

Impact of Teachers' Practices on Students' Reading Comprehension Growth in Guatemala

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This study discusses an educational intervention with a strong emphasis on reading development in a bilingual context in the Western Highlands (WH) of Guatemala. The majority of students speak a Mayan language as their mother tongue, although they are generally taught in Spanish. For this intervention, we report data for the first 3 years of implementation of a bilingual/intercultural education model that includes teacher training at the university level and the development of bilingual materials.

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- The WH of Guatemala is representative of much of rural Guatemala; a multicultural, multilingual country where more than 20 languages—including Spanish—are spoken.
- The country has one of the highest inequality levels in the Americas.
- Teachers are poorly trained and few instructional materials exist, leading to more than one third of children in rural areas not completing first grade.

Lifelong Learning (LLL) project

- The lifelong learning project has supported the development of bilingual instructional materials.
- The project provides undergraduate university training in-service programmes for teaching reading and writing in bilingual situations. It also provides graduate programmes in bilingual education administration for regional administrators that include coaching teachers.
- The programme supports reading awareness efforts in local communities.



The study

This study presents the results for the first 3 years of implementation of the LLL project.

Hypothesis:

- Students of teachers who employed project intervention components showed greater growth in reading than teachers who did not report using such interventions.

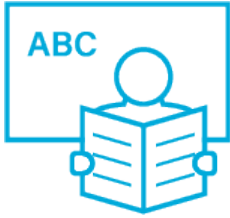
The sample consisted of 114 WH elementary schools. Data were collected over a 1-year period from 326 teachers serving approximately 6,000 students. Teachers' use of interventions was measured through a self-report questionnaire about specific intervention components. Student progress in reading comprehension was measured with the Ministry of Education National Reading Assessments for Elementary Grades at the beginning and end of the school year.



Findings

- Most teachers (93%) taught in Spanish, although the majority (54.3%) stated that teaching literacy should be carried out in both Spanish and Mayan languages at the same time.
- Some 65% of teachers reported having a school library.
- There were 55.2% of teachers who reported receiving in-service teacher training at university level.
- There were 79% of teachers who reported receiving visits from coaching tutors.
- There were 69.2% of teachers who reported having support from parents, which promoted the students' growth in reading.
- Nearly all (95.2%) teachers reported using reading

diagnostic assessments, which had positive effects on student growth.



Implications

- This intervention programme was implemented on a region-wide basis.
- Initial results show that growth has been promising, although clearly this work must be ongoing to continue to have an impact.
- Teachers require training at university level, and training should be accompanied by ongoing support from coaches willing to help them improve their practice.
- Encouraging the Ministry of Education to develop and provide reading and assessment materials in different languages of instruction is beginning to have positive effects.
- Parents' participation in reading is beginning to affect growth.