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# ***Estudio diagnóstico sobre el trabajo con los directores escolares noveles en la provincia de Holguín*** ***Diagnostic study on the work with the novice principal's schools at Holguín province***

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**Resumen:** El estudio diagnóstico tuvo como objetivo caracterizar el trabajo con los cuadros, en su implementación con los directores escolares noveles, en la provincia de Holguín, considerando dos dimensiones, la experiencia y preparación previa al acceso al cargo y el trabajo que se realiza posteriormente. Los resultados dan respuesta al problema relacionado con la necesidad de conocer el estado en que se encuentra este objeto. La metodología ponderó el empleo de métodos empíricos como la revisión de documentos y las encuestas. Se evidenció que el trabajo con los directores escolares noveles presenta insuficiencias que afectan su permanencia en el cargo.

**Palabras clave:** Cuadros; Trabajo con los cuadros; Directores escolares noveles; Estudio diagnóstico

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**Abstract:** The diagnostic study aimed to characterize the work with the cadres, in its implementation with the new school directors, in the province of Holguín, considering two dimensions, the experience and preparation prior to access to the position and the work that is carried out subsequently. The results respond to the problem related to the need to know the state in which this object is. The methodology considered the use of empirical methods such as document review and surveys. It was evidenced that the work with the new school principals presents inadequacies that affect their tenure.

**Keywords:** Cadres; Work with the cadres; Novice principal's schools; Diagnostic study

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## **Introduction**

In the Guidelines of the Economic and Social Policy of the Party and the Revolution, approved in the VII Congress of the Cuba Communist Party, it is convened to "... continue advancing in raising the quality and rigor of the teaching-educational process..."; as well as to "... hierarchy of permanent improvement, exaltation and attention to teaching staff ..." and "... improvement of working conditions ..." (Communist Party of Cuba, 2017, p. 27). The scope of these purposes involves school principals, as senior managers of the educational institution, who should be offered differentiated attention, especially during the initial stage of their management career.

The Guidelines also call for: "Perfecting the Work System with the Tables (...), including its regulatory base, and advancing with quality in the application of the processes that integrate it; paying due attention (...) to: the selection and promotion of cadres, their attention and stimulation, reserve, rigor in evaluation, ethics, discipline, as well as preparation and improvement". (Communist Party of Cuba, 2017, p.32).

The results of an exploratory study carried out by the authors in the Sagua de Tánamo municipality, in the province of Holguín, showed the existence of problems in the stability of the new school directors, expressed in a high number of casualties of these during the first years of the exercise of the position. It was found that during the 2012-2017 period, in which 38 school directors were appointed, 11 caused leave in the first year of the management exercise (28.9%), 13 during the second year (34.2%) and 3 in the third (7.9%); 28 (63.1%) worked for up to two years, and only 28.9% (11 directors) remained in office in 2017.

When analyzing the causes of this growing instability, it was determined that, in the essential, they are related to:

- a) the inadequate style of educational supervision carried out by the higher levels;
- b) the lack of systematic advice and support;
- c) the incorrect planning and organization of work from the municipal authority that limits its time and the concentration of its attention on the priorities of the school activity;
- d) insufficient stimulation and recognition of work;
- e) the lack of relevance of the evaluation of professional performance, which does not consider the moment of the management career in which they are, as well as;
- f) inadequacies in the training prior to access to the position and in the conception of such training at this stage.

The causal analysis of the problem raised allowed to determine that this has its genesis in the insufficient application of the guidelines established in the System of Work with the State and

Government Boards (STCEG), at the initial moment of the directors' management career school children.

Previous works of the Ibero-American field (Carrasco, Gajardo and González, 2017; Castro, 2009 and García-Garduño, Slater and López-Grosave, 2011), which were studied during the research process, reflect factors that affect the performance of the new school directors during his tenure, coinciding with the aforementioned.

From the aforementioned problem, a research problem was identified that is expressed in: insufficiencies in the work with school directors during the first years of his directive career affect his tenure. For its solution, one of the specific objectives of the research aimed to characterize the state of work with the cadres, in its implementation with the new school directors, in Holguin province, through a diagnostic study whose design and main results are exposed in this article.

## **Development**

The design and execution of the diagnostic study aimed at characterizing the work with the new school directors, required the creation of a theoretical framework that was based essentially on the study of the regulations and previous research in which the work with the cadres, as a particular expression of human resources management, and attention to new or beginning school principals.

In Cuba, the specialized definitions on the concept of the cadre and the work with them, in their evolution, are included in normative and political documents that regulate the policy and the STCEG: the Thesis and Resolution on cadre policy approved in the First Congress of the Cuba Communist Party(1986), updated in the subsequent congresses of the organization; the decrees laws 82 of 1984, 196 of 1999, 236 of 2004 and 251 of 2007 promulgated by the State Council of the Republic of Cuba, and Decree 125 of 1984, the agreement of the State Council of July 22, 2010 and other agreements approved by the Council of Ministers.

From the analysis of the evolution that the concept has had in Cuban regulations, it can be specified that the cadre:

a) is an individual who occupies a management position that is accessed by election or designation,

- b) has an ideological and administrative discipline and a high political and moral development,
- c) has the capacity to interpret and guide the directives emanating from the higher levels to the mass; as well as to make decisions and maintain discipline with the due level of demand and,
- d) have a solid preparation to develop the management work.

In the Cuban regulations (Council of State, 2010), three categories are established for the cadres: senior managers, managers (they occupy intermediate management positions) and executives. In the latter, which is the broadest category, school principals are included. For its part, the work with the cadres, understood as the “Set of functions and activities that must be carried out to fulfill the objectives established by the State in its cadre policy” (State Council, 1986, p.50), it is a particular expression of human resources management.

Human resources management (talent or human capital) has been widely studied by authors such as Chiavenato (2012), Cuesta (2009), Herrera (2017), Martín (2011) and Morales (2006, 2009). According to Morales (2009), “... includes the integration of the set of policies, objectives, regulations, functions, procedures, tools and techniques that in the workplace are structured according to the processes of the company to raise productivity to a higher level , work performance and efficiency ”(p. 52).

Human resources management is directed “... to create, develop and preserve, in an adequate work environment, the required, competent, committed and motivated human resources that efficiently and effectively perform their functions to achieve the objectives of the organization” (Levy , as cited in Valiente, 2001, p.16). Its processes are therefore associated (Herrera, 2017):

- a) with the entry into the organization (planning and forecasting; design and analysis of jobs; alignment of job skills and; recruitment, selection and induction);
- b) with the permanence in the organization (training and development, performance evaluation and compensation and stimulation) and;
- c) with control in the management of human capital (control and audit of human capital).

The STCEG of the Republic of Cuba instituted in Decree Law 196 of 1999, as a specific model of human resources management, has the purpose of ensuring the correct application of the policy regarding work with cadres. The main elements (processes) that integrate it are:

- a) selection and movement of cadres;
- b) selection and formation of the reserve;
- c) evaluation;
- d) preparation and improvement;
- e) attention and stimulation, and;
- f) information (State Council, 1999, p.3).

The actions that make up the STCEG processes are valid for working with the leaders who are considered in the category of cadres, in all sectors of national life, including school principals. They are of necessary application in the work with the new cadres, as has been historically recognized in the guidelines of the country's cadre policy. Novel cadres "... have to be the subject of constant guidance, help and direct attention. The units of cadres should prioritize visits to these personnel and analyze the difficulties and problems they face in order to alert and encourage this attention to be provided by colleagues who, due to their position or experience, correspond to them ", it is stated in the document of the Ministry of Education (MINED, 1985, p.73).

The school principal is the most important leader in any educational system. In Cuba he is defined as "... the representative of the Ministry of Education in the teaching center and his function is to perform authority in the political, technical and administrative aspects of teaching, as well as direct, lead, supervise, control and evaluate the performance of the teaching and administrative staff and the activities of the development of the educational process and the entire school life of the center" (MINED - OEI, 1995, p.34).

There is no precise consensus in the literature regarding the limits that frame the first stage of the director's career, in which the novel director is located. Castro (2009) defines it as the one "... who

has officially assumed his position, with seniority not exceeding three years ..." (p. 27). Vázquez, Liesa and Bernal (2016), meanwhile, include in this category "... directors who are in the second and third year of exercise" (p. 10).

The figure of the novel or beginner school principal has been studied by Cuban and foreign specialists. In addition to the works of Carrasco, Gajardo and González (2017), Castro (2009) and García-Garduño, Slater and López-Grosave (2011) referred to in the introduction of this article, it is worth highlighting Salaverría, Garza and Lorente (2014) and Muñoz and Marfán (2011), which provide results regarding their preparation and the support they should have during this period of their professional management. Weinstein, Cuéllar, Hernández and Fernández (2016), in turn, studied the socialization of the new directors and their pedagogical leadership.

The examination of the experiences found in the literature, cited above, made it possible to identify guidelines for the conformation of a theoretical framework related to work with the new school directors. It was noted, however, that from these experiences this work is not approached with a comprehensive approach, considering the diversity of factors and processes concerning the management of human capital.

Regardless of the aforementioned, the existence of a growing consensus on the need to fully attend school principals during the first years of the management exercise is appreciated, favoring those actions that stimulate their preparation, help motivate them and create the conditions for them to perform successfully.

### **Methodology used for the diagnostic study**

For the determination of the content of the diagnosis, depending on the proposed objective, the general management of the work with the cadres in its implementation with the new school directors was specified, which was operationalized in two dimensions, eight indicators and 28 criteria that define the more specific elements related to this variable.

Dimension one, related to the experience and preparation prior to access to the position, includes two indicators:

- 1.1) previous management experience in other school management positions and,
- 1.2) prior preparation to access to the position.

Dimension two, referring to work with the new school directors in the post-access stage, includes, in turn, six indicators: 2.1) access to the position, 2.2) preparation in the management exercise, 2.3) support and accompaniment in the management exercise, 2.4) attention and stimulation in the management exercise, 2.5) evaluation of professional performance in the management exercise, 2.6) motivation and job satisfaction.

For the collection of data related to the defined indicators, three survey questionnaires were applied to an intentionally determined sample of 45 principals and 10 former school principals: the first (C1) to 36 school directors from 11 municipalities in the province of Holguín, from 92 that began their management activity in the 2017-2018 academic year (39.13%), enrolled in the diploma for new directors offered by the University of Holguin; the second questionnaire (C2) to nine of the 38 directors of the municipality of Sagua de Tánamo (23.68%) who started in the position in the school courses from 2012-2013 to 2016-2017 and remained active at the time if the study is done; and the third (C3) to 10 former directors of the municipality of Sagua de Tánamo, of 27 that began between the 2012-2013 and 2016-2017 courses and caused a loss in the same period (37.03%).

From the use of statistical methods and procedures (calculation of measures of central tendency such as mean, median and tabulation); as well as qualitative methods and procedures (content analysis and triangulation), the processing and analysis of the data collected in the surveys was carried out. This made it possible to obtain the information that characterizes the current state of the variable under study.

### **Results of the diagnostic study**

Dimension 1: Experience and prior preparation to access to the position. The information related to the indicators of this dimension was obtained from the data provided in the questions included in questionnaires C1, C2 and C3.

Indicator 1.1: Previous management experience in other school management positions. From the analysis of the data collected on this indicator it was determined that:

a) Even though the majority (41, of the 55, for 74.5%) of the directors and former directors surveyed (35 and 6, respectively) held other school management positions before entering the position; 22 (53.7%) only went through one position and 17 (41.5%) assessed that the performance of the positions held had an insufficient influence on their preparation as future directors.

b) The accumulated experience, associated with the time in which they held positions that precede the director, is considered insufficient, while 15 of the 35 directors who occupied them (42.9%) stated that they had not been more than five years in the performance of them.

*Indicator 1.2: Prior preparation to access to the position.*

On the basis of the data summarized in Table 1, it can be gathered that the previous preparation for access to the position presented inadequacies, which can be attested from the significant number of respondents who accessed the position without having belonged to the cadre reserve (19 , 6%), who did not have an overcoming and development plan in function to prepare for the position (30.9%), and who did not replace the director at some time prior to access to the position as part of their training.

Likewise, of the 29 directors who claimed to have an improvement and development plan, 11 (37.9%) rated the training actions provided for in that plan as insufficient. 70% (7) of the former directors evaluated the impact of the training activities in which they participated as part of their preparation to enter the position.

| Criteria                                                                                 | Total | Yes | %    | No | %    |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------|-----|------|----|------|
| They belonged to the reserve of office cadres                                            | 55    | 46  | 80,4 | 9  | 19,6 |
| They had an improvement and development plan based on their preparation for the position | 55    | 38  | 69,1 | 17 | 30,9 |

|                                                                                            |    |    |      |    |      |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----|----|------|----|------|
| The former director was replaced at some point as part of his preparation for the position | 55 | 30 | 54,5 | 25 | 45,5 |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----|----|------|----|------|

Table 1: Data on prior preparation to access to the position of directors and former directors surveyed

Source: self-elaboration

Dimension 2: Work with the cadres in their implementation with the new school principals in the post-access stage.

The information on the indicators of this dimension was obtained from processing the data of the questions included in the C1, C2 and C3 questionnaires, applied to the directors and former directors who constituted the sample.

**Indicator 2.1:** Access to the position. Based on the data associated with the criteria considered in this indicator, it was specified that:

- The vast majority (41 of 55, for 74.5%) of the directors and former directors agreed to the position due to an emergency or other situation and not because it was scheduled.
- Even though 93.3% (42 of 45) of the directors who answered questionnaires C1 and C2 confirmed the fulfillment of the process of delivery-receipt of the position, only 69.0% of them (29 of 42) valued favorably (Very good and Good). Likewise, only 58.3% (21 of 36) of the directors who answered the C1 questionnaire stated that they had a satisfactory perception of the usefulness of the information derived from the aforementioned process. All of the above reveals an insufficiency that must be addressed, since an adequate execution of this process provides the directors who initiate valuable updated information on the institution they will direct.

**Indicator 2.2: Preparation in the management exercise.** The analysis of the data collected on this indicator allowed us to specify inadequacies in the planning of professional development during the first stage of the management exercise, which can be asserted from:

- The majority of the directors and former directors who answered the C2 and C3 questionnaires (11 of 19 for 57.9%) said they did not have a plan for their professional development at this stage

of the management career. All (8) of those who had this plan said they had little involvement in its preparation.

b) Only 67.3% (37 of 55) of the directors and former directors surveyed said they had received specific preparation for their performance as school principal during this initial stage of their management career. Of those who made this recognition, 21 (56.8%) indicated that said specific preparation consisted of a “school for directors”, in which the training actions were not sufficient, nor were they designed based on their needs. However, 86.5% (32 of 37) of those who responded that they received specific training at this stage of their management career, considered it very useful.

a) All (55) of the directors and ex-directors surveyed received supervision (at least once a month) from the higher instance, which constitutes a favorable element.

b) However, an important part of the probed subjects (16 of 55, for 29.09%) expressed dissatisfaction regarding the systematic and timeliness of the supervisory action of the top management structure.

**Indicator 2.4: Attention and stimulation in the management exercise.** The processing of data related to this indicator, shown in Table 2, obtained from questionnaires C2 and C3, allowed us to establish that:

a) The majority of the directors and former directors received moral and / or material stimulation for the performance and results of the work, although an important part of them (52.6%) considered that this was not sufficiently systematic and timely. Even when those who claim to have received sanctions are few (2), it is striking that, during this stage of the managerial career, in which the appropriate alert and advice should prevail, they have taken place.

b) The subjects surveyed expressed a mostly favorable opinion in relation to working conditions to carry out their managerial activity, which they valued between good and very good. Such majority consensus was not revealed when evaluating the availability of material and informational resources they had to deploy their management work.

| Criteria                                                                                                  | Total | Yes | %    | No | %    |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------|-----|------|----|------|
| They received moral and material stimuli for performance and work results.                                | 19    | 15  | 78,9 | 4  | 21,1 |
| The stimulation by the performance and the results of the work was systematic and timely.                 | 19    | 9   | 47,4 | 10 | 52,6 |
| They received penalties for deficiencies in the performance and results of their management exercise.     | 19    | 2   | 10,5 | 17 | 89,4 |
| They had the appropriate working conditions for the performance of their managerial activity.             | 19    | 17  | 89,4 | 2  | 10,5 |
| They had material and informational resources necessary for the performance of their managerial activity. | 19    | 13  | 68,4 | 6  | 31,6 |

Table 2: Data on attention and stimulation in the management exercise from the perspective of directors and former directors surveyed.  
Source: self-elaboration.

**Indicator 2.5: Evaluation of professional performance in the management exercise.** In relation to this indicator, based on the data provided by the applied surveys, it was possible to specify that:

a) The majority of the directors (45) who answered the C1 and C2 questionnaires were not evaluated during the initial stage of their management career (25 for 55.6%). Likewise, 64.4% (29) considered that the evaluation of their performance has not been systematic, nor timely.

b) The majority of directors and former directors (14 of 19, for 76.7%) who answered the C2 and C3 questionnaires, consider that the performance evaluation is not differentiating in regard to the consideration of this moment of the directive career. They state, in this regard, that there was no distinction between the evaluation they were subject to and the one made to the most experienced directors.

c) A significant part (4 of 9 for 44.4%) of the directors who answered the C2 questionnaire believes that the performance evaluation, in their first years of management career, was not developmental and educational.

**Indicator 2.6: Motivation and job satisfaction.** The data collected on this indicator allowed us to conclude that:

- a) The majority of active directors (36 of the 45 who answered questionnaires C1 and C2, for 80.0%) said they had a high level of motivation for the activity they carry out.
- b) Only 56.5% of directors and former directors (31 of the 55 who answered the three questionnaires) said they had high levels of job satisfaction. The main causes of dissatisfaction of the remaining (24 of 55, for 43.6%) are associated with the inadequacies in care and support received during the initial stage of the exercise of the position.

## Conclusions

The results described above, which characterize the management of the work with the cadres in its implementation with the new school directors, from the intentionally selected sample of novice school directors and former directors who abandoned the management career in its initial stage, allowed establishing the following considerations:

Although there is a global consensus in favor of weighing the work with the new school directors, and since the postulates of the cadre policy defined by the Cuban State is given priority, the application of the STCEG with these managers has limitations associated with the processes of selection and formation of the reserve, evaluation, preparation and improvement, and attention and stimulation.

The work with the cadres, in its implementation with the new directors tends towards a favorable behavior in: the performance of other school management positions in the pre-access stage; compliance with the delivery-receipt process when accessing the position; supervision by the higher instances; the exercise of moral and / or material stimulation for performance and work results; as well as regarding the level of motivation and commitment for the managerial activity of which these managers are carriers.

Likewise, such activity tends towards an unfavorable behavior regarding: a) the influence of the transition by other school management positions in the preparation to access the direction of the educational institution; b) access to the position from the reservation; c) the relevance of the

planning of the overcoming and preparation of the reserve; d) the impact of previous training actions; e) the forecast and fulfillment of the moment of access to the position; f) the usefulness of the information derived from the process of delivery-receipt of the charge; and g) the existence and relevance of a professional development plan for the initial stage of the management career and the involvement of beginning directors in its conception.

It also tends towards an unfavorable behavior in terms of: h) the relevance and sufficiency of the formative actions in the initial stage of the managerial career; i) the systematic and timeliness of the supervisory action and the support for the superior management structure; as well as moral and material stimulation; j) the availability of material and informational resources for the deployment of managerial work and; k) the systematicity and opportunity, the differentiated character and the fulfillment of the developmental and educational functions of the performance evaluation. The causal analysis of the elements described above points to inadequacies in the processes that concern the work system with the cadres in their implementation with the new school directors. The need to develop a proposal that theoretically and methodologically oriented its execution was confirmed.

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