



## A Look at the Process of Achieving Excellence in the Bachelor's Degree in Physical Culture

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### Abstract

Exploratory, descriptive, and experimental studies based on various scientific research techniques done for several years, and an external evaluation performed by the Technical Commission of the National Accreditation Board produced invaluable considerations about the characteristics of the Degree of Physical Culture as a guarantor of excellence that contributes to higher quality and pertinence of professional education, an essential requirement to meet the professional performance requirements with comprehensiveness and competency.

**Keywords:** accreditation, excellence, physical culture.

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## Introduction

The main purpose of education in the Cuban society is to prepare and train individuals for their full inclusion in social life, and to thoroughly accomplish their functions and tasks for its benefits. In that sense, Núñez J., 2010 said, “*Quality must include pertinence; any thought of quality detached from pertinence promotes the alienation of process that create social realities that could help make transformations.*”

The Faculty of Physical Culture integrated to the Ignacio Agramonte Loynaz University of Camagüey, in the 2014-2015 academic year, following the process of optimizing higher education that led to the integration of universities. With 40 years existing as a bachelor’s degree, the faculty has a staff and students committed to excellence, thus becoming renown throughout its historical evolution.

The degree has made a progressive and stable development in different settings or key areas of university work. In the 2013-2017 period, critical advances were made in the teaching and methodological work, organization of scientific research, the educational and political-ideological work of students, and the projection of postgraduate work. This period has been influenced by a strong organizational and methodological work in the optimization of Syllabus E, which gathers all the experience of the staff and put into practice, creating a qualitative higher level of optimization of the curriculum and the teaching-learning process.

Quality management within the degree has gone through different self-assessment moments that evidenced the strengths and weaknesses of every variable, with their corresponding improvement plans following adjustment and optimization throughout past academic courses. Accordingly, the Rector of the



Ignacio Agramonte University of Camagüey requested an external evaluation of the Bachelor's Degree in Physical Culture at the Manuel Fajardo Faculty of Physical Culture, which was conducted according to the SEA-CU of the Republic of Cuba. Resulting from the diagnostic studies that preceded this research, the authors identified the following problematic: What elements should the Bachelor's Degree in Physical Culture have in favor of excellence?

## Materials and Methods

During the evaluation period, several actions were taken, namely a study and analysis by the technical assessing commission in charge of the Self-Assessment Report of the Degree and complementary information, a meeting for the presentation of the degree's self-assessment report by the head teacher of the degree with the participation of the members of the technical assessing commission, the degree's self-assessment commission with the heads of variables, members of the Board of Directors of the faculty, the teachers, graduates from the last five years, and representatives of the National Institute of Sports Physical Education, and Recreation (INDER, as employers.

Likewise, the plan included a review of documents, lesson observation, survey of students, teachers, and graduates of the degree. Additionally, comprehensive exams were given to students between the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> years; a meeting was held with several OACES (Bodies from the Central Administration of the State), like INDER, the Ministry of Education (MINED), the Provincial Company of Camping; a visit was made to the basic organization of graduates and students through their research and on-the-job practice; an intervention was made in La Belen Community through project *Todo Mezclado*, as part of the macro project of the university. A visit was also paid to the specialized classroom and the camping site called *Los Canjilones*, used for recreational activities within the area of influence. These actions, as a whole, permitted the group to make invaluable considerations about the aspects that must characterize the Bachelor's Degree in Physical Culture to be accredited as excellent.



## Results and Discussion

The current scientific results derived from a thorough and painstaking educational, political-ideological, methodological, and research work started by the degree's staff, with a pivotal and meritorious role of the assessing commission together with the technical assessing committee of the degree from the National Accreditation Board. The external Assessing Commission was formed by, Dr. Carlos Cuervo Pérez, Ph.D.- The Manuel Fajardo University of Physical Culture and Sports Sciences, from Havana, Dr. Ana Celia Matarán Torres, Ph.D. University of Oriente, Dr. Modesta Mayo Abrahan, Ph.D, the Maximo Gomez Baez University of Ciego de Avila, Dr. Walberto Quiala Barroso, Ph.D., University of Las Tunas, and Dr. Inalvis Mengana Osorio, Ph.D., University of Guantánamo. The degree's Technical Assessing Committee included the participation of Dr. Maribel Santiesteban Pérez, Ph.D., University of Guantánamo.

The Manuel Fajardo Faculty of Physical Culture at the University of Camagüey has established timely and pertinent collaboration with the National Institute of Sports, Physical Education, and Recreation (INDER), on aspects pertaining to the mission and vision of the center. It started in 1977, with the creation of the provincial branch responsible for preparing human resources for INDER to fill posts in the provinces of Las Tunas, Ciego de Avila, and Camaguey. Its first teaching actions aimed to the formation of bachelors through courses by meetings, and afternoon and evening courses.

By the 1993-1994 course, the solid work on the formation of Physical Culture professionals turned the branch into the now Faculty of Physical Culture. The degree, first in the branch, then in the Faculty, has been under the subordination of the Higher Institute of Physical Culture, later the University of Physical Culture and Sports Sciences, as the guiding center in the country. A number of 1051



professionals have graduated from this school in the regular courses, and more than 7000 have graduated from other course modalities, and have rendered their services throughout the country in the different spheres of influence of Physical Culture. In the last five-year period, a total of 166 students have graduated and taken important responsibilities for INDER, as directors, the National Commissioner of Athletics, the National Technical Commission of Table Tennis, the president of the Hermanos Saiz Association, the Director of the National Women's Soccer Team, among other institutions, bodies, and organizations at different levels.

It has four spheres of influence, such as Physical Education, Sports, Recreation, and Therapeutic and Prophylactic Physical Culture that favors complementation of professional education. The staff is made of 116 workers, of which 60 are teachers holding different scientific and academic categories, combining youth and experience that dynamize professional education in the degree, with a high level of professionalism, commitment, and loyalty.

The faculty includes 22 Doctors with a Ph.D. in Physical Culture and Pedagogical Sciences, 35 Masters degrees of several specialties, including 1 full professor and researcher, 18 full professors, 31 Associate Professors, 9 Assistant professors, and 2 Instructors, with 3.57% of publications in group 3 and 4 journals. The faculty is also made of 28 sports laureates, and 14 high-achieving students that work as student teachers. (See Appendix 1, Appendix 2)

It is important to stress on the quality of the staff within the national setting, being members of different commissions of scientific degree and assessment panels. Internationally, the faculty stands out in scientific education of professionals from other countries in doctorates and master's degree courses. Moreover, part of the staff has been summoned to work as technical and managing in friendly countries, such as Angola, Mozambique, Venezuela, Aruba, St. Lucia Islands, Ecuador, India, the Dominican Republic, and Barbados, demonstrating their



professionalism and contributing to maintaining ties of cooperation, as sports ambassadors.

The quality strategy implemented course registration is clear; the students are committed to the revolutionary assignments requested by the country, by participating in different sports, cultural, health, and environmental activities in different communities, and helping out the population of areas affected by meteorological events that struck the province. The postgraduate courses have graduated 44 master's degrees and 31 doctors, 13 of which are from the faculty, along with 8 foreigners, and 10 from other provinces.

Computer systems can be used to design several different technical resources for professional training, such as a software application to study opponents in boxing, educational videos, applications to perform aerobics in physical culture, a test in .ppt format for evaluation of physical therapy facilities, a significant use of cell phones (88%) by students for knowledge interactivity and its evaluation from the virtual library of the faculty. The faculty has 8 research projects with the participation of 60% of students, and a Research Center that encourages research studies of physical culture.

Below are the Strengths and Weaknesses recognized in each variable, according to the SEA-CU, in January 2014:

Variable 1: Pertinence and social impact

#### STRENGTHS

1. Social recognition by bodies, employers, and population related to social development.
2. Effective management of teachers and students of the degree in relation to the main development programs and top research projects in the province, with significant impacts on several areas of physical culture. (See Appendix 3)



3. High reputation of the staff and close ties with various countries resulting from services rendered in terms of professional training and postgraduate academic education, through Master's Degree courses in the Pedagogy of Physical Culture and the Curricular Collaborative Doctorate in Physical Culture Sciences.
4. Increased postgraduate academic training of teachers in the degree, through doctorate courses, with the inclusion in the Curricular Collaborative Doctorate in Physical Culture Sciences, creating pertinence and a social impact on the territory and other provinces. (See Appendix 4)
5. Recognition of the staff at the national level, with teachers who are members of the national commission of scientific grade in Physical Culture, experts of the national panel of doctoral thesis, and the national commission of the degree.
6. The publication of an indexed, group 2 journal of Science and Sports, part of the degree, and acknowledged by MES.
7. The Delivery of international training courses for Karate Do trainers.

## 2. VARIABLE 2: TEACHERS AND AUXILIARY STAFF

### STRENGTHS

1. High pedagogic mastery and commitment of the staff to the revolution, guaranteeing the methodological work and systematic training, with an effect on student education and technical and scientific collaboration, particularly the assistance provided by 16 teachers to six countries in the last five years.
2. High scientific and academic level of the staff, in which 36.7% has a Ph.D., and 60% has a Master's Degree. It favors the implementation of substantive processes in the degree to be run by teachers with several years of experience in higher education, with major teaching categories (FP and AP). (See Appendix 1)
3. The auxiliary staff that supports teaching has the knowledge and experience needed to perform quality work.



4. Most teachers, (71.7%) are engaged in research with outstanding results awarded in the territory, including related publications, the use of literature reviewed by students. (See Appendix 2 and Appendix 3)

### VARIABLE 3: STUDENTS

#### STRENGTHS

1. High student engagement in the design of the year's academic projects and implementation of the Educational Work Project in the Class.
2. Broad participation of students in the Student Teacher and High-Achieving Academic Movement, producing satisfactory results.
3. The solution to problems of physical culture by students in their research and on-the-job practice in the province, through engagement to teaching units.
4. Systematic off-campus work recognized by the university, faculty, and the community resulting from the broad involvement of students.
5. Close ties between institutional leaders and political-student leaders with teachers and students.
6. Participation of doctors of the degree in systematic panels to assess students looking for quality and competent professionals in the Physical Culture Degree.

### VARIABLE 4: INFRASTRUCTURE

#### STRENGTHS

1. All the subjects in the base curriculum have basic texts (electronic or printed), corresponding to the program. The electronic bibliography available at the FTP site is extensive and covers all subjects; it is widely used by teachers and students.
2. The faculty ensures a classroom for each class, including specialized rooms for particular subjects, two computer laboratories featuring 18 computers, which





are open 14 hours a day between Mondays and Thursdays, and 8 hours on Fridays and Saturdays.

3. There are Sports facilities for teaching a group of subjects related to the profession, including a physical therapeutic facility for students and employees of all the faculties of the university and the community.

4. The degree has a library for 40 seated students. It also includes a dental clinic that assists students, staff, and community members.

6. The teachers of the degree have designed 177 supporting materials for teaching (booklets, presentations, multimedia, etc.).

7. Teachers and students can access 5 related national journals and 165 foreign journals from any computer and cell phone.

8. The faculty has a web page used by students and teachers.

## VARIABLE 5 CURRICULUM

### STRENGTHS

1. The projection, systemic organization, implementation, and control of methodological work ensures high levels of staff training to cope with the challenges of professional education, using a comprehensive conception of the educational strategy, depending on the modes of performance in physical culture.

2. Adequate balance of lesson types, with a predominance of practical activities based on the utilization of active methods directed to developing learning.

3. Timely implementation of most curricular strategies in the degree, academic years, and disciplines, thus guaranteeing its integration into the principal integrating discipline (working-research education), and the attention to local problems using an interdisciplinary perspective.



4. The curricular conception of the degree responds to the demands of professional education in keeping with the local particularities.

Up to this point, the report has shown the quality of institutional management in the 2014-2018 period, according of the analysis of strengths and weaknesses, as well as aspects to be improved. However, the degree is going through a qualitatively higher stage of development, thanks to the implementation of improvements and follow up, including the indicators of variables of the quality pattern stated in the current legislation, Resolution 150/ 2018, and SEA-IES/ 2019, according to the strategic planning established to fulfill the mission of the university, particularly the Faculty of Physical Culture.

Some of the above can be illustrated as follows:

- ✓ The incorporation of 2 new Doctors (Ph.D.), representing 40% of the staff (the figure rose to 24 compared to the end of 2018).
- ✓ Higher academic efficiency and cycle efficiency in 72% and 54.1%, respectively; it was 54% and 48%, respectively, at the end of the 2017-2018 academic year.
- ✓ The graduate exam (English language) was passed by 100% of students in the 2019-2020 regular course.
- ✓ The virtual teaching-learning environment includes more than 60% of subjects in the degree.
- ✓ The degree offers 6 new Diploma Courses (at the end of 2019, there was only one course).
- ✓ The total number of awards received by students and teachers increased to 18 (11 and 7, respectively).
- ✓ Working agreements were established with 4 new institutions (Provincial Baseball Commission, the Rene Vallejo Psychiatric Hospital, the Provincial Center for Horse Therapy, and the Provincial Center for Sports Medicine).
- ✓ In 2019, four new research projects were initiated in areas like the utilization of genetic markers in the selection of new talents, training and development of professional teacher and student competencies in the Bachelor's



Degree in Physical Culture, the sustainability of Camagueyan sports, and the development of high performance sports in Camaguey.

✓ In 2021, two new research projects were integrated to stimulate the training of Physical Culture professionals from the early stages, and as part of postgraduate education.

Therefore, it can be asserted that today, the degree is at a qualitative higher stage of development.

## Conclusion

Following a thorough analysis based on the compliance with the procedures established by the SEA-CU and the evidence presented by the faculty and the degree that permitted the identification of the main characteristics, strengths, and aspects to be improved, the members of the self-assessing commission and the directors of the university, faculty, and degree, together with the representative of the technical commission of the JAN (National Accreditation Board), submitted the final report to the Ministry of Higher Education with the proposal of accrediting the faculty as Excellent.

Finally, in January 2019, the representative of MES communicated that the Faculty of Physical Culture of Camaguey fulfilled the requirements of the SEA-CU for the period evaluated, in spite of the fact that it was the first such assessment performed at the faculty.

The report expresses the quality state of institutional management in the 2014-2018 period, according of the analysis of strengths and weaknesses, as well as aspects to be improved. However, today the degree is going through a qualitatively higher stage of development, thanks to the implementation of improvements and follow-up, including the indicators of variables of the quality pattern stated in the current legislation, Resolution 150/ 2018, and SEA-IES/ 2019, according to the strategic planning established to fulfill the mission of the university, particularly the Faculty of Physical Culture.



The current state of management at this Center of Higher Education (CES) is also the result of the collective implementation of the strategy of quality integrated to the Master Strategy, the Communications and Information Technology Strategy within the context of the university, and other strategies that belong to the degree that allowed for continuous improvement of university processes and their results from the base.



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Conflict of interests:

The authors declare the absence of conflict of interests in relation to this manuscript.



### Appendix 1 Summary of the Staff Meeting

|  | Previous accreditation | % | Current accreditation | %     |
|--|------------------------|---|-----------------------|-------|
| <b>Total staff</b>                                   |                        |   | 60                    |       |
| <b>Doctors (Ph.D.)</b>                               |                        |   | 22                    | 37.6  |
| <b>Master's Degrees and specialists in the staff</b> |                        |   | 37                    | 61.66 |
| <b>Full and Associate Professors</b>                 |                        |   | 52                    | 86.66 |

### Appendix 2

| Indexed publications    | + texts    | Monographs | Other publications | TOTAL      | Web of Science and BDI |
|-------------------------|------------|------------|--------------------|------------|------------------------|
| 2013                    | 2          |            | 0                  | 2          | 0                      |
| 2014                    | 77         |            | 3                  | 76         | 2                      |
| 2015                    | 53         |            | 4                  | 57         | 9                      |
| 2016                    | 16         |            | 1                  | 17         | 4                      |
| 2017                    | 43         |            | 10                 | 53         | 17                     |
| <b>TOTAL</b>            | <b>191</b> |            | <b>18</b>          | <b>209</b> | <b>32</b>              |
| TOTAL STAFF             | 60         |            |                    |            |                        |
| <b>Index by teacher</b> | <b>3.2</b> |            | <b>0.3</b>         | <b>3.5</b> | <b>0.53</b>            |

**Index of Average publications in indexed journals by teacher + texts: 3.2, and from this 0.53, corresponding to groups 1 and 2 (Web of Science and BDI). Total publication index: 36.7**



### Appendix 3

| RESEARCH PROJECTS  |          | NEW STUDENTS |              |
|--|----------|--------------|--------------|
| TYPES  | AMOUNT   | AMOUNT       | PERCENT      |
| NATIONAL   | 8        | 87           | 35.51        |
| INTERNATIONAL  |          |              |              |
| <b>TOTAL</b>   | <b>8</b> | <b>87</b>    | <b>35.51</b> |
| <b>PERCENT OF STUDENTS INCLUDED IN RESEARCH PROJECTS AT THE UINSTITUTION:<br/>(number of students included in the projects in relation to the total enrollment x 100).</b> |          |              |              |

### Appendix 4

| POSTGRADUATE                  |           |           |           |           |           |
|-------------------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| Type of postgraduate activity | 2014      | 2015      | 2016      | 2017      | 2018      |
| Courses                       | 3         | 11        | 28        | 5         | 16        |
| Training Courses              |           |           |           |           |           |
| Diploma Courses               | 1         |           |           |           | 1         |
| Master's Degree Courses       | 5         | 5         | 5         | 5         | 5         |
| Doctorate                     | 2         | 2         | 2         | 2         | 2         |
| <b>Total</b>                  | <b>11</b> | <b>18</b> | <b>35</b> | <b>12</b> | <b>24</b> |