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USING PIRLS IN EDUCATIONAL INTEGRATION

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Abstract. The present thesis discusses the role of PIRLS, the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study, in educational integration. Educational integration is understood here as the coordinated connection of curriculum, assessment, teacher practice, reading culture, family support and evidence-based management into a single developmental system. PIRLS is especially valuable for this purpose because it does not measure reading as a narrow technical skill only. It studies reading achievement together with the purposes of reading, comprehension processes, school context, home environment, teaching resources and learners' attitudes toward reading. Therefore, PIRLS data can help schools and education systems move from fragmented reforms toward integrated literacy development. The thesis argues that PIRLS can be used as a diagnostic, methodological and strategic instrument in educational integration. At the classroom level, it supports the integration of literary and informational texts, explicit comprehension strategies, differentiated tasks and formative assessment. At the institutional level, it encourages cooperation between teachers, school leaders and parents. At the national level, it provides comparative evidence for curriculum renewal and quality monitoring. The main conclusion is that PIRLS should not be treated only as an international ranking; rather, it should be used as a source of pedagogical reflection and practical improvement in reading literacy.

Key words: PIRLS, educational integration, reading literacy, curriculum, assessment, comprehension strategies, primary education, evidence-based education.

Introduction

Reading literacy is one of the central indicators of the quality of modern education. A child who reads consciously can understand subject content, follow written instructions, compare information, evaluate arguments and express ideas in written and oral forms. For this reason, reading is not limited to language lessons. It functions as a cross-curricular competence that connects mother tongue education, literature, social studies, science, mathematics and digital learning. In this sense, reading literacy is a foundation of educational integration.

PIRLS provides an important framework for analysing this foundation. Organized by the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement, PIRLS assesses students' reading achievement at the fourth grade and collects background



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information from students, parents or caregivers, teachers and school principals¹⁹. This makes the study broader than a simple test. It connects achievement results with the educational conditions that influence reading development. Such a design is important for integrated education because learning outcomes are rarely produced by one factor only. They are shaped by curriculum content, classroom methods, teacher expectations, home reading culture, access to books, school climate and assessment practices.

The relevance of using PIRLS in educational integration has increased after the global shift toward evidence-based educational policy. PIRLS 2021 was conducted in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic and provided internationally comparative data on reading achievement during a period of school disruption.²⁰ Its results showed the importance of stable learning environments, systematic reading instruction and support from families and schools. For countries that are renewing school curricula, PIRLS offers a way to identify not only whether students read well, but also what kinds of reading tasks, texts and contexts require stronger attention.

The aim of this thesis is to explain how PIRLS can be used in educational integration. The tasks are: to define the pedagogical meaning of PIRLS; to identify its integrative potential; to discuss classroom and school-level applications; and to explain how PIRLS-based evidence can improve curriculum and assessment practice.

Main part

PIRLS is based on a broad understanding of reading literacy. In its framework, reading is connected with two major purposes: reading for literary experience and reading to acquire and use information²¹. This distinction is significant for educational integration because it prevents schools from reducing reading lessons to mechanical decoding or memorization. Literary texts develop imagination, emotional response, moral reflection and cultural awareness. Informational texts develop the ability to locate facts, understand explanations, compare data and use knowledge in practical situations. When both types of texts are included in teaching, reading becomes connected with literature, history, natural science, social life and personal development.

Another integrative feature of PIRLS is its attention to comprehension processes. The framework includes such processes as focusing on and retrieving explicitly stated information, making straightforward inferences, interpreting and integrating ideas, and evaluating and critiquing content and textual elements²². These processes show that successful reading develops step by step from simple information retrieval to deeper interpretation and critical evaluation. In classroom practice, this means that teachers should not ask only factual questions. They should also ask learners to explain motives, compare viewpoints, justify conclusions, identify the author's purpose and connect the text with

¹⁹ IEA. PIRLS 2021. International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement, 2021.

²⁰ Mullis, I. V. S., von Davier, M., Foy, P., Fishbein, B., Reynolds, K. A., & Wry, E. PIRLS 2021 International Results in Reading. Boston College, TIMSS & PIRLS International Study Center, 2023.

²¹ Mullis, I. V. S., & Martin, M. O. (Eds.). PIRLS 2021 Assessment Frameworks. Boston College, TIMSS & PIRLS International Study Center, 2019.

²² National Center for Education Statistics. PIRLS 2021: Methodology and Technical Notes. U.S. Department of Education, 2023.

wider knowledge.

Educational integration also requires a balance between assessment and teaching. PIRLS can support this balance because its tasks model the kinds of reading operations that can be transformed into classroom activities. For example, after reading a literary passage, students may identify the main event, explain a character's decision, infer the emotional tone of the story and evaluate the ending. After reading an informational text, they may find key data, complete a diagram, distinguish fact from opinion and summarize the main idea. These tasks integrate reading with thinking skills. They also help teachers design differentiated tasks for learners with different levels of comprehension.

The use of PIRLS in educational integration is especially important for curriculum development. A curriculum that reflects PIRLS principles should include diverse texts, regular reading practice, vocabulary development, comprehension strategies and opportunities for discussion. It should also connect reading with other subjects. For instance, a science lesson can include a short informational text about plants or weather; a history lesson can include a primary-source excerpt; a mathematics lesson can include word problems that require careful interpretation. In such cases, reading is not separated from subject learning. It becomes a tool for understanding the whole educational content.

At the school level, PIRLS encourages cooperation among teachers. Reading literacy cannot be developed only by the language teacher. All teachers participate in building students' ability to read instructions, analyse information and communicate ideas. Therefore, schools can use PIRLS-inspired approaches to create common reading strategies across subjects. These may include pre-reading vocabulary work, guided questions, graphic organizers, pair discussion, short written responses and reflection tasks. When the same comprehension strategies are used in different lessons, students begin to understand reading as a universal learning skill.

Family participation is another important aspect of integration. PIRLS collects contextual information about students' home resources and reading-related experiences²³. This demonstrates that reading achievement is connected with both school and family environment. Schools can use this idea to develop parent involvement: organizing reading days, recommending age-appropriate books, encouraging parents to discuss stories with children, and creating small home reading plans. Such activities do not require complicated resources, but they create continuity between school learning and home practice.

For Uzbekistan and other countries reforming primary education, PIRLS can be a useful reference point because it supports the shift from knowledge reproduction to reading literacy and competence-based learning. The Uzbekistan country information in PIRLS 2021 indicates curricular attention to mother tongue and reading literacy in primary grades²⁴. This direction corresponds to the idea that reading must be understood as a practical competence necessary for further education. If PIRLS findings are connected

²³ von Davier, M., Kennedy, A. M., Reynolds, K. A., Fishbein, B., & Foy, P. PIRLS 2026 Assessment Frameworks. Boston College, TIMSS & PIRLS International Study Center, 2024.

²⁴ PIRLS 2021 International Results in Reading. Uzbekistan Country Profile. TIMSS & PIRLS International Study Center, 2022.



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with teacher training, textbook development and school-based assessment, they can contribute to a more coherent educational system.

Thus, PIRLS in educational integration performs three main functions. First, it is a diagnostic tool because it shows the current level of reading literacy and contextual factors. Second, it is a methodological tool because it offers models of reading purposes and comprehension processes. Third, it is a strategic tool because it helps connect curriculum, teacher training, family support and assessment policy. These functions make PIRLS relevant not only for researchers, but also for teachers, school leaders and policymakers.

Conclusion

Using PIRLS in educational integration means using international assessment evidence to improve the real quality of reading instruction. PIRLS helps educators understand reading as a complex competence that includes literary understanding, informational reading, inference, interpretation, evaluation and critical thinking. It also shows that reading achievement depends on the interaction of classroom teaching, curriculum design, school environment and family support.

The main finding of this thesis is that PIRLS should be applied as a developmental framework rather than as a ranking instrument. In integrated education, its value lies in connecting assessment with pedagogy. PIRLS-based approaches can help teachers design richer reading tasks, help schools coordinate literacy strategies across subjects, and help education systems make informed decisions about curriculum and teacher development.

Therefore, the effective use of PIRLS requires systematic work: teachers should be trained to use comprehension strategies; textbooks should include literary and informational texts; assessment should check not only factual recall but also interpretation and evaluation; and parents should be involved in supporting children's reading culture. When these elements are combined, PIRLS becomes a practical mechanism for strengthening educational integration and improving students' reading literacy.

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