MANAGERIAL SKILLS APPLIED BY CLASSROOM TEACHERS TO STRENGTHEN TEACHING-LEARNING IN SECONDARY LEVEL AT ERNESTO FLORES FUENMAYOR EDUCATIONAL UNIT IN THE MUNICIPALITY OF MIRANDA, STATE OF ZULIA

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Habilidades gerenciales aplicadas por docentes de aulas para el fortalecimiento de la enseñanza-aprendizaje en el nivel de secundaria de la unidad educativa Ernesto flores fuenmayor del municipio miranda, estado zulia

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Abstract: Students' learning is related to the strategies and skills applied by teachers the classroom. Nevertheless, from a strategic point of view, very little management skills are proposed insofar as they are directly related to the institutions' administrative activities. Yet, a group of students in a classroom represents an institutional organization, and the teacher plays the role of manager whose purpose must aimed towards meaningful learning. Therefore, the main objective of this research is to analyze managerial skills applied by classroom teachers to strengthen the teaching-learning process in secondary education at Ernesto Flores Fuenmayor Educational Unit. This is a field study of descriptive, non-experimental and cross-cutting nature. The population consists of a census sample including 74 secondary school teachers, using a 27-item questionnaire for data collection and subsequent analysis. Findings obtained show that 27% of secondary education teachers identify cognitive managerial skills, and 48% always apply organizational skills. It is concluded that managerial skills can be regarded as tools to strengthen teaching students, therefore, it is necessary to master a series of cognitive and organizational skills to encourage not only meaningful learning, but also educational quality and successful performance in management.

Resumen: El aprendizaje en los educandos está relacionado con las estrategias y las habilidades que los docentes aplican dentro del aula de clase. No obstante, desde el punto de vista estratégico muy poco se plantean habilidades gerenciales, ya que las mismas se relacionan directamente con las actividades administrativas de las instituciones. Sin embargo, un grupo de estudiantes en un aula de clase representa una organización institucional, y por ende el docente juega un rol como gerente dentro de la misma, cuya finalidad debe estar orientada a promover el aprendizaje significativo; por ello, el objetivo principal de esta investigación es analizar las habilidades gerenciales aplicadas por los docentes de aula para el fortalecimiento de la enseñanza -aprendizaje en el nivel de secundaria de la U.E. Ernesto Flores Fuenmayor. Este estudio es descriptivo, no experimental, transeccional de campo. La población estuvo conformada por una muestra censal de 74 docentes del nivel de secundaria, utilizando un cuestionario de 27 ítems para recolección de los datos y posterior análisis. De aquí se obtuvo que un 27% de docentes de educación media identifican las habilidades gerenciales cognitivas, y un 48% siempre aplican las habilidades organizativas. Se concluye que las habilidades gerenciales pueden ser consideradas como herramientas para fortalecer la enseñanza de los educandos, por lo que es preciso dominar una serie de habilidades cognitivas y organizativas que permitan impulsar no solo el aprendizaje significativo, sino también la calidad educativa y el desempeño exitoso de una gerencia.
Palabras clave: Habilidad, gerencia, educación, educativa.

INTRODUCTION

In each educational process, teachers need to plan the programmatic content of different areas of knowledge on a daily basis, depending on the case, with the purpose of accomplishing proposed objectives and goals. It is essential for teachers to apply managerial tools and skills, to consider students as an organization and human resource to settle or mitigate problems in the environment, encouraging practices and actions that contribute to this end (Mora-Ramirez & Norman-Acevedo, 2017).

However, many teachers fall into repetition instead of suggesting and finding solutions to problematic situations, possibly due to scarce motivation and disinterest to undertake the teaching-learning process in their academic roles, thus hindering group management and students' meaningful learning.

Although teachers' academic activities entail knowledge immersion, they must also strengthen and develop skills, as in any other teaching-learning process. Falcon (2008, p.25) defines skill as the demonstration of capacity through exercise. Capacity is connected with the aptitude to conduct a task (Ortegon & Royo, 2016; Rincon, Niño, & Gomez, 2017). Understood as such, managerial skills allow systematizing actions under productivity and organization criteria, to be able to fulfill objectives and goals within an organizational and professional framework that aims to make educational projects' activities and content feasible.

Currently, educational management plays a significant role, directly or indirectly, and teachers have the power to move masses and modify inappropriate behavior applying strategies that match the degree of appropriateness of a classroom; teachers are in charge of planning,

organizing, directing and controlling their teaching process to steer students towards the accomplishment of proposed objectives, yet, this goes hand in hand with the power of leadership, skills and ethical and social values of a person, regardless of the profession, to lead by example (Arias-Velandia, Rincon-Baez, Becerra-Plaza, Mejia-Rodriguez, & Salas-Diaz, 2018).

Thus, teachers are an indispensable part of this research, their role as educational managers in the classroom demands putting into practice a series of strategies and abilities to deliver a harmonious approach with students, who will be the result of many efforts to become citizens with a sense of belonging and preservation for the place where they live (Ortegon-Cortazar & Gomez, 2016).

In connection with the aforementioned, the purpose of this research is to analyze managerial skills applied by teachers in the classroom to strengthen teaching-learning processes in secondary education at Ernesto Flores Fuenmayor Educational Unit, which has been broken down in the specific objectives: identifying teachers' managerial skills and describing types of managerial skills applied by them in the classroom to promote significant learning in secondary level students at said educational unit.

THEORETICAL FUNDAMENTALS

TEACHERS' MANAGERIAL SKILLS

A set of dexterities of knowledge and organization which, continuously developed, assist in administrating education and relationships with society and nearby surroundings.

It is convenient to add that managerial skills define the capacity to plan, program and execute any activity whatsoever. To support the aforementioned, Klein, cited by Graffe (2009, p.47), expresses:

> managers are individuals with special capacities, they are a combination of updates and personal and technical qualities that allow them to properly use and apply methods and techniques to achieve understanding among members of an administrative group. This definition integrates several criteria to explain teachers' managerial skills, insomuch that school tasks demand resources and content as well as a set of aptitudes and attitudes that ease systematization and strategic handling.

Cognitive Skills

For Diaz and Hernandez (2010), cognitive skills allow teachers a greater likelihood of being creative and elevating the quality of education, therefore, students' results and accomplishments; thus, teaching and learning are neurocognitive processes, as taught by Ander-Egg (2008, p.87) "cognitive neuroscience enriches student-teacher/student-student/teacher-teacher interaction. Therefore, by developing educational communities learning becomes more feasible... it facilitates learning transparency of new contexts".

Strategic Thinking

According to Lopez (2009, p.21),

the term strategic thinking must be understood as the coordination between a creative mind and a perspective to allow a business to move forward in a way that is satisfactory for everyone. Consequently, strategic thinking refers to the observation of goals, as those developed in an institution, at an awareness level that outlines a proactive attitude to be ahead of the future and attain comprehension and knowledge in the organization. Strategic thinking is the compass that leads teachers towards where they want to guide the organization, sustained by a managerial style that is explained through organized management of quality.

Analytical Thinking

In the words of Falcon (2008, p.10), analytical thinking is the "discovery of a new way of making business; it entails refocusing mechanisms and ways through which productivity is generated". With this words in mind and extrapolating the idea to the educational context (the area of this research), teachers' plans need to focus on new ways of generating knowledge or to awaken students to pursue analytical thinking and to obtain productive results that benefit the educational community.

Alarcon (2008, p.62) states that analytical thinking "does not just mean a shift in an individual's mental processes, but a transformation in the way people work and in the institution's values." Consequently, teachers' production of their planning and projects must involve students, this will not just allow managerial skills to be developed, but there will be a chance to drive changes in students' mental processes.

Creative Thinking

Creative thinking is a managerial skill that tends to be applied by the teacher through collaborative work, which allows developing strategic thinking, ideas and perceptions to be applied on education's daily tasks by means of solving daily problems, decision-making and processes' approach.

According to Carrero (2011, p.72), creative thinking is a key trend of programmatical models' traditional thinking, which has been implemented by institutions. This thinking sets out to redirect the way of doing things, crushing paradigms and acting as the sole means to cause knowledge and learning.

Intelligent Thinking

In education, intelligent thinking constitutes a managerial skill to tap into contextual knowledge in order to plan and improve learning processes, at its core are students and collaborative teachers (Pineda-Escobar & Cortes, 2018). Similarly, Ander-Egg (2008, p.61) postulates that "this theory has been widely accepted by teachers, who are the field in which it has had greatest effect, and it has made contributions to the educational field to develop certain capacities in students".

The literature suggests eight types of intelligences and its usefulness among teachers and the sphere of learning. These eight types emphasize actions in practices using pedagogical management, cognitive, emotional and values. The need to encourage autonomy is also suggested, as well as the application of knowledge in their immediate surroundings and communities, praising self-realization and social recognition as a bridge of interaction.

Organizational Skills

Organizational skills are projected as top management's organizational skill to foster interactions between individuals using trust-based skills, communication and teamwork. This capacity pushes teams to take advantage of available resources, making use of its individuals' skills (Niño-Benavides & Cortes, 2018).

Direction of Groups of Work

According to Lopez (2009, p.29), direction of groups of work

> comes from managerial skills that further people to develop coordinately, in order to guarantee the execution of tasks and activities that fall into their responsibility. This can be defined as a driving process of people, facilitating knowledge, skills and dexterities through the organization of tasks, responsibilities, performance goals and decision-making in a manner that is agreed upon, permanent and studied by team members.

On the other hand, Martin (2010, p.220) highlights the scope of direction of groups of work inasmuch as

> it refers to the capacity to build and improve work in an institution, it entails working with others and connecting with others... it allows dominating the decision-making process that influences what, who, how, where and when to establish trust-based and collaboration bonds. Relationships among people are, mostly, institutions' basis for success.

Organization of the Learning Environment

Currently, organization of the learning environment is among the most significant for teachers to undertake school tasks, this organization can be defined as a managerial skill that favors the construction of spaces that are rich in knowledge, places to transfer what has been learned to new contexts, through strategies and tools to be replicated in other school situations. For the purpose of this research, teachers must be inclined to use the institution and community's spaces as practical laboratories for students' meaningful learning, as well as for the development of skills and attitudes that benefit the common good (Bonomo, Corona-Cabrera, Norman-Acevedo, % Sosa-Varela, 2019).

In that sense, it is timely to establish a connection between activities taking place in the classroom and outside of it.

> Therefore, it is necessary to harmoniously conjugate the two environments, outside the classroom there are major sources of information and knowledge that both students and teachers need to understand and access easily. Consequently, the organization of new learning environments enables teachers to act as facilitators, allowing greater access to knowledge and to their own conceptual understanding. (Lopez, 2009, p.30)

Planning Capacity

Planning is a precise and systematized way of formulating policies, it implies the selection of priorities; it also presupposes a will to guide and modify future events. The capacity of planning school activities, as per Garcia (2009, p.63) "allows for the determination of objectives and selection of action routes to accomplish them based on research and a detailed scheme taking place in the future". Also, it sets an organization's

goals and objectives, and traces work maps that illustrate how to fulfill plans and projects.

For the purpose of this research, planning is considered a managerial skill applied by teachers, that focuses on attaining goals and objectives using students and executives as fundamental resource, guiding and modifying behaviors.

Project Management

For Moreno, Labra and Sandoval (2009, p.24), project management

> is a strategic and operational proposal to intervene the educational phenomenon of a specific group, aimed at improving the teaching-learning process. Each educational project intends to enhance the quality of the educational process, and to do so, it generates a series of actions and strategies that are thought of and pondered to intervene the reality of people who propose the project.

This statement helps visualize that project management introduces a new idea of a school of professional teaching development, which supposes a more cooperative and efficient way of undertaking pedagogical tasks in the educational system, exposing the complexity of its problems by means of reflection, dialog, collaboration and action. In that context, management supports project planning in terms of formulation, execution and evaluation of actions that lead a school organization towards the fulfillment of its goals.

Under this modality, for Lopez (2009, p.34)

> teachers in classrooms, executives and other members of the community have to reflect on their own practices and intervene them to improve the quality of the education being imparted. Different experiences of projects with teachers may have different immediate effects: improving the curriculum, infrastructure, yield, methodologies, mind processes, among others, that significantly favor the teaching-learning process, and thus, educational quality.

METHODOLOGY

This is a descriptive research; for Hurtado (2010, p.101), this type of research "aims at precisely describing the event of the study". Likewise, in that regard and considering its temporary dimension, this was a field study of non-experimental and cross-sectional nature, the instrument was applied only once to the population of the study and data was collected on this single occasion. The population was made up by a censual sample (Hurtado, 2010, p.23) of 74 teachers at secondary level in the Ernesto Flores Fuenmayor Educational Unit, which took into consideration classroom teachers, CBIT teachers and counselors (see Chart N° 1).

| Educational Unit | Share of teachers population | | | |
	Classroom teachers	CBIT teachers	Counselors	Total
Ernesto Flores Fuenmayor	69	03	02	74

CHART N°1
Source: department of teaching coordination (2014).

The selected data collection technique was direct observation; also, in order to measure the variable's behavior, two questionnaires with 27 items were designed, answer alternatives were as follows: 'Always', 'Almost always', 'Sometimes' and 'Never'. Each alternative was given a value: 4 points (Always), 3 points (Almost always), 2 points (Sometimes) and 1 point (Never), with the objective of completing the statistical requirement and comparing it with the evaluation scale set for that purpose. To establish the study's instrument validity, it was subject to content validity by means of experts' opinion, they contributed suggestions on indicators' connection and pertinence with the items, as well as possible ambiguities of questions with respect to the variable's context.

Reliability can be defined using Cronbach's alpha, this coefficient is applied to the tests with items of alternative variables with a Likert scale (Chaves, 2010), such as in this research, with the following formula:

K [1-ΣSi .]

$r_{tt}=$ _____ _____

K-1 t.

In which:

K: number of items

$Si^{2:}$ variance of each item's scores

St.: variance of total points

RESULTS

Table 1 focuses on the cognitive skill dimension and illustrates that for the "Strategic Thinking" indicator, item 1, 44% of teachers answered that they <u>sometimes</u> modify their daily planning strategies, and 34% of students manifested that they do it <u>sometimes</u>; both surveyed groups coincided in this alternative. In terms of item 2, 47% of teachers manifested that they <u>never</u> adjust their class strategy to the tastes of students, while 73% of students answered that they <u>never</u> do it

The "Analytical thinking" indicator, item 3, shows that 32% of teachers state that they <u>never</u> detect problems in the classroom before they occur; on the other hand, 51% of students express that their teachers almost <u>never</u> do this. For item 4, 39% of teachers indicated that they <u>almost always</u> think that solving classroom mishaps requires the help of their students, 25% of students answered this item with <u>always</u>. Answers to this indicator evince contradictions between teachers and students.

For the "Creative thinking" indicator, 39% of teachers answered they <u>almost always</u> manage to be creative, innovative and strategic, however, 25% of students answered <u>always</u>. For item 7, 39% of teachers expressed that they <u>almost always</u> like to go beyond the guidelines in terms of their content with their planning, while 25% of students expressed that they <u>always</u> did it.

Lastly, the "Intelligent thinking" indicator reflects that 32% of teachers responded that they <u>never</u> seek assertive negotiations with students to solve a problem, and 51% of students answered the same question with

almost never, indicating a contrast between them. Answers given by students and teachers show that 27% of teachers almost always identify managerial skills, however 39% of students answered never.

According to the aforementioned, there is a contradiction with what has been suggested by Lopez (2009), who asserts that in order to successfully perform in management, it is essential to master a series of cognitive-related skills to allow citizens a more active participation in the knowledge economy, understood as an economy that is based on the use of ideas more than on physical capacities: it is supported by widespread application of innovation and creativity, which is imposing new demands and knowledge sets to perform a professional life.

Likewise, as exposed by Lopez (2009), cognitive skills provide teachers greater possibilities of being creative and enhance the quality of education, and consequently, students' results and accomplishments.

Indicator	Items	Always Do Fr	Always %	Almost Always Do Fr	Almost Always %	Sometimes Do Fr	Sometimes %	Never Do Fr	Never %
Strategic Thinking	1.- Do your teachers frequently modify the strategies of their daily planning?	10	14	12	14	37	44	15	20
	2.- Do your teachers adjust class strategies as per your and your classmates tastes?	2	3	11	15	26	31	35	47
Analytical Thinking	3.- Does your teacher manage to detect problems in the classroom before they occur?	11	15	15	18	24	28	24	32
	4.- Do you think that, in order for teachers to solve classroom mishaps, they need their students' help?	24	28	29	39	11	15	11	15
Creative Thinking	5.- Are your teachers always creative, innovative and strategic?	24	28	29	39	11	15	11	15
	6.- In your planning, do you like to go beyond what the guidelines state in terms of content?	24	28	29	39	11	15	11	15
Intelligent Thinking	7.- Does the teacher seek assertive negotiation when solving a problem?	11	15	15	18	24	28	24	32
	Total	19%	13%	27%	14%	15%	35%	25%	37%

Table 1.
Identify teachers' managerial skills at Ernesto Flores Fuenmayor Educational Unit: cognitive skill.
Source: compiled by the authors, 2014.

Table 2 focuses on the organizational skills dimension and shows that for the "Work team guidance" indicator, item 8, 44% of teachers responded that they are sometimes sociable and easily relate with the institution's staff, and 34% of students answered they are sometimessociable. For item 9, 42% of teachers stated that they almost always organize new activities and manage to clearly explain their ideas about what students should do, however, 31% of students mentioned they never do it. For item 10, 88% of the teachers stated that they always arrive on time to class; 25% of students answered always.

The "Organization of the learning environment" indicator, item 11, illustrates that 32% of teachers said that they never organize the classroom depending on the activity being worked on, 51% of students consider teachers sometimes do it. For item 12, regarding the fact that teachers limit themselves to teach their classes only in the classroom, 68% of teachers answered never, and 72% of the students also did. Item 13 inquired into an order of materials or instruments needed to apply their planning: 88% of teachers answered always, while 29% of students answered sometimes, this shows differences between both groups' answers.

The "Planning capacity" indicator, item 14, shows that 39% of teachers answered that the teaching process almost always does not take place if the class' planning follows a strict order of completion, while 25% of students said that teachers must always strictly follow their planning. Item 15 showed the same results as the prior item, in inquiries into teachers being

able to conduct and apply their planning. Therefore, there are evident differences in the answers provided by teachers and students.

The "Project management" indicator, item 15, shows that 32% of teachers <u>never</u> work with educational projects, and 51% of students responded <u>almost never</u> to this item. Item 16 asked if the best way of attaining the planning's objectives is to postpone what has been planned when it is worthy, 76% of teachers answered <u>always</u> and 40% of students also did.

These percentages indicate that managerial skills applied by teachers in the classroom to promote meaningful learning at Ernesto Flores Fuenmayor Educational Unit, prompted 48% of teachers to answer they <u>always</u> apply them, and 38% of students to answer <u>sometimes</u>.

These results contrast with what has been asserted by the World Bank (2003), which emphasizes the teachers' responsibility to organize students' learning, as follows: "teachers are the source of knowledge, their function is supplying knowledge or developing the method of learning by doing". Likewise, this method has been proven rewarding especially in terms of learning practices. According to this perspective, secondary education teachers need to be aware of the depth of their curricular areas and understand the most relevant concepts and connections between them. Ultimately, it is necessary to create constructive learning environments for the development of educational projects.

Indicator	Items	Always		Almost Always		Sometimes		Never	
		Do		Do		Do		Do	
		Fr	%	Fr	%	Fr	%	Fr	%
	8.- Are your teachers sociable people who easily relate with the staff at the institution?	10	14	12	14	37	44	15	20
Work team guidance	9.- When your teachers organize new activities do they manage to clearly explain their ideas about what you are supposed to do?	30	41	31	42	13	18	-	-
	10.- Are your teachers on time to class?	55	88	19	26	-	-	-	-
	11.- Do your teachers organize the classroom depending on the activity they are working on?	11	15	15	18	24	28	24	32
Organization of the learning environment	12.- Are they limited to teach their classes only in the classroom?	50	68	24	32	-	-	-	-
	13.- Do they have an order of necessary materials of instruments to apply their planning?	55	88	19	26	-	-	-	-
Planning capacity	14.- Do you think the teaching process fails is your teacher follows class planning in a strict order?	24	28	29	39	11	15	11	15
	15.- Do you think your teachers know how to make and apply their planning?	24	28	29	39	11	15	11	15
Project management	16.- Do your teachers work with educational projects?	11	15	15	18	24	28	24	32
	17.- Do you consider that the best way to attain the planning's objectives is to postpone what has been planned when it is worthy?	56	76	18	24	-	-	-	-
Total		45%	20%	28%	20%	16%	38%	11%	22%

Table 2.
Describe the types of managerial skills applied by teachers in the classroom to encourage meaningful learning in students at secondary level at Ernesto Flores Fuenmayor Educational Unit: organizational skill.
Source: compiled by the authors, 2014.

CONCLUSIONS

Pertaining the objective of identifying teachers' managerial skills at Ernesto Flores Fuenmayor Educational Unit, it can be concluded that teachers fail to apply assertive negotiation with their students when solving a problem; also, teachers almost never believe that students' help is needed in order to solve mishaps that may arise in the classroom.

However, teachers always manage to be creative, innovative and strategic on their planning, and content-wise, they like to go beyond the guidelines. Nevertheless, teachers moderately identify managerial skills throughout their students' teaching-learning process.

Regarding the objective of describing the types of managerial skills applied by teachers in the classroom to encourage meaningful learning in the secondary level at Ernesto Flores Fuenmayor Educational Unit, it can be concluded that teachers sometimes arrange the classroom depending on the activity they are working on.

Likewise, it was found that teachers limit themselves to teaching only in the classroom; sometimes they follow an order of materials or instruments needed for applying the program; the teaching process fails if class planning takes place under strict order of completion; similarly, sometimes teachers know how to prepare and apply their planning properly.

Because of the aforementioned, managerial skills may be regarded as tools that solidify student teaching, thus, it is key to master a series of cognitive skills that motivate meaningful learning as well as educational quality and successful performance of a management office.

In that sense, it is recommended to train and motivate teaching staff on the foundations of managerial functions through courses, workshops and others, to continually be updated and apply and integrate these tools and skills to benefit students' teaching-learning process and the institution itself.

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