

Original article

## The university and the new economic actors

### La universidad y los nuevos actores económicos

### A universidade e os novos atores econômicos



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#### ABSTRACT

The new economic actors are part of the transforming process pursued by the Cuban nation in the search for greater economic-social development and are born under the protection of new legislation that bets on the participation of all sectors of the country. The preparation and education of its representatives are in the hands of the University, which establishes links with companies and the population in order to promote the necessary professional training throughout life, which should not be framed in age groups, in a specific space or time, where the most important thing is the desire to better oneself. The objective of this work is to demonstrate the need for the creation of a diploma course for the training of economic actors. Different materials and methods were used, starting from a dialectical-materialist approach in a mixed approach; among the theoretical methods used are: analysis-synthesis, abstract-concrete, historical-logical, induction-deduction and as empirical methods and techniques: scientific, simple, systematic and non-participant observation. An initial diagnosis was also carried out on the systematization of research results. The experience provided made it possible to affirm that the new postgraduate program provides a group of training actions and offers the necessary management tools for the new economic actors, which can be seen in the main impacts obtained.

**Keywords:** economic actors; diploma; MSMEs; university.

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## RESUMEN

Los nuevos actores económicos forman parte del proceso transformador que persigue la nación cubana en la búsqueda de un mayor desarrollo económico-social y nacen bajo el amparo de nuevas legislaciones que apuestan por la participación de todos los sectores del país. La preparación y educación de sus representantes están en manos de la Universidad, la cual establece vínculos con las empresas y la población en aras de propiciar la formación profesional necesaria a lo largo de toda la vida, que no se debe enmarcar en grupos etarios, en un espacio ni un tiempo determinado, donde lo más importante es el deseo de superarse. El objetivo de este trabajo es demostrar la necesidad de la creación de un diplomado para la formación de los actores económicos. Se emplearon diferentes materiales y métodos que partieron de un enfoque dialéctico materialista en un enfoque mixto; dentro de los métodos teóricos utilizados se encuentran: el análisis-síntesis, el abstracto-concreto, el histórico-lógico, la inducción-deducción y como métodos y técnicas empíricos: la observación científica, simple, sistemática y no participante. También se llevó a cabo un diagnóstico inicial sobre la sistematización de resultados investigativos. La experiencia aportada permitió afirmar que el nuevo posgrado aporta un grupo de acciones de formación y ofrece las herramientas de gestión necesarias para los nuevos actores económicos, lo cual se aprecia en los principales impactos obtenidos.

**Palabras clave:** actores económicos; diplomado; mipymes; universidad.

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## RESUMO

Os novos atores econômicos fazem parte do processo de transformação da nação cubana na busca de um maior desenvolvimento econômico e social e nascem sob a proteção de uma nova legislação comprometida com a participação de todos os setores do país. A preparação e a educação de seus representantes estão nas mãos da Universidade, que estabelece vínculos com as empresas e a população para promover a formação profissional necessária ao longo da vida, que não deve ser enquadrada em faixas etárias, em um espaço ou tempo específico, onde o mais importante é o desejo de se aperfeiçoar. O objetivo deste trabalho é demonstrar a necessidade da criação de um curso de diploma para a formação de agentes econômicos. Foram utilizados diferentes materiais e métodos,

partindo de uma abordagem dialético-materialista em uma abordagem mista; entre os métodos teóricos utilizados estavam: análise-síntese, abstrato-concreto, histórico-lógico, indução-dedução, e como métodos e técnicas empíricas: observação científica, simples, sistemática e não-participante. Também foi realizado um diagnóstico inicial sobre a sistematização dos resultados da pesquisa. A experiência proporcionada permitiu afirmar que o novo curso de pós-graduação proporciona um conjunto de ações de formação e oferece as ferramentas de gestão necessárias para os novos atores econômicos, o que pode ser observado nos principais impactos obtidos.

**Palavras-chave:** atores econômicos; diploma; MPMEs; universidade.

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## INTRODUCTION

Economic actors are those who decide and perform some economic activity such as: producing, marketing, distributing and consuming goods and services within a market. Today's economic actors are the active participants in today's economy, including companies, entrepreneurs, consumers, investors, among others.

The term new players in the economy includes mainly micro, small and medium-sized enterprises and non-agricultural production cooperatives. In all cases, these are companies with their own legal personality that have a social capital to support their operations, which comply with the laws and regulations of the country.

Compared to economic actors 10 years ago in Cuba, today's economic actors face a more dynamic and changing environment due to factors such as globalization, technological advances, changes in regulations and economic policies, as well as increased competition both domestically and internationally. Today, economic actors in Cuba may be more exposed to challenges and opportunities arising from digital transformation, the opening to new markets, the need to adopt sustainable business practices, and the demand for greater innovation. In addition, today's economic actors are likely to be more aware of the importance of continuous and specialized training to sustain themselves.

These actors are born under the protection of the new legislations, which bet on the participation of all sectors in the development of the country. They are part of the transforming process pursued by the nation in the search for greater economic and social development. Entrepreneurship plays a

fundamental role here. Entrepreneurship is conceived as the effort made by a person or group of people to promote a project, create a company or an innovative solution. Based on this activity, profits will be generated and value will be provided to consumers, so that the business or project will remain, grow and scale. It is understood then that entrepreneurship generates profits and value, both to its protagonist and to the consumer. Therefore, in addition to effort, it requires motivation to be sustainable and good practices that allow it to survive over time as a feasible enterprise.

Thus, what starts as an entrepreneurial project from a passionate idea must become a serious responsibility that provides satisfaction to its customers. In this aspect, the company must have a considerable weight in society. The company is conceived as an organization of people and resources that seek the achievement of an economic benefit with the development of a particular activity. This productive unit may have one or more people and usually seeks to make a profit and achieve a series of objectives set in its formation.

Valdés Díaz de Villegas and Sánchez Soto (2012, p. 128) state that the company, as the basic cell of the system of generation of goods and services, is the key institution of economic life, which allows the manifestation of creativity and legal freedom of individuals. Essentially, it is a human group to which some men contribute capital; others, labor, and others contribute their management skills to achieve certain economic goals. Therefore, the company is an identity endogenous to society and cannot remain alien to it. Society, represented by the State, provides companies with the institutional legal framework for their operation, allows the education of their workers, technicians and managers, and provides them with economic infrastructure. From this perspective, the economic purposes of the company seem to be above its social purposes, however, both are also inextricably linked to each other and should be pursued without detriment or postponement of the other.

The process of transformation, restructuring and resizing of the Cuban business system, prepared as a proposal of the Policy for the Socialist State Enterprise with emphasis on the creation of micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs), provides for changes in terms of autonomy, integration schemes, science and innovation, social responsibility and workers' participation, as part of a government strategy to boost the national economy.

MSMEs have business autonomy within the framework of current legislation; they are responsible for their tax, credit, labor, environmental, contractual and any other obligations arising from the current legal system with their equity (García Gross et al., 2023, p. 95).

Current world trends in the business field recognize that MSMEs are a fundamental part of the economy of any nation. Data reveal that more than 90% of the universe of formal and informal enterprises in different countries are located in this group, also participating very highly in total sales, exports, gross domestic product and employment. Cuba is not exempt from these considerations, which is why the government created for the first time a legal form for micro, small and medium-sized enterprises, which came into force in September, in 2021.

Due to the importance of MSMEs for the national economy, it is necessary to prepare and educate entrepreneurs to face and assume responsibly the creation of new economic actors. These actors must know how to establish links with companies that contribute to the viability of businesses and, in turn, provide a source of employment for the population in order to improve the quality of life and achieve sustainable development. Start-up companies have been growing in number in recent years, but many of them have not been successful due to poor management. This is where the university comes in and plays an important role.

The University is the teaching institution of higher education and research, where not only professionals of various branches of knowledge are trained in its faculties to grant them the corresponding academic degrees, but it is also the center where existing professionals are trained. The main objective of this paper is to demonstrate the need for the creation of a diploma course for the training of economic actors.

## **MATERIALS AND METHODS**

Different methods were used to obtain the results, starting from a dialectical-materialistic approach in a mixed approach. The research was developed predominantly under the perspective of qualitative research and has Cooperative Action Research as its methodological axis. However, due to the need to process and interpret data of various kinds, quantitative techniques were used.

Among the theoretical methods used were: analysis-synthesis, abstract-concrete, historical-logical, induction-deduction and systematization. All these allowed the bibliographic search of diverse sources to acquire knowledge related to the theoretical-practical references on the subject under study, taking into account research by various authors in relation to micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) at the international, regional and national levels.

An initial diagnosis was carried out on the systematization of research results, based on the descriptive documentary analysis through scientific articles, theses and books consulted. Empirical methods and techniques were also used, such as: simple, systematic and non-participant scientific observation, due to its relevance in the different moments of the research; observation visits to companies and classes of the university center; consultations to experts on the subject of study; interviews to students and university professors and to workers and managers of MSMEs.

It was worked intentionally at the population level, which was constituted by 52 subjects. Among them, 15 students of the Management Tools for New Economic Actors diploma course, 21 professors of the postgraduate course, 11 workers of different MSMEs and 5 managers, whose administrative position determined a direct participation in the management of processes of local MSMEs.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **The new economic actors**

The entrepreneur of the new economic actors at a global level arose to have a limited liability and to protect his personal patrimony from creditors. Thus, micro, small and medium-sized enterprises, known as MSMEs, emerged in Europe as a result of a policy aimed at growth, employment and to improve the comprehensive approach to business in the Union, through the maxim: "think small first".

In the case of the European Union, MSMEs play a decisive role in the competitiveness and dynamism of the economy. In order to develop their growth potential, the European Union has developed a process of promoting entrepreneurship and creating a business framework that respects small businesses. In this context, MSMEs account for 99% of enterprises and provide two out of three private sector jobs, contributing more than half of the total value created in the region. Data in Europe, before the outbreak of the crisis, show that nine out of ten MSMEs are microenterprises with less than 10 employees. This clearly shows that the pillars of the economy rest on micro enterprises, which provide work for at least two people, on average.

A particular review in a global world allows to infer important generalities. In the United States, 99 % of the companies are MSMEs and provide approximately 75 % of the net new jobs generated each year in the US economy. This type of company employs 50.1 % of the private labor force. According to analyses, small businesses contribute 40.9% of private sales, which reflects their importance.

Data indicate that in the USA, 40% of MSMEs fail before 5 years, two thirds pass to the second generation and only 12% survive to the third generation.

In Latin America, the emergence of MSMEs seems to take place mainly in two ways: as enterprises themselves, with an adequate structure, which allows them an adequate business management, this type of organization is capital-intensive and develops within the formal sector of the economy, where they are mainly small and medium-sized enterprises, and as family businesses characterized by a management oriented to survival without paying too much attention to issues such as the opportunity cost of capital, or the investment that allows growth. In this context, microenterprises are located, which arise associated with the phenomenon of self-employment as a form of subsistence (Valdés Díaz de Villegas & Sánchez Soto, 2012, p. 137).

In Latin America and the Caribbean, over the last 15 years, there has been a growth in the figures for micro, small and medium-sized enterprises, since they are the economic agents with the greatest capacity to create employment and are seen as a very heterogeneous group, ranging from small units engaged in subsistence activities to small and medium-sized enterprises that are dynamic, innovative, competitive in the market and export to a lesser extent.

According to the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean for the Central American and Caribbean region in 2022, the presence of MSMEs in the economic structure of Latin America is relevant.

It should be noted that, although in the world these types of companies have been a proven practice for decades, in Cuba they are new experiences that emerged under the new legislation and the updating of the economic model, based on the experience gained in recent years. The creation of MSMEs is part of the improvement of economic actors, a process aimed at putting in their rightful place all forms of management that make up the Cuban economy, in order to unleash the potential and contribute to the socioeconomic development of the country.

The Cuban government created for the first time a legal form for micro, small and medium-sized enterprises for the private sector, which came into force in September 2021, defining MSMEs as:

Economic actors with legal personality, focused on the development of the production of goods and services that can be private or state-owned, depending on the request

of natural persons of Cuban nationality, residents in the country or pre-existing state entities (Council of State of the Republic of Cuba, 2021b).

At the same time, Decree-Law No. 47/2021 established the Non-Agricultural Cooperative as a form of management based on the collective work of its owner-members and on the effective exercise of the principles of cooperativism. Article 2.1 of the aforementioned legal body defines it as follows:

The cooperative is an economic entity, of an entrepreneurial nature, which is constituted from the voluntary association of people who contribute money, other goods and rights for the satisfaction of economic, social and cultural needs of its owner-members, as well as the social interest, based on their work and the effective exercise of the universally recognized principles of cooperativism (Council of State of the Republic of Cuba, 2021a).

The approval in Cuba of these new enterprises was the first step to achieve the necessary increase in goods and services that the country needs to produce more and meet the demands of the Cuban population that had not been met until their implementation. Another main objective of the creation of micro, small and medium-sized enterprises is that the government works to interconnect these actors with the rest of the local economy and achieve a real relationship that enhances the strategy of sustainable territorial development, where the State is immersed as a mediating and coordinating agent between the Government and the collaboration ties between state and private enterprise to move forward together, the state and private sector for the sake of a sustainable economy.

This long-awaited measure reorganizes the Cuban private sector and should guarantee the Island's economic dynamism. The country's strategic lines for the creation of MSMEs are: Food production, Tourism development, Local production of construction materials, Development of industry and mini-industry, Increase of domestic and foreign trade and Development of local infrastructure, mainly.

By the end of 2021, 1286 new non-agricultural cooperatives and micro, small and medium-sized enterprises had been approved as part of the strategy to dynamize the Cuban economy. However, they had only been approved in 136 of the country's 168 municipalities (80%), i.e., in 32 municipalities there were no new MSMEs or non-agricultural cooperatives (NACs). In addition, there were only four provinces where all municipalities had new economic actors: Artemisa, Havana, Granma and Santiago de Cuba (Ministry of Economy and Planning, 2024).



The provinces of Havana (519) and Granma (135) are the ones with the highest approval of new actors, concentrating 40% and 10%, respectively. Of the total number approved, only 22% corresponds to food producers or marketers, while other productions account for 25% and about 40% are services. In particular, the informatic sector accounts for 9% (Ministry of Economy and Planning, 2024).

In the province of Matanzas, 76 new economic actors had been established in 11 of its 13 municipalities, with the exception of: Los Arabos and Ciénaga de Zapata, of which 74 are MSMEs and 2 are NACs in 2021. Of these, 28 are in the provincial capital, 1 in Calimete, 30 in Cárdenas, 3 in Colón, 3 in Jagüey Grande, 1 in Jovellanos, 2 in Limonar, 1 in Martí, 2 in Pedro Betancourt, 2 in Perico and 3 in Unión de Reyes. This was also reflected in the appearance of new employment opportunities. By the end of 2021, the new economic actors had accommodated 2553 employed persons (Ministry of Economy and Planning, 2024).

In the case of approved MSMEs, the most representative sectors are diverse: lodging and food service, food production, manufacturing activities such as the manufacture of construction materials, furniture, textiles, footwear and plastics, as well as cleaning and grooming products, other service activities including beauty and domestic work. In addition, they are engaged in computer programming, materials recovery and recycling, and technical services, among others. The strategic sectors distributed in the municipalities of Matanzas: 14 in food production, 17 in other productions, 35 in services, 5 in informatics and 5 in recycling. By the end of 2021, MSMEs and NACs created 14,000 new jobs throughout Cuba (Ministry of Economy and Planning, 2024).

By the end of January 2022, the figure reached 6,704 MSMEs and, at the same time, 1,080 local development projects were born, increasing the supply of goods and services to the population (Ministry of Economy and Planning, 2024).

By December 2023, more than 9,988 new economic actors had been approved since the launch of the policy in 2021. Of these, 9 747 are micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (Ministry of Economy and Planning, 2024).

On January 10, 2024, the Cuban Ministry of Economy and Planning gave its approval to 133 new MSMEs, starting the year with a remarkable increase. So, since the beginning of the legalization process in September 2021 and up to July 2024, 11 thousand 350 new economic actors have been approved in Cuba; of them, 233 state MSMEs, 71 CNAs and 11 thousand 46 private MSMEs, according

to reports by the Minister of Economy and Planning Joaquín Alonso Vázquez. Of these, 592 companies belong to the province of Matanzas (Ministry of Economy and Planning, 2024).

Micro, small and medium enterprises in Cuba face difficulties in the acquisition of raw materials, inside and outside the national territory, with the commercialization in foreign currency, the economic feasibility, the solvency of the relationship between raw materials in retail markets, productions and the final product to be marketed. In addition, there are problems related to renting and fitting out premises to carry out the planned economic activity, transportation and distribution channels, the possibility of acquiring bank loans and the non-existent sources of financing.

Another drawback is the logistics of exporting due to the narrowness of the domestic market, limiting the correspondence between the export model and the participation of MSMEs in the country's export activity. It should be noted that the lack of basic and necessary knowledge related to these issues on the part of the entrepreneurs, and the fact that the companies have little possibility of access to a labor market where there is a qualified workforce capable of achieving the levels of competitiveness required at the national and international level and with the required quality, have an influence on this. However, most MSMEs face the same or similar obstacles, but some survive, grow and prosper, while others fail and tend to disappear.

In this regard, Claudio L. Soriano (2005), PhD in Economics and Business Administration from the International University of Social Studies in Rome, suggests that business analysts, while taking into consideration the negative environment in which SMEs operate, are more oriented towards finding the causes of failure in the SMEs themselves and, in particular, in the management capacity of those in charge of them. Thus, taking as a starting point an initial summary prepared by Conamype, we can group the various causes of failure into five major areas:

1. Problems in selling: Resistance to abide by customer preferences, poor customer orientation and service, poor location, lack of focus on precise market segments or niches, lack of formal marketing and sales plans, not having systems in place to enable them to detect market opportunities, reluctance to invest in advertising and promotional activities, poor training of the sales network, marketing myopia, disregard for customer complaints, ignorance of what is being sold and to whom it is being sold, ignoring the customer, ignoring the competition, ignorance of one's own competitive advantages, and the like.

2. Problems to produce and operate: Lack of technical capacity to manage production and operations, lack of knowledge of the sector in which it operates, negligence and little interest in the business, supply difficulties (raw materials and materials), high operating costs, poor management of purchases, little previous experience with the products managed, lack of effective information systems, serious deficiencies in internal processes, high levels of waste and wastage, poor time management, error in the calculation of break-even or breakeven, operating in a sector with a very high break-even or breakeven point, lack of knowledge of the life cycles of each activity, and the like.
3. Problems to control: Improper handling of receivables and collections, fraud, lack of knowledge of the true financial status of the company, unnecessary expenses, serious security errors, poor inventory management, serious flaws in internal controls, deficiencies in budgetary and management control, poor debt and liquidity management, mismanagement of funds, and the like.
4. Planning problems: Serious deficiencies in the establishment of strategies, lack of alternative plans, setting unrealistic objectives and expectations, lack of a business plan, inadequate planning, unplanned growth, lack of foresight, lack of pre-investment studies and the like.
5. Management problems: Inability to surround oneself with competent staff, lack of experience, excessive investments in fixed assets, deficiencies in personnel policies, lack of continuous improvement policies, lack of training of the top manager of the company, poor systems for decision making and problem solving, unprofessional management, resistance to change, reluctance to consult outside the company, taking too much money out of the business for personal expenses, poor selection of partners, not knowing oneself, being absorbed by the pleasant side of the business, negative attitudes towards collaborators, nepotism, poor risk management, failure to comply with tax and labor obligations, lack of entrepreneurial leadership, lack of clarity in defining objectives, discouragement at the first major obstacles, poor entrepreneurial culture, lack of experience in the administrative side of the business.

The problems faced by Cuban MSMEs are: external and internal to the economic system, related to issues of general legal provisions and current legal frameworks, the possibilities of accessing national and international markets essential for productive factors, the proper functioning or not of the market for goods and services, management and business cooperation between the Cuban State and private companies, but above all due to mismanagement and the elementary ignorance of entrepreneurs.

The main risk factors to prevent in the creation and management of MSMEs are: lack of experience, lack of money/capital, poor location, lack of focus, poor inventory management, excessive investments in fixed assets, shortcomings in credit and collections, not having good information systems, failures in internal controls, poor personnel selection, failures in personnel policy, failures in planning, serious errors in strategy setting, lack or absence of alternative plans, lack or failures in budgetary and management control, serious failures in internal processes, marketing problems, raw material problems, and absence of continuous improvement policies.

Other risk factors include: lack of training of the entrepreneur and managers, high levels of waste and squandering, serious errors in safety, serious shortcomings in problem solving and decision making, resistance to change, inability to consult, excessive centralization in decision making, poor time management, poor financial management in terms of debt and liquidity, error in the calculation of the break-even point, or operating in an activity with a high break-even point, taking too much money out of the business for personal expenses, poor partner selection, not knowing oneself, not knowing the life cycles of each type of activity, and poor risk management.

Some elements that represent limitations in the management models of the economic actors and that can be solved through training actions are:

- Lack of specific knowledge in areas such as finance, *marketing*, human resource management, disruptive technologies restrict the ability of economic actors to make informed and strategic decisions.
- Poor understanding of the business environment in terms of legal aspects, regulations, market trends, competition and investment opportunities, hinder the development and growth of ventures.
- Lack of leadership, change management, conflict resolution and inefficient decision making diminish the ability that society demands of entrepreneurs to effectively run their businesses.
- Poor knowledge in digital technologies, e-commerce, data analytics and cybersecurity make companies less competitive in today's digital economy.
- Ignorance of sustainable business practices, corporate social responsibility, circular economy and environmental management limits the ways to operate a business in a sustainable and ethical manner.

In 97% of cases, failure is due to poor management. The success of a micro, small or medium enterprise is strongly conditioned by the knowledge of its owner. According to the above, it can be stated that the training of new entrepreneurs, who are responsible for the creation, development and evolution of MSMEs, is vital to prevent the failure of their respective companies.

The greater the number of MSMEs of the same type of production and that respond to the same strategic lines, the greater the competitive market among them will be. In these cases, it will be the value proposition, structure and organization of the company itself that will make some stand out from others and, at the same time, will lead to "... the disappearance of companies that are not ready for competition" (Ahedo García & Cruz Blanco, 2022, p. 17).

It also aims to become less and less dependent on foreign purchases and to have competition and more affordable prices for everyone within the national territory. The development of the new economy is conducive to promoting the sustainable, high-quality, long-term development of the country. The formation of MSMEs requires preparation and entrepreneurial skills on the part of their creators and business partners, and productive resources, but also resilience, determination and innovation. The new economy comprises new industries, new business formats and new business models concentrated in key fields. These include the Internet, modern information technology services, advanced manufacturing, new energies, modern productive service activities and new types of life-enhancing services.

### **The training of economic actors at the Municipal University Center of Cárdenas**

The Municipal University Center (CUM in Spanish) of Cárdenas has an academic, professional development and training postgraduate plan that is updated annually, which responds to the priorities of the country and the needs of the territory. In accordance with the model of continuing education of Cuban Higher Education (Resolution No. 139/19) and the Regulations of Postgraduate Education of the Republic of Cuba (Resolution No. 140/19), it is inserted in the Work Objectives for the year 2023 and in the Strategic Projection of the University and the municipality of Cárdenas for the formation of human resources in the strategic sectors in the territory in topics of Agriculture, Energy, Petroleum, Industry, Tourism, Economy, Construction, Social and Humanistic Sciences, Physical Culture Sciences and Education, as well as current topics such as adaptation to change, Task Life and local development. It responds to the demands of production and service organizations and

the central administration of the State at different levels, and to the need for a permanent increase in the scientific level of the university faculty.

The postgraduate programs aimed at training economic actors at the Cárdenas Municipal University Center include: courses, training, specialized conferences, seminars and workshops aimed at contributing to the postgraduate training and improvement of professionals in the Cárdenas area. It also includes training actions for non-university students and the non-state sector, so that the Diploma Course entitled Management Tools for the New Actors of the Economy strengthens the link between the university and entrepreneurs for the formation of micro, medium and small enterprises. It is consistent with the improvement of the new economic, political and socialist social model of our country.

The elements that demonstrate the need for the creation of a diploma course for the training of economic actors at the Municipal University Center of Cárdenas are:

- Economic actors require specific and updated knowledge to adapt to current market changes and improve their performance.
- Specialized training increases competitiveness among professionals and local companies within the economic environment.
- The program promotes innovation and the development of new business strategies that drive local economic growth.
- Training in aspects such as circular economy, corporate social responsibility and sustainability contributes to local and territorial sustainable development.
- Interaction with other industry professionals in an academic environment fosters strategic alliances and business opportunities.

The creation of the diploma course for new tools for economic actors was the responsibility of a team made up of a total of 8 PhDs, 11 MScs and 2 bachelor's degrees from the CUM of Cárdenas. The general objective of this postgraduate course is to train new economic actors with the tools of innovation and creativity in the areas of legislation, information technology, accounting, finance, administration, business, processes and the environment for the management of new economic actors. Providing the graduates with the necessary knowledge and skills, which constitute the theoretical and practical basis for the management and development of any business.

Available at: <https://coodes.upr.edu.cu/index.php/coodes/article/view/654>

This will help to raise the scientific level, promote social responsibility from the territories and foster the development of science and innovation. It is aimed at entrepreneurs, new economic actors, businessmen and people with a need for knowledge of the subject in question and is designed to be taught in a blended learning format over a period of 6 months and 15 enrollments are offered at a time.

In accordance with the academic, professional development and training postgraduate plan of the Cárdenas Municipal University Center for the year 2023, the diploma program includes 10 mandatory courses that develop different topics aimed at providing students with the theoretical-methodological basis composed of easily applicable tools that will allow for the effective management of the new actors of the economy, which are organized as follows:

- *Course 1:* Creativity and Innovation for Entrepreneurship
- *Course 2:* Legal norms for the management of new economic actors
- *Course 3:* Digital Platforms Management
- *Course 4:* Environmental Overview
- *Course 5:* Tools for Accounting and Financial Management
- *Course 6:* Administrative Management Tools
- *Course 7:* Commercial Management Tools
- *Course 8:* Quality management for entrepreneurs
- *Course 9:* ABC about MSMEs
- *Course 10:* Best Practices in Business Entrepreneurship
- Training

Each course has a duration of four to five weeks, with lectures once a week, in four-hour sessions where the main issues will be addressed and the practical component of the subject in process will be oriented. In addition, one training course is presented, which allows systematizing the skills acquired in the application of the legal and digital tools that are transmitted in the previous courses; the application of these tools in the management of the trainee's enterprise is verified in a practical way, rectifying those errors as a result of the selection or incorrect application of the techniques taught. Two specialized conferences are also presented to contextualize the present and future development of the new forms of economic management and their integration with local development, a task of order today in the country. The diploma course grants 18 credits and has 140 teaching hours and 430 practical hours, for a total of 570 hours.

The evaluation system is integral and systematic during the development of each course, governed by the quality of the interventions of the participants, the discussion in workshops, the team work and the presentation of innovative designs where the tools taught in the guiding lectures are applied. For the culmination of the Diploma course, each student must present a final practical work where the integral application of the knowledge acquired during the courses taught for the solution of a problem in their field of management is demonstrated. The work is defended before an examining board that is formed for this purpose. At the end of the course, each graduate is qualified to adequately design and manage micro, small and medium-sized enterprises and other businesses in different economic sectors of the local territory and is awarded the documentation that certifies the completion of the Management Tools for the New Actors of the Economy Diploma course.

All these transformations have made it possible for students to feel prepared and focused to respond to the needs presented by entrepreneurship in the identification of opportunities that serve as a basis for innovation or the creation of new MSMEs with the application of innovation, science and technology.

### **Link between the Municipal University Center of Cárdenas and the new actors of the Cuban economy**

The Cuban educational system is continuously improving according to the historical context. Currently, the well-known traditional education continues to evolve through the link with new technologies and methodologies driven by the objectives and problems of today's world. In the last decades, university education, under the modality of distance learning and blended learning, has proven to be more than a necessity for the population that wishes to continue to improve itself and for the labor centers that need to train their personnel frequently, these postgraduate plans allow studying and working at the same time, and have proven to have great potentialities and strengths.

As expressed by Fayolle and Gailly (2015), entrepreneurship education comprises all activities aimed at fostering entrepreneurial mindsets, attitudes and skills, covering a range of aspects such as the generation of ideas that could give rise to a new organization, implementation or start-up, organizational growth and innovation.

In addition, students are oriented and provided, through social groups created for them, with the basic and essential materials for their development in each educational module. Efficiency lies in its flexibility, since it allows the student to study comfortably and plan their routine depending on their



work schedule and available time to get the best possible benefit from the academic experience. They can study from their cell phone, tablet or computer, at home, at work or anywhere they find free time and an environment conducive to concentrate and assimilate the knowledge to overcome. In this way they are able to continue their professional development and achieve personal goals. The diploma course has a general advisor in addition to the professors of each course, who can be approached to discuss, clarify possible doubts and obtain advice at any time.

Universities are both actors and spectators of the new global economy. In other words, they drive change and are subject to the forces that are transforming our world (Egron-Polak, 2005). In order to cultivate the new economy, it is necessary to respond to the primary task of creating a favorable environment for entrepreneurs. Today's entrepreneurs are students, housewives, professionals and retirees whose daily activities, work or place of residence make it difficult or impossible for them to attend educational centers to receive face-to-face training. A learning society which, as Unesco points out: refers to a new type of society in which the acquisition of knowledge is not confined to educational institutions (in space), nor is it limited to initial training (in time). In an increasingly complex world in which every individual may be obliged to exercise several professions in the course of his or her life, it is essential to continue learning throughout life (Bindé, 2005, p. 59).

Taking into account the above and based on an organizational structure that guarantees flexible learning from independent study, teachers have opted, once again, for information and communication technologies. Chats, audios, telephone communications, e-mails and videoconferences constitute an information system and act as mediators between the enrolled students themselves and the educational institution that directs and guides blended learning. Communication is bidirectional and multipersonal, supporting students' academic performance. The information and communication technologies contribute to the development and promote the potentialities of the educational sector without neglecting the essential objective of the pedagogical process. The importance of such functional structure that allows teaching how to design the tools, how to use them for their benefit and how to evaluate the results obtained from their application lies there.

Despite the progress of the transformation process of the new economic actors in Cuba, referenced in Decree-Laws 44, 45, 46, 47, 48 and 49, put into effect in 2021, and a group of ministerial resolutions, it is appreciated the need to offer more priority to the preparation and training of

managers, entrepreneurs, to the population in general. These legal norms are included in the Official Gazette No. 94 Ordinary of August 19, 2021 of the Ministry of Economy and Planning.

Universities are important centers of knowledge that put their knowledge into practice to teach how to generate goods and services. It is crucial to give people a proper orientation so that they know how to properly set up a MSME or NAC. Therefore, when we are going to see how the university interacts, how that knowledge is taken to the economy and society, we have to work both on the conditions to generate knowledge in the university and on the capacity to absorb that knowledge and turn it into products and services.

The training of professionals is a lifelong process that should not be framed in age groups, in a specific space or time, where the most important thing is the desire to better oneself. The *blended learning* or the combination of face-to-face actions with those supported through social networks, the crucial thing here is to know what to do and what information to give in each one so that students develop attitudes, abilities and cognitive characteristics.

Universities are increasing their links with companies because it is important to generate knowledge and insist on the training of professionals, promote innovation and achieve a mutual benefit between academia and industry, where a circular cycle of knowledge production and commercial products is created. The good and innovative ideas of entrepreneurs need: that universities provide them with the appropriate tools to carry them out and materialize creativity, and that policy and legislation support them. In this way, the country's economy will move forward.

In spite of being a new postgraduate course, it can already be seen how the academic training has contributed to the students and to their business development, developing entrepreneurial skills, obtaining good results in the management and handling of personnel, resources and the financial capital at their disposal. The main impacts obtained are shown below:

- Capacity building in the municipality, related to new entrepreneurships developed in the municipality of Cárdenas.
- Design from the application of the CANVA business model of new entrepreneurship ideas.
- Professional advice regarding the formation of new entrepreneurships
- Sustainability of entrepreneurships that have already passed the project phase.
- Support by the University Center to the enterprises after the diploma courses have been completed.

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Finally, the economic actors are betting on the participation of all strategic sectors for the sustainable development of the country. It is a reality that MSMEs need advice, preparation and entrepreneurial skills on the part of their creators and business partners, and productive resources. It is here where the link between university centers, companies and the government in constant interaction, promoting changes and solutions to the problems that each territory needs, becomes evident. It is a path that starts from the idea of the entrepreneurs, advances with training and the creation of attitudes and skills from the academic level to their development as entrepreneurs. It is an innovative process, but also one of resilience and determination. Businesses must mature to succeed and grow into new economic forms.

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### **Conflict of interest**

Author declares that she has no conflicts of interest.

### **Authors' contribution**

*Arelys Rodríguez Gavilla* wrote the manuscript and approves the version finally submitted.



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