

ORIGINAL

Operation of the organizational structure of the University of Carabobo as a Venezuelan Autonomous Institution

Funcionamiento de la estructura organizacional de la Universidad de Carabobo como Institución Autónoma Venezolana

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Cite as: Sifontes JJ, Álvarez J. operation of the organizational structure of the university of carabobo as a venezuelan autonomous institution. Management (Montevideo). 2025; 3:129. <https://doi.org/10.62486/agma2025129>

Submitted: 15-01-2024

Revised: 29-07-2024

Accepted: 05-12-2024

Published: 02-01-2025

Editor: Ing. Misael Ron 

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: the University of Carabobo is an autonomous educational institution that has a defined organizational structure for its operation, which consists of different instances and governing bodies that work in a coordinated manner to make decisions and carry out the academic and administrative activities of the university. In this organization, at the top of the structure is the University Council, the highest governing body of the university, which is made up of the Rector, who is the main representative of the institution, and other members such as the Vice-rectors, deans and student representatives. Thus, the University Council has the authority to establish policies and regulations, make important decisions and supervise the general functioning of the university. Under this University Council are the different Faculties and Schools that make up the university. Each of them is headed by a Dean and directors, who are responsible for the academic and administrative management of their respective unit. Likewise, the University of Carabobo has a series of support and advisory bodies in different areas, such as the Scientific and Humanistic Development Council, in charge of promoting and supporting scientific research and development; the Planning and Budget Directorate, responsible for strategic planning and resource allocation; and the Office of Interinstitutional Relations, in charge of coordinating programs and agreements with other institutions.

Method: a documentary review was carried out.

Conclusion: the organizational structure of the University of Carabobo is based on the University Council as the main governing body, the Faculties and Schools as academic units, and various support and advisory bodies. These elements work together to ensure the efficient and autonomous functioning of the university.

Keywords: University of Carabobo; Organizational Structure; Autonomy; Functioning.

RESUMEN

Introducción: la Universidad de Carabobo es una institución educativa autónoma que posee una estructura organizacional definida para su funcionamiento, la cual consiste en distintas instancias y órganos de gobierno que trabajan de manera coordinada para tomar decisiones y llevar a cabo las actividades académicas y administrativas de la institución. En esa organización, en la cúspide de la estructura se encuentra el Consejo Universitario, el máximo órgano de gobierno de la universidad, el cual está integrado por el Rector o Rectora, quien es el representante principal de la institución, y por otros miembros como los Vicerrectores, decanos y representantes estudiantiles. Así, el Consejo Universitario tiene la autoridad para establecer políticas y normativas, tomar decisiones importantes y supervisar el funcionamiento general de la universidad. Bajo dicho

Consejo Universitario se encuentran las diferentes Facultades y Escuelas que conforman la universidad. Cada una de ellas está encabezada por un Decano y directores, quienes son responsables de la gestión académica y administrativa de su respectiva unidad. Asimismo, la Universidad de Carabobo cuenta con una serie de organismos de apoyo y asesoramiento en distintas áreas, tales como el Consejo de Desarrollo Científico y Humanístico, encargado de la promoción y apoyo a la investigación y desarrollo científico; la Dirección de Planificación y Presupuesto, responsable de la planificación estratégica y la asignación de recursos; y la Oficina de Relaciones Interinstitucionales, encargada de la coordinación de programas y convenios con otras instituciones.

Método: se realizó una revisión documental de nivel descriptiva.

Conclusión: la estructura organizacional de la Universidad de Carabobo se basa en el Consejo Universitario como órgano de gobierno principal, las Facultades y Escuelas como unidades académicas, y diversos organismos de apoyo y asesoramiento. Estos elementos trabajan en conjunto para garantizar el funcionamiento eficiente y autónomo de la universidad.

Palabras clave: Universidad de Carabobo; Estructura Organizacional; Autonomía; Funcionamiento.

INTRODUCTION

Universally, all organizations obey a structure that guarantees their functionality. This has always been the case; therefore, the world appeals to this principle so that organizations, whether economic, political, social, industrial, educational, or other, can have minimum functional coordination. This organization is so vital that, over the years, studies have been aimed at continuously improving these structures and thus enhancing performance and production.

In this regard, López-Felipe⁽¹⁾ states that organizations must be focused on self-learning and innovation. Therefore, it can be deduced that each organization is unique and sets the standard for the product that is ultimately developed; that is, what the organization is called upon to do will determine its degree of functional complexity. Based on these principles, it can be observed that, in very general terms, in various countries, educational organizational structures, specifically university structures, are no exception to this reality. According to multiple studies, these structures are undergoing abrupt changes that are affecting their organizational structure. The national government generates these changes as the country's educational policies regulatory body.⁽¹⁾

From this perspective, educational organizations refer to the order that prevails in an institution to develop its programs, seeking quality in teaching and learning processes and focusing on the organization and management of educational centers. In this sense, Sandoval⁽²⁾ considers that the study of educational organizations requires the definition of the relevant aspects that shape them, given the complexity of education and organization and the limitations of human capabilities, knowing that the characterization process faces the reductionism inherent in any partial view.^(1,2)

Similarly, Marcano⁽³⁾ states that:

All organizations pursue goals or objectives, avoiding conceptual or semantic conferences that may arise. We define what the educational center aims to achieve, and at the same time, we describe what is necessary for that organization and the meaning of specific options.⁽³⁾

Considering the above, educational organizations are fundamental to a country's development, which is why universities are currently under attack in terms of their structural organization. If this is altered in any way within the framework of the current relationship with the Venezuelan state, it will impact society. For this reason, a broad outline of the organizational structures of Venezuelan universities has been proposed.

In this regard, the supreme authority in each public university resides in the University Council, through the Rector, the Vice-Rectors, and the Secretary, by their respective powers, as provided in Article 24 of the Law on Universities⁽⁴⁾ in force in Venezuela.

According to definitions established by Venezuelan law, autonomous universities are institutions that have organizational autonomy to dictate their internal rules; academic autonomy to plan, organize, and carry out their research, teaching, and outreach programs; administrative autonomy to elect and appoint their authorities and designate their teaching, research, and administrative staff; and economic and financial autonomy to organize and administer their assets. These institutions generally have professional training programs in more than two fields of knowledge.

Similarly, autonomous universities constitute the group of higher education institutions created since ancient times; therefore, they have the greatest academic tradition and, consequently, a very heterogeneous universe of users. They are also characterized by privileges such as freedom to establish their own internal rules of organization and operation; academic autonomy to plan, organize, and carry out their research, teaching,

and extension programs; administrative autonomy to elect and appoint their authorities and designate their teaching, research, and administrative staff; and economic and financial autonomy to organize and administer their assets.

In the same vein, universities have a collegial governance structure with different hierarchical levels. Their academic organization is generally based on faculties, which in turn are made up of schools and institutes or research centers. Each school is responsible for teaching and researching a discipline related to a profession.

However, the governance of universities in Venezuela, whether public or private, autonomous or experimental, must be governed primarily by the Universities Act⁽⁴⁾, which has been in force since 1970. This law establishes that the supreme authority of each university (public or private) is the University Council, which is composed of the Rector (who presides), the Vice-Rectors (Academic and Administrative), the secretary, the Deans of the Faculties, five representatives of the professors, three representatives of the students, a representative of the graduates, and a delegate from the Ministry of Education.

Similarly, the co-governing bodies of autonomous universities, in hierarchical order, are the University Council, the Faculty Assemblies, and the Faculty and School Councils. In the case of official universities, this University Council holds regular weekly meetings to coordinate the academic work of the entire institution, issues internal regulations and rules, and decides, in the first instance, on the creation, modification, or elimination of faculties, schools, institutes, and other equivalent entities. It makes final decisions on budget distribution, requests for revalidation of degrees and equivalencies, tuition fees, measures to suspend activities, the number of new students, and selection procedures.

It is also responsible for teaching staff contracts, authorization of acquisitions, disposal, and encumbrance of property; the conclusion of contracts and the acceptance of donations; the appointment of representatives of the University to other bodies or institutions and of those who are to replace the Deans and the Secretary of the University in their temporary absence; the appointment of School Directors on the proposal of the Deans; and any matter not assigned to another body by the Universities Act.

The central authorities (Rector, Vice-Rectors, and Secretary) direct, coordinate, and supervise, on behalf of the University Council, the daily development of academic and administrative activities. The faculty elects them, and they serve for four years, but they cannot be re-elected to the same positions in the immediate term. Likewise, the University Faculty is composed of full professors, that is, assistants, associate, associate professors, tenured professors, and retired professors; representatives of the students of each school in a number equivalent to 25 % of the total number of professors who make up the faculty, elected directly and secretly by the regular students; and five graduates from each faculty of the university, appointed by the corresponding professional associations or colleges.

These universities carry out their teaching, research, and outreach functions through the Faculties, each corresponding to one or more related branches of science or culture.

The faculties are made up of schools and institutes, the schools are made up of departments, and the departments are made up of chairs. On the same subject, the government of the faculties is exercised, in descending order, by the Faculty Assembly, the Faculty Council, and the Dean. The Assembly is the highest authority of each faculty. It is composed of all the professors of the respective faculty, plus honorary professors, student representatives, and five representatives of the graduates. The Assembly elects the Dean, studies and proposes reforms and initiatives to the University Council for the better functioning of the Faculty, and monitors the Dean's management through the annual reports that they must submit to the members of the Assembly.

Based on this structure, today, it is threatened by a national executive increasingly taking away powers that by law belong to the universities, fracturing the organization somehow. In addition, the electoral paralysis in the university authorities contributes to an unconventional reality, the migration of payroll payments to a national platform controlled by the executive branch, which suggests that more policies are on the way that, in addition to violating the national constitution, seek to disrupt the functional structure of universities. Added to this is the low pay level, which undermines the institutional stability of universities, as poor salaries encourage migration to other professions where remuneration is higher.

This current reality puts universities in check in their core practice, which is training new professionals. However, another phenomenon has occurred, namely, the pandemic caused by the emergence of COVID-19. This adds a new element, but in a more permanent way, such as the practice of virtual classes; this was already being implemented in all universities, but this time, it has become much more widespread, and many believe that this form of teaching is here to stay, which paints an interesting picture: poorly paid teachers with distance learning, thus becoming a new structural form of learning management, which, in a way, softens the serious socioeconomic situation that university teachers are going through.

All of the above raises the need to reflect on the organizational structure of Venezuelan autonomous universities, specifically the University of Carabobo so that its functioning can be visualized.

METHOD

This research was carried out through a bibliographic documentary design. It was based on a critical

bibliographic review, which the researcher applied to respond to the situation under study regarding the organizational structure of the University of Carabobo as an autonomous institution. As can be seen from the design adopted, the analysis, criticism, and interpretation of previous research, books, and texts were carried out to meet the objectives set out in this research. Similarly, it was carried out at a descriptive level of research.

Techniques and Instruments for Information Collection:

The method used to collect information in this research was document review. The process was a complementary phase, which could be carried out manually or computerized, beginning with reviewing sources related to the research to obtain the theoretical framework underpinning the project.

The information analysis corresponds to studying books, texts, reports, research, academic articles, and other relevant records. Once the data has been collected and recorded, it must undergo a process of analysis or critical examination to identify the causes that led to the decision to undertake the study and describe any doubts about the topic being studied to reach conclusions that contribute positively to the problem.

In this regard, qualitative analysis was taken into account. This was carried out to express the quality of the research findings based on the variable expressed. Thus, the results were evaluated, and the overall understanding of the information was facilitated, allowing critical judgments and conclusions to be reached.

RESULTS

The University of Carabobo (UC) is an autonomous institution of higher education in Carabobo, Venezuela. According to historical data, it was founded on October 22, 1892, and is one of the country's oldest and most prestigious universities. As an autonomous institution, it is governed by a solid and efficient organizational structure composed of different bodies and units that work in a coordinated manner to fulfill its academic, administrative, and research functions.

Similarly, the University of Carabobo has an organizational structure designed to ensure its efficient operation and the fulfillment of its academic, administrative, and research objectives. At the top of this structure is the University Council, the university's highest governing body.

In the same vein, the organizational structure of the UC consists of several levels of management and decision-making, as outlined below, detailing the central bodies and positions that comprise it:

1. University Council: This is the highest governing body of the University of Carabobo. It comprises the Rector, the Vice-Rectors, the Deans of each faculty, and representatives of the faculty, students, and administrative staff. Its responsibility is based on decision-making regarding university policies and actions.
2. Rector's Office: The Rector is the UC's principal representative and executive authority. The university community elects them and directs the institution in all its areas. The Rector has a team of Vice-Rectors, each responsible for a specific function, such as the Academic Vice-Rector, the Administrative Vice-Rector, and the Secretary.
3. Faculties: The UC comprises several faculties that house different academic disciplines. Each faculty member has a dean who is responsible for administration and management. The faculty members elect the dean and represent the interests and needs of the faculty, students, and administrative staff.
4. Departments and Schools: Within each faculty, some departments and schools group specific areas of knowledge. These departments and schools are headed by coordinators or directors responsible for these areas' academic and administrative management.
5. Faculty Council: Each faculty has a faculty council, made up of the dean, professors, students, and administrative staff. This council is responsible for making decisions on academic, administrative, and organizational matters related to the faculty.

In summary, the organizational structure of the University of Carabobo is based on the autonomy and participation of its different actors. Decisions are made on university direction and policies through the governing and management bodies, with the aim of promoting academic excellence, research, and the comprehensive training of students.

Reflecting on the organizational structure of the University of Carabobo as an autonomous institution, one must start from the perspective of the rectorial authorities. In this sense, Venezuelan autonomous universities are united by a commitment to duty, which is evident when they publicize and highlight relevant aspects such as the just, peaceful but forceful struggle, extending to the defense of the constitution, with two essential goals: The maintenance of university autonomy and the restoration of its performance under better conditions.^(5,6)

From this perspective, a struggle backed by a commitment to fulfill their duties and responsibilities to Venezuelan society through their ability to adapt is a contributing factor in their goal of achieving the sustainability of a free, democratic, pluralistic university institution willing to ensure that these social

organizations continue to serve the region where they are established and the country in general. Similarly, they highlight the importance of unity and pride in belonging to the university community, reaffirming their value of democracy and freedom while recognizing their duty to defend them and their conception of citizenship and leadership.^(5,8,9)

The revelation of the Venezuelan autonomous university's meaning as a social organization from the perspective of its management allows it to be defined as a transcendent, democratic, and autonomous social organization. It is considered the historical cradle of free and pluralistic thought, with the capacity to adapt to changes as they arise while simultaneously fulfilling its educational role. On this basis, it is sufficient reason to remember to use its autonomous nature to face its conflict with the government and avoid further weakening due to the limitations imposed through its financing policy.

At the same time, the university must consider its social and ethical commitment and present itself to its internal and external community as an example of a democratic space when defending its political, economic, and social rights. In the same vein, the university needs to present itself as a united organization within its complexity to regain its power as an institution capable of overcoming the limits of its spaces for the benefit of the progress required by society, demonstrating the values that have allowed it to remain steadfast as a cradle of freedom and ideas in the face of attempts to politicize it.^(8,10,11)

Overall, the study's findings revealed that Venezuelan autonomous universities, especially the University of Carabobo, have the necessary tools to overcome the current crisis. Still, it must also be considered a necessity, requirement, or duty to speak out in the face of globalized scenarios about strengthening communications with the community both inside and outside the universities to achieve, as expressed in the theoretical references reviewed, a horizontal flow of information capable of presenting their actions more transparently, to gain support and unifying wills to restore the prestige of these educational organizations and the country in general.^(12,13,14)

According to the organizational diagnosis, Venezuelan universities, especially the University of Carabobo, present several elements, indicators, and circumstances that act in a systemic and organized manner, in addition to internal and external factors that combine to constitute adaptation and survival strategies for the organization. The conclusion is that if managed properly, organizations can anticipate and plan promptly for any uncertainty or threat to which they may be subjected. Likewise, they need other elements, such as the integration of resources and human capital, to ensure their success.^(15,16,17)

As for the first purpose related to the characteristics of the operational elements of the University of Carabobo, under the influence of the national executive, from the perspective of the university authorities, Venezuelan autonomous universities are united by a commitment to duty, which they make known when they highlight aspects such as the just, peaceful but forceful struggle, extending to the defense of the constitution, with two essential goals: maintaining university autonomy and restoring its performance under better conditions.

However, it is public and well-known that the national executive has turned its back on the university and has cut all its economic resources for personnel management and physical and organizational infrastructure. The University of Carabobo has struggled to continue achieving its goal, with the help of its entire organizational structure, receiving starvation wages and losing all the social benefits that are enshrined in the statutes of its teaching and research staff.

About the second purpose, which establishes the parameters that affect the organizational structure of the University of Carabobo, compromising the principle of its functioning in its three components, Teaching, Research, and Extension, it can be concluded that:

Financial resources may be among the parameters that may affect the organizational structure of the University of Carabobo, compromising its functioning in the components of Teaching, Research, and Extension. The availability of funds for the university may influence the organizational structure and the capacity to carry out teaching, research, and extension activities. In this regard, a lack of resources can limit staff hiring, acquiring equipment and materials, and implementing research projects and outreach activities.

Human resources are also necessary: The number, qualifications, and availability of staff can affect the organizational structure and compromise the principles of operation. In this vein, a lack of trained personnel can diminish the quality of teaching and research and limit the ability to carry out outreach programs. Similarly, policies and regulations are considered parameters: Policies and regulations issued by the national government or the university can affect the organizational structure and compromise the functioning of the three components. These policies and regulations may include restrictions on curricula, limitations on hiring, or resource allocation, among other aspects.

In the same scenario is infrastructure: The availability and quality of infrastructure, such as classrooms, laboratories, and libraries, among others, can influence the organizational structure and affect teaching, research, and outreach. The lack of adequate infrastructure can limit academic and research activities. Similarly, Technology is also a parameter: Lack of access to up-to-date technology and digital resources can affect the organizational structure and compromise the functioning principle in the three components. Technology is

essential for research, learning, and communication today.

Internal and external relations are also indicated: Relations between teachers, researchers, students, and administrative staff can influence the organizational structure and affect the quality of educational and research services. Similarly, relations with external institutions, such as companies, local governments, or communities, can affect the development of outreach and collaboration projects. In addition, admission and retention policies: Student admission and faculty retention policies can influence the organizational structure and compromise the operating principle. These policies can limit access to university education or hiring qualified personnel.

In short, these parameters may vary and be specific to the University of Carabobo or any other institution.

The third and final purpose is to assess the impact on society of changes in the organizational structure of universities. It can be established that changes in the organizational structure of universities can have a significant impact on society.⁽¹²⁾

CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, according to the organizational diagnosis, Venezuelan universities, especially the University of Carabobo, present several elements, indicators, and circumstances that act in a systemic and organized manner. In addition, internal and external factors combine to form adaptation and survival strategies for the organization. The conclusion is that if managed properly, organizations can anticipate and plan promptly for any uncertainty or threat to which they may be subjected. Likewise, other elements, such as the integration of resources and human capital, are needed to ensure success.

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FUNDING

None.

CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

None. The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

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