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## Students and Professional Perceptions about the Ecuadorian Economists Profile for Century XXI; Marketing and Digital Competences

### *Percepciones de estudiantes y profesionales sobre el perfil de economista para el siglo XXI; Competencia digital y Marketing*

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#### ABSTRACT

The Ecuadorian neoliberal economic model, traditionally based on petroleum exploration and exportation is changing toward the human talent strengthening for the XXI century sustainable development. This work aim is to propose improvements to the economist professional training program under the expectation of more efficiently respond to the new national and global challenges. A fusion of qualitative and quantitative researching methodologies is administrated as follows: (1) The literature content analysis method is applied to complete the review about the current economist professional profile. (2) The Statistical Analysis is applied to determine the professional competencies that university students consider are required for future professional exercise. Also, the relationships between competences and factors participants' sex and age are presented. Finally, (3) Focus Group is used to collect the voices of the professionals about didactic strategies that can be applying for improving the current formation process in Economy science. It is concluded that marketing and digital communication competencies are two key elements that should be included in the curriculum of professionals in the field of the economy for improving their professional's performance.

**Keywords:** Teaching of Economics; Teaching of Economics; Marketing; Production; Economic Development; Technological Change.

**JEL classification:** A2, M3, M1, O1, O33.

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## 1. Introduction

### 1.1. Professionals in Economy Science, their contribution

Economics as a social science had overcome the barriers to board the commercial, economic, financial, and security sectors in South American nations as an effect of the global market trends and governmental policies. In the case of Ecuador, the national mega project known as - Productive Matrix Change-began in 2009; the expectation was: to transit from the extraction economical model based on the trading of commodities and petroleum, to a system based on the human creative talent (Villafuerte and Intriago, 2016). In this sense, it is necessary to research about the evolution of the economist professional profile to guarantee their positive performances in coherence to the local new necessities. Taking into consideration from the social and educational approaches, the greater the economic training is, the better tools the professionals will have to face any and every change or uncertain situation that might emerge in the local national contexts. Therefore, it should be recognized that the formation of the economist is one of the university institutional factors with a great capacity to promote competitiveness and economic advancement in any nation (Lora and Nopo, 2009). Thus, this work contributes to the regional discussion about the evolution of the professional competences of the economists at the beginning of the century XXI (Villafuerte and Benitez, 2018); when the sustainability is the priority for every country around the world (United Nations, 2015). The economy system of most Latin American nations had been traditionally based on the exportation of agriculture and fishing raw products. In addition, countries like Mexico, Venezuela and Ecuador also have had the petroleum exportation as the main income since the years 70s (Villafuerte and Intriago, 2016, p.2.). The idea is to transform the current Ecuadorian industries into sustainable development projects in the middle term (Republic of Ecuador, 2012, 2015). Thus, the governmental economic policies as the -Ecuadorian National Development Plans (2009-2012) and (2013-2016) establish as priority, to develop the agriculture sector into the agro industry. In addition, the government policies promote the productive sectors such as Fishing and Tourism (Republic of Ecuador, 2015); thought the current knowledge society theory (Viglierchio and Williamson, 2015); and the generation of clean energy and reduction of the mining impacts, petroleum refinery and the progressive investment to develop the national Bio-industry and Nano-technology fields (Republic of Ecuador, 2017). The economist as a professional did not always have the social recognition in the labor market; in consequence, the demand for work in specific public organizations or business did not always meet the supply of proper economists' professional profiles; and in the private sector, economists are the missing piece, because their education was based on entrenched paradigms that promoted a conservative and uncreative mentality affecting their professional credibility (Villafuerte, Franco and Luzardo, 2017). Thus, economists may be not able or capable to identify the current and future market dynamics necessities (Kotler and Keller, 2012) which has been taken for the multimedia and multi-platforms communications environments (Hormaza and Villafuerte, 2018). In this concern, Boyd and Ellison (2008) sustain that, Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) changed the professional and personal communications styles in recently times. In addition, ICT can support projects of training through the application of different multimedia resources to approach professionals to the real context of their work field (Temprano, 2011; y Cabero, Llorente & Gomez del Castillo, 2011). Considering that Bologna process changed the European university principles in 1999, it had a direct impact on the molding of the economics major, who must achieve fostering the development of the professional's skills. Latin American academy is also implementing educational standards from Chile to Mexico and the Caribbean countries; process that represents high exigencies for those institutions (Varela, 2010). However, stakeholders and population in general, wonder about the efficiency of those economic government policies, because population feel any improvement in their lives quality had been reached as result of national developing projects (García and García, 2010). The new role of the professionals of economy may be related to those vision for sustainability, industry transformation and technology development. In addition, Moya (2015) argues South American and Caribbean professionals of Economics require new competences related to marketing and ICT knowledge to manage clients' communications in the national and international commerce scenarios; and this work has as a goal to propose improvements

to the economist professional training program under the expectation of more efficiently respond to the new national and global requirements. This work applies qualitative and quantitative methodologies to identify the economist new competences from the voice of 400 students from an Ecuadorian public university and 10 independent professionals of the economy field. This work consists of a literature review that includes the topics: Professionals in Economy Science, their contribution; the model for professional competencies; Conceptualization of Marketing; and Conceptualization of digital communications. In addition, a Likert questionnaire was designed by the researchers' team to collect data concerning the competences demanded by the Ecuadorian productive sectors from the current views of local and global sectors. A focal group is applied to collect students perceptions. The results expected are related to the economist current professional profile, competences demanded in in current and future economists, and strategic routes for enhancing current economics professional in Ecuador.

## **2. Literature review**

### **2.1 Professionals in Economy Science, their contribution**

To Samuelson (2011), economics can be understood as the study of how societies use scarce resources to produce and distribute valuable commodities among different individuals. Economics is concerned basically with managing scarce resources to produce the necessary goods, as well as to distribute them for consumption and thus provide the material welfare of a society. Professionals in economics need to understand how to carry out a process of production, distribution - exchange - consumption (Mochon, 2004). Economics specifically discusses the following three basic questions: what? how? and for whom? to produce. Moya (2015) sustains that, the aim of the economy science is to provide a method for sorting and setting priorities when making decisions about individual or collective productive process. Thus, it is necessary to understand that any economic system should make the best use of the limited resources to apply the fundamental concept of efficiency. Thus, the professional object of Economics reveals that, economist's contribution is to sustain a society, and to balance its development within a framework of rational and sustainable uses of available resources in a local, national or international interaction. According to Tejada (2011) the scope of a professional in economics science is to contribute to the performance of the nations' economic and social development through the execution of the following activities:

- 1) The analysis of the national and international economic situation and recommending the application of economic policies;
- 2) Formulating development plans;
- 3) Managing and/or advising companies, both public and private;
- 4) Generating private and social investment projects;
- 5) Conducting research;
- 5) Taking the lead in making economic-financial decisions in different sectors of the local, regional and national economy;
- 6) Organizing, manage and evaluating their own company (p. 9).

Some key functions inherent in labor contexts of economist performance are:

- 1) They are inherent to each profession;
- 2) They have a special significance from the most common problems and situations of the profession;
- 3) They constitute ways that make possible the successful performance of professionals;
- 4) They are a formative premise in the university context to favor performance levels and suitability for university undergraduates;
- 5) They are refined to the same extent that practitioners and researchers perform and innovate;
- 6) They constitute a guide for each Economics major from the perspective that there is consistency between what is taught in the university context and what is done in the labor and professional world;
- 7) They have a mutable character, because they can merge, from its contextualization in scenarios of the profession and advances in technological and scientific or technical field. (Tejada, 2011, p. 10)

### **2.1. The model for professional competency**

In 2005, the Price Waterhouse Coopers-PWC introduced the term competencies to refer about a group of human behaviors that reflect the skills, knowledge and attitudes when a person is performing a job. Saracho (2005, p. 28) stated the following classification to the model of professional competency: "(1)

Generic model that provides an average level of performance; and (2) Functional competences related to the responsibilities of a job". Scholars as Kahane (2008) and Bolívar (2010), Villafuerte and Benitez (2018) agree that, the model for professional competency seeks to identify the gaps existing between the ideal level expected and the level of achievement or professional maturity reported. A relevant point in the definition of competencies is presented by Nino (2011), when he raises that competences are different routes people should follow to strengthen their professional skills. Thus, Almonacid, Montes and Vásquez (2011, p. 115) sustain, there are four division of professional competencies; they are: Instrumental competences: cognitive, methodological, technological and linguistic abilities that a professional must have to efficiently and effectively fulfill their tasks; (ii) interpersonal skills: those individual capacities; (iii) Social skills: social interaction and cooperation; and (iv) Systemic competences: they combine those abilities related to understanding, sensitivity and knowledge. Tejeda and Sanchez (2012, p. 11) plant the equation "to know-being and to know-how in order to achieve the ideal performance from a person's resources". Moreover, Tobon (2013, p.16) affirms "every learning process must propose to students, challenges and situations contextualized to their personal, family, social or professional interest". His theory, called Social Training or Socio-formation, do integrate learners on the following aspects:

"(1) Form and consolidate the ethical project of life; (2) Have ongoing ventures; (3) Develop the necessary skills to face the challenges of the context; and (4) Work collaboratively" (p. 12). Thus, the professional training programs directed the classroom work towards "the deepening, application, adjustment, conciliation and adaptation of contents to enhance the skills of professionals in training" (Moya and Alonso, 2016, p. 10).

Finally, Villafuerte et al. (2017) sustain that, the term professional competency is related to the "aptitude, suitability, capacity and expertise that a person could have to obtain the [...] objectives that are wished" (Tobon, 2013, p.59).

## 2.2. Digital communication as a professional competency

For the users of Information and Communication Technologies, the term digital competency consists of skills for executing activities as: the search, obtaining, processing and communicating information, transforming this information using computers (European Commission, 2010).

In the field of professional training the Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) has overcome the barriers of physical distances, doing possible to expose students to different cultures around the world (Cabero, Llorente and Gomez, 2011). In addition, Social networks are virtual spaces in which individual, groups, collective actors can interact (Jansen, 2010); and link learners' emotional capital and motivations (Ferres and Piscitelli, 2012). The web 1.0 allows users to have direct communication between equals (Roig-Vila, 2010); keeping the interest on their users because, the multiple opportunities that ICT offer for effective social interaction. Scholars as Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) define the term social media as that "group of internet-based applications that are based on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0 and that allow the creation and exchange of content generated by users" (p.3).

Maiz and Tejada (2013) argue the social networking sites goal is to improve communication and exchange information multiple interaction ways. "Every task that individuals undertake offers opportunities for learning and reflect on what people have done, how they have done it, and drawing conclusions about what they should do when a similar task would be presented" (Velayudhan, 2013, p.110). These capabilities should be used for developing innovations in the current professional training process (Etxebarria, Garay and Romero, 2012; Intriago, Villafuerte, Morales, Lema, Echeverría, 2016).

## 2.3. Conceptualization of Marketing

To Kotler and Keller (2012), marketing consists of activities, both individuals and organizations, to facilitate and encourage exchanges within group dynamic forces. The human activity is aimed at satisfying needs and desires through the exchange processes. In the same sense, it is possible to identify a few common characteristics:

(1) Marketing involves a set of activities including a mixture of marketing management in attachment to micro and macroeconomic perspectives; (2) Marketing and economy develop both individuals and organizations; (3) Marketing and the economy develop and facilitates the exchange of goods and services with an equitable distribution; (4) The environment in which marketing and economy evolves is dynamic, that is, under pressure and continuous change (p. 8).

To Drucker (2009), the term Marketing can be understood as a technical to make systematic efforts by the company in an orderly manner and according to a plan, to seek, promote and serve markets for their products. A comprehensive analysis of these integrating criteria reveals that the economist as a professional address in their daily activities, satisfaction of needs, processes of movement of goods and services in local, national and international markets, and consumption processes as a means of satisfaction of human needs. In this environment of assessment, basic marketing content should be included in the curricula, as a curricular axis addressing training in economy, strengthening with its content, the development of methodological competencies.

#### **2.4. Conceptualization of digital communications**

Scholars as Boyd and Ellison (2008); and Jansen (2010) argue, the Information and Communication Technology had revolutionized the professional and personal communication styles. So, people must acquire new skills and abilities to strengthen human abilities to learn, unlearn and relearn to adapt themselves to new demands of communication in current and future society conditions (Cabero, Llorente and Gómez, 2011).

The global market is centered on the reaching of consumers (Hormaza and Villafuerte, 2018). In the current digital age, they are looking for users of devices and followers of social networks, always available on Internet. Thus, websites allow users to produce and expose their own digital material (Bartolome and Grane, 2009). Moreover, the digital communication consists in the –transmedia- which can be understood to elaborate and deliver differentiated contents with high quality and alternative formats (text, audio, video, info graphic). Consumer helps the process of expansion of these materials every time they share them through social networks.

Web pages, social networks and their applications, in the last decade have become a powerful source in news, online collaboration, viral marketing and entertainment (Cabero, Llorente and Gómez, 2011). This technological evolution has forced contemporary society to adapt to new communication modalities (Cookie, 2012).

The combination of Internet and computer began with Web 1.0 between the 60s and 80s. Web pages quickly became popular due to their friendly designs; and e-mail contributed to the development of businesses such as tourism and foreign trade.

Ecuadorian have a wide range of usage of mobile telephony in their business and coordination of work, communication with development institutions and family environment. Internet is a service that is available especially in urban areas of the country however; in the rural areas the access is still limited (Vinueza y Simbaña, 2017).

The most accepted social networks in Ecuador are in this order: Facebook, YouTube and WhatsApps (Alcazar, 2017; y Moncada y Freire, 2015).

To Intriago et al. (2016) the Web 1.0 and Web 2.0 facilitated the participation of human groups through virtual environments in educational projects in Ecuador. In addition, web 2.0 and Web 3.0 emerged to boost the distribution of educational information using platforms and running process related to the collaborative work and task base learning (Villafuerte, Intriago and Romero, 2017).

In addition, Hormaza and Villafuerte (2018) sustain multiplatform production uses diverse communicational format to improve the business opportunities. Such multiplatform applications can be operated using diverse systems of mobiles and tablets operative systems; reduction of costs in programming and design; better access to those applications.

Among the previous studies reviewed in this research, it is quoted the work of Woolfolk (2010) who found that vocational training programs in the field of Social Economy must be endowed with an important component that is the motivation.

Farfán, Villafuerte, Romero and Intriago (2017, p. 61) used ICT to improve the foreign language acquisition process. The experience also showed that, the use of ICT in educational projects promote a more intensive and frequent students' participation.

The work of Benítez and Chica (2017) argue that the Ecuadorian universities curriculum in the practical trends combines foreign educative model which promotes the establishment of new forms of relationships between the educational institution, entrepreneurs and the knowledge which emerges from the local communities.

### 3. Methodology

This work applies a critical and reflexive approaches to determine the professional competences of the economist developed up today in Ecuador as a reference for South America. A mixture of quantitative and qualitative approach is applied to determinate the student's perceptions about the current economist's professional profile.

The sample is conformed for 410 participants among students and professors from a public university located in the province of Manabí, Ecuador.

Table 1

Gender	Professionals of Economy	Students of Economy	Total
Female	6	220	226
Male	4	180	184
Total	10	400	410

Source: Project records (2017).

#### Questions to answer in this research

- 1) How is the economist current professional profile?
- 2) What are the competences demanded for future professional of economy science in Ecuador?
- 3) What didactic strategies can be implemented to enhance the current economics professional training programs in Ecuador?

### 3.1. Instruments and procedures

#### a) Literature review

It was applied a literature review technique to identify the Latin American economist professional profile. This review consisted in the chronological review organized in three categories: (1) Training programs in Economy Science Category; (2) The contributions and functions of a professional in economy; (3) Skills and values an economist should has.

#### b) Questionnaire Likert

This instrument was designed by the researchers' team. The purpose of this instrument is to collect data about the competences demanded for the Ecuadorian productive sectors since a global view. The version applied in this study consists of 10 items.

The instrument offer to participants three possible answers for each item:

- (1) Strongly Agree;
- (2) Agree;
- (3) Non-Agree/Non-Disagree;
- (4) Disagree;
- (5) Strongly disagree.

The credibility and viability of the instrument was examined statistically with the Alpha of Cronbach = 0.89.

#### c) Focal group

The focal group questions guide was designed by the researcher's team. The purpose of this instrument is to collect data about the Didactic Strategies for developing professional competences in future economists.

The main categories are digital communication, marketing and commerce, group work, social values and responsibility, gender equality, sustainable development, leadership, and government policies. The questionnaire credibility and viability test were tested through the expert's judgment panel. The instrument was applied after completed the correction suggested for the experts using the format focal group.

### 3.2. Ethic normative

Every participant signed voluntarily a consensus format form. All data collected will be guard for the authors for 7 years. The participants identity will be kept in anonymous the data will only be used for academic purposes. In any case, the data will be used for commerce.

## 4. Results

The results are exposed following the research questions presented in the introduction section.

### Question No.1: How is the economist current professional profile?

To answer the question 1, in the Table 2 is presented a triangulation of literature review.

Table 2  
The professional profile of the current economist

Categories	Literature review
<b>Category Training programs Economy Science</b>	<p>1. To Melgar in Moya, et al (2016), the economist training program should undergo changes in the context in which environments of globalization, modernity, marketing and trade liberalization, among other things, are basic in people studying economics.</p> <p>The effects that global environment performance of the economist brings plus the new labor and changing demands that occur in modern times, it is required that this professional should deepen their leading role in the economy in a more participatory and communicational way. This should be reflected through the harmonious and generative performance in contexts where the economist works, requiring the change of training to improve their performance. This requires that an inclusive formative process be assumed, based on the approach of professional competence, from the perspective of human development with professional significance.</p> <p>Economists trained at the university's classrooms keep the management style used during the last century. Thus, the philosophy applied of their ideological concepts is still more important than being a professional who applies theoretical and practical solutions about Economy concepts in coherence with the local socioeconomic problems.</p> <p>Scholars as Benitez and Villafuerte (2013); and Benitez and Chica (2017) argue the Ecuadorian universities curriculum in the practical trends combines at least the educative model of the United States which promotes the establishment of new forms of relationships between the educational institution, entrepreneurs and the knowledge which emerges from the local communities. Such condition requires of the construction of functional infrastructure and the development of strategic capabilities in various productive sectors having implications on the Higher Education Organic Law (LOES) of (Republic of Ecuador, 2010).</p> <p>Related to the criteria the Pontificia Universidad Católica de Ecuador (Pacheco, 2009) described above formation of the economics majors should be associated with economic, social, political and cultural development at the local, national and international levels (Pacheco, 2010).</p>

**Category (2).** Literature available limits the social contributions of the economist as a professional. **The contributions and functions of a professional in economy** There are several rejection, criticism and accusations of different parties without creating new solutions (Moya, et al. 2016). Such circumstances are also evident when data is contrasted to the current professional environments in Ecuador; where National Constitution of Ecuador (Republic of Ecuador, 2008) establishes that the higher education system should be articulated to the National Development Plan priorities (Republic of Ecuador, 2012). Thus, certain productive sectors must comply with general characteristics to consolidate the national economic sovereignty in harmony with secondary and tertiary factors of production. Samuelson (2011) argues that the satisfaction of material needs (food, clothing or housing) and non-material (education, leisure, etc.) of a society, requires of its members to carry out some productive activities through their own abilities and skills acquired in training, forcing economic entities to be concerned about the way in which scarce resources are managed, and how to distribute them for consumption among the members of society.

**Category (3).** Among the knowledge, skills and values an economist should demonstrate appeared: **Skills and values an economist should have.**

1. Addressing essential needs of the society. Eating and Nutrition; Healthcare and environmental sanitation; Education and Cultural Development; Housing and Clothing; and Utilities
2. The macroeconomic and sectorial development of production.
3. The study of the conditions for the normal development of private enterprise
4. The management and development of the financial sector.
5. Social processes of distribution of income and wealth.
6. The process of movement of goods and services in local, national and international markets.
7. The processes of local, national and international financial circulation.
8. The processes of consumption as a means of meeting human needs.
9. Accumulation and investment processes as a means of expanding social production.
10. The public service within the economic and social functions of the state, of state enterprises and general non-profit organizations.
11. The management of public policies: local, regional, sectorial and national planning; Economic policies: macroeconomic, sectorial and public companies; Social policies, welfare policies; Policies for economic and social control: comptroller, superintendents and other macroeconomic agencies.
12. The field of consulting in development issues.
13. Academy teaching and research (Pacheco, 2010).

#### **Analysis:**

From the review of the available literature, it is concluded that it is necessary to promote the discussion regarding the evolution of the 21st century economist professional profile in order to strengthen his capacity to respond to global trends and digital communication processes styled at present. The introduction of marketing to professional training programs would seem to be a latent and urgent need in the competitive business environment and business management that is in used by economics professionals in Ecuador; where sustainable development trends are imposed in a model that drives productive transformation.

Source: Authors literature review (2019).

#### **Question No. 2.-What are the competences demanded for future professional of economy science in Ecuador?**

In the Table 3 are exposed the economists' learning expectations collected through a Likert questionnaire.

Table 3  
Students of Economy science learning expectations

Items	Strongly Agree	Agree	Not agree disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
1. Price allocation	296	76	0	0	28
2. Information of distribution channels	328	40	0	0	32
3. Techniques for products description	256	88	0	0	56
4. Products promotion on media strategies	228	0	0	128	44
5. Communication supported on technology	364	36	0	0	0
6. Clients' need and desires attention	368	32	0	0	0
7. Strategies for adding value to products	340	56	0	0	4
8. Determination of clients' needs	336	0	56	0	8
9. Sustainable development	320	0	0	80	0
10. Adaptation in multicultural and diversity environments	300	40	0	60	0

N=400

Source: Questionnaire applied to students of the Economy program (2017-2018).

The knowledge more demanded by the participants are: Clients' need and desires attention (92%), Communication supported on technology (91%), and Strategies for adding value to products (85%). The most evident opposition of knowledge is represented for: Techniques for products description (14%); Products promotion on media strategies (11%), and Information of distribution channels (8%).

Relationships between the students' perception and the factors sex and age

It is applied the Index Chi-square of Pearson having as p. value = 0,05; the hypothesis confirmation. The traditional model of hypothesis is administrated. See table 3.

H01= Not existing significative relationships between participants' learning expectations and the factors Sex.

H02= Not existing significative relationships between participants' learning expectations and the factors Age.

Table 3  
Chi-square of Pearson

Items	Sex	Age
1. Price allocation	0,000	0,006
2. Information of distribution channels	0,000	0,000
3. Techniques for products description	0,000	0,001
4. Products promotion on media strategies	0,000	0,010
5. Communication supported on technology	0,003	0,441
6. Clients' need and desires attention	0,007	0,698
7. Strategies for adding value to products	0,001	0,019
8. Determination of clients' needs	0,000	0,008
9. Sustainable development	0,000	0,002
10. Adaptation in multicultural and diversity environments	0,000	0,001

Source: Questionnaire applied to students of the Economy program (2017-2018).

**For the factor sex:**

The Chi-square of Pearson under the condition  $p. \text{valor} \geq 0,05$  for the factor sex any of the item prove the hypothesis Ho1. In consequence it exists relevant relationships between the Items Students learning expectations and the factor sex.

**For the factor age:**

The Chi-square of Pearson under the condition  $p. \text{valor} \geq 0,05$  for the factor age are confirmed for the items 5 and 6. For the other items is not proved the hypothesis Ho2. In consequence those items exist relevant relationships between the Items Students' learning expectations and the factor age.

**Question 3: What didactic strategies can be implemented to enhance the current economics professional training programs in Ecuador?**

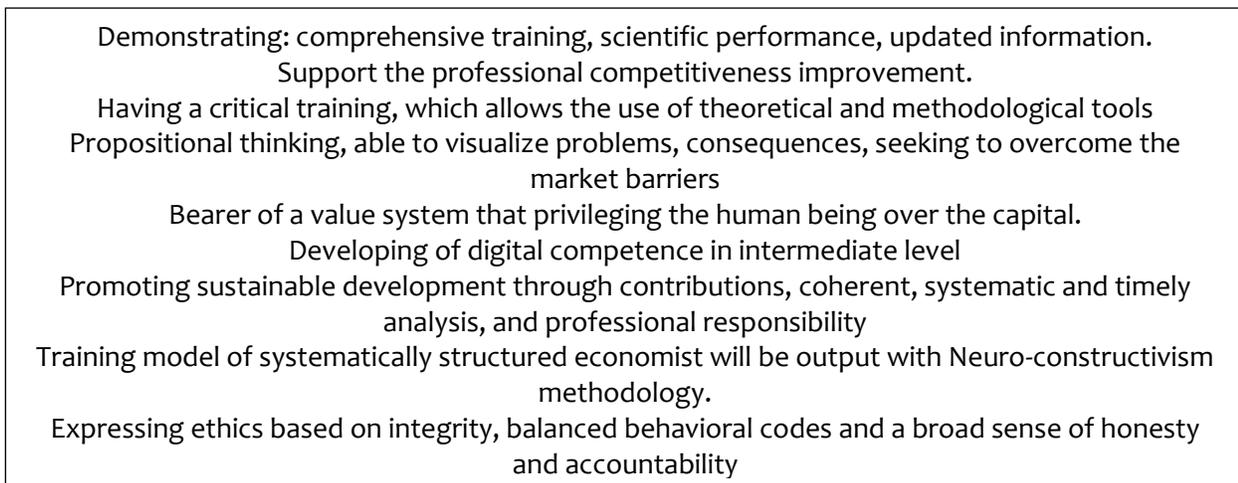
In the figure 1 is shown as the main key results the following: "Propositional thinking, able to visualize problems, consequences, seeking to overcome the market barriers" and "Developing of digital competence in intermediate level".

Likewise from the conception of competencies assumed by Tejeda and Sanchez (2012) that argues that this constitutes a human quality that is configured as a synthesis of the linking of knowledge (knowledge about marketing), know-how (skills, habits, skills and abilities for the realization of the basic processes of marketing), knowing how to be and being (qualities, attitudes, skills and values required for marketing), expressed through their professional performance based on the subject's personal resources.

At this point, Woolfolk (2010) sustain that motivation to university students is one of the fundamental tasks in the process of professional training that combines cognitive, emotional and behavioral aspects. "Every task that individuals undertake offers opportunities for learning and reflection on what people have done and how they have done it and drawing conclusions about what they should do when a similar task would be present" (Velayudhan, 2013, p.110).

Figure No. 1:

Didactic Strategies for enhancing economist professional training programs in Ecuador



Source: Interview applied to experts (2019).

**5. Implications**

The economy as a profession is linked to a complex dynamic that is intertwined with multiple edges that are based theoretically and methodologically, as a basis for the understanding and interpretation of

the economic, political and social relationships that arise around the interaction of societies to satisfy the demand, supply, the shortcomings and needs of consumption of goods and services.

It is considered that the formation of Economics student should be directed to the integration of educational potential as developers of critical and innovative thinking. This makes it possible to ensure their playing in the economic sphere competently, for which an understanding about economics as a science is needed. In this concern, the implementations of the professional competences in the field of economist proposed by Tobon (2013) is welcome in the current sociopolitical conditions of Ecuador.

#### **The current economist professional profile:**

In Latin America and in Ecuador in particular, the training of professional economists includes a predominance of a theory of a harmonious society. This neoclassical approach is mostly supported using texts associated with this movement, and environments of developed countries, as is the case of the United States. Another influential model on Ecuador's higher education system is the European model, where the consensus manifesto of Bologna 99 seeks to ensure the homologation of university degrees and facilitates the mobility of students and teachers (Medina, 2013).

In addition, Fernández and Torres (2015) affirm that students are motivated to carry out activities that form their professional profile, but these activities must be of interest to the learners. All professional training programs should consider such motivational because they have the power to generate in the learners such curiosity senses to explore new learning. In this concern themain deficiencies arise from the intentional exploratory analysis to students who have not received the integral formation of the marketing processes in their professional performance, measured through the scientific method.

According to Moya (2015) who supports that Ecuadorian public policies deserve special treatment from the Ecuadorian university, endorsed in Article 350 of the Constitution of the Republic, which states "that the higher education system is aimed at academic and vocational training; innovation, promotion and development; building solutions for the country's problems in relation to the objectives of development regime".

Students' perceptions about the current Economy Science training program

As it is possible to appreciate, the percentage of "Agree" response for all items exceeds 50%, indicating that more than half of respondents identified it as necessary elements related to marketing.

- a. Clients' need and desires attention (92%),
- b. Communication supported on technology (91%), and
- c. Strategies for adding value to products (85%).

On the other hand, the information collection instrument asked an open question to some comment or suggestion regarding the improvement of the quality of training in economists, finding recurrently the need to prepare professionals for the labor market from the strengthening of the area of market and financial and the practical conception of the career, that is to say, the need to have a much more constant and directed approach with the economic and labor reality is noted.

#### **The most evident opposition in negative are:**

- d. Techniques for products description (14%),
- e. Products promotion on media strategies (11%), and
- f. Information of distribution channels (8%).

#### **5.1. Marketing in the economists' professional profile**

Economics as a science is a complex activity in which the people involved must have a comprehensive and holistic approach (Varela, 2009). This involves observing economic and marketing phenomena, collecting statistical information associated with human resources, and production processes, thus, proposing solutions to improve the lifestyle of the people who work in various fields (Moya, 2015). Considering the dynamics of this context, commercial reasons are fundamental in contemporary societies

where citizens make economic decisions, either as consumers, employers, employees, taxpayers, users, beneficiaries of social benefits or as demanders of banking services and financial requirements.

Addressing the needs of the country, it must be stated the subject of marketing in its integrative effort with economics, develop skills and abilities in handling domestic and international markets, and the various factors that comprise it, such as planning, pricing, promotion, advertising, distribution, sales, merchandising, customer loyalty, e-commerce, and management of new global communication technologies through social networks. They will achieve a real increase in productivity, diversify production and processing of goods and services with a value-generating component, which will give future economists ample knowledge to improve their performance.

## 5.2. Digital communication competences in the economists' professional profile

This proposal contributes to the improvement of the multiplatform-communication competence in the economist professional profile generating abilities and skills, which must be present in the professional current environment. It integrates the processes of consumption as a means of satisfying needs and guide to professional insertion, reintegration and employment update, thus the main objective is to enhance and adapt the knowledge and skills of current and future workers throughout life, and whose purpose is; understanding the environment and building skills conducive to integration into the professional discipline.

Marketing is related, seen from the perspective of satisfaction of needs, which conduces to strategic planning that the individual or organization have with satisfaction plans, at the right time and the right price, among other features and attributes.

Economy actors should have mastery of the principles of cognitive capacity, skills and abilities, with extensive knowledge in resource management, with skills that respond to market demands, to analyze their strengths and weaknesses, pursuant to respond to competency-based education and social relevance, responding to the expectations and needs of the people. This element is established as a requirement and challenge for each of the universities.

The knowledge of Marketing and digital communication competency in the student of Economics are and will be a requirement to allow the development of creative attitudes and innovation, which can be applied through the usage of information and communication technologies. Markets will produce the appropriate insertion of the new professionals in the labor, social and professional environments with an ethical and a proactive vision for local socio economical development.

## 6. Conclusions

At this point, we conclude that marketing and digital communications competences are required to be introduced as official subjects in the economist professional training program in Ecuador, expecting the professional of economy reach higher levels of professional performances in coherence to the national developing projects and government policies as the National Plan "A whole life 2017-2021"; and the international agreements as the "Agenda 30 for the global sustainable development".

The professional training programs in Economy science should include systematically in the curriculum, the marketing and digital competences to allow professionals identifying new market opportunities for selling the national products and services in better business conditions. Thus, the economists will be formed to act in a complex and dynamic world where digital competence is used in every productive sector.

In coherence to the Ecuadorian government policy related to the improvement of the higher education quality and the LOES (2010); this research propose to consider the professional training processes to articulate various subjects in the curriculum of the program of Economics is assumed to integrate the knowledge and skills the future professional as essential step to get an efficient performance. However, the evidences allow us to interpret that other aspects are also required in current times: Adaptation to multicultural and diversity environments; and Sustainable development.

A professional of Economy science should work in a versatile way to work through a variety of processes, such as the creation of social projects, investment analysis, designing of economic policy, making economic and marketing analysis. Marketing is the linchpin that integrates factors that help professionals to have a holistic view of the various scenarios and business opportunities. In line with these arguments, this paper aims at assessing the need for economists to get training in marketing as an aspect that will distinguish their relevance in the work environment at local, regional, national and international levels.

After assessing the criteria of the authors included in this paper, it is inferred that marketing is a set of activities designed to identify and meet consumer needs, to contribute to achieving the objectives set by the organizations. The set of activities is based on the various strategies, techniques and policies implemented and developed by the Marketing, in its integrated process with economics. It is necessary then, to get the professional economist to be formed to develop skills that will be transferred to labor contexts where they can give added value to their work to the organization, able to achieve a competitive effect, by linking economic theory with financial and marketing practice.

The encouragement of joint marketing plans that fit with the new local and global challenges is needed for this reason, it is necessary that the profile of the Ecuadorian Economist makes possible to cover content related to market knowledge and the digital communications competency. Similarly, this profile should seek adjustments to the entire economic, social and cultural system that requires an appropriate usage, and through digital competences, a suitable and competent economist will be achieved, capable of addressing and communicate the economic analysis and plans using the dynamism of digital competences.

The limitations of this study may be the sample corpus which is centered in only one university; which does not allow to present any generalization. However, this work contributes on the regional discussion about the construction of the economist professional profile for the century XXI.

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