
Gestión de la atención y estimulación a directores educativos: Un análisis crítico en contexto cubano

Management of Attention and Stimulation for Educational Directors: A Critical Analysis in the Cuban Context

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Resumen: Este artículo analiza los fundamentos teóricos y metodológicos de la gestión de la atención y estimulación de directores de instituciones educativas en Cuba, identificando brechas en la literatura y proponiendo mejoras. Mediante una revisión crítica de fuentes nacionales e internacionales, se contrastan enfoques funcionales y socio-psicológicos de la gestión de recursos humanos, destacando la fragmentación teórica, la ausencia de integración multidisciplinaria y la falta de estudios empíricos longitudinales. Los hallazgos revelan que las políticas cubanas, aunque normativamente robustas, carecen de articulación explícita entre subsistemas clave. Se recomienda desarrollar modelos sistémicos, incorporar perspectivas interdisciplinarias e implementar estudios mixtos para validar estrategias.

Palabras claves: Gestión educativa; Atención y estimulación; Directores de instituciones educativas; Recursos humanos

Abstract: This article analyzes the theoretical and methodological foundations of the management of attention and stimulation for directors of educational institutions in Cuba, identifying gaps in the literature and proposing improvements. Through a critical review of national and international sources, functional and socio-psychological approaches to human resource management are contrasted, highlighting theoretical fragmentation, the absence of multidisciplinary integration, and the lack of longitudinal empirical studies. The findings reveal that Cuban policies, although normatively robust, lack explicit articulation between key subsystems. It is recommended to develop systemic models, incorporate interdisciplinary perspectives, and implement mixed-methods studies to validate strategies.

Keywords: Educational management; Attention and stimulation; Directors of educational institutions; Human resources.

Introduction

In recent years, school leadership has become more central to public education policy. Transforming education requires transforming educational leaders. Multiple studies show that educational leadership is a factor that significantly influences school management, even when controlling for other variables such as socioeconomic status and compensation.

In Cuba, since 1959, priority has been given to working with managers, with a policy on the training, selection, placement, promotion, and professional development of cadres that has remained consistent. The Guidelines for the Economic and Social Policy of the Party and the Revolution for the period 2022-2026 emphasize the effective organization and quality of the Cadre Policy.

The Third Improvement of the National Education System, in accordance with these guidelines, seeks to redefine the profile of the school principal as a holistic leader: not only an administrative manager, but also a pedagogical promoter, innovator, and territorial coordinator. This approach responds to the current demands of a more complex society, where job security, social recognition, and multidisciplinary training are key.

In the evaluation of the educational process in the province of Holguín at the end of the 2022-2023 school year, deficiencies were evident that limit the professional performance of the directors, such as: insufficient planning to improve their performance and social recognition, little use of the potential of the territory, instability in the position and insufficient recognition by administrative authorities and educational communities.

These manifestations denote deficiencies in the attention and stimulation process that cause adverse results: job dissatisfaction, loss of leadership, low performance, demotivation, psychological effects and exodus to other organizations.

The objective of this article is to analyze the theoretical and methodological foundations of the management of attention and stimulation of directors of educational institutions in Cuba, identifying gaps in the literature and proposing improvements to optimize this process.

Development

Theoretical foundations of the management of attention and stimulation to educational directors.

Managing the attention and motivation of school principals is a strategic focus for strengthening institutional leadership and organizational resilience in educational settings. This section is based on theoretical approaches that integrate organizational psychology, human resource management, and educational sciences, with the aim of understanding how sustained attention, intrinsic motivation, and cognitive activation influence decision-making, pedagogical leadership, and the professional well-being of school leaders.

The systematization of national and international sources allowed for the establishment of a framework for modeling the management of support and incentives for school principals. Multiple studies in the field of education show that educational leadership, when controlling for other variables such as socioeconomic status, family situation, and compensation, among others, constitutes a factor that influences the principal's work in managing the school.

Today, it is a reality that successful organizations treat their staff as a fundamental source of competitiveness, considering the human factor as their most important asset; hence the need to obtain and have at all times the most qualified, motivated and competitive staff possible.

The educational institution must become, in its entirety, a successful organization. Within it, we find countless actors: students, teachers, managers, parents and representatives, workers and employees, and in its environment: different agents including the community, popular councils, cultural, sports, and social institutions.

Of all the actors mentioned, one deserves special attention: the director, upon whom rests an enormous responsibility, and whose actions will largely determine the successful functioning of the educational institution. In Cuba, since 1959, priority has been given to working with managers (cadres), for which a policy on the training, selection, placement, promotion, and professional development of cadres was approved (PCC, 1975), a policy that has been continuously implemented and addressed.

An example of this is what is included in the Guidelines for the economic and social policy of the Party and the Revolution for the period 2022-2026 (PCC, 2021):

"Conducting cadre policy with effective organization and quality processes, especially the selection and training of cadres, reserves, and talent pools, as well as the development of promising young people to fill leadership positions, including women, Black people, and people of mixed race,

ensuring gradual renewal, the appropriate composition of the leadership, and that they are distinguished by their ideological firmness, commitment, personal qualities, ethical and revolutionary principles, professional technical preparation, and positive results in their performance." (p. 84)

Since its institutionalization, Cuba's cadre policy has evolved, shifting from a primary focus on ideological training and political loyalty to a greater emphasis on technical and administrative skills. However, these historical transformations have not been without limitations, such as excessive centralization and the undervaluation of the pedagogical and community role of school principals.

The Third Improvement of the National Education System, in conjunction with the PCC Guidelines for the period 2021-2026, seeks to overcome these shortcomings by redefining the profile of the school principal as a comprehensive leader: not only an administrative manager, but also a pedagogical promoter, innovator, and territorial coordinator. This approach responds to the current demands of a more complex society, where job security, social recognition, and multidisciplinary training are key to facing challenges such as educational decentralization, community participation, and economic constraints.

The implementation of the Third Improvement of the National Education System responds to the nature of the current problems and complex social processes, for which proposals for transformations are offered from educational institutions and modalities through new forms of work, which contribute to the fulfillment of the objectives and purpose of the country's educational policy, and especially in educational institutions, which is where its application is materialized with greater intensity.

Improvement also includes enhancing the management system at each level and educational institution, as well as improving the quality of processes. It is in this context that the role of the school principal becomes crucial in advising on, developing, and evaluating the desired institutional educational project. In this regard, the processes that comprise the system for working with staff are essentially contained within the processes of the human resource management system, of which there is a wide variety of models and the support and motivation model is one of them, albeit with different names.

In the evaluation of the educational process carried out in the province of Holguín at the end of the 2022-2023 school year, as well as in the results of the diagnostic study of the research field, it was evident that, in the work indicators, deficiencies in practice were found that limit the professional performance of the directors of educational institutions, such as:

Actions aimed at improving the professional performance and social recognition of school principals are not always included in the planning of the General Directorate of Education; insufficient use is made of the territory's potential for developing events aimed at improving the preparation, training, and personal expectations of school principals; there are shortcomings in personnel policy to achieve stability for school principals; insufficient recognition of the work results of school principals by political and governmental authorities; insufficient social recognition of school principals within educational communities; and inadequate application of the evaluation of educational personnel.

Such manifestations denote the shortcomings in the process of supporting and stimulating directors of educational institutions, which lead to adverse results in their performance, such as: dissatisfaction with the job, loss of leadership, low performance in the established indicators and goals, loss of creativity, demotivation of the reserves of personnel to assume the position of director, psychological and mental ailments due to a large workload, decrease in responsibilities at home and to the family, exodus to other organizations, pathological ailments and convalescences, disconnection between institution, family and community and a tendency to migrate in search of other life projects.

In the scientific literature related to the work of managers, theoretical and practical proposals of different scope are generally put forward, which favor the evolution of the profile of the school director, what their current expectations are, their professionalization, initial training, as well as recognizing the need for permanent training.

Authors such as Cabrera, Núñez & Alpízar (2018); Corrales (1976); Fernández (1974); González (2019); Hernández (2012); Manzano (2000); Rodríguez (2008); Santiesteban (2011); Sánchez (2008); Santamaría (2007); and Valiente (1997, 2002, 2004, 2011, 2013, 2016), among others, present results from studies related to the role of school principals in the field of professional development. However, few studies focus on improving the support and motivation of school principals, and those that do generally concentrate on practical experiences and in-depth studies that do not consider aspects inherent to this process, demonstrating a lack of integration within it.

These studies include those developed by Hallinger & Heck (1996); Anne -Marie Chase and others (2019); Fullan (2001); Gronn (2002); Goldring (2002); Spillane , Halverson & Diamond (2004); Youngs (2007); Matthew A. Kraft and Allison Crean Davis (2018); Karen Chenoweth et al. (2019); Karen K. Seashore Louis et al. (2020) and Matthew Clifford et al. (2021) ; generally agree that attention to the principal is crucial to the success of an educational institution.

Their proposals focus on the need for support and resources to lead, manage, and motivate their teaching teams, how to deal with the increasingly complex challenges that schools face today, innovative approaches to professional development, including coaching , mentoring , and online learning, the benefits and challenges of these strategies, their approaches to professional development, stimulation, and growth as leaders.

They also consider the role of learning communities in professional development and the need for adequate training, resources, and support to lead effectively and improve student performance. However, there are few proposals that model the management of the support and stimulation process for school principals, which allows us to identify theoretical shortcomings such as: a lack of comprehensive management in working with staff, hindering the understanding of the relationships between the support and stimulation process and the other processes of the STCEGR (System of Support and Stimulation of Educational Leadership and Management); the lack of a multidisciplinary approach in managing the support and stimulation process for school principals, which limits the organizational and individual behavior of principals; and a lack of longitudinal or experimental studies investigating how support and stimulation actually affect the performance and effectiveness of principals in the school context.

The above allowed us to visualize the existence of an external contradiction manifested between the recognition of the importance of the attention and stimulation of the directors of educational institutions and the lack of proposals that allow the development of the management of this process in a systemic and integrated way, as a result of this contradiction, the following scientific problem is derived: Deficiencies in the attention and stimulation of the directors of educational institutions affect the stability and performance in the position and in the management of the educational institution.

Conceptions about Human Resource Management and Working with Managers.

The recognition in the literature of the attention and stimulation process within Human Resources Systems as a component of these systems has led to extensive theoretical development. However, theoretical conceptions regarding the management of this process in the case of managers are scarce.

The definitions of several authors focus on the functional approach to management. Stoner (1984) conceptualizes it as "an administrative function that can be seen as a series of steps that are taken continuously to keep the organization supplied with the right people in the right positions in a timely manner" (p. 489). Chiavenato (1993) assumes that "Human Resource Management consists of the planning, organization, development, coordination and control of techniques capable of promoting the efficient performance of personnel" (p. 139).

These authors primarily address the technical-organizational dimension of human resource management, without sufficiently considering human behavior in organizations. In contrast, Noemí (1999) defines human resource management taking into account the socio-psychological characteristic of this process, considering it as "that which is consciously developed through the broad system of social relationships and interactions established among the subjects involved" (p. 36).

Cuesta (2011) states that currently, in the strategic management of Human Resources, three essential elements are distinguished: the consideration of HR as a decisive resource, the systemic approach in its management and the need for coherence between HR management and the organizational strategy.

Working with managers can be considered a special segment of human resource management, with its own particularities given by: multiple and varied functions, specialization of knowledge, imprecise work content, individual responsibility for continuous updating and more flexible control procedures.

For the purposes of this research, management is assumed to be "a social activity that has a concrete historical condition; as a system of interpersonal relationships; as a strategic process that has a conscious character" (Doctoral Program in Organizational Management, 2018, p. 16).

System of Working with Cadres in Cuba.

Working with managers has been a priority in Cuba since 1959. The legal framework on this subject has been markedly centralized, from Decree-Law 82 of 1984 to the most recent Decree-Law 13 of

2021. The latest approved legal standard assumes that "Managers work in the public sector and are defined as workers who possess the required work capacity, solid technical and professional training, leadership skills, discipline..." (Cuban Council of State, 2021, p. 886). Directors of educational institutions are executive managers, and as managers, they must apply methods and work styles that foster cooperation and coordination with all stakeholders.

The "System of Working with Cadres is the set of processes that are developed, in a particular and interrelated way, in the application of the Cadre Policy" (Cuban Council of State, 2021, p. 886). This system considers the following processes: selection and movement; reserve; ethics and discipline; preparation and improvement; evaluation; attention and stimulation; and control and information of cadres.

Regardless of their hierarchical position, managers are human resources that, according to Castells (2008), are people who, endowed with values, characteristics, aspirations, knowledge, capacities, skills and abilities, perform in organizations, through the multiple relationships that are established to achieve their objectives and those of the institution." (p. 26)

Stoner (1984), for his part, considers it as "the people who give the organization their talent, their work, their creativity and their effort, are its most important assets." (p.489), taken from Castells (2008, p.26)

On the other hand, the System of Working with the Cadres is the set of processes that are developed, in a particular and interrelated way in the application of the Cadre Policy (Cuba State Council, 2021, p 886), that is, it is only applied to a limited portion of the human resources of an entity with specific characteristics.

Analyzing the composition of different human resource management systems, including Bustillo (1994); CEPES (1995); Castillo (1994); Chiavenato (1993); Dolan and Schuler (1987); Dale (1981); Harper and Lynch (1992); Hax (1992); IDEC (1994); Noemí (1999); Puchol (1995), allowed us to identify the most recognized processes within these systems, which in one way or another recognize the subsystems or processes of: recruitment and selection, training and development, performance evaluation, retention and compensation, and human resource control.

Similarly, the system for working with cadres considers the following processes: a) Selection and movement; b) reserve; c) ethics and discipline; d) preparation and improvement; e) evaluation; f)

attention and stimulation; and g) control and information of cadres. (Cuban State Council, 2021, p. 886). When analyzing the elements that make up each of the processes, one can appreciate the overlap between those that make up both systems, without disregarding the interrelation (Figure 1) that exists between the processes within each system.

Source: (Own elaboration)

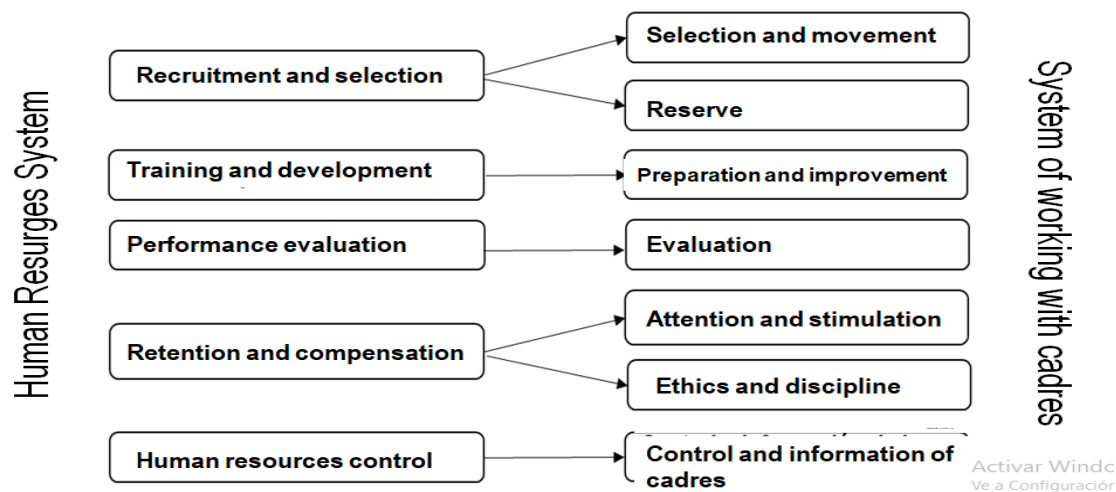


Figure 1. Relationship between the processes of the two systems.

These observations allow us to identify the Management System as a special subsystem of the Human Resource Management System of any organization and as part of the organization's human resources. In either system, human resources are the essential element of organizations. The term "manager" takes on a more specific meaning when referring to the director of an educational institution, which gives them very particular characteristics due to the environment in which they exert influence. They must achieve a healthy and beneficial interaction for the institution, the community, and themselves. The definitions discussed above demonstrate the convergence between the concepts of human resources and the definitions of managers assumed within the management system.

Attention and stimulation as key categories.

Cuban legislation assumes that "Attention to managers comprises a set of measures designed to safeguard their physical and mental health and assist them, within established mechanisms, in

resolving problems that may affect their work performance" (Cuban Council of State, 2021, p. 898). Similarly, "Incentive consists of developing actions that allow managers to be recognized socially, morally, or materially for their work achievements" (Cuban Council of State, 2021, p. 898).

Attention and stimulation are two fundamental categories that directly impact the management of educational institutions. Both influence human behavior within organizations and are essential for managing the work system with leadership teams. While attention refers to the ability to focus on specific stimuli, stimulation encompasses the factors that motivate and influence people's behavior.

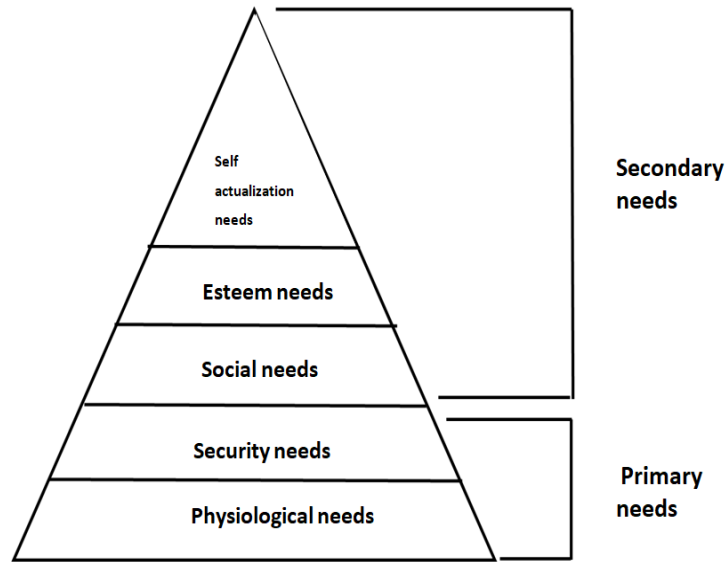
Attention refers to the ability to focus on a specific stimulus, while stimulation refers to the factors that motivate and influence behavior. Pichardo and Justicia (2014) consider that attention can be described "as a basic psychological mechanism indispensable for the processing of information of any modality and for the performance of any cognitive activity" (p. 66).

Stimulation, on the other hand, is considered through rewards or stimuli that awaken in the individual the motivation to do something. Souto and García (2018) consider that "the process of moral and material stimulation has a leading role within the management of the business system" (p. 1) and Jiménez (2017) and Álvarez (2001) agree that comprehensive stimulation is a strategic investment in human resources.

Human Behavior in the Organization.

According to Chiavenato (1993), behavior in organizations manifests itself in two ways: As people: with personality, aspirations, values and individual motivations, and as resources: with skills, abilities and knowledge necessary for organizational tasks.

Therefore, there are external (environmental) and internal (motivational) factors that affect behavior. Maslow (1943) proposed a hierarchy of needs (Figure 2) that influences human behavior. As basic needs (physiological and safety) are met, higher-level needs (social, esteem, and self-actualization) emerge. However, an unmet need can displace higher-level needs if it is not addressed.



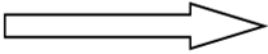
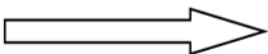
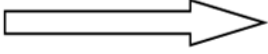
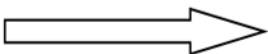
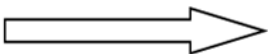
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Maslow's hierarchy of human needs.

Herzberg (1957), for his part, distinguishes between:

- Hygiene factors: working conditions, salary, policies, work environment. Their absence causes dissatisfaction, but their presence does not necessarily motivate.
- Motivating factors: related to the content of the work, recognition, and personal growth. These are what generate lasting satisfaction and greater productivity. (Diagram 1)

Diagram 1. Frederick Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory (1957).

Motivators		Challenging work Achievements Growth at work Responsibility
		Progress Recognition
Maintenance factor		Interpersonal relationships, politics, and company management Quality of supervision
		Working conditions Job security Quality of supervision
		Salary Personal life

Both theories agree that unmet basic needs affect performance, but they differ on how higher-level needs influence motivation. In the educational field, it is crucial that principals receive both attention (emotional and physical support) and stimulation (professional development opportunities) to optimize their performance and that of the institution.

Attention and stimulation are integral processes that, when managed systematically, contribute to a positive organizational climate, talent retention, and the achievement of educational objectives.

Therefore, the support and motivation of school leaders are not just theoretical concepts, but practical tools for improving institutional management. A balanced approach that considers both personal well-being and professional incentives is key to the sustainable success of educational organizations.

Theoretical and methodological gaps identified in the treatment of the attention and stimulation process of the directors of educational institutions.

The bibliographic analysis allowed the identification of theoretical gaps that limit the management of attention and stimulation by directors of educational institutions:

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1. Lack of systemic integration in the management of support and incentives for directors of educational institutions: There is no conceptual framework that dynamically links support and incentives with the other processes of the Management System (evaluation, promotion, training, monitoring, etc.). Management is fragmented; preventing strategic planning that considers the director's career path, context, and needs.
 2. Lack of a multidisciplinary approach, where technical-organizational approaches predominate, without incorporating psychological, sociological, and pedagogical perspectives. This limits the understanding of the motivational, relational, and cultural factors that influence managerial performance.
 3. Mostly descriptive or normative studies: They lack indicators and evaluation criteria that allow measuring the impact of the attention and stimulation provided by the directors of educational institutions.

Principles for the management of care and stimulation.

The principles that should be considered for the management of attention and stimulation of directors of educational institutions are:

- Principle of knowledge and identification of educational policy: It guides on the need to consider, in attention and stimulation, the knowledge and identification with educational management policies.
- Principle of participatory management: It serves as a guideline for the content of management and a guide as to how it should be developed with the active involvement of internal and external agents.
- Principle of objectivity and fairness: Suggests the need for attention and stimulation to be adjusted to professional and personal needs and to the results of the work.
- Principle of the fundamental link: Its essence is the identification of the priorities of attention and stimulation in relation to the essential factors that affect stability in the position.
- Principle of integrality in the analysis of processes: Recognizes in the attention and stimulation the consideration of other processes of the work system with the tables that contribute to attention and stimulation actions.

Principle of transformative and progressive change: Related to the essential purpose of attention and stimulation: the improvement that occurs in performance and institutional results.

Conclusions

The management of support and motivation for school principals in Cuba must evolve from a normative-administrative approach to a dynamic, interdisciplinary model focused on holistic well-being. This requires:

Systemic integration of processes to design models that link support and stimulation with subsystems such as performance evaluation, continuing education , and promotion, connecting recognition to measurable results in educational projects. Adoption of multidisciplinary approaches that incorporate theories from organizational psychology, sociology, and neuroscience to understand the behavior of principals, using frameworks such as complexity theory to address the interaction between individual and contextual factors.

Methodological strengthening through the implementation of longitudinal studies using mixed methods to evaluate the impact of interventions and measure changes in performance following mentoring programs or non-monetary incentives. Regulatory updates with a holistic approach to review Cuban policies to include differentiated incentives, adapt incentives to individual needs, achieve greater flexibility in work-life balance, and a comprehensive evaluation that incorporates indicators of emotional well-being and work climate.

Management training in soft skills that equips managers with abilities such as stress management, assertive communication, and collaborative leadership, based on theories such as emotional intelligence. Promotion of a participatory organizational culture to foster autonomy and decentralized decision-making, aligned with the principle of participative management.

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