

La Educación Preescolar. Su contribución al desarrollo educacional en Guantánamo

Kindergarten education. Its contribution to educational development in Guantánamo

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RESUMEN: La investigación parte del análisis histórico de la Educación Preescolar en Guantánamo, debido a la carencia de fuentes que avalen la contribución de esta educación al progreso educativo en Guantánamo, lo que dificulta el conocimiento de esta temática en los estudiantes de Educación Preescolar de la Universidad de Guantánamo. Por lo tanto, el propósito de esta investigación es revelar hechos y sucesos valiosos, recopilados en documentos y materiales inéditos de actores vivos del proceso. Se utilizaron métodos teóricos y empíricos para revelar la contribución de la Educación Preescolar al desarrollo educativo en este territorio.

Palabras clave: Contribución educativa; Desarrollo educativo; Educación preescolar

ABSTRACT: The research starts from the historical analysis of Kindergarten Education in Guantánamo, due to the lack of sources that support the contribution of this education to the educational progress in Guantánamo, which hinders the knowledge of this subject in students of Kindergarten Education of the University of Guantánamo. Therefore, the purpose of this research is to reveal valuable events and occurrences, compiled in documents and unpublished materials of living actors of the process. Theoretical and empirical methods were used to reveal the contribution of Kindergarten Education to the educational development in this territory.

Keywords: Educational contribution; Educational development; Kindergarten education.

Introduction

Research on the history of education in Cuba has made it possible to deepen the roots of its educational and pedagogical work and its value as a patrimonial identity for scientific advances in the country and the world. At the same time, these investigations show the historical continuity as an expression of the most genuine of a pedagogical thought that should be resorted to in order to

continue transforming current educational practices and projecting the future in the training of education professionals, for constituting an inexhaustible wealth of knowledge and values.

The above mentioned corroborates the historical continuity of the educational and representative legacy of our ancestors, necessary to improve educational practices and project the future of education professionals; as long as there are epistemic deficiencies in the documentation of processes, educational and pedagogical thought, and institutions.

Consequently, it is necessary to venture into the knowledge of Kindergarten Education in the province of Guantánamo, which will allow revealing the existence of a theoretical-practical wealth for its systematization in today's Cuban society. Therefore, it is necessary to search for procedures to urgently carry out research on this topic, as part of the training of Preschool Education professionals.

However, the formative practice of kindergarten educators shows realities that determine the need to enrich their initial training and the consideration of using new strategies for the systematization of local historical-pedagogical studies, oriented to assert the potential of the history of local education, as a reflection of the history of national education, which in turn, would make it possible to advance in these investigations and address the theoretical deficiencies on the history of education and pedagogy in the locality.

On the study of the history of preschool education in Cuba, there is research by Siverio (2006), who wrote the "Historical review of educational ideas about Preschool Education in Cuba".

Similarly, there are studies by Benavides (2006), who addresses the topic related to the "Trends in the development of ideas on the education of the Cuban preschool child, from 1959 to 2000"; Cruz (2007), makes a "Historical systematization of the transformations in the development of Kindergarten Education after the triumph of the Revolution in Villa Clara province"; Heredia (2016), dabbles in its historical-pedagogical process in Santiago de Cuba, from 1902 to 2014, who ratified the value of Kindergarten Education as an essential way for the development of children from 0 to 6 years old; ideas enriched in the course up to the present day.

What has been presented so far constitutes an important reference for this work, due to the contributions offered; however, they do not reflect the contributions and experiences on Kindergarten education that exist in the province of Guantánamo.

On the other hand, in the initial verification carried out, it is verified that there are theoretical deficiencies on the history of Kindergarten education in the territory, as well as dispersion of the sources that endorse the historical development of this process, which makes difficult the systematization of its contributions for the training of Kindergarten Education professionals.

In correspondence with the above mentioned, the objective of this work is to reveal the contribution of Kindergarten Education (1959-2000) to the educational development in Guantánamo.

Development

At the beginning of 1959, preschool education in Guantánamo was marked by a complex reality, characterized by the lack of schooling of the majority of the population, including the population from 0 to 6 years of age, and by the lack of qualified professionals in charge of their care.

It was painful, the reality of this territory, identified as one of the most forgotten of the country, with an eminently rural and mountain geography, with a very precarious economic heritage and residues of the existence of a naval base, from which actions were organized and directed, which reduced to almost nothing the identity of the Guantanamo people.

The existing panorama in the region needed to be transformed, and it depended on a change in the socio-historical situation, which demanded the establishment of certain policies, oriented to solve the needs of kindergarten children. This was not easy to say, nor was it so simple to put into practice, mainly because the main purpose was to provide high quality care for children.

Eradicate the unhealthy situation and promote, together with education, nutritional education, hygiene, health, as well as the creation of jobs for working mothers for their incorporation into the construction of the new society that was emerging, all of this supported by: The opening of kindergarten education as one of the main transformations that would contribute to the development of education and guarantee the educational attention of children under 6 years of age, which up to that moment was not attended.

The educational context at that time demanded great transformations, which would only be achieved with the political will of its rulers, the support of the people and the dispossessed, which posed to the new triumphant Revolution and to the locality, difficult challenges to assume.

The complex situation that the municipality of Guantánamo lived in this period, generated in certain social sectors a tendency to criticize the problems of the society and in particular of the education.

This took place in a difficult historical context, due to the existence of a large population that did not receive any educational benefit, including children from 0 to 5 years of age. Institutions were scarce and were located in urban areas, where welfare purposes prevailed and generally attended children from 3 to 5 years of age.

The conditions of the children were precarious, and there was no organization capable of focusing and unifying the existing institutions. The family was the one that mostly took care of the education of its children, but the total lack of instruction, its low cultural level, prevented it from exercising an adequate educational influence. The changes projected by the Revolution in the economic base required the incorporation of women to the work, and to the different activities of the economic life of the territory.

The existing context was changing as the socio-historical situation demanded the establishment of certain policies aimed at solving the needs of working mothers and social cases, which at a critical moment led to establish guidelines that favored priority social and economic sectors for the development of the country, and in this scenario was inserted kindergarten Education, with the problems of working mothers.

In the midst of this convulsive reality, at the end of 1959, the law of the Integral Reform of Education (Law 680/1959) was applied, where the new structure of the National Education System was proposed. In this reform, the National Education System is conceived from kindergarten to university, with its base in preschool education. It is stipulated that kindergarten education will cover from 3 to 5 years of age and will be divided into cycles according to the children's level of maturity.

This initial period is characterized by the necessary transition that takes place in every Revolution, which cannot erase in one day all the problems inherited from the previous society, but must take measures and lay the foundations for a new society.

The lack of schools and centers for the attention of pre-school children was evident, the few existing Kindergartens took in children between 4 and 5 years old, in these institutions the family had to pay for that education, being insignificant the number of children that were here.

Therefore, it was necessary to open institutions for the immediate attention of kindergarten children who did not attend any center and to solve the situation of many mothers who joined the productive development of the territory and had nowhere to leave their children.

Faced with this problem, Castro (1962) stated: "[...]... the creation of these centers can relieve women of tasks that today enslave them and rob them of an enormous amount of time taken away from production" (p. 15).

One of the first challenges that the Revolution had to face was to make possible the incorporation of women to the different tasks they had to undertake, certain that their children would not be left unattended and that their education would be guaranteed as the fundamental objective.

In this initial stage, actions aimed at transforming and making this education visible within the territory were undertaken; starting with the task of putting into practice the beautiful work of creating institutions where children would be cared for in an orderly manner, where they would feel the warmth and love of the mother who cared for them, protected them and trained them in the purest feelings and values.

The work takes place in Guantánamo, the easternmost province of the country, bordered to the north by the province of Holguín and the Atlantic Ocean, to the south by the Caribbean Sea, to the east by the Paso de los Vientos and to the west by the province of Santiago de Cuba.

This municipality was one of the twenty-two municipalities of the Orient province, considered one of the poorest provinces in the country with the highest number of illiterates and fewer opportunities for access to social development, mainly in rural areas. The locality was part of one of the Orient regions, Guantánamo-Alto Songo-Yateras, according to the administrative political division of the 1953 census.

The extraordinary transformations that occurred in Guantánamo in the social sphere are expressed in areas of such significance as education, culture, science and sports. In this province, as in the whole country, essential changes are taking place in the socioeconomic structure.

Therefore, it is necessary to find a viable alternative capable of revealing the contribution of preschool education in university education through the measurement and consideration of this important subject in the Bachelor's Degree in kindergarten Education.

In order to obtain the new knowledge offered by the work and to corroborate the mentioned inadequacies, a survey was applied to 34 4th year students of the Bachelor's Degree in kindergarten Education, in addition to an interview to 40 teachers and retired educators, which showed the following results:

1. 85% of the respondents have no knowledge about the historical development of Preschool Education in Guantánamo, while 15% do know about the subject treated.
2. 96% indicate that the historical study of kindergarten Education in the territory should be incorporated in the teaching-learning process and 4% indicated that it should not.
3. 83% of the respondents indicated that knowledge about the historical development of kindergarten education in the territory should be taught in several subjects, while 17% responded that it should not.
4. 100% of the respondents indicate that events and contests should be held where the historical development of kindergarten Education should be made known.
5. 88% of the interviewed women indicated that projects should be organized with the help of the university, the Historian's House and other governmental entities for the historical study of processes, institutions and personalities of the territory, while 12% indicated that they should not.
6. 81% of the interviewed women consider that there is a lack of knowledge about the historical development of preschool education in the territory; 11% indicated that there is little, and 8% indicated that there is a lot.

In the search for an alternative solution to the inadequacies detected, an exhaustive bibliographic research was carried out, which revealed the existence of works on the historical development of kindergarten education, among which the following are worth mentioning:

- Historical outline of education in Guantánamo, in the Colonial Stage, Ravelo *et al.* (1989).
- A new conception of the knowledge system of History of Education for the training of the Bachelor in kindergarten Education, Soto (2003).
- Study of outstanding educators of kindergarten Education in the municipality of Baracoa, Louvain (2018).
- Historical study of kindergarten Education in the municipality of Caimanera, Rodríguez (2021).

None of the works consulted found a viable solution that could be applied to the historical study of kindergarten education and its contribution to educational development in Guantánamo, within the

preschool formative process.

As a result of the historical analysis, the theoretical-methodological references and the diagnosis, a methodological procedure followed for the development of the study is proposed, which is based on the proposals developed by Buenavilla (2003) in his project Contribution of outstanding figures of the national culture to the development of Cuban education of the ISP "Enrique José Varona".

Methodological procedure used for the work.

1. Synthesis of the historical background, based on the identification and historical critique of the sources, which allowed for an in-depth study of the essential aspects.
2. Analysis and assumption of the main theoretical-methodological referents indispensable for the study of kindergarten education and to delimit its general aspects, making inferences to the local process.
3. Delimitation of the spatial and temporal context in which kindergarten I education is developed (1959-2000).
4. Search and determination of the fundamental informational content for the elaboration of the work.

The methodological procedure used also served to obtain the new knowledge offered by the work. Thus, from the study it was possible to confirm that in Guantánamo, actions are beginning to be developed to establish kindergarten education for all children under 6 years of age, such as:

- The normal Kindergarten schools disappear, which, although they played a significant role at the time, did not meet the needs of the child population from 0 to 6 years of age. The name Kindergarten is changed to preschool education and continues to be provided by the Ministry of Education.
- The Regional Directorate of Education is created in Guantánamo, since this locality was a region and was directed by Santiago de Cuba, at that initial moment in 1959.
- Between 1960 and 1962, new educational transformations began, which made possible and motivated people of Guantánamo to incorporate themselves into the study to reach the 6th grade, as well as to insert themselves into employment, alternatives for self-improvement and diverse economic and social tasks.
- Premises and houses were transformed into educational institutions for the education and care of children from 0 to 6 years of age. At the same time, children's circles were created,

giving women the opportunity to work since 1961.

- Premises were used for the improvement and training of personnel who had to work in the institutions and who did not have the required level for this work, such as the ISE (Institute for Educational Improvement) and the IPE (Educational Improvement Institute).
- The creation of an infrastructure to attend to the education of children, first, directed by the FMC: National Directorate of Children's Circles (1961), which later became the Institute of Childhood (1971) and finally the Subsystem of kindergarten Education as the first link of the National Education System (1981).
- The national network of children's circles and kindergarten classrooms reaches the most remote places of the province, including rural communities of a new type and areas of difficult access.
- In the 70's and 80's, a higher level in the training of personnel to attend to the education of children was achieved through the incorporation of the school for the training of educators of Children's Circles (EFECI), in Santiago de Cuba.
- The establishment of the Bachelor's Degree for kindergarten Education in the 1990s, the formation of Master's Degrees in the 2000s and the aspiration of doctoral training.
- The expansion of the coverage of attention and the preparation of families to stimulate the integral development of their children with the implementation and generalization of the social program of educational attention "Educate your child" (Educate your child) since the 1990s.

Thus, the study carried out and its results led to kindergarten education contributing to the educational development of Guantánamo:

The creation of an organizational structure of the region's own direction, which in its beginnings was presided over by Santiago de Cuba, made possible the increase of institutions and primary schools throughout the territory, for the attention of the child population under six years of age, as well as for the incorporation of children from the rural and mountain areas to the school network.

Likewise, it allowed part of the population to be trained for the labor performance and to participate with greater preparation, of the material results of education, joining all the people to carry forward the improvement of the children's universe.

Likewise, it contributed to the preparation and linking of personnel; families and organizations, to

assume the pedagogical, medical, stomatological, nursing, food, clothing and footwear attention, which notably extends the educational attention of the child found in 1959.

The development achieved facilitated permanent jobs, raised the training and improvement of the personnel of the children's institutions to a level that guaranteed this service, in function of the quality of the education to the infantile population; it increased the levels of education, preparation and improvement of the educators, when making possible their access to the university.

Similarly, school coverage was expanded with the implementation and generalization of the "Educate your child" program, which made possible the incorporation of children from urban, rural and mountain areas in all municipalities and localities of the province, thus preparing children to enter school.

On the other hand, with the creation of special schools and the opening of homes for children without family support, orphans, abandoned children, children of boarders, psychiatric parents, alcoholics and others who have lost parental authority, the expansion of the school network reached 97.3%, guaranteeing for the first time, the complete coverage of the educational system in kindergarten, which required the inclusion of all infants.

The aforementioned made it possible for the assistance given to children at the beginning of the Revolution to become educational and then comprehensive, based on the implementation of educational programs and the development achieved by the teaching staff.

On the other hand, the incorporation of families and community agents to social work, associated to the necessary transformations for the improvement of kindergarten education, gave these families a preponderant role in the direction of the educational process in home conditions, improving the economic possibilities in the care of their children.

Likewise, it made possible the incorporation or continuity of studies of women, in relation to child care, at the same time it offered decent and dignified employment to young people from all corners of the province, in children's institutions, overcoming and training them, in order to raise their cultural and professional level.

In addition, it facilitated the incorporation of mothers with small children to the productive development of the province, after obtaining the benefit of the entrance of their children to the children's circles. Likewise, it increased the number of people as a labor force and for the continuity of studies linked to kindergarten education and its different services.

In general terms, these contributions made it possible to reduce, with the massive participation of the communities, institutions and organizations, the cultural and social gaps existing between the city and the countryside, through the improvement, training and collective participation of the population.

Conclusions

The study of kindergarten education in Guantánamo and its contribution to the educational development, presupposes its value and effectiveness, being known and recognized by the students in formation of the degree of this education, and having documentary sources and materials about this process.

The results achieved made possible the acquisition of a whole experience, of knowledge and knowledges that are presented in this work about this education, and that will be in the hands, not only of the students in training, but also of the different agents and agencies in charge of the education and preparation of the child from 0 to 6 years old. With the realization of this work we also contribute to enrich the history of this locality, from the kindergarten education in the territory under investigation.

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