



Diálogos sobre educación. Temas actuales en
investigación educativa

ISSN: 2007-2171

Universidad de Guadalajara, Centro Universitario de
Ciencias Sociales y Humanidades

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Editorial. Prácticas de lectura y escritura desde la literacidad
Diálogos sobre educación. Temas actuales en investigación
educativa, vol. 12, no. 23, 00001, 2021, July-December
Universidad de Guadalajara, Centro Universitario de Ciencias Sociales y Humanidades

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.32870/dse.v0i23.1105>

Available in: <https://www.redalyc.org/articulo.oa?id=553471898001>

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Reading and writing practices seen through literacy

School education is still one of the social practices to which multiple public policies and discourse attribute a great deal of qualities and scope as a human right and public asset needed to improve individual quality of life and contribute to the creation of a more fair and democratic society. In general terms, these are some of the aims that make up the framework of the transition to the so-called societies of knowledge proposed by UNESCO (2005) in which, beyond literacy, truly learning to read and write appear as essential and fundamental competencies to produce, transform and disseminate information in the new contexts of media convergence. More than ever before, these skills are being put to the test throughout the world by the health – and social – contingency caused by Covid-19.

That is why, for several decades now, reading and writing competencies have become some of the main indicators of quality in education worldwide. In order to assess them, educational institutions use instruments that are part of the national and international efforts of different governments and agencies concerned with overcoming the deficiencies students suffer in reading and writing, especially in most countries in Latin America and the Caribbean. In Mexico this is still a problem on which little progress has been made. The results of the PISA test in 2015 indicate that Mexican students did not reach a minimal level of reading competencies and rank below the general average of the countries of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OCDE). Likewise, we can identify the results in the area of Language and Communication of the Planea 2017 survey: according to the data obtained with this instrument, 34 % of the students placed at the lowest level: they were only able to recognize and extract information from easy texts, but had difficulty in interpreting their meaning.

Precisely to delve into the complexity of the tensions around reading and writing practices, it is necessary to incorporate the concept of *literacidad*, coined from the word 'literacy' but encompassing more than what is usually meant by that in English, into the space of the school and beyond it, as a *praxis* with possibilities of impacting, transforming, and contributing to social life. Rather than understanding teaching to read and write or reading and writing themselves as mere exercises of passive reception and reproduction of contents, literacy emerges as a new angle that allows us to consider communicative practices through the different languages and contexts in which they are produced. The New Literacy Studies, as they have come to be known,

represent the most recent approach within this field. Besides being an academic project, they arise as a critical de-colonial position that invites to question public discourse and policies that symbolically classify as inferior the cultural practices and expressions of non-dominant groups.

Through this approach it is possible to consider the reading and writing processes that go beyond the institutional academic canon and address them through a sociocultural view as processes of interaction, not of competencies but as contextual and subjective discourse grounded on the specific views of the groups or communities within which they are produced, i.e., with a situated position, to give way to an understanding that transcends what happens or what the classrooms demand, without losing sight of the teaching and learning processes that take place in the school.

The impact of the changes in the cultural transmission system on the communicative and educational practices of the younger generations is imminent. Although social asymmetries have not allowed us to bridge the “digital gap”, it may be argued that the possibilities for the production, circulation and appropriation of information have increased through the connectivity of internet and mobile devices. Despite the fact that the instruments that assess reading and writing competencies in Mexico’s educational context indicate that the students’ results in the language and communication area are insufficient, now more than ever younger generations are in constant interaction with their media environment through multiple experiences on interfaces through which they constitute identity processes. The *new* subjects of education maintain formal and informal conversations through text messages and create their own symbolisms, social movements, online communities, and are avid consumers and producers of audiovisual contents. All these experiences could be considered rhizomatic learning that inevitably propitiates knowledge.

Nevertheless, it seems that the main concern of schools is still how to compete with social networks and internet platforms, without understanding that these spaces could be shaped into places for learning, allies in formative processes that include reading and writing practices, beyond their being compulsory.

For these reasons, *Diálogos sobre Educación. Temas actuales en investigación educativa* presents this issue on “Reading and writing practices. Subjects, materials, literacies”, with the aim of contributing to reflect on this issue of the utmost importance from interdisciplinary theoretical and methodological approaches and allow for dialog and debate. The issue we present today features research work, critical essays and reviews that seek to make contributions about the multiple phenomena underlying the meanings of reading and writing practices. However, it must be noted – and this also deserves some reflection – that most of the papers received address school contexts, and few deal with other social spaces, which is undoubtedly worthy of analysis.

It is our hope that this issue of *Diálogos sobre Educación* contributes to the social production of meaning about the topics addressed, and we are deeply thankful to Doctors Diana Sagástegui Rodríguez, Yolanda González de la Torre and Myrna Carolina Huerta for their work in coordinating this issue, with a special thanks to Diana and our heartfelt recognition.

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