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## Chapter 20

# Service Learning in Higher Education: Results of an Economics and Business School Experience in Chile

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### ABSTRACT

*This chapter presents the experience of the Faculty of Economics and Business of the Universidad de Chile implementing Service Learning as part of Methodology. First, it is described the process of development and then the institutionalization of the methodology and the various emphasis provided by academics. Second, the results of a questionnaire designed to assess motivation, development of generic competencies, social commitment, and students' satisfaction with the methodology are presented.*

### INTRODUCTION

Higher education has undergone a widespread paradigm shift in the last decade, resulting in the transition from a content-based curriculum to a competencies-based one (Tobón, 2006; Jerez et al, 2014). In a post-subprime mortgage crisis world, business and economics schools have reflected about the type of professionals they are looking to train. This debate has highlighted the need to develop leaders with a long-term vision, who are capable of considering in their decision making not only economic, but also social and environmental consequences. Thus, teaching

and learning processes should be planned with a focus on a sustainable development, as an answer to the country's need of professionals who are active agents in the transformation of their social environment and who reflect on the consequences of their professional practices.

This poses the need for training professionals who are not only prepared to face the current challenges of the Chilean society, but that are also capable of adapting to future ones.

The competences approach is an attempt to adjust training models to the demands of the present time, because ensuring mastery of the learning goals of the discipline is not enough.

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It highlights the necessity of developing a set of generic competences to enable professionals to perform adequately in an ever dynamic and changing world (Jerez et al, 2014).

An example of the competences of this model is the Competence of Social Responsibility and Civic Engagement, which is defined by the School of Economics and Business (2014) as:

*The use of a set of criteria for decision making, considering the responsibility of the various stakeholders of society and the balance of economic, social and environmental development, both to understand the context of a problem in an organization or community, and to develop ways of solution, within the framework of sustainable development.*

The curriculum reform incorporates two major actions to promote the development of this competence. First, the addition of a social internship, which aims to integrate the lessons of the first cycle of training to their social environment, and serves as an opportunity for students to develop a critical view of these issues. Second, the incorporation of the Service Learning methodology to a set of core courses in the four majors of the school.

This chapter aims to serve as a contribution towards the systematization of experiences and knowledge production based on the results of the use of Service Learning in an economics and business school in the Chilean context.

## COMPETENCE BASED CURRICULUM

Currently, the higher education system in Chile faces various challenges, being the more prominent, the necessity to be placed in a context of immense national and international competitiveness at the level of quality and capacity of change with regard to the processes of training professionals, along with the expectations that higher education

organizations position themselves as an engine of local development in every scope that has to do with a society, with the cultural, social and economic knowledge (Zabalza, 2002; GUNI, 2008).

During the last years, the Universidad de Chile has been leading a deep process of modernization at the undergraduate level, inspired by national and international trends in higher education and forced by the emerging needs of society and the market. The principles that guided these modernization processes were systematized in the Educational Model of the University (2010), which states:

*Promoting a pedagogy focused in the student, valuing the time of the student and adopting the Transferable Credits System (SCT-Chile), giving priority to active-participative methods, adopting generic competences, this, including the communication through a second language, and promoting strategic methodologies and proper assessing devices to the competences to be developed, all the above, guided by the graduate profile as a referent.*

The core of the training process, unlike the traditional model, is the student, which generates a particular attention to the design of innovative and inclusive methodologies that support the development of comprehensive professionals prepared to face the current challenges of their field.

The objective for implementing a model based on competences was to strengthen the development of students' competences about "knowing what to do", in order to adapt better to the labor market and also to new professional demands at a social level. Within this model is not enough to address the cognitive domain and supply of information, but also the achievement of skills needed to support the content (Abarca-Fernández, 2010).

In 2013, the School of Economics and Business of the Universidad de Chile started a deep curricular reform that has, as the main feature, the replacement of the traditional training model with one based on competencies. The Managerial

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