



Strengthening the Training of Professional and Analysis Skills: Postpandemic update of the professional competencies of the Policy and International Studies Analyst

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Abstract

The work identifies and addresses certain training deficits, associated with the recent implementation of a new curriculum of a bachelor's degree in international studies, but which are also attributable to the impact that the pandemic confinement had on teaching. Derived from a process carried out in different stages between 2022 and 2024, the work synthetically presents the main findings, learnings and projections that emerge, on the one hand from the reflection carried out by the program to address these deficits, on the other hand from a dialogue with future employers, and finally from a reflection on the relevance that international experience acquires concerning the training of professional skills for the twentyfirst century. Among the latter, effective communication skills, skills to adapt to changes, and especially the provision of a solid ethical foundation stand out. Additionally, the work highlights the need to have a permanent dialogue with the different relevant environments of the program, especially with the workplace, to have updated information regarding the expectations associated with the projections of those who graduate as Political Analysts, in terms of employability.

KEYWORDS: CURRICULAR UPDATE; TRAINING EVALUATION; COMPETENCIES FOR THE 21ST CENTURY

Introduction

The current mesh of the Bachelor's Degree in International Studies (LEEI) of the University of Santiago de Chile (USACH) was implemented in 2017 after an update process developed in 2016, which aimed to update the original mesh of 2007. The first students of the new curriculum graduated in 2021, having faced training problems derived from the pandemic confinement and online didactics. (Nurron, 2021; Mogaji & Jain, 2020) In particular, some gaps were observed in practical-professional training, specifically in those aspects that had to do with advising the decision-making processes of various stakeholders. These deficits were addressed in the report "Proposal and External Validation of a Profile of Professional Competencies for the Bachelor's Degree in International Studies" (2022). To address this problem, the report "Towards a New Curricular Structure of the Terminal Cycle for Obtaining the Title of International Analyst" (2023) proposed some changes in the Terminal Cycle that would allow students to strengthen the acquisition, development and implementation of these competencies. Finally, the report "Strengthening the Training of Professional Competencies" (2024)

synthesizes and aligns the findings of previous reports and endorses the LEEII's aspiration to train rigorous professionals who are adaptable to a constantly changing environment, understanding that the ability to strategically advise the interests of clients and clients requires not only scientific rigor, but also effective communication skills, skills to adapt to changes, and a solid ethical foundation.

Literature Review

The training of analytical capacities and especially the training of Policy Analysts are constantly challenged in its validity whether for political reasons (Craft, Head & Howlet, 2024) or technological (Safaei & Longo, 2024; Longo, 2022; Pereira et al, 2024) or even value changes (Clemons & McBeth, 2020). National idiosyncrasies also affect how the work of the Analyst is understood (Geva-May & Gofen, 2016; Geva-May & Maslove, 2007; Dobuzinskis & Howlett, 2018; Yildiz, Demircio & Babao, 2011; Jung & Chung, 2023;) All of the above have determined the incessant need to innovate in terms of how policy analysis is taught (Gillis & Hall, 2010; Cooley & Pennock, 2015; Durrance, 2022; Dente & Vechi 2024; Cairney, 2023) even seeking contributions from the teaching of other disciplines to improve the teaching of policy analysis (O'Connor & Netting, 2008; Denny & Cairney, 2024; Pacheco-Vega, 2024) If we add to the above the indispensable adjustments demanded by the implementation of a new grid in the context of the pandemic, the promotion of a curricular review and adjustment, at least in its critical aspects, is essential.

Methods

In the preparation of the different reports, different techniques for collecting and analyzing information were used: Interviews with future employers (1st report 2022); Curricular analysis of the terminal vocational training cycle (9th and 10th semester) (2nd report, 2023); Bibliographic and documentary analysis: programs similar (benchmarking) to the LEEII in some foreign universities (3rd report. 2024)

Results

In terms of learning, and derived mainly from international experience, the proposal of the 4 Cs of P21 (Partnership for 21st Century Learning. (2019)): Collaboration, Communication, Critical Thinking and Creativity, and specifically the TEC 21 proposal (Olivares et al, 2021; Juárez, Cortés, & Laborde, 2015), specifically in what has to do with the importance of having flexible curricular structures, the implementation of innovative pedagogical practices, such as Challenge-Based Learning (APR), in addition to promoting the proper understanding of teaching as an inspiring and innovative activity. In addition, the final report highlights the importance of having an adequate follow-up of graduates and surveys of teachers to constitute a permanent mechanism for feedback and updating.

Discussion

It must be recognized that for the design of academic programs for undergraduate careers in Social Sciences such as LEEII, it is imperative not only to prioritize the transmission of theoretical or methodological knowledge at an academic level but also to guarantee the comprehensive training of students, with an adequate balance at the level of professional competencies. This seems to be a weakness in LEEII training, which is especially evident in the activities of the terminal cycle.

Conclusions

The specific proposals and suggestions derived from the process concern the curricular and pedagogical field (with various recommendations), but especially the level of personal development and transversal skills, where the indispensable of promoting critical thinking is revealed, fostering lear-

ning strategies where students can apply problem-solving strategies, with dynamics that enhance their autonomy, as well as resilience to failure.

Ideally, the curricular, pedagogical, and personal development and skills levels should be intertwined synergistically to provide students with a holistic set of skills and competencies that will allow them to stand out in a dynamic and complex work environment, to be more competitive with respect to other professionals who also have as their central professional mission the advice in decision-making at the managerial and executive level based on Strategic interpretations of the available information that are effective, timely and endowed with a high ethical standard.

Limitations and Future Research

These recommendations are not exhaustive and new elements may emerge over time, reflecting changing social and professional dynamics. For example, the issues and challenges that currently arise from the development of AI (Artificial Intelligence) (Safaei & Longo, 2024; Longo, 2022)

Recently, a team of LEEII professors was awarded a project to design and implement a pilot subject that allows our students to make contact with the practical dimension of decision-making, through an authentic challenge-based learning (APR) experience in which a decision-making process is simulated in the face of a public problem. To this end, an expert with postgraduate training in didactic simulations in decision-making, with experience in its implementation in university contexts, will be summoned.

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