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Analysis and Perspectives on the Required Competencies for Students at the National University of Chimborazo in the Management Programme, Ecuador

Edith Josefina Liccioni[1], Francisco Paul Pérez Salas[2], Bravo Hidrovo Nicky Alberto[3], Benítez Obando Iván Fabricio[4], Omar Flor Patricio Mora[5]

Abstract

The study analyses the essential competencies for Business Administration students, emphasising their relevance in training competitive professionals for a globalised and dynamic labour market. Using a mixed methodology based on Kurt Lewin's Action Research Theory, participatory workshops, questionnaires, and semi-structured interviews were employed to collect data from a sample of 52 students. The analysis involved statistical techniques and thematic categorisation to identify patterns and trends.Twenty-four key competencies were identified, grouped into technical, methodological, social, and personal categories. In technical competencies, digital literacy (85%) and digital skills (90%) stood out for their importance in technological adaptation, while big data analysis (60%) indicated an area for improvement. Among methodological competencies, critical thinking (80%), problem-solving (88%), and analytical skills (82%) were deemed essential for decision-making. In social competencies, teamwork (95%) and leadership (72%) were highlighted as fundamental. Finally, in personal competencies, ethics (80%) and continuous learning (85%) emerged as pillars of professional development.The study concludes that while social and technical competencies are highly valued, areas such as data analysis and networking require greater curricular emphasis to produce more well-rounded and adaptable professionals.

Keywords: *Competencies, Business Administration, Professional Training.*

Introduction

In the context of Business Administration, the competencies required by students have undergone significant evolution in response to technological advancements and the transformations in global labour market demands. The transition to the Fourth Industrial Revolution has heightened the need for future professionals to acquire a comprehensive set of technical, methodological, social, and personal skills. These competencies are not only essential for adapting to the rapid changes in the business environment but also for ensuring that graduates can meet the complex requirements of modern workplaces (Csaszar et al., 2024).

This research focuses on analysing and understanding the essential competencies for Business Administration students, emphasising their importance in training competitive and adaptable professionals. According to recent studies, the development of these competencies not only positively impacts students' employability but also enhances their educational satisfaction and the overall quality of their professional preparation (Bennett et al., 2024). Furthermore, this article examines how inclusive and adaptable approaches in business education can contribute to more effective learning outcomes, taking into account individual variables such as gender differences and specific needs (Ordoñez et al., 2017).

In the following sections, the key competencies identified in recent literature are outlined and their implications for student training are explored. The importance of integrating these skills into curricula to align them with contemporary labour market demands is highlighted. Within the framework of the

[1] Universidad Nacional de Chimborazo. Riobamba, Ecuador. Orcid. https://rcid.org/0000-0001-6142-7022: correo: edith.liccioni@unach.edu.ec
[2] Universidad Nacional de Chimborazo. Riobamba, Ecuador, Email: francisco.perez@unach.edu.ec, https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5866-3320.
[3] Universidad Técnica De Manabí, Email. nicky.bravo@utm.edu.ec, https://orcid.org/0009-0009-9027-9773.
[4] Universidad Nacional de Chimborazo, Ecuador, Universidad Politécnica de Valencia España https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3802-3932.
[5] Universidad Nacional de Chimborazo. Riobamba, Ecuador, Email: oflor@unach.edu.ec; https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5302-141X

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Business Administration programme, it is worth noting that the programme includes key curricular components, as outlined in Table 1.

Table N° 1. Distribution of Programme Components

Curricular Components	**Number of Subjects: 41** Range for Hour Planning by Components	**Description of Hours:** **1.5**
1. Theoretical Training 2. Pre-Professional Training 3. Training in Methodology 4. Training in Communication and Language 5. Training in Context Integration, Knowledge, and Culture 6. Training for Graduation	**Total Hours of Learning in Contact with the Teacher**	2160
	Total Hours of Practical-Experimental Learning	1456
	Total Hours of Autonomous Learning	1784
	Total Hours of Community Service Practice	120
	Total Hours of Pre-Professional Labour Practice	240
	Total Hours for Curricular Integration/Graduation Unit	320

Curricular Structure and Distribution of Components

The outlined curriculum structure and weekly hours dedicated to various subjects within the academic programme of the Universidad Nacional de Chimborazo, particularly in the Faculty of Political and Administrative Sciences, provide a comprehensive overview of the educational framework. It details the total hours allocated for each semester, encompassing courses such as Algebra, Epistemology, and Business Administration, among others. The study emphasises the distribution of contact hours with instructors and autonomous learning hours, offering an integrated perspective on the programme's academic approach. The curriculum is designed to balance theoretical and practical learning experiences, ensuring a well-rounded educational experience.

A well-structured curriculum serves as a cornerstone for achieving equilibrium between theoretical and practical learning—key elements of higher education. A comprehensive curricular design not only acknowledges the importance of diverse stakeholders, such as instructors, students, and other interested parties, but also actively engages students in long-term projects. This approach fosters in-depth study and the development of critical thinking, which are vital for both professional and academic growth.

Integrating practical experiences into the curriculum is crucial for linking theoretical concepts with their real-world applications. These first-hand experiences not only consolidate acquired knowledge but also create significant learning opportunities, strengthening students' ability to apply what they have learned in tangible scenarios. This experiential learning transcends the classroom, preparing students to address the challenges of the contemporary labour market effectively.

Moreover, systematic instruction plays a pivotal role in structuring the educational process, providing a coherent framework that integrates theoretical knowledge and practical skills. This approach ensures a cohesive learning experience, fostering the development of critical competencies such as analytical thinking, creativity, and problem-solving (Hasan & Kumar, 2024).

Ultimately, the combination of long-term projects, practical experiences, and structured instruction within a comprehensive curriculum enriches the learning process. This approach not only enhances the acquisition

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of knowledge and practical skills but also prepares students to tackle the challenges of a constantly evolving world, meeting educational standards while fostering an engaging learning environment.

Theoretical Foundation

In the context of curriculum transformation aimed at redesigning the Business Administration programme, strategic guidelines have been adopted to align with the demands of the dynamic contemporary business environment and the regulations established by Ecuador's Higher Education Council (CES) (Santana et al., 2021). This integrative effort has also considered internationally recognised standards in business management, the internal regulations of the university responsible for the programme, and the valuable wealth of experience accumulated throughout the academic history of the programme since its inception.

The redesign process has gone beyond merely meeting external regulations to reinforce the relevance and quality of the educational model. It is oriented towards the comprehensive development of technical, ethical, and human competencies that future business administrators need to lead successfully in a globalised and competitive market. This has involved a thorough review of curriculum content, the integration of active learning methodologies, and the incorporation of advanced technological tools to enhance teaching and learning processes.

Among the most significant aspects underpinning this curricular redesign are the following:

Fundamental Principles for Programme Development

The curriculum redesign of the Business Administration programme is based on strategic principles that ensure a logical, comprehensive, and systematic approach to updating and enhancing the curriculum framework. These principles aim not only to meet the demands of the contemporary business environment but also to anticipate global trends in the training of highly skilled professionals. Key aspects of this redesign include prioritising the development of competencies focused on strategic decision-making, efficient and sustainable resource management, and effective leadership in organisations operating in dynamic and globalised contexts (Grasser et al., 2020).

Additionally, the redesign establishes a curricular development framework that coherently aligns the needs and expectations of the labour market with the skills and abilities required for professional practice in the administrative field. This approach integrates essential components such as critical analysis, innovation, entrepreneurship, and the use of information and communication technologies (ICT) as fundamental tools in administrative practice (Thomsen et al., 2024). This ensures that graduates not only possess a solid theoretical foundation but also practical skills that enable them to adapt and excel in an ever-evolving business environment.

The institution, mindful of the challenges posed by the 21st century, has embedded an ethical and sustainable vision into these principles, fostering the education of professionals committed to social and economic development as well as environmental preservation. This holistic approach ensures that graduates are not only competent in their field but also agents of change who actively contribute to the well-being of their communities and the sustainable development of the organisations where they work.

Establishment of Competencies for Business Administration Graduates

EThe graduate profile for the Business Administration programme at the Universidad Nacional de Chimborazo is structured around a set of key competencies designed to address the requirements of a globalised and rapidly changing business environment. These competencies encompass advanced financial analysis, strategic management of resources and processes, innovation as a catalyst for organisational growth, and mastery of state-of-the-art technological tools to enhance decision-making and optimise business performance (Svalgaard et al., 2024).

In this context, graduates are prepared to perform efficiently in critical areas of organisations, such as

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planning, organising, directing, and controlling processes. These skills are complemented by a solid foundation in fundamental disciplines such as economics, marketing, and human resource management, enabling them to adopt a comprehensive and multidisciplinary approach to organisational challenges.

Furthermore, the graduate profile incorporates transversal competencies that enhance their leadership abilities, teamwork skills, and effective communication, ensuring they are well-equipped to navigate complex professional environments (Moralee et al., 2023). An ethical and sustainable vision of business management is also promoted, with a strong emphasis on corporate social responsibility and environmental sustainability, increasingly significant factors in the global corporate landscape.

Additionally, the development of skills in data analysis, business intelligence, and the implementation of evidence-based strategies positions graduates as professionals capable of generating added value within their organisations. This competitive profile enables them not only to adapt to market changes but also to anticipate them, contributing to the sustained success of businesses and the economic development of their communities.

Core Knowledge Areas for Students

The curriculum matrix for the Business Administration programme is structured around a comprehensive set of courses designed to provide students with a solid and multidisciplinary knowledge base. Key areas include subjects such as strategic management, financial management, marketing, and operations management, which form the fundamental pillars of professional training.

These core courses are further complemented by advanced technical components, including statistical analysis, financial modelling, and principles of economics. These additions enable students to develop essential analytical and quantitative skills, equipping them to make well-informed decisions in complex organisational contexts (Sanyal et al., 2024).

Additionally, the curriculum incorporates a humanistic approach, including courses aimed at strengthening soft skills such as effective communication, professional ethics, social responsibility, and critical thinking. This component fosters the development of professionals who are not only technically proficient but also socially and environmentally conscious, promoting ethical and sustainable leadership.

The multidisciplinary nature of the training extends to the integration of technological tools and innovative methodologies, preparing students to tackle the challenges of a dynamic and globalised business environment. For instance, courses include the use of business management software, data analysis with advanced platforms, and digital strategies for the efficient management of organisational resources.

Finally, the curriculum structure prioritises an understanding of global economic trends and their relationship with organisational processes. This ensures that students gain not only a comprehensive perspective on business management but also develop a strategic and adaptive vision, enabling them to succeed in diverse and highly competitive settings. With this approach, student training transcends the academic realm, shaping professionals ready to lead transformation and drive sustainable growth within their future organisations (Sanyal, 2024).

Regulatory Guidelines of CES and the University

The curriculum redesign of the Business Administration programme is developed in strict alignment with the regulations established by the Higher Education Council (CES) and the institutional principles governing the university. This strategic alignment not only ensures compliance with national academic quality standards but also consolidates a programme that effectively addresses accreditation requirements and continuous improvement processes in higher education.

The CES regulations provide a regulatory framework that establishes essential criteria in areas such as curriculum structure, programme duration, entry and exit profiles, and learning evaluation mechanisms

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(Santana et al., 2021). The institutional principles of the university reinforce this framework by integrating values such as ethics, innovation, sustainability, and social responsibility into academic training. This dual approach ensures that the programme is not only technically robust but also aligned with institutional objectives and the challenges of the contemporary educational environment.

Moreover, adherence to these regulatory guidelines translates into the incorporation of key elements such as interdisciplinarity, curricular flexibility, and a focus on competency-based learning. This enables the redesign to not only meet regulatory requirements but also foster the development of professionals who can adapt to labour market changes and contribute innovative solutions in their respective fields.

Additionally, the alignment with these regulations extends to the utilisation of technological tools and the implementation of modern pedagogical strategies, such as active learning, outcome-based assessments, and the integration of practical experiences into the training process. These elements, supported by CES regulations and institutional principles, enhance the programme's quality and ensure the relevance of graduates in a competitive and globalised labour market.

Leveraging Prior Experience

The accumulated experience since the inception of the Business Administration programme has served as a cornerstone in the curriculum redesign process, becoming a valuable source of learning and continuous improvement. Through a rigorous analysis of the outcomes from previous cohorts, both strengths and areas for improvement were identified in the curricular structure, teaching methodologies, and learning outcomes.

This reflective and systematic approach enabled the integration of lessons learned into the new curriculum proposal, enhancing its ability to address the demands of the contemporary business environment and the needs of future professionals (Carson, 2023).

The analysis of previous cohorts evaluated not only students' academic performance but also employers' perceptions, the relevance of the content taught, and the effectiveness of the implemented pedagogical strategies. This comprehensive review led to significant adjustments in course selection, the integration of emerging technologies, and updates to teaching methodologies, ensuring that the learning experience remains relevant and aligned with the demands of the labour market.

The curriculum redesign process goes beyond being a mere technical update; it stands as an innovative model that integrates cutting-edge pedagogical principles, regulatory frameworks, and the wealth of accumulated experience. This comprehensive approach fosters the development of pertinent competencies, including technical skills, analytical abilities, and soft skills, which are essential for graduates to successfully navigate the challenges of a dynamic business environment (Van-Staden et al., 2024).

Asimismo, se ha priorizado la retroalimentación continua con los actores clave, incluidos docentes, estudiantes, egresados y empleadores, para garantizar que la propuesta curricular sea pertinente, flexible y sostenible. Este proceso participativo refuerza la pertinencia profesional de los egresados, asegurando que estén preparados para liderar la transformación de las organizaciones y aportar soluciones innovadoras a los desafíos globales.

Thus, the curriculum redesign of the Business Administration programme, grounded in prior experience, not only optimises learning outcomes but also positions graduates as strategic leaders equipped with a solid, comprehensive education and an ethical, sustainable vision.

In this context, we must highlight the importance of identifying and developing key competencies essential for three fundamental professional areas within the industrial labour market, recognising that Business Administration prepares professionals to assume roles in this dynamic sector (Christy & Lyau, 2022). The authors underline the significance of skills such as effective communication, adaptability, and leadership, which are indispensable for future professionals operating in environments driven by advanced

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technologies. They emphasise that while technical skills are critical, social, personal, and methodological competencies have a greater impact on employability and professional performance in this new industrial era. This underscores the need for higher education institutions to adapt their academic programmes and pedagogical approaches to align with the specific demands of the industrial sector.

Furthermore, the research examines the transformation of the labour landscape, noting that while less-skilled jobs are declining, there is a growing demand for roles requiring high levels of qualification and specialisation. This shift necessitates a strategic redesign of university education, prioritising transversal competencies that enhance students' ability to successfully address contemporary challenges (Wu & Jaimungal, 2023). Similarly, this global scenario highlights the challenge faced by educational institutions in training professionals to develop competencies related to data science. This interdisciplinary field employs methods, processes, algorithms, and systems to extract knowledge and useful information from data in various forms, both structured and unstructured. It combines elements of statistics, mathematics, programming, and domain-specific knowledge in administration/management to analyse and understand large datasets effectively.

According to Pavlov et al., (2024), the study, 24 future business competencies have been identified as essential for preparing graduates to meet the demands of the global labour market. These competencies are categorised into technical, methodological, social, and personal, reflecting a comprehensive approach to professional training.

Technical competencies include skills such as mastery of advanced technological tools, financial analysis, strategic management, resource administration, and data handling through business intelligence systems. These abilities ensure that graduates can adopt innovative solutions and respond effectively to operational challenges in a labour market characterised by constant digital transformation.

Similarly, methodological competencies address the ability to apply methods and strategies to solve complex problems and make well-informed decisions. These competencies equip graduates to tackle dynamic and multifaceted challenges, fostering critical thinking and practical problem-solving skills that are essential in contemporary professional environments (Bai et al., 2024). These include strategic planning, project management, critical analysis, and the implementation of agile methodologies, all of which ensure the efficient execution of business processes.

On the other hand, social competencies highlight the importance of interpersonal skills such as leadership, teamwork, assertive communication, negotiation, and cultural adaptability. These competencies are essential in a globalised environment where diversity and collaboration are pivotal for organisational success and business sustainability.

Lastly, personal competencies focus on individual development, encompassing skills such as emotional intelligence, critical thinking, creativity, time management, and resilience. These qualities enable graduates to face the challenges of the business environment with confidence, flexibility, and an innovative, goal-oriented attitude. Pavlov et al., (2024) The integration of these competencies into academic programmes not only equips students to adapt to the ever-changing labour market but also positions them as leaders capable of driving meaningful transformations within their organisations and contributing to the sustainable development of their communities.

The 24 future competencies identified in the study, classified into four categories, are as follows: Technical Competencies: Big data analysis, digital literacy, digital skills, knowledge of information technologies. Methodological Competencies: Critical thinking, analytical skills, problem-solving, creative thinking, business acumen, research skills, entrepreneurial thinking. Social Competencies: Leadership skills, teamwork, communication, networking, negotiation, customer orientation, language skills. Personal Competencies: High integrity and ethics, adaptability and flexibility, agility, continuous learning, self-management, curiosity.

These competencies provide a comprehensive framework for preparing students in the field of business

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administration to face the challenges of a dynamic and technology-driven environment (proceedings-83-00010-v2). However, a lack of consensus between industry and academia regarding these competencies has been identified, highlighting the need for closer collaboration between the two sectors to achieve effective alignment.

The findings offer valuable insights for stakeholders to anticipate the effects of automation and adapt educational programmes to prepare students for an evolving labour market. The research is grounded in an extensive review of the literature, providing a solid methodological foundation that supports the identification of these competencies (Lee et al., 2024).

In the realm of higher education at the Universidad Nacional de Chimborazo in Ecuador, the relevance and determination of professional competencies have led to the establishment of a theoretical-practical framework that guides the training of graduates in alignment with labour market demands. The competency model, widely adopted across various disciplines, enables the definition of behaviours, knowledge, skills, and attitudes essential for optimal professional performance (Espinosa-Pike & Barrainkua, 2020). This approach has driven the development and formalisation of models that ensure the suitability of graduates, aligning them with both institutional objectives and the dynamic challenges of the organisational environment. The identification and definition of these competencies, particularly in fields such as Business Administration, require active collaboration from the scientific community to ensure their relevance and alignment with the institution's mission and vision.

In the case of Business Administration, technical competencies include the ability to operate effectively in various organisational settings with ethical values and social commitment; solve problems using research methods, technological tools, and critical analysis; lead business projects with sustainability and entrepreneurial spirit; and promote an organisational culture grounded in social and environmental responsibility. These competencies not only address the current needs of the sector but also foster leadership, adaptability, and strategic management skills, enhancing the professional profile of graduates (Garcia-Blandon et al., 2024). Additionally, the specific competencies within this programme encompass areas such as strategic planning and management, the evaluation of business projects, the implementation of innovative solutions, and the use of advanced analytical tools for decision-making. These technical skills, combined with methodological and social competencies, are essential for addressing the complex challenges of a globalised and interconnected market.

The curriculum structure for the Business Administration programme, in alignment with the guidelines set by the Higher Education Council (CES), organises learning into foundational, professional, and graduation units. These units integrate theoretical and practical knowledge, ranging from foundational principles of management to specialised skills in areas such as human talent management. Moreover, the fields of study include areas such as epistemology, professional praxis, integration of knowledge, and communication, offering a holistic approach that blends technical expertise with a humanistic and global perspective.

This model ensures that graduates are not only equipped to meet labour market demands but are also prepared to lead with integrity and responsibility, contributing to sustainable development and strengthening the entrepreneurial ecosystem. In this way, the Business Administration programme at the Universidad Nacional de Chimborazo positions itself as an essential pillar in developing competent, innovative, and ethically committed professionals.

Methodology

Following Kurt Lewin's Action Research Theory, as cited by Villamizar, (2024) y combining the quantitative and qualitative approaches proposed by Hernández & Mendoza, (2018), The adopted methodology utilised a proactive and collaborative approach to analysing competencies among Business Administration students. This methodological design was implemented in a classroom comprising 52 students, aiming to identify, develop, and evaluate key competencies for professional performance in a dynamic business environment.

The methodology focused on an interactive process involving participatory workshops and focus group

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interviews, fostering close collaboration with students and first-year Business Administration faculty members. These strategies facilitated the identification of challenges and opportunities related to professional competencies. Data were collected using mixed-method instruments, including standardised questionnaires for statistical analysis (quantitative) and semi-structured interview guides to explore participants' perceptions and experiences in depth (qualitative).

Building on the spiral model of Zuber-Skerritt et al., (2020) That is, by adopting the components of planning, action, observation, and reflection, the study was structured into cycles of planning, action, observation, and reflection. Each cycle was designed to address specific competency areas, such as critical thinking, teamwork, communication skills, leadership, and problem-solving.

It is worth noting that, in addition to the students, the study included faculty members as key advisors in designing the intervention strategies. These consultations provided critical insights into the competencies demanded by the labour market, based on the 24 competencies outlined by Pavlov et al., (2024), Quantitative data collection was conducted through questionnaires designed to measure students' self-perception of their competencies and their outlook on their professional preparation.

Qualitative data, on the other hand, were obtained through classroom observations and analyses of interactions within focus groups. This mixed-method approach facilitated triangulation, ensuring greater depth and reliability in the findings. Data analysis, guided by the mixed approach, provided critical inputs for developing curriculum proposals aligned with the identified competencies. Workshops served as spaces for co-creating solutions, fostering a collaborative learning environment.

This methodology proved effective by integrating participatory techniques and analytical approaches to address the challenges of training in the Business Administration programme (Corral-Lage et al., 2021). By combining qualitative and quantitative elements, a deeper understanding of the required competencies was achieved, establishing a training model that empowers students to successfully meet the demands of the current professional environment. Instrumentos de recogida de datos.

To gather high-quality information that facilitates a deep understanding of the issues addressed, three main data collection techniques were implemented. The study, based on the Deplix design, was structured into two complementary stages to ensure a comprehensive analysis of the research topic.

In the first stage, a quantitative investigation was conducted through a questionnaire administered to students. This instrument was designed to collect specific and measurable data on their perceptions, knowledge, and experiences, providing critical inputs for the development of curriculum proposals aligned with the identified competencies. The information gathered through the questionnaire enabled the identification of relevant trends and patterns, forming a solid foundation for subsequent analysis and complementing the next stages of the study.

The following questions were structured for this investigation and included in the questionnaire for quantitative analysis directed at the students:

Tabla N°2. Cuestionario Aplicado A Los Estudiantes

Table N°2. Questionnaire Administered to Students

Question	Response Options
1. What are the competencies you consider most important for success in the Business Administration field?	a) Technical competencies (digital tools, data analysis) b) Methodological competencies (critical thinking, problem-solving) c) Social competencies (leadership, teamwork) d) Personal competencies (adaptability, ethics).
2. To what extent do you feel the current curriculum helps you develop	a) Yes, it adequately fosters all competencies b) Only some competencies are well developed

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Question	Response Options
technical competencies, such as financial analysis or data management?	c) It does not adequately foster competency development d) I have no opinion on this.
3. How confident are you in your ability to apply leadership and teamwork skills in professional environments?	a) Very confident b) Fairly confident c) Slightly confident d) Not confident.
4. What specific methodologies or tools have you found most useful in your academic training so far?	Open-ended question.
5. How well do you think the programme integrates emerging technologies into its teaching approach?	a) Very well integrated b) Fairly well integrated c) Poorly integrated d) Not integrated at all.
6. Which areas of the curriculum do you feel need more focus to better prepare you for the current labour market?	Open-ended question.
7. What additional skills or competencies would you like the programme to include to enhance your professional readiness?	a) Emotional intelligence skills b) Competencies in sustainability and social responsibility c) Advanced management of emerging technologies d) None, the current plan is sufficient.

For the second part of the research, the following questions were structured for the students participating in the focus groups for qualitative analysis:

- What do you consider to be the most important competencies a student in the Management programme should develop to succeed in the current labour market?
- Do you think the content of the current courses contributes to developing practical skills such as critical analysis, problem-solving, and project management? Why or why not?
- How do you evaluate the use of technological and digital tools within the curriculum for developing technical competencies?
- To what extent does the programme foster social skills such as teamwork, leadership, and effective communication?
- Do you believe that critical, creative, and entrepreneurial thinking is encouraged in the programme's courses? Can you provide specific examples?
- How prepared do you feel to adapt to the changes and challenges of the business environment once you graduate?
- How relevant do you consider ethical values and social responsibility to be in your professional training?
- Do you think the university provides enough extracurricular opportunities to develop practical competencies, such as internships, real-world projects, or entrepreneurial activities?
- What additional competencies, not currently included in the curriculum, do you think should

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be added to your training?

The data collected during the research were analysed using a combination of theoretical triangulation and a continuous comparison method, employing the latest version of Atlas.Ti software. This tool facilitated the systematic organisation and categorisation of results, following a rigorous and well-founded approach (Rojano-Alvarado et al., 2021)

After the complete transcription of the collected information, the data were reviewed and structured using interpretative logic criteria. Data from semi-structured interviews and participatory observations were integrated into the **Atlas.Ti** software, where key categories were generated. These categories represent essential concepts derived directly from the data, describing specific and relevant phenomena related to the research objective (Sánchez et al., 2023).

The concepts and themes emerging from the research were used to establish units of analysis that facilitated a more detailed and precise description of the results. The extensive volume of information was organised into more manageable segments, enabling a deeper understanding of the analysed material. To structure and interpret the data, the researchers employed flowcharts and conceptual networks that outlined the study's dimensions. This methodological process, grounded in categorisation, was essential for initiating a detailed and well-supported analysis of the information (Naupas et al., 2023).

Results and Discussion

The research findings underscore the fundamental importance of integrating technical, methodological, social, and personal competencies into the structure of a curricular model (Rebollo & Ábalos, 2022). These competencies are not only essential for equipping Business Administration students with the tools required to face the challenges of the current labour market but also for ensuring comprehensive training that enables them to adapt to a dynamic and constantly evolving business environment. This approach ensures that graduates are prepared to excel in complex scenarios, offering innovative solutions and contributing to the sustainable growth of organisations.

Category 1: Technical Competencies

The data collected from the survey, administered to 54 Business Administration students, highlight the significance of technical competencies as fundamental pillars for addressing the challenges of the digital environment. Among these competencies, 78% of respondents identified digital literacy as a critical skill, followed by the use of advanced technological tools (72%) and big data analysis (68%). These results underscore the need to adapt academic programmes to ensure that students can effectively respond to the increasing digitalisation of business processes and the strategic management of information (Oyewo et al., 2021).

On the other hand, the focus groups, composed of a representative selection of students, delved deeper into the perception of these competencies. Participants agreed that digital literacy goes beyond familiarity with basic tools to include the ability to interpret and apply data in strategic decision-making. One student remarked, "Big data analysis has become an indispensable competency as it enables the identification of patterns and market opportunities, something that is not addressed with sufficient depth in the current curriculum" (Grasser et al., 2020).

The analysis of this data highlights a gap between the technical competencies perceived as essential by students and the academic training they receive. While 65% of respondents stated they felt "moderately prepared" in the use of technological tools, only 18% reported feeling fully confident in big data analysis. This underscores the need to strengthen practical training in these areas by incorporating innovative methodologies and technological resources that enable students to effectively develop these competencies (Hellriegel, 2021).

The convergence between the survey results and focus group discussions highlights the importance of

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strengthening technical competencies within the curriculum. Integrating specific modules on digital literacy and data analysis, alongside the use of advanced technological tools, is essential for preparing future Business Administration professionals to succeed in an increasingly demanding and highly digitalised labour market, as illustrated in Figure N° 1.

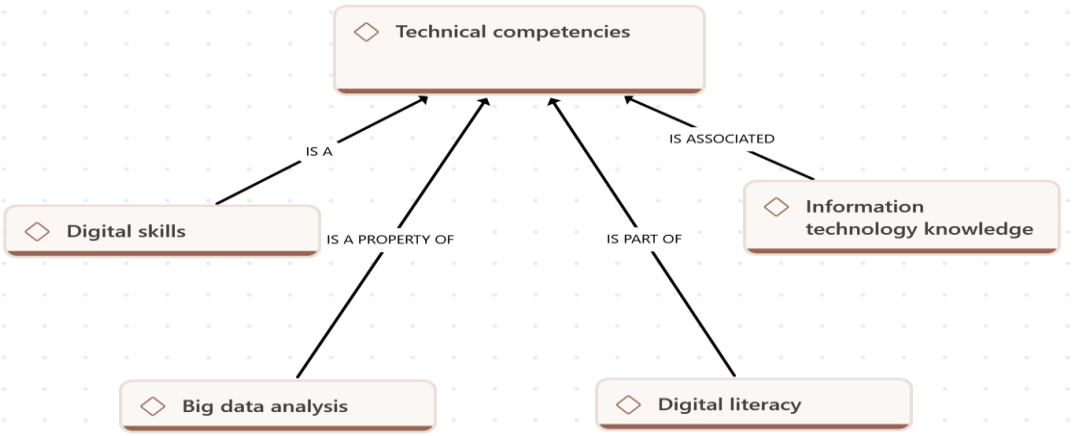

Figure N° 1. Technical Competencies

Category 2: Methodological Competencies

The data obtained from the survey conducted among Business Administration students reflect the importance of methodological competencies in their training. A total of 82% of respondents identified critical thinking as an essential skill for addressing complex business challenges, while 65% highlighted problem-solving as a key competency for the effective management of resources and processes. Additionally, 72% recognised analytical skills as indispensable for interpreting data and making strategic decisions in a dynamic and competitive environment (Vázquez, 2023).

The focus groups, composed of a representative selection of students, provided deeper insights into the impact of these methodological competencies. Participants noted that critical thinking enables them to challenge traditional approaches and propose more innovative and sustainable solutions. One student remarked, "Problem-solving should be addressed more through practical cases and real-world scenarios, as the solutions discussed in class often do not align with what happens in businesses." Similarly, they emphasised that analytical skills are crucial for extracting valuable insights from large data sets, particularly in an information-driven business environment.

The analysis of these findings underscores the need to strengthen the development of methodological competencies within the curriculum. (Palomo-Vadillo, 2022). Although 60% of students reported feeling "moderately prepared" in problem-solving, only 15% stated they had an advanced mastery of these skills. This highlights the need to incorporate more dynamic pedagogical strategies, such as problem-based learning and real-case analysis, to effectively develop these competencies.

The alignment between survey responses and focus group discussions underscores that critical thinking, problem-solving, and analytical skills are not only fundamental for innovating business practices but also essential for equipping future professionals with the tools needed to face the challenges of a highly competitive labour market (Calderon, 2023). This approach will enhance their ability to adapt to changing environments and propose solutions that generate value for their organisations, as illustrated in Figure N° 2.

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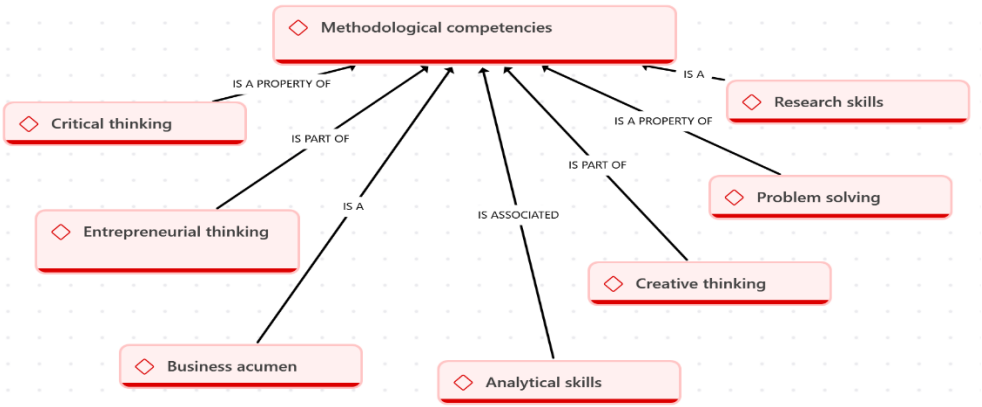

Category 3: Social Competencies

The survey conducted among students highlights the importance of social competencies for professional performance. A total of 80% of respondents identified teamwork as a crucial skill for effective collaboration, while 76% emphasised effective communication as indispensable for managing human resources and conveying ideas clearly and persuasively. Leadership was also noted by 72% as essential for directing teams and fostering organisational development. Additionally, competencies such as networking (68%) and negotiation (65%) were recognised as key elements for establishing strong professional relationships and developing successful business strategies (Velasco et al., 2018).

In the focus groups, composed of selected students, perceptions of these competencies were explored in greater depth. Participants agreed that teamwork and effective communication are fundamental pillars for achieving organisational objectives, particularly in diverse and dynamic work environments. One student remarked, "Leadership is not just about directing; it is also about inspiring and motivating others to work towards a common goal." They also emphasised that networking and negotiation are essential skills for identifying business opportunities and forging strategic alliances. (Hansch, 2023).

The data analysis reveals that, although students recognise the importance of social competencies, there is a gap in their practical development. A total of 62% of respondents reported feeling "moderately prepared" in teamwork and negotiation, while only 20% stated they had advanced proficiency in these areas. This underscores the need to incorporate practical activities, such as group dynamics, simulations, and collaborative projects, to allow students to experience and strengthen these competencies in a controlled but realistic environment.

The triangulation of results from the survey and focus groups reaffirms the importance of social competencies in training professionals capable of leading teams, communicating effectively, and establishing strategic relationships. Strengthening these skills within the curriculum will not only contribute to students' professional development but also enhance their ability to create positive impacts in the organisations where they work, as illustrated in Figure N° 3.

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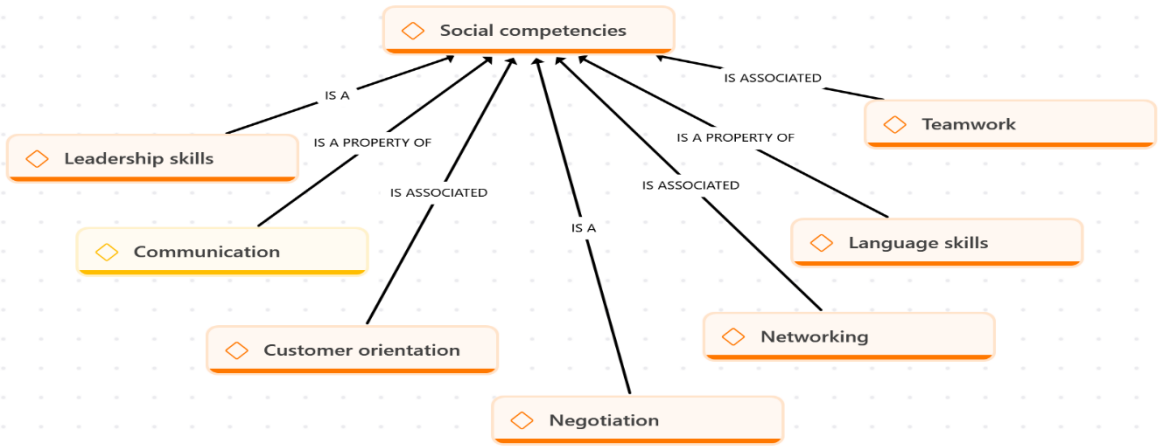

Figure N° 3. Social Competences

Category 4: Personal Competencies

This category highlights the importance of personal competencies in the comprehensive training of future professionals. A total of 85% of participants identified adaptability as an essential skill for effectively responding to constant changes in organisational environments, while 82% emphasised continuous learning as crucial for staying up to date with market demands. Additionally, 78% valued integrity as a fundamental principle for ethical leadership and responsible decision-making, and 70% recognised self-management as indispensable for maintaining autonomous and efficient performance (Ríos, 2024).

In the focus groups, participants explored how personal competencies influence their professional development and ability to tackle organisational challenges. They agreed that adaptability is essential for managing uncertain scenarios, while continuous learning enables them to anticipate labour market needs. One student remarked, "Integrity defines us not only as professionals but also as individuals; without ethics, leadership loses its value." Additionally, they highlighted that self-management helps them set clear goals, prioritise tasks, and maintain a balance between academic and personal responsibilities.

The data analysis indicates that, although these competencies are highly valued, their development in the academic environment presents challenges. A total of 65% of respondents stated they felt "moderately prepared" in terms of adaptability and self-management, while only 25% reported feeling completely confident in these areas. This underscores the need to include activities in the curriculum that promote ethical reflection, time management workshops, and personal development programmes to strengthen autonomous learning and commitment to professional growth.

Findings from both the survey and focus groups emphasise that personal competencies not only enhance students' ability to lead ethically and adapt to dynamic environments but also play a crucial role in fostering their holistic development (Osterwalder & Mieres, 2023). Including pedagogical strategies and activities that strengthen these skills will enable the development of professionals who are well-prepared to face the challenges of the labour market and contribute significantly to the success of the organisations in which they work, as illustrated in Figure N° 4.

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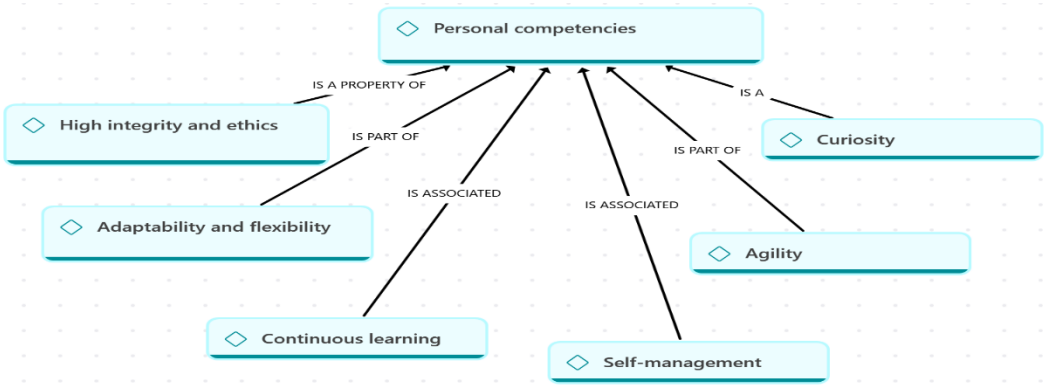
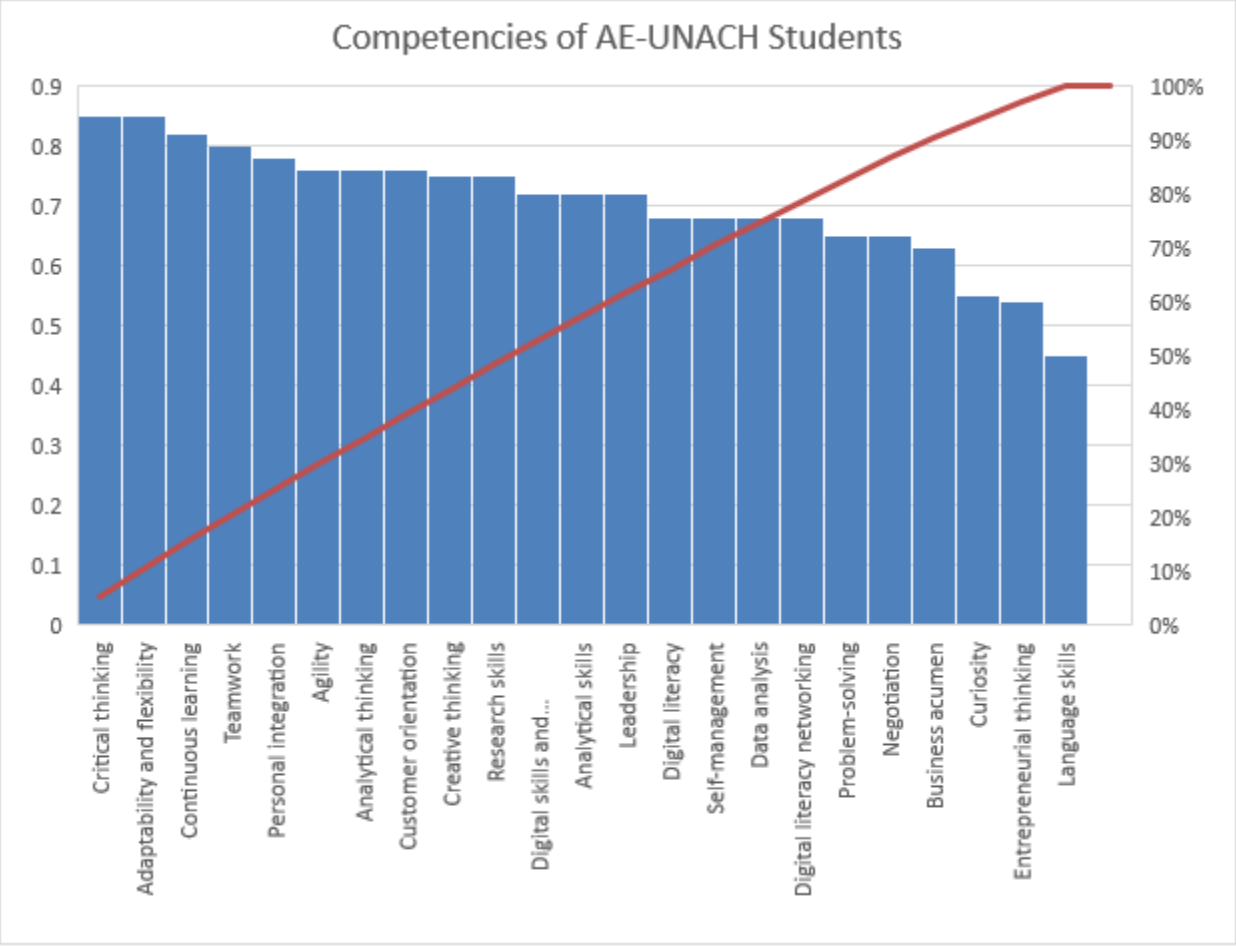


Figure N° 4. Personal Competencies

These findings highlight the need to adopt a comprehensive approach to curriculum design, where the training of future graduates in Business Administration extends beyond the acquisition of technical knowledge. It is imperative that the curriculum also prioritises the development of transversal skills such as critical thinking, problem-solving, adaptability, and leadership, which are essential for excelling in an increasingly competitive, dynamic, and globalised labour environment, as demonstrated in Table N° 3.

Table N° 3. Competencies of UNACH Business Administration Students



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This analysis provides a comprehensive perspective on the essential competencies required for the training of Business Administration students. The results highlight significant strengths in areas such as digitalisation, critical thinking, and teamwork, demonstrating considerable progress in preparing students for a competitive labour market (Hernandez, 2015). However, areas for improvement have also been identified, particularly in less prevalent competencies such as advanced data management and the development of specific strategic skills. These gaps suggest the need for adjustments to the curriculum to ensure comprehensive training that addresses the current demands of the business environment.

Table N° 3 summarises the results regarding the 24 competencies required for the professionalisation plan of Business Administration students. This framework provides a clear visualisation of the areas with greater development and those needing reinforcement. In this context, a curriculum review is recommended, prioritising the less prominent competencies to ensure a balanced approach that enhances both technical and transversal skills.

This effort will contribute to producing more well-rounded, competitive professionals who are capable of leading in a dynamic and globalised environment

Conclusion

The results reveal that technical competencies, such as digital literacy, the use of technological tools, and big data analysis, are highly valued by students. However, there is a gap between their perceived importance and the current level of preparation. While 78% of students recognise digital literacy as critical, only 18% feel fully confident in big data analysis. This highlights the need to integrate practical modules and the use of advanced technological tools into the curriculum, ensuring that students are prepared for increasing digitalisation and the strategic demands of the business environment.

Critical thinking, problem-solving, and analytical skills were identified as essential for addressing complex business challenges. Although 82% of respondents value critical thinking, only 15% report an advanced mastery of these competencies. Focus groups suggest incorporating methods such as problem-based learning and real case analysis to strengthen these skills. This underscores the importance of designing pedagogical strategies that link theory with practice, preparing students to propose innovative and sustainable solutions in dynamic settings.

Teamwork, effective communication, and leadership were consolidated as critical social competencies for professional performance. Although 80% of students highlight teamwork and 76% value communication, only 20% feel highly competent in these areas. The lack of practical development in skills such as negotiation and networking also points to the need to include collaborative activities, simulations, and team projects in the curriculum. This would enable students to build strategic professional relationships and lead teams effectively.

Personal competencies, such as integrity, adaptability, continuous learning, and self-management, are fundamental for navigating dynamic work environments. While 85% of students recognise adaptability as essential, only 25% consider themselves fully prepared in this area. Focus groups emphasise the importance of integrity and continuous learning as the foundations of ethical leadership. It is crucial to implement programmes that promote ethical reflection, time management, and personal development, ensuring that graduates are capable of leading and adapting in an ever-changing labour market.

The convergence of findings across the four categories highlights the need for a holistic approach to curriculum design. The curriculum must balance the acquisition of technical, methodological, social, and personal competencies to develop well-rounded professionals. Furthermore, it is essential to adapt pedagogical strategies to the demands of the business environment, fostering practical activities and real-

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world experiences that allow students to integrate theory and practice effectively.

The identified competencies reflect the global labour market's demand for professionals with adaptive, strategic, and collaborative skills. Strengthening these competencies within the curriculum will enable students to excel in a highly competitive labour market, adding value to their organisations and contributing to sustainable development.

Recommendations

As a result of the study, it is recommended to strengthen the academic curriculum by integrating subjects that delve into technical competencies such as big data analysis and advanced digital tools, thereby addressing the demands of an increasingly digitalised labour market. Additionally, it is crucial to incorporate problem-based learning methodologies and interdisciplinary projects that foster critical thinking, problem-solving, and analytical skills, ensuring a practical and innovative education.

Moreover, strategies to enhance social competencies, such as leadership and teamwork, should be implemented through collaborative activities and participatory workshops. Finally, the development of personal competencies, including ethics, continuous learning, and adaptability, must be prioritised by integrating them transversally into the curriculum design. This approach will ensure the formation of well-rounded and resilient professionals capable of thriving in a globalised and constantly evolving environment.

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