

Level of adoption and implementation of the "OIE Day-1 Competencies" in the Americas

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The implementation of "OIE Day-1 competencies" contributes to a global developmental focus. Competencies such as analyses of working situation specific tasks, competencies to acquire, training objectives, threshold criteria for eligibility in the labor market, teaching strategies, pedagogical and organisational means can be evaluated and certified for global standardisation.

Veterinary medical education in the Americas is well-represented on the OIE list of VEEs. The OIE list based on Member Countries' reports includes 173 Veterinary Medicine Schools, whose distribution are as follows. In North America: Canada, 5, USA 28 and Mexico 16; Central America and the Caribbean: Costa Rica 2, Cuba 1, El Salvador 1, Guatemala 1, Honduras 1, Nicaragua 7, Panamá 1 and Trinidad and Tobago 1; South America: Argentina 10, Bolivia 3, Brasil 40, Chile 9, Colombia 20, Ecuador 12, Paraguay 4, Peru 4, Uruguay 1 and Venezuela 6. However, this list does not include all the Schools of Veterinary Medicine; for example, in the case of Brasil and Mexico and possibly other countries.

According to the OIE information, 76% of the Veterinary Medicine Schools reported are public, 23% are private and 1% are both (public and private), in comparison with the rest of the world where 88% are public, 11% are private and 1% are both. It is notable that Schools of Veterinary Medicine in the Americas have only a difference of 12% less public education with respect to the rest of the world.

The school of Veterinary Medicine at the National Autonomous University of Mexico, established in 1853, is the oldest continuously functioning school of veterinary medicine in the American continent.¹ After that, the OIE recognises the second School in Guelph, Canada, established 1862 and in 1879 the first School in Iowa, USA.

According to the OIE list, the average annual number of graduates from Veterinary Medicine Schools in the American continent is: 46% from 0 to 50 graduates per year; 37% from 51 to 100; 14% from 101 to 150; 1.5% from 151 to 200; and 1.5% with more than 200 graduates per year. In comparison with the worldwide proportion, the data indicate that America has on average a 4% difference of the annual number of graduates per year, for example the global data indicate that from 0 to 50 graduates per year represents 42% and from 51 to 100 graduates per year, 34%.

Veterinary education programs vary among the different regions in the American continent. In the USA and Canada, it is a post-graduate 4 year program; whereas in Latin America it is usually a 5 to 6 year undergraduate program, after high school, which combines veterinary medicine with some animal production.

In the Americas, there are different accrediting bodies some of which are independent of government and others which depend on their Ministries of Education. The oldest government independent organisation with the most experience is the Council on Education of the American Veterinary Medical Association, which accredits schools in the United States and Canada on a mandatory basis; and also in other countries upon request. In Mexico, in 1995 the Mexican Council for Veterinary Education was created as a government independent accrediting body, with 16 schools currently accredited by them. In South America, Colombia, Argentina and Chile have accrediting bodies as part of their Ministries of Education, although there is some level of independence. Also in South America there is a regional international accrediting body of the Mercosur group, which performs accreditations in the member countries on a voluntary basis.

1 Silveira Prado, Enrique y Etxaniz J. Manuel, "Las primeras escuelas de Veterinaria en América" (The first Veterinary Schools in America), REDVET. Revista electrónica de Veterinaria 1695-7504, 2007 Volumen VIII Número 9, disponible en: <http://www.veterinaria.org/revistas/redvet/n090907/090706.pdf>

The main objective of this presentation is to report the awareness and application of “OIE Day-1 competencies” in the Americas which will prompt discussion of the principal challenges in America for their implementation.

In order to obtain the report, an inquiry was made to the Veterinary Medicine Schools in the continent, using harmonised questions. The survey yielded a 25% response, of which 14% corresponded to 25 schools in Latin America; 2.3% to 4 responses from Canada; and 8% to 14 schools from USA. Responses were as follows: 80% know about “OIE Day-1 competencies”; 56% of the Latin American Schools have modified their curricula to reflect “OIE Day-1 competencies”; and finally, schools from countries like USA and Canada know “OIE Day-1 competencies”, but only a few have included them in their curricula for different reasons.

Among the main challenges presented by 25 Veterinary Medicine Schools of Latin America in adoption the “OIE Day-1 competencies”, are the following: The schools do not have the necessary economic backing and qualified human resources in all areas to deliver a high quality program; they do not know how to evaluate the accomplishment of many of these competencies; their curriculum is structured by courses and objectives and not to achieve certain competencies; and, there is resistance by some faculty members to modify their traditional way of teaching through a lecture system, among others.

In the case of 14 schools from USA and 4 from Canada, they reported the main challenges in implementation of the “OIE Day-1 Competencies” as the following: Evaluation of competencies in communication is always difficult; food hygiene is the most challenging as many of their students are interested in small animal medicine and do not value this competency as much; transboundary diseases are of global importance and students are given only an introduction to these essential concepts; schools do not put as much emphasis on the slaughter plant aspects related to food hygiene, inspection and certification procedures, risk analysis and international trade framework. Some of these competencies are already in the curriculum but need to be modified to address more clearly the specifics of the competencies as outlined; and competencies need to match with the geographical context, leading to some schools which have developed their own comprehensive day one competencies.

The situation overview of Veterinary technicians in the American continent is as follows: In México, the OIE has reported that in the 2014 the country counted 1,260 Community animal health workers and 2,441 technicians involved in food hygiene, including the abattoirs. In the case of Argentina para-professionals participate in public and private sector veterinary services; the country has a veterinary statutory body that registers veterinary para-professionals; and they have 3 categories of veterinary para-professionals recognized: Technician local office, Veterinary Assistant of Inspection Service and Technician Accredited for specific Programs.

In Canada also veterinary para-professionals (VPPs) participate in public and private sector veterinary services; two of ten provincial licensing bodies currently register veterinary technicians in their respective provinces. Veterinary technicians spend two years studying in a community college after completing high school to qualify for a Diploma as a Veterinary Technician; and a committee of the CVMA inspects and accredits the majority of veterinary technician programs at these institutions in Canada. These institutions are also certified to provide post-secondary school programs by the Departments of High Education in each of the provinces.

In addition, the USA was found to have para-professionals participating in public and private sector veterinary services. The country counts their VPPs with a veterinary statutory body that registers veterinary para-professionals, but this varies state to state. State regulatory boards may register/license VPPs who are veterinary technologists/technicians, but they do not register veterinary assistants.

In analysing the list of VEEs, it is considered important to improve and update the registration of Veterinary Medicine Schools in the American continent. Additionally, it is recommended that the OIE questionnaire be improved to remove any confusing questions and to take into account the different interpretations of "accreditation/certification/approval".

Finally, it is proposed to make a detailed study of the work done by the veterinary para-professionals and their professional regulation in each country of America.

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