the participants. I also considered the use of a qualitative software program to analyze a portion of the information from the interviews but, as the amount of information was manageable, I analysed it directly.

Ary et al., (2002) state that the analysis of information from face-to-face interviews requires the researcher to organize, summarize, and interpret that information. The organizational process includes the transcription, reading and listening to the interview for a sense of the whole, and delineating units of general meaning (Hycner, 1985). As a result of the translation of three schools documents and three e-interviews (two from Spain and one from Mexico), two direct readings of e-interview (one from Canada and one from the United States), and one face-to-face interview transcription (from Canada), I was able to identify units of meaning or themes. In the summarizing step, the themes were connected and related to each other in order to identify general and unique categories for all of the interviews. In the interpretative phase, I extracted the meanings from the information, indicated what is important and why, and how the categories are connected. In others words, both the themes common to most or all of the interviews, as well as the individual variations, were identified and catalogued. After the general and unique themes had been noted, it was helpful to place these themes back within the overall contexts or horizons from which the themes emerged (Hycner, 1985). In other words, I considered the specific context of each faculty in the process of designing and implementing some form
of CBE model in social work education, noting both commonalities and differences.

To produce an analysis of the highest quality, the research followed the principles articulated by Yin (1994), namely that:

1. the analysis incorporated all the relevant evidence;
2. the analysis addresses the most significant aspects of each piece of data collected;
3. throughout the interpretation and analysis process, the researcher remains open to new opportunities and insights.
4. the strategies used in the analysis motivated the researcher to move beyond initial impressions in order to increase the likelihood of valid findings;
5. the researcher treats the evidence fairly to produce analytic conclusions that answer the original "how" and "why" research questions.

3.6 Research participants

In this research, my goal was to describe, analyze, and reflect on responses from two or more social work faculties, departments, or schools currently applying CBE in their social work education programming.

The research involved social work institutions where degree programs are currently using a curriculum based on the competency model. Research participants voluntarily accepted the invitation to take part in the study. Consequently, the research information presented here is aimed at providing a
better understanding of why and how CBE may most appropriately be applied in social work education programs.

With the use of the ICT tools, including e-interviewing or interview conducted by e-mail and a website blog as techniques to collect information, it was possible to include five professors from the: Faculty of Social Work, University of Colima; Mexico; Faculty of Social Work, University of Alicante; Spain; Faculty of Education and Social Work, University of Valladolid; Spain; School of Social Work; Dalhousie University, Canada; and the Council of Social Work Education (CSWE) in the United States. The information collected from the participants may be used to inductively generate valuable research data to assist in formulating the design steps and implementation strategies that are relevant, and thus effective, for the successful application of the CBE model in social work education. Thus, the findings enabling the Technological Metropolitan University to successfully utilize CBE in its social work curriculum may very well be transferable, that is, applicable, to many higher education problems at other institutions.

As mentioned above, faculties, departments, and/or schools of social work that are implementing the CBE model in their curricula were contacted after discovering the use of CBE in their curricula design. In Spain, the Bologna Process promotes the use of the CBE in the entire post-secondary education system and in the United States the CSWE encourages the use of the CBE model in social work education. At the beginning of the 2009 winter semester, overviews of the research objectives, as well as invitations to participate in the
research, were sent to faculty members at these institutions (see Appendix B and Appendix I). Members of two faculties replied but, for various reasons, only one was able to take part of the study. In light of that response, the decision was made to search for other faculties that are applying CBE.

Due to the Bologna process, many social work professors at Social Work faculties and schools in Europe became potential participants for the research. The information available in the White Book of Social Work education in Europe includes all the social work institutions that have implemented or are in the process of implementing the CBE approach. Using this information I sent invitations and explained the study to some professors at faculties and social work schools across Europe (Appendix I). After that two social work professors in Spain (University of Alicante and University of Valladolid) showed interest in taking part in the research.

A professor in the Social Work Faculty at the University of Regina provided valuable documents related to the historical discussion and development of CBE. As well, the professor referred me to the Canadian Association of Social Workers (CASW) and the Canadian Association of Schools of Social Work Education (CASWE). After receiving information on the nature and objectives of this study, CASW and CASWE forwarded that information to respective committees or people they thought were knowledgeable about the research topic (see Appendix C for more details). In addition, the researcher contacted the Canadian Association of Deans and Directors of Schools of Social Work (CADDSSW) in order to contact a variety of social work educators across
Canada and the United States. Following this effort, a professor from the social work school at Dalhousie University in Canada and the associate director for research at CSWE in the United States agreed to participate in the research. The five research participants who agreed to answer the e-interview were the professors from the Faculty of Social Work at University of Colima in Mexico, the Faculty of Social Work at the University of Alicante in Spain, Faculty of Education and Social Work at University of Valladolid in Spain, the School of Social Work at Dalhousie University in Canada, and the associate director for research from the Council of Social Work Education in the United States.

As well one professor from the School of Social Work at University of Waterloo in Canada answered a face-to-face interview.

These participants provided significant information to the research because they were involved in the process of design and implementation of CBE social work curricula. Four of them used the CBE model and two of them were knowledgeable about the model. In addition the research participants belonged to different countries which brought an international perspective to the research.

3.7 Authenticity issues

Cohen, Kahn, and Steeves (2000) indicate that “reliability and validity are words that carry with them ideas from the logical positivist [perspective] ... they argue for use of words such as trustworthiness and accuracy” (p.12). In this research, I used the word authenticity instead of validity. According O’Leary (2004) authenticity is concerned with “true value, recognizing that multiple truths
might exist and also describes the deep structure of experience in a manner that is true to the experience” (p. 58).

As Whittemore, Chase and Mandle (2001) explain, the first aspect of a contemporary synthesis of authentic criteria in qualitative research is the requirement to make a distinction between criteria and techniques. Criteria are the standards to be upheld as ideals in qualitative research, whereas techniques are the specific methods employed to diminish identified threats to authenticity. Various techniques of interpretive inquiry determined by the investigator within the context of a particular investigation remain as options. Credibility, authenticity, critical thinking, and integrity are considered primary criteria, while explicitness, vividness, creativity, thoroughness, congruence, and sensitivity are considered secondary criteria. Primary criteria are necessary in all qualitative inquiry, but they are insufficient in and of themselves. Secondary criteria provide further benchmark of quality and are considered to be more flexible when applied to particular investigations (Whittemore et al., 2001).

In this study, credibility was used in order to reflect the relativistic nature of truth claims in the interpretive tradition. Assuring credibility refers to the researcher’s conscious effort to establish confidence in the study by an accurate interpretation of the meaning of data (i.e., Do the results of the research credibly and fairly reflect the viewpoints of participants about CBE in a believable way?)

For this research project, I contacted more than 30 social work professors working in CBE in several countries and six of them chose to participate. All had been or are actively involved in the dialogue and discussion related to CBE and
social work education. For example, one professor has the responsibility to lead the curriculum development committee dealing with CBE in his faculty. As well, he has taken part in the development of the White Book for Social Work that identifies 25 competencies forming the basis of social work program convergence in Europe. A second participant has written several papers and documents contributing to discussions about the risks and implications of using CBE in social work education and participated on a task force committee of CASWE charged with developing arguments and evidence to critique CBE. A third professor has been an external consultant on the challenges of implementing CBE for many social work faculties across Latin-America and has written papers describing the opportunities and challenges in the application of CBE models. The fourth professor has participated in the process of developing a comprehensive set of guidelines and standards for the implementation of CBE in social work curricula in the United States while the fifth professor has written extensively on pedagogical strategies and the formulation of objectives for implementing CBE social work programs at the university level. The sixth professor has been a permanent member of International Committee of CASWE and is knowledgeable about many BSW programs and CBE discussions in Canada and in Latin-American countries.

3.8 Ethical considerations

In this study, some of the ethical considerations for the research included:

1. Obtaining human ethics committee approval for the research project (see Appendix J);
2. Ensuring participation in this study was entirely voluntary;

3. Providing each potential participant with information about the objectives of the study along with the invitation to participate and making provision to send each participant the findings of the study; and

4. Securing permission to observe and interview consent as appropriate (see Appendix K).

The research methodology presented in this chapter identifies the method selected to collect information including the opportunities and limitations of its implementation. As well the methods to analyze data and issues related to authenticity and ethical consideration were presented. Research into the effectiveness of CBE models will be a major determinant of their appropriateness for education in social work (and other disciplines). Since research focused CBE models is scarce, as well as yielding initial data, this research also points to other possible areas for future study.

Chapter 4 will present an overview of this study’s research findings, analysis, and discussion. First, background information on the six institutions that participated in the study is provided. Secondly, findings provided in the document analysis are drawn from the review of documents, articles, websites, and papers provided by the literature and the six study participants. Thirdly, the provision of data gathered through the e-interviewing process and the findings and analysis of a face-to-face interview carried out for this study. Finally, discussion notes and considerations of the findings are included.
CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH FINDINGS, ANALYSIS, AND DISCUSSION

Introduction

Currently, little research focuses on the description and analysis of CBE or reflects on whether competency models provide a useful theoretical framework for designing and implementing a curriculum for a BSW degree. Consequently, this research study focused on why and how competency based education has been applied in social work education in the last decade from an international perspective. Such an investigation will contribute to the nascent body of knowledge regarding social work education and CBE.

The information regarding CBE within some academic social work communities appears unclear, is sometimes confusing, and often considers only one philosophical foundation or rationale for the competency-based approach. On the other hand, in some social work faculties and schools, CBE has been applied from an integrated and holistic perspective. The generic qualitative research was developed in order to gain a better understanding of the implications in using CBE in social work education.

The findings of this study incorporate the results of the document analysis, the views and opinions of four professors who are, or have been, directly involved in the design and/or the implementation of CBE for BSW curricula, and the views and opinions of two professors who oppose using competency-based models to construct curricula for post-secondary social work education. The inclusion of both points of view advances and enriches the ongoing dialogue, debate and reflections about the appropriateness of CBC in the context of social
work education – and both points of view are necessary for a full, balanced consideration of the topic.

In summary, this research offered academics the opportunity to speak from their own experiences, and to share their thoughts, reflections, and resulting perspectives on both the theoretical and practical utility of CBE in social work. The participants also provided insights into each faculty’s unique experiences in the design and application of CBE curricula for BSW degrees.

In the first part of the chapter background information of the six institutions that participated in the study is provided. The descriptive information given represents the analysis of documents, articles, websites, and papers provided by the six participants. It is important to remember that participation in this research was absolutely voluntary. The professors that contributed to the discussion about CBE and models for its design and application through this research were from:

(1) The Faculty of Social Work; University of Colima, Mexico;
(2) The Faculty of Social Work; University of Alicante, Spain;
(3) The Faculty of Education and Social Work; University of Valladolid, Spain;
(4) The School of Social Work; Dalhousie University, Canada;
(5) The School of Social Work; University of Waterloo, Canada; and

The second part of this chapter presents an overview of the results of a document analysis specifically related to social work education and CBE. The third part contains data gathered in the e-interviewing process. The e-interview
records were organized in categories appropriate for addressing the research questions. It is important to remember that in the analysis process, the strategy selected for this study was meaning categorization, implying that the researcher codes long interview passages into categories that are developed from the language of the participants. During the process of contacting and inviting participants, I found some individuals who, even though they were not using the CBE model, showed interest in participating in the study by offering to give their opinions and answer questions concerning CBE. Thus a new interview schedule was created, but the same meaning categories for the questions were maintained (see Appendix L).

The fourth section of this chapter presents the findings and analysis of a face-to-face interview carried out for this study. At the time of the interview, this participant was attending the 2009 Congress of the Humanities & Social Sciences: Social Work identity in the age of interdisciplinary and globalization-Canadian Association for Social Work Education held at Carleton University in Ontario, Canada, in May 27 to 29, 2009. Unfortunately, four other potential research participants were not able to do the planned face-to-face interviews because of other commitments. While attending a social work conference in Ottawa, Canada, however, the researcher noted that for CASWE, the meaning of competency itself is a topic of considerable interest. According to CASWE Conference Proceedings (2009):
Social work is changing at an accelerated pace. One of the important changes is the increased emphasis on the measurement of education outcomes and the identification of basic social work competencies (p. 35).

On Thursday, May 28th, from 5 to 7 p.m., the Conference Planning Committee held a panel discussion on social work competencies and the regulation of the profession featuring an address by Dr. Dean Pierce (the Director of the Office of Social Work Accreditation and Educational Excellence of CSWE) on the changes to accreditation in the United States. The discussion included presentations from representatives of the profession’s academic, professional, and regulatory bodies about their perspectives on the issue of social work competencies.

In addition, the Congress hosted many other sessions that discussed the implications of CBE for social work education. For instance, on Thursday May 28 from 13:00 to 16:30 p.m., there was a roundtable to discuss the topic “CASWE in the Neo-Liberal Marketplace: Challenges for Critical Social Work Education.” As well, on Friday May 29 from 10:30 to 12:00 am, a workshop was held on the topic “Globalization: Evidence Based Practice and Knowledge Exchange and Social Work Identity in the Age of Interdisciplinary and Globalization.”

It is important to note that, during the analysis of data, the researcher connected information in the literature review with that collected through the research interviews in a dialectic relationship.
Finally, the fifth section of this chapter discusses the findings that resulted from the articulation of the personal experiences and reflections related to the study questions by the six research participants. The objective was to ascertain why and how CBE is being implemented in social work faculties and schools. Consequently, this section presents the discussion notes and considerations for social work education voiced by academics who advocate using CBE models in social work education as well as those who represent dissident voices in the debate surrounding CBE.

4.1 Institutional context

As noted in page 180 the six international professors included in this research belong to the:

(1) Faculty of Social Work; University of Colima, Mexico;
(2) Faculty of Social Work; University of Alicante, Spain
(3) Faculty of Education and Social Work; University of Valladolid, Spain;
(4) School of Social Work; Dalhousie University, Canada;
(5) School of Social Work; University of Waterloo, Canada; and the

After reviewing, organizing and categorizing the research data obtained from these sources, the researcher was able to present the summaries in this section. These summaries include an outline of the process and strategies applied in the design and implementation of CBE from the perspective of individuals with expertise in such endeavours.
Before that analysis, however, the researcher translated the data provided by three of the professors from Spanish to English. As was mentioned earlier, the researcher analyzes the information based on the recognition of common tendencies and themes brought forward by the participants. Although a variety of initiatives were studied, commonalities in the experiences of the participants frequently appeared.

*Faculty of Social Work, University of Colima, Mexico (Colima University in Mexico)*

In the winter semester of 2009, a faculty member of the Universidad de Colima, Mexico (UCM), took part in an e-interview.

The UCM is a small, public university in Mexico that has a student population of about 13,500. In 1997, during a process of modernizing its educational programming, UCM oriented its policy towards academic excellence based on program innovation. Some faculties, including medicine, nursing, psychology, and social work, were selected to pilot the process with their programs.

The main transformation sought was related to changing UCM’s pedagogical strategy from a traditional model focused on teaching to a model centered on the learning process. These changes in educational programs and teaching and learning strategies were developed in the context of university autonomy (a requirement for being a public university in Mexico). Autonomy in decision making is one of the most important principles for public universities.
In 2002, administrators and faculty members of UCM’s social work faculty began the process of implementing their newly developed pedagogical strategy using a CBE model. More specifically, from among the various strategies for using CBE, the faculty selected the ‘problem solving learning’ approach. This model embraces the four principles of the education for the 21st century cited in the Delors’s (1999) report: learning to know, learning to do, learning to be together, and learning to be.

UCM’s faculty members were seeking a more active and collaborative learning experience for their students. They believed that the acquisition of competencies by students is central to the process of learning how to learn. Thus, the faculty identified specific competencies for general education and designated courses to provide those different competencies, or at least provide the student with the opportunity to acquire them. Some of the competencies were: methodological, technical, contextual, integrative, adaptive, and ethical. In effect, these competencies serve to define the specific knowledge and skills that social work students should posses and be able to demonstrate.

Faculty of Social Work University of Alicante (Alicante University in Spain)

In the winter semester of 2009, a faculty member of the Universidad de Alicante in Spain (UAS) agreed to participate in the study. An e-interview was subsequently carried out.

The BSW at UAS began in 1984. At that time, the former School of Social Services was transferred to the university. Since then, the faculty has redesigned three separate programs. The last transformation was in 2000, when the
changes were made in order to harmonize the BSW curriculum with the recommendations and guidelines in the White Book (in Spanish *Libro Blanco*). A special steering committee was established to plan and lead the transformation process. After much consultation with the main stakeholders involved in the social work educational community, the committee was able to develop a new BSW curriculum. This curriculum includes 25 specific competencies listed in the White Book.

The main components of the new curriculum take up topics and issues like diagnosis, intervention, and the social evaluation of the needs and social problems that are affecting individuals, groups and communities. The objective of social work is to promote change and conflict resolution, improve the well being of the clients, and cohesion of the faculty of social work’s programs. To achieve such objectives, it is important to use both behaviourist and social theories and to apply a specific methodology as this facilitates social intervention, as well as encouraging the planning and management of social services. In addition, through research and praxis, the social work discipline is making a significant contribution to the study of the needs of individuals, groups, and communities and to the promotion of social justice, including the affirmation of human rights and gender equality.

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5 The *Libro Blanco* of Social Work Certificate was approved/endorsed/accredited by the Directors of Social Work Schools and Departments and by the Council of Social Work Professional Order. It is available in the website of the National Agency of Quality Evaluation and Accreditation: [http://www.aneca.es/activin/docs/libroblancotrbjsocial_def.pdf](http://www.aneca.es/activin/docs/libroblancotrbjsocial_def.pdf)
The learning process must include an integrated view of competency. An integrated view sees the learning process as including disciplinary and professional content, competencies, and attitudes. The integrated view of the learning process should develop practitioners who not only know what to do, but who are also able to understand and analyse the phenomena they deal in the practical field. They actually include: General competencies that are a part of the professional profile are also defined in the White Book. The White Book organizes these Competencies into six major categories:

(1) the capacity to work with and value their connection with people, families, groups, and organizations in their specific needs and particular circumstances;

(2) the ability to analyse problem situations and plan, develop, and implement the social work methodologies with clients and other professionals;

(3) the ability to empower people to enable them to indicate their own needs, circumstances and perspectives;

(4) the ability to prevent and ameliorate risk situations faced by both clients and practitioners of the social work discipline;

(5) the ability to responsibly manage social work practices within various organizations; and, finally,

(6) the ability to demonstrate professional competency in the practice of the discipline of social work.
Faculty of Education and Social Work Universidad de Valladolid

(Valladolid University in Spain)

In the spring semester of 2009, a faculty member of the Universidad de Valladolid in Spain (UVS) took part in this study by means of an e-interview.

In 1993, the University of Valladolid’s School of Social Services was transformed into the School of Social Work and, in 2000, along with the Education School became part of the UVS’s new Faculty of Education and Social Work. The new faculty’s formative profile for a BSW degree included specific topics and general areas of interest to the profession drawn from the European context. These aspects of the new BSW degree profile were applied directly from the White Book.

In fact, the White Book states that the formative process of social workers should include both a basic introduction to the social sciences (sociology, anthropology, psychology, and economy) and a theoretical and practical learning experience that provides the opportunity to acquire knowledge and specific social work professional competencies. Thus, the UVS learning process seeks to prepare practitioners by equipping them with a broad understanding of social structures and processes, social change, and human behaviour that enables them to intervene within the social contexts of the individual, groups, and communities. Social work practitioners are then able to participate in the formulation and evaluation of social policies, and to contribute to the enrichment of citizenship through the empowerment of their clients under the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. This declaration is one of the basic pillars...
supporting the values of the social work profession in Spain (Faculty of Education and Social Work, University of Valladolid, 2008).

To develop and implement a new BSW degree aligned to the White Book’s guidelines, UVS’s faculty members adopted a procedure based on participation and consultation. Professors, students, administrative staff, and representatives of the professional order of social worker, as well as former students, employers, and practitioners were involved. The objective of the process was to try to harmonize the opinions and suggestions of all those with an active interest in social work education. As a result of UVS’s participatory/consultative process, a total of 16 specific competencies were identified, and these competencies became the foundation of the new BSW degree’s curriculum.

School of Social Work, Dalhousie University in Canada

In the spring semester of 2009, a School of Social Work faculty member at Dalhousie University in Canada took part in an interview about their Bachelor of Social Work (BSW) program by means of an e-interview.

In 2003, Dalhousie’s BSW program received a full, seven year re-accreditation from the Canadian Association of School of Social Work (CASSW). During the 2003 re-accreditation process, the school committed itself to significant revisions of its BSW program. Following the re-accreditation process, the school developed a new statement of its vision, mission and principles statements. The Strategic Plan 2005 developed from this visioning process was given directly to program committees so that those committees could define the
areas of their programs needing review in light of the new strategic plan. The program committees then carried out the necessary reviews and made recommendations for change that became the basis for subsequent program reviews.

The whole process was designed to increase the congruency between Dalhousie University social work school philosophy and its educational practice. Such objectives have to be articulated by both faculty staff and students and include areas of interest like student demographics and practice realities, carrying out a needs assessment, and analysing different delivery methods. The process includes specifying recommendations and related changes necessary to maintaining and enhancing congruence between the school and Dalhousie University’s decision-making processes (Campbell and MacDonald, 2008).

In response to the commitment made to CASSW, and in line with the directives of the strategic plan, Dalhousie University instituted a comprehensive review of its BSW program. Extensive discussions, consultations, observations, and reflection on all aspects of the BSW program took place between 2004 and 2007. In the fall of 2007, the Undergraduate Program Committee implemented a structured program review co-chaired by the current Undergraduate Coordinator and a past Undergraduate Coordinator. Faculty, staff and students were, and continue to be, active participants in the review and ongoing process.

Dalhousie University’s revision process has multiple purposes that address program requirements, structure and curriculum. This process implies a more systematic and structured introduction to the central concepts of the
curriculum; a greater integration of content related to the evolution of social work and social welfare; a more meaningful integration of a variety of epistemological perspectives throughout the curriculum; and increased time and attention to both the process and content of practice theory and skills (praxis).

According to Campbell and MacDonald (2008), the new BSW curriculum helps the Dalhousie BSW program achieve its overall program goals by promoting, first, an “understanding of equity and justice through a critical analysis of historical and current manifestations of inequity and injustice” (p. 9). Secondly, the authors indicate that the BSW also supports

the development of intellectual skills, scholarly attributes, and professional characteristics and values, including but not limited to, curiosity, open-mindedness, effective communication, judgment, rigor, respect, humility, embracing of difference, acceptance, integrity, compassion, self care and ethical action (Campbell and MacDonald, 2008, p. 9).

In addition, the authors suggest that the BSW includes “insight into the complex, contextual, and contradictory nature of social work theory, practice, policy, ethics, and research... the development of practice theory and skills including an understanding of the range of life events that may affect peoples’ development” (Campbell and MacDonald 2008, p. 9).

School of Social Work, University of Waterloo, Canada

During the spring semester 2009, a faculty member of the University of Waterloo BSW program was interviewed face-to-face. Renison University College, affiliated with the University of Waterloo, offers a small, vibrant
community within a world-class university providing innovative academic programs and mutually enhancing practice in the field. The School of Social Work, the only professional degree program at Renison, prepares students for ethical, critically reflective, anti-oppressive, competent and accountable social work practice. All BSW students graduate with a highly respected degree from the University of Waterloo – an institution renowned for its spirit of innovation and outstanding academic programs.

The School of Social Work distinguishes itself through strong academics as well as a hands-on, skills-oriented approach to social work practice. They offer a ten-month full-time program as well as part-time program that may be completed within three years. Conditional admission for applicants who have a BA (or equivalent) but who lack the required pre-requisite courses; small classes with opportunities for interaction with classmates and teachers; field practicum opportunities supported by a large network of social service agencies and organizations; a rich diversity of ages, ethnicities, cultures, religions and perspectives; and opportunities for students to grow and maximize their potential. The education is then complemented by activities promoting social justice and community service.

Field education is an integral educational component of the BSW Program and is designed to provide students with opportunities for a minimum of 720 hours of field-based learning experiences in community agencies, the application of social work theory to practice in a social work setting, regular professional field instruction, professional development as generalist social work practitioners
through work with individuals, families, groups, communities and organizations, and an Integration Seminar designed to help students integrate field experiences with academic course content. The field education program also offers professional development opportunities for community-based field instructors through workshops and programs throughout the year.

_The Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) in the United States_

During the spring semester 2009, the Associate Director for Research of the _CSWE in the United States_, agreed to an e-interview.

The purpose of CSWE is to provide national leadership and collective action designed to ensure the education of competent and committed social work professionals. Its mandate “includes promoting and maintaining the quality of social work educational programs. It also includes stimulating the development of knowledge, practice and service effectiveness, designed to promote social justice and further community and individual well-being” (Council on Social Work Education, 2005, p. 2). As of February 2009, CSWE “represents 470 accredited baccalaureate social work programs, 195 accredited master’s of social work programs, 12 baccalaureate of social work programs in candidacy, and 21 master’s of social work programs in candidacy” (Council on Social Work Education, 2009, para.1).

CSWE’s by-laws mandate that an educational policy statement be reviewed and renewed every seven years (CSWE, 2008 a). The result of the last review, in 2008, was a document called Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards (EPAS). The 2008 EPAS was approved by CSWE’s Board of
Directors in April 2008 (seven years after the last EPAS in 2001). The bulk of the development work for the 2008 EPAS took place between 2004 and 2008.

Two groups have the primary responsibility for developing the new EPAS every seven years: the Commission on Curriculum and Educational Innovation (COCEI) that develops EPAS’s educational policy component and the Commission on Accreditation (COA) that develops EPAS’s accreditation standards. Both groups, along with CSWE staff, worked collaboratively to produce the 2008 EPAS. This development group also solicited the input of the greater education community through activities that included making a number of presentations on the main concepts of the EPAS document to the Annual Program Meeting of National Association of Deans and Directors (NADD) of Social Work, and to the Association of Baccalaureate Program Directors (BPD).

Conferences were held several years in advance of the final EPAS draft. Following those conferences, drafts were also made available online for public comment online and input was also sought at CSWE’s Annual Program Meeting. The development group received hundreds of comments from academics who either supported or disagreed with the use of CBE. The 2008 EPAS document identifies 10 core competencies that were developed following an inclusive study of social work curriculum, an environmental scan, discussions with social work educators and administrators, a review of the licensing requirements, and brainstorming and discussions with the members of CSWE’s Commission on Accreditation, Commission on Curriculum and Educational Innovation, and its other staff.
Institutional context analysis

Having described the context within the six international institutions who participated in this research study, it is proper to indicate that, even though each organization has unique characteristics and contexts, there are also some tendencies common to all. Collectively, the research data gathered provides evidence that, for some institutions, curricula change initiatives are a response, at least in part, to the effects on social work education of neo-liberal globalization in the late 20th century and early 21st century. In addition, the context of today’s interdisciplinary and global environments as well as social work education are challenged by external forces seeking to shape it. In some cases, the response of social work education to the implicit assumptions in the neo-liberal view of education relates to the use of the CBE model.

Social work and social workers have always been in the unenviable position of having to respond to varied, and sometimes conflicting demands and expectations of the state, the profession itself, employers, post-secondary education, as well as to those citizens and communities whose welfare social work seeks to directly enhance. Despite these factors, participants from all research institutions cited here, clearly reiterated the relevance and importance of core values and principles for the profession and the strong connection, or need for congruence, between those principles and the learning process.

Some of the six institutions that participated in this research reported that extensive discussions, consultations, and reflections related to all aspects of their BSW programs occurred during the process of curriculum design. Encouraging
an open dialogue around program development is one way of attempting to ensure that students acquire the specific knowledge, skills, and abilities considered important for, or necessary to, professionally practice whatever discipline they are studying and/or to effectively manage the life transitions for which they are preparing.

In three of the participating institutions (Faculty of Social Work; University of Alicante, Spain; Faculty of Education and Social Work; University of Valladolid, Spain; and the Council on Social Work Education of the United States), experiences with competency-based curriculum models are at the emergent stage of development. During their processes of BSW program transformation, almost all followed the procedures and guidelines found in an external framework such as that provided by the White Book. One of the institutions (CSWE) presented the development of a guide document (EPAS) seeking to be the main comprehensive framework for designing, developing and implementing competency-based BSW programs in the United States. It is important to note that, in the process of a curriculum design, the institutions consider each program as a formal educational structure that includes both an explicit and implicit curriculum.

4.2 Document analysis: Competency-Based Education and social work

Chapter 2 of this thesis reviewed the books, journal articles, and internet publications that constitute the preliminary approach to the topic of this study. This literature review focused on information dealing with the concept of competence and the historical and philosophical foundations of CBE. As well, the
literature review encompassed descriptions, analyses, and discussions of different topics that provide the reader with an understanding of the major features and characteristics of CBE. Thus, in Chapter 2, the researcher described, analyzed and interpreted concepts, arguments, and thoughts from both proponents and opponents of CBE.

In this section, I will present how the dialogue and debate about using the CBE model in social work education began. The objective of the document analysis was to acquire an understanding of the current state of knowledge regarding CBE trends in social work education, using documents provided by the participants which are neither included in the literature review and nor publically available.

*Social Work Education and CBE*

The professional position of today’s social workers is characterized by contact with dynamic changes in the social reality. These changing needs and demands may require new strategies for teaching and learning in the field of social work that encompass theoretical and practical experiences. Such strategies include monitoring the strengths and weaknesses of university curricula and enhancing the professional training of professors to orient them to these new societal needs. As well, the strategies for meeting these new needs and demands involve teaching, and implementing new evaluation methods and training experiences that will provide both simulated (e.g., role playing) and actual experiences (e.g., practicum and internships) in a concrete reality for students. Since the nature, scope and purposes of social work services are often
debated, graduates should also have acquired sufficient knowledge to be fully engaged in current debates in order to be able to analyze, adapt, and manage and promote positive change.

Effective social work education programmes must be designed to prepare newly qualified social workers to foster and encourage positive and necessary transformations for individuals, groups and communities. From this perspective, development of the students’ skills and abilities is based on the assumption that practical experience provides the critical settings and contexts for learning, and thus is an essential part of the educational process (James and Tranter, 2003).

The discussion and debate about the relevance and applicability of CBE in social work is an ongoing process clearly reflected in the literature. Yet, the literature review (Chapter 2) also reveals that there is limited research information focused on the implications of utilizing CBE in the design and implementation of curricula. Because limited information was available in the literature, the following two experiences present some facts about CBE and social work education. Although these experiences have evolved since their publication, they still provide accurate information about the topic.

A 1978 Canadian research project by Jarret and Clark presented a program comparison between two BSW programs which used the CBE model. The main conclusion of the study was that “variety in the conceptualization and structure of CBE in social work should be prized as long as programs share a concern for careful description, analysis and empirical assessment” (p. 112). This
shows that from the beginning, each BSW program has applied the CBE model differently.

Almost 20 years later, Yelloly (1995) pointed out that the CBE model has been used in Great Britain, and is promoted and regulated by the National Council for Vocational Qualification and the Scottish Council for Vocational Education and Training. Embodied in the regulations are explicit shifts toward:

First the specification of the knowledge, skills, and values needed to achieve competent social work practice of a national minimum standard; second, towards the assessment of competence on the basis of specified practice outcomes at the point of qualification” (Yelloly, 1995, p. 54).

It is remarkable that sufficient consensus was reached by a consultation process among experts in all fields of social work, to produce a statement of requirements intended to reflect the cumulative wisdom and expertise of practitioners, educators, and administrators.

The discussion and debate on the appropriateness of employing CBE for social work education is enriched by some noteworthy ideas related to the vision of social work as a profession seeking positive transformations in individuals, groups, and communities and the provision of education that ensures the discipline’s professionals are sufficiently competent to foster and manage those positive transformations in the field (i.e., concrete realities). Dominelli (1996) notes that “the role of social work in society has been a matter of controversy since its inception” (p.154). This controversy is the central issues in many
discussions in various academic circles. As Campbell and MacDonald (2008) put it:

For more than one hundred years a dynamic tension has existed between those who understand the mission of social work to be one of cure and control and those who see the mission as one of transformation and resistance. Whether this tension is expressed as the debate between individual treatment versus social reform, as case versus cause, as accommodation versus social change, or as private versus public issues, it has profoundly influenced the evolution of social work theory and practice (p. 5).

These different perspectives on the mission of social work have created a tension that, quite understandably, results in differing perspectives of the nature and purpose of social work education. This tension was evident as early as 1910 when Mary Richmond called for agency-based training to prepare workers with specific behavioral competencies, while Jane Adams was an advocate for university-based social work education rooted in sociological thinking (Fook, 2002).

Debates between the educational and professional sectors of social work also reflect, at least in part, this distinction between education and training. These differences are also evident in curriculum review processes when practitioners of social work representatives advocate curricula centered on specific behavioural skill training while social work educators seek curricula rooted in the critical analysis of the constructed and contextual nature of
knowledge (Campbell and MacDonald, 2008). Posner (as cited by Campbell and MacDonald, 2008, p. 6) indicates that:

these differing perspectives (behavioural and constructivist) give rise to different and implicit notions about what learning is and how it takes place, how teachers facilitate learning, what kinds of objectives are necessary for expressing intentions for learning outcomes, and what kinds of curricula follow from these objectives.

Not surprisingly, these two perspectives lead educators to support different curricular objectives. Either a behavioural perspective supports outcomes based on learning objectives that identify measurable performance or a more constructionist perspective supports learning objectives more focused on cognitive structures and internal thought processes (Campbell and MacDonald, 2008).

Campbell and MacDonald (2008) also explain that when debates about the fundamental mission of social work, professional training and/or education, and behavioural and/or constructionist curricular objectives take place within a university context, further unique considerations arise. For this reason, Campbell and MacDonald (2008) say it is important to keep other considerations in mind, including the following facts:

(1) neo-liberal values such as individualism, managerialism, and globalization are significantly impacting both social work and education. These impacts may conflict with the espoused mission, values and principles of social work education;
(2) students have generally internalized the dominant discourse about public service and professional power; 
(3) the training and/or education debate is a familiar one when preparing/educating human service professionals; and 
(4) a coherently designed curriculum requires internal consistency and continuity, but universities promote academic freedom that gives individual professors both the right and the responsibility to teach as they best determine.

As an example, information related to the implementation of CBE in social work education in Canada is available in the report “Social Work and the Development of Competency Standards across Canada 2003 and 2004” (CASSW, 2004). The report’s summary is about social work practice and reveals that individual provinces are handling the issue of competency standards for social work independently of each other. Collaborative efforts between the provinces to develop common standards are limited, although there is an ongoing dialogue on this issue among different provincial social work faculties. Even though the provinces indicate that the issue of labour mobility still exists, there are no current national initiatives to create a common standard for provinces (CASSW, 2004).

The Canadian Association of Social Workers (CASW) recently initiated discussions among its members on the formation of a National Regulatory Council. This discussion is in its preliminary stages and it is not immediately evident how it relates to the issue of competencies for social work education and
the profession’s practitioners. Boundaries between federal and provincial jurisdictions are always a potential issue in Canada, and not all provinces are willing to participate in such discussions, although some do feel that a nationally coordinated approach would be a positive development (CASSW, 2004).

4.3 E-interviews findings and analysis

Having described the context within which each institution was operating during this study, the analysis of the five research e-interviews with an academic at each institution will now be presented. The information coming from these e-interviews constitutes the main source of data for understanding and comprehending the process that each institution used to design and implement a CBE curriculum.

The analysis strategy selected for this study was meaning categorization and that, as the names implies, required the researcher to code or organize long interview passages into categories connected to the research topic. These categories could exist in advance and be identified from the accompanying literature review, or could be developed from the language of the research participants. Meaning categorization thus provides an organizational structure with which to summarize or record the views and opinions of the research participants.

The categories identified for use in answering the research questions posed by this study are presented below. The enumeration of the categories is followed by the analysis and interpretation of data collected in the interviews information. The analysis and interpretation of the data are rooted in theoretical
references identified through the literature review. Finally, at the end of this section, the information from, and the analysis of, an e-interview with a professor who disagrees with the use of CBE models in social work education is presented.

Categories

When related to this study’s original interview questions, the views, opinions, and reflections offered by study participants in agreement with using CBE for social work education resulted in the identification of several meaningful categories. To present the categories that emerged from the research, I grouped the themes emanating from the responses given to each research interview question.

In the explanation of what specific factors lead to the selection of the competency model by the social work faculty, department or school three categories emerged:

The first category: ‘contextual influence to change the curriculum’.

University of Alicante

“As a consequence of the implementation of Bologna project which is related to [the] standardization of European certification.”

University of Colima

“Our university, as [with] other Latin-American universities, was following the direction of the Tuning project. Previously, we were working in improving our curriculum in order to consider the changing and challenging environment of our profession and, at the same time, meeting the learning expectations of our students.”

University of Valladolid

“The competency model was imposed as a result of the reform process in higher education. This was related to the process of the
creation of the European Union. Europe is attempting to harmonize university education on the continent.”

CSWE

“CSWE is leading the accreditation process and [development of] standards in the United States. We are leading the change to a CBE curriculum with the faculties of social work.”

The second category: ‘reasons to change’.

University of Alicante

“We decided to use CBE because we were willing to implement an experience of participative education and the development of abilities and competencies. This promotes research which seeks an integrated education for the students. As well, this may improve the training in confronting social problems and developing intervention strategies and, therefore, increasing their opportunities for successful incorporation into the workplace.”

University of Colima

“In January 2002, the director of the faculty informed us that we have to follow the direction coming from the President of the university. The direction was related to changing the curricula between to 2002-2004 in order to apply CBE. The response was “if we have to do this tomorrow we can do it now.”

University of Valladolid

“Our university was invited to collaborate in the process that identified social work competencies for the White Book. As a result of that involvement, we were able to design a new social work program using CBE as a framework.”

CSWE

“The competency-based approach was selected out of a recognition for the need to focus not on the inputs of education (e.g., prescribed courses and content), but rather on the outcomes, that is, ensuring that graduates are prepared to work competently with individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities. Since the competency-based approach moves away from a list of
prescribed curriculum content, it also gives programs more flexibility to respond to the changing educational environment.”

The third category: ‘decision making’.

University of Alicante

“The decision to use CBE was established in the Strategic Plan of the university. This was in connection to the Bologna project.”

University of Colima

“In general, to answer the question why the competency model was selected, I agree with the argument of Rychen [2004] “The majority of decisions related to the organization of education are based strictly on educational research... in fact, the decision is dependent on power relations, political factors, and ethical decisions” (pp.21-45).

University of Valladolid

“Our faculty was responding the recommendation from the National Agency of Quality and Accreditation Evaluation (ANECA).”

CSWE

“Our laws mandate that the CSWE develops an educational policy statement that includes CBE.”

Analysis based on the categories identified above

In one way or another, economic, social and cultural development trends are now permeating all educational settings. Social work educators need to be aware of the origins and activities of accreditation and regulation bodies that are today increasingly influenced by agendas of internationalization and globalization. The degree to which these current transformations may affect the values and principles of social work education remains to be seen. It is always better to know who or what is driving the external forces behind the pressure for
changes in social work education. Such knowledge helps equip social work schools, departments, and faculties to consciously analyze, reflect upon, and evaluate those external forces as part of the process of managing change.

This research reveals that social work education in different countries (The United States, Spain, and Mexico) now faces demands to incorporate the CBE perspective in the design and implementation of curriculum. Data from the research participants show that the authorities and directors of some universities and social work schools are leading the process of change. Perhaps it would benefit social work schools if a professor or an administrator became the public advocate, leader, and facilitator for creating policies within the institution that are open to change, willing to take risks and foster innovation. Such a leader would encourage faculty and staff to conceptualize and implement changes in an incremental manner based on reaching consensus.

In light of the above ideas, some social work schools are using CBE as a framework to begin a process of change. Those schools are seeking to improve the learning process by connecting it to the practical field. They are looking for richer, more flexible curriculums that enable students to become competent practitioners.

In relation to the interview question number two, what features of the competency model make it suitable for use in social work education?, three categories emerged:
The first category: ‘the debate related to the concept of competency’.

University of Alicante

“The CBE model has generated numerous debates that could result in a lengthy answer if we comment on the different arguments...In personal terms; I believe that the best definition is provided by the OECD: “ability to answer the complex demands and being able to do multiple tasks properly.” It supposes the combination of practical abilities, knowledge, motivation, ethic, values, attitudes, emotions and other social components and behaviours that a person mobilize in order to achieve an efficient action.”

University of Colima

“The competency model in education has ideological, political, economic, social, and cultural implications that are necessary to consider before establishing any commitment to the competency model... The competency model in education has applicability in certain areas of knowledge, but also has limitations. In others words the competency model in education has advantages and disadvantages. Let’s use the advantages and control the disadvantages.”

University of Valladolid

“There is increasing criticism about the ambiguity of the concept of competence...we are in agreement with the definition stated by the Tuning Project.”

CSWE

“In the past, competence was associated with a prescribed list of behaviours and its philosophical foundation was unclear. For this reason, many social work professors avoided it.”

The second category: ‘the competency model in social work’.

University of Alicante

“We have to consider the relevance of competency development for the formation of social work practitioners. It is important not to forget that the criteria to select competencies are critical.”
University of Colima

“If we consider that the competency model is following the principles of the education for the 21th century [Delors, 1999]: learning to know, learning to do, learning to be together, and learning to be. We see that they have high compatibility and connection with social work....In the practical sense; competencies are related to social work practice. However, it is necessary to first pay attention to the theoretical aspects of the competencies because these are devalued when compared to the practical sense. Secondly, it is necessary to consider the humanist philosophy which is the essence of our profession...To consider competencies as a bridge between educational institutions and the labour market in experiences such as Tuning, Europe, Alfa, Latin America, and the National Agency of Quality and Accreditation Evaluation (ANECA, 2004). Those experiences identified the generic competencies for all the professions and specifics competencies for some of them. At this point, the Tuning project in Latin America still does not indicate the specific competencies that should guide the educational process in social work. Therefore, the specific competencies indicated by ANECA are those which should be used in the design of a social work curriculum. The second reference may be socio-emotional competencies proposed by authors such as Graczyk, Payton, Bisquerra, and Carolyn Saami. We need to design other competencies, even though twenty five specific ones have been included in the ANECA document, those competencies are, in my opinion, connected to a traditional approach to social work and social problems emerging in the European Union. Therefore, it is possible to develop other competencies which respond to the new trends or tendencies in social work and in particular to the social reality of Latin-America.”

University of Valladolid

“For our faculty the ANECA proposal of competency was relevant.”

CSWE

“Competencies are measurable practice behaviours that consist of knowledge, values, and skills. The goal of the CBE approach is to demonstrate the integration and application of the competencies in practice with individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities.”
The third category: ‘pedagogical strategy’.

University of Alicante

“Our pedagogical strategy seeks to allow the acquisition of holistic learning where a proper synergy exists between the knowledge that is coming from the different courses and practical knowledge. This step forward must have to do with ethical fundaments that are really important to our profession. Therefore the application of a learning model based on competencies is valuable.”

University of Colima

“The competency model in social work education, from the operative viewpoint is demanding: change in the school administration systems, change in the teacher’s role, and change in the student’s role.”

University of Valladolid

“My understanding is that we are willing to formulate integral learning goals in the program. As well, we include knowledge, skills and abilities connected with competencies that will be acquired in the practical field by our students.”

CSWE

“Signature pedagogy represents the central form of instruction and learning by which a profession socializes its students to perform the role of practitioners. Professionals have pedagogical norms with which they connect and integrate theory and practice. In social work, the signature pedagogy is field education”.

Analysis based on the categories identified above

From the opinions expressed above, there is not consensus about a comprehensive definition of the concept of competency, nor enough practical experience/data utilizing it to reach a unanimous view regarding the advisability of applying CBE social work education. This state of affairs is in accordance with
the data presented in the literature review (chapter 2) regarding the concept of competency and its historical and philosophical foundations and criticisms.

The lack of agreement about what CBE actually means, the ensuing ambiguities in the use of the term, and the lack of a theoretical and philosophical framework supporting the concept are the main objections raised to utilizing CBE in the design of new curricula. There is, however, evidence of progress in overcoming these limitations in that the institutions using CBE and participating in this research study have defined the meaning of competency for themselves. It would obviously benefit all concerned to secure a much greater degree of consensus about the nature and meaning of CBE in the social work profession, and such a definition may emerge as more social work faculties gain more experience applying it to their curricula.

The researcher takes the view that it is crucial for social work education to have a common notion of competency that is constantly being revised and refined. For some educators, competency represents only professional tasks, that is, the reduction of performance to discrete elements that may be performed by less qualified individuals (Dominelli, 1996). This interpretation is a child of the Industrial Society where competency is seen exclusively as knowledge in practice (Dominelli, 1996).

Conversely, other educators see the concept of competency in the context of the Knowledge Society. From this perspective, the key elements in competence are capabilities (skills), values (attitude), knowledge (domains), and performance (how to do). Some of the research participants pointed out that the
competency model has pros and cons, strengths and weakness, and potentialities and limitations.

Knowing the limitations or challenges before setting out to apply CBE to curricula should make it possible to proceed with caution, and better utilize the concept’s strengths. For that reason alone, it is worthwhile to subject the notion of competency to constant review.

From the research participants’ data, it is, however, possible to identify the pedagogical strategy (page, 208) underlying the application of CBE to curriculum design. Thus, the practical experience of educators using the model indicates that competencies can be taught and learned using different domains, methodologies and institutional models. Acceptance of this pedagogical reality would also facilitate the simultaneous development of the different dimensions of the students’ capabilities, values, attitudes, and performance.

In relation to the interview question number three, regarding the description of the implementation processes for CBE models in the development of a BSW curriculum, two categories emerged.

The first category: ‘clear definition of course objectives and performance’.

University of Alicante

“In the design of the program in each course that I teach, there is a clear description of each theme and what the students must know. It is possible for everyone to complete a self-evaluation at the end of each theme in the learning process.”

University of Colima

“In our program, the objectives are formulated as formative goals considering domains and performance in an integrated manner.”
University of Valladolid

“Our faculty paid special attention to the identification of objectives that are permanently guiding the program implementation.”

CSWE

“EPAS [2008] states that the mission and goals of each social work program have to address the profession’s purpose which is grounded in core professional values. Thus, each faculty needs to be consistent with them at the time of identifying their core competencies.”

The second category: ‘implementation processes’.

University of Alicante

“The Tuning Project and, more specifically, ANECA provides a methodology that includes reference points to help faculty and school members to identify domains, and develop a statement of learning outcomes, levels of learning, and desired competences in the discipline so those statements are clear and easily comparable... It [EPAS 2008] seeks to assist faculties in describing a cycle program at the level of subject areas and to establish a common language, but does not prescribe what the faculty and school have to do...it is not mandatory.”

University of Colima

“The task of restructuring our BSW curriculum was a complex experience due to the nature and the methodology used in the process.”

University of Valladolid

“Currently we are implementing a new curriculum for a Social Work degree 2009-2010. We are offering a Social Work Diploma. 6 In the design and implementation of the program structure, we considered the recommendation of the evaluation protocol for the verification of university certificates (Bachelor and Master) published by ANECA in February 2008.
To summarize, the main aspects in the process of program development and curriculum design were:

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6 For more information on the Social Work diploma please see the following link: http://www3.uva.es/tsocial/documentos/Memoria%20%20vf.pdf
(1) to use the module as the main unit in the structure of the program. The module structure affords a flexible organization that is able to efficiently respond to the learning objectives. This is also important to incorporating necessary changes during the curriculum implementation;
(2) to differentiate between modules (academic units that include one of several domains that constitute an organized unit in the program) and content (academic units that should be included in one of several courses in an integrated view); and
(3) to identify general and specific competencies, methodologies, evaluations, and learning activities.”

CSWE

“The identification and definition of 10 core competencies is one of the guideline for faculties... EPAS [2008] describes four features of an integrated curriculum design:
(1) program mission and goals;(2) explicit curriculum;(3) implicit curriculum; and (4) assessment. The Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards are conceptually linked.”

Analysis based on the categories identified above

The data from the research participants regarding the implementation process for CBE models fall into two categories. First, one main component of CBE curricula is that of having course objectives describe overall domains of knowledge and practice. This component should facilitate a common understanding of knowledge, skills, values and attitudes that students bring to the course, and afford a foundation for the course design and implementation process. As a result, teachers and students should be able to construct meaning through relevant learning activities. Such an approach is also fundamental to procedures for the evaluation process as students have an awareness of their own strengths and weakness. Consequently, both self evaluation and formative evaluation are meaningful strategies that support the learning process.
In the second category, it is possible to identify some of the main components that enhance the likelihood of success when using CBE initiatives. These include:

(1) the implementation process must include a leadership team of educators responsible for creating an institutional culture of change that encourages full participation by faculty in identifying, defining, and reaching a consensus about important or core competencies; 
(2) competencies need to be defined at a sufficient level of specificity in order to provide useful and meaningful information that is relevant to the program and course designs; and 
(3) faculty and staff fully participating in making decisions about program’s vision, mission, and goals.

It needs to be kept in mind that any competency-based education initiative is embedded within a larger institutional planning process and is directly linked to the goals or objectives of the learning experience.

More specifically, research participants indicated that the utilization of CBE models should avoid the traditional fragmentation of academic programs focused solely on content or subject. CBE should promote the use of a flexible, modular and integral curriculum design and should take the previous learning experiences of students into account. In addition, in the formulation of the curriculum, an integrative alignment that considers both generic and specific competencies as a part of the curriculum could prove to be a useful option. From this perspective, the CBE model should be modular and connected to the various
social work contexts, including the recognition and validation of the students’ previous knowledge and learning (Whitty and Willmont, 1991; Velasquez, 1997; Guthrie et al., 1995).

In relation to the interview question number four about the challenges in the implementation process of CBE models, three categories emerged:

*The first category: the ‘selection of competencies’.*

*University of Alicante*

“The selection of competencies is critical because they must respond to the social needs that are being confronted by social workers.”

*University of Colima*

“In the selection of competencies for our program, the community members followed some of the guidelines suggested by the Tuning project for Latin-American on social work education. As well, we considered the four competencies proposed by Delors (1999). Most importantly, we incorporated the competencies that were relevant and meaningful in our own particular context.”

*University of Valladolid*

“For designing our program, we considered the 25 competencies pointed out by ANECA.”

*CSWE*

“Our 10 core competencies were developed through an inclusive study of social work curricula. We did an environmental scan that included discussion with social work educators and administrators, a review of the licensure requirements, and brainstorming and discussions with the Commission on Accreditation and the Commission on Curriculum and Educational Innovation [and] CSWE staff.”
The second category: ‘ethical consideration’.

*University of Alicante*

“In the design of our program, as with many social work schools, we considered the values and principles of the profession. These are included in the White Book published by ANECA in 2007.”

*University of Colima*

“It is important to consider the development of a strong ethical component when confronting social problems. This is, basically, because the professional and scientific tasks are immersed in the Human Development Model.”

*University of Valladolid*

“The ethical foundations of our profession are one of the main cornerstones which support our social work program. As well, it is important that the students learn how to apply the values and principles of our profession. This [means] not only to follow the values. It is [also] relevant [to do] a critical analysis of them when confronting ethical dilemmas.”

*CSWE*

“Service, social justice, the dignity and worth of the person, the importance of human relationships, integrity, competence, human rights, and scientific inquiry are among the core values of social work. These values underpin the explicit and implicit curriculum and frame the profession’s commitment to respect for all people and the quest for social and economic justice.”

The third category: ‘changes in the teaching and learning processes’.

*University of Alicante*

“Many specifics workshops for academics on the topic of teaching and learning, pedagogic approaches and didactic sources were held. The aim was to provide instances to reflect on, to discuss and to develop new strategies related to CBE.”
University of Colima

“A special curriculum committee was established in order to suggest and develop accurate pedagogic strategies needed by the new curriculum. One [new strategy] was the implementation of tutorial groups with seven students each. This facilitates and improves the learning process of the students.”

University of Valladolid

“I consider the following challenges the most important in the implementation of the model:
(1) Considering changes that are needed in the teaching and learning models, we need to move from a model where the teacher is the center to a model where the students are able to develop competencies independently;
(2) To be aware of the existence of new competencies required in the practical social work field (by employers);
(3) To establish the general competencies for the program and establish the contribution that each course provides in relation to those competencies;
(4) To coordinate the programs in the different courses in order to ensure consistency of the topics of teaching and to avoid overlap; and
(5) To establish an efficient system of academic management and to promote overall quality for the program.”

CSWE

“Faculty qualifications and experience related to the program competencies are essential for developing an educational environment that promotes, emulates, and teaches students the knowledge, values, and skills expected of professional social workers. The faculty members have to demonstrate ongoing professional development as teachers, scholars and practitioners through dissemination of research and scholarship. The goal is that professors acquire relevant and creative pedagogic strategies to support the teaching and learning process”.

Analysis based on the categories identified above

Developing and implementing a new curriculum is not an easy task. It seems to be especially challenging when applying CBE models. According to
one of the research participants, one challenge in the design of CBE programs is the selection of competencies that will be included in the curriculum. If the goal of BSW program designers is to prepare students for the contextual nature of social work practice, it is first necessary to spend a good deal of time and energy determining what competencies are necessary for a program to accomplish that goal. The selection of competencies must involve all the stakeholders, including educators, students, practitioners, and clients and employers. In other words, including the different perspectives of all concerned should be a high priority.

Another relevant topic to be considered by academics is the need for curriculum designers to conscientiously maintain and sustain social work’s philosophical foundations. This approach must drive the conceptualization and contextualization of the curriculum. Consequently, philosophical, epistemological, ontological, sociological, and anthropological principles need to be incorporated.

One of the main challenges to implementing CBE models is the equipping of academic members (professors and leaders) for the ongoing acquisition and development of pedagogical and methodological competencies throughout their professional life. In other words, it is necessary to create a program for the continuous improvement of curricular qualifications and pedagogical, methodological, and investigative strategies for social work educators. This ongoing program or strategy should provide academics and other professionals the opportunity not only to question CBE, but also to do research, and to develop theory, concepts, methods and innovative pedagogical practices. It should be understood that the unique domains of some courses will require specific,
congruent pedagogical methodologies that address cognitive, procedural and effective learning in order to achieve course objectives.

By way of contrast, simple academic updating does not provide sufficient support for curriculum changes because academic topics rapidly become outdated and simply renewed content is not the only valid reason for undertaking curriculum changes. The criteria for curriculum change needs to be closely related to both the relevance of changes and their effectiveness in terms of imparting new competencies.

In terms of research question number five, an analysis of the advice study participants offered to faculties interested in implementing a CBE model, reveals four categories.

*The first category: ‘teacher coordination’.*

*University of Alicante*

“The relevance of the coordination among professors and, therefore, collaboration of the different areas of expertise and knowledge, is fundamental when implementing the learning model.”

*University of Colima*

“To support the quality and consistency of the curriculum was really important in maintaining a permanent coordination among teachers. The idea was to know and share relevant experiences.”

*University of Valladolid*

“Previous to and during the curriculum implementation, support and coordination among professors was an important task. In many instances, professors got together to reflect on and discuss successes and challenging experiences. This was especially true at the end of each semester when it was possible to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the teaching and learning.”
CSWE

“The faculty members need to discuss and co-ordinate all the curricular activities. Class offer, class size, number of students, and the faculty’s teaching, scholarly and service responsibilities are part of coordination activities.”

The second category: ‘commitment’.

University of Alicante

“All the members of the educational community, professors and administrative staff, have to be on the same page to allow program success.”

University of Colima

“Being sure that all the actors in the educational process show commitment – this is crucial in the process of designing and implementing the curriculum.”

University of Valladolid

“To achieve a successful program implementation, it is necessary that all members maintain and show real commitment. It is possible to maintain commitment when faculty members have to be free to discuss program strengths and weaknesses openly.”

CSWE

“Faculty members have to discuss how to support the achievements of the program and how to overcome the difficulties. This increases participation and commitment.”

The third category: ‘institutional context’.

University of Alicante

“It is also important to have an adequate institutional context that considers the structural factors from the administrative perspective: for instance, the professor-student ratio, financial aspects, and infrastructure that are determinants when you have to put the model into practice.”
University of Colima

“Our program describes how the social work school has responsibility for defining program curriculum consistent with the Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards.”

University of Valladolid

“Our faculty is considering the institutional context of the university. The university is giving us the autonomy necessary to drive the program according to our mission, vision, and goals.”

CSWE

“Context encompasses the mission of the institution in which the program is located and the needs and opportunities associated with the setting. Programs are further influenced by their historical, political, economic, social, cultural, demographic, and global contexts and by the ways they elect to engage these factors. Additional factors include new knowledge, technology, and ideas that may have a bearing on contemporary and future social work education and practice.”

The fourth category: ‘quality’.

University of Alicante

“Quality assurance is one of our program goals. As a part of ANECA, our school is following its accreditation policy.”

University of Colima

“We are ensuring quality through an ongoing evaluation of the program goals. Accreditation standards and critical reflection are guiding the implementation of the CBE curriculum.”

University of Valladolid

“The competency model is a formative one that offers a wide range of advantages for the student and for teachers who are willing to participate and make use of the model. My understanding is that the student receives a more complete and competitive education in an environment which is changing rapidly.”
“EPAS support academic excellence by establishing thresholds for professional competence. Accreditation standards are derived from the Educational Policy and specify the requirements used to develop and maintain an accredited social work program.”

Analysis based on the categories identified above

The research participants gave some significant suggestions that might guide the implementation of the CBE model in a BSW program. They outlined factors such as the collaboration and commitment of educators and administrative staff both at the beginning and during the process. Sometimes, there is an assumption that those aspects are already implicit in the faculty’s culture and environment, but both are factors that will affect the degree of success of the program.

An exploration of the institutional contexts is a central component in the process. The institutional environment is a basic support for curriculum change because the goals of a BSW program have to be aligned with the vision, mission, and goals of the university. The institutional context also includes power (in multiple manifestations), decision making, and participation. In addition, it is necessary to identify areas such as infrastructure and financial support that directly affect a program’s success.

According to research participants, CBE models provide the option to ensure program quality assurance because the models are directly tied to accreditation standards and the actual practice of the profession. Thus, students should be able to face the challenges of the new millennium.
4.3.1 Data provided by a professor who disagrees with the use of the CBE model in social work education.

During the process of the study, the researcher had the opportunity to contact academics opposed to the use of CBE models in social work education. Because of their willingness to participate in the research, the researcher created a new interview schedule directly related to the five questions guiding the study. One professor participated through an e-interview and the other gave a face-to-face interview.

This section of the study presents the data from the e-interview, and the analysis and conclusions drawn from them.

In relation to the specific factors that led her to reject the use of CBE in social work school, the professor asserts:

*Dalhousie University*

“Our understanding of most competency based education leads us to believe that it is not suited to such critical theory and practice. We tend to see competency based instruction as more suitable to training than to educational initiatives.”

“Certainly our School, together with other radical efforts, has been taken to task for insufficient skills training and we are trying to attend to this critique in our most recent program revisions. However, we firmly believe that such skill teaching needs to be firmly rooted in critical analysis and are not convinced that competency based education provides such grounding.”

*Analysis*

These ideas are connected to the main criticisms that CBE faces. In fact, for the opponents of the model (Fagan, 1984; Hyland, 1993; 1997; Elliot, 1993) CBE contains an inappropriate and reductive representation of learning. With
CBE models, the opponents argue, the learning process is seen as a mechanical and technical process devoid of critical thinking and reflection (Jacobus, 2007; Kerka, 1998; Dall'Alba and Sanderberg, 1996)

_Dalhousie University_

“While it is important that social work education offer some specific training for professional practice, the nature of a generic undergraduate social work degree leads us to believe that we are preparing people for “contexts in which we cannot predict with any specificity of certainty the situations” and therefore, a competency based model is less appropriate.”

_Analysis_

Social work education prepares people to proactively respond to the changing environment. Thus, the environment itself is challenging social work education and the profession. From the viewpoint of the Dalhousie research participant, the CBE model does not provide the necessary options to proactively anticipate new and different situations because CBE seeks to reduce complex and contextual relationships and processes to discrete and measurable activities.

In relation to the features of the competency model that make it unsuitable for use in social work education, the professor argues:

_Dalhousie University_

“However, the political context of the origins of CBE is also relevant. My understanding is that the first real mention of CBE in social work within Canada came as a result of the provisions of the Agreement on Internal Trade, especially Chapter 7. These pressures led to the inclusion of a recommendation related to competency profiles in the Sector Study, even though that recommendation did not arise from the Sector Study research data. Since then, provincial educators, associations and regulators have been under consistent pressure to structure their programs and registration processes on the basis of competencies, not credentials, as dictated by the trade agreements.”
Analysis

As was stated earlier, external pressures first raised the debate on applying competencies in social work education. In Canada, the Agreement on Internal Trade establishes that social work faculties and schools must include competencies as outcomes of the learning process. In contrast, the Dalhousie participant believes that the shape and form of social work education should be determined by social workers and those they serve, not by trade or government officials or employers.

Considering the main challenges in the implementation process of the competency model, the professor states:

*Dalhousie University*

“Given our historic opposition to CBE, I cannot see any potential for such a project. We have agreed that we need to give more attention to the teaching of practice skills consistent with a critical analysis and appropriate to current professional and political practice contexts, but I cannot see us using the CBE model.”

Analysis

Although granting that it is necessary to consider changes in social work's pedagogical strategies to improve the teaching and learning process, the professor disagrees with making CBE models the basis of social work education. In fact, the faculty members at Dalhousie have always been opposed to CBE because, in their perspective, it devalues critical thinking.

In terms of advice for faculties, departments or schools interested in adopting the competency model, the professor suggests such faculties:
Dalhousie University

“Ensure a theoretical grounding for the model that is rooted in a critical political, constructivist analysis... Be sure that the motivation for such implementation is the provision of quality social work education as opposed to a response to political neo-liberal and professional managerial forces ... Proceed with caution and extreme thoughtfulness... Understand that, within the current context of social work practice, the pressures for new (and experienced) practitioners to revert to ‘recipes’ and non-critical practices are extreme, and that competency based education has the potential for supporting this movement to technical practice.”

Analysis

The research participant offers meaningful and interesting suggestions and comments for faculties willing to apply CBE. The advice is fully consistent with this professor’s rationale for opposing the use of CBE models in social work education.

4.4 Face-to-face interview findings and analysis

Chapter 3 (section 3.4) presents and explains the process of the face-to-face interview. Even though only one face-to-face interview was conducted, the researcher believes that the professor’s ideas and reflections are germane to the study topic, and particularly notable. The professor interviewed has a wide range of international social work experience and opposes the use of CBE models in social work education. Her perspective makes a significant contribution to the research data.

The organization of the information following the interview included transcription and reading the information for a sense of the whole. The
presentation of the information and its respective analysis, organized according to the interview schedule, follows.

Speaking about the specific factors that led the professor to reject the use of CBE approaches in her social work school, the professor states:

*University of Waterloo*

“We need to clarify what is the meaning of competency. If we consider competency as a synonym of competent, it is very important for a social worker to be competent. However, I think that in the current neo-liberal economic context, and a situation where there are fair trade agreements, we need to be conscious that the competency model is promoting something totally different. It is risky when such agreements allow private institutions to teach social work. They are using a very narrow definition of competency, just skills. It is clearly against [the social work profession’s] values and principles and does not consider a theoretical framework. For all those reasons, we disagree with the use CBE.”

*Analysis:*

From this participant’s viewpoint, the concept of competency has not been defined with sufficient precision and is thus problematical. The research participant agrees that being a competent social worker is an important goal for both students and educators but, in and of itself, this does not entail that the competency model is appropriate for social work education or imparting the profession’s vision and ethical standards. In reality, many terms are used interchangeably to describe learners and the results of the learning process, including outcomes, skills, traits, characteristics, competencies, and domains.

In relation to the features of the competency model that make it unsuitable for use in social work education, the professor states:
"We already know that private institutions are in agreement with CBE because they are leaving out theoretical frameworks such as multiculturalism, inclusion and diversity in the classroom, as well as the reflection process and critical thinking. For me, CBE does not ensure quality in the education process. They [CBE approaches] teach technical skills. We are pretty much against this."

Analysis:

A technical learning process is not necessarily conducive to the promotion of social justice and human rights. In fact, the acquisition of technical skills requires neither a comprehensive theoretical framework, nor reflection or critical thinking.

In relation to the likely challenges faced in the implementation of a competency model, the professor asserts:

"If some school, not us, is using CBE, they have to make sure that values such as equality, anti-oppression, critical thinking, and reflection are in the curriculum. For me, the main challenge is that CBE can be very oppressive."

Analysis:

There is no doubt in this research participant’s mind that the CBE model is not appropriate for implementation in social work education. This professor indicates that the competency model is part of what is often referred to as the neo-liberal agenda and, within this approach these prevailing political ideologies might be viewed as very oppressive for both social work education and its practice (Chappell et al., 2000).
The professor offers the following advice for faculties, departments or schools interested in utilizing the competency model in social work education:

**University of Waterloo**

“They need to use CBE under an umbrella such as CASWE. Being under the umbrella of this organization should ensure [faculties, departments, etc.] meet accreditation standards and are in contact with social work educators who are discussing key issues for social work education. It is also important to be consistent with values and principles such as equality and humanitarianism. Finally, they must be critically aware of the methods and trends of CBE.”

**Analysis:**

The University of Waterloo study participant believes that belonging to and participating in an organization like CASWE should, at least in part, decrease or help limit the influence or external pressures on social work education from groups such as regulatory bodies, accreditation agencies, and free trade zealots. Over many years, CASWE has openly discussed and promoted its accreditation process which includes social work methods such as interventions with individuals, families, communities, and other groups to avoid marginalization and systemic social inequities in the process.

**4.5 Discussion notes and considerations of the findings from e-interviews and face-to-face interview based on the research questions**

The study focused primarily on describing, analysing, and reflecting about practical experiences of social work faculties currently using CBE. As well, after gathering those data, the professors participating in the study were also asked to reflect further and provide advice to others who may be interested in implementing a CBE curriculum.
The research participants identified the reasons for their institutions’ decision to use or reject the CBE model and in its programs. These decisions were based on unique or particular contexts but took into consideration the complex environment in which social work education finds itself. These experiences are certainly worth considering and may support the appropriateness of CBE models in their own contexts.

The following considerations and reflections result from the analysis of the research data that organized the findings in a theoretical and practical perspective.

Like the rest of post-secondary, social work education’s teaching and learning processes are under considerable pressure to meet the goals of, or conform to, the neo-liberal philosophy driving the globalized world. Such pressure has many indeterminate implications. In the words of CASWE (2009) “there are many pressures generated by the managerial restructuring of public institutions” (p. 37). As a result, university educators are urged to focus on the preparation of technically qualified graduates who are not critical thinkers. Such a dynamic, describes a viewpoint where accreditation and regulatory bodies shape social work education.

Competence, competency, and competencies are recurrent concepts often referred to in guideline documents produced by regulatory bodies. In many of these documents, the underpinning concepts of competencies are rooted in a behaviouristic approach that sees competencies simply as a list of skills that can be applied without any grounding in the discipline’s theoretical or philosophical
foundations (Jacobus, 2007; Kerka, 1998; Dall Alba and Sanderberg, 1996). Thus, social work competencies are seen as being imparted through a simple formative process at universities or technical institutions and, for this reason, the appropriateness of CBE for BSW curriculum design must be questioned (Campbell, 2009).

Research participants emphasized the importance of selecting competencies that are connected to the vision and mission of the BSW program and are also relevant to a quality social work practice. The professors who participated in this study also argued that ethical considerations play an important role in maintaining a strong relationship between social work’s values and principles and the practise of the profession Hodkinson and Issit (1995). As well, the research participants stressed that changes in the teaching and learning processes are a key factor in the decision to adopt a CBE approach. Once it is realized that CBE’s integrated and holistic perspective is learner-centered, many transformations are required in teaching or pedagogical strategies (Guthrie et al., 1995; Velasquez, 1997)

On the other hand, a major pitfall to be avoided in the design and implementation of a CBE curriculum is the temptation to reduce competencies to simple skills without taking into account the attitudes and motivations of students. In such cases, the concept of CBE is stunted and it is seen as simply merely teaching how to do particular tasks (Kerka, 1998).

Once it is realized that CBE should provide an integrated and holistic framework, it becomes possible to identify the opportunities and challenges in the
design and implementation of a CBE curriculum. One important characteristic of CBE models is that BSW educators are able to question, analyse and reflect on the process as prelude to introducing all the necessary modifications for each unique context (Velasquez, 1997).

The objective of promoting an integrated CBE curriculum requires new strategies in the formative process. One such strategy is the search for new theoretical constructs and methods that, among other things, strengthen the linkage between the theoretical underpinnings of social work and their application in the field by practitioners (Velasquez, 1997).

Orientation and reflective sessions that encourage the academic community to review the new curriculum are a key factor in the successful implementation of a CBE program. Such sessions seek ways and means of developing participatory strategies in the teaching and learning process, new systems of evaluation, and mandatory educational experiences in a concrete reality (Biemans et al., 2004; Gonczi, 1997).

Discussion notes: findings of e-interviews and face-to-face interview based on the research questions

1. What are the current design and implementation processes for CBE curricula in Bachelor of Social Work programs?

Based on data collected, the first group of categories to emerge were those related to the concept, characteristics, and advantages and limitations of CBE models. Regarding the CBE concept itself, there are two contrasting views. The narrow view presents competencies as simply standardized training
outcomes or behaviours. The broad view, on the other hand, does not separate performance from competency and holds that there are a large number and variety of dynamic factors that underpin competencies, including social, intellectual, and emotional realities. In relation to the characteristics of CBE models, it is important to remember that modern practices acknowledge that learning objectives should span the whole spectrum of knowledge, skills, capabilities, and attitudes. Those faculties currently using CBE utilize a holistic competency approach consistent with social cognitive and constructivist learning theories that acknowledges the role of context and culture in the teaching and learning process. Contextual influences play a strong role in the decision to use the CBE approach in the design and implementation of a curriculum.

On the other hand, opponents of the competency model suggest that it contains an inappropriate and reductive representation of learning. From this viewpoint, the competency model is educationally and philosophically inadequate (Jacobus, 2007; Kerka, 1998; Hyland, 1997).

2. Is the design and implementation of CBE appropriate for Bachelor of Social Work programs?

Through the analysis of each experience researched, it was possible to determine that, in most cases, extensive discussion, consultation, observation and reflection related to all aspects of the BSW program occurred during the process of designing a CBE curriculum.

It is important that in the process of an integrated curriculum design, the institutions consider each program's formal educational structure. This includes
the courses and the curriculum (explicit curriculum) and, at the same time, the educational environment in which the explicit curriculum is presented (implicit curriculum). The faculties identified three key elements of the curriculum design process:

(1) A clear definition of course objectives and performance
(2) Ethical considerations are a second important factor in the design and implementation of a CBE curriculum
There is wide consensus that social work’s values and principles must drive the conceptualization and contextualization of its curricula. Given these principles, beliefs, values and premises, social work faculties and schools should be able to demonstrate what makes university social work education unique and valuable. This approach is consistent with the idea of using the integrated, holistic perspective of CBE models to avoid a narrow, mechanical approach that focuses solely on the ability to do specific tasks and neglecting values and critical thinking.
(3) A third element to consider in the adoption and implementation of a CBE approach is the changes required in teaching and learning processes.
The teaching and learning processes need to take into consideration a paradigmatic shift from a model centered on the instructor to a model centered on the student. Considering the student’s previous values, knowledge and experiences is part of this change. This challenge should constitute an ongoing and ever-changing dynamic because the necessary
transformation in the teaching and learning processes is going to take considerable time.

3. What are the challenges and achievements in the design and implementation of CBE curricula for a Bachelor of Social Work program?

Professors taking part in this study noted that there were elements pointing to successes or opportunities during the implementation phase of a CBE model. The first element that emerged was coordination of the teachers. Coordination among the professors was a relevant factor in the implementation of a successful curriculum. CBE curricula, for example, avoid the traditional fragmentation of academic programs concerned only with content or subject matter in favour of a more flexible, modular and integral curriculum design. Without coordination within and among academic teams, all the benefits of these features are easily lost.

The second element noted as emerging from the implementation of a CBE curriculum is commitment. Commitment appears as a prerequisite and, at the same time, a consequence of the CBE design and implementation processes. This reality requires continuous reinforcement that, in turn, requires the academic team to be active in the process, discussing, proposing, evaluating, and selecting ideas and strategies.

The third relevant element arising from the implementation process for a CBE curriculum was quality. Quality should be one of the most important considerations in the design and implementation processes of CBE curricula. The intensity, breadth, theoretical knowledge and research base required for
competent social work practice demands an outstanding formative process. From this perspective, the accreditation process offers an opportunity to demonstrate program qualities. For example, in the review of some accreditation bodies, such as the EPAS (2008) document, there are definitions of, and presentations on, 10 core social work competencies while, in the White Book, there are 25 competence statements. As a result, a CBE curriculum approach is consistent with and meets the requirements of quality assurance bodies.

The findings of this study incorporate the results of the document analysis, the views and opinions of four professors who are, or have been, directly involved in the design and/or the implementation of CBE for BSW curricula, and the views and opinions of two professors who oppose using competency-based models to construct curricula for post-secondary social work education. The inclusion of both points of view advances and enriches the ongoing dialogue, debates and reflections about the appropriateness of CBC in the context of social work education – and both points of view are necessary for a full, balanced consideration of the topic.

This chapter also discussed the findings that resulted from the articulation of the personal experiences and reflections related to the study questions by the six research participants. The objective was to ascertain why and how CBE is being implemented in social work faculties and schools. As well to consider the discussion notes for social work education voiced by academics who advocate using CBE models in social work education and also those who represent dissident voices in the debate surrounding CBE. In discussing the research
findings, it must be kept in mind that no single approach to education is perfect or
can answer every question and meet every need. CBE approaches to curriculum
design in social work education are relatively new and the concept itself is still
being analysed and more defined. Given the paucity of research information in
this area, as well as providing data, the research data also provides building
blocks or points for future research.

In Chapter 5, the research conclusions, recommendations, contributions
and limitations are presented. As noted, there is a scarcity of research on CBE’s
effectiveness for preparing social work practitioners. Thus, this study in addition
to answering the research questions also highlights the need for future research.
Within the topics discussed, key issues and unresolved conflicts that might
provide the jumping off point for new and needed further research in this area will
appear. This chapter also presents the theoretical and practical contributions of
my research. It also identifies the limitations in the present study that need to be
recognized and addressed. The increasing demand for CBE models or
something similar to them in academic communities mean future research in this
area is a given. Thus, this study makes a contribution to the development for
CBE and social work education that will undoubtedly be supplemented in the
years ahead.
CHAPTER 5: RESEARCH CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS, CONTRIBUTIONS AND LIMITATIONS

Introduction

The theoretical and empirical knowledge base of CBE models and their application in social work education will not be employed to advantage if the academic community is not cognizant of the on-going dialogue and debate about the applicability of such models for professional disciplines.

To fully explore the points of contact between social work education and CBE models, and the implications flowing from those and connections will require collaborative action from all stakeholders. Without such collaboration within the social work community, whether due to active resistance, simple indifference, or other factors, any advance of the CBE approach in social work is unlikely.

As noted earlier, this study describes, analyses, and reflects on key issues related to the CBE model from a range of perspectives. The different viewpoints further the ongoing dialogue and debate about the appropriateness of competency models for social work education. Through the description and exploration of the concept of competency, its historical evolution and perspectives, and its philosophical and theoretical foundations, readers are better able to understand and gain insight into the competency model. Further, the findings of this research represent an initial point in the dialogue and debate over the appropriateness of CBE models as frameworks in the design and development of BSW curricula.
The conclusions and recommendations stemming from my research do not ensure that, for each topic presented, every key issue can be exhaustively addressed. Nor do these data eliminate every unresolved conflict evident in the CBE debate. The research data do, however, point to both potential benefits that can be gained from use of the CBE models, and possible directions for new and necessary research in this area.

This study has collected and presented valuable data, including real experiences, about a topic that is not generally clearly demarcated, that is, defined precisely, within the social work educational community. It is clear that the appropriateness of the CBE model as a useful theoretical framework for designing and implementing a curriculum for a BSW program needs to be subject to a more thorough discussion, and thus further refinement to advance its utility. In response to these needs, it was appropriate to implement a generic qualitative approach for this study because, as mentioned earlier, this methodology best captures the perspectives and views of people in the academic field. Thus, the study’s methodology was applied to data collected from professors who favour the use of the competency model in social work education as well as to data from those who oppose it.

Section 5.3 of this chapter presents the theoretical and practical contributions of my research while section 5.4 articulates the limitations regarding the present study that need to be recognized and addressed. Some of these limitations are related to this study timeline.
5.1 Conclusions for CBE in Social Work Education

The content of this dissertation provides an overview of the complex topics associated with the challenges and opportunities of using a CBE approach for social work education. The contextual forces that are driving post-secondary education generally and, more specifically, social work education, needs to answer questions like: “Why does curriculum need to change?”, “Who is promoting this change?”, and “How it is possible to manage the process of change so as to maximize the benefits?”.

To complement and enrich the insightful information presented in the literature review (chapter 2), the qualitative research for my study includes the views and opinions of professors currently involved in the discussion and dialogue on the relative merits of CBE models for social work education. Given the very skimpy nature of research to date on the use of CBE models for professional disciplines, this study provides basic data and also points the way to future research possibilities.

The questions which guided this research were formulated to reveal and record the experiences and expertise of professors in different parts of the world involved in the design and implementation process of CBE social work programs. Considering all the research data presented (theoretical and experiential) and the informational analysis and discussion coming from it, the following conclusions about CBE and social work education can be advanced. The first conclusion relates to contextual influences which are pressuring and, in some cases, driving curricula change within social work faculties, departments and schools. It is
critical to recognize that the constant evolution and reorganization of social services requires that professionals be able to reframe their knowledge, skills and practices. In a world where ethical dilemmas are often profound and new skill-sets and skill-mixes of radically new kinds are required, the new combinations and categories of such skills need to be anticipated rather than being designed after the fact. There is no doubt that the increasing complexity of social problems is profoundly influencing education in general and the profession of social work in particular.

In relation to contextual influences changing curricula, a particular example is in Europe. The Bologna Agreement, a movement attempting to create a common post-secondary system based on a CBE model within the European Union, seeks to harmonize education and increase interaction between universities around the continent. Specifically, the faculties of social work at the universities of Alicante and Valladolid in Spain are following this reform and implementing curricula which contain 25 distinct competencies indentified by ANECA.

Another example is in Latin America where some of the universities are following the Tuning project. Directly connected to the Bologna Agreement, the Tuning project presents 25 core competencies and gives universities the option to implement them into their curricula. In Mexico, the faculty of social work at the University of Colima included directions from the Tuning project in the design and implementation of a curriculum renewal. In the United States, CSWE, a social work education council representing 470 accredited baccalaureate social work
programs, is leading the implementation of CBE in the post-secondary BSW programs. In 2008, CSWE presented the EPAS document, which identified 10 core competencies.

At the beginning of this century, people from three different social work sectors (education, practice, and regulatory institutions) met to identify the most critical challenges facing the profession and discuss ways of addressing those challenges. These gatherings took place in different countries around the world, including Australia (General assembly IASSW and IFSW 2004), Canada (Social Work Forum, 2000), various European countries (Former les Assistants Sociaux Au XXI le Siècle, 2000), and others. The main ideas emerging from those discussions were:

(1) Economic globalization and its neo-liberal ideology are two of the major drivers of change being experienced in most regions of the world;

(2) As in other professions, globalization is confronting social work with key issues, including the need to respond to the increased emphasis on interdisciplinary studies that requires a willingness to embrace new ways of thinking and working, enhancing the relevance of the profession in the global era, and professional identity, competence and development;

(3) Contextual and professional settings are affecting social work education, it is critical that social work communities constructively manage the process of change in order to ensure the content of social
work educational programs promotes a strong sense of professional identity, strengthens the scientific knowledge base of social work, increases critical knowledge, respects diversity, and adapts programs to address new realities;

(4) A reconfiguration of social work’s educational structure is necessary to recognize that students coming from different backgrounds and educational levels (including generic and specialized domains) have differing needs and may require different approaches;

(5) It is necessary to reconsider the appropriate level at which students access the profession and increase their links with practice or practicum work, as well as harmonizing their connection with employers; and

(6) It is important to make social work education more responsive to global or international developments.

In fact, social work is a profession that is highly susceptible to changes affecting the demand for its services, and this is reflected in the variety of occupational fields that have been integrated into the profession throughout its history. This implies that social work education should be aware of epistemological and ideological pressures, political and economic influences in the process of curricula design and implementation.

The second conclusion indicates that in the design and implementation of CBE curricula, it is necessary to focus attention on the potential flaws, limitations and weakness of the model. There is an ongoing debate and discussion about
what, precisely, CBE is, and some critics indicate that most competency based education leads us to believe that it is more suitable to training than to educational incentives. As this research noted a professor from Dalhousie University points out that it is necessary to ensure a theoretical grounding for the model that is rooted in a critical, political, constructivist analysis. A professor from the University of Waterloo suggests the use of CBE under an institutional umbrella which should ensure awareness of the methods and trends.

Given the above, it is recommended to discuss the CBE model and its characteristics, advantages and disadvantages for social work education. Through this discussion, the academic community will be better positioned to design and implement a pertinent, more appropriate curriculum that avoids a narrow and behaviouristic perspective. It is critically important that the design and implementation process for any CBE model in social work be governed by a strong theoretical, philosophical, epistemological, and phenomenological framework.

The third conclusion relates to the need to debate the concept of competency in social work. A professor from the University of Alicante indicates that the faculty of social work is following the definition of competency from OECD, which mainly considers the combination of practical and other social components and behaviors that a person mobilizes in order to achieve an efficient action. A professor from the University of Colima, however, indicates that it is necessary to consider the broader aspects of the concept of competency
such as the ideological, political, social, and cultural implications for each specific social work context.

During the face-to-face interview, the professor from the University of Waterloo who rejects the model said that some social work institutions use a very narrow definition of competency and consider only the skills students must learn.

The lack of consensus about the precise definitions, and the true nature of competencies and CBE should not be seen as a stumbling block to further progress, but as an indication that there is more than one way – indeed a great many ways – to employ CBE appropriately and effectively (Chappell et al., 2000; Guthrie et al., 1995; Biemans et al., 2004). For example, CSWE (2008a) supports a concept of competency which overcomes a prescribed list of behaviors. However, professors from both the University of Waterloo and the Dalhousie University agree that the philosophical foundation was unclear and for this reason, many social work professors have avoided it. The current lack of clarity surrounding possible universal definitions for the concepts employed by CBE is a caution to authorities, notably curricular development authorities, to take great care to specify the definition(s) and their applications at the outset whenever a CBE initiative is launched (Chappell et al., 2000; Guthrie et al., 1995; Biemans et al., 2004).

We have seen how CBE has grown from a conception in which competencies were considered discreet behaviors learned by repetition and applied only to technical or vocational tasks into a broader, more integrated vision. The variety of theoretical foundations for CBE (behaviorist, cognitive, and
generic construct) and the even greater variety applications using it today demonstrate that the appropriateness of using CBE for curricula development and/or renewal is, in practice, more dependent on whatever conceptions about the meaning of competency one brings to the table, rather than any theoretical limitations inherent in the concept itself.

I would like to suggest that academic communities at schools, departments, and faculties openly discuss the meaning of CBE through meetings and conferences and decide on an appropriate definition which represents its own contextual realities. By creating definitions based on local competencies, educational communities can develop and incorporate their own CBE model for the design and implementation of social work education. Even if some educators are against using the model, from my perspective, the better option would be to analyze and openly discuss the advantages and disadvantages of CBE instead of passively ignoring it and waiting for direction and pressure from outside interests.

The fourth conclusion indicates that the BSW curriculum needs to respond to the uniqueness of each faculty context. In this context it is necessary to consider such factors as pedagogical strategies, changes in the teaching and learning process, clear definitions of course objectives and performances, and the coordination, commitment, and quality of social work faculty members. Both professors and students need to focus on domains and activities that enhance the connections between comprehensive theoretical knowledge and practical experiences. To achieve this dynamic, the connection of schools or
faculties to the practical field where the discipline is practiced has to be a strong and permanent component of the CBE model. As well, research in the field by academics and students should increase the knowledge about a variety of new social issues that will support the need for new domains in social work (and other disciplines) curricula. The development and implementation of a BSW program based on CBE model should be an important determinant that encourages quality in all the diverse areas where social work services are delivered (CSWE, 2002).

The pedagogical strategy describes a method relating to how competencies can be taught and learned. For example, a professor indicates that at the University of Alicante, the pedagogical strategy allows the acquisition of holistic learning where a proper synergy exists between the knowledge that is coming from the different courses and practical knowledge. For a professor at the University of Valladolid, knowledge, skills, and abilities are included to connect competencies that will be acquired by students in the practical field. The CSWE indicates that “signature pedagogy represents the central form of instruction and learning by which a profession socializes its students to perform the role of practitioners” (CSWE, 2008b, p. 8).

Social work educators are, understandably, concerned about the risks or implications of using or transferring pedagogical strategies developed for one model to a new and different (CBE) model (Velasquez, 1997). The introduction of a competency-based curriculum should enable educators, for instance, to select domains and activities that allow students to further their practical experience in
the field. There is, obviously, a need to be aware of how a professor's or educator's pedagogy allows or enables students to learn and acquire competencies. In other words, it is necessary for the academic community to identify the pedagogical strategy or strategies that best suit a student-centered learning process (Velasquez, 1997; Gonczi, 1997).

A professor from the University of Colima supports the idea that through teacher coordination it's possible to know and share relevant experiences. As well, a professor from the University of Alicante argues that collaboration among teachers from different areas of expertise is fundamental when implementing an educational model.

At the University of Valladolid, a professor mentions that it is possible to maintain commitment when faculty members have to be free to discuss program strengths and weaknesses openly. The associate director for research from CSWE states that participation and commitment is increased when faculty members have to discuss how to support the achievements of the program and how to overcome the difficulties.

However, a professor who disagrees with CBE warns that it is necessary to proceed with caution and extreme thoughtfulness when considering the design and implementation of the model. She argues that in the current context of social work practice the pressures for new and experienced practitioners to revert to recipes and non-critical practices are extreme, and that competency based education has the potential for supporting this movement to technical practice.
The fifth conclusion suggests the inclusion of social work values and principles as a foundation of the curriculum. There is wide consensus that social work’s values and principles must drive the conceptualization and contextualization of its curricula. Given the premises, principles, and beliefs of the profession, and the values flowing from them, social work faculties and schools should be able to articulate what makes post-secondary social work education unique and valuable. The primacy of principle and values is consistent with the idea of avoiding a narrow, mechanical approach to social work that focuses solely on the ability to do specific tasks, while neglecting values and critical thinking.

The category ethical considerations included in my research indicates that the principles, beliefs, values and premises of social work must be included in the design of the curricula. These elements of principles and beliefs make social work education unique and valuable. It is evident that social work’s principles and values provide useful standards for interpersonal encounters while the profession knowledge base yields important insights into individual, group, institutional and societal dynamics. The IASSW definition of social work (2000) envisages social workers as promoting positive social change, solving human relationship problems, and empowering people to improve or advance their own well-being. The IASSW accords human rights and social justice a central place in social work practice. As well, qualifying social workers must be able to exercise autonomy within the constraints of supervisory, collaborative, ethical and organisational requirements.
Finally, codes of conduct require social workers to safeguard and promote the interests of service users and clients while acting as their advocate. The CBE approach for social work education must consider the principles and values of social work as the foundation of all BSW curriculum design.

5.2 Recommendations for CBE in Social Work Education

Following the conclusions of the research, it is important to highlight some recommendations for further studies.

This research identifies the interdependent, interrelated, and interacting components that provide the basis for making an informed and responsible decision about whether or not to utilize CBE models in social work education.

In Chapter 4, the research findings revealed why the competency model has been selected by the social work faculties of the University of Colima, Mexico; University of Alicante, Spain; University of Valladolid, Spain; and by the Council on Social Work Education of the United States. As well, from the data provided by all the research participants, including a professor from the School of Social Work, Dalhousie University, Canada and a professor from the School of Social Work, University of Waterloo, it was possible to describe the desirable features as well as drawbacks of CBE models that make it suitable or not, respectively, for use in social work education. In addition, data provide a description of the implementation processes for CBE models in the development of a BSW curriculum; the challenges in the implementation process of CBE models, and the advice offered to faculties interested in implementing a CBE model.
In order to increase the understanding of the CBE model and its potential for social work education, it is first necessary to create ways and means to improve international co-operation on the topic. This challenge could be met, for example, by specific discussion committees established by national or international social work organizations such as the IASSW. IASSW (2000) has been pointing out the need for global standards for social work education for some time and thus is a logical choice to play a key role in such discussion committees.

Today, professional, educational, accreditation and regulatory social work institutions are operating in a context of neo-liberalism and globalization. Globalization means that at any given moment, social work education may feel external pressures to apply CBE or other curricular models. In such circumstances, it is important to act proactively and discuss, analyse, and debate the appropriateness and implications of various curriculum models before such pressures begin to mount. In this way, social work professionals can lead and manage the process of change for their discipline and, hopefully, in so doing preserve the profession’s values and principles.

Analyzing the processes and challenges inherent in the promotion of curriculum change shows that the main problems arise from the lack of a clear definition or conceptualization of just what CBE is and, consequently, a lack of clarity on how best to use the CBE approach. Given this lack of precision, collaboration and co-operation among social work faculties and schools is a pre-
requisite for building a common concept of competency within the profession that is sufficiently flexible to meet current needs.

Thus, undertaking comparative research concerning innovative concepts for curriculum change is another important task for the future of social work. It would be very useful to begin comparative research studies that would identify CBE curriculum experiences that have been successful in terms of teaching students to learn to know, to be, to live together and to do.

Designing, carrying out, and utilizing original research on alternative approaches to curriculum renewal is necessary for the long-term health of the profession. It has been pointed out that, on some occasions, there has been a tendency to launch curriculum change in social work education without sufficient discussions within faculties, departments or schools. The limited research available, moreover, tends to be concerned with the teaching side of the equation. Conducting much more in-depth research on social work education would shed light on the effects of different curricula on students in the short, medium and long term. It would be very useful to have original, pioneering research data that could identify particular needs in changing societies from the point of view of their meaning for students. Such knowledge could have short- and long-term effects on students’ plans for their future and entry into adulthood and possible life careers. Such research might also probe aspects of the relationship between cultural questions and educational processes.

Constructing and keeping an up-to-date registry and database on specialists and institutions playing leadership roles in curriculum innovation could
be part of an ongoing knowledge base for identifying strengths and weaknesses in current programs, and in planning future programs. The current registry of specialists in various social work specialities related to modernizing social work domains and methodologies need to be updated, expanded and better developed in terms of depth.

The experiences of professional and educational organizations, and their respective committees, should be the pillars supporting social work academic communities. A national and international registry of social work specialists would facilitate the selection of persons and institutions in the best position to help find suitable solutions to problems of curriculum development arising in specific contexts. Horizontal co-operation would be greatly increased and would become more comprehensive and more productive if a database of specialists from different countries was compiled. Thus both the expertise and experience of curriculum and domain specialists could more easily be drawn upon as resources for social work educators. As well, innovative approaches would be more accessible to, and thus more easily shared or transferred among, social work faculties, schools, and departments (Velasquez, 1997; Guthrie et al., 1995; CSWE, 2005).

Of pressing necessity is the need to create and activate processes of exchange and dialogue among academic communities about how best to respond to common challenges. Dialogue and the sharing of experiences can help generate better contexts for educators and other leaders of change in each country to make knowledgeable decisions saving considerable time and material
resources. In this regard, it would be desirable to initiate exchanges on two key subjects: domains and methodological strategies and, second, various ways of institutionalizing an academic culture that promotes the evaluation of progress and permanent curriculum innovation.

The IASSW has stimulated systematic dialogue in the social work academic community in order to identify core domains that should be required learning internationally for the social work formative processes. Each country should be encouraged to contribute and share its own particular experiences to this ongoing dialogue.

5.3 Contributions of the study

This research has focused on why and how CBE has been used in the design and implementation of curricula for social work education. From the beginning, the researcher developed a theoretical and epistemological understanding of the complexities of CBE with a specific focus on social work education. The goal was to secure a more in-depth understanding of the different viewpoints in the ongoing dialogue and discussion about the appropriateness of the CBE model for social work education.

The descriptive information and the analysis of this understanding is included in chapter 2 (literature review) and constitutes a referential, theoretical framework for academics considering the application of a CBE model in their own context. This study provides a current overview of challenges in post-secondary education; teaching and learning processes at universities; curriculum design;
and CBE’s historical, philosophical, and theoretical foundations. It also points out the challenges, limitations and opportunities and pitfalls of applying the model.

Consistent with the generic qualitative research paradigm, the analysis of the research findings focused on the study participants’ opinions, experiences, thoughts, and viewpoints regarding the opportunities and challenges encountered when using a CBE approach. The data results were formally conceptualizing and coded in several categories. These categories should be used as a guide to understanding:

(1) What are the current design and implementation processes of CBE curricula in Bachelor of Social Work programs?

(2) Is the design and implementation of CBE curricula appropriate for Bachelor of Social Work programs?

(3) What are the challenges and achievements in the design and implementation of CBE curricula for Bachelor of Social Work programs?

Given that this study included research participants from different countries on both sides of the debate about the appropriateness of CBE approaches to social work education, its results constitute an international resource for social work educators involved in the design and implementation of CBE.

Through the opinions and reflections of the research participants, it was possible to deduce that their faculties are considering a contemporary CBE approach that should be identified as an integrated and holistic perspective.
Consequently, further research on this topic should examine in more detail the strengths and weaknesses of an integrated, holistic approach in order to enhance its efficacy. As well, considering the fact that all the faculty experiences presented in this study were just beginning their implementation of new CBE curricula (Universidad de Alicante, 2004; Universidad Colima, 2004; Universidad de Valladolid, 2008; CSWE, 2008), additional data for analysis and reflection from future studies would both facilitate and support further dialogue as well as advancing networking and collaboration among social work educators.

Overall, the intention of this research study was to understand the design processes and implementation frameworks of CBE models. This study also sought to advance the discussion of current CBE strategies being applied in the current teaching and learning processes utilized in the social work formative process. The primary focus of the research component of the study was on the overall curriculum development process when using CBE.

Useful suggestions for future applications of CBE models could be used to guide and support the challenging decision to opt for the CBE approach as an alternative to current pedagogical strategies used for teaching and learning in social work education. Thus, this research provides valuable background information that advances the dialogue concerning the application of CBE models to social work education. As little research has been done about CBE, the emergent knowledge provided by this study should be part of the discussion regarding CBE.
In relation to the contribution this study will make to Chilean social work faculties, departments or schools, it should be noted that the initial motivation for this research was provided by the development of a new, higher education policy in Chile. The new policy seeks to improve the quality and integrity of Chilean educational processes.

Over the last 10 years, many projects based on a curriculum designed using the CBE approach has been implemented for a variety of university programs in Chile. According to Centro Interuniversitario de Desarrollo (2008), there has been insufficient reflection and discussion among academic communities related to the theoretical and philosophical foundation of CBE and its implications. The lack of such a discussion is having an impact on programs, curricula, and those academic communities looking to establish the connection between CBE and quality assurance bodies.

Consequently, the findings and results of this research will have an impact on the current discussion of the competency approach for the design and implementation of social work education. More specifically, these findings will be utilized in the design and application of future CBE programs at the Technological Metropolitan University in Chile.

5.4 Limitations of the study

An important question that should be asked in relation to this study is what could have been done differently? First, in consideration related to this research is that although the number of participants is somewhat limited for making broad generalizations, the data generated by the study will support future in-depth
research that no doubt will engage more participants. The research design was not intended to produce or predict results applicable to a wide range of social work faculties. This study generated relatively clear and specific data; its findings should be relevant to some social work departments, schools or faculties considering using a CBE approach in its educational programming and, further, will offer guidance about how to proceed once any decision to adopt the CBE approach is made. Given the great pressures for change in the teaching and learning processes of social work education now being confronted by social work faculties, departments, schools, and the increasing interest in, and support for, CBE internationally, future studies on the suitability of CBE approaches for social work education, may be considered all but inevitable. If more resources were available for this study, it would be possible to design and carry out more comprehensive studies on the same topic engaging more participants. Due to the realities of social work and its practice today, the question is more of when such studies will be undertaken, rather than if such studies will be done.

Another important fact to be considered is that the narrative and descriptive-based methodological process may influence the study participants’ long-term thinking after the end of this research process. There is relevant literature suggesting that many of the insights resulting from the research subjects’ personal experience taking part in the study may not be evident at first glance or fully known and enumerated until long after the research ends (Greenberg, Rice, and Elliot, 1993).
Thus, it is quite possible that research participants may have been stimulated to engage in further reflections about the topic by the research process itself. Obviously, such reflections have the potential to produce additional meaningful thoughts, realizations; ways of conceptualizing the issue, new approaches to employing CBE and so on for months after the formal process has ended. By definition, capturing this sort of long term data are not possible until sometime after the fact and, in any event, was well beyond both the scope and means of the current study. Future studies might, for example, consider engaging more study participants over a longer period of time in order to allow the participants ample time for reflection and the more thorough development of ideas, conceptualizations, and approaches.

Given this study’s research methodologies, it is important to note that the methods used to collect information did not completely meet the research expectations. First, study participants’ availability for face-to-face interviews was limited, and the attempt to conduct phone interviews as an alternative was unsuccessful. Such circumstances were beyond the researcher’s control and, as a result, the researcher chose to attend the CASWE conference in Ottawa in order to interview more participants and thus expand the data being collected. Second, the ICT tools (i.e., e-interviews and a thematic blog) did not meet all expectations. Even though the thematic blog received many visits, no comments or reflections were posted. However, some of the visitors sent e-mails, asking for more information on the topic.
Finally, as with all research, and especially doctoral research, time limitation also influenced the collection of data. Still, the information collected answered many questions, and raised many more that quite likely will be considered in future research on the CBE approach in social work programs.

In this research, the author used credibility as authenticity criteria, considering the limitations of the research. Credibility meant ensuring the thorough interviewing of six individuals with expertise on the topic. As well, data generated by the research reflect the viewpoints of participants about competency-based education in a credible way. The methodological design was strengthened by the participation of professors who were in disagreement with using a CBE model. As well, some of the methods used to collect information (e.g., the ICT tools) were included in order to provide an opportunity for people interested in the topic, but geographically at a distance, to have their ideas and reflections included.

5.5 Thesis summary and conclusion about CBE and social work education

From my perspective, the renewal and refinement of social work education should be viewed as an opportunity to build on the best of what the current system of social work education offers, and make that system more adaptable and responsive to the rapidly changing needs of clients, employers and practitioners themselves. The social work landscape is currently undergoing rapid and widespread change that is resulting in curricula maps being redrawn. Social work is expanding its theoretical and empirical knowledge base and new curricula approaches, mean new curricula pathways open up exciting possibilities
for academics and practitioners to make a real difference in the quality of service
delivered to clients.

Misunderstandings about curriculum models need to be identified,
discussed, and addressed. Such research would assist in the identification and
analysis of educational processes in the social work discipline. From an
international perspective, this thesis presents arguments both for and against the
use of the CBE model in curriculum development for BSW programs.

By utilizing a generic qualitative design this study provides a preliminary
basis for understanding and analyzing the suitability of the CBE model as a
useful theoretical framework for designing and implementing a BSW program.
The research data were analysed in order to answer three questions:

(1) What are the current design and implementation processes of CBE
    curricula in Bachelor of Social Work programs?
(2) Is the design and implementation of CBE curricula appropriate for
    Bachelor of Social Work programs?
(3) What are the challenges and achievements in the design and
    implementation of CBE curricula for Bachelor of Social Work
    programs?

Previous research on social work education and CBE in different countries
has not provided an in-depth analysis of the opportunities and challenges in
selecting and implementing a CBE model in social work education. Thus, this
study’s recommendations and suggestions for future applications of CBE in
social work should be helpful in guiding the challenging process of utilizing CBE in social work education today.

This dissertation highlights the main components in the process of design and implementation of a CBE curriculum. It includes the ideas and opinions of social work professors holding both favourable and opposing views about the appropriateness of applying CBE models when designing and implementing curricula. Presenting both sides of the debate enriches and advances the dialogue and debate about the CBE model.

The best social work education and preparation for practice needs to provide a transformational experience for students that facilitates and encourages critical-reflective learning. This approach presents an opportunity to build on the best educational practices and enhance social work’s status and position. As well, it provides both an option and a responsibility to forge a new professional identity of which academics, practitioners, social agencies managers, and clients alike can be proud. Such a scenario cannot be taken for granted, however, as it remains to be seen how changes in the educational landscape will affect practice and the management of social work practice. The only certainty is that the prospect for positive change increases if the process of change is managed pro-actively rather than re-actively.

After considering the research conclusions, my thesis could be used as a reference to help educators now considering applying the CBE model in their own unique educational context. The difference that CBE makes for social work education is now an area where further research is needed.
REFERENCES


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Corvarrubias, E. (2002). Estudio comparativo de las materias teórico-prácticas del área de trabajo social en las escuelas y facultades de trabajo social a nivel licenciatura en México. School of Social Work, Universidad Autónoma de Nuevo León.


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Appendix A

Six future scenarios for universities

Vincent-Lancrin, 2004, p. 258
Appendix B

First e-mail invitation

Greetings,

My name is Nelida Ramirez and I am a Ph.D. candidate at the Faculty of Social Work at the University of Regina in Saskatchewan, Canada. The topic of my thesis defense is Competency-Based Education (CBE) in Social Work Education which attempts to describe, analyze, and reflect on the implications of applying the competency based model in social work education. More specifically, the focus is on why and how CBE has been applied in social work education (curricula) over the last years. Basically, this research is based on interpretative qualitative design and the methodology underlying it is the phenomenological approach.

I would like to invite you to participate in the research. If you are interested in taking part in this study I will really appreciate your confirmation.

Also you can visit this website: http://cbeandsocialworkeducation.wordpress.com/ in order to make connections with people interested in this topic. I would really appreciate your comments and suggestions.

Sincerely,
Nelida Ramirez
Ph.D Social Work ©
Appendix C

Responses from CASWE and CASW

CASWE

From

To ramirezn@uregina.ca

Subject Fw: Competency inquiry

Sent Mon, 23 Feb 2009 17:12:35 -0500

Dear Nelida,

My apologies for taking so long to reply. I am new to the job and we have not had any regular administrative support since October.

I don’t have a lot to tell you. As part of our conference in Ottawa in May we will be hosting a Panel on Competencies and Issues of Accreditation and Regulation. It will be held on Thursday, May 28 at 5-7 pm.

The participants on the panel will include:

Julia Watkins, Accreditation (CSWE in USA)
Veronica Marsmen, Practice (CASW in Canada)
Claude Leblond and Richard Silver, Regulatory body in Quebec
Gilles Rondeau, Accreditation (Canada)
Louise Blais, U of Ottawa

For more information on registering for the conference go to www.fedcan.ca
Any of these people might be able to better answer your questions.

CASWE-ACFTS
1398 chemin Star Top Road
Ottawa ON K1B 4V7
Tel: 613 792 1953 ext/poste 223
Fax: 613 792 1956
cassw@cassw-acess.ca

----- Original Message -----
From: <ramirezn@uregina.ca>
To: 
Sent: Wednesday, February 11, 2009 1:26 PM
Greetings,

My name is Nelida Ramirez and I am a Ph.D. candidate at the Faculty of Social Work at the University of Regina in Saskatchewan Canada. The topic of my thesis defense is Competency-Based Education (CBE) in Social Work Education which attempts to describe, analyze, and reflect on the implications of applying the competency based model in social work education. More specifically, the focus is on why and how CBE has been applied in social work education (curricula) over the last years. Basically, this research is based on interpretative qualitative design and the methodology underlying it is the phenomenological approach. I am contacting you to invite you to visit this website: http://cbeandsocialworkeducation.wordpress.com/ in order to make connections with people interested in this topic. I would really appreciate your comments and suggestions.

Sincerely,
Nelida Ramirez
Ph.D Social Work candidate

CASW

From ramirezn@uregina.ca

To ramirezn@uregina.ca

Subject FW: Greetings and invitation from a PhD social work student at the University of Regina

Sent Wed, 11 Mar 2009 15:26:54 -0400

Good afternoon, thanks for your correspondence dated March 9, 2009. Could you let me know if there time restraints as we wish to circulate it to the Intersectoral Committee for their interest? This is a national Committee composed by representative of CASW, CASWE and the stand alone regulatory bodies.

I am looking forward to hearing from you.

-----Original Message-----
From: ramirezn@uregina.ca [mailto:ramirezn@uregina.ca]
Sent: March-09-09 2:05 PM
To: casw@casw-acts.ca
Cc: nelidaramirezcl@yahoo.es
Subject: Greetings and invitation from a PhD social work student at the University of Regina
Appendix D

Interview questions

1. What specific factors lead to the selection of the competency model by your social work faculty, department, or school?

2. What features of the competency model make it suitable for use in social work education?

3. Could you please describe the implementation process in applying the competency model in your Bachelor of Social Work curriculum?

4. What were the challenges faced in the implementation process of the competency model at your faculty, department, or school?

5. Please outline any advice you have for other faculties interested in implementing the competency model in social work education.
Hello Nelida,

Thank you for following up on this. I wonder if I am the best person to participate in your research, as I have not been involved in the debates for a number of years now, so am not up to date on the issues. I wonder if someone on the panel (roundtable) at CASWE might be better informed. François Huot, for example, has been active on this for years, and is especially well informed about what is happening in Quebec. If you could get him involved, that would be a real bonus. You might also check with Carolyn Campbell (Dalhousie U) who was one of the initial group (of which I was a member) but she continues to be active in N.S. on this issue. Her email is carolyn.campbell@dal.ca (tell her I sent you). Another person from Dalhousie, whom you might interview, is Wanda Bernard. She is the Director at the SSW there (email is: wanda.bernard@dal.ca). Sarah Todd (also on that roundtable panel) would also a good person to interview. These people will be much more helpful to you than I can be, I think.

I am attaching an unfinished paper on GATS (General Trade Agreement on Services), done back in 2003, so out of date. But the trade agreements are an important piece of the context behind the push to competency based education. Take what you want from the paper. Rashmi Luther (a colleague from Carleton) and I gave the paper in 2002 and never finished writing it up. A sad lapse because the trade agreements are hidden, but very powerful forces in the neo-liberal project.

Hope all this helps. I wish you well with your thesis – please let me know when it is out and ready to read. It will be a very timely and important document for CASWE and the profession in general.

Regards,
Appendix F

Response to second e-mail invitation

From

To ramirezn@uregina.ca

Subject Re: Competency research-University of Regina-second contact-participation request

Sent Wed, 01 Apr 2009 20:46:08 -0300

Nelida

I think I must have missed your message the first time around- I was away the whole month of January and it is possible that your message got lost. Thank you for the invitation to participate in your research and I would be happy to do an interview with you. I will be away for the next ten days so I would request that you contact me again the week of April 13th and I should be able to respond/assist at that time.

Regards,

ramirezn@uregina.ca wrote:
> Greetings,
> >
> > In January 2009, I contacted you to inform about my PhD research and also invited you to visit my web site. To date I have received feedback from professors at the following universities: University of Calgary, Carleton University, Universidad de Valladolid Spain, and Universidad de Colima Mexico. In addition, I obtained support from the Executive Director of the Canadian Association for Social Work Education and the Executive Director of the Canadian Association of Social Workers.
> The topic of my thesis defense is Competency-Based Education (CBE) in Social Work Education which attempts to describe, analyse, and reflect on the implications of applying the competency based model in social work education. More specifically, the focus is on why and how CBE has been applied in social work education (curricula) over the last years.
> In this second contact, I would like to invite you to participate in the research. If you are interested in taking part in this research I will really appreciate your confirmation as soon as possible. I am attaching the questions for the e-interview which may help you to decide whether or not participate. According to my time line I would need the interview responses by April 25th 2009.
>
> As well, the following web site: > http://cbeandsocialworkeducation.wordpress.com/ is available for your comments and reflections.
Thank you for your time and consideration
Sincerely,
Nelida Ramirez
PhD Social Work candidate
Appendix G

Response from a professor who agreed to participate

From ramirezn@uregina.ca
To ramirezn@uregina.ca
Cc nelidaramirezcl@yahoo.es
Subject RE: Interview questions
Sent Wed, 8 Apr 2009 11:52:49 -0400

Nelida,

Dr.....forwarded your message to me. I was not able to open your attachment, but I would be willing to participate in your research. Please let me know how to proceed. You can contact me by email or phone

Regards,

Associate Director for Research
ramirezn@uregina.ca wrote:
Dear Carolyn,

I was pleased to receive your response to the interview questions and all the interesting material that you forwarded to me. I very much appreciate your reflections and engagement with the topic and with my research. I hope we can remain in contact. You will receive a copy of the findings, conclusions, and recommendations of the study. I am continuing to update my blog and I hope that you have time to visit and post comments and suggestions.

I am attending the CASWE Conference 2009 in Ottawa from May 25-29. I will be on the panel on Competencies and Issues of Accreditation and Regulation. I am planning to do several interviews with social work educators at that conference. If you know of anyone who will be attending the conference. If so, could you please email me their names. I would be happy to meet and talk to them about my research.

Thanks again for your time and consideration,

Nelida
## Appendix I

Contact list of possible participants

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<tr>
<th>N</th>
<th>Name</th>
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Appendix J

Ethical approval

UNIVERSITY OF
REGINA

OFFICE OF RESEARCH SERVICES
MEMORANDUM

DATE: November 4, 2008

TO: Nelida Ramirez Naranjo
1711 MacPherson Avenue, Regina, SK, S4S 4E2

FROM: Dr. Bruce Plouffe
Chair, Research Ethics Board

Re: The Competency-Based Education Model in Social Work Education
(File # 1650809)

Please be advised that the University of Regina Research Ethics Board has reviewed your proposal and found it to be:

☐ 1. APPROVED AS SUBMITTED. Only applicants with this designation have ethical approval to proceed with their research as described in their applications. For research lasting more than one year (Section 1F), ETHICAL APPROVAL MUST BE RENEWED BY SUBMITTING A BRIEF STATUS REPORT EVERY TWELVE MONTHS. Approval will be revoked unless a satisfactory status report is received. Any substantive changes in methodology or instrumentation must also be approved prior to their implementation.

☐ 2. ACCEPTABLE SUBJECT TO MINOR CHANGES AND PRECAUTIONS (SEE ATTACHED). Changes must be submitted to the REB and approved prior to beginning research. Please submit a supplementary memo addressing the concerns to the Chair of the REB. ** Do not submit a new application. Once changes are deemed acceptable, ethical approval will be granted.

☐ 3. ACCEPTABLE SUBJECT TO CHANGES AND PRECAUTIONS (SEE ATTACHED). Changes must be submitted to the REB and approved prior to beginning research. Please submit a supplementary memo addressing the concerns to the Chair of the REB. ** Do not submit a new application. Once changes are deemed acceptable, ethical approval will be granted.

☐ 4. UNACCEPTABLE AS SUBMITTED. The proposal requires substantial additions or redesign. Please contact the Chair of the REB for advice on how the project proposal might be revised.

Dr. Bruce Plouffe

cc: Dr. Miguel Sanchez – Social Work

** supplementary memo should be forwarded to the Chair of the Research Ethics Board at the Office of Research Services (Lab Building Addition - LA 109) or by e-mail to research.ethics@uregina.ca

Phone (306) 337-4775
Fax (306) 337-4922
www.uregina.ca/research

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Appendix K

University of Regina, Faculty of Social Work

Interview consent form

**Title**: The Competency-Based Education Model in Social Work Education

**Researcher**: Nelida Ramirez N

**Objectives**: This research project attempts to describe, analyse, and reflect on the implications of applying the competency based model (CBE) in social work education programs. More specifically, the overriding question that guides this research is: from the perspective of the academic community members in university social work faculties: How does the CBE model serve as a useful theoretical framework to design and implement the curriculum in bachelor of social work program?

**Procedure**: We are asking you to participate in a face to face interview. The interview will be up to 1.5 hours length. In the interview we will discuss specific questions regarding why competency model was selected by your faculty? How is the CBE implemented in the curriculum development of your Bachelor Social Work program, what are the features of CBE which make it suitable for use in social work education, and what are the challenges in developing and assessing CBE competencies in social work programs?

**Confidentiality**: Your participation in this study will be kept confidential by the researcher.

**Voluntary participation**: Participation in this project is completely voluntary. You may decline participation or withdraw at any time without penalty.

I understand that this project was approved by the Research Ethics Board, University of Regina. If I have any questions or concerns about my rights or treatment as a research participant, I may contact the Chair of the research Ethics Board at 585-4775 or by mail to research.ethics@uregina.ca

I, ____________________________ have read the above protocol and voluntarily agree to participate. The procedures and goals of the study have been explained to me by the researcher and I understand them. I understand that I am free to withdraw from this study at any time without penalty. I also understand that although the information from this study may be published my identity will be kept confidential. I have received a copy of this consent form for my records.

_____________________________________________________

(signature)  (date)

_____________________________________________________

(researcher)
Appendix L

Alternative interview questions

1. What specific factors related to the competency model lead you to reject using it at your social work faculty, department, or school department?

2. What features of the competency model make it unsuitable for use in social work education?

3. What challenges would you anticipated in the implementation process of the competency model at your faculty, department, or school?

4. Please outline any advice you have for faculties or departments interested in implementing the competency model in social work education.