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**Original article**

## **Management of the training process in English, in the Physical Culture career within the framework of the transformations in Higher Education**

**Gestión del proceso de formación en inglés, en la carrera de Cultura Física en el marco de las transformaciones de la Educación Superior**

**Gestão do processo de formação em inglês, na carreira de Cultura Física no âmbito das transformações no Ensino Superior**

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### **ABSTRACT**

This study responds to the need to improve the teaching-learning process of English in higher education, and therefore aims to set out the characteristics of the management of this process within the framework of the policy of improving the English training process in the Physical Culture degree course at the University of Pinar del Río "Hermandos Saíz Montes de Oca". To this end, methods were used from the theoretical level, such as historical-logical, analysis-synthesis and modelling, as well as from the empirical level, document analysis, observation and group interview. Work was carried out with all the first-year students (51) in the regular daytime course starting in the aforementioned policy and with five teachers who teach in the course and also lead processes in the course. The result is the characterization of the management of the students' English training for the continuous improvement of the comprehensive training of the professional.

**Keywords:** Physical Culture; Professional training; English training; Process management.



## RESUMEN

El presente estudio responde a la necesidad de perfeccionar el proceso de enseñanza-aprendizaje del inglés en la Educación Superior, por lo que tiene como objetivo exponer las características de la gestión de dicho proceso en el marco de la política del perfeccionamiento del proceso de formación en Inglés, en la carrera de Cultura Física de la Universidad de Pinar del Río "Hermanos Saíz Montes de Oca". Para ello, se utilizaron métodos del nivel teórico, como el histórico-lógico, el análisis-síntesis y la modelación, así como del nivel empírico, el análisis de documentos, la observación y la entrevista grupal. Se trabajó con la totalidad de los estudiantes de primer año de la carrera (51) del curso regular diurno que comienzan en la política mencionada y con cinco profesores que imparten docencia en la carrera, que a la vez dirigen procesos en la misma. Se obtiene como resultado la caracterización de la gestión de la formación en Inglés de los estudiantes para el perfeccionamiento continuo de la formación integral del profesional.

**Palabras clave:** Cultura Física; Formación del profesional; Formación en inglés; Gestión del proceso.

## RESUMO

O presente estudo responde à necessidade de melhorar o processo de ensino-aprendizagem do inglês no ensino superior e, portanto, visa apresentar as características da gestão deste processo no âmbito da política de melhoria do processo de formação do inglês na carreira de Cultura Física da Universidade de Pinar del Río "Hermanos Saíz Montes de Oca". Para este fim, foram utilizados métodos do nível teórico, tais como histórico-lógico, análise-síntese e modelação, bem como do nível empírico, análise documental, observação e entrevista em grupo. Trabalhámos com todos os estudantes do primeiro ano da carreira (51) do curso diurno regular que começam na política mencionada e com 5 professores que ensinam na carreira, que ao mesmo tempo dirigem processos no mesmo. O resultado é a caracterização da gestão da formação em inglês dos estudantes para a melhoria contínua da formação integral do profissional.

**Palavras-chave:** Cultura Física; Formação profissional; Formação inglesa; Gestão de processo.

## INTRODUCTION

Today the Cuban university faces new challenges in the formation and performance of future professionals so that they can participate actively, independently and creatively, in the socio-economic development of the country, facing the challenges of sustainable development.

In view of this situation, the Ministry of Higher Education (MES in Spanish) is carrying out important transformations aimed at improving the system of continuous training of professionals for the comprehensive education that is so necessary.



The policy of perfecting the training process in English, of university students, is one of these transformations that establishes the command of English as a requirement of graduation in higher education, initially in a basic level equivalent to A2 and moving towards an intermediate level equivalent to B1, following the structure by levels, established for Cuban Higher Education and that is in the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (Mcerl in Spanish).

The policy contains distinctive elements in the teaching of English in the country: (MES, 2019)

- The consideration of the formative value of the English language as a life skill
- The integration of contemporary methodological concepts in the formation of the English language.
- The development and curricular innovation of English language training in accordance with national and international references.
- The concept of English language proficiency as a requirement for graduation and greater personalization of English language education.
- The increase of self-management, cognitive independence and autonomy of the students.
- The standardized evaluation of communicative competence as a graduation requirement.
- The management of the English training is carried out from a language center.
- In this context, as it was mentioned, the language centers arise, which are the new structure in the Cuban educational system to implement this policy.

In particular, the Language Center of the University of Pinar del Rio "Hermanos Saíz Montes de Oca" was created in 2016 and with it began a study of the management of its processes that would allow the improvement of the English formation and the obtaining of the requirement of graduation of the students, selecting the careers of Engineering in Computer Science, Telecommunications, Geology, Forestry and the Degree in Socio-Cultural Management for the development, to implement the policy, attending fundamentally to the satisfactory results obtained in the Curricular Strategy of Languages.

In this academic year, 2019-2020, the results already obtained are generalized to another group of degrees at the University of Pinar del Rio "Hermanos Saíz Montes de Oca", among which is the Physical Culture, in which English teachers have made significant contributions from science and from professional practice to improve this subject.

According to Martínez (2017), Physical Education teachers, coaches, directors and officials of the work departments of the National Institute of Sports, Physical Education and Recreation (Inder in Spanish), require mastery of general language skills for competent communication with their social and work environment, to enable them to fulfill the functions assigned to them. Likewise, these human resources need the English language in their training in the different spheres of action:

- In the academic and scientific field, it allows the management of resources for exchange, internationalization, academic mobility, joint programs and the homologation of programs and degrees.

<http://podium.upr.edu.cu/index.php/podium/article/view/904>



- In the economic area, it is expressed in the impact on trade, with emphasis on the industry of software for teaching sport, economic-financial relations in the world, increased competitiveness in the trained HR, as well as the generation of income from exports of international services.
- In the cultural field, it enables the usual international and intercultural communication in countries and between countries that do not speak English as a mother tongue.
- In the political-ideological one, it allows to extend the general culture formation, to promote and to develop the thought and the cosmovision in front of the challenges of the present world.

The situation previously presented describes the scientific problem of the study that consists in how to manage the process of formation in English, in the career of Physical Culture in the frame of the policy of improvement of that language, in the University of Pinar del Río, which entails to raise as an objective: to conceive the management of the formation process in English, in the career of Physical Culture that allows the implementation of the policy of improvement of that language in an effective way to achieve a competent professional of the physical culture and the sport, in function of the social and economic development of the country.

## **MATERIAL AND METHODS**

In correspondence with the objective of the work, methods of the theoretical level were used: a. the historical-logical method, which was applied to determine the background, particularities, regularities and development of the management of the formation process in English, in the national and international context; b. the analysis and synthesis that allowed the study of the elements that conform the process, its relation with the management and the determination of its particularities, how to integrate them, which makes possible to discover the relations and own characteristics; c. the modeling allowed to discover and to study the new relations and qualities of the formation process in English.

Empirical methods such as group interviews with teachers and managers involved in the implementation of the policy of English language improvement in the Physical Culture career were aimed at ascertaining the dynamics of work in the career for this purpose.

The documentary analysis to the *Curricular Strategy of Languages* in the career, to the base document on the improvement of English teaching in Cuban universities, published by the MES in 2016 and to the methodological work plan of the career, was used to verify the state of the problem.

It was used the descriptive statistics for the processing and tabulation of the information.



## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The study of theories and works developed by diverse authors referring to management, training process in languages and language centers, allowed visualizing, defining and conceptualizing the management of the formation process that takes place in language centers, in the context of Cuban Higher Education.

In the second half of the 20th century, the importance of English as an international language is intensified, given the growth of students' enrollment in higher education and the demand in the development of communicative competences in that language and other languages, as well as academic and professional mobility, which imposes a new challenge to higher education that deeply modifies the way of organizing modern languages in such institutions (Ruane, 2003).

The creation and development of language centers around the world is one of the answers to these new demands, which have grown gradually in the first quarter of the 21st century, as the value of language teaching in higher education has increased (Ruane, 2003), this strategic role has been recognized in international spaces for

"being the most influential in the development of effective internationalization strategies in this education sector, actively contributing to the implementation of key aspects of the Bologna Process: providing linguistic and intercultural tools for effective mobility" (Grainger, 2009).

Therefore, it is necessary to institute strategies that articulate and integrate the language center with the substantive processes of the university and its leadership and management structures, which guarantee that integral formation to which one aspires in order to face the challenges of globalization, safeguarding national cultural identities.

Communicative competence should be seen as a strategic component in the institution, therefore, it should be instituted in "institutional language policies that establish the need to deepen the mother tongue and the promotion of knowledge of foreign languages" Poljakoviæ, (2011). Likewise, "the future of language centers depends considerably on the quality of the teaching staff and their leaders", since they are a critical success factor in achieving the organization's objectives and building organizational culture (Ruane, 2003).

To do so, it is important to "provide pedagogical solutions to the training needs of students who interact in the academic context and who are part of the international scientific community" (Meyer 1997), and therefore "requires a planned and contextualized approach in language centers" (Ruane, 2003) at Poljakoviæ (2011). Language centers are key in institutional development because "the fact of diagnosing the language training needs of high numbers of students makes them highly profitable units with great economic value for Higher Education" (Ruane 2003).



The study of language centers in the international context led to understand the functions and roles of this structure and to define it for the Cuban context as

"the academic and managerial organizational structure, which is in charge of implementing the policy of English training improvement in Cuban Higher Education, through academic services specialized in foreign languages for teaching, research and extension, is a methodological advisor to the rest of the university structures in terms of language training, evaluation and certification, mainly English, for the improvement of the integral formation of students and the social relevance of the university" (Gutiérrez *et al.*, 2019).

As can be seen, the fundamental functions and processes of English language training, within the framework of the policy, are: *language training, evaluation and certification, primarily in English.*

In the study carried out to the moments through which the process of formation in English has passed in the country, it can be said in synthesis that:

- Between 1960 and 1982, the study of the English language was oriented towards the development of reading comprehension skills in its broadest sense, rather than the teaching of reading for professional purposes.
- Between 1983 and 1990, coinciding with the implementation of curriculum B, progress was made towards the application, in universities, of a methodology that would ensure the development of reading skills for academic and professional purposes.
- In 1990, the Director's Program for English (PDI) was applied in a generalized manner, based on pilots that had begun in the 1985-1986 school year. With this program, the English language was recognized in its double condition of discipline and instrument, of study and work, and orientations were drawn around the joint work of the teachers of the language and those of the other disciplines. However, the PDI was not applied in a flexible and creative way in the universities, so it did not have the expected results.
- In 2003, as a result of the design of curriculum D, a group of experts from all over the country worked on the development of a methodology for the teaching of the English language and the creation of texts, with the purpose of promoting the independent study of the language, so that class time could be dedicated to the development of oral communication skills, which at that time was considered a priority.

It is evident that Cuban education has had clear the objective and sustained aspiration of achieving a university graduate, able to show communicative competence in English language and for which different strategies have been traced, however, the levels of development of reading comprehension skills, with academic and professional purposes, and the integration of the four skills to which they have been aspired later for a productive and conscious communication in the professional context, are still not reached.



The analysis of documents confirmed that the Physical Culture degree has the *Curricular Strategy of Languages* designed by substantive processes, however, difficulties are observed in the follow-up and control of the actions that plan which leads to the degree not having clarity of the students' progress in the language. In the educational strategy of the academic year, the form that will be used to give pursuit and control to the route chosen by the student to obtain the requirement of graduation is not conceived. In the minutes of career meetings, there is no indication of the path to be followed to implement the policy of improving the education of its students, in English.

The workshops developed to explain the English improvement policy, in the Physical Culture career of the University of Pinar del Río "Hermanos Saíz Montes de Oca", served as spaces to develop the group interview with the participation of 46 students and the five selected professors. In it, weaknesses were revealed related to the low motivation of students and teachers for learning languages, the insufficiencies in the learning of English in the previous teaching, ignorance of the bases of the policy and the new ways of managing the process of formation in English, in addition, there is no clarity in the role of each one, in this process.

In general, it can be said that the work carried out to ensure the policy of improvement, of training in English, in the Physical Culture career is insufficient, where the *Curricular Strategy of Languages* plays a fundamental role, since in it the actions that guarantee interdisciplinarity are specified. The results reveal unresolved deficiencies, which also have to do with how this training process is managed.

In the management of this formative process, theories and works on the management process were studied, where it is discovered that, as a science, it is a relatively recent phenomenon, which arises in the 19th century due to the need, of the people, to group themselves to achieve goals that they could not achieve by themselves, raising considerably its importance and development.

In this regard, Ruiz (2004) considers that management is:

"science because it requires a set of knowledge, systematically and logically ordered, as well as specific methods and procedures that, from known facts, allow to reach new truths and to interpret them in a more accurate way".

Marx (1973) states that,

"management constitutes a work process whose essence is given by the conscious action that some men exercise over others to obtain a relevant result for the institution itself".

In this definition, management is highlighted as a work process that combines the object, the means and the work itself, arranged in such a way that operations leading to the achievement of a final result are executed consecutively.





Rodríguez (2010) conceives management as:

"a set of processes and actions that are carried out in an organization to achieve its strategy, through a systemic and continuous cycle, determined by the functions of planning, organizing, directing and controlling".

*Planning* is the process of establishing objectives in order to achieve certain results and identifying the actions necessary to achieve them, when and how they can be achieved and who will assume their achievement (Guzmán, 2017).

The *organization* is the process where planning is made concrete, the work to be done is divided and the achievement of results is coordinated with a common purpose, skills, technical possibilities, experiences, resources are combined, resulting in a set of systems and subsystems (Guzmán, 2007). The *execution* is the concretion of the previous functions that requires the motivation, innovation and creativity of the members of the organization to implement the tasks and actions with the participation, involvement and leadership (Galarza, 2007) cited by Guzmán (2017). *Control* is the process of supervising activities and results, comparing them with objectives and applying corrective actions (Guzmán, 2017).

The deepening in the object of study led to the identification and decision that the management of processes is the working tool and perspective of development of the language centers in the country and, therefore, of the formation in English of the university student.

With the process-based approach, the processes in an organization, as well as their interactions, are systematically identified and managed (González, 2016).

Process management, according to the **ISSO 9001, (2015)** standards, is the way to manage the whole organization based precisely on processes; it is easily understood because of its overwhelming logic, but it is difficult to assimilate because of the paradigmatic changes it contains, which implies, according to Zaratiegui (1999) quoted by González (2016),

"multidisciplinary and multifunctional teamwork, self-control, information sharing, decision making as part of everyone's work and wide-ranging continuous improvement by breaking down cross-functional boundaries".

So, with the process approach, the training process developed in the language center is deepened, which revealed particular characteristics given by the policy of improving English in higher education.

The process of formation in English, in this context, is a totalizing, systemic and professional process, where the instructive, educational and developmental functions are given, that allow that, in the measure that the knowledge is acquired and produced, the search of new knowledge is promoted, it stimulates the investigative creativity to solve the problems where the language is instrumental to that objective.





In this process, the labor practice constitutes the most finished form that articulates the academic, labor and investigative thing and allows the user of the language, to promote new knowledge and to develop abilities to be inserted, of more active way, in the development of the society of the knowledge, of the new technologies of the information and the communications and of the sociopolitical practice during its adaptation to the constant demands that are derived from the changes of the national and international surroundings and of the predominant conceptions of its management.

In the academic field, training in English takes place at the undergraduate and graduate levels and aims to develop the communicative competence of professionals on a continuous basis, as established by the reference frameworks for languages, in order to efficiently influence the formation of a comprehensive general culture, to raise the quality of the processes in which they participate and to certify language levels.

This training process is an open training that occurs in formal and non-formal spaces, allowing the language user to choose the form of learning that works best for them, enhances the autonomy in learning that requires more of the practice of skills than theory and prepares them in the use of language to perform professional and research tasks, among which are, literature consultation, dissemination of scientific results, international communication, participation and delivery of lectures (postgraduate), which assign new roles and responsibilities to students, teachers, the career, the academic year, disciplines and subjects.

In this process of formation, other formative and developmental processes occur, since research, innovation, and creation are promoted, which, harmoniously articulated, express their relevance at this level of education.

The research allows the permanent self-improvement and the academic-professional update in the contents of the specialty, published in English, which allows to give solution to the problems of the profession, the continuous improvement and the exchange of professional experiences at national and international level, at the same time that it creates culture, ruled by the economic and social dynamics, the political action for its insertion in the international scientific community.

The extension process allows to increase the cultural level of the intra- and extra-university community, from satisfying the needs of development of the knowledge of languages, which contributes to its integral general formation and to strengthen the relation university-society.

Closely related to the English training process is evaluation, which also has a systemic character as it is one of the components of the training process, in addition to being a process itself, which seeks to perfect the training. It can be carried out through self-evaluation and co-evaluation to have a systematic feedback and eliminate deficiencies in its development; it has a professional character because it is related to the communicative competence that the professional must have for his/her best performance and the solution of professional problems; it is formative, educational and developmental, in the sense that it seeks to continuously check the level of



English proficiency that users reach and verify the effectiveness of the training process, through validity, reliability and viability (Council of Europe, 2018).

As for certification/accreditation, Álvarez (1999) conceives it as that evaluation process that implies the search for recognition and social prestige, with which the social credibility of its work is sought, of what it offers and claims to be; it is a form of moral validity.

In this sense, English certification seeks to recognize the level that the user of the language has developed during the training process. It is considered a systemic process, which is closely related to evaluation and training, whose objective is to validate the professional's level of linguistic domain, which is specified in common frames of reference for languages and goes through the moments of application, acceptance and evaluation. It is the constancy of the Cuban university graduate's fulfillment of the requirement and of the effectiveness of training and evaluation processes in certain periods of time.

From what has been previously presented, it is conceived the management of the formation process in English in the students of the Physical Culture career, within the framework of the policy of English improvement:

- Out of the teaching process plan to be instituted as an educational, socio-political and cultural project of the institution and the careers, based on the model of the professional.
- The organization of teaching groups by equivalent levels and high levels of attendance in training.
- It goes from the basic level (equivalent to a basic user A1 and A2) to the intermediate level (equivalent to an independent user B1 and B2) and can reach the advanced level (equivalent to a competent user C1 and C2).

**Table. 1** - Teaching organization of the courses by levels at the University of Pinar del Río "Hermanos Saíz Montes de Oca"

Grupo de nivel a matricular después del diagnóstico	I semestre	II semestre	III semestre	IV semestre	V semestre	VI semestre
	1er año		2do año		3er año	
Below A1 (matricularán el A1)	A1 (5 unidades)	A1 (5 unidades)	A2 (6 unidades)	A2 (6 unidades)	Examen de certificación	Otros cursos
A1 (matricularán el A2)	A2 (6 unidades)	A2 (6 unidades)	Examen de certificación	Otros cursos	Otros cursos	Otros cursos

- The minimum level established as a graduation requirement is the basic level equivalent to an A2 and the intermediate level equivalent to a B1 according to the structure by levels, established for Cuban Higher Education from the Mcerl.



- It emphasizes social-general communication with elements of academic communication through courses, with general purposes in levels A1, A2 and B1; it moves towards academic and professional communication through courses, with specific purposes and the English curricular strategy in careers.
- It begins with placement diagnosis, continues with course delivery and other academic services, and concludes with assessment and certification.
- It is managed from the Language Center for the development of the process and from the self-access centers for self-learning.
- Services are provided for the diagnosis, placement and certification of levels of communication competence in English, the provision of training programs and advice for self-learning, the provision of educational resources and materials, among others.

The training takes place simultaneously in three directions:

- Intensive training through general and specific purpose courses and other academic services offered at the university outside the teaching process plan.
- Extensive training through the *English Curriculum Strategy*, in the careers, as part of the academic, labor-research and extension training of students.
- The management of the autonomous and independent formation of the students from the academic services that are given in the university and other available ways.

English language training has character (MES, 2019):

- *Flexible* depending on what students need to learn, when they need to learn, and how they need to learn it. They can decide to enroll in courses, at different times in their institution or outside it, according to their motivations and interests.
- *Innovative* in that it can be adjusted in the objectives, contents, methods and forms of evaluation, as well as in the time frames based on the results of the diagnostic and placement tests. It must also be creative and based on the results of research and action research in the specific context of each university.
- *Diversified* as the courses are taught by periods, modalities and levels based on the learning experiences and training needs in the language of the students.

The approaches followed by the English language training process established by the MES are:

- *Humanist*, focused on the values of national and universal identity and culture.
- *Communication process*, when modeling contexts and communicative situations.
- *Problematic*, which considers the development of critical thinking and part of the relationship of language with professional problems and their impact on them, as well as the functions and tasks of the professional through the management of theoretical and practical knowledge of English.



The roles of those involved in the management of the English training process are defined as follows (Gutiérrez *et al.*, 2019).

Role of the Language Center in managing the English training process:

- Plans, organizes, executes and controls curricular and extracurricular activities so that students have options for their integral formation.
- Manages human resources, materials, and information technology, among others, to ensure the English training of students.
- Methodologically advises the career in the implementation of the policy of improvement of English training.
- Calls for placement and certification exams.
- Offers courses by levels of English and other specialized academic services.

Role of the career and the academic year in managing the process of training students in English:

- It systematically orients students and teachers of the career about the policy of English improvement and their responsibility in it.
- It requires disciplines and subjects to take an interdisciplinary approach to language training.
- It manages the Curricular Strategy of Languages from the teaching, research and extension process that allows the integral formation of the professional.
- Identifies the teachers in the career who can lead actions in languages in the Language Curricular Strategy.
- Projects the Educational Strategy of the year as a way to follow up and control the language training in the career.
- Systematically communicates to the Language Center the path selected by the students so that they can then manage the language training.

Role of the students of the Physical Culture career in the management of the training process in English:

- They diagnose their English training needs through standardized placement tests.
- They enrolls in the courses offered by the Language Center according to the level of English identified.
- They self-manages English language training through specialized academic services from the Center or other non-formal learning environments.
- They requests the Language Center for access to assessment and certification when ready.
- They must accounts to the career and academic year for your English training.
- Obtains certification of the graduation requirement through the proficiency exam.



The analysis carried out in this work allows summarizing that the creation of the language centers to implement the policy of improvement of English training in Cuban Higher Education, determined the need to manage them on scientific bases, made it possible to characterize the management of the training process in English and to confirm its contribution to the process of professional training in universities.

The management of the formation process in English, in the students of the career of Physical Culture acquires particularities because it takes into account the intensive, extensive and autonomous formation, its flexible, innovative and diversified character and its humanist, procedural approach to communication and problem solving, where the Center of Languages, the career, the academic year and the students have well defined roles for the integral formation of the professional to whom it is aspired.

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The authors declare not to have any interest conflicts.

**Authors' contribution:**

The authors have participated in the writing of the work and analysis of the documents.



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