

## **Proposal of actions for the treatment of local history in the multigrade school**

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### **ABSTRACT**

The treatment of local history contents in multigrade classrooms requires teachers prepared to deal with the different complexities frequently encountered in this context. The empirical techniques and methods used reveal insufficiencies in the methodological preparation of teachers for the integration of the contents of the curriculum subjects with those of local history. In this sense, we offer a set of actions that favor the process of integration of contents, based on the elaboration of integrative learning situations around a common conceptual nucleus linked to events, personalities and historical facts of the locality.

**Keywords:** Local History; Multigrade Elementary School; Integrative Learning Situations; Integrative Classes; Interobjects.

### **Introduction**

In the primary education curriculum, each subject of the subjects History of Cuba and The World We Live In includes time for the treatment of local history. This is

materialized by linking the contents of these subjects with events, personalities and historical facts of the locality that are related to these subjects.

From the methodological point of view, these requirements are met in grades of the third moment of development (5th and 6th grades) when Cuban History is taught and in those of the first and second moments (1st to 4th grades) when *The World We Live In* is taught. During the methodological analysis of the different thematic units of these subjects, the events, personalities and historical facts of the locality that will be addressed in classes where their integration is feasible are determined. This is reflected in the dosages, which constitute the means to be taken into account for the subsequent planning of the class systems.

In the case of the multigrade school teacher who faces the challenge of attending several grades simultaneously, and sometimes must teach different subjects in the same class shift, most of them do not consider aspects that allow them to achieve an organic articulation of the concepts of the other subjects of the curriculum with events, personalities and historical facts of the locality. In some cases, they teach contents with different levels of depth in the same subject for different grades. In other cases, they deal with contents of different subjects that are worked simultaneously in the same class shift. The treatment of local history content in the multigrade elementary school seems to be the exclusive patrimony of the subjects *History of Cuba* and *The World We Live In*. Samón (2009, p. 3)

According to Juárez (2012) research has been conducted in multigrade education by Gell (2005), Rivera (2009), Guilarte (2010), Céspedes, Falcón and Montoya (2011), Martínez (2011), Peña et al. (2017), Arias-Verdecia and Quesada-Ramírez (2019), González et al. (2021), who recognize the lack of a particular methodology or didactics for the multigrade school. These authors make contributions related to digitalized media for the rural environment, as well as methodologies and didactic strategies both for the initial teacher training and for the development of the teaching-learning process of the learner of this type of school. However, the treatment of local history contents in the multigrade elementary school is not approached with sufficient depth from the methodological point of view.

Therefore, this article proposes a set of actions to be taken into account by the teacher of the multigrade school, which favor the treatment of local history contents supported by the single lesson plan and the development of integrative learning situations.

## **Development**

In the teaching-learning process under multigrade conditions, the classroom multiplies the possibilities of exercising a greater interinfluence, interaction and interrelation between the teacher and the learners of the different grades or levels. There are also ebbs and flows of information, ideas, judgments, points of view, which allow activating cooperative learning and increasing the knowledge arsenal of the learners.

According to Navarro (2006) defines multigrade classrooms as those made up of learners of various grade levels in which various ages, abilities and interests are present and which operate within the framework of the grade system (p. 46).

In turn, and in this order of analysis, Miranda (2020, p. 7), a multigrade school (also called multigrade, multilevel, vertical grouping, multi-age grouping, mixed classes, multi-age) refers to an educational situation that brings together students of different grades and ages in the classroom during a scheduled period, generally under the responsibility of the same teacher. It is common in rural, sparsely populated areas or where the population is dispersed.

In this type of classroom, the students have a single teacher in front of them who teaches all the subjects of the curriculum corresponding to the different grades that make up the classroom. This makes it possible to integrate the different knowledge and skills provided by each of the disciplines, both vertically and horizontally, as well as the formation of values and attitudes in the students in a coherent and systematic manner. All of which also favors the treatment of local history contents through learning situations that allow linking and integrating the contents of the subjects that are treated in the same class shift.

Therefore, it is possible to establish interdisciplinary relationships from the different subjects of the curriculum. There are multiple definitions of the concept of interdisciplinarity, among them Villamar and Guerrero (2018), the Cuban Espinosa (2018), the Chilean Araya et al (2019), the Ecuadorian Bell et al (2022). For this article, we assume the conception of Villamar and Guerrero (2018) who define it as the "(...) joint work between two or more disciplines that revolve around a common thread, which is what allows students to acquire knowledge and generate new conclusions

regarding what they have learned.(...) (p. 3). It is emphasized that this joint work generates interaction between two or more disciplines, resulting in intercommunication and reciprocal enrichment.

This definition is of interest for the correct implementation of the planning process of integrative class systems for the multigrade school, since the teacher must be aware that he/she is working with multiple individuals who have different levels of development. This is possible from the collective treatment of the different conceptual cores, categories and inter-objects common to the subjects and/or areas of knowledge, with different demands according to the grade and level. According to Samón (2009), these inter-objects can be events, personalities and historical facts of the locality that can be linked and integrated with the contents of the different subjects (p. 35).

According to Perera (2009), interobjects are "(...) a communication mechanism established between two or more objects that determine a point of accumulation of information and knowledge (concepts, propositions, laws, principles, theories, models) around a concept or skill" (p. 45).

In the multigrade elementary school, the direction of the teaching-learning process favors the acquisition of knowledge, the development of skills and habits, the formation of values and ways of acting in accordance with the demands that society places on the school. For this, it is necessary to rely on learning situations that stimulate students to analyze and reflect on the categories or objects common to the subjects that coincide in the same class shift.

In this regard, during the planning of class systems or subsystems for multigrade classes, it is necessary that the learning situations foster adequate communication among the interacting subjects. This, according to Samón, allows the creation of educational scenarios of mutual learning and the realization of interdisciplinary relationships through which it is possible to integrate contents and link them with local history, relying on the treatment of an object of knowledge common to the subjects that coincide in the same class shift (2009, p. 25). (2009, p. 25).

For their part, González et al. (2021) stated that, in this type of classroom, students, in a first form of work, are integrated into teams according to their grade level and address content specific to their level. In the second form of work, the teacher chooses a common theme: at the beginning and end of the class, students from different grades

participate indistinctly and during the development of the class, differentiated activities are proposed with degrees of complexity appropriate to the grade and/or level of the students. (p.356).

Thus, the activity in this process is considered of great value, since interdisciplinarity is aimed at solving common problems from the point of view of the different disciplines or areas of knowledge. According to Navarro (2006), this favors the development of collective learning strategies by proposing learning situations to the students in the multigrade classroom around these problems, with different demands and in line with the objectives and minimum requirements according to the grade level (p. 67).

It is emphasized that the activities for the learners of the different grades that make up the multigrade classroom should be organized in a single lesson plan. This favors the didactic performance of the teacher and the collective participation of the students. They act on the same learning object. Their actions must take into account the perspectives and requirements established for each grade, based on the objectives of the programs and curricula.

The objective, as a starting point, guides the teacher to what level of depth he/she will propose each learning situation to the learners, which will be taken into account from the methodological analysis of the thematic units and which will be specified during the planning of the classes. In this way, it will favor group interaction, cooperation and tutoring among learners, that is, the levels of help from more advanced learners and higher grades to those of lower grades and less advanced ones.

Within the framework of the transformations of the educational system, it is of great value to consider aspects related to planning as a general function of educational management. From the foundations of educational management, planning is an aspect of singular importance that emerges from the conceptualization of strategic management.

For the present article we assume the position of Carriazo et al. (2020) who expressed that strategic planning in the educational context "(...) requires the quality of education, quality management systems and evaluation, being these developed from educational planning." (p. 89)

The pedagogical process in the multigrade school requires planning, organization and control of the activities that are conceived, in order to achieve an organized and

consciously directed process. Conscious and goal-oriented planning should essentially characterize the teaching-learning process in the multigrade school.

Sometimes there is no clarity about the most effective ways to meet the objectives pursued in different subjects that are worked simultaneously in the multigrade classroom, in order to successfully achieve the transformations that are executed.

The planning of class systems or subsystems for this type of classrooms is an aspect of singular importance. This allows the teacher to concretize and specify the learning situations, around an object common to the different subjects and grades, the time required for its fulfillment and the mechanisms on the basis of which he/she will propitiate the interaction of the learners for the achievement of collective learning.

According to Carriazo et al. (2020), planning also makes it possible to ensure with the means of planning the adequate use of didactic resources that make viable the achievement of the specific objectives programmed for each grade, the quality in the integral formation of students and the dynamism in the appropriation of knowledge and the development of skills. (p. 89).

It makes it possible to determine in advance the objectives aimed at satisfying the educational needs of the learners, as well as to indicate the learning situations to be carried out and the resources required to achieve the objectives proposed in the thematic units in a given time.

Planning is not an intellectual exercise aimed simply at having plans, but an instrument that is subordinated to the social objectives, embodied in the programs and curricula, is in function of them and is only valuable to the extent that it contributes to achieving them.

It means that, in important elements for the planning of multigrade classes, difficulties persist because the conceptual cores common to the different subjects and grades that contribute to local history are not declared in the programs and curricula (Samón, 2009, p. 2). This has a direct impact on the education of the student and may hinder the didactic performance of the teacher in this type of classroom.

The inclusion of these elements explicitly in the single lesson plan allows, first, a better horizontal and vertical articulation of the inter-objects. Secondly, it favors the integration of contents. Thirdly, it favors the establishment of interdisciplinary relations as a didactic element in the preparation of the teacher of multigrade classrooms and

fourthly, it favors the elaboration of integrating situations and activities that favor the treatment of local history.

The planning of integrative activities with an interdisciplinary approach facilitates the teacher's didactic performance and makes possible the interaction of students around inter-objects. The more advanced and higher grades have the opportunity to play the role of teachers to others in the same grade or another grade. In this way, learners learn from each other, and their progress and growth can be evaluated, since, according to Navarro (2006, p. 45), the best evidence that a person has learned something is when he or she is prepared to explain it and teach it to others.

Thus, for example, according to Samón (2009), in the classes of the different subjects, the following inter-objects constitute entities of interest for the different grades of the multigrade school:

- reading texts with different complexities, in which situations and learning tasks that include contents of the local history can be presented
- writing words with calligraphic and orthographic difficulties subject and not subject to rules, which appear in situations and learning tasks that include contents of the local history
- the development of general and specific intellectual skills (identification, explanation, assessment, comparison, analysis of facts, events, personalities and phenomena of the locality, location in time and space of these facts and events)
- the formation of moral values and feelings of love for the homeland, family and hatred of exploitation and exploiters, based on learning situations and tasks that include local history (pp. 44-45).

The analysis of these aspects allows the teacher, during the planning of class systems, to formulate an integrating objective aimed at the development of a common skill. For example: to value a fact or phenomenon of the locality from the reading of a text that presents words with different spelling and calligraphic complexities, with a view to strengthening a certain moral value in the students; to locate it in time and space, etc. with different demands according to the grade.

For the different grades, the teacher elaborates learning situations around the same object of knowledge with different levels of depth and complexity according to the

grade. In this way, the students value, read, write, locate, calculate; and the moral values that are planned to be treated through the learning situations that include contents of local history are formed and developed in them. According to Navarro (2006), all this action is organized in a single lesson plan for the different grades of the multigrade classroom, in which the interdisciplinary approach that the lesson plan should have is based on the integrating nature of the objective and the activities (p. 60).

Another valuable element derived from the implementation of interdisciplinarity during the planning of the system of integrative classes for the multigrade classroom is related to the attention to diversity.

To the extent that the interaction of students from different grades is facilitated, and the more advantaged students collaborate with the less advantaged or slower ones, the teacher, through differentiated activities, gives personalized attention to students with special educational needs or who present difficulties in assimilation and require direct attention.

From the methodological point of view, the methodological analysis of the thematic units of the different subjects and the correct placement in the dosage of learning situations and tasks that include contents of local history are of incalculable value. These actions must precede the planning of class systems or subsystems, all of which allows the multigrade teacher to determine those inter-objects or conceptual nuclei common to these subjects.

In this way, the teacher concretizes the conceptual nuclei that are entities of interest for the different subjects, on the basis of which the establishment of interdisciplinary relations can be achieved during the planning of the class systems that favor the treatment of local history contents.

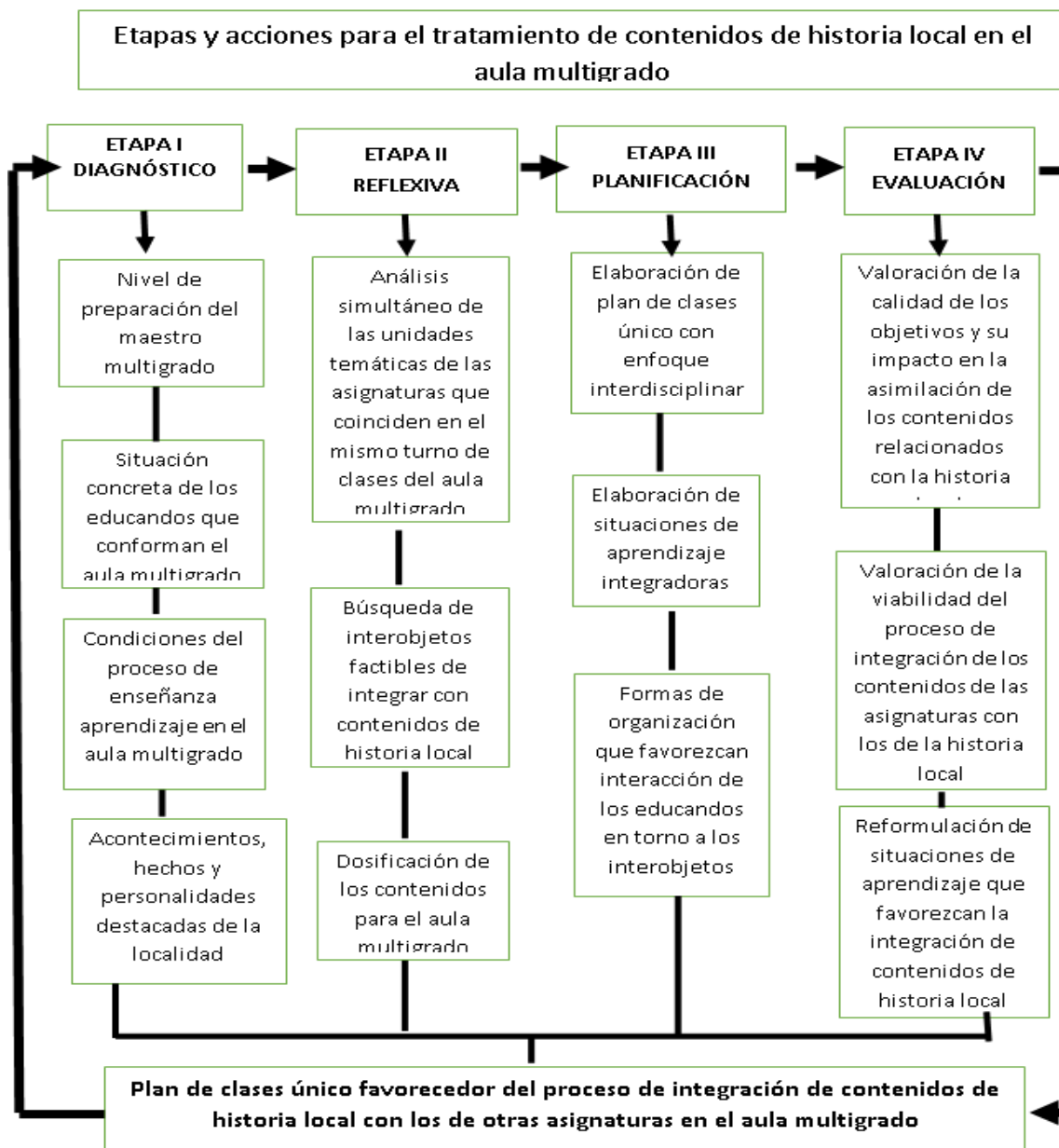
Based on the determination of these inter-objects or common conceptual nuclei, the teacher plans different interaction mechanisms that favor the reflections and actions of the students around the same conceptual nucleus. This is organized in a single class project, with different demands, depth and complexity according to the grade and level of development reached by each of the students.

According to Navarro (2006), four stages are proposed for planning multigrade classes: diagnostic, reflective, planning and evaluation (p. 67). For the purposes of this article, in each of the stages we reconstruct the actions to favor the treatment of local history



contents through subjects that coincide in the same class shift, in this type of classrooms.

Source: Self elaboration



**Figure 1:** Stages and actions that favor the treatment of local history content in the multigrade.

In the first place, the role of diagnosis occupies a very relevant place. It is necessary to determine the teacher's level of preparation to adequately plan the teaching-learning process with an interdisciplinary approach, the concrete situation of each of his or her

students, the conditions in which this process develops and the events, personalities and historical facts of the locality.

Secondly, it is necessary to analyze and reflect on the system of knowledge, skills and values to be formed and developed in each grade and in the subjects that coincide in the same class shift. In this way, it is possible to determine the common inter-objects and/or conceptual cores that are entities of interest for the different subjects involved in the same shift of classes, which are reflected in the dosage of the thematic units and which favor the treatment of contents related to local history.

The reflective stage reveals the importance of the methodological analysis of the thematic units of the different subjects. This methodological analysis must be carried out simultaneously and requires rigorous work in the search for inter-objects that favor integration. It culminates in the elaboration of the dosages of contents with an interdisciplinary approach, which in turn makes possible the elaboration of systems of integrative classes, which favor the treatment of contents of the history of the locality.

- a) This dosage is elaborated by matching the contents that can be integrated corresponding to the subjects that coincide in the same class shift. All of which enables the teacher to design and plan class systems and subsystems with integrating activities around an inter-object, taking into account the levels of depth, systematization and assimilation according to the grade. These activities allow the teacher to guide the actions of the students in terms of the fulfillment of the objectives programmed for each grade, through a single lesson plan.

## **Conclusions**

The treatment of local history contents in the multigrade elementary school presents insufficiencies, and appears to be the exclusive patrimony of the subjects History of Cuba and The World We Live In, biasing the possibilities of the other subjects of the curriculum to integrate contents with events, facts and outstanding personalities of the locality.

The establishment of interdisciplinary relations during the elaboration of the single lesson plan, and the design and planning of integrating activities, integrating teaching

tasks and learning situations around a common conceptual nucleus linked to events, personalities and historical facts of the locality favor the treatment of local history in the multigrade school.