
HIGHER EDUCATION READING: AN ANALYSIS OF ITS IMPORTANCE IN THE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF FUTURE TEACHERS IN MEXICO

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Abstract-- This article analyzes the importance of reading in the initial training of teachers at teacher training colleges in Mexico. Through a documentary research methodology drawing on various sources from Mexico, Latin America, and Spain, it explores the role of the teacher as a trainer of future readers, the importance of reading within the teacher-training curriculum of our country within the framework of the New Mexican School, as well as some proposals to bring reading closer to the student body of teacher-training colleges. The findings suggest that institutional discourse regarding reading does not correspond to students' actual reading practices. It is concluded that establishing a teacher profile as a cultural mediator requires transforming reading from an academic obligation into a practice of freedom that contributes to the comprehensive training of future teachers and, consequently, of the children and adolescents who will be in their care.

Keywords-- Initial teacher education, Teacher Training Colleges, reading, NEM.

Abstract-- This article analyzes the relevance of reading in the initial training of teachers in teacher training colleges in Mexico. Through a documentary research methodology drawing on diverse sources from Mexico, Latin America, and Spain, it explores the importance of reading within the teacher training curriculum in Mexico, within the framework of the New Mexican School model. It also examines the teacher's role as a shaper of future readers and proposes ways to make reading more accessible to the student body. The findings suggest that the institutional discourse on reading does not align with students' actual reading practices. The article concludes that consolidating a teacher profile as a cultural mediator requires transforming reading from an academic obligation into a practice of freedom that contributes to the holistic development of future teachers and, consequently, to the children and adolescents they will be responsible for.

Keywords-- Initial teacher training, reading, Normal Schools, New Mexican School model.

INTRODUCTION

The importance of reading in teaching-learning processes is undeniable. From early childhood education through graduate school, reading is one of the gateways to knowledge. Reading ability is not something acquired during a specific period of life and then left behind; rather, “the acquisition and use of reading in literate societies begin very early and never end, as it is always possible to deepen reading proficiency” (Solé, 2012). Reading can be viewed from different angles and perspectives, and the topic is inexhaustible because, as Rodríguez de

Moreno (2015) states that culture is a vehicle for the “internalization of culture in all its aspects: social, economic, moral, geographical, historical, artistic... but, moreover, it is a means that allows us to know ourselves, to assess our capabilities, and to objectively examine our ways of being, feeling, thinking, and communicating.”

In theory, this should be a lifelong process; however, there are various reasons why this is not the case. In Mexico, the average number of books read per year falls far short of the reading levels achieved in countries such as Japan or the United States (47 and 12, respectively), in contrast to the 4.2 books read on average by men and 3.7 books per year read by women, which also highlights a gender gap¹. The results released in 2025 by the Reading Module (MOLEC) conducted by the National Institute of Statistics and Geography (INEGI) showed that the population that reads the most is between the ages of 12 and 24, particularly books and digital material. However, according to the results of the PISA test conducted in 2022, our country ranks statistically below the average established by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD).

Promoting reading is a responsibility that falls on various spheres, beginning within the family and later being reinforced in educational institutions. It is here that teachers play an essential role, serving as the link between the student and the written word. It is not merely a matter of teaching the technical skill of decoding, but rather a complex cognitive process that enables the construction of meaning and the development of critical thinking. The general objective of this document is to analyze the importance of reading in the training of future teacher-candidates in Mexico. Based on this research, the aim is to generate a better understanding of the teacher’s role as a trainer of future readers among children and adolescents in the complexity of the contemporary world, and how teacher-training colleges can contribute to achieving this goal. The specific objectives are:

- To reflect on the role of the teacher as a trainer of future readers.
- To establish the importance of reading within the teacher training curriculum.

¹ Data obtained from Forbes Mexico magazine in its article “*Mexicans read an average of four books a year, far behind Japan and the United States.*”

- Propose strategies for promoting reading within teacher training classrooms.

The Mexican education system is undergoing a process of structural redefinition driven by the educational model known as the New Mexican School (NEM), which permeates teacher training within teacher training colleges. In this context, reading and writing are positioned not only as linguistic skills but as cross-cutting pillars for academic success, the holistic development of students, and social transformation (Vicente Mejía, 2024). For teacher education students, reading represents the gateway to the “knowledge society” (Barboza Marcano, 2007), functioning as an intellectual tool that enables constant professional development and the future practice of critical pedagogy.

Reflecting on the importance of reading in higher education, specifically in the training of future teachers, and the related issues—such as the reading habits of future teachers, teaching methodologies and strategies for reading, or the improvement of pedagogical practices within teacher training colleges by faculty members, will result in well-founded and conscious pedagogical interventions from the very first interactions of teacher education students with elementary schools, creating a connection between theory and practice from the earliest semesters—a hallmark quality that distinguishes teacher training colleges.

DEVELOPMENT

This research was conducted using a documentary analysis methodology to investigate the importance of reading in the initial training of future teacher education students. This method allows for the retrieval, analysis, and interpretation of data derived from existing documents to generate new knowledge about a phenomenon. Initially, sources of information related to reading and its relevance in higher education contexts in general were sought, and the search was then narrowed to sources specifically related to teacher training in teacher training colleges in our country, yielding both quantitative and qualitative sources.

Digital platforms such as Google Scholar, Redalyc, SciELO, and Dialnet were used to search for various documents in Spanish and one in English, as well as publications in electronic journals belonging to different universities such as La Salle, the Autonomous

Metropolitana, and UNAM. In addition, various articles appearing in teacher-training journals were included, such as *Revista Magisterio*, *Somos Normalistas*, and *Clubs de Lectura Normales*, all published by government agencies.

Priority was given to articles and publications from 2020 onward; however, works from before this period were also considered because they proved valuable for the development of this document, and because sources related to the topic were insufficient. Although this study aims to focus on teacher education in Mexico, publications from other countries were also included as they may shed light on improving pedagogical practices within our country's teacher training colleges. The following search terms were used: importance of reading at the higher education level, reading and teacher training, reading in teacher education, teacher education curriculum in Mexico, reading in the NEM, 2022 curriculum.

Background

One of the most cited studies on the subject is that of Applegate and Applegate (2004), which states that motivation is one of the many factors involved in the development of reading proficiency. It examines the reading habits and attitudes of student teachers at a U.S. university, dividing them into enthusiastic and unenthusiastic readers based on a measurement tool that revealed how students reported low levels of voluntary reading, as well as a utilitarian conception of reading, limited primarily to academic demands.

This gives rise to the term "*The Peter Effect*," which serves as the title of the study, alluding to a biblical passage where a crippled man asks Saint Peter for alms, to which the apostle replies that he cannot give him silver or gold, as these are things he himself does not possess. Hence the conclusion that teachers cannot promote competencies or attitudes that they themselves have not developed. In the context of reading, this implies that teachers with little or no commitment to reading will find it difficult to foster a love of, a habit for, and motivation toward this activity in their students.

The study highlights that teachers' practices and beliefs directly influence reading instruction and the development of reading attitudes in students. If a teacher does not have a close relationship with reading, it is unlikely that their students will either. Consequently, the authors

argue that the lack of solid reading habits among pre-service teachers represents an obstacle not only to effective literacy but also to fostering a love of reading in their students.

Finally, Applegate and Applegate (2004) emphasize the need for teacher training programs to incorporate strategies aimed at developing a positive reading identity, promoting meaningful reading experiences that strengthen both the reading competence and motivation of future teachers. This point will be explored further below regarding the role of teacher training institutions and how they could contribute to improving reading practices.

The Teacher as a Reading Role Model

“Being a teacher should be synonymous with being a reader,” Garrido (2004) states categorically when discussing his experience with the reading program promoted by the Mexican government known as the Reading Corners in the 1990s. In other words, reading should be a *sine qua non* of the teaching profession, and although this might seem obvious, various studies show the opposite. Recent research indicates that many teachers in training have a “complex” relationship with reading, oscillating between academic expectations and limited personal habits (Elche Larrañaga & Yubero Jiménez, 2019).

When Garrido (2004) notes that “children need to be surrounded by adults who read,” he highlights the enormous responsibility that parents, teachers, and other members of the community have in becoming role models for future generations. However, what happens if the teacher does not see themselves as a reader? During the construction of teaching identity—a process that begins during years of academic training—the trainee teacher’s prior experiences, their conception of the world and of themselves, their values, beliefs, goals, and personal and professional habits and expectations all come into play. Hence the importance of examining the relationship that the student teacher has forged with reading and how their perception of it affects their reading habits. Granado (2014) expresses this clearly in the following lines:

Teachers have an individual and collective history as readers, filled with concrete reading experiences that will serve as lenses when interpreting, reacting, evaluating, and acting in contexts and situations of reading teaching and learning (Granado, 2014).

Moguel Morales (2025) states that there is a notable “disillusionment with the page” in contemporary schools. The transition to the digital age and the immediacy of information have led to a shift away from deep wisdom, focusing instead “on brief digital resources, educational memes, infographics, and superficial summaries,” which reduce reading to an “instrumental, fragmentary, and utilitarian” tool rather than a means to rethink reality and foster critical and reflective thinking. According to the author, this undermines the ability to develop pedagogical competencies and will, sooner or later, impact classrooms. These attitudes contrast with the role expected of teachers as reading role models within the classroom.

Reading in the Teacher Training Curriculum

Teacher training colleges in Mexico have historically been regarded as the premier institutions for training future elementary and secondary school teachers. Within their curricula and study programs, the inclusion of courses focused on reading comprehension and written expression has been a fundamental pillar for the training of early childhood, elementary, and secondary school teachers, regardless of the educational model or approach in vogue. Currently, within the framework of the current educational model, the New Mexican School (NEM), reading plays a fundamental role in the student’s holistic development.

The NEM proposes various modalities of reading and writing, processes that are closely linked. As Andreu (2018, cited in Vicente Mejía, 2024) states, these modalities stem from the needs of a changing world and are classified as follows:

- Critical reading: In-depth interpretation of texts.
- Comprehensive reading: Emphasizes the assimilation of key concepts in diverse texts.
- Recreational or literary reading: Perceived as a source of pleasure, entertainment, creativity, and imagination through literature.

The types of reading described above are reflected in various courses within the teacher-training curriculum that focus on working with children and adolescents. Examples include the courses “Children’s Literature and Literacy Practices” in the third semester of the Bachelor’s Degree in Preschool Education; “Literature and Reading Mediation” in the second semester of the Bachelor’s Degree in Elementary Education, as well as “Literacy Development” in the third semester; “Teaching of Language and Literature” in the third semester and “Teaching of Reading” in the fifth semester of the Bachelor’s Degree in Teaching and Learning Spanish, as well as “Teaching of English with an Emphasis on Reading Comprehension and Written Expression”

” in the fourth semester of the Bachelor’s Degree in Teaching and Learning English (General Directorate of Higher Education for Teachers [DGESuM], 2022).

The aforementioned courses are related to those bachelor’s programs at teacher training colleges where a significant portion of their efforts is directed toward developing reading proficiency in elementary and middle school students. This does not mean that teacher education students in other specializations—for example, a student in the Bachelor’s Degree in Teaching and Learning Mathematics—cannot or should not develop reading skills both in themselves and in their future students. The promotion and development of reading proficiency is a core component, whether implicit or explicit, of all bachelor’s degree programs within the national teacher education system, as expressed in the following lines:

In Mexico, teacher training colleges have historically been the heart of the training of teachers, guardians, and sowers of knowledge. Over generations, they have forged educators who not only transmit academic content but also inspire values, critical thinking, and a love of culture. Today, amid a constantly changing social and technological context, teacher training colleges are reinventing themselves and strengthening their role as promoters of reading, consolidating an increasingly united community centered around books. Today, amid a constantly changing social and technological context, teacher training colleges are reinventing themselves and strengthening their role as promoters of reading, consolidating an increasingly united community centered on books (DGESuM, 2025).

In this section, it is worth noting some characteristics of the profile required for entry into the teacher education system and how they relate to reading. The knowledge, competencies, skills, attitudes, and values required for admission to teacher training colleges are established in Agreement 16/08/22, from which the following points are drawn:

- Learning to learn through initiative and personal interest throughout life
- Seeking, synthesizing, and conveying information from various sources by appropriately using different types of language
- Communicating and expressing ideas both orally and in writing

Reading is not explicitly mentioned in the above points; however, processes such as learning to learn, information management, or communication involve reading comprehension processes through various sources, whether printed or digital. Within the basic disciplinary competencies of high school—the educational level preceding entry into teacher education—reading is already

reading is established as an essential part of the graduate profile, regardless of the type of upper secondary program completed.

The aforementioned Agreement, which stipulates the general graduate profile, states that the future teacher will be capable of producing pedagogical, didactic, and disciplinary knowledge, as well as recognizing and valuing educational research and the production of knowledge based on experience. These points are closely related to the action-research model, where “theory and practice engage in dialogue” (Latorre, 2004). For the teacher education student to engage in this dialogue with the authors, they need the necessary reading comprehension strategies to reach the next level, which is to develop “reflective, critical, creative, and systemic thinking” (SEP, 2022).

According to Moreira Moreira and Hidalgo Valverde (2023), reading at the university level must go beyond the simple absorption of information to become a critical process “for the intellectual and academic development of students,” allowing students to “rigorously discern, question, and evaluate the content of academic and scientific texts,” since one of the essential characteristics of higher education relates to the ability to generate new knowledge. Strengthening reading skills would not only have an impact on academic trajectories but also enable students to participate effectively in society and successfully face future challenges (Barrio del Campo et al., 2005).

What actions should be taken in teacher training classrooms?

Various studies have shown that higher education students perceive reading as a fundamental activity within their professional training, yet at the same time, it is not part of their daily lives. This disconnect between pedagogical discourse and actual reading practices (Muñoz et al., 2020) is one of the most common issues regarding reading, as well as the low levels of reading comprehension among future teachers. On this topic, all studies conclude that what takes place within teacher-training institutions—and in the Mexican context, specifically within teacher training colleges—is of vital importance. Its relevance lies in the fact that for some students, initial training will represent their first contact with certain readings, that is, with new ways of perceiving the world through engagement with diverse genres and authors.

Exploring the teacher-trainee’s reading background is one of the first steps to take in the classroom. Understanding their reading preferences and habits can provide valuable

<p>5. Building Habits</p>	<p>Be consistent, implement strategies frequently, and maintain continuity. Include small activities as part of your class day, for example, a brief discussion on a specific topic to start a session.</p>
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Source: Original work based on Palomares López, (2025)

The application of approaches, methods, strategies, techniques, and activities to promote reading will depend on each teacher’s teaching style, but the common goal in every classroom—regardless of the subject area or educational level for which the student teacher is preparing—will be to encourage both academic reading (related to the specific field in which the future teacher is training) and the reading of texts that the student chooses on their own initiative, which may later contribute to their cultural capital as a mentor to future readers.

Actions aimed at promoting reading should be implemented both in the classroom and at the institutional level, based on the premises established by the current educational model, without losing sight of the personal touch that each teacher and institution brings to the reading experience, taking into account the managerial autonomy of each educational institution and adapting strategies to the context, needs, and interests of the students. Based on an analysis of various strategies proposed by Ramírez Infante (2020), a series of feasible and viable activities are listed for implementation within our country’s teacher training colleges, some of which are already underway, while others require improvements in their implementation.

- Reading aloud from children’s and young adult literature, promoting playful activities centered on the stories and the content covered.
- Storytelling sessions.
- Conducting reading promotion workshops for students and teachers.
- Opening of specialized rooms for children’s and young adult literature.
- Certification of the school community as reading promoters by the National Chamber of the Mexican Publishing Industry (CANIEM).
- Visits to national and international book fairs.
- Creation of a Classroom Library established by the students themselves, where the exchange of various types of printed materials from their personal collections is encouraged.

- Biweekly or monthly reading circles where students can share experiences and reflections on academic readings and texts that they are free to choose themselves.
- Meetings for the exchange of reading experiences among different teacher training colleges.
- Formation of new reading clubs within teacher training colleges, promoted by the National Reading Strategy.
- Strengthening of the National Network of Public Teacher Training School Libraries.

It is worth noting here the importance of the National Network of Teacher Training College Libraries, managed through the General Directorate of Higher Education for Education Professionals (DGESPE). Its objective, as stated by Reyes Páez (2018), is “the exchange of ideas, solutions, and resources, as well as promoting the training, professionalization, professional development, and innovation of library staff.” The author states that her work consists of addressing the needs of the teacher-training community “in terms of specialized information for scientific research, information literacy for data use, the promotion of reading and the development of readers, among other things, and thus training education professionals.” In the digital age, it is essential to redefine the role of these spaces—constantly overlooked by the teacher-training community—as allies in the training of future teachers, as spaces for the socialization of knowledge, and for the creation of new readers and writers.

Likewise, the Teacher Training College Reading Clubs, a strategy promoted by the General Directorate of Higher Education for Teachers (DGESuM) and the Fondo de Cultura Económica, in accordance with the National Reading Strategy, have established themselves as spaces of convergence for members of the teacher training community who wish to “share ideas and perspectives that foster respect for difference and the personal vision of each member” (DGESuM, 2024). The experiences resulting from these gatherings are reflected in a monthly digital publication titled *Teacher Training College Reading Clubs*, which highlights the various reading-related activities carried out by teacher training students from different campuses across the country, as well as literary recommendations from each of the participating schools.

DISCUSSION

One of the greatest tensions identified is the disconnect between pedagogical discourse (which extols reading as a channel for learning and access to knowledge) and the personal practices of future teachers (Díaz-Díaz et al., 2022; Muñoz et al., 2020), who lack the reading habits and strategies necessary to successfully meet the educational challenge ahead of them: the formation of future generations. It is not enough to simply train readers or promote literacy; the goal must be to train “teachers who promote reading” (Ramírez Infante, 2020). At the governmental level, through various institutional programs to promote reading, strategies have been developed to bring reading into different social spheres; however, it is necessary to question the missing element to understand why these reading programs and strategies have not had a significant impact.

The teacher-in-training does not read only for themselves; they read to teach. There is a direct correlation between a teacher’s reading capital and the interest they spark in their students. If future teachers do not develop a love of reading and reading skills during their initial training, they will struggle to meet the objectives of the New Mexican School (NEM) and to establish reading as a means of fostering critical awareness of the world and social reality, transforming it into “an act of reflection and understanding of the sociopolitical and economic structures in which we live” (Freire, 2024, cited in León Campos, 2025). This requires the teacher to become a “competent mediator” who consciously employs metacognitive strategies (Díaz-Díaz, 2022).

Under the socio-formation approach proposed by the NEM, reading must be oriented toward solving contextual problems (Vicente Mejía, 2024). The goal is not merely for the pre-service teacher to read, but to develop critical and systemic thinking that allows them to intervene in a reasoned manner within a specific educational reality through the Analytical Program generated by each basic education school. Reading comprehension acts here as a catalyst for learning; without it, the future teacher cannot interpret new curricula and study programs or design effective teaching projects (Palomares López, 2025). Reflective reading, as Rosas Campo (2021) asserts, is presented as one of the strategies to be implemented with teacher education students, with the aim of questioning their reality and transforming it.

Teacher training colleges must continue to establish themselves as spaces that promote reading, both academic and recreational. The role played by the trainers of future teachers is crucial to improving the reading situation in which students find themselves. There is an urgent need for continuing education programs on the implementation of teaching strategies to foster a love of reading and improve reading habits, changing students' attitudes toward the mandatory nature of reading so that they no longer perceive it as a purely instrumental activity, but rather as a tool for self-education and enjoyment.

CONCLUSIONS

For the teacher-in-training, reading presents a dual challenge: they must develop into an intellectually sound professional and, at the same time, prepare to be the primary reading mediator in elementary education. It is not enough to decode words; what truly matters is what one does with the information received to transform one's reality, in line with the principles of the New Mexican School, where the teacher-in-training conceives of reading as a tool of intellectual power (Sandoval Aragón, 2007, cited in Street, 2008). The teacher's role regarding reading translates into that of a leader, cultural mediator, promoter, and role model for their students. Reading, as an activity inherent to the teaching profession, should not end with the initial training of teacher candidates but must be perpetuated in their future professional practice in a cross-curricular manner, integrating different areas of knowledge.

Sharing the reading experience in a two-way teacher-student exchange, incorporating topics of interest to students, and generating meaningful learning through reading by creating an emotional connection and linking it to personal experiences (Muñoz et al., 2020) are strategies that can be consistently implemented to foster a positive connection with this fundamental activity for the future teacher. It is worth noting the motivational role of teacher education faculty, who bear the responsibility of showing students new worlds and possibilities through reading and fostering avid readers, as Domínguez Domínguez et al. (2015) argue when they emphasize that reading is a motivational phenomenon that must be cultivated from the earliest stages of the curriculum.

Furthermore, the involvement of other social actors in addition to educational institutions is necessary for the promotion of reading as an essential element of Mexican society, starting with parents, who represent the primary source of cultural capital.

Joint participation with other higher education institutions or even private-sector institutions can serve as a catalyst for improving pedagogical practices within teacher training colleges, as well as for carrying out cultural and academic activities that enhance reading practices. It is important to note that access to reading is also linked to economic, social, and cultural issues. Due to the existing educational inequalities in our country, governments must continue working on issues of well-being and improving people's quality of life so that reading can be part of everyone's daily life, not just that of a few sectors of society. In conclusion, raising awareness about the transformative power of reading in both the professional and personal spheres of students' lives must remain the primary goal of initiatives undertaken in the classroom and at the institutional level.

FUTURE RESEARCH

This study highlights several areas for future research that may focus on the impact of technology and new digital reading formats on students' reading habits and attention spans, and how these processes may affect their academic performance and their ability to engage in critical analysis. In addition to extensive literature review, it is proposed to implement methods and instruments that provide both qualitative and quantitative data in field studies to determine various aspects related to this topic.

In addition, the possibility is raised of investigating which specific strategies and activities are being carried out in teacher training classrooms to strengthen reading, or, conversely, of proposing viable strategies that teacher educators can implement if their current application is insufficient or nonexistent. Finally, it is suggested that we delve deeper into the topic of the National Network of Public Teacher Training School Libraries as spaces for promotion, as well as Teacher Training School Reading Clubs, with a view to their improvement, dissemination, and participation within the teacher training community.

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