

## **The educational transition from preschool to first grade in the rural context for professional development**

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### **ABSTRACT**

The article presents a methodology for preschool and first grade teachers on educational transition in the rural context. Its starting point is the scientific problem: Theoretical and methodological inadequacies in the practice of professionals in the rural sector that limit the pedagogical continuity between the early childhood and school educational levels. For this reason, a diagnosis was made using theoretical, empirical and statistical-mathematical methods that revealed the existence of pedagogical and didactic deficiencies that must be resolved in order to respond to the needs and demands of the rural context.

**Keywords:** Educational transition; Preschool; Rural context; Methodology.

### **Introduction**

Changes occur in early childhood that require more comprehensive attention to children and their families; it is necessary to involve different institutions, educational and socializing agents that participate in their education. An essential aspect in this sense is the

psychological maturity shown by children at the end of preschool childhood, so that addressing the maturity and continuity of development, not only of the cognitive aspects, but also of the affective, volitional, motivational and behavioral aspects are essential for their future school and social life. That is why the curriculum of this educational level provides for a new conception in its design, development and evaluation, in order to achieve the maximum integral development of each child.

In this sense, there are inadequacies in the professional performance of multigrade teachers that are manifested in methodological deficiencies to conduct the educational transition process from preschool to first grade. They do not prioritize the attention to the contents of the first grade with emphasis on the skills to be developed in preschool with the children served by the Educate Your Child Program.

For which it is proposed to develop a methodology for the improvement of multigrade teachers to enhance their performance in conducting the educational transition in the rural context between the Early Childhood and School educational levels for the continuous integral development of children for their full incorporation into school.

This justifies the need for this topic in order to solve the problem posed, which constitutes a challenge for contemporary society, for the search of alternatives that promote the successful professional performance of these teachers from the point of view of self-improvement.

There are many authors who from the psychological and pedagogical point of view investigate on the multifaceted development that the child reaches from the early ages; we can cite the research conducted by Gonzalez (1985) Benavides, Z (2006), Fumero (2016), Fumero (2017) among others. In essence they all agree with the need for preparation that teachers have in their teaching activity as part of their self-improvement.

## **Development**

Improvement as a continuous process, aimed at professional and human improvement, must respond to the transformations that are required to be achieved, the knowledge, skills and professional qualities of teachers and professors.

In this sense, improvement is defined as:

... the ongoing training required by all professionals who graduate from an educator training center based on the needs they discover to achieve success in their performance and that will allow them to access a higher level of preparation to achieve a more effective educational task, allowing them to be updated in the evolution of pedagogical science, in the results of research, in the advanced experiences of empirical practice carried out by other colleagues. (Martínez, 2004, p. 168).

The improvement that is achieved through research and advanced experiences is weighted; but the methodological work that is developed in children's institutions is not resized as a way to methodologically improve preschool and first grade teachers for the educational transition in the rural context.

The orientation is fundamental to help these teachers to interpret their reality and transform it in the social practice, from promoting learning processes that activate their personal resources in favor of guaranteeing that this process is developed with all the quality in function of the continuity of the children's development in the rural context. For this reason, the research investigates the continuity of children's development from the preschool grade in the different modalities of educational attention and the elementary school, with the purpose of achieving an adequate educational transition process.

In this sense, research methods and techniques of the theoretical level such as analysis and synthesis, hermeneutic-dialectic, induction-deduction and functional systemic-structural were used in the study.

In the case of empirical level methods, observation, interview, surveys, paragraph writing techniques, case study and data triangulation. The instruments applied facilitated obtaining information about the situation presented by preschool and first grade teachers in the researched topic, from compiling information about the characterization of the problem. To identify the conditions for the implementation of the proposal, for the educational transition and in obtaining criteria of pertinence, feasibility and viability of the methodology, as well as, to enrich the proposal from the experience of the specialists and the coherence of the information.

The mathematical-statistical method allows the use of the percentage calculation, to process the results of the information obtained in the applied diagnosis and the comparison among them.

The sample consisted of 10 preschool and elementary school teachers in the municipality of Guamá, in Santiago de Cuba. The selected teachers respond to the areas

with the greatest difficulty presented by the children in the preschool diagnosis, due to the sociocultural context in which they develop, which has a negative impact on their development. These conditions influenced the selection of teachers, the place and time for their development. The effectiveness of the methodology was tested through a case study, carried out from July to December 2020.

The study on the educational transition process, an important aspect to take into account, reveals that the multigrade teachers do not always prioritize the attention to the contents of the first grade with emphasis on the skills to be developed in the preschool grade served by the Educate Your Child program, during the educational transition process from preschool to first grade in the rural context.

The transition process for educational purposes contains in its contextualization, definitions, actions, determined and related to the continuity of children's development seen from different aspects. For this process to be effective, unity of ideas and actions must be achieved, which requires the necessary integration between all the educational influences they receive. Therefore, the educational system must be flexible and function as a set of interrelated elements based on the ongoing training of teachers in order to transform their professional performance, taking into account the conditions they face in the rural context. If it is a question of an educational transition that guarantees the articulation from preschool to first grade, it is necessary to provide solutions to achieve a more consistent curriculum, promoting a gradual process of changes that have an intersectoral character.

In Cuba, López and Siverio (1987), refer that "the articulation between Preschool and Primary Education constitutes the link that joins two stages of development, preschool and school, as a period in which two moments of the same process of teaching and education merge" (López and Siverio, 1987, p. 77). (López and Siverio, 1987, p. 77).

In this sense, a positive change should be appreciated in the process of educational transition of preschool children, conjugated by a set of previous assumptions that lead to the execution of this process taking into account that educational agents are present (educators, family, coordinating group, zonal directors, multigrade teachers, institution in the rural context) and the preschool child, due to the changes that take place in their physical and psychic development and their manifestations in behavior.

The methodology aimed at the improvement of teachers for the educational transition from preschool childhood to first grade to enhance integral development in the rural

context, was elaborated from the need to pay attention to the training needs of teachers in the rural area, taking into account the deficiencies in this process.

The methodology is the instrument that allows transforming the problems related to the improvement of teachers for the educational transition of children, in this sense. It is conceived as a system of actions, based on the potentialities of the context and projecting the possibilities that management and teachers have for the systematization of knowledge that favors a better understanding of this process.

The methodology for the improvement of teachers in the educational transition from preschool to first grade in the rural context is structured in fundamentals, general objective and legal body, functional structuring, cognitive apparatus: concepts, categories and relations, methodological requirements. Instrumental apparatus: procedures, stages, control and evaluation parameters.

The objective of the methodology is to implement the process of improvement of multigrade teachers aimed at enhancing their performance to meet the educational transition and achieve the pedagogical articulation and the continuous integral development of children graduating from early childhood, based on their cognitive and instrumental apparatus.

The legal body of the methodology for the improvement of teachers for the transition from preschool to first grade, is supported by Article 75 (Resolution No. 2/2018) legislates; a) the curriculum, the model of the professional, the object of the profession about comprehensive educational care for early childhood, aimed at education and stimulation of comprehensive development and consequently the orientation to the family, the community, the agents and educational agencies of the environment; the spheres of action for which they are prepared; b) The plan of the teaching process; c) the methodological and organizational indications of the career.

In each of them, the proposed procedures are implemented in a coherent and logical manner. Its development starts from the diagnosis of the teachers' needs for improvement, promotes participation, critical reflection, to attend the process of educational transition from preschool to first grade, it is systematized in the stage to appropriate pedagogical tools. The instrumentation of the actions provides follow-up to the awareness and planning as preceding stages, the procedures of the pedagogical method are put into practice.

The foundations start from the philosophical point of view: dialectical materialistic philosophy, principles, laws and categories, theory of knowledge, transit. From a sociological point of view: dialectical materialism, social group, rural context. From a psychological perspective: Historical-cultural theory, education conducive to development, educational orientation. Its objective is to implement the process of continuous and permanent improvement of preschool and rural first grade teachers in order to enhance the educational transition in function of the continuous integral development of children graduated from early childhood.

As part of the methodology, the functional structuring, cognitive apparatus: concepts, categories and relations, methodological requirements were designed. Instrumental apparatus: procedures, stages, control and evaluation parameters, which are based on the particularities of the context that favor and hinder the improvement of teachers, taking into account how teachers are oriented to self-management and the search for knowledge from the professional point of view, that is, teaching teachers to know how to do, to know how to know how to know, to know how to live together and to know how to learn.

The conception of the procedures is based on the objective of the methodology and is flexible enough to be implemented in different contexts in and from the pedagogical process, taking into account transdisciplinarity and extrapolating, in different formative processes, the contents of the areas of development.

The formation of these features of the teachers' professional mode of action is based on the structural aspects of the cognitive apparatus, the method and the procedures as a dynamic component of the process being modeled, which are specified in the three stages of the methodology.

**Methodology stages:** three interrelated stages are planned with a systemic character: diagnosis, conception and implementation, and evaluation. Its design takes into account:

**Stage I. Diagnosis. Objective:** to diagnose the needs, strengths and potentialities of preschool and first grade teachers, professionals (tutors) and educational agents on the teachings provided by the study of the stage and its contribution to the teachers' professional performance.

**Actions to be implemented**

1. To elaborate indicators for the diagnosis of needs strengths and potentialities about the teachings provided by the study of the stage and its contribution to the teachers' professional performance.
2. To elaborate instruments for the diagnosis.
3. Application of the methods and techniques to be used in the diagnosis.
4. Process the results of the applied methods.
5. Analyze the results to define needs, strengths, weaknesses.
6. Workshop for socialization of the results of the

## **Stage II. Conception and application.**

Objective: to execute the actions conceived to enhance the teachers' professional performance mode in the short, medium and long term improvement in the different formative spaces, based on the teachings that emanate from the educational transition process.

Consequently, the procedures of the method, disciplinary contextual analysis and interdisciplinary conceptual projection are deployed for the study of the stage through teaching tasks for the construction, ordering and coherent articulation from the possibilities offered by interdisciplinarity and the influences of educational teachings.

This is a way for the strengthening of the students' professional performance mode from the increase and significance of systematic, clear, lasting, reciprocal knowledge linked to the concrete and contextualized practice. It allows the preparation that takes place throughout the whole process of teachers' improvement for the educational transition of children graduating from preschool to first grade in the rural context, as it constitutes an important element of the professional role.

The teaching tasks, actions and/or activities to be developed should be directed to enhance basic learning, which become skills to learn to face life; to think, value and create, based on the development of ethical and moral qualities and the students' professional performance, evidenced in behaviors consistent with the profession. These elements stimulate teachers, taking into account their motivations and aspirations, by developing knowledge, skills and a hierarchy of values that allow them to give meaning to their profession and their lives.

### **Actions for teachers:**

1. Workshops for socialization, presentation, discussion and reevaluation of the conception of the methodology, with teachers.

2. The insertion of actions in the plans for the improvement of teachers in the territories for the educational transition of children graduating from preschool to first grade in the rural context.

3. Training on theoretical-methodological aspects to multigrade teachers in the contents related to the educational transition of children graduated from preschool to first grade in the rural context: diagnosis of preschool maturation evaluation; teachers' performance in the preparation and acquisition stage; family orientation, techniques for orientation; ways of family orientation; actions to achieve active participation and family support. Methodological requirements and compliance with the principles for family educational work; methods of conducting socio-educational activities with children, families and community.

4. To achieve a continuous linkage between the diversity of teachers in the improvement, which allows to provide them through the pedagogical delivery, essential aspects required for this process.

Other avenues were the pre-event courses held on the educational transition of children graduating from preschool to first grade in the rural context, 2021, 2022, in which a summary of the methodology for the study of the stage was facilitated, analyzed, socialized and evaluated.

**III Stage: Evaluation. Objective:** to evaluate the effectiveness of the actions of each stage in order to verify the mastery achieved by the teachers during the training and its expression in the professional performance mode.

This stage is manifested in two directions, the significance of the teaching tasks, seen from the students' point of view, when they appropriate their professional performance mode, and on the other hand, the improvement of teachers and educational agents. The active participation of those involved in the process is essential, aware that it is everyone's task. The effectiveness of the methodology depends on the evaluation carried out in correspondence with the particularities of the stages stated in this research.

The evaluation was carried out in the analysis and interpretation of the indicators defined to ascertain their quality and efficiency, as part of the empowerment of the teachers' mode of action for the educational transition of children graduating from preschool to first grade in the rural context.

**Actions to be implemented:**

1. Elaboration and application of evaluation parameters and instruments to assess the professional performance of teachers for the educational transition of children graduating



from preschool to first grade in the rural context based on the actions foreseen in the stages of the methodology.

2. Conducting critical opinion workshops with teachers, professionals (tutors) and educational agents about the methodology.

3. Conducting surveys of teachers, graduate students and participants in the implementation of the methodology to determine the adjustments and changes that should be made.

4. Systematization in the preparation of teachers, educational agents and socializers in the subject under investigation.

5. Evaluation of the workshops, in the deployment of the knowledge radiated by the stage and its impact on the teachers' professional performance mode for the educational transition of the children graduated from preschool to first grade in the rural context.

The professional performance of teachers emerges as a resultant quality between the cognitive apparatus and the instrumental apparatus, which stands in the fundamental synergy between the two, mediated by the method. These are the expression of all the components of interdependence of the categories of the methodology.

Feasibility of the application of the methodology.

To evaluate the results of the case study, the starting point was the self-assessment made by the teachers under study. All of them stated that the workshops provided them with valuable knowledge, advice and actions to be developed, which served as work tools to favor the children's independent performance during the educational transition process. They recognized the value and importance of the topic related to educational transition, the preschool diagnosis, the pedagogical delivery, the preparation stage, and the educational transition process.

After the self-assessment, the guiding agents evaluated the preparation of the teachers, based on the proposed dimensions and indicators.

In 90% of the cases, the development of children's skills was encouraged through the aids. In order for them to play the roles and develop skills, they were offered levels of help:

The evaluation is organized taking into account the following aspects.

- Contribute to the improvement of teachers.
- To link theory and professional practice, in the spaces of professional reflection.
- Promote reflection on the quality of teachers' professional performance.

Objective: Evaluate the actions of the methodology for the preschool and first grade educational transition process in the rural context.

In order to achieve the objective of this stage, the following actions should be carried out:

- Organize the evaluation process on the basis of the established indicators.
- Evaluation of the logical and organizational structuring of the actions for educational transition and continuity of development.
- Monitoring and evaluation of the implemented actions.

The transformations achieved in the children caused changes in teachers, directors, agencies and educational agents, family members, evidenced in the significant changes with respect to the results achieved after the implementation of the actions of the methodology.

The achievements in social skills, the understanding of the need for social, affective and communicative relationships in the school and rural community context and the importance of their participation in political, cultural and sports activities.

The teachers under study regulated their professional performance according to the social norms of the rural context and collaborated with their peers. They understood the importance of the adequate use of free time, evidenced in the ability to distribute their time in activities, play with friends. They made toys. They played a leading role in other types of methodological activities developed in the rural context.

From the understanding of the importance and necessity of work for their independent life, teachers participated and provided that children and families participate in work tasks at home, school in the rural context.

With the regularities appreciated in the cases, the following conclusions are reached:

The elements that contextualize the educational transition from preschool to first grade as a interactive space where different factors intervene and has a medullar value in the results achieved by the children in the educational transition process, the need they have to receive a personological-contextualized attention, according to their needs and potentialities, is highlighted.

The proposal made for the improvement of preschool to first grade teachers had an impact on the quality with which the educational transition process was developed in the rural context. Among the distinctive elements, its orienting character, differentiation, collaborative and cooperative work, action by the children in their subsequent performance and the effective elaboration of teachers for its implementation were highlighted.

Based on these results, it is possible to plan for the quality development of activities in terms of the educational transition process from preschool to first grade in the rural context. If we work with a concept of transition that is far from the psycho-pedagogical characteristics where preschool children develop, it is unlikely to achieve the objectives foreseen for this stage of development. The authors state that transition is a process that generates change. Hence, educational transition can be considered a way to solve problems through the different knowledge acquired.

The criteria offered by these authors are considered important to be taken into account by teachers in order to do things differently in the development of the educational process, without losing the objectivity of the educational process and using the potentialities that learning offers us today to achieve cognitive independence in professional work.

The subjects of the sample were made aware of their role to be more independent in the improvement of skills to contribute to development. The study detected, in the first place, problems in terms of the creation of varied conditions for the development of the educational transition, which could constitute a stimulus to achieve the objectives of the activity. This was a starting point to guarantee a quality educational process.

- a) The present study constitutes only a first approximation in a wide and unexplored field, related to the educational transition in the development of the educational process and its impact on its evaluation in children.

## **Conclusions**

Educational transition is a complex process in which a significant group of educational agents and agencies interact, in charge of guaranteeing that it is developed with full quality, hence, once teachers are better prepared, their professional performance in this sense will be successful and they will be in better conditions.

The application of the methodology favors the feedback of all the factors involved, deepens the particular knowledge of multigrade teachers, families and community members, makes the already existing work relationships between the educational factors in the rural context more flexible, putting it in favorable conditions.