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The process of formation of student leaders from the University Outreach Department in the degree of Physical Culture

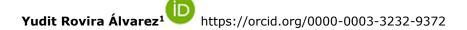
El proceso de formación de líderes estudiantiles desde la Extensión Universitaria en la carrera Cultura Física

O processo de formação de líderes estudantis dede a extensão universitária na carreira Cultura Física

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ABSTRACT

In the present research, a theoretical concentration is offered about the process of formation of student leaders in the pedagogical-sports careers. The general objective was directed to design a strategy that contributes to the formation process of student leaders from the university extension in the Physical Culture career, of the University of Pinar del Río. The results corresponding to its first two research tasks were presented. The general approach of the research was the dialectical-materialistic one, and methods from the theoretical level and from the empirical level were used, such as the analysis of documents, the interview and the survey. The research study carried out about the process of formation of student leaders, from the university extension, is centered in the reality of Cuban university, from a critical look about the social assignment that a professional of Physical Culture has to fulfill his/her goal in a competitive way. The active performance of the student in the socialization and cooperation during the execution of the activities that he/she carries out in the university context and in the community constitute fundamental premises.



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Keywords: Student leaders; Physical culture; University outreach department extension.

RESUMEN

En la presente investigación, se ofrece una concentración teórica acerca del proceso de formación de líderes estudiantiles en las carreras pedagógico-deportivas. El objetivo general estuvo dirigido a diseñar una estrategia que contribuya al proceso de formación de líderes estudiantiles desde la Extensión Universitaria en la carrera Cultura Física, de la Universidad de Pinar del Río "Hermanos Saíz Montes de Oca". Se presentaron los resultados correspondientes a sus dos primeras tareas investigativas. El enfoque general de la investigación fue el dialéctico-materialista y se utilizaron métodos del nivel teórico y del nivel empírico como el análisis de documentos, la entrevista y la encuesta. El estudio investigativo realizado acerca del proceso de formación de líderes estudiantiles, desde la Extensión Universitaria, se centra en la realidad de la universidad cubana, desde una mirada crítica acerca del encargo social que tiene un profesional de la carrera Cultura Física para cumplir con su meta de manera competitiva. Constituyen premisas fundamentales el desempeño activo del estudiante en la socialización y cooperación durante la ejecución de las actividades que realiza en el contexto universitario y en la comunidad.

Palabras clave: Líderes estudiantiles; Cultura Física; Extensión Universitaria.

RESUMO

Na presente investigação, é oferecida uma concentração teórica sobre o processo de formação de líderes estudantis nas carreiras pedagógico-desportivas. O objetivo geral foi orientado para conceber uma estratégia que contribua para o processo de formação de líderes estudantis da extensão universitária na carreira da Cultura Física, na Universidade de Pinar del Río. Foram apresentados os resultados correspondentes às suas duas primeiras tarefas de investigação. A abordagem geral da investigação foi a dialética-materialista e foram utilizados métodos do nível teórico e empírico, tais como a análise de documentos, a entrevista e o inquérito. O estudo de investigação realizado sobre o processo de formação de líderes estudantis, a partir da extensão universitária, centra-se na realidade da universidade cubana, de um ponto de vista crítico sobre a tarefa social que um profissional da carreira da Cultura Física tem de cumprir o seu objetivo de uma forma competitiva. O desempenho ativo do estudante na socialização e cooperação durante a execução das atividades que desenvolve no contexto universitário e na comunidade constitui premissas fundamentais.

Palavras-chave: Líderes estudantis; Cultura física; Extensão universitária.

INTRODUCTION

The current world context, affected by an epidemiological crisis, revalues the role that university students are called to play, participants in socio-political, economic and cultural processes, with developed capacities to offer solutions to existing problems in the contexts where they are found, whether in the Institutions of Higher Education (IES in Spanish) where they are traditionally trained or from community or family spaces.





Batista, González Aportela and Ortiz (2018), express in their studies that the raison d'être of the contemporary university is to satisfy social and individual needs, based on the preparation of the human being as an active entity of the society in which he or she works.

The authors' criterion enunciates the pertinence of the university extension process, expressing in this respect:

"In order to fulfill this mission, the university, as a formative and transforming institution, needs to bring together all its work and project it through a fundamental process: university extension, facilitating the university-society link through the promotion of different forms of culture (scientific-technological, artistic-literary, physical culture, health, socio-humanistic, economic, legal, political-ideological, among others), to respond to the needs of improvement and training, so it contributes to comprehensive cultural development" (p.5).

From this perspective, it is considered that in the university context, the fulfillment of the objectives that the University Extension has today and its link with the social assignment of the professional of the Physical Culture should be pondered. It is a social necessity to promote sports, health and a comprehensive general culture, which makes use of the sciences of such an important career. In addition, a social transformation is demanded that responds to the needs, tastes and preferences of the population in general, from physical activity.

In the field of sports research, leadership has been a topic of growing interest. The importance of the social phenomenon becomes visible in a number of situations and links, among which are identified friendship groups, family, educational settings and communities.

An intentional approach from the pedagogical point of view in the university, specifically directed to the formation of student leaders from the university extension in the pedagogical-sports careers, is in the center of a vision that contemplates the students as protagonists of propositive changes that mobilize other actors and in which they play a fundamental role in the intra- and extra-university communities, sharing common interests and creating conditions of social, cultural and health welfare, with full participation of all.

In recent years, the concept of student leadership has gained great importance, clear evidence that the conception of it has evolved considerably.

Rojas, Rovira, González and Mirabal (2020),

"call powerfully the attention of those who guide their professional work in social areas about the diversity of conceptions "that go from an economic vision to purely social in terms of the role that the university student is called to play as a leader, specifically his social responsibility, from the university substantive processes, especially the extension process" (p.148).





In the system of University-Society interactions, an essential purpose is the promotion of culture in the university and its environment, from this, the student leadership, the need to improve the extension process and its management in order to achieve superior results. "It places it in a position to strengthen all the mechanisms that drive it in a complex scenario such as the one that is revealed today in the region, concluding that from more difficult moments the extension has been victorious and that to the extent that it is more relevant it will achieve the impacts that are required today" (González y González-Fernández Larrea, 2019, p.11).

In view of the above, this research highlights the leading role that a student leader should have in order to fulfill the goals that the University Extension has today as a fundamental formative process in its relationship with society. Studying the context is the basis for the successful achievement of the transformation of the scenario.

The Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development, signed by the General Assembly of the United Nations (UN), includes among its objectives an education that is "inclusive, equitable, of quality and promotes learning opportunities throughout (...) as the basis for improving people's lives and sustainable development" (CEPAL 2016 p.15).

The importance of considering a process aimed at the formation of student leaders from the university extension in the pedagogical-sports careers, for their action on other actors and spaces in which they intend to intervene, leads to consider the relationships that occur between these and other actors from cultural aspects, interests and needs, in the case of the university the relationship of the student with other students, as well as in the territorial spaces promote interactions between the community and the university.

"The social function of the Cuban university, to form citizens capable of promoting culture in any environment where they interact, as actors of social transformation, with participation and identity and with a final objective in the benefit of society, in the understanding and dialogue of knowledge, necessarily implies an active position, as actors of transformation" (Rovira and López, 2017, p.38).

Antonio de Marco, Fanfa and Pinto de Almeida (2018) emphasize that it is the responsibility of the IES, particularly the universities, to reconcile academic training with economic, social and environmental objectives. Thus, it must incorporate in its teaching, research and extension activities, propositive and innovative actions that make viable the development of the skills and technical competences of the future professionals, based on ethical principles and moral values.

As Cao and Céspedes (2019) express about the political-ideological work in the network of physical culture and sports as a challenge in the present times

"in correspondence with the new scenario, (...) in the university premises where the future professionals are formed, (...) the ideological preparation of the youth and the exaltation of their most sublime values are a necessity" (p.127).





Noa, H. (2019) expresses an interesting consideration about leadership in pedagogical-sports careers that coincides with the effects of the diagnosis made, since in his postulates he expresses that,

"The continuous formation of high level professionals with leadership capacity is achieved through the coordination of academic, labor and research actions that propitiate the development of learning by the students in the areas of applied sciences, scientific research, methodology and special sports didactics, which together with the intelligent handling of psychological, strategic and communication aspects, once understood and mastered, will allow the leaders to have the pedagogical mastery to install climates of mutual trust and motivation on the possible achievements of the sportspersons" (p.51).

In this sense, there are diverse actions of all kinds that student leaders can carry out as actors of the extension "that allow not only the transformation in the personal, but of other actors "as a social responsibility that each of the members of the university community must carry out, both inside and outside the university context" (Vento y Ordaz, 2019, p.919).

Making a systematization of the studied theories about University Extension and the role of the student leader in pedagogical-sports careers, it is considered in the research that it is essential to promote the university-society link as the maximum aspiration of Cuban Higher Education. It is necessary to diagnose the current contexts where the student leader works in order to apply the knowledge of Physical Culture Sciences in search of new professional problems and the solution in the community toward a transformation with superior results.

It is manifested that the type of leader intervenes in the psychological climate that exists in the group, in the relations that are instituted between its members, as well as in the fulfillment of the tasks, existing a superior stimulation towards the fulfillment of the goals that are obtained with support, initiative and creativity Troncoso, Burgos and López (2015).

"They express in their studies the need to understand leadership practices, the generation of motivational climates and communication among sports leaders (...) that the athlete feels confident, (...) that he feels understood and accepted. When the athlete trusts the person who leads him/her in sports, he/she presents greater sports satisfaction" (p.2).

Leadership in pedagogical-sports training in Cuba

Noa (2019) expresses an accurate consideration about the leadership in sport, he contemplates the coach as the main leader "to exert influence over the players, (...) so that the coaches can achieve the necessary leadership in the conduction of their athletes.





The cited author states that:

"It is essential that coaches possess a series of qualities and characteristics that distinguish them as an influential personality and inspire in their followers the necessary confidence and security to be followed" (p.54).

Noa (2019) states the considerations about leadership in sport when expresses in their postulates that:

"athletes tend to follow those who offer them sufficient confidence, credibility and certainty for the successful conduct to the top of competitive aspirations, to the satisfaction of their desires, expectations and needs" (p.53).

"Today, when sport is increasingly competitive, it is essential to consider (...) that individual players and teams, as an organized sporting entity, are in a constant struggle to overcome themselves and their opponents in order to achieve or maintain supremacy".

Such perspective leads to consider that, in the case of the Physical Culture career, the actions that are carried out, from the university extension, must be closely related to the Professional Model, in such a way that it pays tribute to the formation of a professional "provided with the knowledge, skills and values (...) characterized by ethics, humanism, inclusion and social equity" (Noa, 2019, p.52).

In every educational institution, specifically in the IES, there are students who are democratically elected by their peers, as representatives of their interests. The university promotes leadership attitudes for the good of research, science, culture, technology, change, political and social transformation.

For Pulido and Barreiro (2019),

"The current transformations of Cuban Higher Education lead to the search for efficiency in the management of university substantive processes" (p.152). "The management of university processes must be accompanied by student leaders with personal qualities related to initiative, empathy, adaptability and persuasion to lead the teams of professionals who execute the substantive processes of the organizations" (p.154).

All of which leads us to think about the need to intend a training process that will allow for the development of competent professionals who will meet the demands that society imposes on contemporary universities.

The Cuban university has been characterized by a constant search for the improvement of the extensionist process, for being a process that promotes the development of actions and strategies in the cultural, sports, recreational and artistic orders, which contribute to the qualifying integrality and identity of its formative nature as a vehicle for the achievement of the professional's preparation in an orderly, systematic and efficient way.





The university student, provided with a preserved and developed culture from the university campuses, contributes to transform other spaces, all of which demands from the formation of students a leadership in this sense.

The theoretical postulates of Rojas, González and Martínez (2018) express that,

"promoted by the University Student Federation (FEU in Spanish), the University Extension Commission was established in 1950 to spread culture among members of society who otherwise had no access to university classrooms. The incorporation of university students as socializing agents was a distinctive practice in Cuba, an element that shows the student participation and a significant antecedent for the process of formation of student leaders of pedagogical-sports careers".

A significant fact, expressed by the authors, is considered the creation of the Feu, which can be considered a significant fact for the development of the formation of student leaders. This organization, with deep leadership, would undertake in the universities the most important changes of the time.

Given that extension work is one of the edges of socio-cultural promotion and has a strong impact on the educational environment, it is considered, then, as an opportune paradigm to promote the management of student leadership training in universities, based on the potential offered by university extension as a substantive process.

The authors propose that the process of formation of the university student becomes a process of professionalization and express that the real challenge is to develop the capacity of the university student to respond to the complexity that the social demands that his environment imposes on him are going through.

The promoter becomes a potential multiplier where the personal-social-professional development is promoted, in the student-student relationship, according to the requirements that the social context demands from the formative process of the professional future. These are criteria that guarantee its relevance and its election to contribute to the professional and integral formation of the students from the extensionist process.

Preparing university students, leaders through a formative process, is of significant importance and relevance at present. It also demands the understanding of certain knowledge and skills in a creative way, especially if they are students in pedagogical-sports careers. This translates into a professional with originality, flexibility, motivation, divergent thinking and cognitive independence in the different spheres of action.

The formation of student leaders, from the university extension in the pedagogical-sports careers, contributes to fulfill by means of the sports-cultural promotion the dialectic relationship of the institution with the society, when favoring, with it, that superior levels are reached in the cultural sports development of the students and the society.

The different study plans through which the Physical Culture career has passed were characterized by diverse adaptations that at each moment required the formation needs of the professional.





Teamwork is in the very essence of sports activity. Noa (2019) enunciates it referring to the figure of the coach, however, for the purposes of research, about the formation of the university student as a leader, his criteria are assumed when expressing that,

"is an essential condition to be able to successfully carry out the tasks that are incumbent upon it" such as decision-making, generating ideas or solving problems, especially in an activity as complex as sport" (p.58) from all its spheres of action as a future professional.

In the Institutions of Higher Education there are varied actions and programs that help students to develop skills, competencies, attitudes and values that contribute to leadership, from the search to the solution of problems.

The phenomenon of student protagonism has almost always been addressed in literature in relation to other interacting phenomena such as the teaching-learning process, educational work, the role of student groups and organizations, among others.

University leadership has become a positive topic of interest for the different organizations and institutions that consider it essential for the integral formation in all the academic environments and in the different levels of education: school, higher technical, university and professional.

Rojas, González Fernández-Larrea and Martínez (2018) state that:

"The University, as a cultural institution, has to contribute to social formation, to the reaffirmation of cultural and national identity, to demonstrate the humanist superiority of socialism and to the formation of values that imply improving the quality of life, promoting culture, both in the intra-university community and in that of its surroundings, with emphasis on the preparation of future professionals with a more integral general culture" (p.351).

Authors such as Labadí, López and Gaínza (2016) in their joint studies have expressed that student protagonism as an educational resource that allows students to be involved in their formation and development processes based on their potential, which becomes a challenge for the educational institution and the educators. Others, such as Casajus (2016), propose to develop physical activities, experiencing recreational and sports activities, where the success is the participation of the target population and the exaltation of values such as commitment and responsibility, promoting the personal development of the target population through practices, so that the change reaches their communities; all this from a concept that understands the university extension as a dynamic dialogue between the university and the community.

Leaders act to help a group achieve objectives through the maximum application of their skills. Their task is to guide, to convince, to lead and, for this reason, they wish to contribute to the development of communication skills, to favour the formation and expression of thought, to improve the language by giving it fluency, expressiveness and, at the same time, to stimulate creativity and favour spontaneity where communication becomes an indispensable term to guarantee success. These elements are fundamental for leaders to face different types of crises and to carry out any undertaking efficiently.





The formation of student leaders, from the university extension, in the pedagogical-sports careers, it is a fundamental challenge of the Cuban Higher Education to form generations of men and women developed in all their potentialities, with a vast culture, to promote the teamwork, to grant the role of leader persons, to demand the rights, duties and to be ethical in the exercise of the profession.

In the Physical Culture career of the University of Pinar del Río, the formation of student leaders from the university extension presents insufficiencies that are manifested in scarce knowledge about their role, lack of protagonism in activities, actions and tasks, as well as scarce systematicity in the actions, which limits their contribution to the socio-cultural development in the intra-and extra-university community.

Based on the above, the objective of this work is to focus on designing a strategy that contributes to the process of training student leaders from the university extension in the Physical Culture career, of the University of Pinar del Río.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The research was developed from a combination of different methods. As fundamental theoretical methods, historical-logical and modeling were used, others from the empirical level such as document analysis, the interview and the survey. In addition, the specific method of cultural promotion was used because of the type of research that is carried out to find out opinions, criteria, as well as the characteristics of the 21 student leaders identified in the Physical Culture career who were part of the sample in the research. In addition, it was necessary to study the cultural reality of the community, its potentialities and natural resources, to detect its limitations for the development of the research, its patrimonial values, as well as tastes and interests of the population.

The population was integrated by 39 students of the regular day course, all of them from Pinar del Río province, and they were willing to participate. Besides, 17 professors and ten directors were selected from the entire Physical Culture career of the University of Pinar del Río. It was taken into account that they had more than ten years of university experience, link with the university extension, all of them with the category of Master in Physical Activity in the Community, as well as interest to participate. Twenty-one student leaders were selected. A system of instruments was built with which the proposed dimensions and indicators were filtered, applying them to the actors of the process under study, from the behavior of each of the dimensions and the assignment of the corresponding category.

The analysis of documents was carried out with the aim of obtaining information about the Physical Culture career and the process of university extension, as well as making an assessment of the planning of the organizational forms of university extension. The documentation was analyzed exhaustively because, in the pedagogical processes, the practice must be preceded by the planning and organization of these as rectors. All the documents that were examined have the same points.





Conclusively, the presence of the topic in the University Extension Program at different levels was considered poor at the different levels of organization of the extension; there are no intentional projections in the direction of student leadership formation. In the educational strategies of the academic years, actions are declared that influence this sense, but do not require the formation of student leaders.

In the educational projects of the student brigades, group educational needs are identified and developed, but not individual ones; however, it was found that the existence of extensionist projects in this sense is not taken into account nor could it be evidenced.

This research assumes the criteria of Rojas (2018) referred to in his thesis, where he explains that the educational process is projected in three dimensions: the educational process, the developmental process and the instructional process.

The behavior of each one of the dimensions evaluated showed that 85 % of the teachers and directors consider as poor the knowledge about the incidence of the formation process of student leaders and the potentialities for the integral formation of the students of the Physical Culture career.

For their part, more than 57 % were unaware of the conscious and intentional character that the process can have, as well as 58 % expressed little preparation in concrete actions in this regard and 57 % recognized the need for the presence of training actions by stages; likewise, 96% recognized the potential of a training process of this type in the formation of values, as well as the correspondence between the influences of the training process and the attitudes of student leaders.

Information on the impact on the formation of values in student leaders was low 97 %, while 92 % did not know the potential of the process in the formation of transformative capacities useful for life, and finally 86 % did not know the attitudes that those involved in the process of training student leaders may have.

The 38.5 % of the student leaders recognized the potentialities of the process for the formation of values in their professional training, as well as the 47 % expressed as positive the correspondence between the influences of a process of this type and their attitudes as future professionals of the Physical Culture and what it can contribute in their professional training.

Seventy percent refer to availability, however, only 30 % acknowledged having attitudes for such a process.

The 44.3 % of the teachers gave the highest category to the formation of transformative capacities useful for life, while in the students, 87 % gave this category.

The applicability of the process was recognized by the students as good, while the teachers and directors, in 58%, gave this category to the applicability in the professional and social areas in general. (76.4%) of the teachers recognized the value of the process for the future professional work of the leaders, while the leaders gave only (9.2%) to this indicator.





The 93.2 % of the teachers recognized the incidence of a training process of this type, only 14 % of the student leaders refer to it, while the teachers, in 95 % and 98 %, gave the maximum category to both indicators.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The individual semi-structured interview was applied to the directors, the teacher coordinating the extension process in the career, as well as teachers from the Department of Extracurricular Activities to find out their opinion regarding the preparation and motivation they have regarding the subject.

The survey was applied to the students, in order to know their motivation regarding the subject.

The following stand out as regularity of the diagnosis:

- The process of training student and sports leaders in the Physical Culture career at the University of Pinar del Río has shortcomings that are manifested in few planned actions from the University Extension, with a predominance of a perspective focused on the group and with limited preparation of the professors who run it.
- Insufficient recognition of the influences of the University Extension process in education, of the values and attitudes that typify the student leaders as actors of social transformation from the culture of their profession.
- Low appreciation by teachers and student leaders about the importance of the process of University Extension in the formation of transformative skills useful for life.

It is considered in the research that a university student of pedagogical-sports careers, who stands out as a student leader, must show abilities, both personal and group, that identify them as an active and socializing subject in the development of all university activities (academic, research, extension and sports).

Such perspective allows us to identify a series of functions to be taken into account in the formation of students in pedagogical-sports careers as leaders:

- Evident acceptance in the community.
- They must represent the community and be responsible for formulating its needs to the different mass organizations and institutions.
- In cooperation with the different social actors of the community, they must carry out the diagnosis to face the problems.
- Use their emotional and intellectual capacities to lead groups in complex contexts.
- They must possess human skills that allow them to stimulate the members of their community.





Consideraciones generales

Taking into account the regularities found in the diagnosis, key elements are highlighted about the formation of student leaders from the University Extension, in the pedagogical-sports careers:

- In general, the university community recognizes the importance of the leader to foster the unity of the student body, as well as to develop and promote actions in different contexts.
- The practice of leadership requires a training process closely linked to the promotion of the culture of their profession.
- Within the fundamental components of a process of formation of students in pedagogical-sports careers as leaders, emphasis must be placed on content and on skills, attitudes and values.
- The conception of the university student of pedagogical-sports careers as a leader conceives a group of functions, which he must develop through his formation.
- The formation of university students as leaders is a priority process to be developed in the pedagogical-sports careers.
- The existence of training deficiencies among students to know how to manage in intra- and extra-university environments.
- The determining factors of student leadership in pedagogical-sports careers are determined by social commitment, creativity and the search for healthy solutions to situations.
- Positive evaluation of their role as leaders, social commitment to others.
- Recognition of the need for a training process in this regard, as well as support from the university community leaders.
- Need to promote in pedagogical-sports careers the participation and involvement of students as leaders, through a training process due to the intentional nature of their actions in intra- and extra-university environments.

The new vision of a participatory, transformative, strategic and open leadership is what is needed to address the changes that the university must make to meet the cultural, political, economic and social needs of the university community and its environment.

With regard to the role of teachers, it is taken into consideration that they should be trainers of student leaders from all possible angles, by contextualizing the academic programs, promoting teamwork, giving the role of teacher leaders, demanding the rights, duties and being ethical in the exercise of the profession.

Leadership is part of the skill set as a teacher. University professors are members of the community; they are responsible academically for training the future leaders of society.

Leadership is of interest to the different organizations and institutions that consider it essential for the integral formation in all academic areas and in the different levels of education: school, technical-superior, university and professional.





The student leader develops personal and interpersonal skills. His behavior and skills inspire those who follow him, making them strive and reach a higher level.

The importance of the study of leadership for managers and teachers influences the development and progress of the students who practice it, as well as the environments in which they act, from the academic, work and research.

It is intended that the students, from their leadership, are incorporated into the preparation to assume the direction of the educational processes, the making of correct decisions, the cooperative sense and responsibility with a high level of professional management.

The preparation must be differentiated, taking into account individual needs and the environment where it takes place, with an organization and structure that ensures effectiveness, and all this must be agreed to determine needs.

Student leaders need to become protagonists and get involved in prioritizing the problems of the university and the community; help find the best strategies to guarantee the achievement of the objectives they set. The formative process in university extension has an essentially transforming social task, which aims to respond to a group of needs, also of a social nature.

The university student trained as a leader, active subject of the process, is the driving force behind the construction of their knowledge, skills, attitudes and values related to their actions as a future professional, actively, creatively, reflectively and independently, learn to learn and seek information, learn to be, to live together as a group, learn by doing, working in and through the various activities of physical culture that will develop throughout their training and once trained, with creativity and independence.

The proposed strategy was structured on the basis of specific strategic actions, aimed at training the teaching staff, training the student leader from university extension through the implementation of workshops and the creation of a management group. The validity of the strategy was verified through the Delphi method, through which the experts contributed with criteria that contributed to its improvement. In addition, an initial experience of the strategy was implemented in the Physical Culture career, based on its particularities.

The research study carried out about the process of formation of student leaders, from the university extension, is focused on the reality of Cuban university, from a critical look about the social assignment that a professional of the Physical Culture career has to fulfill his goal in a competitive way. The active performance of the student in the socialization and cooperation during the execution of the activities that he/she carries out in the university context and in the community constitute fundamental premises.





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The authors have participated in the writing of the work and analysis of the documents.



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