

Scientific Research In The Field Of Social Communication In Cuban University Centers: An Approach To Its Correct Management

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ABSTRACT

The objective of this study is to propose strategic actions that direct and articulate scientific research in the field of knowledge of Social Communication from the fundamental functions of management, particularly in Cuban university centers. For this, techniques such as documentary analysis, interviews with experts and the strategic tool *SWOT Matrix* were used . It is considered that research in Social Communication in the aforementioned context of analysis has distinctive elements such as: insufficient investigative culture of the actors, there are no guidelines that govern the management of research and low level of priority for scientific activity. It helps to visualize the importance of research management and to increase a necessary scientific culture in researchers based on a strategic framework that allows the field of study to be recognized not only as a professional field but also as a scientific and academic space.

Keywords: scientific research; strategic actions; Social communication; research management; Cuban university centers.

INTRODUCTION

Every scientific field requires a system of objective relationships related to the production and socialization of information and knowledge. This system allows validating scientific activity, as well as the actors that develop within it.

"Social Communication is a relatively young, but extraordinarily dynamic field of knowledge that, based on contributions from numerous social sciences, attempts to explore, as well as explain and interpret, the nature of communicative interaction at different levels and areas of human activity".¹

Cuba views investigative activity under a system from which social communication has not benefited, as it has been an object ignored and included within other practices, so much so that society does not feel the need to investigate "communication" and, therefore, it is not recognized that there is a field of its own; and whoever recognizes it, analyzes it as a field of professional "doings" but not as a field of "thinking", and for this reason it is not legitimized as a scientific field (*Saladrigas Medina H.* Personal communication, March 24, 2015).

The research field of our country, developed within social communication, is very dissolved, since there is a divorce between academia and professional practice, which results in each agent involved in the research process carrying out scientific activity in their own way. and condition (*Saladrigas Medina H.* Personal communication, March 24, 2015). For this reason, this area of science has not been understood as a field in itself as a result of its diverse perspectives from multi and interdisciplinarity; There is no relationship between professional and academic practice, which make up the field itself and can be articulated to achieve legitimacy within scientific activity; Furthermore, there is not enough scientific culture on the part of researchers; This limits the management of scientific research.

On the other hand, in the Faculty of Communication the research project "Field of Communication in Cuba" is being developed, which is supported by a significant number of investigations, say 63 (3 doctoral theses, 17 master's theses, 39 works diploma of the 3 careers and 4 coursework of the three careers); 39 articles, 55

presentations and 2 books based on them), which demonstrate the development of research activity and the increase in scientific production in the field in question. However, the interest in establishing precepts that protect research in a certain scientific field has also marked, to a large extent, the evolution of science; Hence, the field of Social Communication in Cuba needs strategic actions to guarantee excellent results in the scientific work of its researchers. For these reasons, the objective of this work is to propose a strategic framework for the field of social communication in Cuban university centers in order to strengthen the research process within said area of study.

METHODS

Classic documentary analysis was used in order to carry out an exhaustive bibliographic review, which entailed the identification, reading and bibliographic analysis of various sources, including the Doctoral Thesis of the author Ailín Martínez , 2 ^{which} constituted a of the most important sources for this research, and the Resolution of the Ministry of Higher Education ³ of Cuba, named "System of stimuli for the results of the work of science, technology and innovation for teachers and researchers of the Ministry of Higher Education " .

Three university institutions in the country were chosen as case studies: the "Vladimir Ilich Lenin" University (Las Tunas), the "Marta Abreu" Central University (Las Villas) and the University of Havana. These institutions were selected because they constitute the spaces where contributions are mostly generated for scientific research in the area of Social Communication, mainly from the praxis of reproduction of knowledge through university learning of topics related to Social Communication to the praxis of production of knowledge through

scientific/academic research in Social Communication; all this with the objective of creating both theoretical and applied knowledge in the field of study.

To collect information regarding how the research management process is currently carried out in the field of Social Communication, the Expert Interview was used with the objective of asking questions to specialists belonging to and related to the object of analysis. For the Selection of Experts, the following criteria were taken into account: the position held in their center, level of participation in the management of research activity within the field, the academic and scientific degree they hold and the years of work experience. Therefore, this interview was applied to the coordinators (2) and other managers (2) related to the Social Communication career of each of the chosen centers ([annex 1](#)).

The previous method was complemented with the use of the *SWOT Matrix* strategic tool for the critical analysis of the current situation of research in the field of study from two specific contexts (internal and external) in order to make decisions and then propose strategic actions in the framework of management functions. This matrix was constructed from the results obtained from the application of the interview ([annex 2](#)).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK OF ARTICULATION FOR THE RESEARCH PROCESS IN THE FIELD OF SOCIAL COMMUNICATION IN CUBAN UNIVERSITY CENTERS

Based on the ideas declared in the SWOT Matrix as a result of the weaknesses, threats, strengths and opportunities found in the field of Social Communication, it is then possible to propose a set of strategic actions for a first approach to

achieving correct management of research, thought from four main functions: planning, organization, control and direction. The above will allow a high level of organization of research practice within Cuban university centers, an aspect that is difficult to achieve at present taking into account the way in which scientific activity is carried out ([table 1](#)).

PLANNING OF THE RESEARCH ACTIVITY

In this first stage, above all, the scientific and research policy of the field must be structured, which must establish guidelines to promote scientific activity based on different elements:

- Identification of specific problems to investigate.
- The demands of society.
- Program planning.
- The objectives and financing for the execution of research projects.
- The development and progress of science and technology in the country.
- Other elements that must be in total correspondence with the key problem areas proposed by the country for the Social and Humanistic Sciences where, of course, Social Communication is located.

This policy must be strictly complied with by all agents involved (students, professors and researchers) in the scientific activity of university centers. It is also necessary that the university centers subordinate to the governing center (FCOM-UH) implement a policy for the improvement and development of the faculty of professors and researchers. This policy must be complied with by the actors mentioned above, which will help increase the levels of preparation, both scientific and educational, of the actors involved.

On the other hand, recognition and high national and international visibility of all research in said area of knowledge is necessary. For this, it is necessary to create a National Research Program that allows for the provision of calls for the creation of national projects. In this sense, the general lines and priorities of research for the academic field analyzed must be rethought and identified. These lines and priorities must be aimed at the choice of research topics, research project work, the training needs of young people and research professors, as well as the solution of significant problems both in the area of knowledge itself and in the country. generally beyond the geopolitical and institutional reach.

It should be noted that each center may have its particular interests; However, it is also necessary that these interests respond to a set of established general needs so that the research results are not inconsistent and dispersed. In other words, the field of Social Communication in Cuban university centers needs autonomy to reformulate its lines of research and identify its groups and research projects taking into account elements such as: the justification of the research proposal, the research objectives, the work schedules and the impact of results. Hence the relationship and correspondence can be fulfilled: line-project-research program.

The investigative outings of groups and research projects are of equal importance. These investigative outings should also not stray from the research lines and priorities that are established. Furthermore, they must be perceived in their main and diverse manifestations: final course work, diploma work, master's and doctoral theses, research as results of work practices, postdoctoral research, scientific articles, books, monographs and presentations at national scientific events. and international.

Through planning, the resources necessary for the development of scientific activity must also be identified. Without a doubt, to achieve scientific results it is necessary to have basic resources that allow the continuity of the research process. Therefore, it is proposed that carrying out research in the field of Social Communication in university centers has the following resources:

- Human resources (training, knowledge, competencies and skills of teachers and researchers in research topics).
- Financial resources (materials, equipment, supplies).
- Dissemination resources (publication in magazines, books; participation in scientific events and others).
- Other resources from national and international collaboration.

It is also necessary to think about a strategy for the publication and dissemination of research results; With this strategy, a process of information and knowledge exchange can be carried out between members of university institutions both internally and externally. These institutions use few sources to formally and informally communicate the results obtained, which limits the recognition, visibility and impact of the research both nationally and internationally. For this reason, some elements can be established to take into account when developing said strategy:

- Increase the variety of sources in which scientific results are published and disseminated in order to achieve greater research productivity. It is important to increase the publication of research results in scientific journals; Without a doubt, this procedure is ideal for boosting visibility and impact.

- Promote the socialization of scientific results, not only using the publication of scientific articles in magazines of groups recognized by the Ministry of Higher Education (MES), as well as participation in scientific events, but also participating in workshop sessions. work and methodological, conferences, symposiums, national and international social and academic networks, national and international courses, annual scientific conferences and colloquiums.

- Have a scientific information system. This system must provide the various research results generated by academic institutions belonging to the field of Social Communication and by other research sectors that generate visible, recognized and important research for the field under analysis. That is, this system will provide broad and general information about research activities in the communication field in the country for decision making and evaluation.

At the same time, it is of interest that each academy can create an internal system of stimuli or distinctions for the research carried out by its professors and researchers, that is, the allocation of resources, both material (equipment, supplies, among others) and financial or otherwise. type at an individual or group level to obtain satisfactory results in the advancement of scientific activity, which will undoubtedly be fruitful for the research culture of each center in question.

This aspect is of great importance, since for each professor it is satisfactory to know that, from their closest context, that is, from their workplace (coworkers), the quality in their research work is recognized in a clear and distinctive way, independently. of the recognitions that they may receive from other bodies such as the country's Ministry of Higher Education.

ORGANIZATION OF RESEARCH ACTIVITY

It is important that scientific activity in the field of Social Communication is managed through research groups and projects. Both investigative movements provide contributions and help solve problems of both science, technology and innovation as well as society, from which the organization and structure to be proposed are also derived.

In this stage of organization it is essential to identify the coordinators of the research groups and projects since they are the ones who make decisions regarding the investigative work carried out; Furthermore, they are the ones who schedule, together with the other members, the specific tasks to be carried out individually or in groups based on the expected results. However, the organizational style of each group and research project must match the interests and characteristics of its members in correspondence with the current thematic and research lines of the field of knowledge in which they are developed.

The choice of these coordinators can be made taking into account the training and research experience of each professor and researcher involved. For example, a professor with a tenured category and a scientific degree of Doctor can serve as a coordinator because he or she has the required knowledge and experience. Likewise, all teachers and researchers must participate, both in groups and in research projects in order to increase both production and scientific collaboration in the academic community; and this should not only occur from within each university center, but also from the cooperation that can exist between all the professors and researchers of the institutions analyzed.

Hence, research groups and projects must be made up of full- and part-time professors and researchers from each center, as well as undergraduate and graduate students, as well as specialists in the field of Social Communication outside and

inside the country. Likewise, they can be made up of students, teachers, researchers and specialists from other fields of knowledge; Unquestionably, their insertion into the group or research project will be based on the scientific contribution they make.

On the other hand, the allocation of resources for the operation of the research groups and projects will be carried out in accordance with the objectives to be achieved by each one and the importance of their results for the scientific and research policy of the field itself and the country. . Another point of attention is the analysis and restructuring of the work schedule of teachers and researchers. In the academies analyzed, the action of research is of low priority for the teacher, and the reason why this occurs is due to "the excess of teaching work and the variety of administrative functions" (according to the interviewees' own statements). What was explained above demonstrates how the importance of articulating and integrating teaching and research (elements that are not isolated) is not recognized. It is proposed that the teachers' annual work schedule be thought about, analyzed and prepared from the perspective explained above, regardless of the fact that it is no less true that each teacher adjusts their time according to their interests, preparation and experience. However, the proposal presented here is aimed at ensuring that professors achieve an adequate balance in their scientific work between all the activities they carry out in their teaching department (teaching, research, academic advising, university extension, among others). actions, which need to be carried out). Said schedule, in addition, must contemplate the guidelines by which the performance of each teacher will be evaluated based on their tasks and functions. Teachers must be clear, from the beginning, of the actions to be completed for which they will later be evaluated with a grade that may be good

(B), regular (R) or bad (M). In short, from the organization stage the various activities to be carried out can be divided to achieve a better focus, interest and responsibility towards the fulfillment of specific elements within them.

CONTROL OF RESEARCH ACTIVITY

In the control stage is the evaluation. This section is where it is necessary to supervise the research activities and results based on the comparison between the proposed objectives and their fulfillment in order to solve the deficiencies found.

Scientific activity is evaluated or controlled through research evaluation methods and techniques (peer evaluation and bibliometric indicators). Therefore, the control of scientific activity will be aimed at evaluating it based on the research results of the research groups and projects. *For this, the criteria of the authors Bellavista , Guardiola , Méndez and Bordons were taken :^{3,4} ex ante evaluation , process evaluation and ex post evaluation . In the ex ante evaluation, it will be verified that the research groups and projects are in accordance with the lines, objectives and research policy identified in the Planning stage. In the evaluation of the process, each group and research project will undergo continuous monitoring and monitoring of its processes, its activities, as well as the events it develops; Therefore, the use of resources assigned to each investigation will also be evaluated.*

Finally, in the *ex post* evaluation , decisions will be made regarding the results obtained from each group and research project. So, at this moment, it is where bibliometric indicators will be used that will allow analyzing the behavior of the resulting scientific production; This is shown in [table 2](#) .⁵⁻⁹

The coordinator of every group and project approved and in progress must present progress reports and final report to the Vice Dean of Research and Postgraduate Studies of their respective academic center, to the research management of the University as the governing center and superior to the Faculties, to the sponsoring entities and financing agencies. In this sense, for the evaluation of the reports, the scientific quality, interdisciplinary nature, innovation, feasibility, originality, interest and correspondence of the proposed objectives with the research priorities of the research policy can be taken into account. and scientific information of the institution or institutions to which it belongs and of the country, dissemination strategy of the results achieved and impact of the scientific results of the group or research project both at the local and national level.

Once the evaluation process of a group or research project has been completed and its results have been accepted with the required scientific quality, it is recommended that the authors take these results to the format of articles so that they can be published in specialized journals and indexed on the subject. of the group or research project. There is no doubt that all the actions proposed in the control stage will allow a mapping of the quantitative aspects referring to the behavior of the research activity both at the researcher level and at the institution or country level.

DIRECTION OF RESEARCH ACTIVITY

This stage is where the previously chosen coordinators must be able to direct the research activity towards achieving the expected results through commitment, motivation and help in the development of essential studies within it.

Likewise, decision making is also an important element within this stage. From this process, the coordinators of the research groups and projects will be able to make value judgments regarding the results achieved, once evaluated in the control stage. In this way, scientific activity may or may not take new routes in its development; It all depends on the aspects that need to be renewed and that give rise to a new cycle for research management.

In short, this stage is as important as the previous ones. Whether its plans and objectives are viable will depend on the correct direction of the investigative activity; hence each one of them contributes essential elements to the next. That is why we speak of a consecutive cycle. With the proper execution and compliance of this strategic framework for research in the area of Social Communication, it is expected to achieve a Research Management System in Cuban university centers with essential characteristics, as indicated below:

- Advancement and consistency of lines, groups, projects and research programs.
- Appropriate balance between teaching, research and administrative tasks.
- Faculty of professors with an increase in master's degrees and doctorates, focused on research and resulting in verifiable and quality knowledge.
- Internal calls, typical of university centers, for insertion in research projects.
- Culture of research evaluation.
- Creation and participation in internal events, typical of university centers, for the dissemination and recognition of scientific results.
- Increased encouragement of the research work of teachers and/or researchers.
- Indexing of specialized magazines in important groups recognized by the Ministry of Higher Education (MES).

- Research groups and projects accepted and financed by both national and international bodies favored with their scientific results.
- Recognized research groups and projects with a high impact both nationally and internationally.
- Research groups and projects with scientific results published in indexed journals specialized in the topic of each group or project, as the case may be.
- Research culture in teachers or researchers.

CONCLUSIONS

The proposal presented is focused on compliance with correct management of research in the field of Social Communication by actors belonging to university institutions. Everything depends, to a large extent, on the effort dedicated to the correct development of this process and the interest in solving the difficulties that may be found in each of its stages.

In general, the *planning* stage includes aspects from the creation of a scientific policy, with a correct correspondence between lines, objectives, groups and research projects, as well as the identification of the resources necessary for the successful development of scientific activity, to the establishment of a system of incentives at the institution level to recognize the investigative work of those involved in said process. Likewise, the *organization* stage covers the organizational aspects within the research process, among which the importance of properly identifying the heads or coordinators of scientific research by groups and research projects stands out.

On the other hand, the *control* stage includes the procedures to appropriately evaluate the research activity, from the evaluation of compliance with the proposed

objectives to be investigated to the evaluation of the research results based on the resulting scientific production. Finally, the *direction* stage encompasses the importance of decision-making within the research process, taking into account the role played by all the actors involved in it. It means then that the proposed strategic framework will allow strengthening scientific research, contributing to the growth of the number of researchers, supporting and valuing their work, developing research projects and increasing collaboration between researchers and between institutions, in addition to increasing scientific productivity through based on the number of publications per researcher. All of the above has the purpose of recognizing the field of study not only as a professional field but also as a scientific and academic space.

ATTACHMENTS

[Annex 1](#). Guide for interviewing coordinators and other managers linked to the Social Communication career in the Cuban university centers analyzed

DIMENSIONS

TO

EXPLORE

I. Promotion of scientific research.

1. Teachers' work .

a) How do you consider the work of teachers and/or researchers?

___Good ___Average ___Bad

b) Is research by professors and/or researchers in the department prioritized?

___But

- If the answer is "Yes" Give an example.

c) Do teachers and/or researchers present problems when articulating research and teaching?

___But

- If the answer is "No", how do you do this articulation?
- If the answer is "Yes" Mark with an x (more than one option if necessary)

___Teachers and/or researchers give more importance to research

___Professors and/or researchers give more importance to teaching

___ Teachers and/or researchers do not know the importance of articulating both tasks

___Other reasons What?

d) Is there collaboration between professors-researchers in the field of Social Communication?

___But

e) Is there motivation when researching on the part of teachers and/or researchers?

___But

2. Research lines.

a) Is research carried out by lines of research?

___But

- If the answer is "No", why other regulations or avenues are you investigating? If the answer is "Yes", is there clarity about the lines of investigation?

b) What are the lines of research?

Research incentives

c) Are research results encouraged at the center?

But

- If the answer is "Yes", how? Mark with an x (more than one option if necessary).

Equipment

Work materials

Travel for academic purposes

Financial resources

Others Which ones? If the answer is "No", why?

Master's and doctoral programs

d) Are there currently master's degrees and/or doctorates in the area of Social Communication?

But

- If the answer is "No" Mark with an x (more than one option if necessary).

There are no lines of research aimed at research in Social Communication

Research contributes to other areas of knowledge

The area of Social Communication is related to other areas of knowledge

The area of Social Communication is not considered an area that should be investigated

Another reason, which one?

e) In general, are master's and/or doctoral topics related to research projects?

Yes No. If the answer is "No", why?

3. Research Groups and Projects.

a) Is research carried out by projects?

But

- If the answer is "Yes", what projects do you have? Specify the names of existing research projects (in the area of Social Communication or not)

b) Type of projects. Mark with an x (more than one option if necessary)

National

Macroproyectos

Business

Institutional with an entity

Institutional

Others Which ones?

c) Members of the projects. Mark with an x (more than one option if necessary)

Master's degrees Doctors Graduates All of the above Others Who?

d) How do teachers (researchers) integrate a research project? Mark with an x (more than one option if necessary)

National calls

International calls

The combination of the previous options

Internal calls (within the center)

External calls (outside the center)

No calls are made

Other ways Which ones?

e) Is research carried out in groups?

But

- If the answer is "Yes", are there research group coordinators?

___But

- f) Are all teachers (researchers) linked to research groups and/or projects?

___But

- If the answer is "No", why?

II. Publication and dissemination of scientific results.

1. Publication of research results.

- a) The publication of the department's research results has been reflected in:

___Books

___Thesis

___Articles in magazines

___Brochures

___Monographs

___Presentations

___Others

- b) Do you hold events for the exhibition and dissemination of research results?

___But

- c) How do you enhance the socialization of your research results? Mark with an x (more than one option if necessary)

___Presentations and exchanges in scientific sessions.

___Methodological workshops and work meetings.

___Scientific articles in magazines from groups recognized by the Ministry of Higher Education (MES).

___ Conferences, symposiums and round tables at the national and international level. ___ Presentations at national and international scientific events.

___ Online discussion forums, social networks, virtual academic networks.

___ Others. Which is it?

III. Regulatory framework.

1. Scientific policy and/or research policy.

a) Is there a scientific and/or research policy in the area of Social Communication?

___ But

[Annex 2](#). SWOT matrix of the field of knowledge of Social Communication in Cuban university centers

STRENGTHS

F1: Presence of a group of teachers with various scientific and teaching categories.

F2: Teachers have the necessary knowledge to carry out any type of research activity.

F3: Professors with greater training and research experience contribute to the training of young researchers.

F4: Motivation and disposition towards investigative work.

F5: Contribution to the improvement of investigative work.

WEAKNESSES

D1: Insufficient scientific culture.

D2: Lack of a scientific and/or research policy.

D3: Lack of a National Research Program.

D4: There are no national research projects.

D5: The hierarchy is not met in the investigative work: Project-Research Program.

D6: Few institutional research projects specific to the area of knowledge under analysis.

D7: There is no clarity regarding research by groups and research projects.

D8: Little participation in groups and/or research projects.

D9: Incipient financial support for the research work of the university institutions analyzed.

D10: Lack of strategic actions for research management.

D11: Low level of priority for research and, therefore, little encouragement of its results.

D12: Excess teaching work, breadth of functions and responsibilities.

D13: Little scientific collaboration between all the teachers in the centers analyzed.

D14: Insufficient publication and socialization of scientific results.

D15: There is no articulation between the lines of research established by the academic-university centers analyzed for the field in question.

D16: Insufficient presence of master's degrees and doctors in Social Communication by the university centers subordinate to the governing center (Faculty of Communication-UH).

OPPORTUNITIES

O1: Carrying out national and international events: ICOM, FELAFACS, CONFIBERCOM, INFO, Festival of the Association of Social Communicators, among others.

O2: Exchange of good practices with national and international colleagues in the profession as well as with policy makers.

O3: Possibility of alliances with other centers and organizations that can help increase visibility of the field of Social Communication.

O4: Improvement of teachers and/or researchers through training and postgraduate courses.

THREATS

A1: Limited time to research due to excessive teaching work, breadth of functions and responsibilities.

A2: Lack of autonomy with respect to other sciences.

A3: Research at the Ministry (MES) level is not recognized as a priority.

A4: Financing of research projects at the Ministry (MES) level is not recognized.

A5: Deficient resources and technological infrastructure required for investigative work.

A6: Insufficient economic resources in the country for research in the area of Social Communication.

A7: Problems in the mechanisms and means of communication to integrate a research project.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest in this article.

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