

# Strategy for the Sustainability and Development of the Teaching Staff at the Central University "Marta Abreu" of Las Villas

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**Abstract:** The sustainability strategy involves planning a series of thoughtful actions whose purpose is to add value, in the national and international literature several authors have worked on the subject but from the social, environmental and economic point of view, however the subject has been little treated from the management of a public institution, in this case a university, in this case a university where the development of teachers is one of the most important points in the management of these institutions. Behind any significant improvement in the university lies the activity of the teaching staff. The objective of this research is to design a strategy for the sustainability of the teaching staff at Central University "Marta Abreu" of Las Villas. Implementing a sustainability strategy is the way in which the organization defines the path towards the scope of its mission, taking care that its impact is positive. As methodological theoretical foundations, the strategy is based on the conceptualization of the Cuban economic and social model of socialist development, the guidelines of the Cuban economic and social policy for the period 2021-2026 and the *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*. Other methods of the empirical and theoretical level were also used. Finally, a group of innovative actions contextualized to the characteristics of the institution object of practical study are described.

**Keywords:** Strategy, Sustainability, Impact, Mission

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## 1. Introduction

The world's economic, political and social system is complex. It is a challenge for organizations to respond to their needs in turbulent times [1, 2]. Currently, organizations, motivated by socioeconomic changes, demand the incorporation of new methods to manage efforts, resources, capabilities and adapt to the demands of the environment, gaining efficiency and effectiveness in their processes [3]. "In a world in constant evolution, which demands quick reactions due to its changing situations, the adequate management of knowledge in organizations has become a necessity [4]".

Many nations, organizations and social groups are in search of reference elements that facilitate the construction of their sustainability [5]. In this sense, authors such as [6-8]

relate the definition of sustainable development to a change in the management of organizations.

Organizational excellence is based on the understanding of the organization as a whole, a system that in turn is part of a larger one, so the sustainability of the organization will depend on the sustainability of the larger system. The objective of organizational excellence is the creation of value for all the stakeholders of the organization, in which the generation of learning and its integration for the improvement of the organization's management is fundamental [9]. In this regard, Pérez, R. [10] highlights the importance of an organizational culture of excellence in obtaining outstanding and sustainable results, since it generates ownership and, as a consequence, employees feel committed to these results. Authors such as Rocha-Vázquez M. et al. [11] and Hernández Mompie et al. [12] have addressed the issue of sustainability, but from the quality of

the academic programs of the institutions, the study variable of authors such as [13] was business sustainability and its dimensions for development, applying circular economy, renewable energy sources and fair trade constitute the most important premiums to be discussed. However, there is a gap in the theme regarding teaching staff development, for which the present work constitutes a guide so that each level of management develops its own actions that will allow the sustainability of the faculty and the continuous improvement of quality.

In recent years, a true revolution has taken place in Cuban Higher Education institutions to achieve excellence. To this end, aspects such as the municipalization of university education in Cuba have been added, as well as the integration of universities that have caused profound qualitative changes in the design of the curriculum, methods and means of teaching that become a new revolutionary paradigm for the formation of human resources in a massive way, with emphasis on education, work, self-learning and the community as the main training scenario.

The university of the present century works to comply with three fundamental principles which are excellence, quality and relevance. On this basis the Central University "Marta Abreu" of Las Villas (UCLV) does not attend as a passive observer to this evolutionary dynamic, but has an urgent mission: to resize itself from a new position, linking its internal actions (curricular design and organization, categorization system, faculty development, evaluation, training process and faculty development, among others), with its actions towards the external environment, increasing its integration and social interaction.

In this case, the *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*, agreed by all Member States of the United Nations in 2015, is a global commitment with a transformative vision towards sustainability from three dimensions (economic, social and environmental), to reverse the challenges facing humanity. For Cuba, the adoption of the *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* is a commitment of the State and a national priority, among the main activities a quality education is enunciated [14].

All of this is materialized in the *2030 National Plan for Economic and Social Development* (NPESD) and in the *Guidelines of the policy of the Party and the Revolution for*

*the period 2021-2026*, where it is expressed that: "The education system, in coordination with the corresponding state entities and other actors, ensures the comprehensive training and qualification of citizens in accordance with the development needs of the country and of each territory, based on adequate vocational training and professional orientation. The law establishes the mandatory nature of the minimum educational level [15]". In the section on education, it is stated the need to "(...) preserve and raise the quality indexes achieved in the educational teaching process (...), as well as advance in the training of teaching personnel, which is required in each province and municipality [15]".

All these transformations in the national economy have conditioned the emergence of new forms of employment and a productive sector with much more attractive payment and incentive systems; it is also necessary to consider the numerous desertions and abandonments due to departures abroad because of economic problems, aspects that constitute threats and threaten the sustainability of the teaching staff.

Therefore, in the future, it is necessary to improve the system to achieve the sustainability of the faculty, as one of the most important points for the management of Higher Education institutions in order to optimize the effort and conserve resources. It is assumed then, that sustainability implies planning a set of actions aimed at the maintenance and continuous improvement of the university staff in order to provide social value.

In order to find a solution to the problem posed, the general objective was to design a strategy: to propose a strategy for the sustainability of the faculty for the Central University "Marta Abreu" of Las Villas.

## 2. Methodological Conception

The study was divided into three stages, grouping young recent graduates in preparation (RGP), professors with lower teaching and scientific categories, consulting professors, emeriti, honorary doctors, reinstated retirees, heads of teaching departments, professors of Municipal University Centers and the HR Training and Development manager, as shown in Table 1:

**Table 1.** Composition of the teaching staff.

Recent graduates in preparation	Teachers with categories	Consulting teachers	Honorary doctors	Retirees reinstated	Heads of teaching departments	Professors of Municipal University Centers	HR Training and Development manager
30	30	10	7	20	15	13	2

Source: Own elaboration.

Three stages were established as follows:

1. Defining the methods to be used.
2. Identifying the stages of the strategy.
3. Designing the strategy and the statement of actions to be developed by objectives, construction of indicators and evaluation.

## 3. Methods

A descriptive pedagogical research was carried out and methods were applied at the theoretical levels.

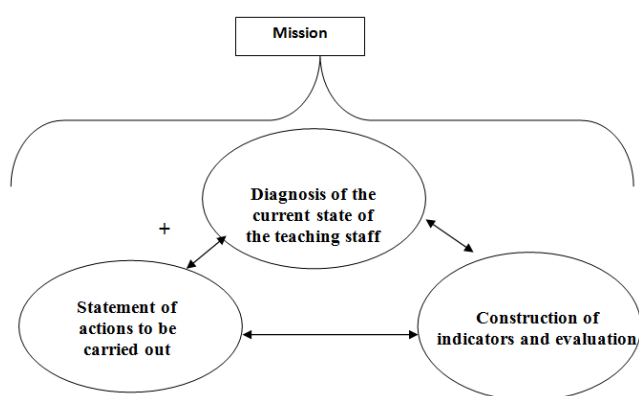
1. Analytical-synthetic: it was used to analyze the work system in order to diagnose the current state of the faculty.

2. Historical-logical: it was used to search for trends and regularities in university processes and characterize the constituent features.

From the empirical level the following methods were applied:

1. Data and document analysis: it was used with the objective of conducting a broad review of guiding documents, as well as methodological work in higher education such as: *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*, *2030 National Plan for Economic and Social Development* (NPESD), *Guidelines of the policy of the Party and the Revolution for the period 2021-2026* and documents of Higher Education institutions.
2. Interviews: they made it possible to identify the characteristics of the system and determine the scientific pedagogical development of the professors.

When designing the strategy, stages were delimited and the objectives for each stage were defined as shown in Figure 1:



Source: Own elaboration

Figure 1. Stages for the strategy.

Stage 1. Mission: Supreme objective.

Stage 2. Diagnosis of the current state of the faculty: identify the strengths and weaknesses that characterize the faculty. Hierarchize the existing problems as a result of the identified weaknesses.

Stage 3. Statement of actions to be developed: define the actions to be developed to guarantee the sustainability of the present and future faculty.

Stage 4. Construction of indicators and evaluation: develop indicators to measure and evaluate the progress of each of the actions.

## 4. Results and Analysis of the Results Obtained During the Different Stages

### 4.1. Stage 1: Mission

Mission: To guarantee the sustainability of the faculty at the Central University "Marta Abreu" of Las Villas, in order to achieve low fluctuation rates in order to fulfill the mission and vision of the organization, to contribute to increase the competencies and job satisfaction of the professors, their

commitment to the University and the country, as well as the development of values.

### 4.2. Stage 2: Diagnosis of the Current State of the Faculty

In order to diagnose the current state of the faculty it was necessary to detect the strengths and weaknesses (S/W) of the faculty. Taking into account the identified weaknesses strategic objectives were defined, and as a result of these processes an ERIC matrix was created. Finally, an analysis of the key success factors was carried out for better strategic decision making.

#### 4.2.1. S/W Analysis

For the purposes of this paper the authors understand weaknesses as the main factors of the organization that constitute weak aspects that need to be overcome in order to achieve the highest levels of effectiveness in fulfilling the Mission; and for strengths, the organization's own main factors that constitute strengths on which it can rely to work to take advantage of opportunities or reduce the negative impact of threats, for the fulfillment of the Mission.

##### i) Strengths

1. There is a good composition of the faculty in terms of professors with higher main teaching categories (Full Professor, Assistant Professor).
2. High percentage of professors with scientific degrees and academic categories in the teaching staff.
3. Sustained growth in the percentage of categorized professors in recent years.
4. The process of categorization and ratification of categories is maintained at the established levels.
5. Existence of specific strategies for pedagogical and scientific improvement for the teaching staff.
6. There is an established methodology for the awarding of decorations and honorary titles.
7. There is a consolidated training system for the faculty.

##### ii) Weaknesses

1. Insufficient processes of principal teaching categories in some areas at the university.
2. There is evidence of a sustained aging of the faculty in the last 3 years.
3. Increase in the number of faculty and researcher departures in the last few years.
4. No actions are taken in a timely manner for the transition of assistant professors with the requirements to full professors.
5. The faculty evaluation process is not aligned with the required work competencies.
6. Existence of a high number of professors not evaluated in the previous period.
7. The pedagogical and scientific improvement plans are not applied homogeneously in the teaching departments, as part of the training and improvement of the teaching staff.
8. The visibility and relevance of the scientific results of the professors is not homogeneous in all the

faculties and the Institute.

9. Insufficient and non-homogeneous work in the areas for the awarding of decorations and honorary titles to professors who meet the requirements.
10. The experience and knowledge of consulting professors, emeritus professors, honorary doctors and others is not fully utilized.
11. Low levels of perception on the part of department heads that they are the true human resources managers of university professors.
12. The process of attention to recent graduates in preparation does not manage to consolidate homogeneously in the UCLV.
13. Many areas do not take adequate advantage of the process of recruiting skilled workforce as a replacement for the teaching staff.
14. The laboratories and teaching departments do not have the ideal conditions that are required.

#### 4.2.2. Strategic Objectives

1. Achieve increased retention of young graduates.
2. Provide special follow-up to faculty members with lower teaching ranks.
3. Align the plans for pedagogical and scientific improvement of the faculty with the work system of each of the teaching departments.

4. Improve the work system for the adequate attention to consulting professors, emeritus professors, honorary professors and others.
5. Guarantee that the process of training and improvement of the faculty responds to the improvement and development of the needs identified for the achievement of work competencies.
6. Achieve strategic alliances between the HR Rewarding Group, the faculties and the Institute.
7. Improve the rewarding system for the university staff in both aspects, moral and material.
8. To achieve adequate working conditions in laboratories and teaching departments.

#### 4.2.3. ERIC Matrix in the Context of the Teaching Staff Sustainability Process

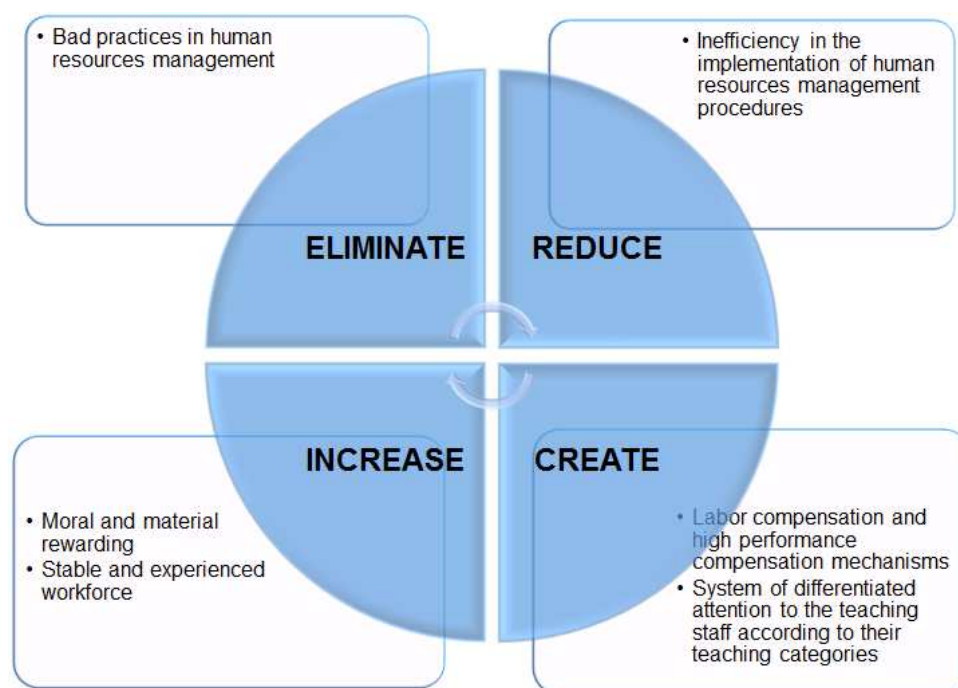
It is a simple matrix-type tool that drives organizations to focus simultaneously on eliminating and reducing, as well as increasing and creating.

Eliminate completely those variables that do not deliver value.

Reduce the value delivery of some variables.

Increase the intensity of those variables that we believe fall below the level of expectations.

Create that which the organization has never offered and can generate value below the level of expectations.



Source: Own elaboration

Figure 2. ERIC Matrix of the teaching staff sustainability process.

#### 4.2.4. Analysis of the Key Success Factors (KSF)

Key success factors (KSF) include those elements that, given the characteristics of the organization, are decisive for obtaining effective and sustainable results. Thus, the following are identified:

1. Image of the Central University "Marta Abreu" of Las Villas.
2. Human Resources Management.
3. Efficiency and Effectiveness of the processes.
4. Faculty experience.
5. Planning and Organization.

#### 4.3. Statement of Actions to Be Developed by Objectives, Construction of Indicators and Evaluation

The achievement of actions is carried out through a reflective process in which each stakeholder participates consciously. The system of actions is presented in a structured and coherent manner, starting from the resulting diagnosis of the current state and addressing the weaknesses identified in the diagnosis. The actions to be developed in the strategy focus firstly on achieving an increase in the retention and commitment of young recent graduates.

#### 4.4. Developing Indicators to Measure and Evaluate the Progress of Each of the Actions

The indicator makes it possible to compare at any given moment the level or degree of quality of a characteristic or parameter with respect to pre-established levels. The elaboration process was developed on the basis of this concept.

Another aspect to be noted is related to the impact of the actions, the result of the action to be implemented, measured through a control system as shown in Table 2.

*Table 2. Control system.*

OBJECTIVES	CONTROL POINT	RESPONSIBLE	MEANS OF VERIFICATION
1	Rectory	General Directorate of Human Potential (GDHP)	GEFORZA Database Quarterly report to the board Review of the teaching staff evaluations
2	Rectory	GDHP/ Teaching staff attention group	Report to the Board of Directors Dispatch with responsible persons Review of the teaching staff evaluations
3	Rectory	Deans / Directors	a) Applicant control b) Methodological activities plan c) Report of results d) Individual work plans
4	Rectory	GDHP / Deans / Managing Directors/ faculties	Report: Satisfaction surveys
5	Rectory	GDHP / Deans / Managing Directors	Survey: Semiannual report on compliance with the training plan
6	Rectory	GDHP / Deans / Managing Directors	Observation: Stimulation strategy compliance report Satisfaction survey
7	Rectory	HR Director / Deans / Directors	Report on the fulfillment of the objective: Satisfaction survey

Source: Own elaboration.

## 5. Conclusions

1. In any attempt to transform the existing reality, it is necessary to promote an institutional and human resources commitment in pursuit of the sustainability of the faculty.
2. In the theoretical review of the work it was found that there are many authors who have worked on the issue of sustainability and development, however it has been little treated in the achievement of actions for public institutions of Higher Education.
3. It can be concluded that the strategy is presented as a system of actions structured in a coherent manner, based on a diagnosis of the current state of the faculty.
4. The systematization of actions aimed at maintaining and improving the indicators shown in the sustainability strategy will lead to the necessary progress and quality leap required in the search for excellence.
5. Achieving the sustainability of the faculty requires the transformation first of all of the human resources in their ways of thinking, feeling and acting, combining the tactical and the strategic in a systematic attempt to improve work practice, with the purpose of increasing the quality of teaching, research and management.

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