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**COMPETENCES OF PUBLIC ACCOUNTING STUDENTS:
AN INSTITUTIONAL APPROACH**

“Generally, happiness is not much considered in the definition of education, and yet I think it is a priority. I think we need professionals who are, if not happy, at least highly satisfied with the profession they have chosen, the job they perform, and this requires that education is not just a resource to us: for work, a source of income, but an exercise for self-assessment”
(Ospina, 2012, p 26.)

Introduction

This document is developed as an instrument that seeks to address explicit and implicit gaps in relation to specific studies on teaching and learning processes in the education of accountants. This work aims to provide an approach to the conceptualization of higher education competences. Taking into account such a multifaceted concept and the different approaches possible, this study aims to develop upon the relationship between University & companies, based on the analysis of Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) and their impact on a homogenizing training and professional accounting exercise.

It is unavoidable when talking about competences, to confront issues related to global dynamics that impact different areas of human life and how the University, as an institution, guarantor of production and appropriation of knowledge by a community, has been permeated by this concept, so that it has redefined its work and its relationships with the social environment, based on the promise of substantial improvements in the processes of education. However, despite the calls by international agencies to universalize competence acquisition and development processes through agreements between different stakeholders (training institutions, companies and workers) a rigorous study exercise is necessary face to the heterogeneity of contexts, even when "the identification, standardization, training, assessment and certification for the

acquisition and development of competence are, inevitably, part of the processes of globalization and go hand in hand with the quality management processes" (Maldonado, 2006 p. 164). Criteria on the quality of education are diverse, one of the more significant according the current trends is that of academic-administrative management, because it is here where decisions affecting the quality of training programs are taken (Cardona & take Zapata, 2006).

Regarding competences, there is much criticism, beginning with its conceptualization and implementation, for example: that they should be treated as a mandatory element, conducting inevitably to homogenization processes in education, in which diversity is lost and therefore so too different contributions to particular social problems. In addition, it is mentioned that the competency approach is a work-oriented type of education, leaving aside social issues and especially the critical character professionals should have, not considering the context necessary for education, thus pretending to give the same solution regardless of the particular situation. In the words of (Zabala, 2008, p. 31 quoted in Guzman & Marin, 2011, p. 152) "the notion of competence is presented as an alternative to training models that have been insufficient to respond to labor needs and problems that life presents."

The practice of Accounting is no stranger to these discussions, particularly in Colombia where accounting education has been undergoing some notable changes like the voluntary accreditation process, which by April 2014 has 26 programs with this quality guarantee, according to the Ministry of Education (n.d.), a process which initiated as an evaluation for the programs and has gained recognition in recent times so that it has even become a benchmark when selecting a education program.

There are three main aspects concerning academic issues of public accounting, these are: Research groups, accounting journals and postgraduate training. In the first aspect, an improvement of accounting journals has been achieved, to the point of having a journal indexed in category A2 (Journal of Accountancy) (Colciencias, n.d.) and according to Valero Zapata & Patico Jacinto, 2012, there are 61 accounting research groups by 2012¹, formally recognized by Colciencias. The two indicators above are quite favorable as they

¹ On March 13, 2014, Colciencias reported measurement results of the research groups and about 40 categorized groups of Accounting programs appear.

show how accounting research progresses and this has a major impact on accounting education, transcending the issue of competences.

As for postgraduate formation, according to (Patico & Vasquez, 2013):

An important feature is the restriction on masters and doctoral education because in Colombia the creation of master's programs in accounting subjects (only about 3 years) is very recent and we still do not have doctoral programs in the discipline.

Another change that has recently occurred in Colombia is the Saber Pro test, according to (Valero Zapata, Patico Jacinto, & Duke Cruz, 2013): Decree 1781 of 2003 regulated and defined the first State examinations of higher education quality -ECAES (now SABER PRO) as "official and mandatory academic tests."

Overall, the examination is based on a competency assessment, which formalizes the application of this criterion in the evaluation of accounting.

Another very relevant change that occurred in the profession was the regulation of Law 1314 (2009), which poses a radical change in accounting, which aims to internationalize the accounting model, which subsequently led to the issuance of Decree 2784 (2012) and Decree 3022 (2013) from which it was decided to adopt the International Financial Reporting Control Standards [IFRS] model from the International Accounting Standards Board [IASB] for two groups of entities (large ones and the ones that have to submit public information), which translates into the "new" need to train under different parameters, basically looking for competences in order to meet the new objectives of the model, which aims to generate information based on decision making, where accountants cannot perform the same functions as they did 20 or 30 years ago. Training cannot keep developing in the same way but there is urgent need to make changes to the accounting professional training, given by international like the IASB and IFAC. These changes are necessary but are made for short term reasons and precepts, when the real need is structural.

This paper includes three parts: background of competency training which aims to show the basis of the model; in the second section, a competency approach for accounting, from the IFAC institutional approach; and finally some closing conclusions on the particular subject.

1. Background on competency training

The high hopes placed upon the multi-paradigmatic concept of 'competence' leave out historical constructs that preceded it; there is evidence in different contexts of Latin American countries that the introduction of competence:

Through the context of a modernizing pedagogical speech, constitutes a return to the policy of human resource training from the 70's and 80's, which explains the emphasis on concepts such as efficiency, equity, quality and efficiency without a clear pedagogical support (Baccarat and Graziano, 2002 quoted in Tobon, 2005, p. 41), hence much of its theoretical inconsistency.

Also the changes generated in the opening of the university to society meant a reengineering within these institutions, so that processes such as academic and faculty mobility between similar institution or companies, appropriation and dissemination of information in the age of technology, a different educational environment among other aspects, have put pressure on the university to "rethink its mission, traditions, roles and responsibility" (Tuning Latin America, 2007, p 34.).

Bearing in mind that higher education has strong responsibilities and challenges related to:

Funding, equal access to education (...), better staff training, competency-based training, enhancement and preservation of quality teaching, research and services, relevance of curricula, the employability of graduates, establishment of efficient cooperation agreements. (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization [UNESCO], 1998).

Challenges for which the concept of competence appears as a new training model, with the implications that its conceptualization implies, mainly because it is not the same to have a model of higher education based on the definition promoted by the World Bank, which "raises the need for educational institutions to form human capital required by the local and global market" (Jurado, 2003 quoted in Tobon, 2005, p. 41), a proposal that demonstrates a strong interest to train workforce regardless of the needs of their context, omitting that "training for the acquisition and development of competency is not done spontaneously and during its development different interpretations converge " (Cinterfor, 2000 quoted in Maldonado, 2006, p 161.), disregarding the difficulties to set such

approach in the curricula of different academic programs. Taking into account aspects related to systemic education, a synthesis with pros and cons of competency-based higher education training is presented.

Table 1

Points for and against the model of competence-based training

In favor	Against
It generates added value to curriculum design, allowing reflections on teaching practice.	The implicit relationship that the competency training model poses, between education and work, " <i>carries the risk that the educational system folds to the demands of the labor market</i> " (Maldonado, 2006, p. 162).
It is a guarantor of methodological precision in the relationship between work and education purposes.	More importance has been given to 'certification' than training for competency as such.
Articulates education with work, mainly around the synergy that must exist between the different levels of the educational system and work.	The constant changes in the dynamics of the production of goods and services, makes it difficult to establish a definition of the required qualification in a specific environment.
It is structured to form 'efficient' human resources	The methods used for the definition and certification of competences from production processes generate significant doubts on the company & university relations.
It allows participation among different sectors of the economy of a country, in relation to the definition of the maximum and minimum of the skills required, as well as standardization.	<i>"The proliferation of terms that have been generated around skills has caused enormous confusion"</i> (Maldonado, 2006, p. 162).

Source: Authors' Own Construction from (Maldonado, 2006).

University & Company Relationship

The University & company relationship has been the central topic of many debates and discussions in the world, particularly from the pressures and dynamics engendered by globalization processes, such as the concepts of competitiveness, quality and competences, among others, which end up raising a number of challenges and reforms within these institutions and their connections; aspects that in some countries are a mere utopia that fail to transcend a theoretical prescription. Therefore, it is not surprising that one of the

most important priorities in this relationship, according to Farias (n.d.) is to allow for the use of a common language between the university and the workplace, based on the necessity of labor organizations to define their demand in terms of "formation of human capital (knowledge, skills, attitudes, values, etc.)." (Carballo, Rodriguez, & Garcia, 2008, p. 3).

While acknowledging that the University is currently mediated by pressures from stakeholders such as companies, the state and the community where each of them separately and also collectively "demand" a series of new services and behavioral parameters, among which it can be mentioned that:

The first (companies) want for it to operate as a business and in the logic of the market, the community will demand them to operate as a public organization so as to ensure real access and permanence options, as expressions of participation and democracy. (Ariza & Soler, 2006, p. 3)

"Not only in Colombia, but in Latin America and Europe too, there is a growing social concern about the divorce between education and work". (Maldonado, 2006, p. 159.). Skills are transformed into the 'how' to eliminate this break and to achieve it "training, assessment and certification programs" have been structured and developed (Maldonado, 2006, p 160.), involving processes that ensure flexibility and alignment of the educational curriculum within the context of society's needs and its correspondence to the object of the title degree (Duran & Reyes Mejia, n.d.).

It is currently evident how certifications are beginning to be a trend in different professions, which seek to ensure the suitability and the 'skills' implicitly required in a professional to exercise certain activity. Likewise, these certification become a guarantee for companies; However, questions arise concerning the education of citizens; Considering this, if there is a "lack of appropriate higher education and research institutions to form a critical mass of skilled and educated people, no country can ensure genuine endogenous and sustainable development" (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization [UNESCO], 1998, p. 19).

According to Carballo, Rodriguez and Garcia (2008) "in the age of knowledge it will not be possible to initiate a process of industrial and educational modernization if a solid scientific and technological research system and communication between the two sectors is not sought" (p. 3), However, developments as to "how to" go about achieving this goal are yet not solid.

Proposals cannot be generic recipes and must respond to the economic, social, political and cultural particularities of each environment as well as the specific needs which University & Companies ought to systematically address.

Among the many proposals, "continued education and training will be the common place, or better said, it is already the common factor and the interface between the academic and productive world" (Maldonado, 2006, p 160.) Considering that a college graduate is a person who meets the eligibility requirements for a professional degree and thus "conveys to its social environment the quality of his training, which is the product of the quality of the teacher-educational process [TEP] of the Higher Education Institution [HEI]" (Carballo, Rodriguez, & Garcia, 2008, p.4.), which means that the graduate reflects institutional qualities inherent in his educational process.

Currently, key aspects for choosing a career like vocational and academic motivations do not have the same importance versus "labor or certification motivations as determinants for selection" (D.R. Union of Universities of Latin America and the Caribbean, 2007, p 35). This compels students and future graduates to make their decisions thinking primarily that their academic process must guarantee them a number of features that would allow them to preserve jobs in the context of competitive markets, by performing ideally in the field of their choice, which in turn is the result of a number of social pressures and ratings, product of:

The new scenarios of the knowledge society, the increasing competition in the labor markets and the massive renovation of knowledge set the foundations for lifelong learning, which is structured on a basic education in a university and subsequent development paths to various academic skills in tune with the requirements of labor markets (D.R. Union of Universities of Latin America and the Caribbean, 2007, p 35).

Concept of competency applied to Accounting from the International Federation of Accountants (IFAC)

The International Federation of Accountants [IFAC], is the body that regulates the issue of education internationally as well as being in charge of auditing norms, ethics, among others. Given such responsibility, this authority designated the International Accounting Education Standards Board [IAESB] as: "An independent regulatory agency that serves the public interest by strengthening the accounting profession worldwide through the development

and improvement of accounting education, including knowledge, skills, values, ethics and attitudes" (International Federation of Accountants [IFAC] n.d.).

The objectives of IFAC (n.d.) for 2013 are, among others: "Establishing a set of high quality standards and other publications that reflect the best practices in education, development and evaluation of professional accountants."

The IAESB publishes various documents relating to education in accounting, of which the following may be highlighted:

The Handbook of International Education Pronouncements (2010), however, subsequent revisions were generated for each of the standards.

Enhancing Professional Accounting Education (2012).

Regarding International Accounting Education Standards contained in the IFAC (2010) and accompanying documents, the following concepts dealing with education should be mentioned:

Table 2

Items included in the International Accounting Education Standards

Word	Concept given by IFAC
Competence	The ability to perform a work role to a defined standard with reference to working environments. To demonstrate competence in a role, a professional accountant must possess the necessary (a) professional knowledge, (b) professional skills, and (c) professional values, ethics, and attitudes.
Education	Systematic process aimed at acquiring and developing knowledge, skills, and other capabilities within individuals, a process that is typically but not exclusively conducted in academic environments.
Practical Experience	It refers to the work activities that are relevant for the development of skills.
Training	Used to describe the activities of learning and development that complements education and practical experience. It has a practical bias, and it's performed usually in the workplace or simulated work environment, including: (A) Training (B) networking, (C) observation, (D) reflection and (E) obtaining self-directed and unstructured knowledge

Source: Own Construction from the (International Federation of Accountants IFAC, 2010).

Table 3

Competences required by the International Accounting Education Standards

Standard	Name	Requirements
IES 1	Requirements for admission to a professional training program in Accounting.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Skills, values and professional ethics, in addition to the attitudes needed to become professional accountant. • Different types of training as long as they have quality and they are formally approved. • Previous degree (secondary education).
IES 2	Content of Professional Accounting training programs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Duration and intensity to ensure the necessary professional skills for professional competence. At least two years full time or equivalent part-time. • The content of a professional accounting education should consist of: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Accounting, finance and related knowledge: which provides the fundamental technical basis for a professional accountant. Must include at least: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Financial accounting b. Management and control accounting c. Taxes d. Corporate and commercial law. e. Audit and assurance f. Financial Management g. Professional values and ethics Besides the above, more detailed contents are presented as follows: (a) the history of the accounting profession and accounting thought, (b) the content, the concepts, the structure and meaning of the organization's reports, (c) national and international accounting and auditing norms, (d) the regulation of accounting, (e) management accounting, including planning and budgeting, management control, quality

		<p>control, performance measurement and benchmarking; (f) concepts, methods and processes that provide control accuracy and integrity of financial information and the safeguarding of business assets; (g) taxes and their impact on financial decisions and management; knowledge of the legal environment of business, (i) the nature of the audit and other assurance services, including risk assessment and fraud detection; (j) knowledge of finance and financial management, including financial statement analysis, financial instruments, markets, both domestic and international capital and management resources; (k) ethical and professional responsibilities of a professional accountant in relation to the professional environment, (l) matters of governmental accounting and nonprofit, and (m) use of nonfinancial performance measures in business development.</p> <p>2. Organization and business knowledge: It includes how organizations in terms of funding and administration. Includes: Economic Sciences, Business Environment, Corporate Governance, Business Ethics, Financial Markets, Quantitative Methods, Organizational Behavior, Management and strategic decision making, Marketing, International business and globalization. The specific contents are: (a) Macro-and microeconomics, (b) Business and financial markets, (c) Application of quantitative methods and statistics to business problems; d) The role of the professional accountant in corporate governance and ethics in business, (e) Organizations and environments in which they operate, (f) environmental and sustainable development issues, (g) interpersonal relationships and group dynamics in organizations, (h) Personnel matters and human resources (i) strategy, (j) the risk of the organization and operation; (k) a basic knowledge of international trade and finance and (l) an ability to integrate the above components in meeting strategic objectives.</p> <p>3. Computer skills: The accountant has an important role as part of a team in the assessment, design and management of these systems. Includes: General knowledge of ICT, ICT Control Knowledge Skills and ICT user level competences.</p> <p>a. At least one of the skills of roles like manager, evaluator or designer of information systems.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Professional knowledge component complements the non-professional and intellectual knowledge, personal, interpersonal, communication and organizational and management skills developed in general
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		<p>education.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The exact combination of general studies, accounting studies and practical experience may differ from one program to another, provided that the equivalent skills are achieved. <p>The curriculum is adjusted according to market demands.</p>
IES 3	Professional Skills and General Education.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Skills contained: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Intellectual skills Technical and functional skills Personal Skills Interpersonal and communication skills Management and entrepreneurial organization management Specific Skills: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> The ability to locate, obtain, organize and understand human information, from printed and electronic sources; The ability to research, logical and analytical thinking, reasoning ability and critical analysis, and The ability to identify and solve unstructured problems that may be in unfamiliar environments. The technical and functional skills consist of general skills and specific skills for accounting. They include: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Arithmetic Aptitude (mathematical and statistical applications) and IT Modeling decision and risk analysis, measurement, Reporting and compliance with legal and regulatory requirements. Personal skills relate to the attitudes and behaviors of professional accountants. Developing these skills helps personal learning and improvement. They include: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> self management, initiative, influence and self learning, The ability to select and assign priorities within limited resources and organize work to meet tight deadlines; The ability to anticipate and adapt to changes, Given the implications of ethical values and professional attitudes in the form of decision making and Professional skepticism. Interpersonal and communication skills enable a professional accountant to work with others for the common good of the organization, receive and impart information, form reasoned judgments and make decisions effectively, this aspect is highlighted in teamwork.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Professional accountants should develop a broad view of business as well as political awareness and a global perspective. Organizational skills and business management including: (a) Strategic planning, project management, people management and resources and decision making, (b) The ability to organize and delegate tasks, motivate and develop people; (c) leadership, and (d) Professional judgment and discernment. It may include general education in accounting education programs, at least with regard to: (a) an understanding of the flow of ideas and events of history, different cultures of the world today and an international perspective; (b) basic knowledge of human behavior, (c) an idea of the breadth of ideas, issues and contrasting economic, political and social forces in the world, (d) experience in research and evaluation of quantitative data, (e) the ability to conduct research, carry out logical thinking and understand critical thinking, (f) an appreciation of the art, literature and science, (g) an awareness of personal and social values and the process of investigation and trial, and (h) the experience of making value judgments.
IES 5	Practical experience requirements.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The training is presented in a framework of professional values, ethics and attitudes for exercising professional judgment and acting ethically in accordance with the IESBA Code. Includes a commitment to: (a) the public interest and sensitivity to social responsibility, (b) continuous improvement and lifelong learning, (c) the reliability, responsibility, punctuality, courtesy and respect, and (d) laws and regulations. High ethical content. Teaching values, ethics and attitudes, through strategies that simulate situations such as role plays. A learning workplace, professional values, ethics and attitudes: Agencies shall require students to acquire proper training and practical experience before graduation; therefore, the period of training and practical experience must be structured to give students the opportunity to observe the application of professional values, ethics and attitudes in work situations. Practical Experience Requirements: The period of practical experience in performing the work of professional accountants should be part of the pre-qualification, long enough and intense enough to meet the requirements. The internship must be a minimum of three years.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A period of relevant graduate studies (beyond undergraduate, for instance a master's degree). • Professional education with a strong component of accounting practice, a period of 12 months is recommended as a requirement. • Monitoring and Control: The regulatory authority should ensure that the practice of the candidate is acceptable. The program of practical experience should be mutually beneficial for both the employer and the apprentice and developed together. • A detailed procedure of how the process should be performed for these practices must be determined.
IES 6	Evaluation of skills and professional competences.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The skills and competences of candidates must be formally evaluated before qualifying as a professional accountant. This assessment is the responsibility of the IFAC member body, complying with the following: Cover enough of the full range of professional knowledge, skills and professional values, ethics and attitudes for the assessment to be reliable and valid, and be as close as possible to the end of the pre-qualification education program. However, for this evaluation factors as geographic location and available resources are taken into account.
IES 7	Continuous professional development: A Program of Lifelong Learning and Continuing Development of Professional Competence.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promoting lifelong learning: All professional accountants are required to develop and maintain their professional competence, appropriate to the nature of their work and professional responsibilities. This obligation applies to all professional accountants, whether they are involved in the traditional fields of accounting or other areas. • Access to CPD: mandatory for all professional accountants. • Input-based approach, it should be required for the professional accountant to: (a) Complete at least 120 hours or learning units, (b) Complete at least 20 hours or equivalent learning units in each year, (c) Track and measure learning activities to meet the above requirements.

Source: Own construction from (International Federation of Accountants IFAC, 2010)

Likewise, IES 8 issued "competency requirements to be met by professional auditors," however, it is not considered in this work since there would be a need for a separate study on the subject of auditing, given its magnitude and importance on the professional practice.

In IES 1, it is highlighted that part of previous training includes professional ethic and the existence of formation spaces different from University recognized in the process of training as a professional accountant.

IES 2, mentions that at least two years are required to ensure an education process, indicating that in Colombia this duration is exceeded, which has different causes, on one hand it should be noted that, according to (Vásquez & Patico, in press) (Patico & Vasquez, 2013):

Higher education accounting programs belong mostly to private sector. In 2013, of the 308 professional Accounting programs, 66 correspond to private institutions, which correspond to 79% according to the SNIES of the Ministry of National Education.

There is a clear tendency for programs to last five years, although due to recent shifts in the demand the tendency is to reduce that time in training. In relation to specific contents, we can mention the following: It is limited to taxes which is very relevant, but should be extended to the understanding of public finances since tax concepts ought not to be viewed solely from the taxpayer perspective, but also from the State perspective which has a more holistic view and gives a unbiased analysis of the phenomenon.

The research component within the content of academic programs should be contemplated, considering that even if it is acknowledged that there are different research strategies in the learning process, one of which is to adopt subject courses where practical work is developed, the importance of this issue is evident in generating critical and social awareness in accounting students. It is estimated that about 7% of the programs have more than 12% of their courses focused on research topics (Patico Jacinto & Santos, 2009), furthermore, Cardona and Zapata (2006) mention that "accounting relationships with other fields of knowledge are evident in the structuring of curricula through research."

On the other hand, the approach towards private organizations is tangible, as public accounting is not included. By contrast, there is a marked "business emphasis and the need to identify with the objectives of international corporations and the configuration logic of the new market" (Ariza & Soler, 2006, p. 16). No social responsibility contents were observed which is worrying as it does not take into account the social nature of the discipline.

In IES 3, there is differentiation between different types of skills needed for the accountant education, also giving importance to personal issues, such as: teamwork and the need for the development of communication skills by the accountant. This may be developed in specific subject courses. In Colombia it is estimated that at least 76% of programs use this strategy to develop this type of content (Patico Jacinto & Santos, 2009).

As contained in IES 5, the need to work in an ethical environment is emphasized, which is evident in the business world. In this aspect the question arises of where and how an ethical character for the accounting professional is created, even more when the evidence on corporate frauds has been frequent on the global stage.

Perhaps one of the most complex issues is how an assessment by competences is achieved, which is contained in IES 6, and it includes the need of such evaluation and considers the inclusion of context aspects within that evaluation, however, it does not specify how this is accomplished.

Requirements for continued professional development (IES 7) improve on the accounting professionals profile as such, because it generates continuous updating and capacity building; in addition, it is worth noting that there is no mandatory certification in Colombia, a mechanism that guarantees a minimum level of knowledge to perform in the workplace.

Conclusions

The debate about accounting education addressed by international institutions such as The Accounting Education Change Commission [AECC] and the American Institute of Certified Public Accountants [AICPA] has repetitively centered around to the need for curricula and teaching processes to adapt to the demands of the professional markets in increasingly dynamic and changing environments, with the argument that accounting curricula gives little relevance to practice (Ott, Cunha, Cornacchione, & De Luca, 2011). However, for IFAC accounting education ends up focusing on practical skills as professional knowledge, which is evident in Accounting graduates (Cardona & Zapata, 2006), mainly because the IFAC model does not consider the acquisition of knowledge and skills that are not directly related to specific roles of the working environment, leaving ethical, critic, environmental, among others, issues aside, in what is called comprehensive training*.

The aforementioned elements pose questions about the accounting practice and the training for those skills tend to be the more important than theoretical knowledge as such, since priority is given to the formation of "competent and competitive" professionals. This means that the proposal is to rethink the curriculum, so to concentrate on this trend, but this would limit other practices such as those associated with the research experience, in which other knowledge, skills and abilities are developed that, and which although relevant in the workplace, do not focus primarily on this aspect.

In IES 2 it is clear that the model aims on an education focused on financial accounting and on how this knowledge responds to market demands, through the curriculum, by classifying three major areas: "Accounting and Finance; organization and business; and skills in information technology "(Ariza & Soler, 2006, p 16.), in the first area a strong emphasis is placed on the functionalist and predominant perspective of accounting, which is not surprising, considering the homogenizing tendency of IFRS and the International Standards on Auditing [ISA]; the second area displays the entrepreneurial aspect, so that " it is evident that the advisor (not an accountant, not auditor) profile will mark the new

* The term comprehensive training will include working from the biological, psychological, aesthetic and spiritual perspective, that is to observe the formation of human beings from the social (humanistic education) and professional (scientific and technological training) perspective (Inciarte & Canquiz, 2009).

professional"(Ariza & Soler, 2006, p. 16); and finally the knowledge associated with the Information Technology in the "knowledge society". Particularly in the case of Colombia, this standard is embodied in Resolution 3459 (2003), where the minimum courses "to achieve the comprehensive formation of the accountant" are established.

It is clear that an accountant with communication, computer, analytical, intellectual, multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary skills, personal qualities and critical thinking is required; however, it is unclear how through Higher Education Institutions a highly skilled a professional, a "doer" can be obtained but who still retains throughout this process critical thinking about problems in his environment.

Finally, the issue of education obviously points to competences, which are directly related to the concept of competition as well as internationalization and interdisciplinarity, aspects that are the most challenging features of the curriculum in relation to the HEIs (Cardona Monsalve Arteaga & Zapata, 2006). Other aspects, different to that of contents, but vital in the justification of the curriculum must be mentioned, referring not only to market demands but to the context and social needs, essential to the nature of the accounting discipline.

The dynamics in the world today have allowed to identify "...that the context on which the accountant works has been changing rapidly; factors such as technology, economic globalization, an intensified competition in the market, renewal of professional standards, teaching-learning and ethics" (Valero & Patico, 2010, p.5.), among others, therefore, the need arises for an education that ensures "...passing to problem resolution on the basis of hypothetical work and on supported models with broad intellectual competences" (Quijano, 2002, p 62.); that means, a process of "deprofessionalization*" of teaching that focuses not only on, as suggested by González (2010) "... the fourth dimension of the accounting task: symbolic / conventional aspect of characters and formal procedures used in bookkeeping" (p. 14) and which is greatly supported in the postulates of IFAC, mainly on IES 2 and 3.

* Deprofessionalize teaching is understood as the "work that requires adaptive abandonment of constraints supported in instrumentation and simple techniques" (Quijano, 2002, p. 62), to move to "the accounting education as a set of epistemological foundations , knowledge of rules, whereby students are prepared for a changing future " (Quijano, 2002, p. 63).

It is expected therefore that higher education promotes models and initiatives for greater equity in mobility opportunities, promotion and professional training (Farias, n.d), like the consolidation of the teaching-learning processes beyond classroom problems, tending towards "...dissemination, evaluation, contrasting and building academic conceptions of accounting, which result in the understanding and transformation of the concrete practices of accountants and, through them, the social organizational network" (Gymez & Ospina, 2009, p 13.); understanding that accounting education cannot be framed in the instrumental rationality that underlies it, nor should focus on answering the needs of a particular stakeholder, just because its social position. By contrast, it involves a dual construction between theory and practice, so that it focuses on understanding and studying how the theoretical, conceptual and technical accounting developments are incorporated into the training process and affect the professional practice of Accounting, from the recognition of accounting as a result of any number of interrelations between different actors, not restricted to the company.

This line of thought is fixed in the challenge of re-thinking the accounting professional training through the making of coherent proposals with the context and the needs of society, emphasizing on the "constituent power" of accounting and therefore its contributions to strengthening trust in organizations and markets, from researches that recognize the developments or setbacks related to accounting training, without neglecting epistemology nor the "...recurring debates about its relevance as a specialized field of study, on its very object of reflection and the permanent contradictions " (Gomez, 2008, p. 3) within the accounting community.

The strategy identified in the competency-based training model is directed to address the development of skills and attitudes, so it still lacks the promotion processes to address values (Cardona & Ramon, 2009); features given by the Political Constitution of Colombia, 1991: Training in values, tripartite responsibility, learner-centered education ... that allows full development of personality, access to culture, respect for life and other human rights, peace building and democracy, the practice of work and recreation, for the cultural, scientific and technological improvement and also the protection of the environment (Cardona & Zapata, 2006). Fundamentally, accounting education still owes much to the social field, as:

It has yet to overcome its exclusive use to comply with legal and fiscal requirements, while other users also need and demand from accounting reports and analysis to substantiate judgments and appropriate decision making. For this, accounting should be guided by a deep sense of social responsibility, of redistributive justice and participatory democracy. (Ariza & Soler, 2006, p 35.)

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