

Impact of teleworking on administrative management in universities in the Dominican Republic

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Abstract

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This study proposes a model for efficiently implementing telework in the Dominican Republic's higher education institutions (HEIs). Starting from the fact that HEIs must be able to adapt to the circumstances and variables of the environment, with innovative models supported by technologies, which make it possible to offer their operations to maintain them. To prevent Detfrom from engaging its operations and services in the face of external factors. Starting from the theory of contingency, which emphasizes that there are no absolutes in organizations because everything depends on the functional relationship between external conditions and administrative techniques to achieve organizational objectives. The proposal will consider the variables that can influence employees to be productive and feel satisfaction in a work and personal environment with the remote work modality. The country began its first steps in developing the teleworking workforce due to the COVID-19 pandemic, which led multiple institutions to move to this work modality without it being contemplated in the country's Labor Code.

Keywords: remote work, telecommuting telework, productive, labor satisfaction.

Introduction

This study addresses the impact of teleworking on the management of Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), taking into account the experience of confinement lived in the years 2020 and 2021, which led to the use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) in any space of life to the members of the university community to respond and have the fundamental services of the academy. As Lizano Mora and Palos Sánchez (2020, p.25) explain, confinement transformed the user experience and the institutions to carry out the processes and not stop their operations; sometimes, it even led to changing the business model. Based on the theory of contingency or systems, this study proposes to develop innovative and flexible university management models, identifying adequate strategic opportunities for adopting and implementing remote work.

Although teleworking has been presenting itself for five decades as an option to redefine work patterns, where space and distance are no longer an obstacle to working outside the borders of institutions, it is no less accurate that this work modality has become relevant in the Dominican Republic after the health emergency of COVID-19. At the international level, the analyses of the impact of remote work in educational institutions are intensifying, with research focused on academic processes. as a central axis, pending the approaches in the field of administrative management, as well as the impact on bureaucracy and governance, on changes in the behavior of non-teaching collaborators of HEIs, and their interaction in the different work modalities. This study aims to contribute to developing flexible models of Dominican university governance, which allow them to guarantee administrative operations, not only teaching but also responding to the challenge of teleworking and the virtualization of their management processes when external factors prevent face-to-face service.

Background and Rationale

Higher education institutions (HEIs) have been assigned the roles of transforming realities and agents of change, so they are expected to be organizations capable of adapting to the context that surrounds them to respond quickly to the limitations that may arise, as explained by society Rodríguez-Ponce and Palma-Quiroz, (2009, p.13). Being the production in the knowledge economy is a fundamental element in generating value and wealth in organizations and society.

This research seeks to contribute to developing flexible models of Dominican university governance supported by information and communication technologies (ICT). Authors such as Ramirez-Montoya (2020, p.124), Lizano Mora and Palos Sánchez (2020, p.25), and Salgado Jaramillo and Pangol Lascano (2022, p.189) state that ICTs have transformed the ways of communicating and face the needs of society, and the academic field has managed to redefine the teaching-learning process. They expect universities to use technological innovations to support administrative, management, and control processes.

The teleworking modality was used in the country during the health emergency of 2020, forcing the closure of urges to guarantee operational continuity and as a form of labor resilience as defined by Zamfir and Aldea (2020, p.192). The health situation of 2020 led the country's universities to switch to teleworking without being prepared; as Rosario (2020, p.77) explains, the strengths and weaknesses of the technological infrastructure and the digital divide of the Institutions of Higher Education, IES, to provide the service at a distance. In addition to finding technological weaknesses in the knowledge and resources of the members of the HEIs, De Vincenzi (2021, p.129), Zamfir and Aldea (2020, p.192), and Ramírez-Montoya (2020, p. 131) link the differences in knowledge and technological resources at low educational and economic levels, concerning the ability to master technological tools and equipment, an example of this was that during the 2020 confinement some had personal computers with broadband internet and others a cell phone and prepaid internet.

According to the study by UNESCO IESALC (2020, p.31), the COVID-19 pandemic offered the opportunity to redesign processes to optimize the governance of universities since it tested the management processes of HEIs and their capacity to adapt their administrative functions and services, highlighting the limitations to serve users under a situation that limits their operations in a face-to-face format. Using the momentum of teleworking in the Dominican Republic, HEIs can develop efficient solutions and greater administrative productivity for user services. Wulan Febriani and Churiyah (2022, p. 435-437) in their research state that although working from home was widely studied at a time when the entire global world was being hit by the COVID-19 pandemic, which implies that upcoming research may more accurately link telework to future environments. There are few research literature studies on teleworking, distance, or remote work, particularly in Latin American countries and the Dominican Republic. The Ministry of Labor created the modality as a type of working day in June 2020, after the start of the COVID-19 health emergency. This lack of research in Latin America Muñoz and Kimmitt (2018, p. 103) consider it special to test the different theories developed and tested in first-world countries without undermining or aligning the observed behaviors.

Problem statement

The operations of the Institutions of Higher Education, IES, of the Dominican Republic stopped due to external factors; they had to close their doors, eliminating the processes and services. External variables are uncertain, as Mejia Trejo (2019, p.270) exposes, and are not controlled by the organization, such as weather, strikes, political or health situations, and universities. This problem was aggravated in 2020 and 2021 when social distancing forced the closure of facilities and services to be

extended for months. The HEIs of the country must be capable of adapting to the circumstances and variables of the environment, with innovative models supported by technologies that make it possible to offer the maintenance of their operations. In the Dominican Republic, he began his first steps in developing the workforce in the teleworking modality (distance work or work from home) due to the COVID-19 pandemic. This situation led multiple institutions to switch to this modality. Work without it being contemplated in the Labor Code of the country. As of the health emergency under the protection of the Dominican constitution in June 2020, the DR Ministry of Labor (2020, Resolution 23) issued the first regulation establishing teleworking as a working day option, where the duties and rights of teleworkers and employers are set.

For institutions, it becomes necessary to adapt their services due to changes in user behavior and habits, which leads organizations to create new models and structures facilitated by ICT, as Brunner (2011, p.148) affirms. HEIs are successful to the extent that they can adapt their governance to the demands of the environment. This research seeks to create a model of how to implement the teleworking format innovatively and flexibly to achieve management that allows facing labor dynamics, considering incorporating technologies in all work areas as an alternative for the continuity of the operations and ensuring administrative management activities. At the same time, new lines of research are opened on how implementing an innovative and flexible teleworking implementation impacts governance and university bureaucracy. In this study, we propose how Dominican universities can improve their management model, guaranteeing the continuity of their operations in the face of adverse environmental variables.

Preliminary purpose of the study

This study proposes a model for efficiently implementing teleworking in higher education institutions in the Dominican Republic. The variables influencing employees to be productive and feel satisfaction with their work and personal environment with the remote work modality are considered. To prevent employees from feeling job insecurity, thinking that they have fewer opportunities than their colleagues, or feeling discrimination for working remotely, as expressed by Zamfir and Aldea (2020, p.192).

Initial research questions

1. How can Dominican universities improve their management model, guaranteeing the continuity of their operations in the face of adverse environmental variables?
2. Are all people equally efficient and productive in teleworking, regardless of their personality?
3. Can employees feel satisfied with their jobs and relationships with their colleagues and supervisors with a high intensity of remote work?
4. Does working from home have an impact on employee productivity?

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