



Review article

Work in multigrade classrooms: need in the initial training of the graduate in primary education

El trabajo en aulas multigrado: necesidad en la formación inicial del licenciado en Educación Primaria

Trabalho em salas multisseriadas: necessidade na formação inicial do egresso do Ensino Fundamental

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ABSTRACT

The process of initial training of the primary teacher to work in multigrade classrooms is a core issue that cannot be postponed due to the importance of their influence as the basis of society. In order to achieve an optimal initial training process, several generations of study plans have been applied in the Primary Education career, considering it as a need for curricular innovation, conceiving a continuous training process for professionals and increasing quality and comprehensiveness in their training. The objective of this review article is to characterize the historical evolution of the initial training process of the primary teacher for work in multigrade classrooms in the students of the Bachelor of Primary Education career, through the use of the historical and logical method, the documentary analysis and of analysis and synthesis procedures and induction and deduction. As a result of the study carried out, the main features of the initial training process of the primary teacher for work in multigrade classrooms were determined. The investigation allowed us to conclude that the process of initial training for work in multigrade classrooms implies knowledge of the set of stages that occur logically in the initial training of the primary teacher and that allow the appropriation of content for multigrade classrooms in correspondence with the consistent performance of his mode of action as a university graduate.

Keywords: multigrade classrooms; initial training; degree in Primary Education.

RESUMEN

El proceso de formación inicial del estudiante de la carrera Licenciatura en Educación Primaria para el trabajo en aulas multigrados es una cuestión impostergable por la importancia que reviste su influencia en la sociedad. En esta carrera con el fin de alcanzar un proceso de formación inicial óptimo se han aplicado varias generaciones de planes de estudio, a partir de la necesidad de innovación curricular al concebir la formación continua para los profesionales e incrementar la calidad e integralidad en su formación. El presente artículo de revisión tiene como objetivo presentar los resultados de la evolución histórica del proceso de formación inicial del estudiante de la carrera Licenciatura en Educación Primaria para el trabajo en aulas multigrados en los estudiantes de la carrera Licenciatura en Educación Primaria, mediante el empleo del método histórico y lógico, el análisis documental y de los procedimientos de análisis y síntesis y la inducción y deducción. Como resultado del estudio realizado se determinaron los rasgos del proceso de formación inicial del estudiante de la carrera Licenciatura en Educación Primaria para el trabajo en aulas multigrados. La indagación permitió concluir que el proceso de formación inicial para el trabajo en aulas multigrados implica el conocimiento del conjunto de etapas que se suceden de manera lógica en la formación inicial del estudiante de la carrera Licenciatura en Educación Primaria y que posibilitan la apropiación de contenidos para el trabajo en las aulas multigrados en correspondencia con el desempeño coherente de su modo de actuación como graduado universitario.

Palabras clave: aulas multigrado; formación inicial; carrera Licenciatura en Educación Primaria.

RESUMO

O processo de formação inicial do aluno do Bacharelado em Ensino Fundamental para atuação em salas multisseriadas é uma questão urgente devido à importância de sua influência na sociedade. Nesta carreira, para alcançar um processo de formação inicial ótimo, foram aplicadas várias gerações de planos de estudos, assentes na necessidade de inovação curricular ao conceber a formação contínua dos profissionais e aumentar a qualidade e abrangência da sua formação. O objetivo deste artigo de revisão é apresentar os resultados da evolução histórica do processo de formação inicial do aluno do curso de Bacharelado em Ensino Fundamental para a atuação em salas multisseriadas nos alunos do curso de Bacharelado em Ensino Fundamental, por meio da utilização do método histórico e lógico, análise documental e procedimentos de análise e síntese e indução e dedução. Como resultado do estudo realizado, foram determinadas as características do processo de formação inicial do aluno do curso de Bacharelado em Educação Básica para atuação em salas multisseriadas. A investigação permitiu concluir que o processo de formação inicial para atuação em salas multisseriadas implica o conhecimento do conjunto de etapas que se sucedem logicamente na formação inicial do aluno da carreira de Bacharel em Ensino Fundamental e que possibilitam a apropriação de conteúdos para o trabalho nas salas multisseriadas em correspondência com o desempenho coerente do seu modo de atuação como egresso universitário.

Palavras-chave: salas de aula multisseriadas; treino inicial; Graduação em Ensino Fundamental.

INTRODUCTION

Contemporary society is characterized by its complex and growing network of socio-economic and scientific-technical relations. These conditions ensure that educational systems are united in their commitment to guarantee quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities with equal possibilities and opportunities for all.

Significant changes are taking place in Cuban education to adapt to the current conditions of society, aimed at guaranteeing the quality of education at all levels of education; In this sense, Primary Education has had a prioritized nature, given its complexity as teaching and the role it plays in the comprehensive training of schoolchildren.

The Cuban educational system has considered the need for a qualitative leap in education and school management for the formation of a qualitatively superior personality in a complex and interactive process. The school must guarantee the formation of this vital human capital, as a pillar of future socio-economic development, in any national context. Of these, rural education is one of the most complex, requiring greater attention due to the number of schools with these characteristics that exist in the country, hence the importance of achieving better functioning and raising the quality of education. in this context.

Cultural, scientific and technological progress has also erupted in rural areas, transforming ways of life, ways of thinking, organizing and producing. This advance causes the appearance of areas of concern in the work, which require reflection and transformation of ways of doing things in pedagogical practice, to adapt technological advances and actions to the characteristics and conditions of the educational process.

The initial training of primary teachers is not immune to these transformations, demanding professionals endowed with a

high social commitment and with levels of sufficiency such that the graduate can transform and relevantly impact the reality that surrounds them.

Consequently, in the initial training process of the student of the Bachelor's Degree in Primary Education, work in multigrade classrooms is given a relevant meaning, since it is unquestionable that attention to rural schools, and within them to multigrade schools, It fell behind after the improvement of primary school, which brought with it many transformations in other types of schools (mainly in those in the urban sector).

The need to provide the student in training for the Bachelor's Degree in Primary Education with the basic professional knowledge and skills for the successful development of their professional performance in the rural sector in this context of action is evident. In this regard, it is recognized in the professional model of the current Curriculum (E) that the Primary Education professional has as his sphere of action, first of all, his primary school, in different contexts: urban and rural from first to sixth grades, both in semi-internal, external and internal centers; Therefore, it is essential to contribute to their training for their professional pedagogical performance in both contexts from the study curriculum.

School practice in the rural context in most primary schools proposes multigrade as an organizational form; this is a complex and difficult task for many teachers, uncertain, as it involves dealing with a very diverse number of elements and variables. The actions proposed for the class must be based on the real state of the development of the subjects, knowledge, development of skills, motives, needs and interests of the group members.

Multigrade schools are those where teachers or educational figures serve students from different grades in the same classroom. This educational modality is present at the Basic Education levels, from

Preschool to Secondary. Depending on the case, these schools are single-teacher or single-teacher, two-teacher or three-teacher, which depends on the established number of students per teacher (Bracho, 2019).

On the other hand, Boix and Bustos (2016) state in their article that multigrade classrooms:

(...) They are small educational institutions, which work with a small number of students, who live in the same room, but necessarily coincide in the degree they are studying. Normally, this condition is closely associated with a certain geographical, social or cultural situation, which generates a low concentration of students and certain idiosyncratic particularities. The teacher in charge of the institution normally assumes the training process of the entire group and also other administrative functions of the establishment.

These definitions, in essence, reflect the particularities of this type of school by considering the combination of knowledge and interpersonal relationships produced between students of the same grade, of different grades and ages as the elements that characterize the multigrade class group.

In the multigrade school, the pedagogical process pursues the same objective as in the graduated school, but it is more complex because a single teacher must attend to students of different grades and moments of development in the same class act, which requires the creativity of the teacher. teacher to develop a process with quality.

Teaching in multigrade classrooms is a complex task. Studies carried out by Bustos (2014) support the existence of a great diversity of conditions in the framework that intervenes in the effects of teaching and learning; generally, teachers who do not know it arrive at the multigrade classroom lacking in different degrees of didactic equipment. For this author, the chronological heterogeneity of the students in these groups, the use of grouping techniques, the rationalization of time and space, or classroom programming seem to be important elements for their knowledge and application.

The analysis of these elements allows us to point out initial training for work in multigrade classrooms as one of the most pressing social demands made to Higher Education, a justifying reason for its presence in the university and in its processes.

There are several authors who have addressed in different ways the initial training of the Bachelor of Primary Education student for work in multigrade classrooms. Such are the cases of González (2017), Bracho (2019), Frómata, Marrero, Rodríguez and Bermúdez (2019), Cruz (2019), López (2019), Schmelkes and Águila (2019), Colmenares, Castillo and Ortiz (2020), De la Vega (2020), Peña, Martínez and Ibáñez (2020), Rodríguez and Smith (2020), Tabaco, Bernal and Araque (2020), Espinoza, Cruzata and Herrán (2021), Garfas and Rubio (2021), González, Becerra and Moreno (2021), Juárez, Espinosa and Medina (2021), Pallchisaca (2021), Priego and Castro (2021), Rodríguez, Castillo and Chillón (2022), Salas, Calzadilla and Diogo (2023).

These researchers, from their perspectives, offer valuable elements for the research being carried out. In general, they agree that teaching in multigrade groups is a challenge; based on this reality, they consider that teachers are required to be prepared to address the different complexities that occur in this context. Furthermore, they highlight the relevance

of the initial training of teaching staff who work in adverse contexts.

In this sense, it is stated that the class that develops in the multigrade is considered as an integral process, with its particularities based on the characteristics and conditions in which it develops. In these groups, subject-subject relationships of the same grade, subjects-subjects of different grades, subject (multigrade)-object of knowledge (common object, based on integrated content) and subject-teacher relationships are established.

These investigations support that in the multigrade, a great diversity of conditions are manifested in the framework that intervenes in the effects of teaching and learning that, generally, teachers are not aware of it and arrive at the multigrade classroom devoid of this didactic equipment to different degrees. For these authors, the chronological heterogeneity of multigrade classrooms, the use of grouping techniques, the rationalization of time and space, or classroom programming are important elements for their knowledge and application.

What has been stated so far reaffirms the need for the initial training process of the student of the Bachelor's Degree in Primary Education to work in multigrade classrooms, understanding this process, according to Céspedes, as:

The systematic and gradual transformation in the mastery of the training contents related to the disciplines and/or subjects, which allow a general and specific preparation for the direction of the teaching-learning process in the multigrade school, which in ascending order must be worked on in the pedagogical institutions and primary schools (over a period of time) by Primary Education professionals. (2010, p.7)

Despite constituting the initial training of the student of the Bachelor's Degree in Primary Education for work in multigrade classrooms an important topic and

generally being implicit in the study plans, it has not had a declared intention in the way it is addressed, There have been subjects that address multigrade in the base or own curriculum.

The analysis of documents, bibliographic sources and works of researchers who have addressed the topic is used. The normative documents of the different study plans of the Bachelor's Degree in Primary Education, such as the Teaching Process Plan (PPD), methodological guidelines, the professional model of Study Plan E, as well as discipline and subject programs, constitute the object of analysis. Theoretical methods such as historical and logical analysis, analytical-synthetic and inductive-deductive methods prevailed. The dialectical-materialist method is assumed, which makes it possible to study the initial training process of the student of the Bachelor's degree in Primary Education for work in multigrade classrooms in the students of the Bachelor's degree in Primary Education in the different study plans by which that has passed through.

The direction of the teaching-learning process in the multigrade class group requires teachers prepared in their initial training to address the different complexities that occur in this context, which is why this article aims to characterize the historical evolution of the initial training process. of the students of the Bachelor's degree in Primary Education for work in multigrade classrooms in the students of the Bachelor's degree in Primary Education.

DEVELOPMENT

The investigations carried out show that in the stages prior to 1959, the initial training for the multigrade of primary teachers was not taken into account; The situation of education in rural schools in the country before the triumph of the Revolution could be summarized in the critical analysis that Fidel Castro Ruz makes in La Historia me

Absolverá (1975), where he expressed: "... the public schools in the countryside are attended by barefoot, semi-naked and malnourished, less than half of the school-age children, and many times it is the teacher who has to acquire the necessary material with his own salary" (p.40).

In 1959, education in Cuba was nationalized and on June 6, 1961, the Law of General Nationalization of Education was promulgated. An important event worth highlighting was the First National Congress of Rural Teachers, held in August 1959 in Havana, where the decision to open 10,000 new classrooms in the rural areas of the country was approved. To respond to this request, at the beginning of 1960, the "Frank País García" Volunteer Teachers Brigade was created and in 1962 the Popular Teachers Brigade was created, by Ministerial Resolution 1570/62.

In this sense, it should be noted that the initial training of these professionals was almost non-existent and empirical. During this period, the Literacy Campaign was also developed in the country, which culminated on December 22, 1961 successfully, and Cuba was proclaimed to the world as a "Territory free of illiteracy."

In 1961 the Normal Schools were closed and another form of regular training for primary teachers emerged in 1962: the massive Minas de Frío- Topes de Collantes - Tarará plan, from 1962 to 1967, whose study plans were different. At that time, more importance was given to the development of the physical skills of that professional, and not to the development of one's own skills to practice the profession with the required quality; This was fundamentally done, empirically, by the teachers in training, in the schools where they were located in their work practice.

At the beginning of the 1966-1967 academic year, the decision was made to create a primary teacher training center in each province, and Teacher Training Schools emerged, with a sixth grade entry level. The fundamental objective of these

teacher training schools was to ensure the training of teachers who would resolve the existing deficit; The conception of the Study Plan was superior to that used previously.

New subjects are introduced, including methodologies, which, although they did not resolve the scientific and methodological deficiencies of teachers in their initial training, put them in better conditions to face work at school, but initial training for work continued to be lacking. in multigrade classrooms; However, there is a leap in quality in the development of skills for their professional work, in the last years of the degree.

In the 1971-1972 academic year, a new study plan for Teacher Training Schools came into force, and its fundamental objective was the training of teachers, with a high academic and professional level, although the initial training to work in multigrade classrooms was very limited. The study plan was developed taking into account previous experiences. They had an attached school, where teaching practices were developed in the different years of the degree.

However, the initial training of the student of the Bachelor's Degree in Primary Education for work in multigrade classrooms presented limitations based on the organization and design of the teaching practice, as well as the limitations of the programs, which were not contemplated in their design, work in the multigrade school until the last year of the degree, and there was no systematic follow-up by the team of teaching practice teachers.

In 1976 with the creation of the network of Higher Pedagogical Institutes, as part of the Higher Education centers, a new stage began in the training of primary teachers in Cuba, with the establishment of new study plans in 1977 (the so-called Plans A), from pre-university graduates, whose fundamental purpose was aimed at raising the cultural and professional level of the graduates.

In 1979, the Bachelor's Degree in Primary Education was created, in the Course for Workers with the enrollment of more than 20,000 teachers, in which transit plans were used, which despite their insufficiencies in the conception of the curricular design, had the programs conceived by subjects, and this constituted a higher level of development of the teaching-learning process in initial training, as it guaranteed the scientific-pedagogical and methodological preparation of primary teachers for their teaching work in any context of action.

The initial training they received for multigrade at this time was limited and was based on the experience of the teachers and the bibliography that was used in this regard. But undoubtedly, this Study Plan marks a higher stage in the training of primary teachers in Cuba with a university level, with a broader culture, and above all, the achievement of scientific, pedagogical and methodological knowledge; although the insufficient preparation of teachers to work in the contexts of rural and mountain areas continued.

The continuous improvement of pedagogical training in line with social demands led to the implementation of new study plans for the training of teachers and professors. Starting with the 1982-1983 academic year, the "B" Study Plans began in the university pedagogical careers, where greater mastery of the didactic-objective category is appreciated and is required in the field of subjects and topics, but the Bachelor's Degree In Primary Education it continued with transit curricula, and all based on the Courses for Workers (CPT).

It should be highlighted in this stage, the beginning for the first time in Cuba, of the transfer of the Pedagogical University to a municipality, to teach the contents of the Bachelor's Degree in Primary Education, the so-called Guamá Plan, which was later extended to the entire national territory. Through this plan, the initial training of primary teachers who worked in rural and mountainous areas was evidently

increased, achieving greater systematization of the contents and skills to be acquired by teachers.

The Guamá Plan allowed the gradual elimination of tabloids in the multigrade school, better school organization and better academic and cultural results were achieved for primary school students; In addition, the professionalism and scientific methodological level of primary teachers was raised to a certain extent; however, inadequacies in their multigrade preparation continued, since the nature of the multigrade initial training process was underestimated.

These traffic study plans were the result of several years of work carried out by different specialists in the country and the Ministry of Education. In the 1988-1989 academic year, the conditions were created to further raise the quality of the initial training of the student of the Bachelor's Degree in Primary Education, opening this as the Bachelor's Degree in Primary Education as a Regular Day Course (CRD). This Study Plan had a broader conception in the profile of the graduates.

In the 1990-1991 academic year, the Pedagogical Schools and the Educational Improvement Institutes were integrated into the Higher Pedagogical Institutes, being under their responsibility the training and improvement of education professionals, at the different levels of education. In the 1991-1992 academic year, Study Plan "C" began in the Bachelor's Degree in Primary Education and all the plans for the Regular Day and Meeting Courses were modified.

It should be noted that, in 1994, for the initial training of primary teachers, from the areas of the Turquino-Manatí Plan, Plan C "Turquino" was designed, with positive results, creating specialized training for students to work in the rural and mountain areas. Positive aspect, however, the subject programs still did not achieve the necessary preparation of teachers in training, since they were very general and

did not achieve the specificity required for work in primary school in general and multigrade in what particular.

The programs of the Disciplines of the Study Plan "C" still did not achieve everything that was needed in the didactic aspect in relation to interdisciplinarity and the inter-subject relationship. Despite the large number of subjects and topics, there was no differentiated treatment in relation to the problems that arise in the multigrade school, which limited the integration and effectiveness of the entire teaching process.

It is the author's opinion, after the documentary analysis carried out on Study Plan "C" and based on her personal experience; in relation to the initial training of the student of the Bachelor's Degree in Primary Education for work in multigrade classrooms, that the trained professional had an insufficient theoretical basis and preparation to creatively face the problem of his reality to also resolve it, with pedagogical and scientific methods. appropriate from didactic activities focused on a direction that would allow the organization, diagnosis, characterization, planning, evaluation and monitoring of the teaching-learning process.

In the year 2000, the stage of Universalization of Higher Education began in the training of the Bachelor of Primary Education as a program of the Cuban Revolution in its Battle of Ideas, it is not possible to understand it without taking into account the international context of the last decade of the century. XX and in the first years of the XXI with the purpose of guaranteeing a solid political, ideological and revolutionary preparation in our students.

For this reason, starting with the 2001-2002 academic year, a series of modifications are introduced to the Study Plan in the country's Pedagogical Universities, the essence of which is that the first year would be internal in nature, where initial training with psychological,

pedagogical and sociological training and from the second year of the degree, students would be placed for their professional practice in schools; with the concept of considering this as a micro university, in which experienced teachers became tutors for each of the students.

The generation of "C" Study Plans in correspondence with the initial training of students of the Bachelor's Degree in Primary Education for work in multigrade classrooms required a new conception, which would allow this future professional to progressively assume responsibility for their own learning, achieving the transition towards self-directed and self-regulated learning; based on commitment and emotional involvement with it, reflection and the growing ability to direct the teaching-learning process in rural schools.

The new generation of study plans called Study Plan "D" begins to be applied in the 2010/2011 academic year, based on the validation carried out that leads to modifications in the initial training system for students of the Bachelor's Degree in Primary Education. . The Teaching Process Plan (PPD) is organized based on the base curriculum, the curriculum itself and the optional elective. This new Study Plan allows the increase of the student's presence up to three intensive years, guarantees greater rigor in the evaluation and the implementation of different forms of study completion.

In line with the implementation of the course's own curriculum, due to its cultural, political and professional importance, for this generation of Study Plan "D" content related to the training of students of the Bachelor's Degree in Primary Education in the work with the rural sector. It is suggested to include rural education in Cuba in one's own curriculum and address topics such as sustainable agriculture, agrarian extensionism, agricultural practices and rural industry, to contribute to environmental education and sustainable development based on knowledge of rurality in Cuban schools. and

achieve a teacher with the rural culture of the Cuban.

The validation applied to Study Plan "D" brought with it the implementation of the new Study Plan "E", which begins in the 2016/2017 academic year, according to the Professional Model for this Study Plan, the need to design the new generation of "E" Study plans.

In the methodological guidelines of the Bachelor's Degree in Primary Education in relation to the work research practice of students in training, it is recommended, in the face-to-face modality, to proceed to placement in primary schools in different contexts so that in the fourth year proposes the practice in schools in the rural sector. It is the author's opinion that in this way performance is encouraged for their future insertion in the different contexts in which they will practice their profession, with emphasis on the conditions of the multigrade group.

It can be specified that in the different study plans (A, B, C, D and E), through which the Bachelor's degree in Primary Education has passed, in the initial training of the Graduate for work in multigrade classrooms there have been no subjects that address multigrade in the base or own curriculum; However, they are currently part of the optional _elective curriculum, thus leaving the motivation, almost zero, of the students in training for work in the multigrade and consequently in rural areas.

The review of research by authors such as Camacho (2018); Rodríguez and Ferrer (2018); Urkidi, Losada and López (2020); Vidal, Bravo and Senú (2022), among others, and the analysis of regulatory documents, allow us to highlight key moments that characterize the initial training process of the student of the Bachelor's Degree in Primary Education. These scholars address the training of this professional in the different study plans, but work with multigrade groups is not intended.

CONCLUSIONS

Before the revolutionary triumph, initial training for multigrade primary teachers was not taken into account; consequently, the situation of education in rural schools in the country was alarming and it was not until the revolutionary triumph that changes occurred that would transform them.

The initial training of university students has been a permanent task of Cuban society since its origins. Throughout this historical process, the Cuban teaching profession has distinguished itself for its dedication and dedication to the education of new generations. After the triumph of the Cuban Revolution, qualitative leaps are evident in the progress of education; one of their tasks has been the promotion and improvement of the training of educators.

The training of primary education professionals in Cuba has gone through different curricula based on validations carried out in order to perfect it. In this sense, the study plans (A, B, C, D and E) even though they emerged due to the need for curricular innovation, to conceive a process of continuous training for professionals and increase the quality and comprehensiveness of their training to practice in any context, they have not always been trained to work in multigrade classrooms in an intentional, systemic and contextualized way.

The initial training of the students of the Bachelor's degree in Primary Education to work in multigrade classrooms is a process that includes the set of stages that follow one another logically in the initial training of the students of the Bachelor's degree in Primary Education and that They enable the appropriation of content for the multigrade school, in correspondence with the coherent performance of their mode of action as university graduates.

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Authors' contribution:

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