


## Training of literary and critical readers as an institutional challenge. School ethnography in vulnerability contexts

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### Abstract


This paper analyses the literary reading practices that are maintained in schools with students at risk of vulnerability, from a general to a particular point of view, delving into the actions at an institutional level and the daily work of teachers. Its objective is to identify the main strategies deployed for the training of literary readers. By means of an ethnographic research with a case study approach, different schools in the northern area of Granada, Andalucía, were visited for nine months, working with eight primary school teachers. The data collection techniques used were documentary analysis, participant observation and semi-structured interviews. The results show that institutional efforts and mediation strategies are mainly focused on the development of the reading habit. With this, there is little support and space for the development of interpretative competence. In addition, there is evidence of limited actions by school libraries for the training of readers. The conclusion is that there is a need to strengthen reading plans in educational establishments that define specific purposes and actions to advance the consolidation of literary education.

**Keywords:** Literary education; literary reading; school libraries; reading programs; educationally disadvantaged; Elementary Education.

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## La formación de lectores literarios y críticos como desafío institucional. Etnografía escolar en contextos vulnerables

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### Resumen

Este artículo estudia las prácticas de lectura literaria que se sostienen en escuelas con estudiantado en riesgo de vulnerabilidad, desde una mirada que va de lo general a lo particular, profundizando en las acciones a nivel institucional y el quehacer cotidiano de maestros. Su objetivo es identificar las principales estrategias desplegadas para la formación de lectores literarios. Por medio de una investigación etnográfica con enfoque de estudio de caso, se visitaron durante nueve meses distintas escuelas de la zona norte de Granada, Andalucía, en las que se trabajó con ocho maestros de Educación Primaria. Las técnicas de recogida de información empleadas fueron el análisis documental, la observación participante y la entrevista semiestructurada. Los resultados muestran que los esfuerzos institucionales y las estrategias de mediación se focalizan mayoritariamente en el desarrollo del hábito lector. Con esto, se constatan escasas ayudas y espacios para el desarrollo de la competencia interpretativa. Además, se evidencian limitadas acciones por parte de las bibliotecas escolares para la formación de lectores y lectoras. Se concluye la necesidad de fortalecer planes de lectura de los centros educativos que definan propósitos y acciones concretas para avanzar en la consolidación de la educación literaria.

**Palabras clave:** Educación literaria; lectura literaria; bibliotecas escolares; planes de lectura; estudiantes en situación de vulnerabilidad educativa; Educación Primaria.

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## INTRODUCTION

The potential of literary reading in social, emotional and ethical terms has been explored in a number of studies that highlight its discursive richness, thanks to its ability to stimulate reflection on the world, put one's own existence into words and broaden everyday experience (Andruetto, 2015; Calvo, 2019; García-Única, 2022; Petit, 2015). Reading and mediation can even constitute a type of care in which responsibility is assumed for others (Véliz et al., 2022), in some cases becoming socio-educational interventions (Yubero et al., 2022). From this perspective, this study focuses on the relationship with literature and the spaces for its interpretation that are promoted in schools located in disadvantaged areas in the north of the city of Granada, characterised by job insecurity and economic hardship, high levels of insecurity, neglect and school failure (Government of Andalusia, 2024).

With regard to the circulation of literature in schools, it could be said that the notion of literary education is the meeting point between researchers, who agree that the main objective of literature in the classroom is to promote a reading experience that is relevant and linked to everyday life (Mata, 2020; Sanjuán-Álvarez, 2014), from which the growth of specific reading skills is encouraged (Colomer, 2014; Mendoza, 2004). In other words, in terms of teaching literature, schools must enable and encourage ways of relating to literature, together with the ability to interpret its discourse (Lomas, 2023; Munita, 2018).

In line with the above, the latest curriculum proposal in Spain (Organic Act amending the Organic Act on Education, LOMLOE, 2020; Royal Decree 157/2022, of 1<sup>st</sup> March) takes on the dual purpose of developing both independent reading habits and interpretative skills among students. The latter is understood as the ability to comprehend and construct meaning from what is read (Martínez-Ezquerro, 2016), meaning that, in the words of Montes (2006), is interwoven with the culture, codes and previous readings that each reader brings with them. Thus, interpretative competence would enable students to relate the worlds proposed in literary discourse to their own experience, in order to shape the multiple meanings it evokes (Lerner 2001, Colomer, 2014). To move forward in this direction, the current curriculum framework proposes the creation of reading itineraries, similar to literary maps, to build relationships between readers and works, facilitating the construction of a reading identity. It also suggests the creation of communities to share reading experiences and enjoy the social dimension of literature.

This highlights the relational role of reading, where teacher mediation is essential. According to Munita (2021), literary reading mediators intervene in the design of favourable conditions for children to appropriate written culture and participate in it. By revitalising spaces for readers and texts to come together, the mediator organises activities that enable people to discuss books with others in an environment that promotes the socialising potential of reading (Cerrillo, 2016; González-Ramírez et al., 2022; Jarpa-Azagra et al., 2024; Paladines-Paredes and Aliagas, 2021). Thus, literary mediation as an educational activity shifts the focus from the texts to the students and their relationship with others and with the world.

Research on literary education and the role of teachers as reading mediators has increased recently; however, the knowledge gained from various studies has not fully reached the classroom or is not considered essential (Permach-Martín et al., 2024). This is evidenced by the limited time devoted to reading literary works, the design of activities that respond to a historicist vision (López-Rodríguez & Núñez-Delgado, 2023; Suárez-Ramírez and Suárez-Ramírez, 2020), and the lack of coordination in establishing common criteria for reading tasks or itineraries (Santamarina et al., 2024). Added to this are factors specific to postmodernity which, in the opinion of teachers, make it difficult for students to find the time for reflection and literary interpretation (Hernández-Heras et al., 2024). This challenge is intensified in disadvantaged contexts, where reading faces additional obstacles, such as a lack of reading role models at home and the low social value assigned to literacy (García-Jiménez et al., 2018). Low academic performance, as a result of limited family involvement (Martínez-Díaz & Torres-Soto, 2019; Ramos-Navas-Parejo et al., 2022), also exacerbates the problem.

In this sense, responding to the challenge of training readers in contexts with students at risk of vulnerability requires collective efforts. To this end, the notion of a 'mediating ecosystem' (Munita, 2021) is

considered essential, proposing that this work be understood as a coordinated social task that goes beyond the individual actions of teachers. This makes the institutional dimension in which reading practices are framed particularly important, as these practices become sustainable over time to the extent that different educational agents collaborate (Romero-Oliva & Trigo Ibáñez, 2019). Initiatives transcending the classroom and sustained at the school level generate community ties among readers, which helps build a collective identity around reading (Arenas-Delgado et al., 2020) and reinforce a positive social representation of it.

The main objective of this research has been to identify the strategies used by educational establishments and teachers in the third cycle of primary education in literary reading processes. The following specific objectives were established alongside this:

- a) To understand the institutional objectives for reader training.
- b) To characterise the mediation activities and strategies implemented by the school library and teaching staff within the framework of literary education.
- c) To identify the criteria used to create reading itineraries.

To this end, several educational establishments located in North Granada were visited over the course of a school year. The daily work of teachers and librarians was observed and the reading plans of these establishments were examined.

As for the importance of this research, its contributions allow us to delve deeper into a little-studied area of reading instruction, namely the formation of critical readers through individual and collective efforts in schools. Furthermore, as these schools are affected by vulnerability factors, the findings contribute to the objectives of the 2030 Agenda (UN, 2015) to ensure inclusive and quality education (SDG 4) that reduces inequalities and promotes skills development (SDG 10).

## METHOD

This research followed the ethnographic method with a case study approach, which made it possible to understand reality from the behaviour and interaction of those who make it up (Díaz-de-Rada, 2012; Sabariego et al. 2019). The perspective adopted falls within the framework of what is known as the ethnography of reading, understood as the study of individual and collective uses of reading within the context of school culture (Martos-García, 2010; Rockwell, 2018; Ruiz-Bejarano, 2019). The selection of scenarios and participants was carried out intentionally, in line with the research objectives (Bisquerra, 2019).

### *Participants and information gathering techniques*

The three participating schools are located in the northern district of Granada, in areas with vulnerable communities characterised by high illiteracy rates and limited economic and family support. (Government of Andalusia; 2018; 2024). Two schools are public (C1 and C2) and one is a state-subsidised private school (C3) with a learning community. Eight Spanish language and literature teachers from the third cycle of primary education (four women and four men) participated, including a school librarian. The selection was intentional, considering the location of the schools and the participation of all third-cycle teachers, which ensured internal diversity in terms of experience, roles and perspectives on the training of literary readers. In accordance with Universidad de Granada's research ethics and data processing commitment, all participants were anonymised.

**Table 1***Informant profile*

	The teaching staff	Age	Teaching experience	Years at the school
<b>School 1 (C1)</b>	Teacher 1 (M1)	45	15 years	9 years
	Teacher 2 (M2)	29	3 years	3 years
<b>School 2 (C2)</b>	Teacher 3 (M3)	37	12 years	7 years
	Teacher 4 (M4)	47	15 years	10 years
	Librarian teacher 5 (M5)	42	10 years	8 years
<b>School 3 (C3)</b>	Teacher 6 (M6)	31	7 years	7 years
	Teacher 7 (M7)	29	3 years	3 years
	Teacher 8 (M8)	32	5 years	3 years

The information gathering techniques used were participant observation, semi-structured interviews and document analysis. As for observation, an open record was chosen to capture the dynamic nature of the classroom. Nevertheless, some areas of focus were established to ensure that key aspects were covered, such as: a) mediation strategies used by teachers; b) reading practices; c) materials used, among others. As for the semi-structured interview, a number of questions were established to stimulate conversation around specific topics. For the documentary analysis, the official files made available by each school regarding reader training were reviewed.

### *Research procedure and result analysis*

Firstly, authorisation was requested from the Regional Delegation for Educational Development and Vocational Training in Granada, an informative meeting was held with the participants, and informed consent forms were collected.

The ethnographic work lasted nine months and included observation of twenty classroom sessions by each teacher, activities in the school library, and three interviews per participant (initial, intermediate, and final). This was complemented by informal conversations that helped expand ethnographic records and dense descriptions (Díaz-de-Rada, 2012). Prolonged stay, together with the triangulation of space/time and techniques (Álvarez, 2011; Bisquerra, 2019), allowed us to achieve information saturation, evidenced by the recurrence of reading practices and discursive regularities among the teachers.

Content analysis was chosen to process the results, following the three-step sequence proposed by Rodríguez-Sabiote et al. (2005). The relevant discourse units were identified in each of the ethnographic texts produced. They were then classified according to different emerging categories and, through axial coding, grouped into macro-categories that allowed the results to be summarised.

The results were organised into two themes or macro categories: the institutional dimension and reading mediation. The first covers the objectives of training and promoting reading, the role of school libraries and reading practices encouraged at school level. The second is the teacher/librarian as a literary reading mediator, which includes mediation practices and the reading corpus used.

Similarly, a code system was established to differentiate the sources of the interview data, as follows: School documents (DC), Observation records (RO), Initial interview (Eini), intermediate interview (Einter) and final interview (Ef); Informal conversation (Cinf).

## RESULTS

First, a summary of the results is presented (Table 2) to facilitate understanding of the aspects that define each school. The findings for each macro category are subsequently described in depth.

**Table 2**

*Result systematisation*

	School 1	School 2	School 3
<b>Institutional dimension</b>	<b>Reading objectives</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strengthening reading habits.</li> <li>• Absence of internal documents to guide reading practices.</li> </ul>	<b>Reading objectives</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strengthening reading habits and developing interpretative skills.</li> <li>• School reading plan with objectives and guidelines.</li> </ul>	<b>Reading objectives</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strengthening reading habits.</li> <li>• Absence of internal documents to guide reading practices.</li> </ul>
	<b>Role of the school library</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Creation of reading itineraries.</li> <li>• Virtual space for reading promotion.</li> </ul>	<b>Role of the school library</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Arranging meetings with authors.</li> <li>• Storytelling activities.</li> <li>• Dramatised readings.</li> <li>• Planning of network activities with the municipal library.</li> </ul>	<b>Role of the school library</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Educational support for completing assignments.</li> <li>• Virtual space for reading promotion.</li> </ul>
	<b>Reading practices</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Guided compulsory reading.</li> <li>• <i>Bibliopatio</i>.</li> </ul>	<b>Reading practices</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Guided compulsory reading.</li> <li>• Literary contests.</li> <li>• Literary awards for Book Month.</li> </ul>	<b>Reading practices</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Literary dialogues.</li> </ul>
<b>The teacher as a reading mediator</b>	<b>Mediation practices</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Focus on reading fluency and learning formal content.</li> <li>• Individual reading spaces.</li> <li>• Lack of practices to deepen literary interpretations.</li> <li>• Textbooks as the main tool for teaching.</li> </ul>	<b>Mediation practices</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Focus on building habits and understanding texts.</li> <li>• Spaces for free, compulsory and guided reading.</li> <li>• Stimulation of exchange between readers and the collective construction of meaning.</li> <li>• Cultural mediation to expand the social circuit of books.</li> <li>• Difficulties in mediating literary reception errors.</li> <li>• Reading cards as the main mediation tool.</li> </ul>	<b>Mediation practices</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Focus on building reading habits.</li> <li>• Stimulation of exchange between readers and personal involvement.</li> <li>• Few strategies for deepening literary interpretations.</li> <li>• Reading cards as the main mediation tool.</li> </ul>
	<b>Reading corpus</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identification with the characters as the main selection criterion.</li> <li>• Absence of criteria related to interpretative challenges.</li> </ul>	<b>Reading corpus</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Texts with low difficulty for establishing interpretations.</li> <li>• Works with simple vocabulary.</li> <li>• Expansion of cultural references.</li> <li>• Absence of established reading itineraries.</li> </ul>	<b>Reading corpus</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Exclusive use of classics.</li> <li>• Identification as the main selection criterion.</li> <li>• Absence of criteria related to interpretative challenges.</li> </ul>

### *Institutional dimension*

Overall, the first school (C1) has a weak reading culture. Teachers believe this is partly consistent with the low importance assigned to this practice in families. ‘It goes hand in hand with the type of society we are moving towards, doesn't it? We want everything to be simple and brief. Families do not value reading; there is little tradition of reading’ (M1\_Einter).

In view of the above, the absence of a school reading plan (PLC) that includes specific actions or objectives with regard to reading is striking. Although your educational project reads as follows: ‘Reading



is an essential factor in the development of specific skills' (DC); no other references to it are found in internal documents.

As for the school library, internal documentation assigns it the primary function of creating a reading itinerary, understood as 'a literary journey that all students, from the moment they enter the first year of primary education until they leave the school after the sixth year of primary education, should read' (DC). However, the selection criteria were not specified, nor are they known to the teaching staff. In turn, it was noted that the library was rarely used, as it remained closed during most of the fieldwork. As a result, no activities organised by the library were recorded, with the exception of a virtual space called the 'library blog', where students occasionally recommended reading material to the community.

As for reading practices promoted at the school level, only 30 minutes per day were devoted to specific teaching of comprehension and fluency, in accordance with the provisions of the Instructions of 21 June 2023 (Regional Government of Andalusia, Art. 6, p. 2). There was also a '*bibliopatio*' (*playbrary*) initiative, which was not sustained over time due to a lack of staff.

Teachers at the second school (C2) state that their students are occasional readers and that for many, school is the place where they can establish links with literature: 'The little they read outside of class, they do so because they are motivated by a teacher who managed to get them hooked on a book' (Einter\_M4). 'Most people here are not in the habit of reading; we don't have that, neither in our families nor in terms of the importance we attach to reading' (Einter\_M3).

In response to this, the school developed a PLC stating: 'The reading experience that students accumulate throughout their education becomes a means of constructing and communicating knowledge' (DC). The document sets out the objectives of promoting the enjoyment of reading, improving reading skills and planning teaching activities (before, during and after).

As for the role of the school library, internal regulations state that it should promote activities to encourage reading in collaboration with external bodies. In practice, the space was frequented by teachers and students during school hours and in their free time.

A student reads while sitting on the carpeted floor of the library, leaning back against it. Another girl enters during break time, silently, going straight to take a book, as if she knew its location by heart, and sits down in one of the chairs in the corner. The librarian observes from her desk, without intervening (RO).

These scenes confirmed the symbolic value of the space as a meeting point for reading. The girls' behaviour revealed a particular way of being in the library, from the silence and comfort they projected. According to the manager, the library also held meetings with authors, storytelling sessions, dramatised readings, among other activities.

At the institutional level, the PLC stated that practices should enhance understanding and the social nature of reading, 'to promote the role of the reading mediator, the exchange of experiences and guided discussions' (DC). This was mostly observed on Thursdays, when thirty minutes were devoted to guided reading, selected by the teachers, to encourage expressiveness and comprehension. Most of the texts used in these sessions were short stories adapted from works such as *The Mouse, the Frog and the Pig* by Erwin Moser and *Las babuchas de Abu Kassim y otros cuentos árabes sobre el destino* by Julio Peradejordi, among others.

According to teachers at the third school (C3), which was governed by the learning community model, there was an established reading culture, nurtured by the continuity of institutional practices: 'The fact that we have discussion groups from the earliest years helps them to develop a certain relationship with literature' (Eini\_M8). Although the school had not implemented any PLC, teachers referred to the principles of learning communities in interviews: 'Pleasure, reading habits, literary reflection, and dialogic learning. I believe they are the pillars' (Eini\_M6).

As for the school library, its use was focused on the 'tutored library' model, an educational initiative specific to communities to provide support with schoolwork. This instrumental approach relegated free

reading time to the end of so-called 'study hours.' Similar to the first school, its role in promoting reading was unclear and it was undergoing restructuring. 'There used to be a teacher in charge, there were books, and readings were organised, but that has been lost recently' (Eint\_M8).

Among the institutionalised practices, the regular holding of Dialogue Literary Gatherings (TLD) stood out. Twice a month, the class would meet to discuss exclusively classical works, which drew criticism from the teachers themselves due to the lack of diversity. In addition, the school had a website where teachers and students shared reading recommendations.

### *The teacher/librarian as a mediator of literary reading*

The mediation practices observed among teachers at the first school (C1) focused almost exclusively on reading fluency and learning formal content.

The teacher asks everyone to continue reading the novel *El misterio del colegio embrujado* by Ulises Cabal. He asks them to go to the last chapter where they left off in the previous session. He designates the first person in the row to read aloud. He corrects any mispronounced words and insists that they emphasise the intonation. He repeats the exercise with the entire row. When they finish the chapter, they also finish the reading space (RO).

Situations like this occurred repeatedly in the classroom, where literacy skills such as fluency and intonation took precedence over literary aspects. When asked about the objectives pursued when reading, the teacher explains: 'I'm not pursuing any educational goal, so to speak. Well, yes, they should be able to read and read quickly, have a good rhythm and be able to imagine things, get into the book' (Einter\_M2).

In addition to these reading activities, there were individual activities from the textbook. During the observations, no support was found to deepen understanding of what had been read, which reflects the low importance assigned to developing interpretative skills, the socialisation of ideas or the collective construction of meaning. In sixth year, most reading time was devoted to learning literary content focused on recognition of elements, rather than enriching literary discussions. 'You may or may not like the story you read, it may not be entertaining, but I am more interested in your ability to analyse the composition of the text' (Eini\_M1).

As for the literary corpus used, the teachers refer to encouraging reading habits and comment that, on a personal level, they are interested in the class group being able to identify with what happens in the works. With this in mind, stories from the library are routinely selected that tell of 'adventures of boys and girls, ideally of the same age as them' (Einter\_M2). This intention contrasts with observed practices, as dynamics that do not favour the socialisation of reading experiences predominate.

The mediation practices observed in the second school (C2) were consistent with the PLC objectives, particularly in terms of promoting reading habits. Of particular note here is the weekly poetry reading by one of the teachers, with a clear intention to broaden the cultural references of the students. 'They should leave school knowing who Machado, Lorca, and Zambrano are, right? (...) if at the end of the class, at least one person wants to take one of their books home, then the class has been successful' (Efin\_M3).

There were also frequently areas for free and/or guided reading, both in the library and in the school garden or playground, where interaction between readers was encouraged, promoting the construction of interpretive communities, as they are referred to in the curriculum guidelines.

After finishing the reading, a student comments to the teacher: 'Did the toad just need some love?' The teacher replies: 'That's a good question. Do you think that was necessary? What in the text leads you to think so? Let's try to solve it: 'What if you ask the others? Let's see if you agree or not! (RO).

In addition, the teacher-librarian (MB5) provided cultural mediation, expanding the students' reading experiences and social circle through guided visits with the students to the neighborhood library. During



one of these visits, it was possible to see how, together with other cultural mediators, spaces were being created for discussion and the production of literary texts by the students.

The development of interpretative skills, another of the reading objectives set out in current regulations, is one of the weak points observed in guided reading settings. The few strategies available to mediate comprehension difficulties often give way to interpretations imposed by teachers or direct responses in order to continue with the lesson. 'How would you describe the fairy godmother's assistant? (There is silence). Can anyone give me a description? Well, I'll write down some characteristics on the board, we'll copy them down, and then we'll review the next one' (RO\_M4).

As for the corpus used, one of the criteria for teachers is to avoid using texts that are difficult to interpret. As one of the teachers explains, it is more a question of 'readings with simple vocabulary that can be adapted to the type of students we have' (Eini\_M4). Added to this is what was stated above regarding the aim of broadening the cultural references of the student body.

The formation of reading habits and the consolidation of a relationship with literature emerge as fundamental pillars of teaching practices at the third school (C3). Literary discussions, in the form of TLD, were organised as the main activity for this purpose. Through observation, it was possible to see how the teachers' mediation questions acted as catalysts for exchange between readers, while also helping them to overcome misunderstandings.

One girl chose a passage that said the earth had shrunk, mentioning that this made her sad. The teacher asks: 'Why does it make you feel sorry?' As there is silence in the classroom, the teacher asks again: 'What do we understand when we are told that 'the earth has shrunk'?' Another child clarifies that it is not that the earth is shrinking, but rather that we now have the means to travel across it in less time. The girl looks surprised, as if she has suddenly understood the passage she has chosen. The teacher thanks her for the clarification and looks at the girl, who nods (RO\_M6).

Mediation aimed at enhancing interpretative skills was frequently observed in this teacher's classes (M6), but was not generalisable to the rest of the teaching staff. As the main mediation tool, weekly worksheets were handed out to accompany the reading of the works. These mostly pointed to a fruitful reading, focusing on the aspects they enjoyed most and the passages with which they could identify.

In the short readings carried out in class, an activity called 'multilevel' was implemented, based on five questions that progressed in complexity. However, the so-called analysis questions focused on linguistic or grammatical aspects.

With regard to the reading corpus, which consisted mainly of classics, the teachers expressed some disagreement. 'I would like them to be different kinds of books, different stories' (Ef\_M7). 'They have to see themselves reflected, even if it is sometimes difficult with certain texts' (Ef\_M8). Faced with selecting from a closed list of canonical works, teachers refer to identification as a criterion for reworking the corpus.

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The actions implemented in schools show that reader development and literary education, rather than being a coordinated social task, continue to depend largely on the individual efforts of teachers. The absence of a reading plan in two of the three schools limits the possibility of defining objectives and actions to guide work on reading. The difficulty of sustaining certain reading practices over time is also becoming apparent (Romero-Oliva & Trigo-Ibáñez, 2019).

In terms of literary education, schools prioritise strengthening reading habits, to the detriment of developing literary competence. This could be explained by the fact that students are exposed to literature at a later age and there is a low level of reading culture. The need to foster a positive outlook on reading is consistent with other research conducted in similar contexts (García-Jiménez et al., 2018).

Among the most worrying findings is the role of school libraries. Only the second school shows evidence of playing an active role in promoting reading. Although all schools have a library, this does not guarantee that it will be used properly. Similar to findings from other studies such as that of Serna

et al. (2017), their importance is limited, as the school itself operates on a day-to-day basis independently of the school library. On the contrary, the dynamism and diverse activities in the second school reflect an expansion in the social circuit of the book, articulated with cultural mediations in cooperation with external organisations.

In view of the above, the results in the institutional dimension reveal a gap between the regulatory framework and the reality in schools. This highlights the need to strengthen collaboration among educational authorities, as according to [Organic Act 3/2020](#), they are responsible for promoting reading programmes. Although valuable resources have been developed at the ministerial level, such as the Guidelines for the Development of Reading Plans (2024), it would be necessary to strengthen support in schools in vulnerable areas, where reading is often not a priority for families. Added to this is the importance of management teams leading discussions with the community to define a shared vision around reading. As for school libraries, it is important for schools to promote the role of a professional in charge, in order to intensify promotional initiatives and raise awareness of resources ([Arellano-Yanguas et al., 2022](#)). Another opportunity for improvement is strengthening ties with external organisations such as the neighborhood public library.

With regard to teachers/librarians as mediators, the results show continuity between the institutional perspective and their mediation strategies, which are mainly focused on building reading habits. The most common practices are compulsory guided reading and encouraging exchange between students. The excessive use of textbooks and reading cards highlights the need to incorporate practices that broaden reading experiences and opportunities for literary appropriation ([Suárez-Ramírez & Suárez-Ramírez, 2020](#)). In contrast, many cases show difficulties in incorporating mediation to overcome comprehension difficulties, with little help offered by teachers.

As a result, interpretative competence remains one of the weakest areas in teaching, despite its presence in the official curriculum. This situation seems to reflect a disconnect between the knowledge produced in the field of teaching and its application in everyday practice ([Permach-Martín et al., 2024](#)). This highlights the importance of strengthening the role of reading mediators in future teachers.

As for the literary corpus used, the results show a lack of consensus regarding its selection ([Santamarina-Sancho et al., 2024](#)). In certain cases, there are teachers who focus their interest on the students, seeking works that allow them to identify with the plots or characters. Progression towards new interpretative challenges does not appear in the teachers' discourse. This contradicts current regulations ([Royal Decree 157/2022, of 2<sup>nd</sup> March](#); [Decree 101/2023, of 9<sup>th</sup> May](#)), which stipulate the need to design itineraries that ensure the gradual acquisition of skills.

Finally, the results call for a rethinking of the development and scope of literary education in schools with students at risk of vulnerability. While efforts are being made to establish a relationship with literary reading, these must move towards consolidating ways of reading that allow for new reading experiences. In this regard, teacher training as reading mediators and the diversification of practices become essential to accompany students in the construction of meaning. Institutions such as literary gatherings and reading clubs could be valuable spaces for literary discussion and social and cultural exchange of experiences ([Amo Sánchez-Fortún et al., 2023](#)), while also serving as a concrete avenue for participation in interpretive communities.

To move forward in this direction, it is necessary to develop institutional and pedagogical proposals that integrate emotional involvement, dialogue between readers, and interpretation as a collective and meaningful practice. Thus, literary education would enable the exploration of new worlds, while also providing access to culture for students at risk of vulnerability. This, as a right and obligation for quality education (SDG 4) that reduces inequalities (SDG 10) within the framework of the 2030 Agenda, requires a shared commitment among all stakeholders (administration, schools, teachers, students, and families).

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## AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTIONS

**Oscar Araya-Maldonado:** Project management; Formal analysis; Conceptualisation; Data curation; Writing – original draft; Writing – review and editing; Research; Methodology; Resources; Software; Validation; Fund acquisition.

**Cristina Del-Moral-Barrigüete:** Project management; Conceptualisation; Data curation; Writing – review and editing; Methodology; Supervision; Validation; Visualisation.

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