

The Perception of Graduates and Employers of the Competencies Acquired during the Studies at a Higher Level in Cu Costa Sur

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Abstract

Studies of graduates have gained increasing interest in higher education institutions (HEIs) in the country. Both the Ministry of Public Education (SEP), with its sectoral program of Education 2007 - 2012, and the National Association of Universities and Institutions of Higher Education (ANUIES), have been promoting the realization of this type of studies, since they conceive them as one of the strategic lines to consolidate the development of HEIs. It is in this context that this study of graduates of the Degree in Tourism that is taught at the University Center of the South Coast (CuCosta Sur) of the University of Guadalajara is presented, under a novel approach of competencies, oriented to know the perception that on two types of exposed competencies - generic and specific of the educational program have the graduates themselves, but also shows the perception they have about these competencies to those who use them. Initially the issue of the follow-up of graduates is discussed, justifying the focus of our study, then the concept of competencies is reviewed, and in particular that of the specific competencies of an educational program. Subsequently, the results of perceptions on generic and specific competencies for graduates of the Tourism Degree are presented, which are contrasted with those of employers following a methodology of proposal analysis. Finally, and this is perhaps the most relevant aspect of the work presented here, a methodological proposal is elaborated to bring the results of the study of perception of competencies to the academic bodies immersed in the curriculum and the possible curricular reforms that favor greater relevance between the discharge profile of the students and the training mandates by the employers, to bring fresh winds and external visions to the rich and valuable academic discussions

Keywords: Graduate Follow-up, Educational Quality, Acquired Competences, Competencies Approach

Introduction

The culture of quality has gradually been incorporated into the discourse of Mexican universities, as well as in many other countries of the world in recent decades. Higher education, as responsible for the training of future professionals, has been the subject of attention of

international and national organizations, which have promoted the realization of diagnoses and the design of strategies for continuous improvement and evaluation of the performance of universities. From the World Conference on Higher Education of UNESCO (1998), the Bologna agreement (1999), the World Bank studies (2000), the Inter-American Development Bank (1997), the Spanish Rectors Declaration (2002), up At the national level, the diagnosis "Higher Education in the 21st Century" of the ANUIES (2000), has strengthened the vision that universities must generate mechanisms to ensure their quality, that they must act with transparency and perform accounts to society about their achievements and limitations.

In Mexico, this vision has been reflected in state policies, driven mainly by the federal government and the National Association of Universities (ANUIES), through the creation of strategic programs for teacher quality certification (SNI, PROMEP), incorporation of performance indicators (FOMES, PIFI) and the creation of certification and accreditation systems for undergraduate and postgraduate university programs (CIEES, COPAES, PNPC), and the evaluation of knowledge and skills at the end of academic training (CENEVAL). To this have been added the certification of administrative processes to support the academy under international standards (ISO 9000) and a boost to accreditations under international standards.

Accountability, financial transparency, certification of educational programs and teachers, continuous updating of their performance indicators, application of national exams to their graduates, are activities that are already part of the daily work of universities in our country, strengthening the commitment with the quality of the professionals that are trained in their classrooms and laboratories, with the scientific research projects carried out by their professors, and the extension, cultural diffusion and linkage programs that they carry out for the benefit of the different social sectors. This represents a notorious advance in the right direction, to ensure that universities adequately fulfill their mission in the social conglomerate.

In this sense, the monitoring of university graduates has been an extremely useful institutional policy, since it allows the institution to approach those former students who are already performing professional tasks of different orders

and in different professional fields. Knowing the professional performance of the graduates and the perception that their employers have of them is strategic for the updating and improvement of the curricular designs and the curricula of the careers offered by a higher education institution.

The purpose of this study is to present the results derived from the application of an evaluation instrument designed to track graduates in the labor market. The report is organized in the following sections:

- a. Methodology, with the exposition of the stages and activities of the project, the sustenance of the evaluation tool used, the description of the study sample and considerations for the analysis of the information;
- b. General results obtained in relation to the profile of employers and graduates;
- c. Notable aspects of the findings;
- d. Comments made by the actors participating in the study;
- e. Interpretation of the results of the competencies by careers, by means of the analysis and the correlation of the variables of the investigation;
- f. General recommendations for the improvement of curricular plans.

This research is part of a group of studies that analyze the characteristics and implications of the perception of graduates and employers about the competencies acquired during their studies at a higher level in the specific case of CU Costa Sur, in Autlan de Navarro Jalisco.

I explicitly focus my attention on the students of the CU Costa Sur, as this is my work centre and for having a direct contact with the students who are about to graduate.

This work is initiated by the concern to know what is the perception of graduates and employers according to the various competencies acquired during their academic trajectory at a higher level in the CU Costa Sur.

From this point, I will delve into the specific competencies in the evaluation of graduates that exist so far, the experience that exists in the middle regarding the follow-up of graduates and employers in the CU Costa Sur.

And once obtained these realize an intervention project for the update and modification of educative plans from the analysis of the generic and specific competitions, located.

Tracking of Graduates and Employers and the Competencies Approach

Studies of graduates have gained increasing interest in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in the country; Both the Secretariat of Public Education (Sectorial Program of Education 2007-2012) and the National Association of Universities and Institutions of Higher Education (ANUIES), have been encouraged to carry out this type of studies, since they are conceived as one of the lines strategies to consolidate the development of HEIs.

According to ANUIES, the follow-up of graduates represents a cyclic evaluation research strategy, which makes it possible to know and systematize information on the trajectories, conditions and personal, labor and professional perspectives of the graduates of the different careers offered by higher education institutions, both public as private. In this sense, the follow-up studies of graduates allow to permanently reconstruct the study plans in accordance with the new demands established by the national and international labor market. Basic Scheme for Studies of Graduates in Higher Education. (National Association of Universities and Institutions of Higher Education, 1998).

National institutions such as CONACYT have been recommending to the IES the implementation of systematic evaluation and follow-up actions (September 1989: 120), which will have positive consequences when making decisions to modify, renew and innovate educational programs. The monitoring of graduates is one of the strategic actions of continuous evaluation that provides the greatest benefits to a university, among them we can mention:

- The reality of the educational program is known in its impact on society.
- The reality of the institutional link with the graduate and the company is recognized.
- Help strengthen and consolidate the educational program. o It allows to assess the impact and relevance of the educational program through the graduates.
- Get the companies involved, participate and give feedback to the educational programs.
- Allows the congruence between objectives, profile of the graduate, expectations and / or professional demand.
- Help to know the relevance of educational programs.
- Provide information to make diagnoses.
- The continuity of follow-up studies of graduates fosters an evaluative culture in institutions, to create or, where appropriate, consolidate aspects or areas of internal and external linkage.
- It is an effective means for improvement and helps increase the quality of education.

The aim of the studies of graduates is then to have systematic and transparent information that contributes to institutional development, in the academic, labor and professional context, which guarantees the social pertinence of the university educational offer, (Fernández, M & Rodríguez N, 2005).Monitoring of graduates in the institute. (National Polytechnic Institute, 2013).

There is also a document of the year 2011 that was made by the State Council for Dialogue with the Productive Sectors (CEDISP) of the state of Jalisco, in which a set of Basic Indicators for Tracking Graduates is proposed for different universities. In this document the proposal is made to integrate information of the graduates of the Institutions of

Higher Education of the entity, by means of indicators. According to the established methodology, the data obtained will be uploaded to an electronic system, to which all interested users will have access, allowing in this way to permanently monitor the graduates by means of indicators with quantitative elements. However, there are still no results from it. (State Council for the Dialogue with the productive sectors, 2011)

It is noteworthy that most of the educational institutions have ventured into the monitoring of graduates concerned about assessing their quality, with the aim of establishing strategies that allow them to increase the recognition of society towards their educational offer, implement medium and improvement plans. Long term and make curricular reforms that help insert their students with greater efficiency in the labor field.

On the other hand, since the nineties, what has been called the Knowledge Society has gained conceptual relevance. Our societies are involved in a complicated process of transformation that is affecting the way we organize ourselves, how we work, how we relate and how we learn. (García, 2011).

Results of the Follow-up Studies of Graduates and Employers at the University Center of the South Coast

The University Center of the South Coast (CU Costa Sur) has established a priority policy of institutional evaluation in which they have been established as general lines; the accreditation of undergraduate and postgraduate educational programs; international accreditation as a university institution; the certification of professors (PROMEP, SNI); the certification of management processes, and; the monitoring of graduates.

The monitoring of graduates was based on a novel approach to evaluating the perception that graduates and their employers have about professional and work skills. To this end, a specific methodology was created for the application of perception surveys and for the analysis of results. With the objective of generating inputs for decision making in the updating of the plans and study programs of the different careers that are offered, and with this, contributing to meet the requirements that in the matter demands the regional, state and national labor reality.

The project began with information activities on the subject for all those responsible for the follow-up of graduates, including academic authorities as well as coordinators of

each career, teachers and students, in the context of the international accreditation process. The work program established the design of an instrument to evaluate the perception of graduates and employers, in the first place the generic competences of a university graduate were considered, based on the model proposed by PROFLEX (Flexible Professional in the Knowledge Society) (Ortega et al, 2012). The PROFLEX Project arises with the objective of responding to the needs of Latin American universities for effective follow-up systems for graduates, making available to Latin American society the experience acquired in the previous projects of the European Union. Thus, maintaining the philosophy of improving institutional quality, and at the same time adapting the initiative to the reality and context of the Latin American countries, started the PROFLEX Project in 2006.

As a result of the first activities of the program of graduates and employers of CU COSTA SUR, the need to develop several lines of research was evident; in the first place, the traditional socio-demographic aspect of the follow-up of graduates; general school and work data of the graduates; but in addition to that, we sought to know their perception of the generic competences they possess, both those they had acquired during their time at the university and those that their work life is requiring. It was further opted to compare these results with studies applied to employers, regarding the same generic competences evaluated in the graduates. For the analysis of the collected data, various methodologies were proposed; they included graphical, numerical and statistical analyzes, as well as proprietary methodologies specifically designed for research, such as colorimetric analysis and TIMAX. The TIMAX is an alternative methodology created to apply the results of studies of graduates in the curricular design in a dynamic and short-term way, taking its name from the maximum time in years that the suggestions to improve the curricular design should be attended. The proposed method is based on the importance that is being given in recent years to evaluation as a strategic factor for educational decision making.

The Specific Competencies in the Evaluation of the Follow-up of Graduates

The present work covers the second stage of the graduates' follow-up project, based on the perceptions of competences, again considering a comparative analysis of the perception of the graduates themselves and their employers, but in this case the specific competences identified for the Degree in Tourism.

Specific Competencies of the Educational Program of the Degree in Tourism	
Number	Competence
1	Diagnose tourism activity
2	Design tourism projects
3	Direct the activities of a tourism company
4	Analyze the social, economic and cultural environment of the negotiating counterpart
5	Analyze the tourist market
6	Design marketing programs for tourism products and services
7	Apply processes for the commercialization of products and services
8	Develop tourism marketing schemes
9	Manage sales strategies

10	Develop strategies for the distribution of tourism products and services
11	Design the international logistics strategy
12	Predict the behavior of tourist activity
13	Disseminate the results on the behavior of the tourist activity
14	Design development plans for the organization
15	Develop organizational diagnostics to detect areas of opportunity

Source: Own elaboration based in Ceneval (2015 a)

For a better understanding of the study model it is important to understand what is perception? and why it was taken as a key element in the follow-up of graduates. With support in the psychology of Neisser (Pérez and Gimeno, 1992), who defines it as an active-constructive process in which the perceptor, before processing the new information and with the data stored in his conscience, constructs an anticipatory information scheme, that allows you to contrast the stimulus and accept or reject it as appropriate or not to the proposed by the scheme, in addition to being based on the existence of learning, was taken as a reference to introduce this variable to the study model by its type (qualitative).

Perception is a key variable in the composition of the study model of graduates of the CU South Coast, this has many meanings, approaches and applications depending on the object of study that is analyzed, in this case the perception was used from the psychological model with a focus Social. According to Rojas (1995), this type of methodology is closer to the exploratory scope or approach to reality, according to what it refers to. The survey is used as an instrument, since for obtaining non-existent data it is one of the most used techniques to gather information such as in this case study, to identify the perceptions of employers and graduates. In this way the answers are settled and access is available at the same time to corroborate data with the community.

The concept of specific competence is a concept that must be analyzed from different perspectives according to a type of knowledge, or branch of studies depending on the term used. First we must analyze the concept of competence as such, to later define according to each educational program the term of specific competences that are required to meet the graduates of each PE correspondingly.

Competition Concept

The competence is a set of technical, methodological, social and participative knowledge that is updated in a particular situation and at a particular moment, that is, it is a complex know-how, the result of the integration, use and adaptation of skills, abilities and knowledge, used effectively in situations that have a common character (Scallon, 2004, cited in Ortega, *et al*, 2012).

According to Alles (2006), competence refers to the characteristics of personality, knowledge and behavior, which generate a successful performance in a job. Each job can have different characteristics in different companies, institutions and / or labor markets. He also points out that the terms talent and competences are two concepts that can be handled as "synonyms", since one goes hand in hand with the other, even if they are not synonymous. The work plan approved by the CUCSUR included the design, validation and application of a market study for employers and graduates,

as well as the generation of this results report. The investigation included the follow-up of graduates belonging to the Degree in Tourism.

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