



## **Full Length Research Article**

### **THE EVALUATION OF TEACHERS' COMPETENCIES IN THE HIGHER EDUCATION OF EAST TIMOR: STUDENTS PERSPECTIVE**

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#### **ABSTRACT**

Several studies have demonstrated the impact that the quality of teacher education has on teaching and student performance. The assessment of the competences of higher education teachers by students is one way of assessing the quality of teachers and, therefore, the quality of public higher education itself. It is therefore pertinent to carry out empirical studies that make it possible to understand how students evaluate teachers' competences. The objective of this study was to evaluate the competences of higher education teachers in the public university of East Timor, based on the students' opinion. Using a random sample of 342 students enrolled in four of the nine faculties of the National University of East Timor (UNTL), surveys were carried out to evaluate the pedagogical, professional, social and personality traits of teachers. The results showed a positive evaluation by the students, although the objectives of the National Strategic Plan for Education 2011-2030 (METL, 2011) have not yet been fully achieved.

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#### **INTRODUCTION**

The quality of teacher and teaching is crucial in student learning, and several studies show that policies to improve teaching and learning place teachers at the center of change (UNESCO, 2013). Most educational policy documents include strategies that would improve both the quality of teaching and the levels of student learning through measures related to curriculum development, teacher training, teacher/student ratio reduction, conditions and increased access to educational resources (UNESCO, 2013). The need to raise the standards of teaching and the quality of student learning has led governments to introduce reforms in the evaluation of teachers' work in order to ensure greater accountability (Minelli, Reborá and Turri, 2015; Brewer, Knoepfel and Lindle, 2015). The evaluation of teachers' performance has received increasing attention from the academic community and policy makers around the world, "coupled with the idea that it is one of the decisive aspects for improving the quality of education" (Flores, 2010, p.7). In East Timor, the National Strategic Plan for Education 2011-2030 (METL, 2011) outlined the first plan of national education, emphasizing the quality of education and, in particular, the quality of teachers.

This document includes innovations such as the development of a system to assess and monitor the impact of vocational training on the quality of education and the implementation of surveys to assess teachers' competencies and performance in order to assess professional training needs. One of the main commitments made in this document was the guarantee of quality education, which is invariably associated with the quality of teachers (METL, 2011). However, despite the efforts of the Timorese Government over the last decade, the quality of education and teachers still have a long way to go. By 2020, two specific objectives are indicated at the level of higher education, such as the extension of UNTL to seven colleges and the implementation of a comprehensive and integrated higher education system, regulated by strict quality standards (aimed at both public and private institutions (METL, 2011, p.31). The first objective has already been reached, but in relation to the implementation of a quality education system and regulated according to objective standards and criteria, the few studies carried out show that there is still progress to be made (UNESCO, 2013, UNTL, 2015). Therefore, five years after the publication of the National Strategic Plan for Education, the following question is raised: *what is the students' perception about the quality of public higher education teachers, their professional, pedagogical and social skills as well as personal? Does a positive or a negative perception of TL public higher education prevail today?*

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Since students are one of the main beneficiaries of quality assessment and the improvement of the quality of higher education (along with other stakeholders such as business and the community in general, for example), we believe that it is relevant to study students' perceptions on the quality of the skills and competences of higher education teachers. There are authors who highlight the added value of student involvement in the process of assessing the quality of teaching, taking into account the benefits in terms of their satisfaction, participation and current expectations (Stark and Freishtat, 2014). On the other hand, students' evaluations on teaching are one of the main tools to evaluate university teaching and the work of teachers, in terms of pedagogical, technical and overall quality of teaching, thereby influencing teacher career management and the professional development of teachers in higher education (Clayson, 2009, Miller and Seldin, 2014). Therefore, this study intends to implement the instrument for the evaluation of the competences of university teachers to collect data about the students' perception. For this, the article is presented in four fundamental parts. First, there is a review of the literature on teacher assessment, associated with the quality of teaching, and, in particular, about the role students can play in this process. In a second phase, the problem of study is framed considering the specific case of Public Higher Education of East Timor and the expectations that fall on this sector in terms of the development of the country. Third, the method of analysis is described and then the results of the study are presented. Finally, the contributions of the study, as well as its theoretical and practical implications, are mentioned.

### Literature review

Students' evaluations of teacher competencies and performance are one of the main tools for assessing the quality of university education (Miller and Seldin, 2014; Moreno-Murcial and Torregrosa, 2015). This need for evaluation has received increasing public attention, as the number of people attending higher education is increasing, and this depends more and more on scarce resources. In this sense, the evaluation of the quality of teachers by the students is one of the crucial components of the evaluation of the quality of teaching (together with the external evaluation and evaluation of heads and peers) and the so-called teacher accountability (Flores, 2010). The evaluation of the competences of the teachers by the students is important to inquire about the quality of the educational process in a university, since it allows to obtain objective information on the performance of the teacher, it makes possible to determine the level of conformity between the their practices and the goals and tasks of a university, as well as the needs of the students. Students 'feedback on teachers' teaching practices enables teachers to reflect on their actions, the adoption of more effective teaching practices (*Accomplished California Teachers*, 2015, Van der Lans, Grift and Veen, 2015) and the attribution of increasing responsibility of students to improve the entire public higher education system (Ramirez, Lamphere, Brown and Pierceall-Herman, 2014). In the final balance sheet, it is possible to point out the strengths and /or those that require improvement (Liliya, 2010). The evaluation of teaching performance in higher education is the only one that involves students in the role of evaluators. Students are not supervisors of the teacher, but there are already many higher education institutions that ask students to evaluate each teacher for each course and each semester (Carrell and West, 2010; Braga, Paccagnella and

Pellizzari, 2014; Nikolaidis and Dimitriadis, 2014). The authors Kuzmanovic, Savic, Gusavac, Makajic and Panic (2013) proposed an approach for the objective evaluation of university teachers from the student's point of view, and Lupo (2013) considered an extension of the ServQual model to evaluate the satisfaction of Italian higher education students. Nikolaidis and Dimitriadis (2014) proposed a statistical model of quality control of teachers in Greece, based on the evaluation of their students. Braga et al (2014) carried out a study that compared the evaluation of teaching by the students with the evaluation of the University of Bocconi (in Italy) and verified that, with the same curricula, the characteristics and the competences of the teachers have a substantial effect on the students. The same study also found that the teachers 'effectiveness indicators were negatively correlated with the students' evaluation, that is, the teachers who were associated with a better performance by the University received worse evaluations of their students.

Other studies have shown that the impacts of quality assessment are not always reflected in teaching or student learning, just as sometimes students do not review the results of quality assessment because they feel that their voices were not sufficiently heard (Shuiyun and Hiu, 2014). A study on the assessment of the quality of higher education in China drew attention to the importance of teachers' motivation to achieve effective and genuine change in the whole education system (Shuiyun, 2015). Another study by the same author pointed to the influence of the factors of the external quality evaluation system of the universities - the changes will only occur when the external force is integrated with the motivation and the internal capacity of the universities evaluated (Shuiyun, 2013). In a study carried out between 2009 and 2010 with teachers of maths of middle schools in Missouri, there was a positive relationship between performance pay and improvement of teachers' constructivist teaching practices (Liang and Akiba, 2015). Several studies show that qualified teachers and teachers who seek their professional development have strategies that allow students to improve their learning in the classroom (Barrera-Pedemonte, 2016).

Other authors have identified an extensive list of characteristics of students and teachers that may influence classifications attributed by students, such as teacher and student gender, expectations for the course, as well as ethnicity, charisma, academic level and the experience. A recent study showed that students attributed higher scores to teachers who were apparently male (MacNeill, Driscoll and Hunt, 2014) against the idea that the influence of gender (teacher and student) on teacher assessment was a myth (Aleamoni, 1999). Other studies have suggested that the relationship between the teacher's gender and the assessment may also depend on the student's gender, as well as whether or not the teacher's behavior matches students' gender stereotypes (see, for example, Pounder, 2007 and Boring, 2015). Some authors, however, draw attention to the different study designs and methodological options that may be at the origin of such diverse conclusions. Some of the reasons pointed out are that many studies do not exercise control of experimental variables, such as the gender of the teacher or student. On the other hand, questions posed negatively, the number of response options and the neutral response options, as well as the conditions of administration of the evaluation instruments (in the presence or absence of the teacher) have also been shown to condition respondents' responses (Spooren, Brockx and Mortelmans,

2013, Stark and Freishtat, 2014). The different forms of teacher evaluation in higher education can focus on the individual performance of teachers in classrooms (teacher praise/distinction, peer evaluation and student ratings); in the evaluation of school context performance (external inspection and internal self-assessment of the school) and in the assessment of student outcomes (national and regional student assessments and value-added assessments to measure learning gains over time). The instruments for assessing the quality of teaching at the institutional level can be divided into three groups: organizational (self-examination university and teacher classifications), pedagogical (instruments to assess student achievement achievements), sociological and customer satisfaction monitoring (that is the evaluation of the quality of the teachers by the students). There is, however, little consensus on how to adequately measure teacher quality, especially in higher education, where the availability of standardized tests to analyze performance is still scarce (Cunha and Miller, 2014).

The complexity of applying the quality assessment process as an instrument for controlling the quality of education can be understood as being related to a multiplicity of factors. First, by the dynamics and flexibility of the teacher's activity (which includes a pedagogical, scientific and research dimension); Secondly, because it is impossible to avoid the subjectivism of evaluations; And third, because there are no mechanisms to objectively determine the effect of teaching evaluation on improving the quality of education in the university as a whole. Fourth, the attitude of educational agents to the capacity for assessment is quite diverse, which is why some experts believe that student evaluations are an effective tool only to identify cases where teaching is unsatisfactory (Liliya, 2010, Pp.145-146). Some studies suggest that the quality of teaching should be studied from the point of view of the correlation between personal and professional competences, the transfer and evaluation of knowledge, and the personality traits of the teacher (Alves and Machado, 2010). According to the same authors, "the basic elements that underpin a teacher evaluation model should be related to the improvement processes of schools, given that it is a type of synergistic relationship that will surely favor the systemic possibility of various actors and educational agents to achieve their goals" (Alves and Machado, 2010, p.91).

Although educational policies aim to establish an increasingly strong causal relationship between evaluation, professional development and school improvement, this relationship does not result in their fullness (Herdeiro, 2013). The lack of results of this relationship does not come from the constraints and limitations of the evaluation, but rather from the way in which the quality of teaching can be managed from it (Herdeiro, 2013, p. 426). For this reason, establishing evaluation models and implementing integrated evaluation practices has not been an easy task, resulting in a tendency of European governments to make punctual interventions and implement measures with some discontinuity, which leads to transform this evaluation act into a mere "practice of classification and labeling", especially when the evaluation process depends on human resource management practices such as the selection of teachers, for example (Alves and Machado, 2010, p.94). Accountability of teacher work has required performance evaluation that enables both the distinction and competition "in the higher education market" and managerialist management, such as the introduction of improvements in the quality of

teaching (Blackmore, 2009, p. 858). Therefore, authors point to the difference between a teacher evaluation system designed to measure performance and a system designed for professional development (Desimore, 2009; Marzano, 2012; Kolner and Jacobs, 2015). Either the evaluation system designed for performance measurement or an evaluation system designed for the development of competencies. When performance measurement is the primary purpose of the assessment system, then a small set of elements is sufficient to determine the teacher's ability in the classroom. However, if the emphasis is on teacher development, the model needs to be more comprehensive and focus on teacher development in various dimensions of teaching. This distinction is crucial for the effective design and implementation of current and future teacher assessment systems (Marzano, 2012 and Desimone 2009) provided some guidance in this direction, offering a conceptual framework for the study of the effects of professional development. Its structure resembles a "path model" that links the main characteristics of professional development to the increase of teacher's knowledge, followed by changes in teaching and, finally, to the improvement of student learning. Desimone (2009) advocated a framework that provides a basis for assessing professional development and in particular for measuring the impact of development policy using rigorous standards of performance measurement. More recently, Marrongelle, Sztajn and Smith (2013) have assembled recommendations from various experts to design and study a professional development model aligned with common performance standards. Among the recommendations pointed out, the authors proposed "the development of common evidence standards for the effectiveness of professional development", including a consensus on the "right combination of results", which includes measures of teacher knowledge, observed practice and student outcomes (p.209). In addition to Desimone (2009) and Marrongelle *et al.* (2013), other authors advocated the implementation of professional development assessment models that were "adaptable" to the learning needs of the participating teachers, the circumstances of the teaching and the student outcomes (Kolner and Jacobs, 2015), while others advocated the implementation of practices based on evidence and performance standards (Marrongelle *et al.*, 2013).

### Research Problem

The certification of university teachers in Timor-Leste, which is compulsory, provides for the implementation of external evaluation mechanisms (course documentation, peer evaluation, hierarchical and student evaluation) and internal evaluation mechanisms (guideline of the instrument description of teaching staff, curriculum and self-assessment) that make it possible to gauge the quality of teaching performance and, consequently, the service provided by the teacher. In addition to assessing the quality of the higher education system, these mechanisms aim to regulate the access, progression and development of the university teaching career.

According to the University Teachers' Certification Manual (CEDU) in East Timor, teacher certification consists of the formal recognition of their teaching skills, defined as a set of characteristics, knowledge and skills that they must possess and demonstrate in the activity, in terms of pedagogy, professional, social and personality.

The evaluation of *pedagogical competences* focuses on three areas: the ability to design teaching and learning; the ability to implement and evaluate the teaching and learning process and its outcomes; the ability to use research results to improve the quality of teaching and learning. The assessment of *professional competences* is based on increasing the integrated capacity of knowledge on a given scientific area, on the field of knowledge application techniques and also on positive behaviors such as innovation. In relation to the evaluation of *personality traits*, we refer to the values, behaviors and professional ethics of the teacher with an impact on the students, relatives, family and society, which can influence the motivation of the students for the study, as well as their personal development.

According to the CEDU Manual, teachers' competences are crucial for the quality and implementation of the three pillars of higher education: teaching/pedagogy, research and community service. The same document (approved by Ministerial Diploma No. 33 / ME / 2014, of 10 September) incorporates the evaluation carried out by the students to assess the adequacy of the teachers' competences and the quality of their work and, in this sense, questionnaire addressed to students of the Timorese public higher education, in order to be evaluated by them the competences of the respective university professors. And since university teachers are one of the essential components of the Higher Education System, their functions, duties and responsibilities are crucial for the achievement of national educational policy objectives and for ensuring greater qualification of the population in various fields (technical, scientific, technological, artistic, civic, religious, etc.). Some of the strategies of the National Strategic Plan for Education are precisely aimed at promoting the quality of education and improving student learning outcomes, focusing in particular on the work of teachers (METL, 2011).

The purpose of this document is to: increase the quality of teacher education, including a flexible and modular system of credits linked to the principles of lifelong learning; The development and implementation of a "measurement system" to monitor and evaluate the impacts of teacher training on improving the quality of education; the strengthening of institutions dedicated to teacher training; The promotion of more flexible training courses through multiple specialization; The training of non-formal education teachers; the implementation of teacher surveys to assess competencies and performance, tools that would help to define teachers' in-service training needs and provide indicators for a fairer and more efficient career management of teachers as well as the incentive scheme (METL, 2011 : 80-163).

The National Development Plan of Timor-Leste (PDN-TL) emphasizes the importance of human and social development as the key "for the development of the Nation, reducing poverty, promoting economic growth and improving the living conditions of (PDN-TL, 2002) in order to achieve the aspirations of the East Timorese expressed in "Vision 2020", particularly in the so-called priority sectors for development. In order to promote priority development in the country, the National Strategic Plan for Education 2011-2030 also defined the implementation of a quality assurance system through: (i) registration of all courses in the National Qualifications Framework and ii) the continuous development of the National Agency for Academic Evaluation and Accreditation

(ANAAA), within the national quality assurance framework, with the responsibility of determining the standards and criteria for quality assurance of all courses. The development of this legal framework will make it possible to improve the performance of higher education in terms of teaching and learning as well as research and development, which represents a fundamental step towards the development of skills, competences and social and professional recognition of university teachers (METL, 2011).

Over the past five years, therefore, many measures have been implemented by the Timorese Government to introduce higher quality into the entire higher education system. The measures implemented aimed at regulating access to and progression of the teaching career, defined the strategic objectives set for the sector, in line with national development objectives, and defined the criteria on which the evaluation of the quality of teaching work should be based. In 2015, the results of the Pedagogical Survey to the implementation of the 2014 Curriculum in UNTL were published, under the premise that there is an intimate relationship between the didactic performance of the teacher and the performance of the student. The report aimed to evaluate the quality of content and curricular units, teachers and students. The dimensions of the survey concerning student opinion presented a positive overall assessment, with the rating between (3) "adequate or sufficient" and (4) "moderately high" compared to the evaluation of the implementation of the new 2014 curriculum of UNTL. However, data from students and discussions during the work sessions found some distortions in school success rates in some courses and warned of the need to minimize one of the causes detected, namely the poor pedagogical performance of a significant number of university teachers (UNTL, 2015, 45).

Taking into account the current evaluation framework of public higher education and following the measures implemented at this level of education, the present study arises with the purpose of evaluating the current perception of the students about the competences of their teachers, so that we can from here to collect indicators on the perception that the students have of university professors in the country. It is therefore necessary to obtain an answer to the following question of study: *what is the students' perception about the quality of public higher education teachers, specifically their professional, pedagogical, social and personal skills?* At the level of the empirical study, a positive perception of the competences of the teachers on the part of the students, in line with previous studies carried out in the scope of the quality of the public higher education, with regard to the defined objectives and goals reached for the public higher education of East Timor (UNESCO, 2013) as well as the pedagogical evaluation of a new curriculum (UNTL, 2015).

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

In order to evaluate the pedagogical, professional, social and personality traits of the teacher, a questionnaire was used, in paper format, as proposed in the University Teacher Certification Manual and through which students evaluate the their university teachers through nine items that focus on teachers' *pedagogical competence*, eight items that refer to *professional competencies*, six items that evaluate *personality traits* and five items that assess *social competencies*. The items of each set of competences were classified by the students

according to a 5-point Likert scale, where 1 corresponds to "very bad", 2 "bad", 3 "sufficient", 4 "very good" and 5 "excellent". After coding the data, the mean scores were calculated for each skill group. The random sampling technique was used to select a representative number of students from these four faculties, whose criterion was the inclusion in the study of the evaluation of teachers from different technical-scientific areas. The questionnaire was submitted to a sample of 342 students (N = 342) attending four of the nine faculties of the University of East Timor (Faculty of Philosophy, Faculty of Education, Arts and Humanities, Faculty of Medicine and Faculty of Political science). The sample consisted of 52.3% female students (n = 179) and 47.7% male students (n = 163). The most frequent age group was 18 to 24 years old (87.7%; n = 300) and 25 to 31 years old (11.7%; n = 40); Only one respondent was between 32 and 38 years old and another between 39 and 45 years old. The students comprised four UNTL colleges: 29.5% of the Faculty of Medicine (n = 101); 28.9% of the Faculty of Education, Arts and Humanities (n = 99); 25.4% of the Faculty of Philosophy (n = 87); 16.1% of the Faculty of Political Science (n = 55). The observed data were treated through quantitative techniques, in order to quantify (according to the Likert scale) the competences of university teachers, which are perceived by the students. The research design was therefore based on the quantitative method and the analysis through the quantitative techniques of description and statistical correlation between the variables under study.

The Spearman Rho correlation test indicated a positive and highly significant correlation between all items under study, as well as between the dimensions under analysis ( $p < .01$ ). The Cronbach's Alpha values for each competency group showed good internal consistency of the items evaluated in each dimension of analysis ( $\alpha > .7$ ). It was verified that the students strongly correlated the personality of the teachers with the professional competences ( $r = .697$ ) and with the social competences ( $r = .682$ ) demonstrated. According to the students, it is the social competences that exert less weight on pedagogical skills ( $r = .551$ ) (Table 1). The descriptive statistics indicated very close average values in the four competency groups, with personality (M = 3,66, SD = ,71) and social skills (M = 3.63, SD = ,80). Taking into account the average values obtained for each set of competences, these were close to the classification (4)"good". Similarly to the descriptive analysis of the mean of the set of competences, in the evaluated items the students ranged from (3) "sufficient" and (4) "good", considering the values rounded to the unit. The students' scores for each of the competency items under evaluation revealed an equal dispersion of data in all sets of competencies, ranging from 1 (minimum) to 5 (maximum) points that correspond to the classification of "very bad" and "very good", respectively. The results of the descriptive statistics for each item also indicated very close average values and, in general, a high standard deviation (around one unit) which suggests a coefficient of variation of about 30%.

**Table 1. Descriptive and correlational statistics of competences**

Competences	N	Min.	Max.	M	SD	$\alpha$	CPed	CProf	CPersn	CSoc
Pedagógica (CPed)	342	1,56	5,00	3,56	,67	,813	1			
Profissional (CProf)	342	1,50	5,00	3,59	,66	,798	,675**	1		
Personalidade (CPersn)	342	1,67	5,00	3,66	,71	,770	,609**	,697**	1	
Social (CSoc)	342	1,00	5,00	3,63	,80	,771	,551**	,604**	,682**	1

Legend: N- dimension of the sample; Min. – Mínimo; Max.-Máxim; M-Mean; SD-Standard Deviation.

\*\* $p < 0,01$

**Table 2. Descriptive Statistics and pedagogical competences**

	N	Min.	Max.	M	SD
1. Preparation of lessons and practices	342	1,00	5,00	3,63	1,10
2. Organization and discipline in the classroom	342	1,00	5,00	3,58	1,02
3. Ability to create a living environment in the classroom	342	1,00	5,00	3,49	1,05
4. Give materials and clear answers to questions in the class	342	1,00	5,00	3,67	1,02
5. Use of media and educational technology	342	1,00	5,00	3,36	1,20
6. Variety of forms of assessment of learning outcomes	342	1,00	5,00	3,54	,97
7. Assignment of feedback on the work / evaluation	342	1,00	5,00	3,33	1,10
8. Adaptation of materials of the exam/ working towards the goal of the subject	342	1,00	5,00	3,83	,94
9. Harmonization of points or grades awarded on the agenda with the result of learning	342	1,00	5,00	3,55	1,03

**Table 3. Descriptive Statistics of professional competences**

	N	Min.	Max.	M	SD
10 Ability to properly explain the content / approach / topic / concept	342	1,00	5,00	3,80	1,01
11. Ability to give relevant examples of concepts	342	1,00	5,00	3,66	,92
12. Ability to interdisciplinary explanations of the current topic with others	342	1,00	5,00	3,48	1,01
13. Ability to interdisciplinary topic of the current explanations with everyday realities	342	1,00	5,00	3,54	,96
14. Mastery of more advanced issues of the subject (materials / references of learning lessons)	342	1,00	5,00	3,63	1,01
15. Use of research results to improve the quality of learning in the classroom	342	1,00	5,00	3,57	1,06
16. Involving students in research / analysis and develop the design made by the teacher	342	1,00	5,00	3,59	1,00
17. Ability of using various communication technologies	342	1,00	5,00	3,38	1,13

## RESULTS

The quantitative analysis of the questionnaires addressed to the students (N = 342) allowed to obtain descriptive and correlational results on the set of competences under study.

Regarding the pedagogical competences, the items with the lowest average level (3) "sufficient" were the items "3. ability to create a living environment in class" (M = 3.49, SD = 1.05) "5. Use of media and pedagogical technology" (M = 3.36, SD = 1.20) and "7. assignment of feedback on the work / evaluation" (M = 3.33, SD = 1.10). The remaining items

received a very close average rating (4) "good" (Table 02). In relation to professional competences, the lowest scores corresponded to "sufficient" level (3) and were observed in "12. ability of interdisciplinary explanations of the current topic with others" (M = 3.48, SD = 1.01) and "17. ability to use the various communication technologies" (M = 3.38, SD = 1.13).

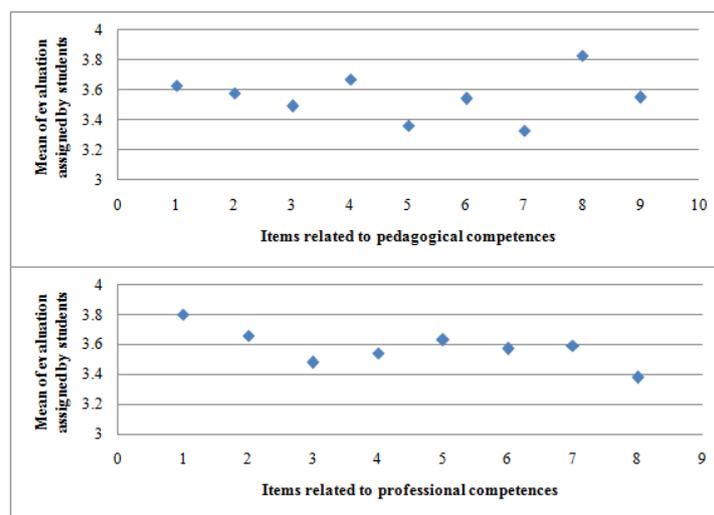
the lowest mean score also corresponded to level "3" "sufficient" and was observed in item "21. Watchword and measures" (M = 3.39, SD = 1.00). The remaining items received an average rating very close to (4) "good" (Table 4). Regarding social skills, the scores attributed by the students were once again close to the "good" level (4) and no item with an average of less than 3.5 was observed (Table 5).

**Table 4. Descriptive statistics of personality**

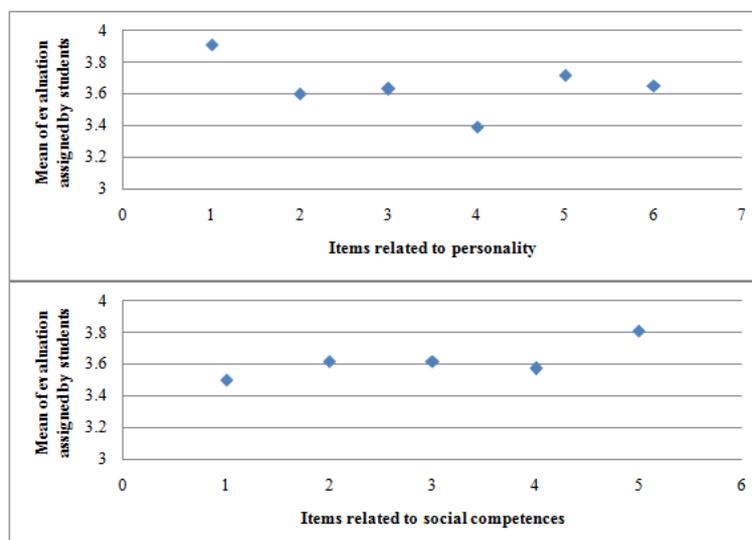
	N	Min.	Max.	M	SD
18. Dignity and personality as a teacher	342	1,00	5,00	3,91	1,05
19. Honesty and fairness in the decision	342	1,00	5,00	3,60	1,09
20. Modelling by the position and behavior	342	1,00	5,00	3,63	,967
21. Watchword and measures	342	1,00	5,00	3,39	1,00
22. Self-Confidence in any situation	342	1,00	5,00	3,72	,98
23. Fair and neutral to all students	342	1,00	5,00	3,65	1,11

**Table 5. Descriptive Statistics of Social Competences**

	N	Min.	Max.	M	SD
24. Ability of expression	342	1,00	5,00	3,50	1,12
25. Ability to accept criticism and suggestions from students	342	1,00	5,00	3,62	1,09
26. Knowing well the students of their subject	342	1,00	5,00	3,62	1,10
27. Easily get along with peers, staff and students	342	1,00	5,00	3,57	1,09
28. Tolerance in religious groups of students	342	1,00	5,00	3,81	1,08



**Image 01. Scatter plots of the mean values assigned by the students to each competency evaluated**



The remaining items received an average rating very close to (4) "good" (Table 3). Regarding the personality competences,

Image 01 allows graphical visualization of the distribution of the average scores that resulted from the students' inquiry, for

each item and by the competency group. The items of the *pedagogical competences*, followed by the items of *professional competences*, were those that registered a greater oscillation of the students' scores. The items related to *social skills* were the ones that obtained more consonant average values between them. As already mentioned, the average scores obtained for each group of competences (*pedagogical, professional, personality and social*) were between level (3) "sufficient" and level (4) "good". The evaluation of the competences of the teachers of the UNTL by the students of the same institution (N = 342) showed a positive and satisfactory classification, since the average values of the classifications (for each competence and for each group of competences) 3) "sufficient" and the level "very good", being in some cases closer to the latter. At the level of pedagogical competences, significant differences were observed in the average of the classifications attributed to the teachers, among male students and female students ( $t(340,344) = 3,45; p < .05$ ), being the female students who gave top ratings (M = 3.68, SD = .645) compared to male students (M = 3.43, SD = .67). Therefore, there was a significant influence of the students' gender on the evaluation of teachers' pedagogical competences, although unlike Boring's (2015) study, the higher classifications were not observed by the male students.

### Conclusion and implications

The study allowed a group of UNTL students (N = 342) to evaluate different competences of university teachers, namely: pedagogical skills, professional competences, social skills and personality traits. The students' evaluation of the competences of UNTL teachers was positive, since the average grade ranged from (3) "sufficient" to (4) "good". In analyzing how the students measure and evaluate the competences of university teaching staff in public higher education, it was possible to conclude about the quality of the performance of this teaching system in TL. In pedagogical terms, lower scores were observed (3) "sufficient" in relation to the teacher's ability to create a living environment in classes (M = 3.49, SD = 1.05), to the use of pedagogical means and technologies (M = 3.36, SD = 1.20) and the assignment of feedback on the students' work and evaluations (M = 3.33, SD = 1.10). These results, therefore, support the need to introduce improvements in the relationship of empathy and closeness to students, either through the promotion of a living learning environment or through feedback to students. Therefore, teachers' feedback on students' performance, both through formative assessment and through summative assessment, is a consensual practice and implemented in different educational institutions (Ramirez *et al.*, 2014). This position was reinforced by the fact that the students classified as "sufficient" (M = 3.39, SD = 1.00) the ability of the teacher to implement a classroom order environment (in terms of personality competencies). It is also evident the need to consider more innovative and inclusive pedagogical practices, by the greater use of educational resources. Regarding the professional competences, it was also concluded about the need to reinforce the use of ICT in the classroom, since this was one of the items with the lowest classification (M = 3.38, SD = 1.13), As well as the capacity for interdisciplinary explanations of the given subject (M = 3.48, SD = 1.01).

The conclusions identified also point to the need to deepen the interdisciplinarity of the various disciplines and areas of study of the curriculum, reinforcing transversal learning. To this end,

it is considered necessary the continuous and professional formation of the teachers, an educational project that the UNTL has already tried to answer through the creation of the *Center for Advance Teaching and Learning (CATL)*. Improvement of the quality of UNTL teachers, based on the conviction that there is a close relationship between the didactic performance of the teacher and the performance of the student (UNTLL, 2015). The social competences of the teachers were the most valued by the students, as they received superior and close classifications of (4) "good" and showed a strong correlation with the personality traits ( $r = .682$ ) Those who had a lower weight on the pedagogical competences ( $r = .551$ ). For students, social skills and personality traits of the teacher correlate strongly, but social skills have a reduced influence on the evaluation of the pedagogical competences by the students. The results of the study carried out for UNTL students (N = 342) showed a positive evaluation of the quality of teachers' competences, specifically their professional, pedagogical, social and personal skills. And there is a positive evaluation of public higher education by the students, taking into account the specific case of the UNTL, despite the recognition of necessary improvements in teachers' performance, especially in terms of pedagogical practices and pedagogical resources used in the classroom. In practical terms, the conclusions of the study support the effective improvement of teachers' competences, insofar as they inform students about the teachers' pedagogical and professional performance, as well as their social and personality competences. The classification attributed by the students allowed to identify the skills that require improvement by the teacher, and these should be considered in the elaboration of the professional development plan of the teachers of the UNTL.

These results also highlight the need to consolidate the various types of competences of TL university professors in order to improve their performance in a continuous way and, by this way, to promote quality university education throughout the country, both in public institutions, or in private institutions, according to the Strategic Plan for National Education 2011-2030 (METL, 2011). The policy measures introduced in the meantime have led to an improvement in the higher education system, but there is still a need to make progress in improving teacher performance through professional development programs (UNESCO, 2013). One of the key purposes of the public higher education evaluation policy in East Timor is to improve the quality of higher education, to inform students (and other stakeholders) about the real quality of institutions and to encourage students to participate in this process, as they are the main beneficiaries of quality assessment. We consider that, at this level, the study developed makes a relevant contribution since, for the first time, it presents the results of the evaluation of the students about the competences of the teachers and, by this way, it gives the students the voice to express themselves about the quality of the public higher education of TL. Since this was the first study to be made known and allowed an evaluation of teachers by the UNTL students, it was not possible to establish a comparison with the results of previous studies, which is a recognized limitation of the analysis developed. In future investigations, it will not only be possible to analyze the evolution of the students' evaluation, but also to carry out empirical studies on the impact of the evaluation system on the quality of public higher education in general, based on the evaluation made by the different stakeholders. (In addition to students, teachers, course directors and faculty directors) using questionnaires and in-

depth interviews. Although educational policies aim to establish an increasingly strong causal relationship between evaluation, professional development and the improvement of the quality of teaching, this relationship has not been studied in the teaching system in TL, a research that is more extensive and demanding to which we will seek to make a contribution throughout this course of study.

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