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REVIEW ARTICLE

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## MULTIGRADE AND THE NUCLEATION POLICY OF COUNTRY SCHOOLS: A REVIEW

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### ABSTRACT

Multigrade teaching and nucleation, although distinct in approach, play fundamental roles in students' academic development. In multigrade teaching, the emphasis is on personalized education, vital to meeting individual needs in a diverse environment. Interaction in classrooms with students of different ages creates a flexible environment, allowing educators to adjust their practices to encompass varied learning styles. The research, conducted from 2019 to 2023, selected 15 articles after the careful exclusion of irrelevant materials, providing insights into multigrade teaching and nucleation policies in rural schools. The results contribute to understanding aspects involving the community, crucial for educational success. In multigrade teaching, maintaining local schools strengthens the ties between the school and the community. Geographic proximity and active parental involvement in smaller schools often result in more cohesive communities committed to education. On the other hand, nucleation may require additional efforts to maintain community involvement, as the centralization of resources can physically distance the school from the community center. Thus, the objective was to conduct an integrative literature review to understand multigrade teaching and nucleation policies in rural schools.

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## INTRODUCTION

The themes that permeate this study, involving the rural context and the educational system aimed at rural inhabitants in Brazil, constituted the fundamental motivation for carrying out this research. The impetus to investigate and contribute to critical reflection in favor of a truly meaningful education for rural people drove each step of this work. In this sense, the importance of commitment to the search for an emancipatory education, capable of meeting not only educational requirements, but also various fundamental needs, such as health, sport, culture and leisure, is undeniable, considering rural inhabitants as subjects of comparable rights to urban people. The inclusion of alarming data on the illiteracy rate in the rural context, representing a significant 23.3%, in contrast to 7.6% in the urban area (Taffarel, 2016), highlights the urgency of critical reflection in the face of the lack of interest of the elite in power in promoting the education of these subjects of rights who live and work in the countryside. Furthermore, analyzes of social movements, such as the Movimento Sem Terra (MST), reinforce the need for attention to issues such as the fight for meaningful education in/from the countryside, the valorization of family farming and respect for the rights of different groups. rural ages. Social movements play a crucial role in promoting change and defending human rights in diverse societies. Through the protagonism of social movements, marginalized voices are amplified and injustices are challenged.

They serve as catalysts for awareness, mobilization and collective action, contributing to the construction of fairer and more equitable societies (Bicalho, 2017). The deep desire to understand and investigate education aimed at rural people, historically excluded from fundamental rights, is fueled by questions about the true extent of democracy in favor of these communities. In this specific study on multigrade in rural schools, we seek not only to understand the challenges and possibilities of pedagogical practice in multigrade classes, but also to ask whether it is possible to guarantee genuinely meaningful learning in this context. Rural Education, throughout its trajectory, remained outside the interests of the Brazilian State, denying rural inhabitants the right to an education that effectively builds identity for those who live in/from the countryside. The intensification of the struggle for meaningful education for rural people, especially through the MST, highlights the pressing need for differentiated pedagogical proposals in rural schools. Therefore, the primary objective of this study is to conduct an integrative review of the literature, aiming at an in-depth understanding of multigrade and the nucleation policy of rural schools.

## METHODOLOGY

A literature survey was carried out in November 2023. The review consisted of: (1) Formulation of the question; (2) Definition of inclusion and exclusion criteria; (3) Search and location strategy for studies; (4) Selection of studies; (5) Data extraction;

(6) Assessment of study quality; (7) Analysis and interpretation of results; (8) Discussion and Final Considerations. A search was carried out covering two large electronic databases that include extensive literature, namely: SciELO, Periódicos CAPES, Google Scholar frontiers in. Mdpi. In the search for works, the combination of descriptors was used: "Multiserialization" AND "Country schools" AND and 'Nucleation', in English, "Multiserialization" AND "Nucleation" AND Country schools in all data base. In this way, 15 articles were selected and included according to the eligibility criteria as shown in Figure 1. The inclusion criteria were: articles in English, Spanish and Portuguese, in the last five years, involving knowledge about multiserialization and nucleation policy of rural schools. Book chapters, event summaries, case reports, editorials, systematic reviews, meta-analyses and opinion articles were also excluded.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

305 articles identified in the database were selected, but 242 were excluded by briefly reading the titles and abstracts, included in the eligibility criteria, 27 articles were read, 255 were excluded based on the exclusion criteria. The review was carried out with 15 articles made available in full about the perspective of multigrade and the nucleation policy of rural schools. Multigrade, in the educational context, represents a pedagogical strategy that diverges from the conventional teaching model, characterized by the organization of classes composed exclusively of students of the same level or series. This approach, often implemented in rural schools or in regions with structural limitations, consists of bringing together students of different ages and grades within a single classroom. Furthermore, the National Rural Education Program (PRONACAMPO) was launched by President Dilma Rousseff, in accordance with Decree No. 7,352/2010 (BRASIL, 2010). Its purpose was to provide financial and technical support for the implementation of public policies in rural areas. The program presents several innovations, aiming to meet the needs of rural people, including the significant mission of containing the persistent closure of schools in these regions and promoting the adoption of Alternation Pedagogy, among other objectives.

Aware of the challenges Da Silva, Foschiera, Cabral (2020) addressed the issue of closing rural schools in Porto Nacional – TO, highlighting the urgency of more government investments. In their interviews, observations and document analysis, they concluded that the need for more investment by the government is evident, as communities disagree with school closures. They also highlighted the importance of community organization and partnerships with legal institutions to resist closure and build agreements that serve the educational interests of students. On the other hand, Dos Santos, Garcia (2020) developed a critical analysis of the policy of closing rural schools in Brazil. Defending a vision of rural school/education aimed at all subjects, they argue that "the closure of rural schools is based on a societal project by and for the dominant class." They observed that it is necessary to rethink this policy, defending a school of the countryside that promotes a harmonious and fair relationship with the Earth, recognizing it as a place of knowledge, production and human sociability. In turn, De Amorim and Dos Santos Leite (2021), when mapping educational policies and their specific implications for rural education, focused on the process of closing schools in the municipality of Casa Nova - BA. They pointed to this closure as one of the main developments of the Brazilian State's educational policies aimed at the countryside. The analysis, based on historical-dialectical materialism, revealed a significant reduction of almost 50% in the number of schools between 2010 and 2018, with this closure triggered by policies related to school transport in the 1990s. The authors highlighted that this policy, initially designed to meet transportation needs, became a business, prioritizing local practices and private interests to the detriment of the fundamental premise of free, quality public education. It was noticed that teacher training aligned with territorial particularities, recommended by Almeida and Abreu (2020), not only proved to be crucial for dealing with multigrade classes, but also emerged as an essential factor in the face of the challenges arising from the closure and nucleation of schools from Camp. Both

approaches converge in the urgency of educational policies and practices that recognize and address the complexity of rural communities, aiming to provide a contextualized and meaningful education to rural students. The implementation of multigrade in classrooms, although it represents a pragmatic response to logistical limitations in regions with low population density, presents unique challenges that demand innovative approaches from educators. These challenges, far from being insurmountable obstacles, instigate deep reflection on pedagogical practices and the construction of inclusive learning environments. The study by Souza Farias and Socorro Silva (2021) focuses on the closure of schools in the municipality of Sumé (PB) and highlights the interaction between the actions of public authorities and the community. The dialectical approach, combined with documentary analysis and interviews, reveals the complexity of this process. The public authorities argue economically for maintaining schools with few students, defending the quality of learning in graded schools in the municipality and considering closure as a solution to eliminate multigrade classes. On the other hand, communities question the closure, see school as a right and understand it as a collective space for cultural, social and emotional experience. In this context, Silva and Magalhães (2021) addresses the São Marcos Municipal School as a key element in the sociocultural constitution of the rural community. The study highlights the importance of the school, active for around 50 years until its creation in 2005. The research, divided into phases, included field surveys, interviews with residents and former students, highlighting the relevance of the school in offering education to the community. The school, built in the 1960s, represents not only a material landmark, but also a symbolic one for the community. The closure of the school generated significant impacts on residents, highlighting the unique importance of this space in the life of the community.

Within the scope of assessment, the need for flexible instruments that capture students' progress at different stages of learning emerges. Personalizing feedback.

It is essential to guide the development of each student in a constructive way.

In this sense, Dos Santos Rocha et al. (2022) addressed the organization of groups in rural schools, highlighting different types of arrangements and challenges faced in the face of contingencies. The central problem of the work questions how multi-age and multi-grade groups are organized in these schools.

Therefore, multi-age groups are described as organizations that bring together children of different ages in an activity room, a response to the limited demands at each level and the restrictions of rooms and teachers. Note the absence of a specific and legitimized pedagogical proposal for this type of grouping. Multigrade classes, in turn, bring together students from different grades in the same physical space, configuring themselves as an adaptation imposed on teaching practices and learning due to the contingencies present in rural schools. Nucleation, although presented as an alternative to dealing with these issues, is also highlighted as a proposal that, in many aspects, lacks pedagogical consistency.

In the complexity of multigrade classrooms, adapting teaching methods proves to be a captivating challenge and, at the same time, an opportunity for educators to redefine their pedagogical practices. Recognizing diversity as a wealth is the first step. Among students of different ages and levels of knowledge, the teacher assumes the role of pedagogical architect.

The investigation conducted by Da Silva (2022) on multigrade teaching in Campos Sales, Ceará, highlights the persistence of this educational modality in rural areas. By analyzing the narratives of educators involved in multigrade, the study reveals inconsistencies and gaps in the teaching and learning process of these schools, highlighting the urgent need for reflection and improvement of educational practices in multigrade environments. The analyzes point to significant challenges, including issues related to the right to

education, peculiarities of education in the field and normative regulations, highlighting the complexity of these contexts and the importance of considering the experiences and perceptions of educators to promote effective improvements. Assessment plays a transformative role in adapting teaching methods. Formative and diagnostic assessment sheds light on each student's individual progress, allowing for precise adjustments in the pedagogical approach. Frequent feedback becomes valuable guidance for continuous improvement of the educational process. In summary, the adaptation of teaching methods in multigrade transcends barriers, becoming a journey of pedagogical innovation. By embracing diversity, personalizing learning, incorporating active methodologies, and promoting collaborative learning, educators not only overcome challenges, but also shape an educational environment that is rich, inclusive, and conducive to the holistic development of students. In this context of challenges, Dos Santos Prata et al (2023) addresses the challenges faced by students in accessing rural schools in the municipality of Parintins/AM, with a special focus on school transport. Participant observation and discussion circles at the Forum.

The school nucleation policy, as an educational strategy, carries with it significant nuances that directly impact educational institutions, especially those located in rural areas. It refers to the concentration of educational resources around a single institution, often resulting in the closure of smaller, dispersed schools. The intent behind this approach is to optimize resources, improve administrative efficiency and, in theory, provide a more robust and equitable educational environment. In the context of rural areas, nucleation policy can be particularly challenging. Rural communities often face significant geographic distances, making access to education a logistical challenge. The centralization of schools can result in long journeys for students, affecting school attendance and, therefore, the quality of education. When it comes to nucleation in rural communities, not concentrating resources in a single institution redefines the geographic distribution of rural schools, directly impacting accessibility and local identity. Furthermore, it can present significant challenges in accessing education. Closing local schools may require students to travel long distances, compromising school attendance and limiting the availability of educational opportunities. Almeida and De Souza (2023) explored the implications and possibilities associated with beginning a teaching career in multigrade classes. Narrative interviews were carried out with four teachers who teach in the early years of Elementary School in rural multigrade schools. The comprehensive-interpretative analysis of the narratives revealed the teachers' feelings regarding the challenges faced in teaching in this specific context. Crucial aspects, such as the lack of adequate pedagogical training for multigrade teaching, and the difficulties related to transportation, long journeys and teachers traveling from the city to rural schools, were highlighted as central issues in the teaching working conditions in these schools. Within the scope of the study by Rony Von de Jesus Santos (2023), the article addressed the process of nucleating multigrade schools in the municipality of Ariquemes, Rondônia. The objective of the research was to analyze how this process influenced the lives of rural communities in Ariquemes. Using Carlo Ginzburg's evidential paradigm and the critique of Marc Bloch's document as theoretical and methodological foundations, the study highlights the lack of motivation of teachers, the low quality of education and the high number of students per school as results of the nucleation process. In this context Rony Von de Jesus Santos, and De Gouveia (2023) offered an insightful analysis of the past of the process of nucleation of multigrade schools in Brazil.

The results reveal a scenario in which educational policies adopted by the State, especially in the 1970s and 1980s, followed a vertical and ideological approach. The implementation of nucleation, initially observed in states such as Paraná, Minas Gerais, Goiás and São Paulo, reflects the imposition of urban standards on rural communities. The justification for improving educational quality in multigrade schools was a recurring narrative, highlighting a simplistic view that did not take into account the specific characteristics of these institutions and their communities. The study also highlights the consequences for the communities affected by this policy. The movement of students to nucleated schools, often facing long distances and precarious transport conditions, had significant impacts on the routine and quality of life of these students and their families. Furthermore, the study addressed local resistance to the closure of multigrade schools, indicating that communities did not see nucleation as an effective solution, but rather as an imposition that disregarded the cultural and social importance of these institutions.

## CONCLUSION

In summary, the analysis of the process of nucleation of multigrade schools in Brazil reveals a history marked by vertical, ideological and urban-centric approaches in educational policies. The imposition of urban standards on rural communities, although justified by the search for improved educational quality, resulted in significant challenges, such as precarious travel and impacts on community routines. Local resistance highlights the need for policies that are more sensitive to rural particularities, recognizing the cultural and social importance of multigrade schools.

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