



EduSol
ISSN: 1789-8091
edusol@cug.co.cu
Centro Universitario de Guantánamo
Cuba

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EduSol, vol. 17, no. 60, 2017, -March, pp. 34-44
Centro Universitario de Guantánamo
Cuba

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La formación del maestro para el trabajo en el grupo multigrado

Training the teacher for the work in the multi-grade group

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Recibido: 12 de octubre de 2016

Aceptado: 21 de febrero de 2017

Resumen: La dirección del proceso de enseñanza aprendizaje en el grupo clase multigrado requiere de maestros preparados para atender las diferentes complejidades que se dan en este contexto. Las técnicas y métodos empíricos utilizados revelan insuficiencias en la preparación teórico-metodológica de los maestros para la concepción de la clase única. En este sentido, se ofrecen fundamentos teórico-metodológicos que sustentan el trabajo en el grupo clase multigrado, se ejemplifica con actividades integradas para combinaciones complejas y se valoran los resultados de los cursos que se generan del programa de formación propuesto como aporte práctico de la tesis doctoral de la autora principal.

Palabras clave: Escuela multigrado; Grupo clase multigrado; Formación de maestros, Proceso de enseñanza aprendizaje

Abstract: The direction of the teaching-learning process in the multi-grade class requires teachers prepared to cope with the different complex issues that occur in this context. The techniques and empirical methods used for this research reveal shortcomings in the theoretical and methodological preparation of teachers for the conception of a single multi-grade lesson. In this sense, theoretical-methodological foundations that support the work in the multi-grade class are offered, exemplified by integrated activities for complex combinations. The paper also presents the results obtained from a training program which are a practical contribution of the Doctoral thesis research of the main author.

Keywords: Multigrade school; Multigrade class; Teacher training, Teaching-learning process

Introduction

The constant transformations that occur in the National Education System are aimed at ensuring the quality of education at all levels of education. Primary education has been prioritized given its complexity as a teaching and the role it plays in the comprehensive training of schoolchildren.

Within this whole process of changes is the multi-grade school, an issue which requires a greater attention given the number of schools that with these characteristics exist in the country; hence the importance of achieving a better functioning of the same and the enhancing the quality of education in this context. In this sense, the changes conceived for the work in this type of school

from the Model of primary school, require an adequate theoretical-methodological preparation of the teachers.

The recognition and priority of the Cuban educational policy around the multi-grade school, the revision of the doctoral and masters theses related to the subject, the work experience of the researchers in this context, as well as the use of different methods and research techniques, reveal that the initial and permanent preparation received by Primary Education professionals for work in the multi-grade class group is still insufficient, which limits the organization of activities from the integration of contents by thematic axes in the direction of the process of teaching and learning.

Consistent with the above, the main objective of this article is to provide theoretical and methodological elements indispensable for the initial and permanent preparation of Primary Education professionals in the direction of the teaching-learning process in the multi-grade class group, based on a system of different courses generated from the training program proposed in the doctoral thesis "Referential theoretical framework of the Cuban multi-grade school" of the main author, in accordance with current educational requirements.

Development

The continuous improvement of the teaching-learning process poses new demands on the professional's performance, particularly in the conception, planning and development of his lessons. Facing this challenge requires well-trained teachers who are updated with the scientific and technical advances. This preparation must be achieved both from initial and the ongoing training.

In this sense, we agree with Forneiro (2013), considering that teacher training in Cuba is a priority, and that it includes three essential components: the initial (which takes place in pedagogical centers, both at university level and Higher education); self-improvement, methodological work, professional improvement, post-graduate education; and pedagogical research, aimed at raising the quality of education through the different modalities of scientific activity.

From these elements, it is declared as a priority in the process of training the Primary Education

professional the integral preparation to face all contexts of action, including the multi-grade primary school.

In Primary Education the multi-grade school is conceived by the characteristics of the class group, for which there are several definitions, among which stand out: unitary school, multipurpose, mutual teaching, monitorial and multi-grade. Pérez (1982) defines it as the school in which the school group is made up of children of different ages and grades, with different dispositions and competences of knowledge and communication, which are influenced by the teaching-learning process in the same classes, with the same plan of study for the primary school, under the same conditions, in the same lessons and where the pedagogical process is directed by the same teacher.

We agree with González (2006) when defining the multi-grade classroom as the pedagogical space where the combination of knowledge occurs between students of several grades, guided by a single teacher; and by multi-grade school, where there is at least one multi-grade classroom, although it may be interrelated with graduate classrooms, but it maintains a single teacher per class of multi-grade class groups.

By multi-grade class the same author refers that it is the classroom space, which sometimes coincides with the Rural Primary School (multi-grade classroom), composed of students of different grades and ages, led by a single teacher, who intentionally guarantees the combination of knowledge and interpersonal relations according to the particularities of education of these groups that generally belong to the same rural community.

These definitions, in essence, reflect the particularities of this type of school when considering the combination of knowledge and interpersonal relationships produced among students of the same grade, of different grades and ages as the elements that characterize the multi-grade class.

This type of group fosters different forms of interaction because of the diversity of ages and grades found in it. During the process the students acquire the experience and culture of others, it is an organized, systematic and coherent process in correspondence to the combination of levels that exist in the classroom and the development of each school.

Studies show that there are 57 combinations of groups for multi-grade schools, whether "simple"

or "complex". The complexity of the direction of the teaching-learning process is recognized in the literature because any combination presupposes a greater complexity for this process, given that it not only combines levels, but also different moments of development of the school, interests, motivations.

The particularities of the teaching-learning process in this group lead to systematizing the research results of doctoral theses and master's theses that have been carried out in recent years in Cuba, which can be introduced and generalized in practice from particularized curriculum courses taught for professionals in training of the major Primary Education, as well as postgraduate courses to teachers and managers of the territory. These are:

- The direction of the teaching-learning process in the multi-grade class group.
- The conception of the class in the multi-grade group.
- Particularities of the multi-grade school.

These courses are derived from the training program proposed by the lead author as a practical result of the doctoral thesis titled "Theoretical framework of the Cuban multi-grade school". The fundamental contents addressed are those referred to the historical evolution of the multi-grade school, theoretical-methodological foundations that support the teaching-learning process in the multi-grade class group, school organization, the simple schedule, and concerning the direction of the process of teaching-learning, from the organizational variants for this type of school recognized in the Primary School Model and Ministerial Resolution 200/2014.

In the reference thesis as a theoretical contribution, the principles that have been contributed by researchers for the teaching-learning process in the multi-grade class group are systematized, complementing the system of pedagogical and didactic principles recognized in the Primary School Model. These are: the principle of multi-integration (Miyares, 2006), the principle of the combination of knowledge (González, 2006), the principle of prospective character (Martínez, 2007), the principle of multi-interaction (Marrero, 2007), audiovisual multi-integration in the direction of the teaching process of the multi-grade school (Martínez, 2010). For its materialization in this context (Peña, 2013) proposes a set of actions that contribute to its enhancement.

Other systematized elements are the components of the teaching-learning process, which in this context have specific characteristics (Peña, 2013).

The teaching-learning process is the process that takes place during the course of the subjects of the grades that form the combination of the multi-grade class group under the direction of a single teacher and which main objective is to contribute to the integral education of the personality, which has its synthesis in the achievement of a unique lesson in multi-grade class group conditions. It is the mediatizing way essential for the acquisition of knowledge, procedures, skills, habits, behavioral norms and values, in accordance with the age and level of development that reaches each school.

The objective as a guiding category of the teaching-learning process in the multi-grade class group, whenever possible must be integrative for all grades that form the combination from the adjustments that can be made to the syllabus of the subjects, and must favor all the students and grades of the class.

The selection, order and logical sequence of the content is made whenever possible by thematic axes and groups of related contents, in correspondence with the combination of levels present in the group, in close relation with the environment that surrounds the scholar and the scientific advances achieved.

The method is recognized as the essential way to be used by the teacher, the school, the managers, among others, to organize and direct the cognitive activity and the way of learning; in the multi-grade class the method is useful for making the organization and direction of the learning process more dynamic, while the various combinations demand methods to allow the teacher to lead in a successful way the achievement of objectives that are specified in the simple type of class, in which productive methods such as problem solving, heuristic conversation, investigative, independent work, and group exchange must predominate.

The means of teaching as a material support of teaching methods make possible to achieve the objective of the simple class in the multi-grade class group. In the opinion of the authors, the means that better guarantee the assimilation of the content of the teaching and the independent work of the students in this type of group are the worksheets, the content cards, the exercise cards, and the audiovisual means.

Class as a fundamental organizational form in the multi-grade should be unique for all students with a goal that allows different actions for each of the levels present in it, with an integrative and differential character, which takes into account the individual diagnosis and the group in general, and to enhance the independent search for knowledge and the development of skills.

Evaluation in the multi-grade class should stimulate self-evaluation and self-assessment of the results by the school, as well as control and assessment actions of the same grade and academic year, allowing the teacher to check the level of achievement of the students when learning.

The courses also contain, from the methodological point of view, examples of integrated activities, which are generated from the analysis of related contents by thematic axes for different combinations of multi-grade class groups, which serve to demonstrate teachers, managers and professionals in training how to conceive one unique class in these conditions.

Examples

Combination 1st-2nd-3rd-4th-5th grades

Subject: Mathematics

Class type- Fixing

Unit # 1 Natural Numbers

What's New?

1st Natural numbers up to 10

2nd Natural numbers up to 100

3rd Natural numbers up to 10 000

4th Natural numbers up to 1000 000

5th Natural numbers greater than one million

Subject- Reading and writing of natural numbers

Objective- Solve reading and writing exercises using the natural numbers

Exercise

A) Read the numbers:

9, 0, 7, 5, 25, 99, 1000, 34, 99999, 100, 2500

B) Write the ancestor and successor of each one

C) With the numbers provided:

- Write the largest number of two figures that can be formed (with numbers repeated), (with numbers not repeated).
- Write three numbers from two places with a 5 in units.
- Write the smallest number of two figures that is formed with those numbers.
- Write the largest number of three figures without repeating.
- Write the number consisting of 9 units of thousands, 7 hundred, 5 decimals and 3 units.
- Write the numbers of 4 numbers not repeated with a 5 in the hundreds and a 9 in the units.
- Write the numbers of 5 figures that you can form with a repeated number, which has a 0 in the hundreds and a 7 in the units.
- Represent the numbers formed in a position table.
- Write the name of each one.

Combination 1st-2nd-3rd-4th-5th grades

Subject Mathematics

Class type - Fixing.

Unit # 4 Geometry.

When in the first level of the concepts of point and line are exercised, the second line is aligned with the drawing of segments, the third with the drawing of parallel and perpendicular lines, in the 4th with the layout of rectangles and squares with ruler and bevel, in 5th with the review of flat figures. Thus in this way the contents that serve as basis for the different levels of the combination are taken up. This can be done activities such as the following:

- Draw a dot. Denote it.
- Draw straight lines that pass through the point. Denote them.
- Draw a line r .
- Draw two points on the line r . Color the portion of line delimited by those two points
- Draw a line s parallel to the line r .
- Draw a point M that is located on the line s .
- Draw a line perpendicular to the line s passing through point M .

- Which geometric figure is delimited? Denote it. What characteristics does it have?
- What other geometric figure can be drawn with the same procedure? What characteristics does it have?

Draw three non-aligned points. Denote them. Draw the figure that is delimited by these three points.

- How is the figure obtained according to the number of equal sides classified?

Common activities for combination 4th-5th-6th grades.

Subjects - Spanish Language and History of Cuba

Generally, when in the multi-grade class is a combination of the two cycles of Primary Education, in the single schedule are made to coincide the subjects Spanish Language in the first cycle and History of Cuba in the second cycle. In this case, the teacher must have full mastery of the content that he / she teaches and the abilities to work in these conditions, which will facilitate the search for common elements to develop collective activities.

Grade	4th	5th	6th
Subject	Spanish Language	History of Cuba	History of Cuba
Content	Unit 1. Reading comprehension of the texts "Cuba" and "Patria"	Unit 1. Cuba and its ancient history. The first settlers of Cuba. Group collectors-hunter-fishermen.	Unit 1. The Yankee military occupation (1899-1902) prepared the Neocolonial Republic. How the Cuban Revolutionary Forces were eliminated.
Objective	Read with intonation the poems "Cuba" and "Patria", so as to appreciate the author's feelings expressed in the text.	Describe the life of the first settlers of Cuba with an emphasis on the collector-hunter-fishermen group, through the commented reading of the History book and the observation of pictures.	To appreciate the significance that the dissolution of its representative forces had for the Cuban people.

In this case it is difficult to achieve an integrating objective for all grades of the combination, in

view of this problem it is proposed to start with a common activity in which all students participate and then assign activities to work independently with content cards, while the teacher gives personal attention to the particularities of each level.

The class can be started with a conversation about Cuba, its landscapes, the fundamental historical facts. Then it is indicated to locate it on the map and ask the following questions: Has Cuba always been as we know it? How were our first inhabitants? How did they live? How were our landscapes? What do they know about our history? Why Cuba could not be free and independent in 1898, what do we know about the end of the Necessary War?

These questions can be harnessed to ensure the preconditions, motivate and orient towards the goal. Then, the 5th and 6th graders are presented to the content cards they are going to work with while 4th graders receive the direct attention of the teacher.

The teacher alternates direct attention to each grade with independent activities. Control of these tasks can be done collectively so that all students participate in the debate, regardless of grade.

The conclusions of the class can also be done collectively, this will allow schoolchildren to continually reactivate their knowledge, because what is new for a grade serves as familiarization or feedback to others.

Another way to work with common activities in this class is to use as reading for 4th grade the content of History that will work 5th or 6th grade, which provides greater possibilities of integration and makes possible that all students participate in the debate. It can also be hierarchized as content in 4th grade textual construction so that the content of History that works in one of the two grades can be used.

The examples provided are part of the specific curriculum in the day course and in the course of the meeting, as well as in the second year of the training course for teachers of the upper secondary level. They have had as main objective to familiarize the professionals in training with the theoretical-methodological foundations on the multi-grade school, and as fundamental characteristic the experiential workshops in the schools of the territory where the students observe activities of the schedule where classes are included, and they exchange with teachers, managers and the other students, which allows greater knowledge on the subject.

Due to the importance of the subject for the integral training of professionals from the subjects of the Didactic discipline of Primary Education, we also include topics related to the process of teaching learning in the multi-grade class, which reinforces their preparation.

In the postgraduate course specialized lectures are given on the teaching-learning process in the multi-grade class to methodologists of the Provincial Directorate of Education, as well as teachers and managers enrolled in the course for the Diploma of direction of the pedagogical process in primary school and in the Sabbatical course that takes place from the Department of Primary Education of the University. The workshops have predominated as a form of organization, where participants socialize their knowledge and experiences about the direction of the teaching-learning process in the multi-grade class group.

From the implementation of these courses, teachers, managers and professionals in career development are satisfied with the preparation they receive and the development of professional pedagogical skills to manage the teaching-learning process in any context. The courses have also served as an incentive for teachers in the discipline of Primary Education, career students, teachers and managers of the territory to carry out research related to the subject and the results are socialized in different scientific events.

Conclusions

The systematized theoretical-methodological foundations are essential precedents for the direction of the teaching-learning process in the multi-grade class group.

In the study carried out, it is evident that even the Primary Education professionals show insufficiencies that limit the direction of the teaching-learning process in this type of group, which in essence allow determining as a fundamental cause the need to prepare them from the singularity of the context in which this process is developed, and is revealed more from the normative documents and the Primary School Model.

The courses derived from the training program proposed for the management of the teaching process in multi-grade groups becomes a necessity of the Cuban teaching profession and for the education managers, while they freshen up subjects that are efficient an updated, training and professionalization of teachers, managers and teachers impact on the quality of learning of

schoolchildren.

The validation of the syllabus curriculum and postgraduate courses, the work experience of the authors in this context, as well as the socialization of the results in different events, has allowed the continuous improvement of the proposed training program.

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