

Work in Progress - A Model for the Development of Competencies for the Faculty at National University of Tachira (UNET) – Venezuela

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Abstract - In Venezuelan Universities, the need for improving faculty performance has become a priority. Venezuelan universities understand that the learning process has to go along with the changing requirements of the environment in order to improve the quality of professionals that the University forms. The National University of Táchira (UNET) understands that this adjustment of the learning process to the changes in the environment has to be carried out by the faculty members of the university. For this reason the UNET is looking for methods to prepare its faculty members in the necessary competencies to achieve a successful academic performance. This paper will investigate the general and specific faculty competencies to achieve a high academic performance in order to develop a model that presents guidelines for faculty formation and performance evaluation. The investigation will be based on literature review, Venezuelan university legislation review, expert panels, focus group and interviews to faculty members deeply involved in the academic university functions.

Index Terms – Competencies, Faculty development, Venezuelan universities.

RESEARCH JUSTIFICATION

The constant changes and challenges that Venezuelan higher education system is currently facing, has created in universities a need for faculty personnel with the academic skills to be able to adjust the process of learning to the new requirements from the environment. For the University of Tachira (UNET) in Venezuela, the communities claim for a direct presence of the university in different communities not only through extension activities but teaching and investigation, the need of an open and flexible curriculum, the incorporation of UNET programs to interactive educational systems aligned to the new technology, and the achievement of national accreditation of its programs are the main challenges that UNET has to confront.

The new realities of change and uncertainty currently present in Venezuela, and the University commitment to a higher education oriented to the individual learning not only of knowledge but also of being, doing and live with others demand structural, cultural and human resource management strategies change.

A model for the development of faculty members based on competencies seems to be a viable approach for UNET to follow. Focusing formation programs on competencies has become a key for the capital human and talent development. Emphasizing on competencies imply revising expected results as well as the methods and procedures used to achieve them. It is necessary to identify the competencies required to accomplish a task as well as those associated to behaviors displaying the philosophy, values and strategic objectives of the institution.

RESEARCH PLAN

The Model for the Development of Competencies for the Faculty at National University of Tachira (UNET) – Venezuela is developed in six phases. In phase one, revision of UNET policies and bylaws and Venezuelan university legislation will take place to determine the meaning of ‘being an academic’. This phase has been carried out in its totality at this time and its findings will be presented as preliminary results.

Phase two, a profile of general competencies will be developed based on the results of phase one and through the consulting of experts on the academic arena, first from the UNET then from panel of experts from the national university system. This will be accomplished through interviews and focus groups. Results from this phase will allow researchers to determine the responsibilities and challenges that faculty faces in order to establish the expected behaviors faculty members need to display.

In phase three, a profile of specific competencies will be developed for each of the academic programs that UNET offers. Similarly to the second phase, the specific

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competencies will be determined through interviews to renowned UNET and national universities faculty members.

In phase four, a career map will be developed. The career map will show for each academic program the specific competencies that a faculty member has to be able to display on each category and each of the general competencies. At UNET, faculty members have to advance through five categories; instructor, assistant, aggregate, associate and titular, during their academic life. This classification is based on academic work and seniority of faculty members.

In phase five, based on the career map, the formation program is designed. An evaluation of the gap between general and specific competencies formulated and the behaviors observed on faculty members will delineate the plan of formation and development of the faculty. Finally, phase six considers designing a plan for competencies assessment to ensure that those competencies still are aligned with the needs of the university environment.

The final result of this project is expected to be a model for the development of competencies for the faculty at National University of Tachira (UNET) – Venezuela that allows UNET faculty to adjust their academic strategies to respond timely to the constant change of their environment.

Preliminary results on specific, general competencies and career maps will be presented and discussed, as will the plans for future research phases.

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