

Original article



Professionalization of university students: new approaches to the course by encounter





La profesionalización en los estudiantes universitarios: nuevos enfoques desde el curso por encuentro

A profissionalização nos estudantes universitários: novas abordagens a partir do curso por encontro

Sailí Rodríguez Fuentes¹  0000-0002-8800-705X  saily.rodriquezf@upr.edu.cu

Taymí Breijo Worosz¹  0000-0002-9424-3278  taimi.breijo@upr.edu.cu

Marlen Arencibia Castro¹  0000-0003-0176-1787  marlen.arencibia@upr.edu.cu

¹ University of Pinar del Río "Hermanos Saíz Montes de Oca". Pinar del Río, Cuba.

Received: 26/08/2024

Accepted: 31/12/2024

ABSTRACT

Professionalization as a process is a requirement of social development and, as a trend, it is desirable because it guarantees higher quality in the professional performance of the teacher. Therefore, this article aims to systematize the main theoretical references of the professionalization process, in favor of the modes of action in students of the bachelor's degree in primary education in the modality Course by Encounters. A set of theoretical and empirical methods were used, which allowed to interpret from a materialistic dialectical logic the historical development that has had the process of professionalization and its contextualization in this degree, as well as substantiating the process under study. The integration of the instruments used has made it possible to identify shortcomings in the occupational behavior of these students, which prevent them from solving the vocational

problems inherent in their teaching activity in educational institutions. The main results are the articulating character of the professionalization process in students of the bachelor's degree in Primary Education in the Course for Encounters, based on a more integral preparation, with attention to diversity and increasingly inclusive practices. In short, the process of professionalization must develop in students ways of acting, ways of proceeding that favor a competent professional performance, allowing them to be in accordance with the current educational requirements in Cuba.

Keywords: teaching; teachers; modes of action; professionalization.

RESUMEN

La profesionalización como proceso es una exigencia que deviene del desarrollo social y como tendencia es deseable porque garantiza mayor calidad en el desempeño profesional del docente. Por ello, se pretende en este artículo sistematizar los principales referentes teóricos del proceso de profesionalización, a favor de los modos de actuación en los estudiantes de la licenciatura en Educación Primaria en la modalidad Curso por Encuentros. Se emplearon un conjunto de métodos teóricos y empíricos, que permitieron interpretar desde una lógica dialéctica materialista el devenir histórico que ha tenido el proceso de profesionalización y su contextualización en dicha licenciatura, así como fundamentar el proceso que se estudia. La integración de los instrumentos aplicados permitió identificar carencias en los modos de actuación profesional que presentan estos estudiantes, que impiden dar solución a los problemas profesionales propios de su actividad pedagógica en las instituciones educativas. Los principales resultados se concretan en el carácter articulador del proceso de profesionalización en los estudiantes de la licenciatura en Educación Primaria en el Curso por Encuentros, en función de una preparación más integral, con atención a la diversidad y prácticas cada vez más inclusivas. En resumen, desde el proceso de profesionalización se deben desarrollar en los estudiantes modos de actuación, maneras de proceder, que favorezcan un desempeño profesional competente, permitiéndoles estar en concordancia con las exigencias educativas actuales en Cuba.

Palabras clave: docencia; docentes; modos de actuación; profesionalización.

RESUMO

A profissionalização como processo é uma exigência que vem do desenvolvimento social e, como tendência, é desejável porque garante maior qualidade no desempenho profissional do docente. Por isso, neste artigo, pretende-se sistematizar os principais referenciais teóricos do processo de profissionalização, a favor dos modos de atuação nos estudantes da licenciatura em Educação Primária na modalidade Curso por Encontros. Utilizaram-se um conjunto de métodos teóricos e empíricos, que permitiram interpretar, a partir de uma lógica dialética materialista, o desenvolvimento histórico do processo de profissionalização e sua contextualização nesta licenciatura, além de fundamentar o processo que está sendo estudado. A integração dos instrumentos aplicados permitiu identificar carências nos modos de atuação profissional apresentados por esses estudantes, que impedem a solução dos problemas profissionais próprios de sua atividade pedagógica nas instituições educativas. Os principais resultados se concretizam no caráter articulador do processo de profissionalização nos estudantes da licenciatura em Educação Primária no Curso por Encontros, com o objetivo de alcançar uma preparação mais integral, com atenção à diversidade e práticas cada vez mais inclusivas. Em resumo, a partir do processo de profissionalização, devem-se desenvolver nos estudantes modos de atuação, maneiras de proceder, que favoreçam um desempenho profissional competente, permitindo-lhes estar em conformidade com as exigências educativas atuais em Cuba.

Palavras-chave: docência; docentes; modos de atuação; profissionalização.

INTRODUCTION

The training of education professionals is an essential aspect in the integral development of any educational system and has therefore been a subject of concern for various projects and institutions. Research linked to international bodies such as the Organization of Ibero-American States and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (Unesco), they argue that the training of educators today should be a continuing task for all states aspiring to a culture based on diversity.

In this regard, Unesco stresses that higher education is fundamental to the development of every person, from pre-school education to lifelong learning. The right to higher education is therefore considered an urgent need to support work and the defense of socially just societies.

This context is reflected in the Basic Document for the Design of the Curricula "E", in which Cuban higher education commits itself to maintain its model of a modern, humanistic, universalized, scientific and technological university, innovative, integrated into society and deeply committed to building a prosperous and sustainable socialism.

The vocational training of teachers is analyzed in contemporary literature as a process of professionalization, which is permanent and enables educators to exercise their profession, with the result of achieving professionalism.

In the case of students in the undergraduate course in primary education, the process of professionalization is closely linked to the quality, comprehensiveness and relevance of the modes of action developed during their training. The guiding documents emphasize the formation and development of the primary school personality through the general and school curriculum, extracurricular activities and after-school activities, the José Martí Pioneers Organization, school coordination and the educational influences of family and community. All this is supported by a system of actions directed at the educational process in general, and at teaching-learning in particular, with an increasingly inclusive approach.

It is therefore of vital importance to understand how this very complex process manifests itself in the training of the teacher and how it continues to ascend dialectically through his professional activity, pedagogical performance, continuous improvement, Scientific activity and knowledge production, essential requirements for improving the pedagogical performance of teachers.

Goal 4 of the 2030 Agenda reaffirms this need, by proposing to ensure quality and inclusive education, in order to improve people's lives and promote sustainable development.

In this sense, it is considered that the educational change in Early Childhood Education in Cuba requires a comprehensive preparation of professionals, so that they can take care of diversity, with a pedagogical position that includes gender differences, cultural, development and learning of children, adolescents and young people as the foundations for increasingly inclusive practices.

The model of the professional career bachelor in Primary Education (2016) emphasizes the role of the educator, who must be prepared to understand personal and social needs, to tackle the problems of pedagogical practice with initiative and integrate scientific and technological advances into their training process. Hence, educational institutions must train a primary teacher who loves his profession and has a hierarchy of values in accordance with those prioritized by Cuban society, based on a pedagogical professional approach that allows him to internalize his mode of action.

The subject of the Bachelor's degree in primary education is the educational process. Therefore, its mission is to achieve an integral attention to the development of the personality of the primary school student, from the direction of the educational process in general and the teaching-learning process in particular. The educator's approach in this career also aims to develop the pupil's personality through extra-curricular and extracurricular activities, José Martí Pioneers Organization, school coordination and the educational influences of family and community. All this is organized through a system of actions that direct both the educational process in general and the teaching-learning process in an inclusive way.

In this research, the social problem identified was the inadequacy of the students' modes of performance in the Primary Education degree, which prevents them from performing adequately in their pedagogical activity.

Several external manifestations were recognized that show inadequacies in the process of professionalization of students, such as:

- Theoretical inadequacies in the content of the subjects taught, both from a theoretical and methodological point of view.
- Insufficient professional teaching skills, which prevents them from developing ways of acting that favor the solution of professional problems in the performance of their pedagogical activity.

Following this, an initial exploratory study was carried out by analyzing the works consulted, reviewing documents, observing classes in their working practice and interviewing teachers with extensive experience, this allowed to know a set of strengths and weaknesses to be identified in the process of professionalization of students, which are outlined below:

Strengths: the model for the vocational training plan "E" specifies the objectives to be achieved by academic years in primary teacher education, in line with the modes of action.

The course is composed of a group of teachers with extensive experience in the educational sectors and committed to their social work.

Weaknesses: limitations in the students' modes of action in their pedagogical context, which do not respond to needs such as integral preparation, attention to diversity and inclusive practices, and insufficiency of actions that, contextualized and systemic, from the academic, work, research and extension sectors, in line with professionalization.

Based on the ideas previously presented, the authors define the process of professionalization in students of the bachelor's degree in Primary Education in the Course by Encounters (CPE), at the Centro Universitario Municipal de Viñales, as the set of actions and tasks aimed at transforming and developing the professional way of acting of primary teachers, so that they can provide creative and innovative solutions to vocational problems in the context of the direction of the teaching process-Learning in primary education institutions from an inclusive, equitable and quality perspective.

In accordance with the requirements of broad-profile careers, the process of professionalization of students must ensure their preparation and develop ways of action which will enable them to provide innovative answers to the problems inherent in the profession and become agents of change for society.

Several researchers, such as Añorga (2014), Baute et al. (2020), Enríquez et al. (2021), Mercader (2021), Sardina (2023), among others, adopt different theoretical positions to adjust the development of professionalization in various contexts, with the aim to achieve quality education.

Sardina (2023) believes that the professionalization of teachers, supported by training, practical preparation and staff suitability to promote educational change in schools, should be commended. Furthermore, the concept of "pedagogical professionalization" refers to the fundamental continuous process that takes care of the integrity of subjects, developing and consolidating skills for social and professional life, according to the demands of society (Añorga, 2014).

Osorio (2021) states that the interrelation between reflection and professionalization provides an instrumental character to continuous improvement, appropriating instruments to the teacher's practice.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The course was developed in the form of Course by Meetings at the Centro Universitario Municipal de Viñales, in a semi-presential manner, with meetings every 15 days. In this type of course, the class meeting predominated as an organizational form, whose objective was to clarify the doubts corresponding to the contents and activities previously studied by the students, to debate, practice said contents and evaluate their compliance.

It is important to note that this type of study involved students who graduated from pedagogical schools that qualified them as primary school teachers, as well as students who graduated from high school at the pre-university level. They completed their studies in a period of three or five years, respectively.

In the research, the following methods were used, starting from assuming the dialectical materialist method as a general method, which allowed the study of the object as a process, the determination of its components, its contradictions and the justification of the methods used.

The theoretical method used was historical and logical analysis, in order to interpret from a dialectical materialist logic the historical development of the professionalization process and its contextualization in the Bachelor's degree in Primary Education at the CPE.

The following were used as essential empirical methods:

- Documentary analysis: the model of the professional in the Bachelor's degree in Primary Education, the "E" Plan, the Base Document for the Design of the "E" Study Plans, Resolution No. 47/2022: Organizational Regulations of the Teaching Process and Direction of Teaching and Methodological Work for University Careers in Higher Education, study plans, planning of subject preparations, individual development plans, improvement strategies, and the review of documents in accordance with the Field Manual applied by the III Improvement of the National Education System were included. This analysis made it possible to know the system

of knowledge and procedures that students must have in order to comply with the assigned orientations as primary teachers, performing in their respective educational institutions.

- Interviews with principals and teachers: These were conducted to obtain reliable information related to the professionalization process and its manifestation in the ways primary school teachers act during the exercise of their profession.
- Survey of professors of the course: to find out the state of opinion that teachers had about the professionalization process and the ways to improve it, from the classroom-meeting.
- Observation of teaching activities: in order to diagnose the object of study, highlight the problem and verify the results obtained from the practice of the implemented strategy.

Regarding the statistical-mathematical method, descriptive and inferential statistics techniques were used, as well as percentage analysis, which allowed the interpretation of the results obtained from the applied instruments. The work was carried out with the entire population of students (54) who were studying the career of this profile and the professors (20) who made up the teaching staff, belonging to the 2023-2024 academic year.

RESULTS

The application of the methods and instruments described above allowed us to reach a group of results, which are detailed below:

Characteristics of professionalization in the previously specified context

1. Professionalization as a process. In the context of the meeting-based course modality, it was determined that professionalization was not addressed as a priority in the training of students in the Bachelor's Degree in Primary Education at the CPE.
2. Insufficient priority. Professionalization did not reach the level of priority required by the current context, which directly affected the training process of students.
3. Insufficient articulation. There was insufficient articulation between academic, work, research and extension activities, which limited the strengthening of the professionalization process in the Primary Education career.
4. Insufficient understanding of potential. An insufficient understanding of the potential of the professionalization process in student training was identified, which made it difficult to achieve the corresponding modes of action established for each academic year.

In summary, it was observed that, although the need to promote professionalization as a process that contributes to the development of modes of action was implicitly declared in the different study plans (from Plan A to Plan E), this was not addressed intentionally or systematically, which affected the development of the professional quality of educators.

Manifestations of the professionalization process in the context of the CPE

In the particular context of the CPE, the professionalization process in the students of the Bachelor's degree in Primary Education in this modality was manifested through the following features:

- It was found that research in the CPE modality did not assume the professionalization process from the training of students. This limited the capacity of future educators to develop modes of action that would allow them to solve professional problems in their teaching activity.
- A poor relationship was identified between the professionalization process and educational agencies, as well as with employer organizations, which made it difficult for students to integrate into their future professional practice.
- It was observed that the potential of the content of the programs of the disciplines of the degree course was not adequately exploited, which could have favored the professionalization process.
- There was a lack of coordination between academic, work, individual and extension activities in relation to the professionalization process, which affected the coherence of the training process.
- The professionalization process was not oriented towards the development of increasingly inclusive pedagogical practices, which constitutes a limitation in addressing diversity in the classroom.

The authors consider it essential to give greater relevance to the professionalization process, encouraging modes of action that offer creative and innovative solutions to the professional problems faced by future primary school teachers in their pedagogical activities in various educational scenarios.

Regularities of the applied diagnosis

The regularities of the diagnosis applied to the process studied were reflected in its non-systemic and decontextualized nature. This was manifested in the limitations of the students' modes of action

in their pedagogical context, as they did not correspond to essential needs such as: comprehensive preparation, attention to diversity and increasingly inclusive practices. This disconnection between theoretical training and practical demands affected the effectiveness of the professionalization process, contributing to the inadequacy of the students' professional performance in their role as primary school teachers.

DISCUSSION

Teacher professionalization involves acquiring new skills, leaving behind traditional teaching models. This process transforms the role of teachers, who must be continuously trained and updated on advances in education, technology and science, in an increasingly interconnected world.

In this sense, professionalization trains teachers in the use of student-centered teaching methodologies, such as project-based learning, collaborative learning, and the development of technological skills. These methodologies allow teachers to take advantage of digital tools to improve both learning and communication, with the aim of better performance in their pedagogical activity.

Coinciding with the studies of Rivero *et al.* (2019), it is highlighted that the professionalization of the teacher is reflected in the essential competencies that he or she develops, which directly affect the effectiveness of the educational process. This point is fundamental, since adequate training not only benefits the teacher, but also the students and the quality of education in general.

This approach corresponds to the orientation of Cuban Higher Education, which seeks to maintain itself as a model of a modern, humanistic, universalized, scientific, technological and innovative university, deeply integrated into society and committed to the construction of a prosperous and sustainable socialism.

In this sense, we agree with the studies by Calvo-Ferrer and Muñoz-Villena (2024), who point out the importance of universities adopting an integrative vision, where academic training and professionalization are seen as complementary aspects. This vision should not only take into account the needs of the labor market, but also prepare students to be critical, responsible citizens committed to the development of their community and society.

Professionalization is a necessary process for the training of any professional. Beyond reproducing knowledge, it requires a constant search for creative solutions to the problems inherent to their professional field.

Along these lines, Mercader (2021) highlights professionalization as the process by which people specialize and train in an employment-oriented activity. Likewise, a professionalization process entails greater attention to the exchange between teachers, students, and professionals in production and services, in order to transform the training process (Baute *et al.*, 2020).

Enríquez *et al.* (2021) state that professionalization is a necessary process for the transformation of professionals, in order to contribute to the improvement of substantive processes in universities. It is agreed with Miranda (2011), Bermúdez and Tristá (2019) and Sánchez (2024), who have investigated the formation and structuring of the modes of action in professional pedagogical activity, highlighting the importance of these modes of action guiding and developing the professional training process, in accordance with the fundamental principles of the Cuban educational system.

In this regard, the authors of this research agree with the criteria of Mendiri *et al.* (2024), who highlight that one of the most demanded aspects in the teacher-student relationship is respect, kindness, good treatment, understanding and active listening. These elements are essential to guarantee school well-being and create a positive educational environment in primary education, which favors the comprehensive development of students.

In summary, the professionalization process must develop in primary school teachers modes of action that favor a competent professional performance, allowing them to be in accordance with the requirements of the III Improvement of primary education. For the reasons stated above, it is necessary to develop competent modes of professional action in primary school teachers during their training, from the transition of professionalization with a centralized approach, all of this oriented to transform the object of the profession.

Professionalization as a process allows teachers to acquire the skills and knowledge necessary to offer quality education, aligned with the principles of the Third Improvement of Primary Education, and adapted to the needs of students. This approach not only responds to the demands of the educational system, but also to the demands of society.

The study conducted allowed us to confirm that the professionalization process in students of the Bachelor's Degree in Primary Education at the CPE presents an asystemic and decontextualized character. It has not been considered as a transversal element in the training of the primary professional, or as a priority objective in their humanistic training, especially in their interaction with the various socializing agencies. In this context, it is necessary to carry out a systematization of the main theoretical references related to the object of study of this modality, in order to improve the modes of action and the results in their pedagogical context.

REFERENCES

- Añorga, J. A. (2014). La Educación Avanzada y el Mejoramiento Profesional y Humano. *Varona*, 58, 19-31. <http://www.redalyc.org/articulo.oa?id=360634165003>
- Baute, L. M., Iglesias, M., León, J. L., & Pérez, C. J. (2020). Profesionalización del docente universitario desde la solución de los problemas profesionales. *Revista Universidad y Sociedad*, 12(5), 178-182. http://scielo.sld.cu/scielo.php?script=sci_arttext&pid=S2218-36202020000500178
- Bermúdez, J. A. & Tristá, B. (2019). Experiencia pedagógica en el desarrollo de los modos de actuación profesional. *Revista Varela*, 19(53). <https://revistavarela.uclv.edu.cu/index.php/rv/article/view/61/151>
- Calvo-Ferrer, J. R., & Muñoz-Villena, A. J. (2024). Evaluación de materiales didácticos y competencia traductora: Desarrollo y validación del cuestionario EMaCT para la profesionalización docente y discente en traducción e interpretación. *Mutatis Mutandis. Revista Latinoamericana de Traducción*, 17(1). <https://doi.org/10.17533/udea.mut.v17n1a10>
- Enríquez, J. O., Cabrera, L., Cabrera, A. G. & Herrera, M. (2021). La profesionalización pedagógica y su necesidad en los docentes de la educación médica cubana. *Revista EduMeCentro*, 13(2), 287-300. http://scielo.sld.cu/scielo.php?script=sci_arttext&pid=S2077-28742021000200287

Mendiri, P., Rebollo Quintela, N., & Losada-Puente, L. (2024). El bienestar escolar desde la experiencia del alumnado de educación Primaria. *Educar*, 60(1), 237-254.

<http://doi.org/10.5565/rev/educar.1818>

Mercader, C. (2021). Profesionalización y empleabilidad: una relación necesaria. *Educar*, 57(1), 11-13. <http://doi.org/10.5565/rev/educar.1329>

Miranda, L. T. (2011). El modo de actuación profesional y su formación en las carreras pedagógicas. *Varona*, (53), 24-28.

Rivero, E. M., Carmenate, L. P., & León, G. A. (2019). La profesionalización docente desde sus competencias esenciales. Experiencias y proyecciones del perfeccionamiento académico de la Universidad Técnica de Machala. *Revista Conrado*, 15(67), 170-176.

Sánchez, T. (2024). Papel de la pedagogía y el modo de actuación de un profesional pedagógico. *Revista Referencia Pedagógica*, 12(1), 207-213.

<https://rrp.cujae.edu.cu/index.php/rrp/article/view/405>

Sardina, E. (2023). La profesionalización del docente para la inclusión socioeducativa de educandos con trastorno de la conducta. *Horizonte Pedagógico*, 12(1).

<https://horizontepedagogico.cu/index.php/hop/article/download/279/526/1387>

Conflict of interest

Authors declare no conflict of interests.

Authors' contribution

The authors participated in the design and writing of the article, in the search and analysis of the information contained in the consulted bibliography.



This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License