

The Limits of Reading Programs in Rural Education in Ecuador

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Abstract

Reading programs in rural areas are a real academic necessity due to the gaps that occur in students in these sectors of the country and the dependence that the learning of the subjects has on the reading process, in this sense, this research aims to analyze the limits of reading programs in rural education in Ecuador. In order to identify the main barriers that impede its effectiveness. A quantitative approach was used, with a descriptive level of depth, creating a referential floor through documentary research, a field research was also carried out by applying a survey to the teaching staff of the institution under study. The applied survey had six questions with a Likert scale, the instrument was validated through the assessment of experts in the educational area. The data were expressed through frequency distribution tables, and the percentage data were analyzed by means of descriptive statistics. Likewise, a discussion was made comparing the existing reality with the theoretical positions of authors in order to conclude that reading programs in rural schools in Ecuador have a reduced impact. This is due to a number of factors such as the lack of educational resources, the lack of adaptation of programs to local contexts, poor access to technology, little motivation of students and their families towards reading, which is not seen as a life priority.

Keywords: *reading process, Rural Education.*

Introduction

Reading is a fundamental skill for the cognitive, social, and emotional development of every student at any level of education on the planet. Through reading, students acquire knowledge, develop language and imagination, and learn to relate to the world around them (Delgado, Méndez & Ruiz, 2020). It is evident that, by generating some difficulty or limit in the reading process, it can create serious inconveniences in people's learning.

Due to the relevance of reading for the initiation and consolidation of learning processes, it is necessary to be able to acquire and consolidate reading processes at the lower levels of education, in order to adequately understand the content written in books, magazines, electronic devices, and other media (Chica, Cuellar, & Ramos, 2023).

Reading goes beyond the simple identification of graphic signs, it requires being able to understand what is written, that is, to understand the idea that the author wants to express. Therefore, reading is a skill that is built progressively, as each person evolves in their

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cognitive processes, reading is consolidated through the acquisition of the habit of reading and reading is consolidated through the acquisition of the habit of reading and reading skills. (Solis, 2023)

For the The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization points out that the literacy process that takes place in the region of Latin America and the Caribbean has a high significance for the inhabitants of these countries, because through the acquisition of reading people improve their levels of participation in the field of work. Mental schemes are created that improve health, likewise, being able to develop habits within the reading process allows to raise a series of opportunities in the development of each person's life. (UNESCO, 2021)

In order to guarantee these processes, education must be considered as a fundamental right that must be guaranteed to all people, regardless of their geographical location. In the specific case of Ecuador, rural education is a subject that has been the subject of various investigations and studies in recent years due to the shortcomings that have been observed in rural schools in order to consolidate through the different literacy and reading programmes in students in these areas (Constitución de la República del Ecuador, 2008) (Galván & Cadavid, 2021).

One of the main challenges faced by rural education is the lack of access to quality educational resources, such as reading programs (Herrera Rivera, 2020). Despite the efforts made by the government and non-governmental organizations to improve rural education, there are still limitations in the implementation and effectiveness of reading programs in the school population.

Literacy plays a crucial role in the future of children living in rural areas who are often marginalized from ministerial efforts to strengthen the different reading programs that have lost their place and specificity in education (Herazo & Jara, 2023).

On the other hand, studies carried out in rural sectors of the province of Manabí showed that the vast majority of children at the age of elementary basic education present difficulties in the initiation and consolidation of reading processes, mainly due to factors of teacher and family follow-up, reading for many families is not very relevant compared to the occupation of minors in productive and support activities in the classroom. the home (Navarro & Ruiz, 2019). On the basis of the study, it can be seen that reading programmes in the rural sector should be geared towards meeting not only the need to teach reading and writing, but should also be adapted to the contexts in which children live.

Rural education faces unique challenges in terms of teaching reading; the programs that were once effective today are not, resources in rural schools are very limited, the benefits of digital tools associated with education are not available (Castellanos et al., 2022), on the other hand, there is an isolation as a result of the remoteness of their location for most schools and the differences are added Culturally speaking, among students and teachers working in rural areas, rural education programs must be designed to address these challenges and provide students with the opportunity to consolidate reading processes that contribute to meaningful student learning. In this context, this research aims to analyze the limits of reading programs in rural education in Ecuador, in order to identify the main barriers that impede their effectiveness.

Rural education is an issue of great importance in Ecuador, as it represents a large part of the country's population. Despite efforts by the government and non-governmental organizations to improve rural education, there are still limitations in the implementation and effectiveness of reading programs. This study is important because it will allow us to identify the main barriers that impede the effectiveness of reading programs in rural education in Ecuador and allow learning processes to be truly meaningful. (Osorio, 2013)

This research is based on the foundations of rural education and reading programs, as well as meaningful learning, which are presented below:

Rural education is a mixture of contexts between children and teachers who daily share a training space in the middle of the most remote isolated areas of the country. Rural education faces great challenges such as the difficulty of students and teachers to educational facilities, the lack of resources such as teaching materials and laboratories, State collection books, lack of classrooms, facilities, inadequate infrastructure, untrained personnel, insufficient sports equipment, among others. (Herrera & Rivera, 2020). The educational policies designed by the State are not suitable for rural areas and do not adjust to the realities of the community. Because these policies were created outside the local context, with their backs turned to the real needs of the students, ignoring the location of their headquarters in the rural areas of our country. (Romero, 2023)

On the other hand, the challenges that arise at the educational level for the teaching of reading using different programs in the rural sector, show a very serious shortage of educational resources in rural schools, teachers often have to work with few educational resources, which hinders the implementation of effective reading programs (Díaz et al., 2023). Likewise, in Ecuador, there is a great linguistic and cultural diversity, which can make it difficult to select suitable reading materials for all students and many rural communities, families have few economic resources, which can limit children's access to books and other reading materials (Díaz et al., 2023).

There are a series of theories that support the application of strategies and programs in the field of reading in the rural sector, among them we have: the constructivist theory of reading, which is based on the fact that reading is an active process in which the reader constructs his or her own meaning from the interaction with the text. This theory is important because it emphasizes the active role of the reader in the reading process. In rural areas, where educational resources may be limited, it is important that reading programs promote the development of critical thinking and reading comprehension skills (González & Conde, 2022).

Motivation theory is important because it emphasizes the need to create a motivating and joyful learning environment. In rural areas, where children may be exposed to other activities that may be more engaging than reading, it is important that reading programs are engaging and relevant to students (González & Conde, 2022).

Likewise, the theory of educational inclusion is of utmost importance, which states that all children have the right to a quality education, regardless of their socioeconomic or cultural conditions. This theory is important because it emphasizes the need to cater to the linguistic and cultural diversity of students. (González & Conde, 2022). In rural areas, where linguistic and cultural diversity is high, it is important that reading programs are inclusive and take into account the needs of all students, who are often overlooked.

Methodology

This study had a quantitative approach, that is, the information provided by the teaching staff was used in measurable and quantifiable data, which allowed us to know the teachers' appreciation of the reality of the reading programs and their effectiveness in students (Hernández, 2018). Likewise, the research design was non-experimental because the variables involved are not manipulated by the researchers (Mata, 2019). On the other hand, the level of in-depth research is descriptive, adjusting to the description of the behavior of the object of study according to the objective that was set in the study (Ramos, 2020).

Due to the theoretical elements that underpin this article, documentary research was used, based on the synthesis and selection of mainly electronic documents such as articles

indexed in databases, this allows the description of variables in different contexts. (Reyes & Carmona, 2020). On the other hand, field research was used, appropriate to the level and focus of the work, through which information can be collected directly from the context in which the relevant research subjects operate (Rus, 2020).

The intervening sample consisted of 10 teachers who make up the teaching staff of the Basic, Elementary and Higher Basic level at the Olmedo-Pesillo Millennium Educational Unit in Cayambe, the sample falls into the category of unintentional probability. (Hernandez, 2018). Similarly, to obtain quantitative data, a survey with 6 closed questions was applied, using a Likert scale. The survey was validated through peer review with criteria of relevance, clarity and coherence. The level of confidence was also known through Crombach's alpha with a high weighting of: (0.87) (Hernández, 2018).

The results are presented in frequency distribution tables, exposing the frequencies and percentages that are expressed through descriptive statistics, which favors the discussion and conclusions of the same (Hernández, 2018).

Results and Discussion

Table 1. Effectiveness of reading programs.

<i>Question</i>	<i>Always</i>		<i>Sometimes</i>		<i>Never</i>	
	Fa	%	Fa	%	Fa	%
<i>Do you think reading programs in rural education in Ecuador are effective?</i>	3	30%	4	40%	3	30%

Source: Authors' elaboration.

In the question in Table 1, the majority of respondents say that reading programs in rural education in Ecuador are effective, a significant group say that they are not because students have difficulty relating what they read to their daily experiences.

The educational reading programs implemented by rural schools have not had the expected impact on the school population, there is little interest on the part of students in their learning and this is a very significant limitation. Despite the implementation of educational models more oriented to meet the needs of students, there are large gaps in reading among students in rural schools, which greatly hinders the teaching processes and guarantee meaningful learning. (Parraga, 2023)

Table 2. Effectiveness of reading programs.

<i>Question</i>	<i>Always</i>		<i>Sometimes</i>		<i>Never</i>	
	Fa	%	Fa	%	Fa	%
<i>Do you think that educational resources for reading in rural schools are sufficient?</i>	1	10%	3	30%	6	60%

Source: Authors' elaboration.

For the answer to the question stipulated in Table 2, the majority of the teachers surveyed show that 60% believe that educational resources for reading in rural schools are never sufficient, a discrete minority indicate that they are.

In this order of ideas, within rural schools there is a series of shortcomings that go beyond the educational resources for reading programs, in the schools there is a lack of furniture, insufficient educational materials, basic services are in chaos, there are a number of

structural problems, there is no maintenance of the physical plant and teachers multiply in educational and administrative activities (Pillacela, Crespo & Cazar, 2023). It is really very difficult to form reading habits in the most remote sectors of the country, where resources are insufficient to guarantee the success of reading programs.

Table 3. Effectiveness of reading programs.

<i>Question</i>	<i>Always</i>		<i>Sometimes</i>		<i>Never</i>	
	Fa	%	Fa	%	Fa	%
<i>Do you think reading programs in rural schools are tailored to the needs of students?</i>	0	0%	2	20%	8	80%

Source: Authors' elaboration.

The result of the teachers in table number 3 shows that the majority, represented by 80% of the teachers, indicate that reading programs in rural schools are never adapted to the needs of students, in very few opportunities they are usually adapted to meet the needs of students in rural areas.

Reality suggests that reading programs need to be truly adapted to the specific needs of rural students, especially in relation to their cultural contexts, flora and fauna, among other elements necessary to create reading programs with resources adapted to the real identity needs of children living in rural areas (Chireac & Francis, 2018). It is evident that in order to be successful in reading programs, it is necessary to arouse the interest of each student.

Table 4. Access to technological resources.

<i>Question</i>	<i>Always</i>		<i>Sometimes</i>		<i>Never</i>	
	Fa	%	Fa	%	Fa	%
<i>Do you think the lack of access to technology in rural schools affects the effectiveness of reading programs?</i>	7	70%	2	20%	1	10%

Source: Authors' elaboration.

For the question expressed in table number 4, the majority of teachers, represented by 70%, indicate that the lack of access to technology in rural schools always affects the effectiveness of reading programs, consequently, it generates a delay in the achievement of academic competencies in a comprehensive way, while a minority believe that this never happens.

Lack of access to the use of technology can have a negative impact on the achievement of academic competencies not only in the development of programs aimed at reading orientation, but can create levels of poor learning in students who do not have access to technology, who may have difficulty developing their reading skills, which can affect their performance in other subjects (Navarrete, 2023).

Table 5. Student Motivation

<i>Question</i>	<i>Always</i>		<i>Sometimes</i>		<i>Never</i>	
	Fa	%	Fa	%	Fa	%
<i>Do you think that students' lack of motivation is a factor limiting the effectiveness of reading programs in</i>	10	100%	0	0%	0	0%

rural schools?

Source: Authors' elaboration.

For the question that is reflected in table number 5, the teachers of this institution, most of whom are represented, say that the lack of motivation of the students is always a factor that limits the effectiveness of reading programs in rural schools and of all other subjects.

Teachers should try to keep students motivated in order to avoid a lack of confidence in the achievement of the reading processes that the child may achieve; therefore, providing reading material related to the context will create motivational links with what the child is exploring or learning (Pillacela, Crespo & Cazar, 2023).

Table 6. Student Motivation

<i>Question</i>	<i>Always</i>		<i>Sometimes</i>		<i>Never</i>	
	Fa	%	Fa	%	Fa	%
<i>Do you think families' lack of interest in reading is a limiting factor in the effectiveness of reading programs in rural schools?</i>	8	80%	2	20%	0	0%

Source: Authors' elaboration.

In Table 6, 80% of teachers indicate that families' lack of interest in reading is always a factor that limits the effectiveness of reading programs in rural schools.

It is evident that the academic level of parents in rural regions is not the highest, this can have some kind of negative impact on the reading habits of the children who make up the families. The educational level of the parents of the students at whatever level of education, as well as the cultural conditions of the family, have a powerful impact on the study styles and habits of the other members of the family group. (Silveira, 2020)(Silveira, 2020)

Authors' Discussion:

In the first place, it is necessary to consider the effectiveness of reading programs, which have had a reduced impact and resulted in the reading in Ecuador's rural schools is limited. The fact that reading programs do not have sufficient significance in students generates learning difficulties in students in different subjects because most of the content transmitted is done through reading and understanding ideas (Parraga, 2023)(Asencio, Ordoñez & Aguirre, 2023).

Likewise, educational resources were seen by the majority of teachers who stated that they are not sufficient for reading in rural schools, in addition, there are numerous shortcomings of resources and other implements in rural educational institutions that affect the proper development of the reading program in students (Pillacela, Crespo & Cazar, 2023). It is evident that didactic materials serve to capture the attention of students in the development of any content and especially reading, the resources usually show the creativity of the teacher in order to attract and fully capture the attention of the people who learn (Moreno & Andrade, 2023).

On the other hand, in order for reading programs to be successful or to transcend significantly, it is necessary to adapt reading programs according to the contexts of the localities in each region of the country (Chireac & Francis, 2018). This type of adaptations are required for the best use of the resources used for reading, these must

generate common sense in the children who are in the process, this awakens the interest in discovering the arguments within the text.

On the other hand, access to technology becomes a factor that puts students in the rural sector at a disadvantage with whom they handle electronic devices on a daily basis. In this sense, teachers believe that the lack of access to technology in rural schools does affect the effectiveness of reading programs. Nowadays, it is necessary to incorporate technologies linked to education capable of generating in the student the practice of new experiences with reading, awakening creativity and curiosity in terms of educational content. It is important to use videos, images, audiovisuals and other digital tools in favor of reading programs.(Navarrete, 2023) (González F. &, 2022)

Reading at all levels and modalities of the educational system requires the teacher to be able to generate levels of motivation in each of the students (Pillacela, Crespo & Cazar, 2023). Lack of motivation becomes a threatening factor to reading programs and consequently to other subjects. Each teacher must develop their motivational strategies to keep students' interests awake within the academic space (Chacón, Herrera, Encalada, & Álvarez, 2020).

The reading programs developed in the different educational institutions require the support of the parents as representatives of the families, the teachers believe The lack of interest of families in reading is a factor that limits the effectiveness of reading programs in rural schools, most parents in the rural sector dedicate their time to productive activities and not to reading as a source of recreation, consequently children do not follow reading examples which can create other interests in the family other than reading habits. It is clear that reading programs must be supported by the family on a voluntary basis and not in an imposed manner.(Barrera, 2022)

Conclusions:

Once the data has been analysed and a discussion of different authors has been generated, the different conclusions are presented:

Reading programs in Ecuador's rural schools have little impact. This is due to a number of factors, including:

Lack of adequate educational resources is a limiting factor in the effectiveness of reading programs. Teachers need reading materials that are appropriate for students' developmental levels and interests. In addition, they need technological resources to support learning to read.

The lack of adaptation of reading programs to local contexts is a factor that limits the effectiveness of reading programs. Programs should take into account the cultural and linguistic characteristics of students, as well as their specific educational needs.

Lack of access to technology is a limiting factor in the effectiveness of reading programs. Technology can be a valuable tool for promoting reading learning, providing many resources and opportunities not found in print books.

Lack of student motivation is a limiting factor in the effectiveness of reading programs. Teachers should use motivational strategies to spark students' interest in reading.

Lack of family interest in reading is a limiting factor in the effectiveness of reading programs. Families should support reading programs at home, encouraging the reading habit in children.

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