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CORREO: [educare@una.cr](mailto:educare@una.cr)

# Healthy Academic Processes in the University Context

## Gestión académica saludable en el contexto universitario



*Ileana Castillo-Cedeño*<sup>1</sup>

National University

Center for Research and Teaching in Education

Heredia, Costa Rica

[ileana.castillo.cedeno@una.cr](mailto:ileana.castillo.cedeno@una.cr)

*Luz Emilia Flores-Davis*<sup>2</sup>

National University

Heredia, Costa Rica

[luz.flores.davis@una.cr](mailto:luz.flores.davis@una.cr)

*Giselle Miranda-Cervantes*<sup>3</sup>

National University

Basic Education Division

Center for Research and Teaching in Education

Heredia, Costa Rica

[giselle.miranda.cervantes@una.cr](mailto:giselle.miranda.cervantes@una.cr)

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<sup>1</sup> Doctor of Education specialized in pedagogic mediation. A graduate Doctor in curriculum design and educational evaluation at the University of Valladolid, Spain. Master's degree in Educational Psychology. Master's degree in Preschool Education. Specialist in consumer educational didactics. University of Valladolid, Spain. Professor, Bachelor and Graduate in Sciences of Education with emphasis in Preschool Education, National University of Costa Rica. Associated Dean of the Center for Research and Teaching in Education from 2008 to 2013. Academic Vicerectory Advisor in design and curricular management programs and in Academic Assessment and Professional Development programs. In 2013, she participated as candidate for academic Vice Rector of the National University of Costa Rica. Currently, she serves as a researcher and holds the position of Dean of the Center for Research and Teaching in Education of the National University of Costa Rica. Author of several publications in journals devoted to her specialty on education, pedagogy, diversity, leadership, higher education.

<sup>2</sup> Doctor in Education with specialization in pedagogic mediation. Master's degree in Higher Education. Full university professor. She has held positions as Director of Education, Director of Professional Development and University Cooperation, President of the Board of Scholarships and Coordinator of Technical Admission Commission of the National University. She serves as researcher, extension and professor of Basic Education Division of the Center for Research and Teaching in Education (CIDE) at the National University of Costa Rica. She is currently Deputy Rector of the National University. Among her most recent publications feature work in literacy for adults.

<sup>3</sup> Doctor in Education specialized in pedagogic mediation. Bachelor, graduate and master's degree in Psychology from the University of Costa Rica. She works as academic and researcher since 1990 in the Basic Education Division of the Center for Research and Teaching in Education (CIDE) of the National University of Costa Rica, academic unit in which she held the positions of Director, Member of the Academic Council and Coordinator of Special Education degree program and Teaching English for cycles I and II. In the field of research, her interest centers in the areas of diversity, follow-up to graduate students of special education career, interpersonal relationships, social climate in the classroom and healthy pedagogy.





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*Abstract.* This scientific article aims to identify the perceptions of healthy academic administrative processes in the university context. This contribution was directed by socio-educational research processes generated at the National University of Costa Rica (UNA), in the Center for Research and Teaching in Education (CIDE). The issue of health is part of the institutional plan and the Center. Whereas health, like education, is a fundamental human right that deserves responsibilities from pedagogy as educational science research, which analyzes and transforms; it is urgent, in the face of new global challenges, to address planetary crises linked to health. This research is based on the naturalistic paradigm and methodology that assumes a type of joint research, where using a semi-structured interview achieves a deeper analysis that allows contrasting perceptions, theories and practices by comparing qualitative and quantitative data. From the impact results, it can be inferred that the concept of Healthy Pedagogy is unknown in the university context. The connection between education and health as a holistic theoretical, epistemological and axiological construction that considers the complexity theory allows the university to take challenges with an enormous potential; promote environments, styles and healthy organizations from academic administrations out of individual and collective aspects. It is possible to construct new sense of orders, which assume in a jointly responsible manner to re-dignify the university life in its various stances and dimensions. Research has the valuable potential to become a dynamic element of institutional policies in favor of life.

*Keywords.* Academic administration, healthy pedagogy, higher education.

*Resumen.* El presente artículo científico tiene como objetivo identificar las percepciones con respecto a los procesos de gestión académica saludable en el contexto universitario. Aporte gracias a los procesos de investigación socioeducativa que se generan en la Universidad Nacional de Costa Rica (UNA), en el Centro de Investigación y Docencia en Educación (CIDE). El tema de la salud es parte del plan institucional y del Centro. Considerando que la salud, al igual que la educación, es un derecho humano fundamental que amerita responsabilidades desde la pedagogía como ciencia de la educación que investiga, analiza y transforma, es urgente, de cara a los nuevos desafíos mundiales que ponen en evidencia las crisis planetarias vinculadas a la salud, atenderlo. La investigación se fundamenta en el paradigma naturalista y una metodología que asume un tipo de investigación mixta, donde se contrastan datos cualitativos y cualitativos a partir de la utilización de entrevista semiestructurada para lograr un análisis más profundo que permite contrastar percepciones, teorías y prácticas. De los resultados de impacto se tiene que es inédito el concepto pedagogía saludable en el contexto universitario. La vinculación entre pedagogía y salud como un constructo teórico, epistemológico, axiológico holístico que contempla la teoría de la complejidad permite a la universidad asumir desafíos con sus enormes potencialidades; promover ambientes, estilos, organizaciones saludables desde la gestión académica desde la vertiente individual y colectiva. Es posible la construcción de nuevos órdenes de sentido que asumen de manera corresponsable la redignificación de la vida universitaria en sus diversos espacios y dimensiones. La investigación tiene el valioso potencial de convertirse en un elemento dinamizador de políticas institucionales que favorecen la vida.

*Palabras claves.* Gestión académica, pedagogía saludable, educación superior.





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## Background information

This research article has been supported from the investigative process carried out by the Center for Research and Teaching in Education (CIDE) of the National University of Costa Rica (UNA).

The Healthy Pedagogy Project was registered in 2013 ([I. Castillo, R. Castlillo and Miranda, 2013](#)) with a validity of three years, until 2015. It is an interdisciplinary project registered at the university within the subprogram of research.

The team of researchers based in that health and education constitute inalienable rights which must be correlated to have a more inclusive and holistic overview, and from the paradigm of complex thought, assume and understand that higher education institutions have a shared responsibility to take on the challenge of improving the quality of life at its pinnacle. The researchers assume the project with the certainty that pedagogy, beyond theoretical construct, is a science which investigates and screens in order to generate changes that improve the quality of life of people and other living beings in their different living environments. A unified vision of what mind, matter and life implies.

## Rationale

This article is based on understanding the correlation of social, economic, political, cultural relations, which have generated new and necessary reflections in the field of health and pedagogy care. Health is an issue that from a perspective which understands the complexity of life, assumes the need for interdisciplinary dialog, to look at the current context of health and life as a conscious exercise which is assumed not just from the medical side, but from the pedagogical knowledge; allowing to educate based on the knowledge that pedagogy is the science of life. Therefore, it is directly linked with health which, in addition to a vital necessity, constitutes a shared responsibility between individuals and groups which value new global trends that demand sustained and determined attention to prevent and tackle health situations experienced by populations and the planet in general.

Broadly, the article refers to basic bibliographic references; convince that it has been generated from extensive literature reading, knowledge which allows communicating interconnected approaches that do not need any hinting of claimant's writings done by other authors. We believe in the need and possibility to create own knowledge and propose new constructions from the experience and the research carried out.





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## Frame of reference

Within the framework of the emerging paradigm, different authors ([Assmann, 2002](#); [Gutiérrez, 1981](#); [Maturana, 1999](#); [Maturana and Varela, 1986](#); [Morin, 2001](#)) have developed proposals that impact the pedagogy in several dimensions from a transforming vision. On the other hand, health is also re-conceptualized with the contributions from authors such as [Dossey \(2004\)](#), [Payán \(2000\)](#) and [Najmanovich \(2001\)](#), among others. This allows us, as researchers, to establish a relation of dialog between pedagogy and health. We award ourselves the merit of developing a theoretical, epistemological and axiological innovator construct named “healthy teaching”.

From this perspective, healthy pedagogy is characterized by a holistic and complex pedagogy that favors peaceful coexistence, cooperation, expression and creation. It is a pedagogy of freedom, democracy, responsibility and care. It is a rewarding experience that builds through a learning community. ([I. Castillo, R. Castillo, Flores & Miranda, 2014, p. 317](#))

Health, education, and life itself have been traditionally assumed from the mechanistic paradigm, crossing the road of a supposed certainty. However, they have begun to explore new directions and reinterpreted the freedom and hope to meet again the bridge that connects health with life and life with health. The world is changing quickly and the old paradigm cracks.

The beginning of the 21st century has forged new paradigmatic trends and a widening of the cosmic and planetary awareness based on advances in knowledge, mainly in three areas of science: Physics –with the discovery of the basic laws, to unravel the secrets of the atom–, computer science –to progress in the development of the electronic computer, and biology– to decode the nucleus of the cell and to discover DNA. All of this generates alternative visions in all fields of knowledge and impact our daily lives.

Thus is how an emerging paradigm appears as an option that enables a new way of thinking, feeling and acting; a different way of living, which invites us to confront ourselves, our environment and the reality we have created; ethics that unite us not only among human beings but with the rest of nature.

It also invites us to build a culture respectful of life. This new conception is characterized by its ecological, holistic and complex vision. A new vision of education and health has a place in it; and new ways to understand the relationships and vital processes unfold.

In this new paradigm it is understood that the disease “...is not the opposite of health but a vital process by which that being, composed of mind and body as a unit, searches for and





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keeps harmony with himself/herself and with his/her surroundings" (Payán, 2000, p. 4). This is a perspective that restores freedom to man, to make him aware of his vital power as an active and dynamic being; and establishes a relationship of solidarity where health is conceived as the "resulting harmony of a fluidity of movement" (Dossey, 1999, p. 13).

This approach in health has connotations of great importance, since in orthodox medicine, although specialization has made cardinal progress, the understanding of the human being as an integral being has often been left out.

Today we know that thoughts and emotions can influence a cure in a positive or negative way, in our bodies and the bodies of others, even at a distance (Dossey, 2004). This finding implies recognizing the importance of the full participation of each person in their own vital processes, as well as the need to overcome the standardization characteristic of traditional culture.

Learning to live life at a full and healthy way is a challenge for the education of today. Moreover, it is necessary to take into account that the sense of hurry in our culture also brings a lot of physical problems: "anxiety, stress and tension are among the factors causing hypertension, arteriosclerosis and heart diseases in general; further, some of the more common mortality causes in our society" (Dossey, 1999, pp. 255-256). A healthy life also goes through serene, relaxed, pleasant states, which impact the hormone levels in the blood, heart rate, pressure and blood flow, among others. And in this sense, the pedagogy has a role of great importance in the education of individuals and societies which learn from a harmonious relationship.

Since we are living a paradigmatic change at planetary level, the later certainly introduces the reflection that health integrates unparalleled fields of action in which people develop and interact, consequently, it is the work of pedagogy to study and take action according to life. The complexity emerging from the existence is revealed, aspect which implies the recognition that reality has different and uncertain components that need to be addressed holistically from all areas of human development. This change also entails a rupture with the organization and traditional management model, and demands grow from the sum of efforts and wills of the people in their everyday environments.

Education is a fundamental right that should walk hand in hand with human development to achieve better living standards. An important and necessary challenge arises then to be approach from pedagogy, to respond to an era that demands outlining processes in which academic management occurs, as that interrelation between reflection and action and for them, the performance of healthier life organizations.





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A healthy organization, according to [Gimeno, Grandio, Marquis \(2013\)](#), is characterized by:

... promoting and enhancing positive synergy between its own growth, its members and the community. The construction of such organizations has become one of the challenges of the organizational world, and thus, for society itself. Its viability and realization can determine, in good measure, the social model of the future in the medium and long term. (p. 41)

From the later, it is inferred that the essential pedagogical task of universities is to foster, as active organizations from its inside, the understanding that social changes require higher levels of research and action for pleasurable personal and social welfare.

### **Healthy academic management in everyday life and from it**

Universities are living organisms committed to generate understanding and comprehension dynamics of the global context in order to improve the quality of life of people. Therefore, it is proclaimed that, as living organisms, they feature a role as innovative socio-educational and diffuser of life.

The organizational climate is based on individual perceptions. It is often defined as the recurring patterns of behavior, attitudes and feelings that characterize life in the organization, and refer to current situations in an organization and linkages between work groups, employees and job performance. ([Domínguez, Ramírez, García, 2013. p. 62](#))

The respect to that set of individual perceptions and the ability to mediate in order to achieve collective understanding conditions allow a healthy academic management that involves the sum of wills and enables people to venture and identify with common pedagogical projects that elevate the community and lead to levels of coexistence, identity and welfare, necessary for the deployment of a transforming academic management.

Innovations are characterized by clear policies of motivation which attract all members of the educational community, who understand and are fully identified with the commitment to develop learning and life experiences that reveal and serve the common welfare. From this perspective, motivation overcomes resistance and the states of comfort. It involves an active and articulate participation of persons in educational projects that exalt and promote changes in the organizational culture, which implies permanent evaluation.

Indeed, to deal with educational innovation, related to the organizational climate, it carries implicit other components such as: infrastructure, investment, environment of confidence, meeting, among other many aspects that configure healthy organizations.





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As it is certainly confirmed by [Vila, Escotet and Goñi \(2009\)](#):

Innovation is a term that has been used in several ways and with some ambiguity. It has been confused and exchanged for other purposes. Its Latin origin “*innovatio*” refers to both the process and the outcome, and its prefix “*in*” is equivalent to in, inside, within the interior. In this setting, innovation refers to the introduction of something new within an existing reality, in which virtue it results modified. (p. 133)

If we consider the *learning organization* as the one that facilitates the learning of all its members and continuously transforms itself, we are emphasizing the value of learning as the fundamental basis of the organization. The development of the organization is based in the development of the people and its ability to incorporate new ways of doing things into the institution in which they work. ([Gairín, 2010, p. 22](#))

In this sense, the process of learning is the basis for continuous improvement of people in particular and of institutions in general. The complexity of an autonomous university that is self-organized entails the need to establish networks of relationships in an environment of solidarity and appreciation for others.

Academic management is carried out in an educational setting and, therefore, it deals with the pedagogy that is being promoted. If healthy forms of life are intended, it is necessary that management ensures the welfare of the university community.

Healthy pedagogy can only be explained from the complexity involving learning environments, where learners and mediators are intertwined, constructed and reconstructed from their individuality and the relationships that are established in all areas and dimensions. ([I. Castillo, R. Castillo, Flores and Miranda, 2014, p. 317](#))

Personal visions on health, care, welfare and quality of life, among others, have an impact on institutional life: because it is like this that the individual shed intertwines recursively with the collective side in the construction of senses which mutually forge.

The quality of life has to do with the person in a holistic way; from its various stances personal, family, community and social. [Ardila \(2003\)](#) defines quality of life in the following way: “Quality of life is a state of **overall satisfaction** that stems from the **potential** that the individual possesses. Personal development and quality of life are two aspects which have been linked and undoubtedly are highly correlated” (p. 163).





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From a holistic and inclusive perspective, work or study activities at the university and duties in other personal, social and family stances are combined with values in the search for a fulfilling life as well as personal fulfillment, which give sense to life.

The coexistence carried out at the university has to do with your organization and the interactions between academic, administrative and student sectors. However, there are principles that characterize relationships in each institution. In order to speak about a healthy institution, such interactions need to be based on trust, respect, solidarity and equity in the dialog. As well expressed by [Maturana \(1996\)](#): "Trust is the basis of social coexistence, whichever the field and multidimensionality of it. In fact, there is no substitute for confidence in human relations, and without trust there is not social phenomenon" (p. 68).

## Methodology

The research shared hereby is part of a qualitative paradigm looking for comprehensive and holistic understanding of the link between healthy living and academic university management, from the perspective and feeling of the people who lead these processes. The study identifies itself as exploratory ([Hernández, Fernández and Baptista, 2006](#)) and tries, from a wide range of points of view, to make a description and interpretation of the findings found.

On the other hand, given the complexity and multi-causality of such a link, it turned to the use of semi-structured interviews as a technique for collecting information.

The group selected for the research was formed by people who, at the time of collecting the information, were in positions of authority and academic administration in CIDE, specifically in the following bodies: Vice-deanship, Primary Education Division, Work Training Division, Rural Education Division, Education for Educology Division and Institute of Interdisciplinary Studies of Childhood and Adolescence (INEINA). The divisions are bodies of specialization in the education area, also known in this document as academic units or departments.

The method used for the interview was designed stemming from the literature reviewed. It was validated by the criterion of expert judges. It was structured in eight open questions. The information was collected by the researchers.



The results obtained were systematized and grouped into categories of analysis according to the answers. The data were analyzed from the paradigmatic perspective shared by the researchers in accordance with the conceptual references of this article. As significant information from these data, the section of general reflections and contributions of this research article, and the findings and relevant constructions of research to the field of knowledge can be inferred; finally, the contributions of the participants are also highlighted.

## Results and analysis

As previously mentioned, all participants, at the time of collecting information, were in positions of authority and academic administration at CIDE. Therefore, the population was constituted by ten people and [table 1](#) shows the corresponding distribution.

Table 1

*Distribution of the population, according to post and gender*

Post	Gender		Total
	Male	Female	
Vice-deanship	0	1	1
Administration of Academic Unit	4	1	5
Assistant Administration of Academic Unit	2	2	4
Total	6	4	10

The results described below were obtained from the interview with all authorities of CIDE.

When inquiring about the concept of **health**, most (90%) show a vision that involves the comprehensive welfare of human beings, alluding to physical components, socio-affective and cognitive; only one (10%) shows a more localized vision associated with the absence of disease.



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In detail, 60% of the people of CIDE with directorial positions, perceived **health**, such as a state or a condition of comprehensive welfare, 30% associates it with balance in different dimensions. While a 10% indicates that health is the “*absence of disease*”. As shown on [figure 1](#).

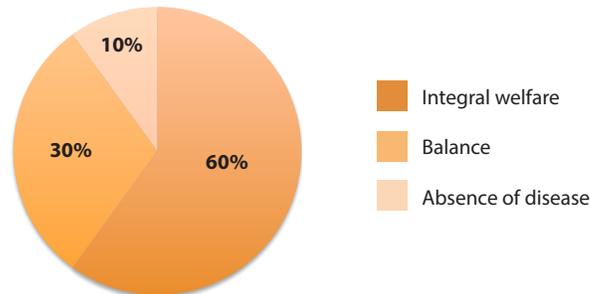


Figure 1. Health concept according to criteria of authorities of CIDE.

[Figure 1](#) reflects that there is greater awareness among people, as the World Health Organization (OMS) indicated in multiple texts, health cannot be conceived only as the absence of disease. Health involves several dimensions of human development.

Some written expressions in the interviews are cited because they expand and allow illustrating the way in which health is conceptualized:

- a. *enjoy life in terms of quality of life;*
- b. *it is a comprehensive welfare which is reflected in the biochemical and physical part”; “the person today day seeks a life that makes sense, we are not talking about age but of how to live your life.”*

With regard to the concept of **healthy**, a majority of replies (90%) that shows a vision that involves aspects which include the meaning of life and harmony with the inner being were obtained again; in opposition to a minority (10%) that focuses more on those practices or actions that allow a good physical functioning (body).

The majority of responses of the authorities of CIDE suggests healthy aspects such as: “*making sense of life*”; “*enjoy, take time*”; “*enjoy the health condition*”; “*take time off as individual*”; “*relationship with other people and what was achieved at personal, physical, emotional and romantic level*”; “*enjoy the group relationship*”; “*avoid stress*”; and “*commit myself with what I can do*”, among others.



This confirms that, to be healthy, it is necessary to know oneself and take care of oneself. Love for one and knowledge allow staying away from situations that can lead to ailments or diseases. However, it seems somewhat contradictory to the fact that when one questions them as to whether a person is considered **healthy**, 70% answers unfavorably, compared to 30% which indicates that "Yes" is considered healthy.

The reasons offered are strongly associated with work and issues inherent to the position they play. [Table 2](#) highlights what was indicated.

Table 2

*Reasons for which they are considered unhealthy or healthy, according to those interviewed*

Not healthy	Percentage
Physical and psychosomatic illnesses associated with work related stress (colitis, migraines, gastritis)	10.0
Conditions of non self-care, derived from schedules imposed by the post (lack of time for eating, stress, labor issues)	20.0
Bad habits (type of food, lack of sleep, take work home, smoking)	20.0
Conditions or chronic diseases (overweight, slow metabolism)	10.0
Drug dependency	10.0
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>70.0</b>
Healthy	
Personal interest, motivation and awareness	10.0
Personal decision even in front of the adverse (enjoy life when there is health, and when there is pain)	20.0
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>30.0</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0</b>

[Table 2](#) definitely shows that health has to do not only with the way it is conceived in a theoretical sense, but on how people live and how it is able to balance what is said with what is done; very usual pairing within the life of a human being.

From words to action, there are obviously complex elements that lead to contradiction. Hence the importance of highlighting these inconsistencies to begin creating life performances and practices consistent with what is expressed.



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In addition to the above, and considering the position carried out at the academic administration by those interviewed, they were asked: **How healthy is his/her post** at the National University. The answers show a similar distribution to that obtained from the previous question, since the majority (70%) considered that the post is not healthy and the remaining (30%) believes that it is healthy. Response data are shown on [table 3](#).

Table 3

*Reasons for which they are considered unhealthy or healthy, according to those interviewed*

Not healthy	Percentage
Due to the stress generated by the post, you need to be a multi-task person	10.0
There is an overload of tasks which forces to take work home	30.0
Lacks space for personal growth	10.0
Loss of institutional direction and lack of priority-setting	10.0
Bureaucratic processes	10.0
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>70.0</b>
Healthy	
Attitude and management in which priorities and responsibilities of the post are assumed	30.0
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>30.0</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0</b>

These answers provide evidence of that, for the most part (70%), academic management processes that people perform in management positions at CIDE are conceived as unhealthy, as a burden that generates stress and limits personal growth. They seem to indicate also that the university has lost the bearings and has bureaucratized; aspect that needs to be restored from a vision and action that fosters healthy environments. According to [San Nicolás \(2014\)](#):

The concept of healthy work environment has evolved in recent years from an almost physical work approach, to a broader scheme of health and security that has expanded to include habits of health, lifestyles and psychosocial factors (work organization, emerging risks and work culture). (p. 32)





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The opinion of those interviewed refers, precisely, to a multiplicity of factors both institutional and personal, which makes them considered their position as healthy or not. Aspect obviously complex linked to the perceptions and mental constructions, patterns taken not as a result of previous training for the post, but as part of the experience on a daily basis. This is why, for some people, the post is healthy depending on the way in which it is taken.

It is important to highlight, from this perspective, that the persons who responded that their position is healthy (30%), justify it in the way and the attitude in which they, as individuals, manage and assume the responsibilities arising from this, as well as the priorities; emphasizing that everyone must be prepared to assume the post and to be trained to make a total life change.

The later makes the researchers reflect upon that, in order to assure a healthy university management, it is necessary to ensure a training process that allows understanding and making sense on the institutional culture, boosting its structures and forms of work. This is consistent with the issues raised by [Basora and León \(2013\)](#):

It is necessary to understand that the university culture, meaning the system of values, ideas and standards shared by the actors, is due to the interaction of university training processes, management, capabilities, will, structure and organizational processes and the superior environment in which the organization lives by being on these interrelations where it transforms and develops training and identity in constant search for social relevance. (p. 39)

Other aspects linked to the research are related to working conditions in the institutional area and in health, specifically in the academic unit where each person with a position of authority works. Questions to inquire about these aspects were:

### **How healthy is your academic unit or department?**

Fifty percent of the participants considered that very much, 30% think that moderately and 20% believe that it is unhealthy.

Those who say that their work place is very healthy, refer to group cohesion, shared reflection and commitment to the work team, as well as an emotional and participatory organizational culture, with horizontal relationships, where an atmosphere of good relations and enjoyment prevails. They indicate that in their academic unit work is not muddle with personal life. Also, that they count on institutional support for stress management and development of emotional intelligence.





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A person reveals: *"It is an academic unit or department very cheerful, very sharing, that is the reason for being healthy." It is an academic unit of reflection. One enjoys working at this academic unit."*

People who consider their academic unit fairly healthy, refer to power struggles, confrontations or conflicts between individuals or degree programs and lack of maturity of people. They also refer to work overload and stress generated by institutional dynamics. All of the above plus the flexibility of the processes, work self satisfaction and the fact that they have opportunities to share. One of the authorities indicated that: *"the institutional dynamic subdues a situation of stress." There are positive aspects of self-satisfaction."*

The remaining 20% of CIDE authorities considered that their workplace is unhealthy. Their arguments in this respect makes reference to lack of team vision and sharing, lack of appropriation of the mission and vision of the academic unit from some officials and no distinction between what is personal related or work related. A person expresses: *"We have parts that are ill!"*

The latter is clarified on [figure 2](#):

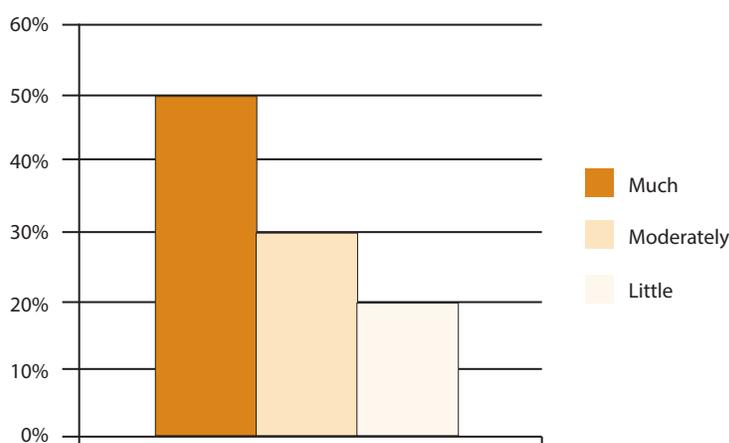


Figure 2. How healthy is the academic unit, according to authorities of CIDE.

In spite of the above results, it is interesting to compare the perception of a healthy academic unit showed by authorities that represent the same academic unit, since from the four units which have posts in the direction and deputy direction, only one of them showed agreement in this regard, in the remaining three academic units there was disagreement. This is detailed on [table 4](#).



Table 4

*Consistency between the same academic unit regarding how healthy authorities consider their academic unit or department*

Academic Unit	How healthy is your academic unit or department?	
	Direction	Deputy Direction
Unit 1	Very healthy	Moderately healthy
Unit 2	Moderately healthy	Very healthy
Unit 3	Moderately healthy	Unhealthy
Unit 4	Very healthy	Very healthy

This comparison makes it possible to deduce the perception an authority has regarding how healthy the academic unit in which he/she has a leading position is. It is a criterion with subjective nuances which do not depend entirely on the demands of the post (direction and deputy direction) or the complexity of the academic unit and, as it was previously stated and mentioned by one third of the authorities interviewed. The findings are related to the attitude and the way to take on the post.

### **Do you consider that your post at the university is healthy?**

Seventy percent said "No," while 30% expressed "Yes." This information is correlated with previous answers, where aspects of functional and bureaucratic order that the post demands are explained; demand for more time to take over more tasks and set aside relevant aspects of the university life.

### **Identification of specific healthy experiences that are encouraged by the interviewee**

The above can also be noticed in the response to the question which asks to identify specific healthy experiences encourage as authority or academic unit or department management post; 10% indicates that they do not promote any healthy experience. A comment in this regard is that: "*there are no policies in the unit or in the Center.*" *There are no instances for recreation. Only to solve but not to live together.*" This obviously allows defining the importance of identifying job options that help build experiences where you can express not only knowledge, but emotions and passions. A clear and necessary challenge that must be assumed from the position of clear policies.



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On the other hand, 90% reveals that it promotes healthy experiences in their academic unit, confined to student body, administrative or academic sector. Regarding student body, it refers to induction and information processes for positive student university insertion as well as managing stress, faculty support and guidance, good administrative services to take care of student procedures, presence of unit academic authorities in the classroom to promote student engagement, bonding with student associations and group representatives, student groups tours and gatherings of students and teachers.

In this sense, a person expresses: *"In regard to students, induction and information processes are created for more positive insertion and anxiety management. They are offered support from a counselor, professor adviser (per level) that has closeness with the student. There is a coordinator at administrative level."*

Regarding administrative staff, activities that promote familiarity and opportunities to share are mentioned. In addition to creating opportunities to take care of physical health, tours for the administrative sector are promoted to learn about academic realities. In this sense, it is stated that: *"The administration has formed a very familiar work team as support. Administrative meetings are opportunities for all to provide their opinion about how they feel, how to improve and distribute the workload."*

According to their opinion, healthy experiences with the academic sector carried out by CIDE authorities seek to create spaces for dialog and sharing. This is how carrying out celebrations, social activities and bringing together the academic production are mentioned. It intends to guide the academic debate in a pleasant atmosphere. One of the people interviewed mentioned: *"Regarding academics, we are proposing a training, teamwork, interpersonal relationships plan. We are working in the vision of a unit."*

### Visualization of a healthy pedagogy

This research was also interested to learn the way in which authorities leading the pedagogical and administrative processes of CIDE displayed a healthy pedagogy, theoretical construct in construction, **relevant and innovative contribution to this research**.

Twenty four responses were received, which were grouped according to the term definition offered, a characterization or a way to carry out a healthy pedagogy.

The majority of responses was located between offering a definition of what authorities believe is a healthy pedagogy (41.7%), and the way in which they consider that this can be worked in the university classroom and, in some cases, in the own daily life of human beings (41.7%).





A small percentage (16.6%) included some features of what is considered or displayed as a healthy pedagogy.

Table 5 transcribes, in a systematic way, all replies obtained from the construct healthy pedagogy, characterization and implementation. In accordance with the above, the following categories are established.

Table 5

*Representation of persons leading CIDE regarding healthy pedagogy, its characterization and implementation. Grouped by categories.*

Category of analysis	Responses obtained	Percentage
Definition of healthy pedagogy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Views of self as a whole.</li> <li>• It is a model as part of a community.</li> <li>• It is experience and attitude towards life what considers the human being as a whole in their relationship with each other.</li> <li>• It is the expression of love in their relationship with each other.</li> <li>• Open communication processes, respectful and searching for horizontal relationships.</li> <li>• One that takes the human being as a center / designed for the person as a comprehensive being.</li> <li>• In which education is taken as a personal and comprehensive process.</li> <li>• It is a practice of life.</li> <li>• It is a philosophy of life which can be transmitted to other people.</li> <li>• One that seeks to create balance between academic and personal matters.</li> <li>• It includes values such as love, cooperation, solidarity and empathy, in the daily work.</li> <li>• It occurs in the coexistence.</li> <li>• They are respectful and horizontal processes.</li> <li>• There is willingness to listen.</li> </ul>	41.7
Characterization of healthy pedagogy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It should be a philosophy of courses that need to be mainstream.</li> <li>• Must define health and mainstream courses.</li> <li>• Must be included in daily activities.</li> <li>• Let students know that every teacher serves as a facilitator role and is also learning.</li> </ul>	16.6
How to carry out a healthy pedagogy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• With the academic adviser person and level coordinator.</li> <li>• Working self-esteem along with the subject.</li> <li>• Training to take care of the habits that allow a better body development.</li> <li>• Providing workshops and incorporating subject matters on interpersonal relationships, managing stress and time, values and ethics.</li> <li>• First you need to empower yourselves.</li> <li>• Knowing the group, stories of life of the student body.</li> </ul>	41.7
Total		100.0





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As can be seen, within the “definition” category of what authorities of CIDE displayed as a healthy pedagogy, it includes aspects related to human beings integrity and its relationship with a community and as part of it; besides the balance between academic and personal matters, an open communication and the search for horizontal relationships. In addition, they identify healthy pedagogy as a philosophy of life in which the relationship with each other is an expression of love.

The category on “how this type of pedagogies are carried out” is described in responses such as: health should be defined and a mainstreaming work in degree programs performed; including workshops, talks about interpersonal relationships, stress and time management, as well as values and ethics, among others; the foregoing, without neglecting responses that indicate that teachers must be perceived by students as facilitators of the process in which they are also learning.

Finally, among those grouped into the “characterization” category of healthy pedagogy mentioned horizontal and respectful processes; willingness to listen and the existence of values in everyday life.

### **Which healthy experiences are developed in the classroom in your academic unit or department?**

In order to identify concrete healthy experiences, the question was raised and asked to cite specific teaching experiences, according to the opinion of the participants.

The responses were grouped into three categories. The first, corresponding to a 51.7% of the responses, integrates aspects of “**socio-affective**” nature, which include participatory experiences that allow self-knowledge, knowledge of other people and of social and cultural environment. A second category covered 34.5% of the responses; it is located at a more “academic and curricular” level, describes experiences related to thematic and cognitive components. The remaining answers that correspond to 13.8% highlight the absence of healthy experiences in their academic unit classrooms and focuses on mentioning “**other perceptions**” that they consider unhealthy.

[Table 6](#) presents, in a systematic way, the responses obtained from the voice of the authorities who lead academic and administrative processes at CIDE.

It is important to indicate that, as it can be seen on [Table 6](#), within the healthy experiences mentioned by participants, they deal with experiences outside the classroom such as tours, walks, ludic-creative games and get together activities, aspects which have been mentioned in other responses within the interview. This should be an internal analysis carried out by the Center for Research and Teaching in Education and National University, understanding that the educational process and pedagogical experiences make sense when inserted into the reality and are associated to life in itself.





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Table 6

*Specific healthy experiences that develop in the classroom, according to the opinion of people who lead academic and administrative processes categorized by areas*

Category	Healthy experiences	Percentage
Socio-emotional Area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Support for students</li> <li>· Concern of teachers for the human being</li> <li>· Activities designed for student welfare</li> <li>· Fellowship</li> <li>· Courses in which students learn first about themselves as learners</li> <li>· Introspective journeys to resolve personal issues</li> <li>· Knowledge of himself and of other persons</li> <li>· Life stories, getting closer to people</li> <li>· Doing a get together at the end of the course</li> <li>· Celebrating birthdays</li> <li>· Workshops as a space to grow</li> <li>· Solidarity actions</li> <li>· Search for students welfare</li> <li>· Work areas such as professional self-realization, project life, goals and objectives</li> <li>· Growing as human beings and developing social sensitivity as teachers</li> </ul>	51.7
Academic and curricular Area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Educational tours to get to know other educational realities</li> <li>· Getting out of the classroom is healthy, to make changes and call for meetings outside the university</li> <li>· Cultural and recreational activities</li> <li>· Projects that promote academic performance</li> <li>· Specific courses (Education for health and quality of life; Personal development and human communication)</li> <li>· Courses that develop a very balanced work from nutrition, aesthetic and organizing their processes</li> <li>· Courses related to projects such as social pedagogy</li> <li>· Courses which will design strategies for workshops</li> <li>· Projects and outreach activities that involve visits to hospitals and work with older adults and people with disabilities</li> <li>· Curricular adjustments in courses</li> </ul>	34.5
Other perceptions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· We are accustomed to the subject of knowledge, courses that do not promote movement</li> <li>· In the cafeteria you cannot have lunch in peace, it is not possible to enjoy lunch due the noise</li> <li>· Since some students were transferred or lack money, they cannot eat on time</li> <li>· There is no assessment of the human body as such</li> </ul>	13.8
Total		100.0





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## General reflections and contributions to this research article

The researchers stress it is essential that National University of Costa Rica think, organize and manage, promoting, at the same time, healthy mental and contextual environments. The Center for Research and Teaching in Education as teacher of trainers' trainer and cradle for trainers of university teachers, should position pedagogy as a science of life which researches and analyzes educational processes to transform them into personal and social qualitative and quantitative improvements.

University life needs to provide opportunities for cognitive, social and emotional, psychomotor grow; certainly integrating values and principles that allow to foster spirit and affection. Academic and administrative processes cannot be managed if they do not draw from the fact that pedagogy has the role to train for life, for citizens of the planet which require to understand that health is one of the purposes that should lead educational actions, because health is an essential element for intelligence to flow in its maximum expression. "The main strengths of a successful organization are: staff and a new philosophy of work, in which human values are essential when becoming part of life and of the organizational culture" (Soberanes and de la Fuente, 2009, p. 127).

New trends in human talent management appreciate that, when people feel motivated at personal and collective level, there is a spirit of commitment and identification that yields better and bigger conceptual, procedural and attitudinal results. It is necessary to promote policies that show the value and respect for life in its different dimensions and manifestations, and health must be taken care of as a fundamental right that transverse and permeates the entire educational process to achieve life management.

Clearly research highlights as finding that perceptions that people who live and lead university processes have regarding health, care, welfare and quality of life, intertwine in a repetitive way with the collective side in the construction of senses, and are mutually forged. It is necessary to give new meaning and re-dignify the university management system as a system, a living organism where a diversity of diversities lives and coexists.

The qualities of social and educational process at university-level are not only measured by quantitative indicators, but other aspects of qualitative nature which cannot be addressed from mechanistic paradigms are of special care.

The university trains human beings for life; therefore, it has to worry about creating spaces to strengthen it comprehensively. From a complexity paradigm, where networks and linkages are valued, it is undeniable that the university should be closing gaps. Academic results or follow-up prescriptive standards do not show evidence that the institution is being a promoter of life, nor of authentic processes of relevant learning and of importance for people who live together in it.

Every organization as a living organism moves drawn from support networks and strengthens from rewarding experiences that allow keeping the excitement to learn, live, do and be.





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## Conclusions and relevant constructions of research to the field of knowledge

New requirements and demands force organizations to seek mechanisms to be viewed as a system whose synergy triggers the functioning of the institution to be successful hence the shared understanding of all people and the typical processes of change in complex societies.

In this sense, the National University of Costa Rica and the Center of Research and Teaching in Education must make a permanent reading of the changes, to be consistent in its forms of administrative, academic and student organization, suggesting versatile and varied experiences which will allow agreement with national and international needs. Of course, we understand that this is a complex and uncertain process that involves a change in the approaching path, therefore, a shift in paradigm. This shows that not only what is measurable and quantifiable is valuable, but that from an emerging paradigm it takes up the essence of life as a revitalizing social historical element.

The institutions have life thereafter the thoughts, feelings and actions of their actors and actresses: students, faculty and administrative staff. It is necessary to transcend the linear and hierarchical paradigm, to understand that the university is a holistic and learner community, where the sum of features, well mediated, generate a "whole" with vital human consciousness, which contradicts neo-liberal trends and allows to discover the potential to oppose the consumer market policies that commercialize education, overriding the creativity and leaving aside the life and training of the being in its amazing breadth.

Universities need to develop an ethic of deep care, promoting lifestyles based on dialogic communication and willing to discuss with diversity; aspect that demands respect, solidarity, interpretation and compassion in order to take on the reality and its variables. A healthy human being in the broadest sense of the term is capable of contributing not only to the workforce and economic strength of a context, but is able to change the environment hereupon a humanizing vision and its humanizing performance, which is linked with a recognition of basic rights, but also global and universal responsibilities.

Insofar healthy environments are recognized as a source of healthy lives, educational institutions will be able to plan educational innovations based on respect and the legitimization of the plurality that emerges from feeling and thinking; principles and vital accessories for any educational progress.

As part of the research process, developed at the National University of Costa Rica and concerned with pedagogy and its necessary approach routes, we discovered that we can approach creative and alternative routes to generate pedagogical processes that, based on principles and values, enrich and exalt life. This entails shared learning processes; contemplation and resignification of the differences as a prerequisite for enriching thoughts, interpretations and actions that illuminate a form of more vigorous university academic management, aspect strongly associated with the concept coined by the healthy pedagogy research team.





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Healthy academic management, then, involves implicitly the concept of innovation, lifelong learning and proper appropriation of changes. An institution that grants privilege to a humanist vision should always be open to innovation, promoting a healthy institutional lifestyle.

Evidently it is a difficult path, it is necessary to make mental breaks that allow you to promote an academic management that favors motivation and learning and love for life. A healthy university is necessarily committed to vital development; that which connects mind, body and spirit and keeps you in harmony with the context. It is certainly a social function which involves other fields, actors and, above all, personal conviction that life is the greatest treasure therefore we must ensure the right to health and education that exalts.

Creating healthy experiences, from a healthy pedagogy, refers to that university and the set of instances and people that comprise it should deepen in practicing experiences that allow you to develop an environment of freedom, democracy, dialog, critical reflection and ethical commitment.

Establishing a healthy lifestyle at the university through the beliefs of each university community member and those who are responsible for managing work require being aware of the impact of their ideas and their behavior in the population.

### **Highlighting the contributions of participants**

From the suggestions provided by the interviewees, there are conclusions and findings relevant to this research, including:

To live a healthy pedagogy, the rupture of the vision of CIDE as the sum of academic units or departments is required in order to collectively build a vision of Center that promotes human rights.

It is suggested the need to rely on the design of policies from each unit as a whole that can be considered and addressed and, even as managers of learning processes, integrate and radiate towards the university community and with this to impact the national reality.

Healthy pedagogy should be noticeable in permanent and continuing education courses developed by CIDE, to project their experience at level of center, university, community or communities that are represented.

It is required to establish clear university policies that foster literacy in terms of the meaning of healthy pedagogy and its appropriation; in such a way that more assertive and responsive learning spaces will be encouraged.

To achieve a learning healthy process it is necessary to recognize the diversity of contexts and persons living together. The respect and recognition of otherness is vital.





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It is important to have infrastructure spaces and times that motivate the academic reflection and incorporate the urgency of recognizing and act on the new social historic settings that challenge us and demand to do something more for life in all its expressions.

The articulated work involves learning to understand, share, promote and be agents of healthy lifestyle. It involves a personal and collective change, where the culture of affection linked with knowledge is rescued. In other words, it is understood that pedagogy is life and that protecting it is a decision and a collaborative management process.

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