

***La dimensión extensionista. Una necesidad en la formación del
estudiante de la Carrera Educación Preescolar***
***The extensionist dimension: a need in the formation of the student
of the Preschool Education Career***

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Resumen

La extensión universitaria junto a la docencia y la investigación garantiza la misión de preservar, desarrollar y promover la cultura. No obstante, existen insuficiencias en su concepción teórica y metodológica que limita su reconocimiento como dimensión para la formación profesional y son limitados los estudios realizados dirigidos a la formación de los estudiantes de la Educación Preescolar. Lo cual conduce a la solución del problema científico ¿cómo contribuir a la dimensión extensionista de la formación del estudiante en la carrera Educación Preescolar? El objetivo se dirige a la sistematización de los referentes teóricos y metodológicos de la dimensión extensionista en la formación de los estudiantes en la carrera Educación Preescolar. Con la utilización del método histórico-lógico, análisis y síntesis, inducción y deducción, sistematización, análisis documental y la observación participante, se determina la situación que presenta esta dimensión. Los resultados evidencian su necesidad e importancia por las características de la profesión.

Palabras clave: Formación integral; Educación Preescolar; Extensión universitaria; Dimensión extensionista.

Abstract

University extension, together with teaching and research, guarantees the mission of preserving, developing and promoting culture. However, there are insufficiencies in its theoretical and methodological conception that limit its recognition as a dimension for professional training and there are limited studies aimed at the training of Pre-school Education students. This leads to the solution of the scientific problem: how to contribute to the extension dimension of student training in the Preschool Education career? The objective is directed to the systematization of the theoretical and methodological referents of the extensionist dimension in the training of students in the Preschool Education career. Using the historical-logical method, analysis and synthesis, induction and deduction, systematization, documentary analysis and participant observation, the situation of this dimension is determined. The results show its need and importance due to the characteristics of the profession.

Keywords: Comprehensive training; Preschool education; University extension; Extension dimension.

Introduction

Cuban Higher Education in the 21st century faces the challenges of development originated by the economic and social situation the country is going through, as well as by the scientific and technological advances achieved. That is why, in correspondence with the historical moments, universities are in charge of preserving, developing and promoting the culture of humanity in close connection with society.

Teaching, research and university extension, as the processes through which universities must guarantee the fulfillment of this mission, are agents of change, capable of linking the processes with the needs and potentialities of the social contexts where they are developed. This requires the presence of a professional with a high level of commitment to society to integrate and extend what has been learned.

Based on these ideas, it is necessary to give university extension the role that corresponds to it in professional pedagogical training, based on the possibilities it offers to obtain, build and transmit knowledge through different ways. These possibilities can be taken advantage of in the training of the student of the Preschool Education career, due to its specificities.

It should be emphasized that the training of professionals is developed through curricular and extracurricular forms. These should be used for the development of the educational work from the integral approach. This is concretized in the educational dimensions of the student's training process: curricular, university extension and socio-political activities, which are designed in the educational strategy of each level.

All of the above illustrates that university extension is conceived as a substantive process for the fulfillment of the university's mission, and as a dimension for the development of the educational work in the students' formation process. However, its conception as a dimension is insufficient, which limits its planning, execution, control and evaluation in correspondence with the professional training model.

For its part, in Curriculum E, it is posed as a challenge to the Pre-school Education career "the training of an innovative and creative professional with a high social commitment" (MES, 2016, p.133). However, the use of the extensionist dimension for such purposes is insufficient, so that it responds to the formative objectives for each year of study and influences the modes of action.

Based on this challenge, the mission is established to train a student with the ability to achieve a comprehensive general culture and ideological preparation that will allow him/her to become a model of stimulation of the comprehensive development of children from 0 to 6 years of age, of orientation to the family and of interaction with the agents and socializing agencies of the community. Hence, the specific characteristics of the object of this profession.

In addition to the above, the training process developed in the career should be aimed at preparing the student as an educator from the first to the sixth year of life in children's circles, as a preschool teacher in primary schools, as a promoter of the Educate Your Child Program, as well as a teacher in pedagogical schools or the university. This gives his training a distinction and an integral cultural preparation.

All this constitutes, in the researcher's opinion, starting points to undertake, from the sciences, the search for foundations and practical implementation, starting from objective reality. And it is that ways must be sought for the articulation of the extension dimension with the particularities of the training of the student of the career so that they guarantee the integral preparation; and thus the social task.

For, the student of the Pre-school Education career is formed under the principles that lead him/her to act as an educator par excellence, who has a social task as a transmitter of a treasured culture. Not only to the younger generations which is of unquestionable significance, but to the families as continuators of that culture at home, in the community.

Therefore, it is determined as a problem to investigate: how to contribute to the extensionist dimension of the student's formation in the Pre-school Education career? For which the following objective is proposed: systematization of theoretical and methodological references of the extensionist dimension of the formative process of the student in the Preschool Education career.

Development

University extension is seen as a social function since its origins in the Reform of Cordoba, Argentina 1918, reflecting in its postulates the need to put university knowledge at the service of society, understood as the opening of the university to all social classes. From which the "José Martí Popular University" was created in Cuba by Julio A. Mella in 1923.

It is there that lectures, lecture series, exhibitions, artistic presentations and summer schools were developed. Since then, university extension has been the subject of several studies that have allowed a systematization of its evolution and transformation.

The research carried out visualizes university extension as a system of interaction between the university and society; a non-formal, permanent and dynamic educational process; a complex web of internal and external relations; a dynamic process of integrating and systemic formation.

The starting point is taken as that which conceives it as the "system of interaction between university and society, through activity and communication, which is carried out inside and outside the center with the purpose of promoting culture in the university and extra-university community to contribute to its cultural development" (González, G., 1996, p.70). It connotes value to the preparation of professors, students and workers, in order to contribute, from interaction, to the transformation of themselves and their environment.

Similarly, in the National University Extension Program, it assumes the interaction between university and society as a "process oriented to educational work, which promotes and raises the general integral

culture of the university community and its social environment" (MES, 2004, p.15). In addition, this program contains the general guidelines to be addressed, as well as the main projections for each of them.

The interaction between the university and society as a referent, contains key elements that are erected to the orientation of the educational work and the direction to the cultural promotion of the community, with double intentionality because they benefit with its results both the community that exercises it and who receives it, guarantees the transformation for itself and for others by appropriating a culture, not in a passive way, but that allows personal development and its transmission in favor of others.

The initial training of the education professional, also known as professional pedagogical training, is a process of appropriation of culture. Seen as a result of assimilated knowledge, skills, values of the profession and which is expressed through the way of professional performance, given the links of the profession with society.

It concerns then, an integral formation where there is an indissoluble unity of categories such as instruction, education and development, where love for children and for their profession prevails, where the values in their actions are in correspondence with those prioritized by society and by the beautiful task to be performed.

It is important to emphasize the value of the integral preparation that is required of the student of the Preschool Education career, since this is the one that lays the foundation for all his development as a human being in the performance of the profession. To who it corresponds the honorable and responsible task of educational attention and stimulation of the integral development of the new generations from birth to six years of age.

In addition, he/she must guarantee an adequate orientation to the family, agents and educational agencies of the environment. This should influence the apprehension of styles, characteristics, functions, qualities and feelings that direct their modes of action in the different socio-educational contexts.

The conception of the training of the student who is to perform in such a sensitive area as preschool has been analyzed by different specialists when they say "the Preschool Education professional presents

very special performances as a result of the object of work he/she possesses" (Hernández, X., 2003, p.6). Hence also the peculiarities present in the training process, to which the extensionist dimension contributes in an articulated manner.

From this position, the training process requires new views in search of relationships that allow coherent integration, the contribution to the insertion of the student in the different spheres of professional performance, from the interaction in the socio-educational contexts; the university extension is one of the ideal scenarios for this purpose.

The main priorities should be aimed at political-ideological and value formation, cultural and professional improvement, consolidation of adequate standards of social behavior and formal education that promote relations of mutual respect, the correct use of language and culture in dealing with each other.

The university extension as a process has its own components that must be used in order to achieve in the students an integral formation, such as:

- The direct link with different artistic manifestations, from the first year, students should be incorporated into an artistic manifestation to develop and/or consolidate aptitudes, attitudes, interests or motivations and thus gradually eliminate cultural deficiencies.
- Community work stimulates the participation of students in community projects and prepares them to participate in the solution of territorial problems of a cultural, educational and social nature.
- Honorary professorships are spaces for the training and professional cultural development of students.
- The optional courses are complementary extracurricular courses of student choice or are directed in correspondence with the motivations and needs.
- The movement of Amateur Artists of the University Student Federation to increase the development of the amateurs in the different cultural manifestations.
- The national program of reading stimulates the use of books related to the subjects of the careers and of general culture.
- The creation or artistic appreciation workshops constitute productive or appreciation units through reflection and action.

- Sports or recreational activities are activities that are programmed based on the practice of sports or recreation.
- The university movement for health is the name given to the use of the university scenario for the promotion of health and environmental education.

These components acquire importance in the formation of the student of the Pre-school Education career, for their contribution to the way of professional performance, since in the basic work entities, he/she must apply techniques proper to music, with the accompaniment of the instrument, literature, drawing, modeling and manual work. The domains of the techniques allow evaluating the development of knowledge, abilities and values for the adaptation and musicalization of children's stories, the elaboration of toys, didactic means, and the assembly of dances, gymnastic tables and other artistic activities with the children, on the basis of an aesthetic, educational and histrionic criterion.

The system of knowledge and skills will allow the application in socialization and exchange with the community, associations and organizations from a critical position in the development of social awareness and sensitivity to the cultural diversity of children, their rights, care and development prospects.

From the analysis that is made explicit, it is necessary to project the extensionist dimension in such a way that it contributes to the acquisition of knowledge, abilities, values, attitudes and aptitudes for the efficient development of such a peculiar profession, due to its particularities, its social importance and value in the integral formation of the human being in the first years of life.

The extensionist dimension only acquires meaning if the different forms of sociocultural work are applied: programs, projects, activities, actions and the extensionist tasks themselves. Taking into account the doctoral thesis of González (2002), which are taken as a reference for the development of the integral formation of the students of the Preschool Education career, based on the potentialities it offers; and these are:

The program constitutes the most general organizational form for university extension, becoming a guiding scheme for sociocultural work, as it is an expression of strategy and policy.

The project constitutes a more operative unit within the planning process of university sociocultural work, since it offers treatment to specific situations and problems.

The extension activities are those that are part of the operationalization of the planning of sociocultural work. They are identified as such the set of actions and tasks that have a similar character or are closely related and are oriented to the fulfillment of a specific objective or part of it.

The extensionist actions are made up of a set of tasks that are strongly identified among themselves due to their similar characteristics and their orientation to very specific purposes.

The extensionist tasks represent the constituent cell of the extensionist process and of the university sociocultural work, for being the smallest expression of the same that maintains its fundamental characteristics and relations.

The organizational forms that are presented, due to their characteristics and properties, acquire meaning in the interrelation among their components and are vital in the organization of the university extension dimension. Hence, the importance of their knowledge by the intra-university community for their application inside or outside the walls of the universities.

The use of observation as a method of exploration, oriented to the development of different components and forms of organization, made it possible to verify:

- The limited theoretical-methodological conception of the extensionist dimension, possessed by agents and actors of the formative process.
- Insufficient planning, execution, evaluation and dissemination of extension projects, activities and actions.
- Little use of the existing potentialities and strengths for the integral formation of the student of the Preschool Education career.

Likewise, the analysis of normative documents such as the Organizational Regulation of the teaching process and of the direction of the teaching and methodological work for university careers (RM 47/2022), the Study Plan "E" (2016) that integrates the Professional Training Model of the Preschool Education career, the methodological and organizational indications, the Teaching Preparation Plan; as well as the Program of disciplines is carried out.

The documentary analysis carried out reflects the following results:

The Organizational Regulation of the teaching process and of the direction of the teaching and methodological work for university careers makes explicit, in Article 4 of Chapter I that:

First, the training of professionals is developed curricularly (the teaching-educational process); and extracurricular.

Second, extracurricular scientific research and university extension, as well as participation in tasks of high social impact, are integrated to the training work; they constitute elements of vital importance for the integral formation of the students.

Third, the integration of academic, work and research activities must be effective throughout the entire training process. This excludes university extension.

All of the above, based on the III Improvement of Higher Education, confirms the need to incorporate extension into university activities in pursuit of the integral cultural formation of students. However, the recognition of its formative and integrating character, as a necessary dimension of professional training, is insufficient.

The analysis of Study Plan "E" shows that, in the Model of the professional of the Preschool Education career, the elements for the planning, execution and evaluation of the extension dimension are insufficient. It is not sufficiently explicit the integrating approach that allows the direction of the integral formation of the student of the career in the different socio-educational contexts.

On the other hand, in the design of the disciplines Investigative Work Training or Main Integrative and Theoretical and Didactic Foundations of Preschool Education, it is stated that through these disciplines the successful fulfillment of the components of the Professional Model is guaranteed and the integration of the academic, work, research and extension components is favored. Because of its content, it acquires a fundamental role in the integral formation of students; what is not very evident is how the fulfillment of these aspirations is achieved through the integration of the different components.

In the analysis of the Teaching Process Plan, it is found that they contain subjects of the basic curriculum, directed to the planning and direction of the educational process of Plastic, Musical,

Physical and Mother Tongue Education, without sufficiently developing personal and social interaction skills.

There is a lack of subjects in the curriculum and optional electives that focus attention on the development of knowledge, abilities, skills and aptitudes necessary for the exercise of the profession.

It should be noted that from the agreements established between the career and the base labor entities, activities related to academic, labor, research and extension activities are implemented, the latter being insufficient. This shows the low level of integration of these activities in the integral formation of the students, as a way of showing the closest links between the university and society.

Hence, the integral evaluations of the student do not reflect the influence of the extension dimension in their formation and as a consequence in the integral educational attention of the children of the Early Childhood; as well as in the orientation to the family and community.

Similarly, the Educational Plan (2017) is analyzed due to the changes that have been taking place since the III Early Childhood Improvement and the contradictions with the training model of the professional who join it to exercise it, in their research work practice and in the exercise, itself.

The cultural institutions, among which are the universities and the basic labor entities, are the most directly in charge of the pedagogical professional training, of developing the thinking to know and assimilate all the culture of humanity and to be able to transform reality for the benefit and individual and social improvement.

For this reason, this cultural institution, which has the social responsibility to train and develop intellectually, morally, aesthetically, ideologically and physically all the subjects involved in the processes that take place in it and whose content is precisely the creation, preservation, dissemination and enjoyment of culture, must assume the promotion as a strategy to become the most important cultural center of the community.

Universities, by their very essence, "are promoters of culture in the broadest sense of the word. Not only artistic manifestations, but all the culture treasured by the institution, including in an essential way the culture of each of the professions" (Horruitiner, P. 2009, p. 12).

Thus, cultural promotion is conceived as a system of actions aimed at establishing and boosting the active relationship between the population and culture in order to achieve higher levels of both. It includes actions for the creation and production of cultural goods, but also their extension and research; the conservation, rescue and revitalization of cultural values and education and training, among others.

In addition, cultural promotion is considered by several authors as the methodology of university extension and its mission is to increase more and more the participatory levels of the community in cultural life, promoting the access of all to the creation and enjoyment of cultural goods that are owned and renewed.

Therefore, the university extension is also consubstantial to the integral formation process developed in the Pre-school Education career, but singularized in the extensionist dimension. The student fulfills a social function, through the object of his profession with the preservation, development and promotion of the culture that has been transferred to him and from the individual needs and those of the community where he interacts.

This is the basis for the integration of the university's processes to fulfill its social role, which coherently tend to respond to social demands, especially those related to the general integral culture of actors, agents and agencies. This is highlighted in the direct link that the career has with the community, through socio-educational projects that include programs, activities, tasks and extensionist actions.

All of the above is useful to look at the extension dimension as a component and indispensable part of the professional training process developed in universities. As well as the singular significance of the same in the Preschool Education career, based on its specificities.

In relation to the term dimension, its origin comes from the Latin dimension, which means measure, measurement. Its meaning is varied and is given in: measure of length, width, or depth; magnitude that, together with others, serves to define a physical phenomenon; size or importance of something; extension in some direction.

However, in Cuban Higher Education, the concept of dimension is incorporated to characterize the way in which a process can be studied and analyzed, from different positions and approaches in correspondence with the purpose.

Therefore, the dimension expresses "the perspective from which a certain process is analyzed in specific circumstances" (Horruitiner, 2009, p. 20). Thus, the pedagogical training process must be studied, analyzed and projected from the dimensions that characterize it. Therefore, the extensionist dimension constitutes one of them, although its conception as such is insufficient and lacks significance of its formative and integrating character.

Three essential dimensions are identified in the training process: the instructive dimension, the developmental dimension and the educational dimension, which in their integration guarantee the preparation of the professional for his successful performance in society. These are manifested in the extension dimension in an indissoluble unity that justifies its formative and integrating character.

However, Cuban Higher Education distinguishes the objectives related to the formation of the student's personality as the most important of the whole training process. Therefore, educational work constitutes the main priority in it and is developed through curricular and extracurricular means, using an integral approach that involves the entire university community.

This is based on the integral approach to educational work that emerged in 1995, as a result of a discussion process in universities throughout the country, with the participation of faculty and student organizations. This approach constitutes the main strategy of Cuban Higher Education for educational work, due to the importance given to the integral formation of a professional.

However, despite the progress achieved in the educational work, it is still insufficient the coherence and integrality required for its development, the formulation of the most accurate and comprehensive formulation of educational strategies, the proper balance of the different dimensions of this work. From which it is highlighted how the extension dimension is underprivileged, both from a theoretical and practical point of view; hence the relevance of the research.

It is recognized in R/M47/2022 that, "the elaboration of the educational strategy of the career in its three dimensions: curricular, university extension and socio-political activities have as a starting point the model of the professional" (MES, 2022, p. 31).

The above confirms that the importance of university extension is recognized as a component dimension of the integral formation of students. Based on the need to achieve integration in the educational influences, directed and concretized in the educational strategy of the year, from what is established in the model of the professional, in this case of the Pre-school Education career.

In addition, from this approach, the determination and planning at the different levels of the forms of organization to be implemented for the fulfillment of such training should be promoted. Likewise, "the extension dimension has as a fundamental support for the development of the professional model, the cultural promotion, complements the training and development of values, knowledge and skills in accordance with the educational purposes foreseen" (MES, 2004, p.16).

Therefore, this reference leads to the study of the extension dimension of the student's training, specifically in the Preschool Education career, based on its peculiarities. This should be used to introduce changes in their ways of thinking and acting.

From the indications of the MES as a document, the projection of the extensionist dimension in the years of the career is oriented in correspondence with the educational objectives; expanding its scope in a way that strengthens the protagonism of the students as object and subject. As well as adopting the organizational forms to concretize and dynamize this dimension in the strategies at all levels. This makes evident the need for its study and implementation based on the characteristics of the aforementioned career.

Conclusions

The historical-logical analysis carried out allows the systematization of the existing theory on university extension; the study of conceptions, components, forms of organization and its methodology. This leads to the need for new relations and influences of the extension dimension in the integral formation of the student of the Preschool Education career. The theoretical and methodological references analyzed and the application of research methods reveal insufficiencies that limit the use of

Miriais Guibert, Yanet Simón, Norma Leonard: La dimensión extensionista. una necesidad en la formación del the formative and integrating character of the extensionist dimension in the training of the student of the Preschool Education career, based on its peculiarities.

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