

The relations of coexistence, integration and coordination in the mixed center

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ABSTRACT

This article presents an assessment of the relationships of coexistence, integration and coordination in educational institutions called mixed centers. This type of school has the singularity of developing the teaching-educational process in more than one educational subsystem, with a high level of complexity for the educational community of the levels that comprise it and in particular for the management structures that manage it. It is necessary to establish relationships of coexistence, coordination and integration in the single control of the educational levels that concur in this type of institution to achieve the goals and objectives defined by the educational policy.

Keywords: Relations of Coexistence, Integration and Coordination, Mixed Centers, Key Processes.

Introduction

The opening of mixed centers in some localities of the country took place at the end of the 80s and beginning of the 90s, with combinations of ESBEC - IPUEC, and primary - internal basic secondary. This type of institution has been defined as one "where more than one education subsystem coexists and develops the educational-teaching process

(...) and the teaching staff may teach at various levels of education". (National Seminar for the Preparation of the 2010-2011 school year, p 301).

With the aim of bringing educational services closer to the community and making the best use of physical spaces, material and human resources, in the 2010-2011 school year, mixed centers became generalized in the National Education System, as an educational institution grouping several educational levels, and managed from a single management structure.

In the process of improvement, mixed schools have achieved discrete advances in the stability of management structures, in the work of teachers in more than one educational level, and in the saving of human, material and financial resources; however, coherence and unity in the school community is not achieved, the educational levels and the processes that ensure the overall functioning of the school are still attended in a fragmented manner by the management structures.

Another element that indicates the high level of complexity of the aforementioned process is the fact that in the mixed school the technical and management bodies function in the same way as schools that have only one educational level. As a result, decision-making and the agreements adopted often show a lack of integration.

The diversity of processes at the different levels, the differences in the training and preparation of teachers, the social situation of students' development, the demands and needs that emanate from the family-school-community link, in correspondence with the students' own psycho-pedagogical demands, among others, make the management of processes in this type of center more complex, since it is necessary to materialize it with the presence of several educational levels, together with the insufficient attention that the management structures have given to the system of relationships established in these institutions, generally without an intentionality in their management.

Manzo and other authors, (2011) recognize the need for the establishment of relationships of coexistence, integration and coordination in this type of center. The aforementioned ideas indicate the need to delve deeper into the way in which the management of processes in mixed educational institutions is conceived and materialized, and it is here where the aforementioned relations of coexistence, integration and coordination come to life.

Development

For this work, papers were consulted in order to find references that would make it possible to go deeper into the relations of coexistence, integration and coordination that need to be achieved in the operation of the mixed center, because although these relations have been proposed, in the Cuban context, no theoretical references have been found that offer sufficient arguments to make it possible to understand their essence. In the systematization carried out, authors were found who have indistinctly delved into them:

- Authors consulted who have studied the concept of coexistence: Caballero (1996), Sandoval (2014), Doria and Benítez (2017), Alfaro et al (2018) and Mc Pherson et al (2011).
- Authors consulted who have studied the concept of integration: Sorenson (2003), Hitt et al. (2006-2008), Mayer (2008), Chiavenato (2009), Pestana (2009), Hernández and Álvarez (2012), González et al. (2013), Echevarría (2015) and Batista et al.
- Authors consulted who have studied the coordination concept: Urrego (n/d), Rodríguez (2007), Vega (2006), Gairín (2008), Armengol et al (2009), Bembibre (2009), García (2013) and Fernández et al (2014).

The study made it possible to corroborate that the three concepts under study have been dealt with by various sciences (philosophical, natural, social, business, medical, sociological, among others), hence the variety of meanings. Their etymological meaning is common in all cases, and their nature responds to three types of relationships that are established between phenomena and processes that take place in nature, society and thought.

In the case of coexistence relationships as a basis for the management of key processes in mixed centers, they are based on the concepts and meanings of the word coexist, which comes from Latin. It derives from coexsisto, coexsistis, coexsistere, coexstiti, which is formed by the prefix co (convergence, meeting, union). The original concept of

this term is associated with the action of bringing together objects or persons that exist, which is revealed in studies carried out by Caballero (1996).

Coexistence is associated with the concepts of tolerance and coexistence, which is related, above all, to the "immense plurality of religious, moral, philosophical and political ideas" existing in the world. Scholars agree on the importance and benefits of coexistence in the management of educational institutions. Caballero (1996, p.138) alludes, in this sense, to the fact that this type of relationship "becomes the driving force for the development of the institution".

One of the most consistent arguments for this assertion is the fact that coexistence means that the parties that converge in the institution complement the achievement of the educational action, according to the researcher mentioned above. This responds to the achievement of links that are established between the different institutional actors and, on the other hand, between these and those of the community; as well as with the entities and other organisms that in some way must be harmonized with it. Alfaro et al. (2018) allude that coexistence and coexistence have similarities. It could be corroborated that scholars, almost in their generality, appreciate them as synonyms. In this regard, the analyses carried out by Alfaro et al. (2018) and Morales and López (2019) stand out.

Alfaro et al. (2018) consider that school coexistence or coexistence, "is the set of human relationships that occur in a school, are built collectively, daily and is a responsibility shared by the entire educational community. (...) is determined by respect for human rights, to the differences of each person, (...) that promotes the integral development and the achievement of learning of students, and students." (p: 8). The value of this definition is recognized, given the interests of this research.

It is important to have found, in the studies carried out by Caballero (1996), the recognition of coexistence as one of the relationships that must be managed by the directors, for the sake of their fundamental goal, namely: the integral development of the students of the educational institution, which is completely consonant with the essence of education in Cuba, and its humanistic character.

According to this researcher, a fundamental requirement for the achievement of coexistence in an educational institution is the achievement of the relationship between the school and its economic and socio-cultural environment which, according to her, is presented in three forms, namely:

- 1) As a process that is articulated through the students. It promotes their participation in community processes, which are led by them. The work of the institution is to promote and guide community management through the students.
- 2) As a process that integrates parents in the organization of the school. It is carried out at the level of the institution, in order to support community projects.
- 3) As a process that achieves the integration of the community towards the school, and of the school towards the community. The former participates in school life, and teachers develop direct work in it.

These three forms of manifestation of the relationship between the school and its economic and sociocultural environment for the achievement of coexistence and, thus, of its management as a relationship, find their arguments in the sociological perspective of education which, according to Álvarez (1997, p.15), has an impact on the following aspects:

1. The need for knowledge of society and, in particular, of the micro-society (the community).
2. The determination of contextual diagnoses, from which emanate the problems that are reflected in the subjects and the educational process.
3. The selection of content-problems that link education with reality and are a source of motivation.
4. The precision of aims and purposes, in correspondence with the historical-concrete of the educational process.
5. The selection and application of didactic strategies characterized by protagonism, social intervention, criticism, problem solving, and empathy, as ways for a more integral and committed education, individually and socially.

These elements become important guidelines for the modeling of the contributions of this study; but in addition to this requirement that establishes the link between the school and the community in order to achieve coexistence, in the specific case of the mixed center in Cuba, an essential element that distinguishes the formative process that takes place in it must be taken into account. In this case, the confluence, in a common physical space, of students from two or more educational levels, whose social situation of development is different.

Other aspects associated with coexistence in the educational institution, which become important guidelines in the present research, are also referenced by Caballero (1996), and are cited below:

1. Collective participation in decision making
2. Appropriate forms of communication
3. Institutional climate and environment

In the theoretical and practical experiences studied related to coexistence, it is noted that it contributes to solving problems, such as the following: rigidity in the management of schedules, flexibility of organizational structures, curriculum design, development of extracurricular and extra-curricular activities, and the establishment of a closer relationship between community agents and agencies.

According to MINED (2011), the coexistence relationship in mixed centers is manifested in those processes that have a direct relationship with the diversity that characterizes the educational levels that compose it. Considering as a coexistence relationship, the materialization of the purpose and objectives of each educational level, the psychological and physiological particularities of the students, the objectives and contents defined in the study plans and programs, the functioning of the student organizations and the statistical control system.

Manzo et al. (2011) refer: "The relationship of coexistence in the center is manifested in those processes that have a direct relationship with the diversity that characterizes the educational levels that make up the institution; while integration and coordination are manifested in the processes that can be developed in a unique way in the center and are associated with the unity between the educational levels that compose it" (p.151).

On the other hand, integration and coordination relations, "are manifested from a single management system (...) for the fulfillment of essential processes related to the political-ideological preparation of teachers and students, methodological work, the process of pedagogical delivery, vocational training and professional orientation, job training, the use of labor force, preventive work, improvement, management, direction and control of learning and school organization processes" (p.152). (p.152)

In the approach to these relationships, by the aforementioned Mc Pherson et al. (2011, p.148), it is stated that "these (...) ensure the effective development of the teaching-educational process in the center...". This statement limits the scope of such relationships.

For Hernández and Álvarez (2012, p.1) Integration is "the action of obtaining and articulating the material and human elements that the organization and planning indicate as necessary for its proper functioning. It consists of noticing to the organization all those means necessary for its effective functioning, choosing, introducing and articulating them in search of its best development".

Hill et al. (2008) state that integration is a very complex relationship that allows achieving synergy in the organization, "which occurs when the value created by working together is greater than the value that could be created if the parties involved (individuals, work teams, strategic units) worked independently".

Among the authors consulted, the contributions of Echevarría (2015) were found, who alludes to the fact that in educational institutions the integration relationship acquires a greater connotation, which is consistent with the demands of the mixed center that requires a single management system. This researcher, at the same time, assures that, in the field of education, integration is intrinsically linked to the unification of all the factors that guarantee the assimilation of the institutional culture for the achievement of the goals. In this sense, he assures that this relationship is referred "not only to the school-environmental factors area; but it must begin with the school-interrelation of factors that define it as an institution". Echevarría (2015, p.36).

The study carried out allows affirming that there is coincidence in the approach of authors such as Pestana (2009), Hill et al. (2008) and Echevarría (2015) who express that in the achievement of integration three categories come to the fore, namely: communication as a basic process of all life in society, leadership as a driving force, and shared values. These are favorable elements for the achievement of satisfactory levels of integration within institutions and, therefore, of the management of their processes.

Educational institutions, like other organizations, can be considered as a system of processes, an issue alluded to by Batista et al. (2018). And it is in this dynamic of processes that the integration relationship becomes necessary. It is in this action of unification of action in the planning, organization, execution and control of processes, where the single command in the mixed center has to fulfill its mission. In this type of institution, integration plays an important role and is distinguished by the analysis of the results of each of the educational levels to evaluate the effectiveness of the work of the educational institution and to extract inputs for decision-making.

According to the Wikipedia encyclopedia (2020), "Coordination is the action and effect of coordinating. Its etymology indicates that it comes from the Latin "cordinatio".

It basically consists of the application of a method to maintain the correct direction and orientation of any function being performed." Coordination becomes a "tool for maintaining order", as stated in the source cited above.

Coordination from the administrative or management sciences, Fayol, when explaining the content of the activity of managers from the functional approach, of which he was the pioneer founder, considered coordination as one of its functions. Following Fayol, other authors, such as Borrego (2009) in Cuba, include coordination as a function of the management cycle. Others, such as Koontz and Wehrich (2008), who do not understand it as a managerial function, conceive it as "...the essence of management, for the achievement of harmony of individual efforts in favor of the fulfillment of group goals." They state, "Each of the administrative functions is an exercise in favor of coordination." (p.13).

The theoretical systematization carried out confirmed the presence of studies on coordination in the management of educational institutions. Vega (2006, p.73), points out that "Coordination revolves around a nucleus of people who share common interests and join forces to reflect on basic issues, in the interest of educational improvement: where they are, where they want to direct their practice, and how they should act to achieve their goals".

This idea makes clear the notion that this relationship offers managers the possibility of establishing a connection between the agents of the institution, the community and its institutions, as a strategy for the debate of ideas and the construction of a common and global project for the center.

Fernández et al. (2014), refer to a set of elements that should be considered in educational institutions and which gain more weight in mixed centers due to the complexity already mentioned:

Open and flexible professional dialogue.

1. The establishment of effective communication mechanisms and channels, which favor the flow of information and promote consensus decision-making following joint analysis processes.
2. The development of coordination meetings as spaces for reflection that facilitate interpersonal relationships and the perception of being part of a common plan.

These coordination relationships are manifested from a single management system, which facilitates the work focused on the integration of actions from the Institutional Educational Project or institutional strategy, where key processes are addressed with a view to what is common in each educational level, based on a deep and accurate institutional diagnosis, which allows managers to harmonize methods, management styles and above all a unity of pedagogical requirements for the mixed school to be a single institution.

Conclusions

The systematization referred to coexistence, integration and coordination relations, constitute the basis for continuous improvements in the preparation and performance of the managers of mixed centers in the management of the key processes of these institutions, particularly the teaching-learning process and the educational work.