

Title of QEP: Critical Thinking for Action

Institution: INCAE Business School

Summary:

Our QEP is intended to make a measureable impact on the critical thinking abilities and implementation skills of our MBA students by improving course content and strengthening the student-centered method of learning that occurs in the classroom. This objective will be achieved through curriculum redesign and faculty development. Learning outcomes will be ensured through the on-going assessment of students' critical thinking skills and actions to improve those skills.

A review of the masters' program curriculum is currently taking place at INCAE. The QEP is conducting a series of actions to ensure that this curriculum review addresses the need to improve critical thinking skills and dispositions. One is to ascertain the problem-solving and implementation skills most valued by business leaders in the countries we serve, and which of these skills and dispositions are most lacking in our recent graduates in their employ. Another is to identify those courses whose objectives are most directly related to the development of critical thinking skills, and to review the content of those courses in light of information obtained in our meetings with business leaders. This will reveal areas for improvements in course content and in course selection. In the first year of QEP implementation, the number of sessions in the managerial decisions course was increased by fifty percent based on the results of a program assessment.

The curriculum review will also consider alternatives to the traditional classroom for building critical thinking skills and action orientations, including the enrichment of student experience as company interns in our required capstone course, *Management Consulting Practice*, and the use of our the Entrepreneurship Center as a laboratory for building skills in putting business ideas to work.

Faculty development is occurring through an active program of classroom observation in which pairs of colleagues share their teaching plans and goals for improvement, attend each others' classes, and provide useful feedback using proven observation methods. The classroom observation program has already provided useful insights on how to best maintain student engagement in class discussion. Coupled with this program is the participation by members of our faculty in Harvard Business School's Colloquium on Participant-Centered Learning and INCAE's Case Method Workshop, both of which seek to improve students' critical thinking skills through the mastery of discussion leadership.

Improvement in students' critical thinking skills is being measured in several ways. One is through the application of a pair of standardized tests (in Spanish), the California Critical Thinking Skills Test and the Dispositions Inventory, which provide measures not only of CT skills as compared to other populations but also of the attitudes or dispositions toward using these skills, which is equally important for the successful manager. A second assessment measure is the quality of written case analyses at the beginning and end of the masters' program to identify those areas in which students are or are not improving in their ability to analyze problems and to articulate their solutions. Finally,

teams of our faculty are performing in-depth evaluations of the final reports and presentations in the capstone “Management Consulting Practice” course as a summative assessment of the range of managerial knowledge and skills, including critical thinking, that the program seeks to develop in our graduates.

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