

***Particularidades del desarrollo de la formación académica de
posgrado en la educación superior cubana
Particularities of the development of postgraduate academic
training in Cuban higher education***

Felisa Leonard-Rodríguez; Jesús Piclín-Minot; David Alvarez-Utria

Universidad de Guantánamo, Guantánamo, Cuba.

Correo (s) electrónico (s)

felisalr@cug.co.cu

jesusp@cug.co.cu

david@cug.co.cu

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1248-3292>

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1490-5084>

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1194-0036>

Recibido: 4 de enero de 2024

Aceptado: 7 de abril de 2024

Resumen

El presente trabajo tiene como objetivo caracterizar la formación académica de posgrado desde el desarrollo que ha tenido la actividad posgraduada en la educación superior cubana y su proyección presente y futura, atendiendo al contexto actual y los objetivos trazados. Para ello, se aborda el desarrollo de la formación académica de posgrado, que revela la importancia que posee en la formación continua de los egresados universitarios, a partir de su contextualización dentro de la educación de posgrado, y de igual manera se analizan los elementos que la caracterizan y su relación con el contexto social y económico en estrecha vinculación con la práctica. Además, se resalta el papel de la formación académica de posgrado y los retos que enfrenta en la formación continua del egresado universitario teniendo como base sus necesidades y las demandas que la sociedad exige. Para ello se emplearon métodos del nivel teórico y empírico.

Palabras clave: Formación académica de posgrado; Educación de posgrado; Formación continua; Contexto actual cubano.

Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to characterize the postgraduate academic training from the development of the postgraduate activity in Cuban higher education and its present and future projection, taking into account the current context and the objectives set. For this purpose, the development of postgraduate academic training is approached, which reveals the importance it has in the continuing education of university graduates, from its contextualization within postgraduate education, and likewise, the elements that characterize it and its relationship with the social and economic context in close connection with practice are analyzed. In addition, the role of postgraduate academic education and the challenges it faces in the continuing education of university graduates based on their needs and the demands of society are highlighted. Theoretical and empirical methods were used for this purpose.

Keywords: Graduate academic education; Graduate education; Continuing education; Current Cuban context.

Introduction

The United Nations Organization (UN, 2018), in the 2030 Agenda for the sustainable development of nations, states, through Goal 4, the need for quality and inclusive education at all educational levels, including Higher Education.

Hence, in order to comply with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), a genuine transformation in the way of thinking and acting of the actors involved is required, so that they can become agents of change. In this regard, it is necessary to prioritize both the initial training of practicing professionals and postgraduate academic training.

In Cuban higher education, according to Horruitiner (2007):

The training category is used to characterize the substantive process developed in universities with the objective of comprehensively preparing the student in a given university career and covers both undergraduate studies in the basic and specific aspects of each profession, preparation for employment and postgraduate studies aimed at professional development and academic training. (p. 13).

On postgraduate academic training, several authors have made their contributions, such is the case of (Alpízar and Velázquez, 2021; Bernaza et al. 2020; Horruitiner, 2007; Zayas, Zamora and Sarmiento, 2019), who recognize it as a process oriented to the professional enrichment of university graduates in order to update, broaden, deepen continuously their knowledge to improve the performance of their

professional and academic activities, the development of high professional skills and advanced capabilities for research, innovation.

The theoretical systematization made it possible to appreciate that the category of postgraduate academic training is a concept that has had different views to refer to the same process.

When we speak of training, there are different interpretations of the term. Its delimitation and certain specificity in the pedagogical language, frame its understanding from the professional perspective, on the personal level it is seen as action and result through institutions and educational experiences throughout life and from a macro perspective it is considered as the key to the development of nations, which finds its pillars in the human factor, it is consensual therefore, to place the future of man and therefore the future of nations, as the axis of the training process.

Postgraduate academic training is a teaching-educational process, whose purpose is to contribute to raise the integral preparation of university graduates, whose didactic conception makes possible a teaching-learning process, which, linked to practice, uses scientific research to place it at the level demanded by society.

It is aimed at postgraduate education with high professional competence and advanced capabilities for specialized professional performance, research, development, innovation and artistic creation.

Hence, a scientific conception is needed about the way to prepare professionals who go through one of the organizational forms of postgraduate academic education, in correspondence with their historical-cultural traditions and according to the current demands of society; therefore, systematization is also assumed as a way to search for new knowledge for the solution of problems generated in social practice.

Its foundations are endorsed in a model, whose documents mark the present success and the commitment with its continuation towards a future adjusted to the new context that humanity lives and has also been addressed by researchers such as Zayas, Zamora and Sarmiento (2019).

From it, it is evident that there is a political will in Cuba, aimed at social, economic, scientific and technological development, which demands from professionals, in all branches of society, a permanent updating of their knowledge to raise the quality of their professional performance, where academic training is indispensable for the achievement of such purposes.

Based on this systematization, the present research aims to make a historical characterization of postgraduate academic training from the development that postgraduate activity has had in Cuba and its present and future projection, taking into account the current context and the objectives set.

Development

From the beginning, social development has demanded from educational institutions that their processes respond to the increasingly growing and complex needs of human development, as well as that all elements of the social structure be subjected to the laws and regularities of the organizational structure of men, for a given era, and in particular those conditioned by the economic development that sustains it. In this aspect, the education of society is no stranger.

Education, the search for alternatives that make it possible in the continuous training of individuals to establish an efficient relationship with the natural environment, social life, and in particular, with the scientific and technological development of the time.

The materialization of these purposes demands substantive transformations in the postgraduate academic training of higher education graduates, to ensure that they possess personal qualities, culture and professional skills that allow them to perform successfully in society.

Such purpose is endorsed from the undergraduate training itself, in the base document for the design of "E" curricula of the Ministry of Higher Education (MES, 2017), where it raises as one of its fundamental premises the system of continuous training of Cuban professionals.

The current scientific-technical revolution demands professionals prepared for the efficient fulfillment of their work tasks on a scientific basis. This requires a process of permanent training and updating aimed at strengthening their knowledge, appropriation and construction with creativity with the knowledge provided.

This statement undoubtedly indicates that a solution to the above lies in postgraduate education, since postgraduate education is one of the irreplaceable answers of the contemporary university to the demands and accelerated social changes, in the updating and professional training.

The main origins of postgraduate academic education can be found in ancient times, when universities granted the degrees of Doctor, Master and Professor to their graduates with the aim of accrediting their professional culture and expertise to teach their science.

Eventually, with the growing development that occurred in the 18th and 19th centuries, these institutions sought alternatives to adapt to the new conditions, and it was in Germany where they first began to offer postgraduate degrees, which gave rise to a new type of university.

This new model was implemented by other countries with their respective adaptations, an example of which was France, which separated research from teaching and assumed a much more centralized control that deprived the universities of their autonomy.

In analyzing postgraduate academic training from its origin and conception, it is also necessary to address how this has materialized in practice. In this regard, there have been many approaches, as many as the breadth of the language has allowed.

All these positions have followers and detractors, and for this purpose they have been used to denominate the postgraduate activity in terms such as: continuing education, permanent education, professional improvement, postgraduate academic education, updating, training and professionalization, etc. These aspects have been regulated in Cuba on the basis of the legal basis that exists for this subject and which, logically, is based on positions assumed from theory.

The above shows the relevance of considering the term "postgraduate academic training" as the most pertinent to refer to the actions carried out by any institution or country to raise the professional level of university graduates with a particular didactic conception that strategically guarantees the continuous training of professionals for a suitable performance according to the social demands made on this professional.

First transformations of postgraduate academic training in Cuba

The postgraduate activity in Cuba and its updating, has its beginnings in colonial times and arrives to the Republic marked by a period of military intervention of the United States between 1898 - 1902, which used education as an instrument to materialize its interference interests, which, according to Añorga (1999), produced "a marked penetration of North American pedagogical ideas, such as pragmatism" (p. 26).

During this period, the postgraduate activity was not a priority, which meant that, in addition to the insufficient actions carried out by the University of Havana, which offered some courses, there were no alternatives for university graduates to improve their education other than abroad.

It was in 1959, with the triumph of the Revolution, that a new stage began with a new meaning in the lives of all the people, which instantly had an impact on education and where the formation of people in the broadest sense ceased to be a forgotten issue and became a fundamental objective.

Until the 70's, the actions developed with the objective of overcoming university graduates were carried out by the Ministry of Education, through courses and seminars. At this stage, institutions such as the Higher Institutes of Education (ISE) in 1960, which later became Institutes of Educational Improvement and then, Institutes of Educational Improvement (IPE).

Similarly, the three universities that existed before the revolutionary triumph began a process of expansion into other territories with the creation of subsidiaries, which later became new universities. In this process, courses, short courses, trainings, etc. were undertaken with the objective of raising the scientific-technical, cultural and political preparation of university graduates in the branches of engineering to guarantee the efficiency of the industrial sector and the country's own development in this sense.

As can be seen, this stage initiated a new look at postgraduate academic training, and as already mentioned, higher education institutions were expanded and diversified as one of the priorities of the revolutionary government, but regardless of what was proposed and the significance of this progress, there was still no consistent strategy in this regard, although progress was being made in this regard.

The road traveled, the accumulated experience and the technical advice, mainly from the socialist camp in Europe with the extinct Union of Soviet Socialist Republics as the main exponent, created the necessary conditions for the establishment of the National System of Scientific Degrees in 1974, and later in 1976, the creation of the Ministry of Higher Education (MES). With this, the Postgraduate Education System was organized as the highest level of the National Education System for the continuing education of university graduates, which gave rise to the Professional Postgraduate System with a massive character and the Scientific Degree System, which had a more selective character.

It is from that moment on that the postgraduate activity began to consolidate steadily and as one of the priority lines of the MES and the institutions that were contributing to that ministry. It is worth noting that all these advances were made in total correspondence with the changes that were taking place in this area in the world, in the region of the Americas and in those countries committed to the construction of Socialism.

This brought about the progress and consolidation of the postgraduate activity in Cuba, creating the conditions so that in 1992, two directions could be clearly defined in the postgraduate activity, the first one related to professional improvement and the second one to academic training. Thus, a process of homologation of the organizational forms of academic training with respect to other countries took place.

With the fall of the socialist camp in the 1990s, Cuba's scientific and academic ties with this group of countries practically disappeared in a few months. For the Cuban graduate program, this rupture had three major implications:

- The need for a change in the regulations established in postgraduate academic training in general, which integrated Cuba into the group of countries of the former socialist camp; a

sustained increase in postgraduate studies was experienced throughout the country in spite of the acute socioeconomic situation the country was going through.

- The different modalities of self-financed postgraduate studies in Cuba began to be offered to foreign students.
- Participation in academic and scientific networks was promoted.

In spite of the present situation, this decade is characterized by the consecutive increase in the number of graduate programs offered and, consequently, in the number of professionals graduating.

The increase in the number of professionals graduating from higher education in different modalities also demanded an increase in postgraduate activity.

The transit through several regulations showed the evolution of this activity in all senses, from the end of the last century to the first decade of the present, which represented a more renovating and developing conception in its projection.

Emphasis is placed on objectives whose correspondence with the changes that occurred, from the accumulated experiences of the practical exercise and the analysis of the behavior of this phenomenon in the world and especially in Latin America, revealed strengths and weaknesses that have made it possible to adapt this activity in correspondence with the changes occurred in the economic and social policy of the country and the current context of geopolitics and economy at the global and regional level.

The 1990s imposed on Cuba an immense challenge for the beginning of the new century, to overcome the so-called "Special Period", derived from the fall of the socialist camp in Eastern Europe. On the other hand, a global scenario marked by a technological revolution, which brought with it the so-called information and knowledge society.

The era of cellular telephony and the Internet became development premises that gave rise to terms such as: digital divide, technological illiteracy, among others, which became issues on the global agenda of international organizations and countries.

The experience accumulated by Cuba, its growing development in the fields of biotechnology, informatics, tourism and medicine, among others, as well as the political will of the State to follow the progress in the socioeconomic development of the country, allowed the approval, in 2004, of a new postgraduate regulation much more adjusted to these purposes.

In the first decade of this century, a process of updating the Cuban model began with the aim of building a more prosperous and sustainable socialism that would guarantee the development of Cuban society and the continuity of the Revolution.

Thus, a group of documents that lay the foundations for the achievement of these purposes and demonstrate the political will of the State, the Government and the Communist Party of Cuba, approved at its 7th Congress, such as the Guidelines of the economic and social policy of the Party and the Revolution for the period 2016-2021, the Conceptualization of the Cuban Economic and Social Model of Socialist Development and the Bases of the National Plan for Economic and Social Development until 2030: Vision of the Nation, Axes and Strategic Sectors; as well as the Objectives of the First National Conference of the PCC, which are closely related to the subject under discussion.

Continuing education and, therefore, postgraduate academic education, reaffirm even more its importance, as reflected in the aforementioned documents and in the recent legal basis that updates and contextualizes this role in the current scenario.

Among the Guidelines of the 7th Congress of the PCC (2011), it is specified:

- 117 (...) to give hierarchy to permanent improvement (...)
- 122 (...) to update the training and research programs of the universities according to the needs of development, the updating of the Economic and Social Model and the new technologies.

The importance given to permanent improvement is evident. In addition, it explicitly addresses the updating of training and research programs of universities according to the needs of society.

On the other hand, in the Conceptualization of the Cuban Economic and Social Model of Socialist Development (2021), in its Chapter 1, it is stated that:

- Education and training in values, health, science, technology and innovation, culture, social communication, defense and national security, rational use and protection of resources and the environment, among others, are decisive for the sustainability and prosperity of the nation.
- A prosperous and sustainable socialist society can be achieved on the basis of a deep revolutionary consciousness and sense of duty, work with efficiency and effectiveness, the participation of workers, high motivation, rational use and saving of resources, progress and application of the results of science, technology and innovation.

These aspects find continuity in Chapter 3, when it is stated that:

- Modernization of the organizational structure - including management methods - as well as the technological structure, especially through the introduction and generalization of the results of science, innovation and technology.

As a continuation of this analysis, there is the document "Bases of the National Economic and Social Development Plan until 2030: vision of the nation, strategic axes and sectors", which in its strategic axis "Human Potential" highlights among its specific objectives:

- Promote a culture that fosters scientific, innovative and entrepreneurial vocation at all levels of society, especially from an early age.
- 13. Promote the formation of highly qualified human potential (...) guaranteeing the development of universities and general education.
- 15. Doctoral training for young talents in universities and technological institutes.
- 17. Continue to encourage the development of research in the field of social and humanistic sciences (...) introduction of results (...) systematically evaluating the impacts obtained.

Likewise, another aspect that goes deeper into the subject are the work objectives approved in the First National Conference of the PCC where it is stated in its objective No. 65, the need to develop social research and socio-political and opinion studies; to make greater use of their results for decision making, the evaluation of impacts in all sectors of society; and to work especially in the conceptualization of the theoretical foundations of the economic and social model.

Postgraduate academic training constitutes one of the forms of consciously organized education that is oriented to the updating of knowledge and its deepening in university graduates, offered by the different educational institutions of the higher level in Cuba, a purpose that led the Ministry of Higher Education in 2019, to the approval of a new Regulation of Postgraduate Education of the Republic of Cuba.

This new regulation states in its Chapter IV "Organizational Forms of Postgraduate Education", Section One, Article 18 that to implement postgraduate education should be structured in professional improvement, postgraduate academic training and doctorate, in turn, from these are derived several organizational forms that are differentiated by their objective and curricular design.

Similarly, in "Section Three", Article 30, it states that postgraduate academic training aims at postgraduate education with high professional competence and advanced capabilities for specialized professional performance, research, development, innovation and artistic creation, which is recognized with an academic degree or a scientific degree.

Its organizational forms are the postgraduate specialty, the master's degree and the doctorate. All complement and enable the study and dissemination of advances in knowledge, science and technology.

A novel aspect of this Regulation, unlike the previous one, separates doctoral training from academic training. In this regard, in its Chapter V "On the doctorate", Article 54, it states that the obtaining of the scientific degree of doctor in a certain area of knowledge is organized around a doctoral training program that assumes scientific research as its center and also contemplates other theoretical and methodological training activities.

Correspondingly, Article 59 states that "the specific regulations for this organizational form of postgraduate studies are established in the current legislation of the National System of Scientific Degrees, a document that was recently approved as part of the set of laws mentioned above.

In the postgraduate activity, it can be seen how it arises from the need of universities as educational institutions, to continue offering their graduates an update of the contents of their area of performance, necessary to maintain their theoretical-practical, technical-methodological and cultural-political level. In response, undoubtedly to the ideological interests of the Cuban revolutionary State

The postgraduate program is a formative activity, which responds to educational interests and as such is inserted within the educational system itself, it is based on a teaching-educational process, which is distinguished by a teaching-learning process with novel characteristics according to its objectives and purposes.

Continuing education is the last educational level of university studies, one of the activities that gives a continuous character to this training for the rest of life, is precisely the postgraduate academic training, as a teaching-educational process, whose purpose is to raise the overall preparation of university graduates, and its didactic conception makes possible a teaching-learning process, which, linked to practice, uses scientific research to place it at the level that society demands.

In this regard, Díaz-Canel and Núñez, 2020, state that the country has a significant human potential working in universities and science, technology and innovation entities with the capacity to respond to various contingencies, including undergraduate and postgraduate training, including doctorates, in areas such as biology, microbiology, biochemistry, pharmacy, psychology, biomedical engineering and others of relevance to the sector. In other words, the country possesses important professional, scientific and technological capabilities, with the values they contribute being the most valuable, such as solidarity and dedication, expressed with special intensity in times of COVID-19. Science, technology and values, all together, offer the possibility of seeking answers to old and new contingencies.

Main challenges of postgraduate academic training and its impact on the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals in Higher Education

- The University must reinforce and consolidate its efforts to link with its environment, with social and economic actors and to produce and transfer relevant and socially valuable knowledge.
- Postgraduate academic training programs must define strategic priorities in their lines of research, aimed at solving the most pressing sustainable development problems of their geographical environment.
- Academic and scientific training should ensure the appropriation of the competencies of a researcher, such as intellectual autonomy, academic work discipline, rigor, as well as the development of capacities to assume ethical, social and environmental responsibility.

Despite the inadequacies of Cuban higher education, encouraging results have been obtained in terms of the formation of a prepared university staff of more than 50,000 education professionals, which constitutes an important strength of Cuban higher education, with challenges in doctoral training and the attainment of academic and scientific categories to reach higher levels of quality, as shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Doctoral Education



Source: Taken from Ministry of Higher Education (2018)

Conclusions

The postgraduate activity, its background and development allowed us to demonstrate that this is the result of a teaching-educational process whose theoretical basis is found in the educational sciences. The study of the methodological theoretical foundations on training allowed us to homologate the term postgraduate academic training in the bibliography consulted. The characterization made by the author

on postgraduate academic training contributed to the elaboration of the theoretical and methodological foundations of the object of study of her doctoral thesis.

Referencias bibliográficas

- Alpízar, M. y Velázquez, R. (2021). La universidad cubana, su desarrollo y acción en tiempos de COVID19. *Revista Universidad y Sociedad*, 13(5), 112-123. <https://rus.ucf.edu.cu>
- Añorga, J. (1999). *La educación avanzada: Paradigma educativo alternativo para el mejoramiento profesional y humano de los recursos laborales y de la comunidad*. www.gestiopales.com/oragnizacion-tolcabo y <http://www.cujae.edu.cu>
- Bernaza, G., Aparicio, J. L., De la Paz, E., Torres, A. M. y Alfonso, J. E. (2020): La educación de posgrado ante el nuevo escenario generado por la Covid 19. *Revista de Educación Médica Superior*. Vol.34, No. 4. ISSN: 0864-2141. <https://ems.sld.cu>
- Díaz-Canel, M. M. y Núñez, J. (2020). Gestión gubernamental y ciencia cubana en el enfrentamiento a la COVID-19. *Anales de la Academia de Ciencias de Cuba*, V. 10, No. (2). ISSN 2304-0106 RNPS 2308. <https://revistaccuba.sld.cu> > [revacc](#) > [article](#) > [view](#)
- Horruitiner, P. (2007). El proceso de formación. Sus características. *Revista Pedagogía Universitaria*. XII (4): 24. <https://www.redage.org> > [publicaciones](#) > [revista-pedagogía](#)
- Ministerio de Economía y Planificación. (2019). Plan nacional de desarrollo económico y social hasta el 2030. <https://www.mep.gob.cu> > [Documentos](#) > [Archivos](#). PDF
- Ministerio de Educación Superior. (2017). *Planes de Estudio E. Documento base de los planes de estudio*. <http://www.mes.gob.cu/es/planes-de-estudio>.
- _____. (2019). *Resolución N. o 140/2019. Reglamento de la Educación de Posgrado de la República de Cuba. Gaceta Oficial No. Ordinaria de 2019*. <http://www.gacetaoficial.gob.cu>
- Organización de Naciones Unidas (2018). *Agenda 2030 y los Objetivos de Desarrollo Sostenible: Una oportunidad para América Latina y el Caribe*. <https://repositorio.cepal.org/handle/11362/40155.4>
- Partido Comunista de Cuba. (2012). *Primera Conferencia Nacional del PCC*. <https://www.granma.cu> > [1ra-conferencia-pcc](#) > [objetivos](#)

- _____. (2016). *Actualización de los lineamientos de la política económica y social del Partido y la Revolución para el período 2016-2021*. 7mo Congreso del Partido. <https://instituciones.sld.cu/fcmec/files/2017/12/Lineamientos-2017.pdf>
- _____. (2017). *Documentos del 7mo. Congreso del Partido aprobados por el III Pleno del Comité Central del PCC el 18 de mayo de 2017 y respaldados por la ANPP el 1 de junio de 2017 (II)*. <https://www.granma.cu/file/pdf/gaceta/>
- _____. (2021). *Conceptualización del modelo económico y social cubano de desarrollo socialista*. <https://bit.ly/3x7dxKn> [Links]
- Valle, A. y Castro, O. (2006). *Retos y perspectivas de la formación y superación de los docentes en Cuba*. Instituto Central de Ciencias Pedagógicas. Archivo digital.
- Zayas, L., Zamora, A. y Sarmiento, O. (2019). Condicionantes sociales en la formación académica de posgrado para el logro de desempeños investigativos del docente universitario. En. *Ciencia e Innovación Tecnológica, Vol. IX, Capítulo Ciencias Pedagógicas*. Académica Universitaria-Opuntia Brava. <http://edacunob.ult.edu.cu>