



# The Career Self-Evaluation in Improving the Quality of Higher Education



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## Abstract

The institutional self-evaluation is described as forming the basis of a pyramid, which has accreditation as the cornerstone, passing through external evaluation, it can be applied to higher education centers, careers, and programs. In this work the self-assessment of careers is analyzed, an instrument to identify strengths and weaknesses, its different stages and processes, taking as reference what has been described in the scientific literature. Regarding the accreditation process in some Latin American countries as well as the peculiarities of the self-assessment process of a health career at a university in Ecuador.

## Keywords

Accreditation;  
Career;  
Higher education;  
Institutional;  
Self-evaluation;

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## 1. Introduction

The substantial increase in the university population and higher education centers worldwide and regionally [1] due to social demand and the globalization of knowledge. Among others has led to a greater concern of governments and academic institutions to guarantee the greater quality of the training that students receive in university centers, and that it contributes to the economic development of the countries, in response to the demands of modern society, and that the final product is within international quality standards.

It is noteworthy that some regions of the world have promoted projects for the constitution of joint spaces in the area of Higher Education, such as the European Higher Education Area, which was designed to facilitate the mobility of people, transparency, and recognition of qualifications. The quality and the European dimension of higher education, and general attractiveness of European institutions for students from third countries "[2]. In the case of Latin America, in most countries of the region, actions have been taken to guarantee the quality of the university evaluation and accreditation. Through the creation of national agencies and accrediting agencies, which would carry out this process in a gradual, depending on the particularities of the country, with more or less success in achieving its objectives [3], [4].

In the region, some associations have also been established that have contributed significantly to the assurance of quality. These include the Central American System for the Evaluation of Higher Education (SICEVAES), the Ad hoc Committee of MERCOSUR and the Ibero-American Network for the Accreditation of the Quality of Higher Education (RIACES) [5]. From the analysis of this situation, González (2005) concludes that there is considerable progress in the Region on the subject of evaluation and accreditation. It has been possible to verify the main achievements, but also the difficulties and the delaying and impeding factors to carry out those processes.

Analyzing to Cabrera (2005) who states that the majority of Latin American universities did not take the initiative to present appropriate solutions to such situations. It is caused that the pressures to reform higher education come from outside rather than from within. So that, almost no The system or model of external evaluation has come from the universities, but from state entities that are far from the universities, and that introduce concepts or criteria. That is not academic or imported without proper adaptation and also criteria that respond to other unfavorable interests to the universities (paragraph 25).

For our part, we believe that, despite the above, it is becoming increasingly clear that the evaluation models for accreditation purposes try to give prominence to the subjects evaluated through the generation and implementation of internal evaluation processes. Rubio points out that: "in the trinomial quality-evaluation-accreditation, the evaluation and in particular the self-evaluation as an internal participatory process that seeks to improve quality and that has great significance. As the starting point of the evaluation and accreditation processes seeks to improve the quality of the work of the institution and involves the whole university community for this purpose "[4].

The evaluation, has as its previous path, the self-evaluation, which is constituted in the processes of quality with which the institutional processes are developed to achieve results in the continuous improvement. In the measure that the university can design, plan and organize a quality management system that supports concepts of effectiveness, efficiency, effectiveness, sustainability and profitability [6]. Taking into account our experience as a career evaluator. We have carried out the following analysis of the career self-assessment process as an instrument to identify strengths and weaknesses of the academic processes, and that contributes to the improvement of the quality of university education, emphasizing the organization of the process, indicating some recommendations for the achievement of its objectives.

## 2. Research Method

### Definition and objectives of the self-evaluation

Several self-evaluation definitions have been proposed, but in their entirety, they agree to raise the challenge proposed by the institutions that implement them. "The challenge is to promote collective reflection to produce changes that promote a constant process of improvement" [7]. The institutional self-

assessment (AI) is shown as a participatory and collaborative process, to which all the components of the organization contribute from their experience, formulate proposals and contributions.

There are different ways of carrying out the self-assessment, and each institution adopts the methodology that best fits its organizational culture, so that several ways of carrying it out are designed by designing specific instruments, including from an inclusive perspective [8]. For what is stated, "The problem does not lie in the shortage of instruments, but in the lack of a clear scheme shared by the agents who must carry out the self-assessment processes" [9]. However, we agree that the self-evaluation pursues two fundamental purposes:

- a) Identify the problems, achievements, successes, and difficulties and
- b) Propose corrective and commit to the review and adjustment to ensure a permanent process of qualitative improvement [9].

Therefore not all AI processes assume the same characteristics, those that depend on the model that is put into practice and the conditions of the educational system in which they take place [10]. However, we can highlight the following distinctive features:

The actors of the school organization are the ones who lead and implement the process. You can seek consultants or external personnel in the process only if necessary and there are management difficulties. The purpose is to strengthen the mechanisms of institutional self-regulation. The institution itself previously selects the dimensions, aspects and criteria used for this self-evaluation. Your product is a self-evaluation report with improvement actions to be implemented to optimize the quality of training, and educational purposes pursued [7].

We can infer, then, that the IA plays a dynamic role in school institutions. On the one hand, it requires planning actions of its process. On the other hand, it seeks to generate institutional planning actions as a conclusion of the value judgments that it provokes, while at the same time dynamizing institutional management in a dynamic evolution that constantly feeds itself [7]. The self-assessment in its definition establishes the participation of the academic community itself. As internal evaluators, this, on the other hand, this has its limitations: it may happen that certain shortcomings are not noticed, and if they do, they do not give importance, making evaluations arbitrary, showing only the positive side of things [11]. For this reason, we believe it is healthy to incorporate, if possible, the participation of external evaluators in these self-assessment processes, to impart a little impartiality and objectivity to the final assessment.

We consider very positive the initiative that the Institutions of Higher Education, careers and programs, not only perform the self-evaluation as precedent to the evaluation or in the cases of non-accreditation as part of the evaluation of the Action Plans or proposed improvements, but as periodic processes of self-analysis and decision-making.

### **The Ecuadorian evaluation system**

In the case of Ecuador, the Evaluation, Accreditation and Quality Assurance of Higher Education Council (CEAACES) has an evaluating and accrediting body. Since its creation in 2010, based on the new law that governs Higher Education in Ecuador since then, it has been responsible for the planning and execution of the policy for improving the quality of Higher Education. Although it is true that actions have been carried out since previous years to raise the quality of Higher Education, it was in 2008. With the issuance of Mandate 14, when one of the important milestones in the recent history of recovery is marked off the role of the State in the stewardship and regulation of this system [12].

Specifically, for the year 2014, the objectives of CEAACES were oriented towards the evaluation of the Higher Technical and Technological Institutes. The beginning of the evaluation of careers of social interest and the application of the first examination for the professional qualification, processes that started with the career of Medicine. The realization of a more sustained work of advice and accompaniment to the universities and extensions for the design and fulfillment of their improvement and strengthening plans; the deepening of the reflection on the existing relationships between the quality of Higher Education and equity, and the strengthening of the institution through the link with international accreditation, which allow the exchange of experiences, methodologies and evaluators [12]. Result of this process were evaluated the first races called social interest. As is the case of Medicine and Dentistry of the different universities in the country, were accredited and others group did not reach the required standards, so a

new process began to achieve that the careers of the second group. You could be evaluated again in a set time and be able to demonstrate your academic improvement.

Within these careers began, therefore and at the request of CEAACES, a deep moment of self-analysis from which the design of a "Plan of Strengthening for the race, to be implemented in the period of one or two years, as approved by CEAACES. It will allow it to meet the minimum standard of evaluation of the learning environment" [14], in this plan the weaknesses, strengths were recognized, and the tasks were conceived for the achievement of the new goals, as well as the limits of time, defining actors and responsible for compliance.

### 3. Results and Analysis

#### Organization of the self-evaluation process

The careers within them established internal control mechanisms that allowed monitoring the progress made in the tasks proposed and detecting the brakes that were emerging beyond informing the University authorities of the progress and difficulties. According to the Organic Law of Higher Education (LOES) of Ecuador, self-evaluation is the rigorous process of analysis that an institution performs at all. Its institutional activities or a specific career, program or postgraduate, with broad participation of its members. Through critical analysis and reflective dialogue, to overcome existing obstacles and consider the achievements, to improve institutional efficiency and improve academic quality. (Article 99 of the LOES)

So, each year, each career must run the respective self-assessment process, however in the case of the Medicine career at the Technical University of Manabí. Due it is in the accreditation process, it was decided to include it in the careers that would take effect self-evaluation process with the support of CEAACES and the participation of external evaluators from solidarity universities. This same process had already been carried out on a pilot basis in Nursing and Agronomy careers, which had not yet been evaluated, but which would later be objects of evaluation for accreditation purposes. Before initiating this process, the respective organizational forecasts were taken, taking as reference the proposed in the Regulation for the self-evaluation processes where certain phases to be taken into account are described.

Three phases of the self-assessment process can be identified: planning of the self-evaluation process, execution; and generation of report and delivery of results. *1<sup>st</sup> Phase*: Planning of the self-assessment process: Higher education institutions must prepare a plan for the development of the self-assessment process, in which actions are determined that are intended to be executed to achieve the objectives proposed by the institutions, due to their characteristics and own ends, aimed at improving quality. It is important to disseminate the process, as well as to awaken the interest and motivation of the entire community that will participate in the process. *2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Phase*. Execution of the self-assessment process, report generation and delivery of results. Among the actions to follow:

- a) Guarantee the proper functioning of the Self-evaluation Commission and of the committees that cooperate with the process.
- b) Generate preliminary reports regarding the purposes and continuous improvement.
- c) Follow up on the response process coming from the committees and the academic community in general.
- d) Manage surveys, process them and analyze the results.
- e) Check and validate the information
- f) Prepare reports on the purposes and continuous improvement
- g) Prepare the first draft of the self-assessment report
- h) Conduct and promote a comprehensive review of the institution regarding the first draft of the self-assessment report

At this time it would be important to consider: the formation of the working groups. The necessary administrative support, the location of work premises, the definition of times and periods, the collection of information, both facts and opinions of the various factors and internal and external instances of the system under study.

Among the facts to be collected are data of the teaching staff (academic profiles, functions, responsibilities, production and others) and students (socioeconomic characterization, academic and of origin, academic indexes of regularity and others). Curriculum (curricular map, course distribution, extracurricular activities, teaching and learning process and others); resources (sources of financing, infrastructure, equipment, bibliography and others). As sources of opinion are used teaching staff, students, graduates, executives, support services, external agencies, similar institutions, academic peers.

It includes the application and processing of surveys, interviews, data review and verification of facts and figures, construction of indexes and opinion judgments, preparation of technical reports of different functions, holding of committee meetings, discussions and conclusions [14]. The preliminary self-assessment report must be socialized with the different levels of the institution, depending on the process of institutional self-evaluation, careers or programs [15]. The self-assessment report responds to a diagnosis of the reality of the career and must present a work plan, whose conditions must be validated by external evaluators.

Once the report of the evaluators has been issued, a proposal for improvement and development is consolidated in the report, which must be negotiated and agreed as an implementation plan derived from the self-assessment and its consequences. The above must derive a common action plan with the central administration of the institution (institutional development plan) in which resources, personnel, infrastructure, equipment, and capacities are committed in favor of improvement results in areas with problems

It is necessary to establish a monitoring and follow-up phase of the implementation of the action plan. This stage is dynamic insofar as it allows introducing the rectifications needed by the plan itself. The results of the measurements must be checked against the values designated in the standards, whether they are career-specific or external [15]. In this process, you should take as a reference, of course, the evaluation model approved by the evaluating body for your institution, career or program, which will give the specificities of the process.

#### 4. Conclusion

Institutional self-evaluation is a valuable tool to strengthen the evaluation culture within careers, allowing them to appropriate the essence and characteristics of this process, mobilizing the teaching and administrative community towards a north to which we all aspire, perform in an institution with social recognition and with the best possible quality levels. It also favors cooperation and inter-institutional exchange and the internationalization of higher education, given the role of external evaluating agents, who not only act as such but in many cases transmit their positive experiences to perform substantive processes more efficiently, but they can repair in those points that could contribute to their own and better performance. There is no single way to proceed in the self-assessment, this depends on the peculiarities of the environment and will be a function of the evaluation model that is put into practice and the conditions of the educational system in which they take place

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