

MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES USED IN BASIC EDUCATION IN THE FACE OF ITS TRANSFORMATION INTO A BOLIVARIAN HIGH SCHOOL. THE CASE OF THE MUNICIPALITY OF MIRANDA



Estrategias gerenciales utilizadas en educación básica ante su transformación en Liceo Bolivariano. Caso Municipio Miranda

Estratégias de gestão utilizadas na educação básica diante de sua transformação em uma Escola Secundaria Bolivariana. Caso do Município de Miranda

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ABSTRACT

The objective of this research was to determine if the management strategies applied by directors of the third stage of basic education contributed in its transformation into a Bolivarian High School. The theoretical model used is based on the postulates of authors such as David (2000), Pozner (2000), Hernandez (2002), Gairin (2004), Sandoval (2004), Graffe (2004), Bateman (2004) and Dezerega (2008), among

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RESUMEN

La investigación tuvo como objetivo determinar si las estrategias gerenciales utilizadas por el director de la tercera etapa de Educación Básica en Liceo Bolivariano contribuyen para la transformación de esta. El modelo teórico utilizado se apoya en los postulados de autores como David (2000), Pozner (2000), Hernández (2002), Gairín (2004), Sandoval (2004), Graffe (2004), Bateman (2004) y Dezerega (2008), entre

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RESUMO

O objetivo da pesquisa foi determinar se as estratégias de gestão utilizadas pelo diretor da terceira etapa da Educação Básica contribuem para a transformação desta em um Liceu Bolivariano. O modelo teórico utilizado baseia-se nos postulados de autores como David (2000), Pozner (2000), Hernández (2002), Gairín (2004), Sandoval (2004), Graffe (2004), Bateman (2004) e Dezerega (2008), entre outros. O estudo enquadra-se na

others. The study follows a cross-sectional prospective typology of the descriptive method. It is supported by a non-experimental, field design. The population consisted of 9 directors (principals) and 90 teachers to whom a structured Likert scale questionnaire was applied, containing 32 questions with three alternative answers. Likewise, the instrument was subject to qualitative and quantitative validation, respectively, through experts' judgement and the Cronbach coefficient statistical technique, with a resulting index of 0.97 for the instrument designed for teachers and directors (considered to be highly reliable). The results showed that the management strategies applied by the directors and staff of the Bolivarian High Schools in the Municipality of Miranda during the transformation process positively contributed in strengthening the preparation of the student body, however they must strengthen communications and rely on the revision and redesign of the educational processes to improve them.

Keywords: Strategies, management, transformation, educational processes, basic education.

otros. El estudio está enmarcado dentro de la tipología prospectiva transversal de método descriptivo, apoyada en un diseño no experimental de campo. La población estuvo constituida por nueve directores y 90 docentes, a quienes se les aplicó una encuesta tipo cuestionario estructurado de escala tipo Likert, con tres alternativas de respuestas, conformado por 32 ítems. Igualmente, el instrumento fue sometido a una validación cualitativa por medio del juicio de expertos, y cuantitativa mediante la técnica estadística del coeficiente de Cronbach, donde el resultado fue un índice de 0.97 para el instrumento dirigido a docentes y al personal directivo, siendo este altamente confiable. Los resultados arrojados indicaron que las estrategias gerenciales utilizadas por el personal directivo de los Liceos Bolivarianos del municipio Miranda, durante el proceso de transformación, contribuyeron positivamente ayudando en el fortalecimiento de la preparación del estudiantado; sin embargo, deben fortalecer la comunicación y apoyarse en la revisión y el rediseño de los procesos educativos para mejorarlos.

Palabras clave: Estrategias gerenciales, transformación, procesos educativos, educación básica.

tipología Transversal Prospectiva do Método Descritivo. Apoiado por um design de campo não experimental. A população era composta por 9 diretores e 90 professores a quem foi aplicado um questionário estruturado numa escala de Lickert com três respostas alternativas, compostas por 32 itens. Da mesma forma, o instrumento foi submetido a uma validação qualitativa através do julgamento de especialistas e quantitativa através da técnica estatística do coeficiente de Cronbach onde o resultado foi um índice de 0,97 para o instrumento destinado a professores e gestores, sendo este altamente confiável. Os resultados mostraram que as estratégias de gestão utilizadas pelo pessoal diretivo das Escolas Secundárias Bolivarianas do Município de Miranda durante o processo de transformação contribuem positivamente para fortalecer a preparação do corpo discente, porém devem fortalecer a comunicação e contar com a revisão e redesenho dos processos educativos para melhorá-los.

Palavras chave: Estratégias, gestão, transformação, processos educativos, educação básica.

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INTRODUCTION

Education is the means by which human beings can develop their intellectual and moral skills; consequently, countries' government systems try to establish educational policies by implementing strategies to drive behavioural changes in its inhabitants in order to be part of society and achieve a nation's development. In this sense, it can be said that in developed countries such as Japan and the United States, the structure of their educational system is so comprehensive that it positively impacts communities. In contrast, systems in South American countries such as Venezuela, suffer constant transformations as a result of radical changes executed by the government.

Throughout the years, the Venezuelan educational system has experienced major changes that have affected entities involved in the process, especially director's teams. In 1870, when Guzman Blanco established education's gratuity and mandatory nature, the result for Venezuelan society was a decreased illiteracy as most of its citizens started attending schools; prior to this, education was reserved to the most influential social classes. In the 40's, the Organic Education Law was enacted and it was followed by many changes, two of the most significant were: the establishment of basic education with the modality of stages I, II and III (in the 80's), and the curricular reform of 1997. Without a doubt, throughout this changes,

director's teams were forced to redesign their strategies.

Currently, the country is transforming the basic (stage III) and diversified secondary education of some institutions known as Bolivarian High Schools; it is considered that this fact has not been addressed clearly with educational communities; due to its significant nature, the educational manager must implement a series of strategies to face the challenge of this transformation.

Likewise, it can be said that the methodological strategies of Bolivarian education mostly focus on project-based planning to apply problem solving and address the community's needs, subject integration per academic and knowledge areas, and the endogenous development seminar to produce learning through research for transformation. Venezuela's stage rollout began with 26 pilot Bolivarian High Schools, out of which 16 were located in endogenous development nuclei (NUDE, for its Spanish acronym) with agricultural and industrial vocation, with the aim of enabling the area's growth with projects developed by students themselves.

According to the information provided by the Ministry of Education, approximately 15 Bolivarian High Schools existed in the state of Zulia in 2005, these were the result of a transformation that took place in under 2 years. By 2006, 50 high schools operated under the new educational strategy. Currently, Bolivarian High

Schools have expanded and have incorporated the modality of the new fundamental pillars in their planning.

Taking the aforementioned into consideration, it is necessary to analyse the managerial function of directors and teachers in said institutions with the aim of determining the types of strategies they have applied as managers in order to effectively address the changes brought by this transformation. In that regard, starting in the 2006-2007 academic year, the U.E.N General Francisco de Miranda, Jose Cenobio Urribarri and Ernesto Flores Fuenmayor, in the municipality of Miranda, moderately adopted this flagship project's operation, unlike the U.E.N General Francisco de Miranda, which has fully adopted this modality.

Therefore, it is necessary to address this problem in order to determine the contribution of the strategies applied by the director's and teachers' teams throughout the change, verifying if they are adequate and – if needed – recommending new managerial strategies to guarantee an improved operation of the institution, with the purpose of having other institutions in the municipality successfully achieve the transformation and thus strengthen the students' teaching-learning process and the performance of directors and teachers. The following question is proposed with the aforementioned in mind: How do the managerial strategies applied by directors of basic education contribute to its transformation into Bolivarian high schools?

The purpose of this study is to determine if managerial strategies applied by the director of the third stage of basic education contribute in its transformation into a Bolivarian high school. This objective is justified by the flagship project in which Bolivarian high schools intend to decrease the elevated percentage of students excluded from the educational system, and to prepare youngsters and teens in areas that are useful in society's labour market. This is an important problem to study because it allows directors, administrative, teaching and staff, students, representatives and community to become familiar with the difficulties and benefits arising from the change, as well as detecting the needs of the community involved in the transformation, with the purpose of finding solutions.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

MANAGERIAL STRATEGIES

Are conceived as the art of using the existing elements of power for the achievement of goals. "The art of tactics, meaning, deploying and managing forces to reach a limited objective or an immediate purpose" (Encyclopaedic Universal Bolivarian Dictionary, 2005). The strategy implies profound usage and integration of economic, political, cultural, social, moral, spiritual and psychological power. Whereas (disregarding the terminological problem) a strategy is "the set of relative decisions and actions based on the selection

of means and the articulation of resources aimed at fulfilling a goal” (Gairin, 2004, p.157).

TYPES OF MANAGERIAL STRATEGIES

According to Graffe (2004, p.47), the educational manager’s “function is to manage the different actors linked to the institution and thus contribute to the fulfilment of education’s quantitative and qualitative demand”. Likewise, when managing a school, directors (alongside other actors) continuously apply the following cycle: planning (strategies), executing, reviewing and acting. In terms of managerial strategies, the following types will be addressed in detail:

STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT

According to David (2003, p.75), “strategists are individuals who are accountable for the success or failure of a company”, they must focus on building the mission, which is to say that a long-lasting purpose is what differentiates a similar companies from one another. Also, Bateman (2004, p.120) explains that “strengths refer to activities that are performed specially well within an organization” (quality of teachers).

Therefore, it can be inferred that strengths are a set of internal strategies and that they are part of the institution, e.g., the conditions of the internal structure, which translates in the comfort of students and educational community. Similarly

with the quality of teachers, any institution with good teachers will seamlessly develop the objectives set by the management. Internal weakness is a term that refers to management activities that limit or inhibit the overall success of an organization, while threats and opportunities are strategies that are external to the institution.

REENGINEERING

In the managerial context “new administration modalities arise, including reengineering, which is based on the premise that processes and not products lead companies to long-term success” (Hernandez, 2002, p.66). Great products don’t make winners, winners make great products.

Based on this, Sandoval (2004, p.55) explains:

The reengineering strategy for any educational institution has to consider the coexistence of these scenarios and, consequently, enable a pedagogical paradigm: in institutions that are failing to achieve its goals and objectives, it is necessary to review the strategies, thus, the implementation of new ones, in order to pause and start over; this will result in a pedagogical reconstruction that is aligned with students’ needs and focuses on liberating future work.

TOTAL QUALITY

Chiavenato (2000, p.132) defines quality as “the degree of excellence at an acceptable price; quality is achieving the highest level instead of conforming with less”. Therefore, “quality benefits and depends on the ethical values that steer institutional actions, doing what is right and correct for everyone

involved is the most efficient way of directing an institution” (Hernandez, 2002, p.67). In this context, total quality is necessary in the educational system in order to achieve truly meaningful learning.

COACHING

For Dezerega (2008, p.23) “it is a system that includes concepts, structures, processes, work tools and measurement instruments, as well as groups of people”. It also entails a leadership style, a particular way of selecting people or configuring groups of developing people.

Mora (2008, p.17) proposes that “it is an activity that permanently improves performance”. Specifically, it is a conversation that involves at least two people, namely (in this case) a supervisor or director and an individual (although sometimes it may be between a superior and his/her team), the use of this strategy reinforces communication between work team members.

FUNCTIONS OF THE DIRECTOR

Panorama | The new institutional schemes contemplate more
pp. 58-66 | autonomy from educational establishments. These
Volumen 13 | imply a radical change in the function of the
Número 24 | director, who is now required to assume a position
Enero-Junio | with his/her career in mind, but also assuming a
2019 | moral, intellectual and functional position. This
ISSN impreso | means that directors in office will have to be
1909-7433 | engaged in extensive training programs to
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introduce them to the modern management techniques of educational institutions (CEPAL-UNESCO, 1992).

The following are among the studied functions:

Educator

In the words of Pozner (2000, p.93) “the director or the director’s team is responsible for the school life, he/she frames or undertakes certain ways or cultures in which the school is brought to life”. To do so, the director focuses on student socialization and in promoting their autonomous moral development in order to build core values. The director “participates and is receptive of the culture and its popular expressions, develops openness and understanding of the teen culture” (Gairin, 2004, p.167). In that sense, the director must apply his/her teaching experience to manage with prudence, flexibility, with values and justice (among others) to successfully comply with managerial strategies such as total quality.

Pedagogical Encourager

Encouraging, as per the Encyclopaedic Universal Bolivarian Dictionary (2005) means: “instilling vigour to a person, inciting to action, motivating, providing movement, moral energy”. Moreover, the director as encourager is aware that motivation in the workplace is inhibited or facilitated by the quality of the relationships established by the

director with his/her teams. Yet, certain managers forget this decisive idea and make use of subjectivity, “an unfortunate fact, since encouragement and stimulus of teachers, administrative staff, students and the community in general is needed to fulfil its functions as efficiently as possible” (Pozner 2000, p.95).

Informant and Communicator

Sandoval (2004, p.160) explains that the director as communicator “knows that addressing teachers, parents or students demands a capacity to design messages delivered with adequate codes”. Favours informal and face-to-face communication, and organises meetings or groups of study, awareness, reflection, evaluation, etc. “The main purpose of this function is to assure that the students, teachers and community have pertinent information. Realises the importance of generating and understanding communications aimed at the exterior: living local, neighbourhood forces, etc. (Gairin 2004, p.167). An educational manager must make good use of formal and informal information as per the situation, using verbal code expressions filled with intention.

that satisfies institutional demands and needs. Subsequently, institutions no longer manage economic resources; in Bolivarian High Schools, parents and representatives must collaborate in whatever is necessary to achieve the institution’s objectives.

TRANSFORMATION OF THE THIRD STAGE OF BASIC EDUCATION INTO BOLIVARIAN HIGH SCHOOL

Bolivarian High Schools came to be as a project of the national government implemented by the Ministry of Popular Power for Education in the 2004-2005 school term. “The purpose of these high schools is to service children and teenagers through the human continuum, a place for 12 to 18-year-olds to share their particular interests with children of similar ages” (Isturiz, 2005, p.23). Therefore, Bolivarian education emerged as an alternative proposed by the Ministry of Popular Power for Education with the aim to change the operation of the country’s educational system, which has suffered considerable weaknesses; this is the framework of the human-centred Bolivarian High Schools.

HOLISTIC IDEA

For Tadesco and Lopez (2002, p.39), “the holistic conception of a developing human being demands curricular and pedagogical articulation and continuity in order to transcend the administrative levels of the educational system”. The

forementioned encompasses modalities such as Simoncitos, Bolivarian Schools, Bolivarian High Schools, Technical Robinsonian and Zamoran Schools, and Bolivarian Universities. Under this approach, the student acquires a knowledge range that covers pedagogical, economic, cultural, social, and other aspects, applying a critical tool: the “popular knowledge” of the different localities within the institution’s area.

HUMAN IDEA

According to the Vice-Ministry of Educational Affairs (2004) this human, integral and progressive approach to education begins in the earliest stage of life, birth, after which the child experiences different formal or informal periods, as follows: infancy (Simoncitos), childhood (Bolivarian Schools), teen years (Bolivarian High Schools) and adulthood (Bolivarian Universities). Gradually, each one contains the one prior. Thus, a humanist education allows the student to be cared for in the level according to his/her age and at the same time receive gradual continuity, as teenagers have interests and needs that greatly differ from children’s. Consequently, it is expected for students’ exclusion rate to drop, since they are receiving what they really need and critical knots are eradicated.

COMPREHENSIVENESS AND PROGRESSIVENESS IDEA

This particular idea coherently and continuously articulates learning citizens’ axes with learning how to coexist; knowledge and actions that take place in the educational levels corresponding to each period of life. Hence, initial preschool education (focused on affection, intelligence and play) are responsible for driving identity, basic cognition and education for work, which are characteristic of basic education; in turn, those derive in endogenous development based on coexistence, research, complex thinking application and work, which are the essence of the teenagers’ education curriculum in high school and diversified education levels (Coordinacion Nacional Liceo Bolivariano, 2005).

STRUCTURE OF BOLIVARIAN HIGH SCHOOLS PER AREAS

According to Isturiz (2005) “the implementation of the Bolivarian High School project has the historical responsibility of completing the Bolivarian Education structure, benefited by progress in the curricular debate, where the ideas that shape this proposal are identified”. In that regard, it was necessary for this research to explain the structure of Bolivarian High Schools through the integration of three transformation areas, namely: academic area, administrative-managerial area and socio-community area.

ACADEMIC AREA

Bolivarian High Schools build actions oriented towards breaking the traditional structure. Diaz

(2006) says: “transforming the institution with the idea of a collective construction of pedagogical organizational components” forces the actors involved in the process to partake in educational tasks. Therefore, the following are integrated into this area: objectives, curricular organization, integration of knowledge areas and evaluation.

ADMINISTRATIVE-MANAGERIAL AREA

To build a new organizational model within the framework of the new institutional guidelines (Bolivarian Education), Isturiz (2005, p.45) states that “collective participation is necessary, substantiated on (among others) the dynamics of each institution, its humanitarian character, being co-responsible, transforming, horizontal, recreational, of accompaniment, systematized and evaluated follow-up”.

In that sense, Rodriguez proposes (2012, p.17) “new relations are built among students, teachers and other actors of the educational process, based on a different idea of resource management”. Moreover, new ways of learning and connecting with the environment are created, as well as new leadership, work processes and directions that enable a common ground, the act of being communicated and teamwork. Therefore, this area addresses teachers’ profiles and programs corresponding to each level.

SOCIAL-COMMUNITY AREA

The contributions by Mas (2007, p.13) affirm that “integrating students with communities’ development depends on productive processes, as well as on their potentialities”; e.g., in an agricultural or touristic community, students will learn the necessary trades to guarantee the development of their localities. This State policy of education from a municipalities’ point of view guarantees the progress of initial, basic and diversified secondary and higher education as a human continuum stemming from the community.

This is why institutions have projects that connect with communities through endogenous development seminars and the national system of socio-labour action.

METHODOLOGY

TYPE OF RESEARCH

As proposed by Chavez (1994, p.134) this is a prospective research, since it takes into consideration the period of time in which it is collected. Likewise, Fidias (2006, pp.40-41) affirms that this study is based on the descriptive method because it is limited to a precise description of the characteristics in the study’s population. Also, research design is of non-experimental and field nature, according to Hernandez et al. (2001, p.136) and Santis (2009).

POPULATION

Defined by Nava (2002, p.73) as “the set of elements with a common characteristic that represents the problem being studied”. Considering the aforementioned, the population that is the object of analysis included nine (9) directors and one hundred sixteen (116) teachers that work at the 3 Bolivarian High Schools in the municipality of Miranda.

SAMPLE

A censal or intentional sample of nine (9) people was used on the population consisting of the directors; on the other hand, a stratified sample was used on the population consisting of the teachers involved in the research.

The method of Sierra (1998, p.178) was applied to obtain the sample of the population of teachers (116) that work at the 3 Bolivarian High Schools in the municipality of Miranda; eventually ninety (90) teachers were selected in the final sample.

INFORMATION COLLECTION

INSTRUMENT

Panorama | This research used a Likert scale-based survey as a
pp. 58-66 | collection instrument, the questionnaire had the
Volumen 13 | following response alternatives: always (3),
Número 24 | sometimes (2) and never (1); it included 32
Enero-Junio | questions and 2 versions were produced, one was
2019 | aimed at directors and the other one at the teachers
ISSN impreso | of Bolivarian High Schools, the intention was to
1909-7433 | get the largest amount of relevant information
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corresponding to the indicators of the variables ‘Managerial Strategies’ and ‘Transformation of the third stage into Bolivarian High Schools’, respectively, to fulfil the objectives.

DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

Statistical results show that managers at the municipality’s Bolivarian High Schools resort to reengineering as part of their managerial strategies, but fail to apply it with the required frequency (‘Sometimes’, 51.1% for teachers and 66.7% for directors), knowing that this allows applying any corrective actions necessary, which concurs with the ideas of Hernandez (2002, p.66), who states that reengineering is the fundamental review and radical redesign of processes to achieve spectacular enhancement in critical and current performance measurements.

Moreover, results revealed that the director’s function as communicator needs to be strengthened since (formal or informal) communication is a key strategy for internal (institutional staff) as well as for external customers (the rest of the educational community, including live forces); 55.6% answered ‘Sometimes’, both for teachers and directors. This context confirms Gairin (2004, p.167) thought, he believes the main purpose of this function is to assure that students, teachers and community are given pertinent information. At the same time, he warns about the importance of generating and understanding communication provided to the outside: living local

and neighbourhood forces, among others; this confirms Cubillan's (2007) studies' input during the analysis process.

On the other hand, some coincidences were identified between the 'coaching' indicator of the 'Types of Managerial Strategies' dimension (corresponding to the first variable), and the 'academic area' indicator of the 'Structure of Bolivarian High Schools per Areas' dimension (corresponding to the second variable) 80% of the teachers and 66.7% of the directors responded 'Always'. Both indicators showed a higher percentage of answers corresponding to the very high category in the surveys applied to teachers but not in those applied to directors.

This reveals that directors service staff and students when compromising situations arise, and that teachers act as guarantors for directors to be aware if the institution is in total compliance with the objectives set by Bolivarian Education. This is supported by Mora (2008, p.17) who explains that coaching is an activity that permanently improves performance. Moreover, managers, supervisors and leaders may have many types of conversations, which may be used to try to improve an aspect of individual or team performance.

Also, the Bolivarian High School document by Coordinacion Nacional Liceo Bolivariano (2005) reads: in that regard, this curricular change has three fundamental objectives: firstly, the "the elaboration of projects by students in order for

them to get to know the reality and may develop as social subjects"; secondly, it has the intention to "promote, strengthen and consolidate new ways to enhance participation and organization of communities"; and finally to "promote the elaboration of plans to favour the creation of cooperatives, small production units, and small companies of social production". Thus, Bolivarian institutions that achieve these objectives will have guaranteed educational success.

Along with the aforementioned, the incidence of managerial strategies used by the directors of the third stage of basic education in its transformation into a Bolivarian High School is positive, results obtained were answered almost entirely with the alternative 'Always', which corresponds to the high and very high categories of the conversion scale.

CONCLUSIONS

The usage of proper managerial strategies constitutes the foundation for Bolivarian High Schools to fulfil the proposed objectives. From this perspective, the following conclusions were found.

In terms of the specific objective, describing managerial strategies applied by the director of the third stage of basic education in its transformation into Bolivarian High School, it is evinced that strategic management is one of the tools that Bolivarian High School directors most frequently apply, this is clear in the production of diagnoses used to build projects. The SWOT matrix

(Strengths Weaknesses Opportunities and Threats) is a key tool to identify situations that may affect the educational process, at the same time, it aids in the detection of elements needed to achieve educational excellence.

Regarding the second objective, analysing the managers leadership functions in Bolivarian High Schools, it can be concluded that directors -overall- comply with the leadership functions in the transformation process; as educator, he/she socializes with students to foster values and, given the situation, he/she acts as a teachers. Likewise, it was confirmed that projects are considered an essential element of Bolivarian Education, concurring with the input by Bolívar (2003). In terms of communication, formal and informal communication management was, at times, inadequate. Also, the objective connected with the characterization of education as a human continuum in the face of its transformation into a Bolivarian High School, concludes that high school directors involve every social actor in order to develop comprehensive and community educational projects, “just as they jointly use managerial functions to consolidate the educational process as a whole” (Barcelo, 2007, p.34).

Concerning the objective of allowing to identify the structure making up these Bolivarian High Schools per areas, it was necessary to describe the elements that constitute these institutions with the creation of transformation areas, as explained in Revista

Compas (2009) to deliver a vision that is closer to reality.

In terms of the last specific objective, verifying if the managerial strategies applied by the basic education director contribute to its transformation into a Bolivarian High School, it is concluded that the managerial strategies and functions used by the directors in the high schools of the municipality of Miranda do contribute to the educational process during the change. In that sense, it is evident that all of the teaching staff employed in these institutions satisfactorily follows the demanded guidelines in the transformation process, confirming the positive contribution of the strategies implemented by these high schools’ management.

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