

CASE STUDY

Procedure for the design of competency profiles in the telecommunications sector: case of Radiocuba Sancti Spiritus, Cuba

Procedimiento para el diseño de perfiles de competencias en el sector de telecomunicaciones: caso Radiocuba Sancti Spiritus, Cuba

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Received: 06 April 2026 / Accepted: 29 June 2026 / Published online: 31 July 2026

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Abstract Competency management has become a fundamental strategic approach for optimizing human capital in contemporary organizations. In the telecommunications sector, characterized by rapid technological changes and high competitiveness, the precise definition of competency profiles is essential to align staff capabilities with organizational objectives. This article presents the results of applied research aimed at designing a procedure for developing competency profiles for positions at the Radiocuba Sancti Spiritus Division, Cuba. Using a mixed approach that combined documentary analysis, focus groups, surveys of managers, and expert interviews, the current state of competency management in the entity was diagnosed. The findings revealed the absence of structured profiles under this approach and the prevalence of sectoral qualifiers centered on tasks. As a result, a procedure structured in four phases, nine stages, and twenty-three steps is proposed, based on the functional analysis methodology. The procedure aligns with the current Cuban regulatory framework, particularly with the projections of the Draft Labor Code introducing the principle of “demonstrated capacity”. The implementation of this procedure will allow the organization to transition from task-based management to a competency-oriented model, improving selection, training, and performance evaluation processes.

Keywords competency management, competency profiles, functional analysis, telecommunications, human capital, demonstrated capacity.

Resumen La gestión por competencias se ha consolidado como un enfoque estratégico fundamental para la optimización del capital humano en las organizaciones contemporáneas. En el sector de telecomunicaciones, caracterizado por cambios tecnológicos rápidos y alta competitividad, la definición precisa de perfiles de competencias resulta esencial para alinear las capacidades del personal con los objetivos organizacionales. Este artículo presenta los resultados de una investigación aplicada cuyo objetivo fue diseñar un procedimiento para la elaboración de perfiles de competencias para los cargos de la División Radiocuba Sancti Spiritus, Cuba. Mediante un enfoque mixto que combinó análisis documental, grupo focal, encuestas a directivos y entrevistas a expertos, se diagnosticó la situación actual de la gestión por competencias en la entidad. Los hallazgos revelaron la inexistencia de perfiles estructurados bajo este enfoque y la prevalencia de calificadores ramales centrados en tareas. Como resultado, se propone un procedimiento estructurado en cuatro fases, nueve etapas y veintitrés pasos, fundamentado en la metodología de análisis funcional. El procedimiento se alinea con el marco normativo cubano vigente, particularmente con las proyecciones del Anteproyecto del Código de Trabajo que introduce el principio de “capacidad demostrada”. La implementación de este procedimiento permitirá a la organización transitar desde una gestión basada en tareas hacia un modelo orientado a competencias, mejorando los procesos de selección, formación y evaluación del desempeño.

Palabras clave gestión por competencias, perfiles de competencias, análisis funcional, telecomunicaciones, capital humano, capacidad demostrada.

How to cite

Baguet, Y. G., & Álvarez, M. O. (2026). Procedure for the design of competency profiles in the telecommunications sector: case of Radiocuba Sancti Spiritus, Cuba. *Journal of Advances in Education, Sciences and Humanities*, 4(2), 30-38. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.21854628>



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Introduction

Competency management is a central paradigm in strategic HRM, enhancing individual and organizational outcomes across diverse contexts (Alles, 2005; Chiavenato, 2019). Defining competency profiles is essential for aligning human capital with strategic objectives. In telecommunications—marked by rapid technological change and uncertainty—competencies cannot be static attributes; instead, a dynamic, process-based vision involving continuous collective reflection is required to manage them effectively (Lorino, 2008).

In the Cuban context, competency management has acquired growing relevance as a result of regulatory and strategic transformations. Decree-Law No. 13/2020 “System of Work with State and Government Cadres and their Reserves” (Consejo de Estado de la República de Cuba, 2020) establishes the need to evaluate the performance of cadres based on results and competencies. More recently, the Draft of the Labor Code, which concluded its popular consultation period in November 2025 and is expected to receive final approval by the National Assembly in July 2026, introduces the principle of “demonstrated ability” as the central axis of the employment relationship. This new principle offers a pathway for sensitive decisions such as hiring, permanence, promotion, training, and professional development, favoring labor mobility based on real merits and recognizing non-traditional career paths.

The Radiocuba Sancti Spíritus Division, an entity of the Business Group of Informatics and Communications (GEIC) responsible for guaranteeing radiocommunication, broadcasting, and television services in the provincial territory, faces significant challenges in the management of its human capital. The diagnosis carried out reveals the absence of job profiles structured by competencies, with traditional descriptions centered on tasks and functions prevailing. The branch qualification standards used present significant limitations in relation to competency management, as they are structured around tasks and do not define competencies, are generic and decontextualized, and do not establish progressive professional development pathways.

The research aimed to propose a procedure for the development of competency profiles for positions in the Radiocuba Sancti Spíritus Division, Cuba. It was based on the hypothesis that the implementation of this procedure would contribute to the improvement of competency design, a current scientific and legal requirement in the Cuban business context.

The concept of competence has evolved significantly since the pioneering work of McClelland (1973), who argued that traditional academic examinations do not guarantee performance and postulated the need to seek other variables—competencies—that could predict a certain degree of success. In the following decade, Boyatzis (1982) defined competencies

as underlying characteristics of an individual that are related to effective performance in the job, differentiating superior performance from average or poor performance.

In the Ibero-American context, various authors have enriched this definition. Cuesta (2000), a Cuban researcher, incorporates experience as a significant variable, defining competencies as underlying characteristics in people, associated with experience, related to successful actions in a job position. Alles (2005) emphasizes the relevance of competencies not only as a selection and evaluation tool but also as a mechanism to foster a solid and coherent organizational culture.

Competency management addresses strategic alignment, intellectual asset management, performance evaluation, and fair compensation (Le Boterf, 2001). Competency-based performance appraisal systems evaluate behaviors that drive high-level performance, complementing numerical results (Sahay & Kaur, 2021), with financial rewards serving as extrinsic motivators that enhance employee effort and performance.

The competency management framework is recognized as an efficient practice that motivates employees and facilitates decision-making and development (Sahay & Kaur, 2021). Functional analysis methodology, widely used to develop competency standards (Harrison et al., 2006), focuses on describing job performance outcomes rather than titles. This technique identifies labor competencies inherent in a productive function at various levels (Mertens, 1999), establishing the main purpose and then determining required functions through a hierarchical map of purposes, key functions, constituent functions, and realizations—concrete, verifiable results that form the basis for competency standards and training programs. The integration of competency units, elements, performance evidence, criteria, and assessment guidelines provides the foundation for competency-based curricula.

The Cuban regulatory framework has evolved toward the incorporation of competency management as a strategic tool. NC 3001 (2007) on the requirements of the Integrated Human Capital Management System established the need to define competency profiles for positions. Decree-Law No. 13/2020 (Consejo de Estado de la República de Cuba, 2020) on the system of work with State and Government cadres and their reserves establishes the principles, objectives, requirements, and procedures for the selection, training, evaluation, and development of cadres. It emphasizes the need to evaluate performance based on results and competencies.

The Draft of the Labor Code, which concluded its popular consultation period in November 2025 and is expected to receive final approval by the National Assembly in July 2026, introduces the principle of “demonstrated ability” as the central axis of the employment relationship. This prin-

ciple prioritizes preparation and actual performance over other formal criteria, both for entering and for remaining in or advancing in the job position. The practical scope of this transformation offers a pathway for sensitive decisions such as hiring, permanence, promotion, training, and professional development.

The new regulation also provides advantages by favoring labor mobility based on real merits, recognizing non-traditional career paths, and orienting training toward verifiable results. However, it also carries risks if applied without clear procedures, so the standard must be interpreted as a principle that obliges the design of objective, transparent, and participatory processes. This underscores the importance of having clearly defined competency profiles as a basis for objective evaluation processes.

Methodology

The research methodology was grounded in a mixed-methods approach, integrating quantitative and qualitative elements, and was framed within applied research of a projective nature, since its ultimate purpose was to develop a proposal aimed at solving a practical problem previously identified through a rigorous diagnosis. For the collection of empirical information, a diverse set of techniques and methods was deployed.

First, documentary analysis was employed, through which institutional documents, branch qualification standards, training plans corresponding to the 2021-2025 period, as well as national and international regulations, were exhaustively reviewed. Concurrently, a focus group was implemented, developed within the framework of the First National Administrative Section Workshop, held in May 2024, which involved the active participation of 12 key informants, including human capital directors from various territorial divisions, specialists from the national directorate, and heads of administrative sections.

Similarly, a survey was administered to 10 managers from the Sancti Spiritus Division and other territorial divisions during the 2025 Annual Balance, and semi-structured interviews were conducted with experts from the Center for Studies in Advanced Management Techniques (CETAD) and the Provincial Institute of Labor Studies (IPEL) of Sancti Spiritus. Finally, participant observation was employed, facilitated by the author's professional experience within the institution, which allowed for direct immersion in the context under study. The triangulation of these sources—documentary, experiential, and observational—guaranteed a comprehensive and coherent approach to the phenomenon analyzed, providing robustness and validity to the results.

Results and discussion

The diagnosis carried out at the Radiocuba Sancti Spiritus Division reveals the absence of job profiles developed on the basis of competencies, since the documents used for job descriptions fall within a traditional approach centered on tasks and functions. These instruments present generic descriptions that do not establish differentiated levels of mastery, lack behavioral indicators that would enable an objective performance evaluation, and omit any explicit alignment between job functions and the organization's strategic objectives; likewise, they do not contemplate mastery levels that distinguish the expected performance between novice workers and those with greater experience, which hinders internal professional progression.

Furthermore, the analysis of the training plans corresponding to the 2021-2025 period reveals equally significant structural limitations. The absence of a systematic diagnosis of training needs is evident, since the selection of training actions responds to available offers, specific requests, or generic topics, without any explicit connection to the actual requirements of the positions. This deficiency results in random and disjointed training actions, characterized by abrupt thematic changes from one year to the next, isolated initiatives without a structured pathway, and the lack of training levels that would foster the progressive development of competencies. Added to this is the fact that training is conceived fundamentally as a reactive mechanism to problems already evidenced in work evaluations, addressing symptoms rather than underlying causes, and without establishing a cumulative sequence that would allow advancement from basic levels toward higher levels of mastery. Finally, a marked disconnection from the organizational strategy is observed, since training actions do not derive from a prior analysis of the critical competencies necessary to fulfill the institutional mission, which perpetuates a talent management model alien to the demands of the environment and to the strategic purposes of the entity.

Table 1 presents the diagnosis of the current situation, the desired state, and the main gaps identified in human talent management through a competency-based approach. The analysis integrates regulatory, methodological, selection, training, performance evaluation, and organizational culture dimensions, providing a framework for identifying improvement opportunities and guiding the development of competency-based profiles.

Despite the limitations identified, the diagnostic process also brought to light several strengths that can be leveraged to support the proposed changes. Among the most significant are the strong commitment and profound sense of belonging exhibited by the workforce, coupled with a clear recognition among managers of the strategic importance and necessity of

implementing competency-based management.

Table 1. Diagnosis of human talent management gaps through a competency-based management approach

Dimension	Current situation	Desired state	Identified gap
Regulatory	National guidelines that are not contextualized to the organizational reality	Policies adapted to the territorial context	Lack of operational translation of regulations
Methodological	Profiles based on tasks and functions	Competency-based structured profiles	Absence of appropriate methodological designs
Recruitment and selection	Based on academic qualifications and experience	Based on required competencies	Selection criteria that do not predict performance
Training	Reactive and fragmented	Based on competency gaps	Lack of knowledge of actual development needs
Performance evaluation	Focused on task fulfillment	Focused on competency development	Inadequate instruments for competency assessment
Organizational culture	Technical commitment with limited professional development	Culture of continuous development	Human potential not sufficiently enhanced

These human and leadership factors provide a receptive cultural foundation that is essential for the successful adoption of any new methodological framework.

From an institutional and academic perspective, the Division benefits from established collaborative ties with the University of Sancti Spiritus, particularly through previous projects focused on competency training, which facilitate technical support and knowledge transfer. Furthermore, the current regulatory framework provides solid backing for the implementation of competency management systems, a support that is reinforced by the accumulated experience and guidelines derived from the Draft of the new Labor Code, which explicitly underscores the centrality of “demonstrated ability” as a core principle for professional evaluation and development. Together, these elements create a favorable environment that can effectively drive the transition toward a competency-oriented management model.

The proposed procedure rests on four essential pillars: theoretical-methodological, normative, contextual, and strategic. From a theoretical-methodological standpoint, it adopts the functional approach to labor competencies developed by the ILO/Cinterfor (Mertens, 1999), which is grounded in key principles such as the identification of competencies derived directly from workplace functions, a strong orientation toward tangible results, a normative character that guides performance expectations, and the active involvement of subject-matter experts throughout the process. This methodological framework is complemented by a robust normative foundation, which includes the Cuban standard NC 3001:2007, the provisions set out in Decree-Law No. 13/2020 (Consejo de Estado de la República de Cuba, 2020), and the guidelines outlined in the Draft of the new

Labor Code; these legal instruments collectively provide the mandatory institutional context and structural references that legitimize and support the implementation of competency-based management within the organization.

Contextually, the procedure is carefully tailored to the specific realities of the Radiocuba Sancti Spiritus Division, taking into account its highly specialized technical nature, the existence of branch qualification classifiers that serve as a valuable point of departure for functional analysis, and its prior collaborative relationships with both CETAD and IPEL, which facilitate technical support and knowledge transfer. Strategically, the proposal is directly aligned with the Division’s overarching objectives, particularly within the Human Capital Key Results Area, ensuring that the design and subsequent application of competency profiles are not developed in isolation but rather contribute meaningfully to the institution’s long-term performance, operational efficiency, and strategic fulfillment of its mission.

Building upon the theoretical and strategic foundations previously outlined, the proposed procedure is guided by a clear set of objectives designed to ensure its practical relevance and methodological rigor. Table 2 below presents these objectives, classified into general and specific categories, which collectively establish the roadmap for the development of competency-based profiles using the functional analysis approach.

The proposed procedure is systematically organized into four distinct phases, which are further subdivided into nine stages and a total of twenty-three operational steps (Figure 1). The first phase, Preparation and Organization, is designed to create the necessary organizational, methodological, and human conditions for the process. This phase comprises two

stages.

Table 2. General and specific research objectives for the development of competency-based profiles using the functional analysis approach

Objective type	Objective formulation
General	Design competency-based profiles for the key positions of the Radiocuba Sancti Spíritus Division through the functional approach to labor competency analysis, providing a foundation for integrating human talent management processes and contributing to the improvement of organizational performance. Identify, based on objective criteria, the key positions to be prioritized in the design of competency-based profiles. Apply the functional analysis methodology to break down the critical functions of each key position.
Specific	Determine the required competencies and their corresponding performance criteria. Develop competency-based profiles following the structure of the functional approach. Validate the designed profiles through expert judgment and pilot application. Establish guidelines for implementing the profiles in selection, training, and performance evaluation processes.

The initial stage focuses on sensitizing and securing management commitment, involving the formal presentation of the procedure to the division's leadership, the issuance of an internal resolution to institutionalize the commitment, and the formation of a Technical Committee for Functional Analysis. Subsequently, the second stage entails the specialized training of this committee, which includes a 20-hour workshop on functional analysis methodology and the development of a detailed work plan complete with a schedule and assigned responsibilities.

The second phase aims to identify and prioritize key positions according to their strategic relevance. It begins with the definition of explicit prioritization criteria, weighting centrality to the mission at 35%, functional complexity at 25%, technical singularity at 20%, and responsibility for results at 20%. These criteria are applied to select the top 20% of positions, a choice that is subsequently validated by senior management. Following this selection, the stage concludes with the collection of baseline functional information, achieved through a thorough review of branch qualification standards and normative documents, as well as exploratory interviews with area supervisors.

The third phase constitutes the core application of the functional analysis methodology for each selected position. Its first stage involves constructing a functional map by first defining the primary purpose of the role and then disaggregating it across four distinct levels: the main purpose, key functions, constituent functions, and specific, observable realizations, all of which are validated by area experts. In the

next stage, these functions are grouped into coherent competency units, for which specific, observable, measurable, and realistic performance criteria are defined, alongside the identification of relevant performance, knowledge, and product evidence. Finally, this phase culminates with the drafting of the functional profile, following a predetermined structure to ensure comprehensiveness and consistency.

The fourth and final phase is dedicated to the validation, approval, and implementation of guidelines for the functional profiles. It begins with a technical validation involving the selection of 7 to 10 experts, to whom a simplified Delphi method is applied. This is followed by participatory validation through workshops with managers and jobholders to discuss and refine the profiles based on their feedback. The concluding stage encompasses formal approval: the profiles are presented to the directorate, an official resolution is issued, and a practical guide for their application is elaborated. The process finalizes with the communication of the new profiles across the entire organization and the establishment of periodic review mechanisms to ensure the profiles remain dynamic and up-to-date.

The next example demonstrates the concrete application of the proposed procedure by linking the key functions of the position, the expected outcomes, and the established performance criteria. In this case, the procedure allows the general responsibilities of Electrical, Electromechanical, and Telecommunications Equipment Operator A to be transformed into verifiable and measurable actions (Table 3).

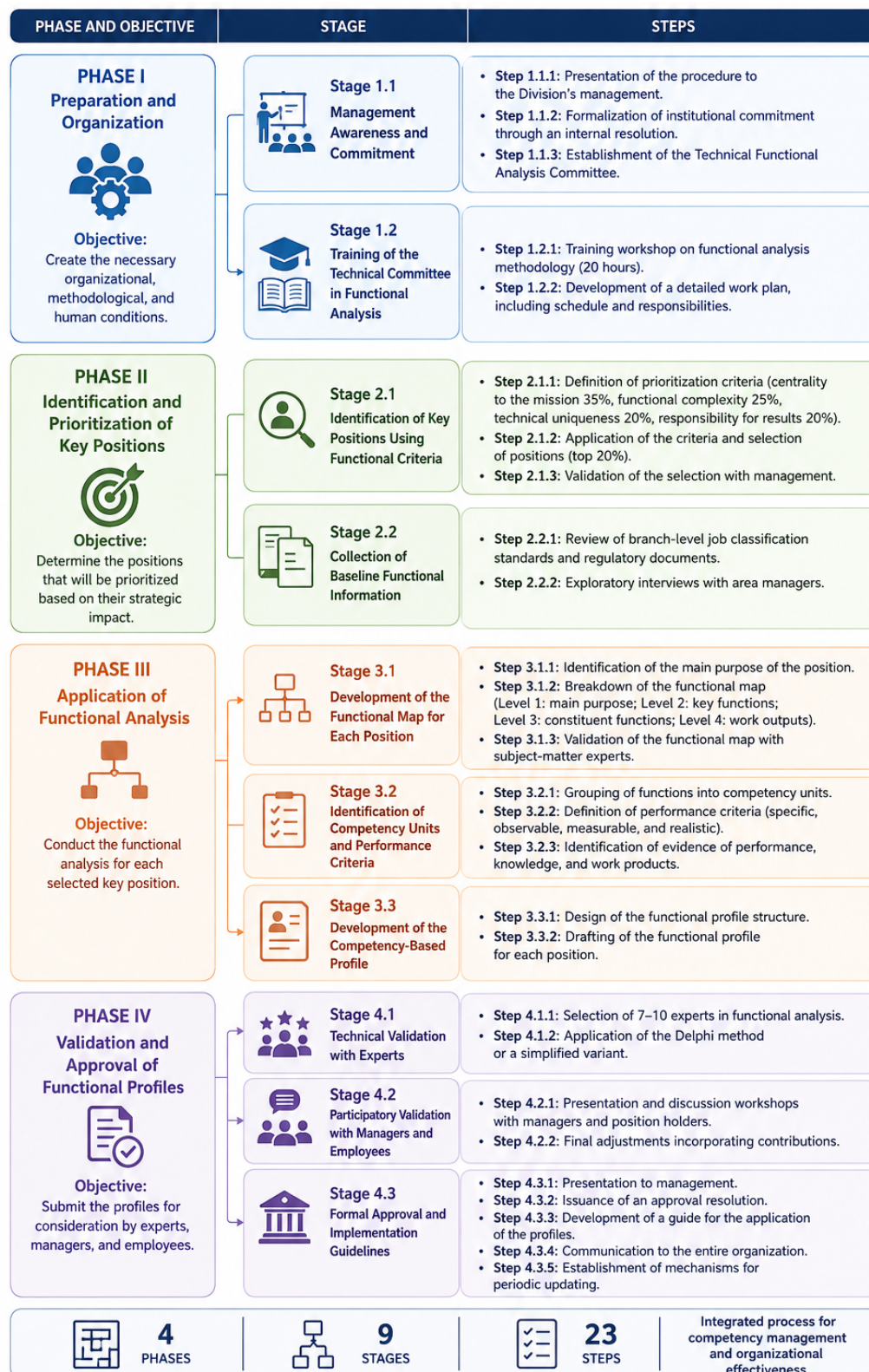


Figure 1. Structure of the Procedure for functional analysis and development of competency-based job profiles.

Note: Graphic design created using OpenAI ChatGPT (GPT-5.5-mini) based on information provided by the authors. The use of artificial intelligence was limited to the visual representation and aesthetic optimization of the figure; the scientific content, analysis, and interpretation are the sole responsibility of the authors.

Table 3. Specific example of procedure implementation: key functions, activities, and performance criteria for the electrical, electromechanical, and telecommunications equipment operator

Key function	Activity / Performance	Performance criteria / Verification procedure
1. Monitor technical parameters of equipment	Output power maintained within specified parameters.	Verification at least every 30 min; comparison with established ranges; recording of deviations >5%; reporting of persistent deviations.
	Modulation indices adjusted according to standards.	Verification at transmission start-up and every hour; maintenance within the 85–95% range; adjustments according to established procedures.
2. Perform adjustment and calibration operations	Parameters adjusted according to technical specifications.	Verification of compliance with established technical specifications.
	Measuring instruments calibrated according to procedures.	Verification of calibration in accordance with established procedures.
3. Respond to technical alarms and contingencies	Accurate diagnosis of the reported situation.	Identification and assessment of the cause of the alarm or contingency.
	Response actions executed according to protocol.	Implementation of the response actions established in the corresponding protocol.
4. Record operational incidents and developments	Complete and accurate reports prepared at the end of each shift.	Verification of the completeness, accuracy, and timeliness of the recorded information.
	Incident log updated with detailed information.	Chronological and detailed recording of incidents and actions taken.

Periodic monitoring of output power and modulation indices incorporates objective criteria for frequency, acceptable ranges, and deviation recording, facilitating the systematic control of technical parameters. Additionally, adjustment and calibration activities establish mechanisms to maintain equipment and instruments according to their technical specifications, while alarm and contingency response links diagnosis with pre-established protocols. Finally, the recording of incidents through shift reports and an incident log ensures the traceability of operations and actions taken. Overall, this example demonstrates that the proposed procedure is not limited to describing job functions, but rather establishes an operational relationship between what must be done, how it must be done, and by what criteria compliance can be verified, thus promoting an objective and reproducible performance evaluation.

The results of this research are situated within a growing body of literature that demonstrates the effectiveness of competency management in the telecommunications sector. Studies on Algeria Telecom have shown a significant impact of competency management on improving institutional performance, concluding that it is necessary to resort to competency maps to reduce the competency gap and align employees' competencies with job requirements (Jaber & Rahalia, 2021). These findings coincide with the diagnosis carried out at Radiocuba, where significant gaps between current and required competencies were identified.

A systematic review of the impact of performance apprai-

sal systems and competency management frameworks on employee performance in the telecommunications sector identified the competency management framework as one of the most efficient employee-related management practices, recognized as a strong motivator for employees (Sahay & Kaur, 2021). This review also established that performance appraisal systems have a significant impact on employee performance, recommending that management be objective during evaluation exercises, provide regular feedback, and offer professional development.

The functional analysis methodology proposed in this research is consistent with the approach widely used in the United Kingdom and around the world (Harrison et al., 2006). This outcome-based competency approach focuses on describing job performance outcomes and does not deal with job titles, allowing qualifications to be awarded independently of any particular learning process.

The diagnosis of training needs and competency gaps is a key element that connects with the research findings. Studies in Nigeria revealed that organizational training needs can only be identified from the results of performance evaluation, and that the inability to provide timely feedback is a challenge for performance appraisal systems. This reinforces the importance of the procedure proposed in this research, which establishes clear feedback mechanisms and links competency profiles with training planning.

Conclusions

Competency management stands as an essential strategic approach for the telecommunications sector, given its environment of accelerated technological changes and uncertainty, and its dynamic, process-based definition makes it possible to reconcile long-term development planning with the necessary operational flexibility; this approach is fully valid within the current Cuban regulatory framework. However, the diagnosis carried out at Radiocuba Sancti Spiritus revealed a critical lack of competency-structured job profiles, as the branch classifiers used are limited to generic and decontextualized tasks and functions, without defining competencies or outlining progressive professional development pathways. To address this problem, a specific methodological procedure was designed, organized into four phases, nine stages, and twenty-three steps, which, under the functional approach, guides the identification of competencies by disaggregating functions until reaching verifiable achievements and observable performance criteria. The implementation of this procedure will allow the Sancti Spiritus Division to overcome the traditional task-based model and adopt competency-oriented management, thus optimizing the processes of selection, training, and performance evaluation, and achieving an effective alignment of human capital with the organizational strategy.

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Conflicts of interest

The author declare that she has no conflict of interest.

Author contributions

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Data availability statement

The datasets used and/or analyzed during the current study are available from the corresponding author on reasonable request.

Statement on the use of AI

The author acknowledges the use of generative AI and AI-assisted technologies to improve the readability and clarity of the article.

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