

Pre-Professional Internships and their Relationship with Employer Satisfaction of Accounting Students at a Technological Institute

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SUBMITTED: 22/11/2021 ACCEPTED: 07/04/2022 PUBLISHED: 31/07/2022

ABSTRACT

Given the demands of the globalized and competitive job market, higher technical institutes must improve the training of technical professionals, especially in recent years when the COVID-19 pandemic has caused unemployment and underemployment. Pre-professional internship constitutes one of the fundamental components of quality technical education. In this study, the relationship between the performance in pre-professional internships, rated by the Instituto de Educación Superior Tecnológico Público Aenor Orrego, and the satisfaction of the expectations of the employer was studied in order to find the degree of congruence between the training entity and the requirements of the employers. The research is of a descriptive correlational type, since it considers the analysis of paired samples, without manipulating the variables. The results show a good, direct and positive correlation. The educational impact on employability would be notable if we consider the needs of employers; it would also contribute to the economic growth and welfare of the country.

Keywords: Pre-professional internship; job performance; employer satisfaction; technical accounting.

INTRODUCTION

In the globalized and competitive world of today, companies require highly qualified professionals capable of adding value to the organizations in which they work. In that sense, the greater the professional capacity, the more competitive companies will be to confront the adversities they face, with the strategic direction of human resources for organizational success (Montoya & Boyero, 2016). To face this challenge, higher education institutions must provide a quality education that trains professionals based on competencies linked to the demands of the labor market.

According to the Foreign Trade Society of Peru (ComexPeru), in Peru there is a gap between the training supply and labor demand, higher education is of low quality and underemployment affects 47.3% of the Economically Active Population that is employed. This means that for more than six million people in Peru, this underutilization of skills reaches up to *un 58.6% para profesionales con educación superior no universitaria* [58.6% for professionals with non-university higher education] (ComexPeru, as cited in Gestión, 2016). Greater attention must be paid to the job market, because if we continue to train professionals who are not needed, they will end up unemployed or underemployed, which will affect the economic growth of the country. In the last couple of years, 2020 and 2021, we have experienced great changes due to the COVID-19 pandemic, which generated an economic crisis that has caused the closure of many micro and small enterprises and formal and informal businesses. Consequently, there is more unemployment and underemployment, especially in technical careers in business, administration, accounting and tourism, among others. In an analysis of employment in Peru, Cardenas (2021) states that Peru has gone from an unemployment rate of 7% to 14.5% from March 2020 to March 2021.

The Institutos de Educación Superior Tecnológica (Higher Technological Institutes) (IEST) offer professional training that includes the development of specific skills, the development

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of employability skills and pre-professional internships (PPP). These internships are carried out in companies and constitute an opportunity that allows students to strengthen their technical competencies and gain experience in real working conditions, which improves the quality of their training, as defined by the Basic Curriculum Design for Higher Education (Resolución Viceministerial N.º 069-2015-MINEDU, 2015).

The main objective of this study is to determine the existing relationship between the performance in pre-professional internships of Accounting Technician career at the Instituto de Educación Superior Tecnológico Público (Public Higher Technological Institute) (IESTP) of Chorrillos and the satisfaction of employer expectations. It also seeks to determine the difference between the qualification levels evaluated by the Public Higher Technological Institute of Chorrillos in Lima and by the employers.

This study is relevant because it is assumed that the employer is the client who will use the services of the technical professional; the technical professional is the server (product) trained in the IESTs; and the IEST is the training center for technical professionals or producer of services. In other words, they are in a production-product-client relationship.

The study is justified since the IESTs seek to train professionals based on competencies through a process of continuous improvement and with an entrepreneurial focus, in order to contribute to the strengthening of a fairer society with professionals capable of leading the changes demanded by the modern world (Ministerio de Educación [MINEDU], 2014).

This research is important because it provides knowledge about the aspects considered by employers, public and private companies, on the performance of students during the completion of their PPPs in the technical accounting field.

PPPs are regulated in Ley N.º 28518 (2005), about modalities of labor training; however, this law has lost relevance due to the current labor problems caused by the pandemic.

Theoretical Framework

a. Accounting Technician Training

In Peru, technical vocational training is provided by the Higher Technological Institutes (IESTs), which guarantee the integration of theoretical and instrumental knowledge aiming to ensure the acquisition of the competencies required by the productive sector for job market insertion. They offer specialization and professional improvement or updating studies in specific sections, as well as other continuing education programs, for which they grant the corresponding certificates in accordance with Ley N.º 30512 (2016).

IESTs develop technical vocational training within the framework of the Nuevo Diseño Curricular Básico (New Basic Curriculum Design), which is based on the competency-based approach, which implements the continuous improvement of the quality and relevance of the training of professionals in the face of the evolution of technology in the production of goods and services, and of society; thus it raises the level of competitiveness of companies, living conditions and job opportunities for the population (Trujillano, 2014).

The professional profile is the basis of competency-based training since it facilitates the design of an educational offer or professional training relevant to the labor demand of the market. In this sense, a relationship is established between the productive referent and the educational referent in the following Figure 1:

In other words, a congruence is established between the training of graduates and the requirements of employers in terms of the professional and personal competencies needed for the job.

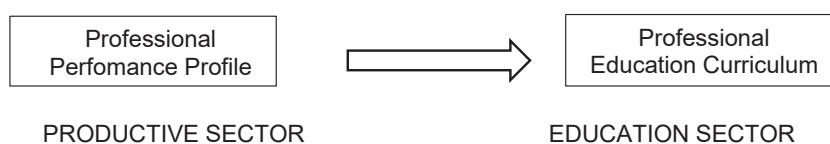


Figure 1. Relationship between the productive sector and the education sector.

Source: Prepared by the author.

The professional profile includes technical competencies, employability competencies and pre-professional internships, which allow an optimal professional performance according to the requirements of the production sector of society.

The Training Guidelines of the Accounting Technician career

The training guidelines corresponding to the Accounting Technician career is composed of a set of modules and didactic units, which are defined according to the characteristics of the professional career profile, the available resources of the IEST, the needs of regional and local development, and the qualities of the students.

The career of Accounting Technician has a duration of at least 2550 hours, which is equivalent to at least 120 credits and a maximum of 10% more credits.

Accounting Technician Training Curriculum

The curricular design of the Accounting Technician career guarantees the development of the competencies of the Accounting Technician profile and is integrated by the following components:

- a. Specific or technical training. This is constituted by the set of technological and scientific knowledge, attitudes and procedures required to achieve the competencies of the career. The development of these competencies comprises at least 89 credits.
- b. Training for employability. This provides the humanistic and scientific bases in order to develop individual and social competencies that support the capacity to act with ethical sense and efficiency in the job performance. The development of general and cross-sectional competencies for employability comprises at least 19 credits of the total training.
- c. Pre-professional internship. The PPP is the use of the skills obtained during the academic training time, in a real work situation, applying the different knowledge and theories developed in the training modules. The development of the PPP comprises at least 12 credits of the total training and is distributed throughout the whole career in each of the training modules.

The Accounting Technician, upon developing the competencies of the graduate profile, will be prepared to work in any type of company: both in the

private and public sectors; industrial, commercial or service companies; micro, small, medium or large enterprises. Their incorporation into the job market is defined by the job and professional competencies that they gradually acquire during their academic training. In addition, the Accounting Technician is capable of creating and managing companies through the application of modern accounting systems, tools and models.

b. Pre-professional Internships - PPP

PPPs allow the relationship between the IEST and the business and job field, where students put into practice the knowledge acquired in their professional training and acquire new skills and experience, enabling them to be able to solve problems in real work situations.

The Decreto Legislativo N.º 1401-2018-MTPE stipulates that PPP is the modality that aims to develop skills of university and non-university higher education students. According to the PPP regulations of the Professional Accounting career of the IESTPs, the PPPs established by the modular system are mandatory and constitute a requirement for progressive certifications per module and have a duration at least equivalent to 35% of the total training hours of the technical and professional modules.

The PPPs of the Accounting Technicians are regulated by the Resolución Viceministerial N.º 069-2015-MINEDU that approves the National Basic Curricular Design of Higher Technological Education, where it is stated that the PPPs are a set of activities that aim for students to integrate, consolidate or expand knowledge, skills and real work attitudes in order to complete their technical, employability or cross-sectional competencies linked to a professional career.

PPPs can take place in a company or in the vocational training center through productive projects.

The aforementioned norm stipulates that the objectives of PPPs are:

- Strengthen cognitive, procedural, and attitudinal aspects.
- Establish a relationship between students and public and/or private organizations.
- Encourage students to learn and adapt to new technologies.
- Encourage personal, professional and social fulfillment to the students.

- Enable the student to be trained in the organization and to manage a self-managed company.

PPP Management Process

The PPP process corresponding to the Accounting Technician training follows a sequence of three modules in an average time of 14 months of internships in one or more workplaces, adding a total of 828 hours of internships that represent more than one third of the total hours of the training.

To access the PPP, the student can apply through the Instituto de Educación Superior Tecnológico Público de Chorrillos or directly to a company or institution that requires interns. The IESTP will designate a teacher of the specialty or mentor to guide and evaluate the intern.

Evaluation of PPPs

The indicators in the regulations for programming, execution and evaluation of PPPs of the Instituto de Educación Superior Tecnológico Público de Chorrillos in Lima are considered for the PPP evaluation. Performing the work of supervisor, counselor and tutor is part of the job performance of the teacher in higher technical education, as stipulated by Ley N.º 30512 (2016).

c. Employer satisfaction

According to Kotler (1993, as cited in Thompson, 2005), user satisfaction is *el nivel del estado de ánimo de una persona que resulta de comparar el rendimiento percibido de un producto o servicio con sus expectativas [the level of a person's state of mind that results from comparing the perceived performance of a product or service with his or her expectations]*. Thus, the perception of the user regarding the satisfaction of his or her expectations and needs defines the quality achieved by an institution.

Employer satisfaction regarding PPPs can be evaluated through a set of indicators that reflect their perception of the level of performance of the intern.

Regarding the PPPs performed by Accounting Technician students, employers are satisfied with two general expectations (León & Mayta, 2011):

- Level of knowledge, skills and attitudes that the intern has to perform effectively.
- Contribution of the intern to the development of the company.

The purposes related to the evaluation of employer satisfaction on student performance in PPPs are:

- To evaluate the job performance of Accounting Technician students and obtain information that serves in academic and administrative decision making.
- To know the labor field of the students, identifying the academic profile of the graduate requested by the production sector.
- Contribute to the evaluation of the training services offered by the IESTs and provide alternatives to improve the performance of professionals.

Indicators of Employer Satisfaction

In order to evaluate the intern, the following are considered:

- Identification data of the intern.
- Internship characteristics.
- Indicators of the work performance of interns.

METHODOLOGY

The research is descriptive-correlational because it considers the analysis of the relationship of the two variables: the level of PPP performance and employer satisfaction (Hernández, Fernández & Baptista, 2014).

The study sample consisted of 28 students, 7 males and 21 females, of the fourth and sixth academic cycle of the Accounting Technician career of the Instituto de Educación Superior Tecnológico Público de Chorrillos, who carried out their PPPs in 2019. The sample is equivalent to 50% of the interns and 20% of the enrolled students. The sample was obtained by convenience considering the following inclusion criteria:

- Their performance in the PPPs corresponding to modules II and III had been evaluated.
- Predisposition of the students to collaborate in the research.

The instruments used for data collection were:

- **PPP evaluation sheet.** This evaluation sheet is found in the Reglamento de Programación, Ejecución y Evaluación de PPP (Regulations for Programming, Execution and Evaluation of PPPs) issued by the IESTP Antenor Orrego Espinoza (2018). The form is used

to gather information on the performance of students during the pre-professional internships. It is made up of 14 indicators classified into 4 criteria: procedures and techniques, objective and accuracy, personal contribution in the production process, and efficiency and commitment to work (Table 1). For the evaluation of the indicators, weights of 0, 1 and 2 are considered, amounting to a score of 20.

- **Questionnaire to evaluate the satisfaction of employer expectations.** Prepared to evaluate employer satisfaction based on the 30 indicators of the European Union Tuning Project on higher education (SOCRATES Program, 2003). These indicators were synthesized by relevance to a total of 20 indicators (Table 2) that are qualified on an ordinal scale from 1 to 5 (“Never”, “Hardly ever”, “Frequently”, “Almost always” and “Always”). This rating was converted to the vigesimal scale to estimate the correlation with the other variable.

Techniques and processing for data analysis

To identify the most appropriate techniques and statistical tests, that described by Vale and Rivera

(2015) on creation and validation of questionnaires, and the recommendations of Flores, Miranda and Villasís (2017) are considered. After analyzing the statistics related to the type of variable, sample size and hypotheses, the stages according to the research design are shown.

- The validity of the instrument was checked by means of expert judgment by four subject matter experts.
- To test the reliability of the employer satisfaction questionnaire, Cronbach's alpha coefficient was used. To evaluate the coefficients, the criteria recommended by George and Mallery (2003) were considered. A value of 0.78 was obtained, which means that the reliability of the scale is quite acceptable, which means that there is internal consistency among the sample data.
- Since the sample is small, less than 50, the verification of the normality of the data distribution was done by means of the Shapiro-Wilk normality test. In no case were the test values greater than 0.05, which means that the distribution of the data is asymmetric, not normal. Therefore, nonparametric statistics is applied.

Table 1. Criteria for Evaluation Report of the Pre-Professional Internship.

CRITERIA/INDICATIONS	PRESENCE		RATING (weight)	QUALIFICATION
	YES	NO		
1. PROCEDURES AND TECHNIQUES				
Use of technical processes in the preparation of the report.			0, 1, 2	
Appropriate use and description of methods, techniques, and instruments.			0, 1, 2	
Demonstrates originality of the schemes employed.			0, 1	
Considers tasks or activities as accomplished.			0, 1	
2. OBJECTIVES AND ACCURACY	YES	NO		
Capacity for analysis and synthesis.			0, 1, 2	
Supports the accuracy of the data provided.			0, 1, 2	
Writes in a clear and precise way.			0, 1	
Describes the actions carried out in an orderly manner.			0, 1	
3. PERSONAL CONTRIBUTION IN THE PRODUCTION PROCESS	YES	NO		
Demonstrates accuracy in conclusions.			0, 1, 2	
The recommendations reflect their feasibility.			0, 1	
Explicit interest in adapting to technologies and innovations.			0, 1	
Suggests improvements of the work carried out in the workplace.			0, 1	
4. EFFICIENCY AND COMMITMENT TO WORK	YES	NO		
Presents information in an orderly, sequential and clear manner.			0, 1	
Delivers the work within 30 days before the end of the internship			0, 1, 2	
REPORT SCORE				

Source: Reglamento de Programación, Ejecución y Evaluación de PPP, IESTP Antenor Orrego Espinoza (2018).

Table 2. Qualification of Employer Satisfaction.

Indicators	Rating 1 - 5
Follows the instructions given by the boss or superior.	
Demonstrates ability to design, organize and direct productive projects.	
Shows concern for quality.	
Demonstrates an entrepreneurial spirit.	
Has innovative ideas.	
Proposes solutions to problems in an accurate and timely manner.	
Possesses basic information technology skills.	
Has the ability to apply what has been learned in practice.	
Possesses the ability to work autonomously with dedication.	
Shows security and ability at work.	
Adapts to different work situations.	
Cooperates with the conservation and maintenance of equipment and machines.	
Complies with the rules and regulations of the organization.	
Has the ability to work in interdisciplinary teams.	
Has the ability to communicate actively and seek consensus.	
Possesses leadership skills.	
Has the ability to analyze and synthesize information.	
Shows ethical commitment.	
Shows critical and self-critical capacity.	
Performs satisfactorily for the company/institution.	
Total	

Source: Prepared in collaboration with the support team.

d. Since the variables do not have a normal distribution and the sample was small, Spearman's correlation coefficient (ρ) was used to find the relationship between the variables. The hypothesis testing was carried out.

The data collected were processed with Excel 2016 for descriptive statistics calculations. To estimate the inferential statistics, SPSS vs.24.0 was used, following the user's guide (IBM, 2018).

RESULTS

a. Evaluation of the PPPs

Module III interns obtained higher average in PPP performance (17.22) compared to Module II interns (16.20). It can be deduced that the difference is due to the fact that Module III interns are better prepared since they are studying the sixth cycle, while Module II interns are studying the fourth cycle. There was no difference in qualification based on gender.

According to the PPP performance evaluation criteria, the contribution to production (92%) and work

efficiency (88%) obtained higher scores, as shown in Table 3.

Table 3. PPP performance Evaluation Criteria for the Instituto de Educación Superior Tecnológico Público de Chorrillos.

Evaluation Criteria	Total Points	Considered Points	%
Procedures and techniques	168	133	79%
Objectives and accuracy	168	136	81%
Contribution to production	140	129	92%
Efficiency at work	84	74	88%

Source: Prepared by the author.

Regarding the PPP performance indicators, the interns recorded performance levels of 68% in their capacity for analysis and synthesis; 66% in the appropriate use of methods, techniques, and instruments; and 71% in the capacity for report preparation. As for the indicators "complies with the tasks", "describes in an orderly manner", "suggests improvements in the work" and "presents information sequentially and

demonstrates originality”, they reach a performance level of 100%.

b. Employer Satisfaction

In the companies, the students performed their PPPs mostly in the areas of accounting (71%), cash or treasury (11%), data processing or computing (11%) and warehouse or inventory (7%), which are related to their training.

Female students in Module III achieved higher scores (15.9), while male students in Module II obtained slightly lower scores (15.0).

Regarding the economic stimulus received by the interns from the company, it was found that 50% received tips, 29% received minimum wage and 21% did not receive any financial incentive.

The interns have poor performance in the areas of accounting (14%), warehouse/inventory (25%), planning/statistics (21%), data processing (18%) and sales/marketing (7%). As for the contributions of interns to the development of the company, the most important are “taking timely initiatives” (32%), “doing extra work” (21%), “collaborating with the institution” (21%) and “coming up with innovative ideas and working overtime” (11%), although they identify very little with the organization. The students are hard-working, but contribute little in terms of ideas, proposals or solutions to problems.

In relation to employer satisfaction regarding PPPs, the following skills of the interns stand out: “cares about quality” (5.4%), “demonstrates skill and safety at work” (5.4%), “complies with company rules and regulations” (5.3%), “has the ability to apply what has been learned” (5.2%), “cooperates with the conservation and maintenance of equipment and machinery” (5.2%), “proposes solutions to problems in an accurate and timely manner” (4.6%), “has the capacity to analyze and synthesize information” (4.7%), and “adapts to different work situations” (4.7%). While the least qualified are: “has the capacity to generate innovative ideas” (4.5%) and “has the ability to work autonomously with dedication” (4.5%).

c. Relationship between variables

The results of the Spearman correlation, shown in Table 4, demonstrate that there is a direct and positive correlation ($\rho = 0.746$) between the PPP performance of students in the fourth and sixth cycle of the Accounting Technician career and the satisfaction of employer expectations, with a significance level of 0.05 between the variables.

Table 4. Spearman's Correlation Coefficient.

			PPP Performance	Employer Satisfaction
Spearman's Rho	PPP Performance	Correlation coefficient	1.000	0.746**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000
		N	28	28
	Employer Satisfaction	Correlation coefficient	0.746**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.
		N	28	28

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Source: Prepared by the author using SPSS.

The relationship between the two study variables is confirmed by the analysis of the scatter diagram (Figure 2), where it can be seen that there is correspondence between the data of both variables. In addition, the value of the coefficient of determination (R^2) was 0.586, which means that both variables share 58.6% of the variance. The coefficient determines the quality of the model to replicate the results, since it demonstrates the interdependence of the data.

d. Behavior of the Qualification Levels

The performance in PPPs evaluated by the Instituto de Educación Superior Tecnológico Público de Chorrillos has a higher rating at the high level, 68%, while the rating for the employer at the high level is 21% (Table 5); this means that the IESTP rates the PPPs higher than the employers.

Table 5. Qualification Level by Variable.

Level	Qualification range	Employer Satisfaction	Performance in PPPs
Low	0 – 12	0	0
Medium	13 – 16	22	9
High	17 – 20	6	19
Total		28	28

Source: Consolidated data, prepared by the author.

The qualifications given by the Instituto de Educación Superior Tecnológico Público de Chorrillos on the performance in PPPs have an increasing, exponential trend (0, 9 and 19), while the ratings by the employer on their satisfaction with the intern have a parabolic trend (0, 22 and 6), that is to say, a more normal distribution.

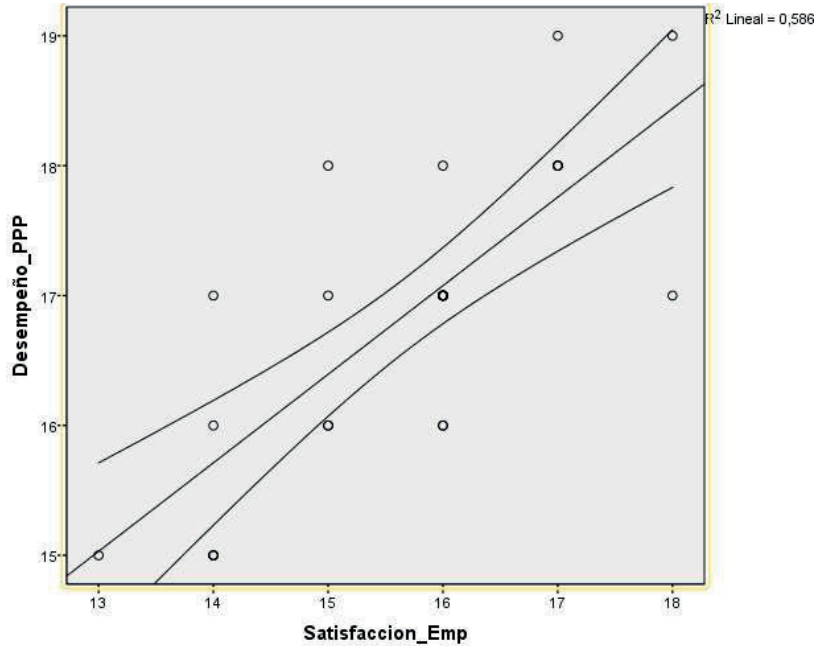


Figure 2. Scatter Diagram.

Source: Prepared by the author.

DISCUSSION

Employers give an average rating of 15.68 (78% satisfaction), while the Instituto de Educación Superior Tecnológico Público de Chorrillos registers an average rating of 16.86 (84% Satisfaction). The causes of such differences could be: the limited evaluation criteria of the Instituto de Educación Superior Tecnológico Público de Chorrillos, the training of the teachers supervising the PPPs, the lack of monitoring by the head of the academic area, among others. In the performance in PPPs, the interns show higher scores in those indicators qualified by two alternatives (0 and 1) since they all present indicator 1 (maximum score); on the other hand, the questions or indicators with three alternatives (0, 1 and 2) present different scores.

There is very little research related to the evaluation of PPPs of accounting students from higher technical institutes, since research tends to be done mainly on the PPPs of university students. Similarly, there is a greater number of studies on the satisfaction of the intern or worker, but not of the employer.

Although the analysis and evaluation carried out by the Tuning project considers the indicators in two parts (generic and specific), in this study only the indicators suggested in the generic evaluation, and

not specific to the accounting career, have been considered; that is to say, the evaluation of performance in PPP by the Instituto de Educación Superior Tecnológico Público de Chorrillos only considers general aspects.

This study intends to be a document of critical analysis for the evaluations of performance in PPP of the Accounting Technician students of the Instituto de Educación Superior Tecnológico Público de Chorrillos, as well as for the unequal qualification from the employers. In this way, the investigation seeks to propose a consensus of relevance in the evaluation of PPPs between vocational technical training centers and employer companies, considering the proposed evaluation indicators, as well as the principles and characteristics of the professional career training.

If we consider the IEST as the center of production of technical professionals and the employers as clients, it is understood that the client is not satisfied. This study seeks to satisfy the client by means of a better relationship between the training entity of the technical accounting professional and the job centers. Thus, the impact on the professional's efficiency would be greater and, consequently, their productivity and economy would improve. The impact of training on employability would be notable if

we consider the needs of companies or employers, that is to say, it would be very healthy for the growth of production and, therefore, for the economic growth and welfare of the country.

CONCLUSIONS

The performance in PPPs of the fourth and sixth cycle students of the Accounting Technician career at the Instituto de Educación Superior Tecnológico Público de Chorrillos has an approval of 84% by the Head of the Academic Area, while the employers feel satisfied in 78%. This difference indicates that it is necessary to make adjustments in the evaluation instruments in order to achieve greater congruence between the results of the training guidelines and the production reality.

The performance in PPPs of the fourth and sixth cycle students of the Accounting Technician career at Instituto de Educación Superior Tecnológico Público de Chorrillos reached a medium (32%) and high (68%) level, which demonstrated objectivity and accuracy in the procedures and techniques and contributed with efficiency and labor dedication to the productive process. Employer satisfaction reached a medium (79%) and high (21%) level, which showed that they value the efforts of the trainees and identify their deficiencies.

The performance of the PPPs of the fourth and sixth cycle students of the Accounting Technician career at Instituto de Educación Superior Tecnológico Público de Chorrillos has a direct and positive relationship with the satisfaction of the expectations of the employer ($\rho = 0.746$) in that there is contribution with timely initiatives, performance of extraordinary work and institutional collaboration. Thus, it is confirmed that there is a significant correlation between the variables under study.

RECOMENDATIONS

Strengthen the knowledge and skills of students in inventory and warehouse management, statistics, and data processing so they can improve their performance in their PPPs. It is also recommended that students develop creative and innovation skills, problem solving, design and execution of productive projects, adaptation to new work situations, leadership, and active communication before they begin their internships.

Conduct research regarding the guidance and counseling of interns, including input from the company or IEST professionals. Student and graduate

mentoring should also be standardized through practical training and information updates.

Deepen the research in relation to the demand of the labor market in order to align the curricular contents and the graduate profile of the Accounting Technician career according to the demand of the labor market.

Carry out a detailed analysis of the indicators, criteria and dimensions of the PPPs in order to build a standard evaluation instrument, in accordance with the characteristics and objectives of the pre-professional internships that will ensure their efficient development.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I express my gratitude to the people who have supported me in the completion of this research:

- Support team in the validation of the research instrument: Dr. Walter H. Alva Miguel, Mg. Carlos Zúñiga Reynoso, Mg. CPC Blanca S. Benites Asmad and Lic. Eduardo O. Pazos Elías.
- To the 28 students who collaborated and provided valuable information.

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