

Original article

System of actions to integrate university processes to the management of local development



Sistema de acciones para integrar los procesos universitarios a la gestión del desarrollo local

Sistema de ações para integrar processos universitários à gestão do desenvolvimento local

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ABSTRACT

Local development in Cuba represents in recent times a topic of great importance in public agendas, from which Higher Education assumed it as a priority in its strategic planning. On this basis, the management of the professional training process of university students should focus on territorial needs, based on the development of activities and actions that respond to social needs and contribute to their professional performance. To this end, the training process should facilitate the articulation of knowledge, innovation, as well as the development of skills for entrepreneurship and the training of social leaders to enhance the fulfillment of economic policies. Taking these aspects into account, the objective of this research is to propose a system of actions to contribute to the integration of university processes to the management of local development. In order to achieve this objective, theoretical and empirical methods were used, which made it possible to achieve as main result the design of a proposal of actions that contributes to provide ways to ensure that the training process

of professionals is developed in an integrated manner to the management of local development, facilitating structural changes and improving the quality of life of the population.

Keywords: university processes; local development; integration.

RESUMEN

El desarrollo local en Cuba representa en los últimos tiempos un tema de gran importancia en las agendas públicas, a partir de lo cual la Educación Superior lo asumió como prioritario dentro de su planeación estratégica. Sobre esta base, la gestión del proceso de formación profesional de los estudiantes universitarios debe enfocarse hacia las necesidades territoriales, en función del desarrollo de actividades y acciones que respondan a las necesidades sociales y contribuyan a su desempeño profesional. Para ello, el proceso de formación debe facilitar la articulación del conocimiento, la innovación, así como el desarrollo de habilidades para el emprendimiento y la formación de líderes sociales para potenciar el cumplimiento de las políticas económicas. Teniendo en cuenta estos aspectos, la presente investigación tiene como objetivo: proponer un sistema de acciones para contribuir a la integración de los procesos universitarios a la gestión del desarrollo local. Para darle cumplimiento a este objetivo, se emplearon métodos teóricos y métodos empíricos, que posibilitaron alcanzar como principal resultado el diseño de una propuesta de acciones que contribuye a aportar vías para lograr que el proceso de formación de los profesionales se desarrolle de manera integrada a la gestión del desarrollo local, facilite cambios estructurales y mejore la calidad de vida de la población.

Palabras clave: procesos universitarios; desarrollo local; integración.

RESUMO

O desenvolvimento local em Cuba tornou-se recentemente uma questão muito importante nas agendas públicas, razão pela qual o Ensino Superior o tornou uma prioridade em seu planejamento estratégico. Com base nisso, a gestão do processo de formação profissional dos estudantes universitários deve se concentrar nas necessidades territoriais, em termos do desenvolvimento de atividades e ações que respondam às necessidades sociais e contribuam para seu desempenho profissional. Para isso, o processo de formação deve facilitar a articulação do conhecimento, a

inovação, bem como o desenvolvimento de habilidades para o empreendedorismo e a formação de líderes sociais para melhorar o cumprimento das políticas econômicas. Levando em conta esses aspectos, o objetivo desta pesquisa é propor um sistema de ações que contribua para a integração dos processos universitários na gestão do desenvolvimento local. Para atingir esse objetivo, foram utilizados métodos teóricos e empíricos, o que possibilitou alcançar como principal resultado o desenho de uma proposta de ações que contribua para proporcionar formas de garantir que o processo de formação de profissionais seja desenvolvido de forma integrada à gestão do desenvolvimento local, facilitando mudanças estruturais e melhorando a qualidade de vida da população.

Palavras-chave: processos universitários; desenvolvimento local; integração.

INTRODUCTION

In the last decade, local development became an important issue in the Cuban economic and social development model and Higher Education assumed it as a priority in its strategic planning (Núñez Jover et al., 2021).

There are many criteria on how to define local development management, however, common aspects can be identified that make it possible to understand the term as a complex process for social economic development purposes, led by the local community with the participation of actors, both from the territory and from outside it, in which political and socioeconomic aspects interact and where the fundamental axes are represented by the territory, the environment and the actors (whether local or not) (Simón Otero & Capote Pérez, 2021).

These same authors define aspects that distinguish local development management, among which the following can be highlighted: (1) it is a process of economic growth and structural change, reactivator of the economy and local society on sustainable bases that affect a territorially defined community and that takes the form of an improvement in the standard of living of its inhabitants; (2) it shapes a process of strengthening local structures and powers; (3) it is composed as a territorial strategy; (4) it constitutes the process through which public policies, strategies, programs and projects oriented to take advantage of endogenous and exogenous resources are managed; (5) it is an integral project that seeks the competitive insertion of the territories in the international market

on innovative bases; (6) it is presented as a process of coordination of actors and articulation of local and supra-local interests; (7) and, finally, it is assumed that territorial development is a complex social and political process that has its own characteristics depending on the territories and their characteristics (identity, cultural, political and other resources such as economic and environmental) and where the basis is the construction of capacities for different actors to develop the management process in an articulated manner (Simón Otero & Capote Pérez, 2021).

To these aspects, it could be added that, in the process of local development management, local actors as managers and protagonists of change constitute a fundamental factor for success. To this end, constant training and capacity building processes are required, with the particularity of assuming participatory training methods, through which results are generated that contribute to development at the municipal level (Pérez Viñas et al., 2020).

In this sense, Núñez Jover et al. (2021) state that sustainable local development calls for the creation of human, cognitive, scientific and technological capacities. Human potential is a determining factor. Therefore, universities, key actors of knowledge, play an important role in the battle for sustainable development, also at the local level.

In recent years, the University has assumed a more leading role in the search for solutions to community problems, based on the generation of scientific results of research, development and innovation. However, from the professional training process, limitations are still perceived in the integration of training processes to the realities of the localities. From an effective management of this integration, the student interacts with the practice in the management of the development of his municipality, appropriating skills, knowledge and values, from the territorial dynamics, taking advantage of the initiative, creativity and knowledge of these actors that could be integrated from their training to the needs of their locality.

The management of the professional training of university students must facilitate the development of activities that respond to the needs and social responsibilities of the sciences. In this particular, graduates will contribute to the economic development of the territories.

To this end, the training process must facilitate the articulation of knowledge in terms of innovation, as well as the development of skills for entrepreneurship and the formation of social leaders with knowledge to enhance the fulfillment of economic policies.

The formative process developed in universities prepares professionals to solve multiple problems of social practice, generates potentialities to carry out studies that contribute to development, taking into account scientific, technological, socioeconomic and political changes.

Among the problems in the training process of the professional, insufficiencies are recognized in the training process for the development of local development projects, employment and its insertion in the new forms of management with skills for entrepreneurship, development financing, mechanisms of the Cuban banking system, food and nutritional security, tax policy, among others.

Based on these aspects, the present research raises the following question: how to integrate the training process of the professional, from the university, to the management of the development that takes place at the municipal level, and proposes as an objective: to propose a system of actions to contribute to the integration of the university processes to the management of local development.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The research used theoretical methods. Among the theoretical methods, the following were used:

The historical-logical: It was used as a starting point to carry out an analysis of the essential aspects in the historical evolution of the training process of university professionals, in correspondence with local development, entrepreneurship and innovation, which allowed to identify in different stages the study of the referents to make theoretical inferences that lead to the establishment of the conceptual theoretical framework of the research, as well as the stages of the behavior of the object.

Analysis and synthesis: They were used for the division of the training process of professionals, in terms of local development, entrepreneurship and innovation in its parts, moving from the elements of local development strategies, programs, projects and services offered by the banking system to that particular.

Systemic: It allows modeling the training process of professionals to enhance local development, entrepreneurship and innovation, by determining its structure, its components, relationships established between strategies, development programs and local development projects approved and in portfolio, in each of the territories with the participation of the Municipal Administration Council (Cam in Spanish).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

University processes and their integration into the management of local development

Considering the current context of economic and social crisis that Cuba is going through, a greater integration of universities in the development management process is essential. This integration will contribute to the search for more effective and efficient solutions to local issues, scaling up the development process by influencing in an integrated manner all the dimensions of the management process.

In order to achieve this objective within the university, its fundamental processes must be strengthened, as well as the integration between all areas, based on a common objective of social transformation, in terms of development.

The university processes, taking into account the criteria of Álvarez de Zayas and Sierra Lombardía (1997), are classified into: the educational process and, in particular, the teaching-learning process for the formation and permanent improvement of professionals, of the management officials of society, as well as the research and creative processes in general. All these processes with a marked orientation of extension, that is, to decisively influence the progress of society, which formed it and to which it owes, through the promotion and dissemination of culture. These university processes become the most efficient and systematic way that contemporary society chooses for the preservation and development of its culture, establishing functions that characterize them (Piñón González, 2020), as explained below:

- Teaching-Learning Process: The functions of the teaching-learning process are of two types: instructive and educational. The first is the generalizing action that is developed in the process, in order to achieve the mastery of the ability to solve problems; the second is the formation of other transcendent qualities of the personality, such as convictions, feelings, will, attitudes and others.
- Scientific research process: The functions of this process are: innovation and development, development of scientific knowledge according to the scientific level of the research contribution.

- Extension process: The function of this process is the promotion of culture, towards the social context and from this towards the university. In the extension process, the cell is the extension process itself and all its components, characteristics and laws are expressed in it.

These processes are developed and based on their integration into the proposed solutions to the problems posed by the management of sustainable economic and social development, where extension is recognized as the ideal mechanism to achieve university-society integration.

With respect to the management of economic and social development, this can be done from two areas from an adequate territorial planning that takes into account all levels, these areas are, according to Capote Pérez (2018):

- The one that responds to activities of national interest, which define the role of each territory in the country's development conception and must be promoted through national policies, decisions and investments.
- That of activities of territorial interest, understood as those related to internal potentials and capacities that satisfy the demands and expectations of the local population. These activities can be identified, decided and implemented by the municipal and provincial authorities, mainly with the resources available to them, both those generated by the territory itself and those obtained from other national and international sources, within the framework of the conditions defined by the development of the nation and the regulatory framework established for this purpose.

The success of the development management process depends on the capacities of local actors to integrate both interests, in which universities act as ideal platforms to manage knowledge and innovation through the link between teaching, research and extensionism (Carballo Ramos et al., 2019). Referring to the latter process, Duque (2011) and González and Ávila (2016) establish definitions that allow identifying particular characteristics that demonstrate the importance of extensionism as a mechanism for university-society integration. These characteristics are:

1. A transformative educational process that nourishes all those involved with knowledge
2. It articulates teaching and research in the social projection of the university
3. It establishes a horizontal exchange between academic and popular knowledge
4. Mechanism through which the university puts the knowledge acquired in the university faculty at the service of the community

5. It establishes communication mechanisms that enable the university to interact proactively with its social environment
6. Dimension of the educational process that promotes culture, science, technology and values that commit man to his society, both within and outside its walls

From the elements addressed, it is possible to identify the necessary articulation between the management of development from the local level and the management of university processes. From this articulation, resources are optimized, opportunities are taken advantage of, efficient and effective solutions to local problems are offered and the professional training process is strengthened. Based on these aspects, a system of actions is designed to integrate university processes with local development management.

System of actions for the integration of university processes to the management of local development

Based on these criteria and recognizing the importance of university extension as a process that enables the integration of other university processes with society (Guibert Gámez et al., 2020) and, on the other hand, focusing on the management of development from the municipal society, the following system of actions is proposed, which main objective is to contribute to the integration of university processes to the management of local development based on extension practices, through a set of established and technically based tools.

For the development of these actions, the following premises are defined, which represent indispensable requirements and ensure that the objective conditions are created for the implementation of the proposed actions:

1. Willingness of municipal governments to manage local development through a management system based on science and innovation
2. Defined municipal priorities for development management
3. Willingness of university staff and students to integrate the results of science into the municipal context

On the other hand, it is important to note that the implementation of the proposed actions should be based on fundamental principles such as:

- Integration and coordination: it includes the active participation of local stakeholders that interact in the development management process, through the exchange of information, knowledge and experiences based on honesty and open communication.
- Flexibility: adaptability of the actions to the historical-concrete conditions where it is developed.
- Creativity: it fosters an environment that encourages the development of creation and innovation in terms of alternatives or mechanisms to solve problems related to local development.

The system of actions declares as inputs the use and verification of public policies, municipal development strategies, study plans and subject programs, as well as the bank of local problems. Each of these elements offers particularities and regularities in the design of actions for the integration of university processes to development management.

The operation of the system of actions is based on the development of a management process, which is framed in a basic cycle that goes through the planning of actions, organization of the work system, implementation of the planned actions and evaluation of their execution, with a monitoring and control process that is permanent in all its stages. The components of each of the stages mentioned above are described below.

In the **planning stage**, work is done on the diagnosis of the training needs of students and teaching staff who will work in the communities, identifying the training needs based on the results expected to be achieved in the integration process. In this same stage, the methodological actions to be carried out to achieve the training objectives formulated are designed.

In the **organization stage**, students are trained through workshops, exchanges with local development coordinators at the municipal level, and visits to good practices of local development projects. The local needs to be addressed by the teams of students from different disciplines and professors are defined through interactive workshops.

In the **implementation stage**, the planned actions are carried out taking into account the defined priorities. It is also at this stage that the multidisciplinary teams design the proposed solutions to the problems addressed at the local level.

In the **evaluation stage**, indicators are defined and calculated, improvement plans and feedback and socialization of results are developed. As outputs of the system, a professional training process is established with high levels of quality and proposals for solutions to local problems.

The actors involved in the process are: 1) students of all university careers, whose training contributes to local priorities, 2) university staff, 3) specialists in local development management in the municipalities, 4) the National Association of Economists and Accountants, 5) other institutions that are considered necessary to evaluate the priorities to be worked on.

The graph below describes the combination of stages in the integration of university processes to the management of local development, from the perspective of extensionism.



Figure 1. Scheme of the stages and actions for the integration of university processes into local development management

Source: Own elaboration

The scheme shown above describes in concrete terms the process of integrating university processes into the management of local development, through the different stages defined. Next, the 13 actions that integrate it are explained in order to facilitate its implementation.

Actions system

1. Assessing compliance with the premises

Description: A premise is an indispensable requirement. They ensure that objective conditions are created for the implementation of the proposed actions. If they are not met, the implementation of the actions is postponed until the municipal governments have the necessary conditions to be able to develop the proposed actions. In the execution of this step, the members of the Municipal Group for Local Development (GMDL), Cam and University participate.

2. Sensitize and train students and teachers

Description: Workshops will be scheduled to sensitize students and professors with the elements related to local development management, as well as the importance of integration between the areas of the university and the territorial dynamics. Workshops are also developed with the members of the Municipal Group of Local Development, with the objective of making local actors aware of the need for integration with the areas of the university, in a win-win process.

Based on this process, the training needs of the members of the group, as well as of others involved, will be identified. Training actions are programmed taking into account the needs and assuming that the greatest learning is achieved in the action and work to be carried out in the municipalities.

The aim is not to first build knowledge or generate capacities and then apply them to action; it is a matter of reflecting by doing and doing by reflecting. Specialists in the topics, teachers, members of the GMDL, the Municipal University Center and other stakeholders will participate.

3. Identify members of the multidisciplinary groups

Description: The University's management defines the area and the people responsible for managing the process of integrating university processes with local development management. Multidisciplinary groups are created, based on the integration of students and professors from different areas of the university, preferably sharing the same municipality of residence. Their

objective is to evaluate local problems from different perspectives, taking into account the particularities of each science. In this way, they contribute to the creation of proposals for integrative solutions and must be executed by the university management and coordinated by the professors they designate as responsible.

4. Prepare the organizational and material conditions

Description: Elaboration, for discussion with the GMDLs, of the document that establishes the planning of the work system to be implemented. The elements that represent priorities of interest to work together with the university, the local actors that accompany the groups of students and professors that will work in the municipalities, the work methods, the schedule of activities to be developed, the work plan for each student and the material resources necessary to make this schedule viable, as well as other logistical aspects, are defined jointly with the public administration. This will make it possible to have the necessary conditions for the implementation of the proposed actions. Coordinating teachers and GMDL will participate.

5. Socialize the designed work system

Description: The work schedule is presented to students and professors for discussion and approval as a prerequisite to continue with the development of the other actions. The coordinating professors, students and professors, members of the GMDL participate.

6. Diagnose the capabilities of the students

Description: A diagnosis is made of the training needs of students in topics related to local development management, its particularities, current tools for its management, actors involved in the processes, research techniques and other aspects that represent needs. Coordinating professors and specialists in local development management participate in the process.

7. Carry out methodological preparation activities

Description: Training programs (workshops, courses, exchanges, visits to experiences, etc.) are designed taking into account the needs previously identified in the diagnosis. Work guides are designed for the different student teams, taking into account the particularities and priorities of the

municipality. The priorities to be worked on by the work teams are defined. Coordinating teachers, specialists in local development management and members of the GMDL participate.

8. Implement the activity plans designed

Description: In this action, the activities planned during the methodological work are implemented. The teams of students apply the techniques for the collection of the necessary information to diagnose the object in each of the municipalities, process the information and define the causes and effects that define the proposed problem. Subsequently, they design proposals for solutions together with local stakeholders. These proposals are submitted for discussion with local leaders, who define their viability and relevance. Participants: multidisciplinary groups of students, professors, coordinating professors, local stakeholders, GMDL members and local leaders.

9. Monitoring the implementation of activities

Description: Workshops are designed for the socialization of the partial and final results of the work of the teams in the municipalities, in which the students must demonstrate the contents and skills acquired in the work carried out. The state of the relationships between actors, the fulfillment of the planned commitments, as well as the elements that hinder the implementation of the planned actions will be evaluated. The fundamental objective is that the coordinating teachers, together with the GMDLs, make the planned actions feasible, as far as possible, or readjust the schedules and planned actions.

In the implementation of this action, GMDL members, students, coordinating teachers, participating teachers and others involved participate.

10. Define indicators for evaluation

Description: The definition of indicators for the evaluation of the management of the integration between the university processes and the management carried out at the local level of the development, elements that are essential to evaluate the efficiency and effectiveness of the actions designed.

The system of indicators is designed to be applied at the beginning of the process, which represents the base period, and at the end of the cycles, in order to be able to provide feedback to the

management in order to achieve continuous improvement. In the application of this step, coordinating professors, students and members of the GMDL participate.

11. Executing of the evaluation

Description: The sample to which the instruments (surveys, interviews) will be applied is selected. The instruments should be designed based on the information needs required by the previously designed indicators and can be improved based on the practice of data collection. The actors or groups of actors who will apply the instruments will be defined, as well as the mechanisms for collecting and processing the information. The information obtained from the application of the instruments is processed, the defined indicators are calculated and a report is prepared on the fulfillment of the planned objectives, indicating favorable and unfavorable aspects. GMDL members, coordinating professors, students, participating professors and designated specialists participate.

12. Systematize good practices and lessons learned and feedback

Description: Based on the results of the evaluation report, the process will be fed back, those aspects that merit it will be identified and corrected, and the evaluation will be projected at a later estimated time that will allow verifying the correction of the limitations pointed out.

This action is carried out on a weekly basis and the results will be presented to coordinating teachers and GMDL members. Students, coordinating teachers, participating teachers, GMDL members and other stakeholders participate.

13. Communication about the process of integrated work in the university, community, enterprise system and government

Description: Communicative activities are of vital importance, with the objective of socializing the actions developed in terms of integration, where the different actors feel part of the process and exchange criteria and points of view. These should be taken into account as part of the constant monitoring that is carried out throughout the process, from which feedback processes can be favored.

It is important to articulate all the media and to disseminate the impacts generated and the main challenges. Gradually introduce participatory mechanisms: accountability, consultations and

dissemination of information at the level of popular councils. The University, GMDL, the media, and stakeholders involved in the process participate.

As a summary of the topics addressed in this article, it can be concluded that the training of professionals for local development is based on a necessary process that contributes to the efficient and effective training of professionals and to the management of local development, on a participatory basis and strengthening inter-relationships.

A system of extracurricular actions is proposed that contributes to the integration of university processes, to the management of local development, which enhances the development of territories, innovation and entrepreneurship. Scientific and technological innovation plays a preponderant role in the process of training professionals as a way of conceiving and involving professionals in training to internalize knowledge and influence the economic and social development of the territories and the country.

From the scientific point of view, the research will be important because it will make it possible to identify the barriers to local development in the territories and will provide ways to ensure that the process of training professionals facilitates structural changes and contributes to making efficient use of local resources.

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Conflict of interest

Authors declare that they have no conflicts of interest.

Authors' contribution

Annelise Paula Gil Guerra and Raysa Capote Pérez conceived and designed the study. They collected, analyzed and interpreted the data and prepared the draft.

Raysa Capote Pérez made a critical revision of the article with important contributions to its intellectual content.

Both authors reviewed the writing of the manuscript and approved the version finally submitted.



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