Chapter 16
Assessment of Graduates' Generic Competences in Virtual Mode at the National Polytechnic Institute: A Case Study

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ABSTRACT

The main objective of the study was to assess the levels of development of generic competences in the graduates of the degree in International Commerce in the virtual modality of the IPN. The type of research was a quantitative methodology with an exploratory cross-sectional design. The instrument that was used to obtain the information on the GCs developed was a questionnaire based on a Likert scale. It was found that the assessment of the participants on this type of competences has an interval based on a lower mean of 2.13 until a larger average of 3.71, where those that were identified with the lowest level of dominance were the ones related to the work in international contexts, second language communication skills and the ability to work as a team. The findings serve to support its virtual academic programs and thus increase its academic offer based on quality indicators that include not only graduates but also other educational actors such as teachers, managers and administrators as well as assessing the operation of the support infrastructure and equipment.

INTRODUCTION

One of the main effects of globalization is generating a growing relevance of knowledge as a principal motor of economic growth. Thus, the accumulation of knowledge and its application have become strategic factors for the development of countries, and it constitutes the main competitive advantage in the global economy (World Bank, 2003).

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Therefore, the role of higher education in the construction of knowledge economies is of great importance due to the fact that it allows to create the intellectual capacity in the human resources and to generate a continuous learning that enables to constantly update the knowledge and skills of people, so it decisively influences in the total productivity of the social and economic system of each country (Vila, Dávila & Ginés, 2010).

In the same way, these authors determined the strategic role of higher education as a source of competences where its graduates are considered as a key determinant for both the success of their professional career and the overall efficiency of the production systems in the different countries.

Thus, the relevance of human capital formation is recognized, as well as promoting the management of new knowledge, innovation and the development of human capacities as sources of sustainable economic growth (Stiglitz, 2008).

As pointed out by Brennan & Teichler (2008), higher education is relevant because it generates economic and social impacts on the communities, which is why it is of great importance to ensure that the students meet the standards of educational quality.

For their part, Coronado & Estévez (2016) mention that the schools have faced changes in their training processes where not only is it necessary to improve the fulfillment of their substantive functions, but also to link with society. Thus, higher education institutions (HEIs) need to generate results that are relevant and useful to society, which is carried out through their graduates, who are valued for their professional competence levels (Akareem & Hossain, 2012).

In this sense, the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD, 2000) established that higher education offered a vocational training according to scientific and technologic advances in the labor sector which have changed not only in the productive but also in the organizational sector, which is why new job skills that allow not only the application of knowledge but also its generation are required, and so in that way being able of conducting business innovation.

Meanwhile, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO, 2005) considered that to develop a country in the XXI century it is required to have competent people who understand their socio-cultural and technological environment so that they can bring to their job positions the creativity and the innovation to solve the actual complex problems that arise.

In this way, for the overall development of a country, the knowledge economy considers that the most important asset is the creation, use and diffusion of knowledge (Sánchez & Ríos, 2011) which is why it is emphasized the relevance of both the human capital and the management of the new knowledge, the innovation and the development of human capacities as sources of sustainable economic growth (Portnoi, Rust & Bagley, 2010).

To meet the demands that the professionals should satisfy in an increasingly competitive market not only nationally but also internationally; the increased generation of information requires more complex methods and techniques for its analysis and systematization where the use of the integration of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) has become a fundamental support to achieve it (Blanco & Latorre, 2012), hereby the countries have established strategies to integrate the ICTs into the education systems.

Thus, development strategies consider knowledge as a strategic factor that has led to transformations in both private and public organizations regarding the use of ICTs in combination with individual and organizational knowledge; the insertion of the competence-based vocational training model as well as the new ways of building knowledge that generates competitive advantages in organizations (Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995).