

Chapter 1

Human, Relational, and Structural Capital as Strategic Objectives in Higher Education

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ABSTRACT

This chapter will focus on the characterization of human, relational, and structural capital, as well as the importance of establishing them as strategic objectives in higher education in Mexico, with the aim of designing academic proposals oriented to optimize and manage intellectual capital. Given that the new economic order demands from academic organizations more efficient ways of producing and transferring education, the context of higher education is pointed out with reference to the capitals in question and the importance of their relationship in such a way that through this it is possible to determine strategic objectives that maximize academic performance and improve teaching-learning models, as well as terminal efficiency in higher education schools in Mexico.

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INTRODUCTION

This chapter will focus on the characterization of human, relational and structural capital, as well as the importance of establishing them as strategic objectives in higher education in Mexico, with the aim of designing academic proposals oriented to optimize and manage intellectual capital.

Given that the new economic order demands from academic organizations more efficient ways of producing and transferring education, the context of higher education is pointed out with reference to the capitals in question and the importance of their relationship, in such a way that through this, it is possible to determine strategic objectives that maximize academic performance, and improve teaching - learning models, as well as terminal efficiency in higher education schools in our country.

In such a way, the new concepts and models in organizations are taken as a reference parameter due to the success they bring to different structures. Such is the case of intellectual capital that, despite not being a new conception, was not used a few years ago either. And, what has happened in the course of the last two decades is an explosion in certain key technical areas, including information and communication technologies, which have provided new tools with which a global economy has been built. Many of these tools provide intangible benefits that did not exist before, and that have now provided competitive advantages that constitute an asset in institutions (Viedma, 2000).

BACKGROUND

Ulrich (1998) conceptualized intellectual capital as a multiplicative function of competence and commitment. Congruent with the arguments of Ulrich (1998), and Quinn et al. (1996), an examination of the characteristics and features of intellectual capital reveals that it represents a particular case as far as its different components are complementary. This brings about a new dimension in human capital analysis. Without constituting a revolution, this methodology can be used for capital items revealing a high degree of complementarity.

Several studies indicate that unique or scarce resources impact firm performance (Barney, 1991; Castrogiovanni, 1991; Grant, 1991; Mahoney, 1995; Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998; Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978; Tsai & Ghoshal, 1998). For instance, Barney (1991) suggests that organizations have a competitive advantage when their assets, capabilities or processes possess specific attributes. That is, when assets, capabilities or processes are rare, valuable, difficult to imitate, and have few substitutes, they represent a critical source for competitive advantage.

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