



Feasibility study of the implementation of a deconcentrated and process-based management model in public universities in Ecuador

Estudio de viabilidad de la implementación de un modelo de gestión desconcentrado y por procesos en universidades públicas en Ecuador

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Abstract

This study aims to determine the feasibility of administratively implementing a deconcentrated and process-based institutional management model at the University of Guayaquil, as well as the proposal of a management model that allows the execution of strategic, business and support processes at the University of Guayaquil, in order to achieve a significant institutional transformation. For this purpose, a survey and analysis of the current process management at the UG was carried out, which allows proposing to the authorities the tools and mechanisms through which the implementation of processes could be made more viable and thus comply with the Plan of Excellence proposed by the Intervention Commission, which will lead the institution to overcome the D category in which it is currently located.

Keywords: management, institutional, category

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Resumen

El presente estudio pretende determinar la factibilidad de implementar administrativamente un modelo de gestión institucional desconcentrado y por procesos en la Universidad de Guayaquil, así como el planteamiento de una propuesta de modelo de gestión que permita la ejecución de los procesos estratégicos, de negocio y de apoyo en la Universidad de Guayaquil, para lograr una transformación institucional significativa. Para esto, se realizó una encuesta y análisis de la gestión de procesos actualmente en la UG, lo que permite proponer a las autoridades las herramientas y mecanismos mediante las cuales se podría viabilizar de mejor forma la implementación de procesos y cumplir así con el Plan de Excelencia propuesto por la Comisión Interventora, que lleve a la institución a superar la categoría D en la que se encuentra actualmente.

Palabras clave: gestion, institucional, categoría

Introduction

In October 2013, the Council of Higher Education (CES), after receiving several complaints from students and members of the University of Guayaquil (UG), and after forming a Commission of Inquiry for this purpose, intervened the institution of higher education due to the existence of administrative, academic and financial irregularities, as well as violations to the principles of free education and Co-Governance.

Additionally, the CES (2013) expresses in its report that "The University of Guayaquil is going through a crisis of a systemic nature expressed in the stagnation, disruption and dilution of institutional policies that guarantee the governance and integration of academic, administrative and financial functions, with its consequent impact on the processes of generation and social management of knowledge, professional and academic strengthening of human talent and the

preservation and production of culture, which are currently in clear violation of the constitutional principles of higher education."

Fonseca et al., (2017) explains that one of the weaknesses of the institution is the lack of efficiency and effectiveness in the use of financial resources, which in turn allows it to obtain and provide better physical and academic infrastructure. For the CES (2013), at the University of Guayaquil "there is a management that goes against transparency and is expressed in the inefficient and unsustainable use of resources, in the inefficient and bureaucratic administrative practices that far from planning processes have generated customary budget under-execution that have paralyzed the strategic processes related to the production of knowledge and the strengthening of human talent and deteriorated the physical and academic infrastructure of the institution, compromising the quality of its functions and substantive processes". p. 89.

Regardless of the sanctioning actions generated by such events, this highlights a centralized management model that does not have an adequate management and updating of administrative, financial, academic, research and liaison processes that are part of the daily work of the UG, even more of the magnitude and impact on society that it has, which due to the lack of an adequate methodology does not allow a good performance of the strategic, business and support processes, which helps the institution to fulfill its social responsibility.

Regarding the management of administrative and academic processes, (Zuluaga & Moncayo, 2014, p.88) the various publications in the main newspapers and newscasts about the administrative and financial problems within the University of Guayaquil, before and after the intervention process, were notorious. On May 29, 2014, El Universo newspaper presented a news item related to the lack of coordination between the respective areas to carry out the selection, hiring, assignment of schedules and payment of teaching staff, since Dr. José Apolo, rector in charge of the higher education center, indicated that a difficulty for the payment of teachers was the failure

to send from the faculties the distribution of the workload; and that regarding the lack of teachers in some careers, it would be solved in the coming days. In other words, less than three months ago, and with the beginning of a new academic year, the processes related to these issues were not working (or did not formally exist) normally within the institution.

For Pérez-Cabrera, (2013) the need to implement a deconcentrated and process-based management model that allows the execution of strategic, business and support processes that contribute to the fulfillment of institutional objectives related to academic efficiency, research, organization and institutional infrastructure. Therefore, the question would be: What are the success factors that allow the change to a deconcentrated and process-based financial administrative management model?

The plan of excellence of the University of Guayaquil proposed by the Intervenor Commission proposes the "design, co-construction and establishment of systemic and innovative management models that will act as driving forces for the development of institutional substantive functions for their alignment with quality, transparency and relevance in the framework of the exercise of the right to education for all, and access to knowledge in its condition of social public good" (Rubiano-Pinzón et al., 2017 p. 230)

For the effect, a deconcentrated management allows to decongest a centralized administration and thus provide a more agile and efficient service to those who demand, and as institutions grow Rodríguez & Jarpa, (2015) analyzes and establishes that they have a greater number of tasks and responsibilities to fulfill and deconcentration is considered useful and necessary to better fulfill the tasks entrusted to them.

To this end, and in accordance with current budgetary regulations, the deconcentrated units, which are structurally part of the same institution, must be assigned and endowed with the respective powers and competencies so that they can carry out their academic,

administrative and financial functions with high levels of efficiency, effectiveness and transparency.

For Ceja et al., (2015) process management will allow increasing productivity levels in the UG, which includes efficiency and effectiveness in the use of resources. Management is a creative work that takes the strategic, business and support processes as a means to fulfill the purpose of the organization, organizes them in the most convenient way to achieve the stated objectives. In a good process management, Palma, (2017) understanding as process the competences of the organization, allows important cost reductions, decrease in customer service times, as well as in the elaboration and completion of procedures, improvements in service, decreases improvisations and errors in the execution of activities and tasks, among other benefits of utmost importance.

Cárdenas-García et al., (2014) Therefore, it is necessary to identify the success factors that allow the adoption of a deconcentrated management, as well as cooperation in the formulation of a process management methodology that contributes to an efficient, effective and transparent management in the use of human, financial, physical and technological resources of the University of Guayaquil.

One of the existing techniques to install the different phases and practices of process management is called Integral Change Model (MIC), which allows incorporating any type of project in the organization because it allows defining a transversal way of working and integrates all the participants that interact and impact the life of the institution. According to (Larrán-Jorge & Andrades-Peña, 2015 p. 98) based on the MIC, it is possible to make a diagnosis of process management within the organization and detect its failure factors, as well as propose opportunities for improvement in each category of the MIC. To carry out this diagnosis it is necessary to know at what level of maturity in terms of process management the Institution is, by determining practices grouped in levels from less to more complex, so that the reality of each area can be reflected in a better way.

The MIC establishes the five general guidelines: strategy, people, processes, structure and technology, and the important thing is to maintain harmony among these five elements. It also incorporates the actions to be taken to incorporate the processes within the Institution, which will allow the systems to be more organized and in better conditions to face the complexity of the environment.

Among the benefits of incorporating process management in an organization, the following can be obtained:

- Place the customer as the focus and meaning of what we do.
- Speaking a common language
- Know what we do and how we do it
- Applying process costing formulas
- Improving by simply describing a process
- Achieving quality assurance
- Apply process optimization methods
- Benchmark our processes against the best practices in the industry.
- Redesigning a process to obtain much higher yields
- Strengthening knowledge management
- Innovate at different levels of depth: process, activity and task.
- Supporting control through real time indicators

For François, (2014) there are concepts used in process management that should be clarified, and that everyone in the organization should be fully aware of.

Process: Competence of the organization that adds value to the customer through the work of people in a team, in an organized sequence of activities, interactions, structure and resources that transcends the areas. Processes give life to the organization.

It is necessary for every organization to have a concrete, known and approved method to identify, model, formalize, design, control and improve the processes in the organization, as a means to achieve the productivity needed by the institution. Productivity includes efficiency to optimize the use of resources (doing more with less) and effectiveness to achieve objectives towards the outside of the

organization, i.e. meeting customer needs to add value and satisfy the constraints of others. (Sánchez et al., 2012, p. 245).

- Phase one allows Process Management (PM) to be integrated into the organization, first to learn about it, then to relate it to other important management concepts and finally to incorporate it into the organization.
- The objective of phase two is the visual modeling of the processes, where three models represent all the repetitive work of the organization: process map, information flow chart (IF) and task list.
- Phase three aims to align process priorities with the organization's strategy, which also includes the definition of indicators and risk management.
- In phase four, the necessary change in processes is designed, implemented and formalized, culminating in the new way of doing things taking root within the institution.
- The goal of phase five is to achieve operational excellence and the important thing has happened: the process change is well established. What follows are the actions to be taken during the lifetime of the new process design, reflected in your practices.

One of the existing techniques to install the different phases and practices of process management in an organization is called the Integrated Change Model (ICM), which allows the incorporation of any type of project in the organization because it allows defining a transversal way of working and integrates all the participants that interact and have an impact on the life of the institution. The MIC consists of five elements: strategy, people, processes, structure and technology, which must be developed in parallel and harmoniously, since it is a totality, transcends the areas and is transversal to the entire organization.

Based on the MIC, a diagnosis of process management within the organization can be made and its failure factors can be detected, as well as opportunities for improvement in each category of the MIC can be proposed. Through a survey of thirty University employees (authorities, analysts of the administrative and financial areas of the Central Administration and of the Academic Units), it is intended to point out, using the MIC, what is missing in the opinion of the

interviewees within the institution to achieve a deconcentrated management model and by processes at the University of Guayaquil.

Methodology

Level 1 is expressed as: "nothing or almost nothing achieved, erroneous and incipient use of process management concepts". Among the characteristics immersed in this level we have:

- Nonexistent or incipient process map.
- Models and procedures elaborated with particular methods.
- Lone fighters who advocate process management and achieve something.
- The processes are not evident and have serious errors in the interaction between areas.
- People are "task" oriented without knowing or committing to the end result of the process.
- It is applied "this is the way it has always been done", instead of designing or improving processes.

Level 2 is expressed as "Some plans and minor achievements, the basics". Indeed, formalities and products begin to be seen, the most important thing is that they begin to believe in process management and some structure is created. At this level it can be observed:

- There is a basic process map for the entire organization.
- There is a formal and known method for developing procedures.
- Members of the organization understand the models because they are model-oriented and have had at least basic training.
- The task lists are visible to the respective roles and have been prepared with their full participation.
- The obvious improvement of the processes has been achieved, at least to make it logical.

Level 3 is expressed as "Something systematically achieved". At this level, the processes of the processes emerge strongly and a formal structure is already in place. At this level it can be observed:

- The organization's strategy refers to incorporating process management into its operations.

- Management and members of the organization are trained in processes.
- Roles and functions are defined in the process area.
- The technology to model the processes is known and applied by the users.
- There is a formal and known method to improve and redesign processes.
- The process map and visual process models are updated frequently.

Level 4 is expressed as "Well implemented with details missing". It refers to the incorporation of the process management model, from the role of process owners to risk and change management. In this level it can be observed:

We work with high productivity in the elaboration of process management products: procedures, improvements, redesigns and others.

- Members of the organization apply the process vision and are committed to the outcome of the process.
- There is a formal process management structure that is consolidated and quantitatively demonstrates its relevance.
- There are process owners who effectively fulfill the role of process owners.
- There is a formal and known method for continuous improvement and process improvement.
- The procedures incorporate all the elements related to the process.

Level 5 is expressed as "Process management applied with excellence and continuous improvement". This level shows the commitment of people, broad vision of the organization's management reflected especially in the strategic direction process and much more. In this level it can be observed:

- Strategic process management formally exists.
- The main process indicators are derived from the global business indicators defined in the strategy.
- All stakeholders are involved and there is a sense of mission to meet customers' needs.

- The organization's management is committed to process management and includes in its budget the necessary investment for change.
- Technologies are available for process improvement, process redesign and document management.
- Process management products (maps, models, indicators, etc.) are vital inputs for the organization's strategic plan.
- The organization's strategy is formulated in terms of processes.
- The participants take into account the purpose of the process, the reason for its existence and the need for the effort to obtain great results.

Results

In spite of the institution's negative maturity level, it is important to mention that if process management is applied correctly and under a clear methodological proposal, greater results would be obtained at the beginning of the Process Management, it should be noted that the contribution of value in the organization when advancing a maturity level is not even. It is greater at the beginning and then decreases. In other words, achieving the first stage in the organization where practically nothing has been done in process management means taking advantage of opportunities for great advances with relatively little effort. This effect is called decreasing contribution, where each marginal increase in productivity is more expensive to achieve, where the contribution remains constant and in each stage the investment increases.

It shows that with each advance in a maturity level, the percentage of contribution drops by half: 50% is achieved in the first stage, up to 75% is achieved in the second, 87.5% in the third and 93.8% in the fourth. Therefore, in spite of the figure and the negative evaluation for the University of Guayaquil, the positive aspect is that being at such a low maturity level, the impact of achieving the first tranche is notably high.

Table 1. *Competencies of an organization's personnel*

Level	Competencies
Management team	Work with a strategic and systemic vision. Working as a team Develop the process vision Managing change Create an environment for participation.
Process analysts	Being an educator and facilitator Knowledge about processes, methods, improvement, redesign, projects and social responsibility. Public speaking and communication in general. Working as a team
Participants	Make decisions in the frameworks that the company allows. Know a variety of continuous improvement techniques. Master communication techniques to express ideas. Develop a proactive attitude to generate and propose initiatives that are aligned with people development.

Source: Gestión de Procesos (Valorando la práctica): Bravo, 2013.

Prepared by: Ing. Priscilla Vargas

By having a staff with the competencies described above, a participatory environment is achieved, where decisions arise from agreements. The structure is process-oriented, everyone thinks and there are commitments.

The next component is the structure. The process area can emerge from operations or administration areas, as well as from management support functions such as quality management, planning, systems and organization departments, among others. It could also emerge from the audit area, initially as a practical formula for having procedures and ensuring compliance.

In large companies, process management units could be formed in functional areas, which can coordinate with each other, although centralization is still required. The recommendation is that it should

depend on a development management - oriented to change - where other areas related to management support are also located.

Among the functions of the process management area we can consider among the most important ones:

1. Centralize, update and make available the organization's process map.
2. Centralize, update, order, formalize and make available the visual modeling of processes: flowcharts and their task lists.
3. Centralize, update and make available the organization's standard procedures.
4. Assist management in identifying process owners.
5. Coordinate with all areas of the organization to develop competencies and raise awareness among employees.
6. Facilitate process redesign and improvement.
7. Ensure that the agreed methods are followed.
8. Coordinate with process owners to define indicators.

Finally, technology refers to software tools to support process management. It is necessary to clarify that having the best technology will not help to achieve the incorporation of process management if an analysis of the problems and solutions existing in the organization has not been carried out beforehand, since technology does not make up for the lack of personal competencies or the lack of strategy, methods or structure in an organization.

To this end, eight actions are proposed to be implemented in order to incorporate, through the integral method of change, process management within the institution. Action one involves setting up a project team to lead the change process by defining roles and functions and building an action plan. It requires the active participation of a top management referent with leadership, decision-making capacity and time. Systematic, planned meetings to evaluate the execution of the project. Ad-hoc participation of leaders and/or heads of each area or department. Agile communication within the team.

Action two is to raise awareness among users by carrying out activities to disseminate the transformation and changes to be implemented, focusing on the benefits of the change. Formal instances that exist for

this purpose should be used (team meetings, publicity material, among others).

Action three requires an internal communication plan that delivers systematic information through various channels to all employees about the project objectives, the action plan, the expected benefits and progress in implementation. The participation of formal and informal leaders in this "conversational" process is required in order to involve everyone in the process of organizational transformation (always in small groups).

For action four, innovative user groups should be selected. The "Technology Adoption Cycle" is a phenomenon that accompanies all implementations of computerized systems.

Action five provides for a Campaign to facilitate change. Actions to reinforce the new behaviors and make the project visible in the organization: Recognition actions, considering local incentive systems that make it possible to demonstrate the commitment of the organization's managers to the project. Small "gifts" (mousepads, pens, diplomas, etc.) that help promote the project and can be given in the context of individual or collective recognition.

Action six requires the active participation of all members of the organization in the construction of the change proposal. Involve and engage formal and informal leaders (this makes it easier to organize resistance and thus achieve greater adherence). - The benefits should be sold and the users should be prepared for the change by departments (avoiding large groups).

Action seven allows for the training of field facilitators. It consists of having a group of people who can support the process of change in the organization. This group should ideally wear clothes that promote the project and allow for very simple identification (T-shirts, badges, credentials, etc.). The objective is to promote confidence in the change.

Finally, action eight is the development of an external communication plan. This consists of having graphic or audiovisual material available to inform about the changes. It helps employees to be more relaxed about the change of practices, knowing that customers are informed.

It allows customers to understand that the objective of the process is to improve and also those customers who are more enthusiastic about the changes will exert pressure, having a positive impact.

Conclusions

It is possible for the University of Guayaquil to meet the success factors required through the MIC to incorporate process management.

The benefits generated by incorporating process management related to improving budget execution will allow for the availability and execution of greater resources for institutional development.

The University of Guayaquil is in category D, under the supervision of an Intervention Commission to correct certain administrative, academic and financial irregularities, as well as violations to the principles of free education and Co-Government. Through a Plan of Excellence, an instrument of university planning and management, several lines of action are proposed to correct these irregularities and achieve academic and administrative strengthening.

The financial administrative management model of the University of Guayaquil is centralized, and the last revision and publication of the financial administrative processes dates back to 1986. This model does not allow for increased efficiency and effectiveness (reduction of time and cost) in the execution of the activities and tasks that are performed daily in the institution, which result in the ineffective use of financial resources to provide better physical and technological infrastructure to the community.

Process management at the University of Guayaquil, based on the survey and analysis conducted, is at a level of Awareness that is interpreted in that the existence of processes is almost nonexistent or are not developed in the different areas. All this is generated due to the lack of a process map, lack of a manual of description, valuation and classification of positions, lack of an updated inventory of

academic, administrative and financial processes, among other documents of vital importance for the management of the institution.

The Plan of Excellence presented by the Auditing Commission states the need to implement a deconcentrated and process management model that allows the execution of strategic, business and support processes. However, to date, the survey of the institution's processes initiated by the Administrative Vice Rector's Office has been paralyzed despite having taken steps to carry out a consultancy for the survey.

The University of Guayaquil, in order to incorporate process management, must develop and maintain harmony among the five elements of the Integral Model of Change (strategy, people, processes, structure and technology) and thus achieve a significant institutional transformation process, which will allow it to increase productivity levels, optimize user service, complete procedures in optimum time, reduce improvisations and errors in the execution of activities and tasks, thus demonstrating efficiency, effectiveness, transparency in the use of resources and compliance with its social responsibility.

All inputs generated from process management (process map, flow charts, procedures, instructions, and other internal regulations) will allow all personnel to align and contribute to the fulfillment of the objectives set by the Institution, generating continuous improvement and compliance with the minimum quality parameters determined in the four criteria on which the CEAACES model of university evaluation and accreditation is based, so that the University of Guayaquil exceeds the D categorization in which it is currently placed.

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