

Pedagogical importance of reading literacy: A comparative study on PISA.

Fátima Rosado-Castellano¹, Miguel Martín-Sánchez²

^{1,2}*Universidad de Extremadura, Badajoz - España*

ORCID: ¹[0000-0003-3051-0792](https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3051-0792), ²[0000-0002-9370-1732](https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9370-1732)

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Abstract— Reading, as complex cognitive activity, has become the focus of numerous national and international studies from a comparative perspective. This research analyses the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) over the last few years due to, according to the results, the low performance presented by Spanish students in reading skills. This low result is shown in the different stages analysed and it is even worse if it is considered the 2006 and 2018 reports since in those years worst results were achieved (461 and 477 points respectively).

In order to do this, different factors that have an influence on reading skills are analysed. It is done a comparative and longitudinal research from 2000 to 2018 that considers all the results provided by OECD. With that data in mind and the purpose of understanding them and contextualize those factors that could rise to them, other elements are studied, such as the presence of the reading skills in the Spanish legislation, the investment made in Secondary Education, the rate of students who finish Compulsory Secondary School, as well as the evolution that school libraries have had in terms of number, uses or the participation of families and the environment in them. These aspects are analysed in a way that is compared with the reading performance obtained throughout the PISA studies. Finally, the approach of the PISA reports justifies its use as a reference for a qualitative and global understanding of the aspects that interfere with appropriate reading skills in fifteen-year-old students. This goes beyond numerical results.

Keywords: academic achievement, reading literacy, reading, reading comprehension, the PISA technical report.

*Corresponding author.

Email: miguelmartin@unex.es (Miguel Martín Sánchez).

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I. INTRODUCTION

You learn a lot by reading. You learn to speak, to write, to think. Reading increases vocabulary, improves expression, increases concentration, stimulates the mind and imagination, develops intelligence [1, 2] and opens you up to the world. All learning is language learning, and reading is an ideal medium for building and developing ourselves as human beings. To read is to enter a community that transcends individuality from collectivity. This is why reading and its promotion are so important, both at school and in the family [3], insofar as family-school collaboration will facilitate the acquisition of significant reading skills that will result in the overall learning of the subjects [4].

Reading is one of the most important actions of human beings. In this action we can understand ourselves as a species, insofar as we are part of a collectivity, because "with word and action we insert ourselves into the human world and such insertion is like a second birth, in which we confirm and assume the naked fact of our original physical appearance" [5, p.103].

Reading, writing, language, is a dialogic discursive action, thought by and between human beings, because reading is sharing humanity, it is the desire to share our world with the rest of the world, with other human worlds, in the conviction that reading is a human construction, a social manifestation of a constitutive dimension of human reality, because the human being develops in community, and because through reading (individual and shared, indoors and at school), as the result of human thought, it cannot be done if it is not from one with others, from others among others [6]. Therefore, reading and the reading habit generate important benefits in the integral development of human beings [7], fostering education in values, the recognition of cultural heritage, a critical sense and the improvement of cultural leisure, sufficient reasons to consider reading a capital indicator of human development [8,9].

It is clear that reading is important, as evidence and studies show. But then comes the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), the famous OECD test designed to measure students' skills in science, mathematics and reading comprehension. Despite the controversies, the results are there, and it turns out that Spanish students are systematically sinking.

But are these reports really important? They are interesting in their own right. The importance of the PISA reports lies in the broad significance they have in comparison with other similar reports, such as the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS), in both national and international education policies, since, among their aims, beyond the comparative description of results, they seek to emphasise public education policies, highlighting those that lead to improved results. This generates a certain prescription both at the curricular level and in public policies so that they are aimed at improving students' educational outcomes [10].

II. THEORETICAL ANALYSIS

Literature that aims to study reading skills and other related terms is extensive. As mentioned before, this is justified by the fact that it contributes to the development of the social, personal and community dimensions of human beings. In this context, a terminological approach to two key concepts is carried out, reading skills and comprehension, followed by a legislative analysis of how is developed at the curricular level in Spain and, finally, a look at the Programme for International Student Assessment, analysing its origins, development and, lastly, the strengths and weaknesses of this type of international studies.

Terminological approach to reading literacy and comprehension

Defining reading competence and reading comprehension is a complex issue due to the multiple dimensions that both terms adopt. For [11], comprehension implies the knowledge and autonomous use of cognitive and metacognitive strategies for processing texts according to the reader's objectives.

For its part, [12] considers that competences are more than knowledge and skills, as they imply the ability to face complex challenges by drawing on different psychosocial resources, including skills and attitudes. These competences are classified into three categories, specifically, that individuals are able to use tools in a collaborative way, that they can communicate with others and interact with heterogeneous groups, and they can act by themselves. It is in the case of the former, that the competences linked to language use, in particular, competence 1-A (ability to use language, symbols and text interactively). The aim of competence 1-A is based on the effective use of language skills, both oral and written, and communication skills, which are covered in PISA by the so-called "reading competence". These competences are considered essential for living together in society and participating in effective dialogue with others. Another competence to be highlighted is 1-B (ability to use this knowledge and information interactively), whose purpose is to enable people to interact effectively with information, as well as reflect critically on it. From the 2018 report, the focus is on the ability to search, compare, contrast and integrate information from different sources for knowledge creation [13], which also includes an adaptive test in reading based on students' responses.

In the PISA reports, reading literacy is understood "as students' capacity to understand, use, evaluate, reflect on and engage with texts in order to achieve one's goals, develop one's knowledge and potential, and participate in society" [14, p.27]. Its definition has been similar in the early years, but from 2009, as a result of the changes that have taken place, the object of reading is modified, that is, reading printed text is combined with digital text, highlighting.

That is why, in PISA 2018, the definition changed to be considered as "ability to find, compare, contrast and integrate information from multiple sources" [15, p. 2]. From these first definitions, we obtain the cornerstone of comprehension, which involves both the knowledge and the resources that students have. Comprehension is understood as the ability to understand and use linguistic forms to construct meaning according to the reader's purpose [16]. For [17], comprehension is oriented towards the construction of meaning through the interaction between the text and the reader. [18] maintains that text comprehension improves when the reader relates the ideas represented in the text to his or her knowledge and experiences and, from there, constructs mental representations.

Regarding to levels for the achievement of reading competence, authors such as [19] and [20] establish several ranges among which are: the executive level (knowledge and use of the written code, recognition of letters, words, phrases and textual structures), the functional level

(reading provides a response to the demands of everyday life), the instrumental level (obtaining information and access to other people's knowledge) and the epistemological or critical reading level (reading is used to think and contrast self-thinking). It involves identifying, evaluating and contrasting different perspectives, including one's own, in a process aimed at questioning, reinforcing or modifying knowledge, thus producing a transformation of thought and not a pure accumulation on information [11].

[21] After analysing various definitions of reading comprehension and reading competence, concludes that the former refers to the individual's ability to grasp what the author wanted to convey in the text, while competence responds to the ability to use reading comprehension in a useful way in society. From both proposals, it can be deduced that reading competence encompasses reading comprehension and that reading comprehension is an individual fact of each person, while competence is the materialisation of reading comprehension.

Reading literacy in Spanish educational legislation

The different legislative documents state that Language and Literature are key elements in the educational curricula of the different stages of the Spanish education system, and are present in the academic life of pupils. Reading, as a process in which various skills are involved, includes the implementation of tasks such as identification, selection of information, organisation, interpretation and assimilation of the same in order to put it into value with the reader's own knowledge. It is for this reason that this process is found in people's daily lives and its inadequate acquisition is reflected both academically and personally and socially, and a linear correlation can be established between them. Therefore, understanding a text, interpreting it and subsequently using it according to the reader's needs is essential both for successfully passing compulsory schooling and for life in society [22]. Aware of this, in the last three education laws [23], [24] and [25] state that reading comprehension, oral and written expression should be present in the different areas and, according to several authors, an adequate development in writing can improve reading skills. Reading comprehension, oral and written expression should be introduced in Infant Education and, in later stages of Primary and Secondary Education, reading comprehension, oral and written expression should be worked on in all subjects and areas. Moreover, not only the use of the vernacular language is encouraged, but also effective communication in other languages, as well as the promotion of multilingualism.

In this sense, the public authorities play an important role in promoting measures to develop activities in different subjects that stimulate interest in and the habit of reading, as well as the task of providing the necessary resources to guarantee, among other aspects, the implementation of a plan for the promotion of reading [23, article 156].

Therefore, a quality education system must enable students to "learn to read and read to learn" [26, p.33]. Because reading is learning.

PISA report as an international evaluator

The Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) assesses fifteen-year-old students in different countries around the world, including Spain since 2000. It was created with the intention of providing an international evaluation that facilitates a greater understanding of the state of the different educational systems through the knowledge that students possess in the areas of reading, mathematics and science, measuring the skills, content and contexts in which they are applied. In the case of study of reading, these three dimensions are oriented towards analysis of the type of reading activity of the students according to the overall comprehension of a text, information retrieval, interpretation, reflection on the subject and purpose and intentions of the author. In the second dimension, the content, it is worked with genres or forms of written material, applying continuous prose and discontinuous text in PISA. In the contexts, several usages are differentiated such as personal (reading novels or letters), public (reading official documents or reports), occupational (reading manuals or forms) and educational use (reading textbooks) [27]. Therefore, it does not seek a curricular type of evaluation, but rather a study of student learning in different areas (literacy). Changes at different scales (social, economic, political, inclusion of Information and Communication Technologies, among others) have caused alterations in the fundamental pillars of educational systems and, therefore, in the educational objectives, contents, competences or assessment systems, hence, the methodology as well as the items to be assessed have had to be adapted to this changing situation. In fact, following what is indicated by [28], considering 2030 as a horizon:

Students will need to apply their knowledge in unknown and evolving circumstances. For this, they will need a broad range of skills, including cognitive and meta-cognitive skills (e.g. critical thinking, creative thinking, learning to learn and self-regulation); social and emotional skills (e.g. empathy, self-efficacy and collaboration); and practical and physical skills (e.g. using new information and communication technology devices) [28, p.5].

Consequently, new aspects to be assessed are gradually being include, for example, in 2025 it is intended to analyse foreign language competences, justified by the fact that in the global and connected world it is necessary to master more than one foreign language, as this provides greater intercultural understanding, economic and cognitive benefits [29]. Considering the changes listed above, we focus on the inclusion of ICT in education as it offers a wide range of learning opportunities for students. Specifically, in terms of reading literacy, students will be able to access a greater number of resources (applications, texts, activities, etc.) with different levels and content that can be adapted to a variety of needs [30]. In the same way, [31] finds that there is a close relationship between linguistic competence and ICT due to the multiple possibilities it offers.

It is also important to note that what is measured in these reports is previously determined by the programme, and is therefore linked to a theoretical curriculum and not to that established in each of the countries, although in some cases they may coincide as some of them are being adapted to the PISA competency framework. This aspect should be taken into account when analysing the results, since a score below the international average does not imply a low quality of education, since it may be fulfilling what is prescribed at the national level and not by the programme. Likewise, this dissimilarity between the national curricula of the different countries and what is measured in PISA is analysed from a critical perspective by establishing what students should learn without this having been agreed at the national level, thus generating competitiveness within the international framework. This position shows that such tests focus more on competitiveness, the economic development of the country and the role that students will have in the future in today's knowledge societies (literacy) and less on the individualised development of students [10].

There are conflicting positions regarding the assessment of this type of test. Despite the trajectory and participation of different international organisations, the PISA assessments are no strangers to scepticism from different sectors and there are numerous detractors who consider that the measurement of reading literacy by means of a one-off test does not provide real results. Furthermore, following the previous author, other weaknesses are that the choice of the population is made on the basis of age and not grade, the motivation that students have for this type of assessment, cultural aspects between the different countries, the disaffection of students towards school in some countries, the pressure that students are under before an assessment test of this kind or issues of another nature such as prior preparation [10]. Similarly, in line with these aspects, there is also the influence that the cultural environment has on its implementation, as reading is not only limited to the school environment [32].

In spite of this, this type of test and standardised tests, both international and national, are enjoying great popularity, due, among other reasons, to the speed of transfer of results, relatively low costs and possible management and control external to the education system [33].

III. METHODOLOGY

Having analysed these issues, it should be noted that the aim of this research is to understand the value of this type of assessment for a better understanding of the Spanish education system and, specifically, reading comprehension, by analysing the different elements that make it up. To this end, we take as a sample the assessments carried out between 2000 and 2018 and, especially, those of 2000, 2009 and 2018, as they are specifically focused on reading literacy. This will allow us to make a comparison and gain more in-depth access to the results offered by these assessments, analysing dimensions such as national and international reading performance by year, the educational investment made over time, completion rates in Compulsory Secondary Education (ESO) and the school libraries available to address this competence and where specific programmes are carried out that contribute to its development. An analysis of the scientific literature is carried out to facilitate a better understanding of what reading literacy implies in the PISA reports, in the educational curriculum and, therefore, in the Spanish educational system. On this basis, the research questions are the following:

- A. Does Spain have an average similar to that of the rest of the OECD countries?
- B. Do issues such as educational investment in education have an impact on reading literacy (PISA score)?
- C. Is the gross rate of the population completing Compulsory Secondary Education related to better results in PISA?
- D. Do improvements in certain services such as libraries lead to better reading scores?

The method employed in this study is based on a qualitative bibliographical analysis in which, by means of a descriptive development, the aim is to gain a deeper understanding of the results obtained in reading literacy over the different years at national level, as well as the factors that contribute to or hinder it. To this end, a comparative approach is adopted in which the establishment of inter- and intra-national and cross-sectional units of comparison will enable this longitudinal study to shed light on the results shown by the different bodies involved in the production of the PISA Reports. In order to contextualise the process followed and to guide through the results presented in the following section, it is useful to indicate the aspects studied. These are:

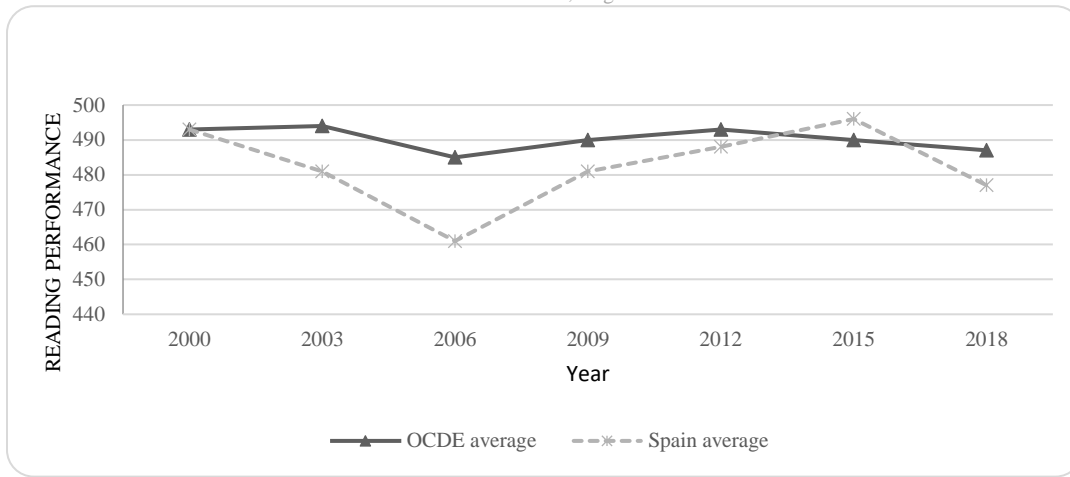
- Average OECD and Spanish reading literacy performance from 2000 to 2018.
- Investment in Secondary Education, Vocational Education and Training and Special Education and reading performance in PISA tests from 2000 to 2018.
- Gross rate of population completing compulsory secondary education and reading literacy performance in PISA from 2000 to 2018.
- School libraries and their evolution in terms of number, programmes, involvement of the educational community, etc.

IV. RESULTS

Having described the study items, the results obtained in each of them are set out below, in response to the research questions posed.

Average OECD and Spanish reading literacy performance from 2000 to 2018

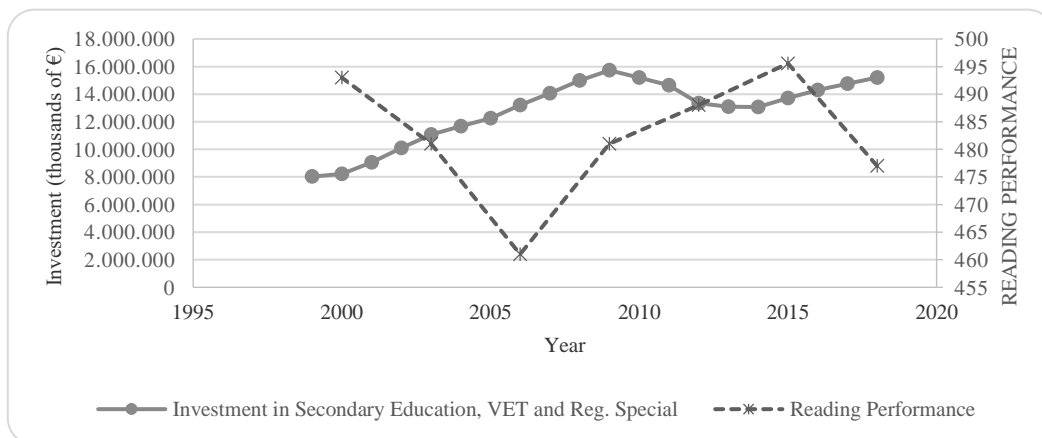
First, we analyse reading literacy performance over the years both in Spain and the OECD average. The data show that the results of Spanish students in the reading literacy tests administered by the OECD have varied over time, ranging from 461 points (2006) to 495.58 points in 2015, the highest figure reached in these 18 years of study. In these reports, the Spanish average is below the OECD average; only in 2015 was it exceeded, with a difference of 6 points. Moreover, there is no linear correlation between the two, since, if we take into account the year 2003, in the OECD, using the starting year (2000) as the base year, a slight increase is observed (493 to 494 on average) while in Spain it decreases from 493 to 481 points on average. In 2015, a reverse effect occurs, while Spain achieves its best result, surpassing the OECD average, the latter shows a decline that it will maintain until the last report. In this sense, and in response to the research question we initially posed, Spain is in the quadrant of countries, along with Croatia, Lithuania and Turkey, with variability and performance below the OECD average [13].



Picture 1: Average reading literacy performance of OECD and Spain from 2000 to 2018. Source: Own elaboration (2023) based on [34].

Investment in Secondary Education, Vocational Education and Training and Special Education and reading performance in PISA tests from 2000 to 2018

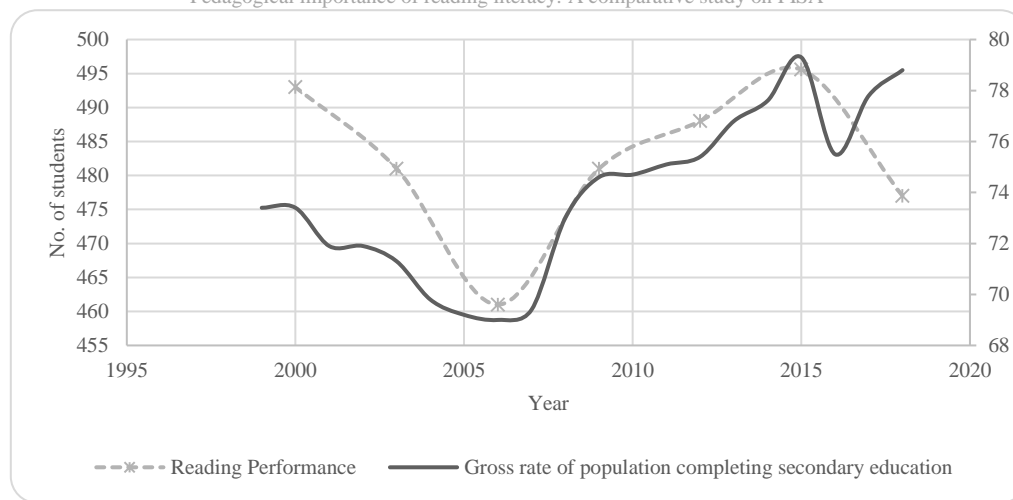
With regard to investment in Secondary Education, Vocational Training and Special Education (excluding financial chapters of the investment from the Ministry of Education data) and the reading performance shown by Spanish 15-year-old students in the PISA tests, it is noted that no correlation can be done between them, as reading performance has varied over time, regardless of the investment made in these stages (taken as a whole due to the presentation of the data offered by [35]). In the period studied, it can be noticed that investment is increasing until 2009, when it starts to decrease until 2014, when it increases again. In 2006, the year in which the worst results were obtained in reading literacy, a total of 13,201,847,000 euros were being invested in this type of education in Spain. Therefore, in response to the research question posed, it is possible to indicate that reading comprehension is not influenced by the investment made in education, and it is therefore necessary to delve deeper into other aspects of a qualitative nature, as well as into the uses to which these amounts are put.



Picture 2: Investment in secondary education, vocational education and training and special needs education and reading literacy performance in PISA by year. Source: Own elaboration (2023) based on [35].

Gross ESO completion rate and reading performance in PISA from 2000 to 2018

Following the study, it is now time to analyse how higher reading achievement can significantly affect student completion in Compulsory Secondary Education. Picture 3 shows how both curves coincide: at higher reading achievement values, the ESO completion rate of the population is higher, and at lower reading achievement values, the population rate is lower. Both curves practically overlap and follow the same trends year by year except for the last year, and it is necessary to wait for the results of the year 2022 to see if this is a one-off moment or if the trend is broken.



Picture 3: Gross ESO completion rate and PISA reading literacy performance by year.
Source: Own elaboration (2023).

Analysing the gross completion rates of compulsory secondary education in Spanish schools as a whole, both public and private, it can be seen that better reading comprehension favours higher academic performance, hence the importance of promoting it throughout the education system. Therefore, in order to answer the research question posed and based on these results, as well as on the scientific literature, it can be indicated that an adequate development in reading competence and, therefore, in comprehension, has a positive influence on the academic development of pupils.

School libraries and their evolution

On the other hand, with regard to school libraries, the three statistics carried out by the Ministry of Education and Vocational Training are taken into account, specifically, in the 2010-2011, 2015-2016 and 2019-2020 academic years. Based on these, the average percentage of centres that offer this service, the reading posts, as well as their uses and the participation of other members of the educational community in it are analysed. In relation to the number of centres that have a functioning library, the latest study shows a decrease with respect to the previous one, the same happening in Primary Education and Compulsory Secondary Education (ESO) centres, from 88.2% to 83.9% in total in both public and private centres. In terms of the percentage of Primary and ESO schools that have separate areas in libraries for reading, there was an increase in the number of these between the first two statistics, but a decrease in the 2019-2020 academic year (71.9%, 94.2% and 91.5% respectively). Furthermore, since the 2015-2016 academic year, other areas such as informal reading have been included, existing in 31% of Spanish Primary and Compulsory Secondary Education centres in the 2015-2016 academic year and in 58.8% in the 2019-2020 academic year. Although there has been a decrease in the number of reading places in the latest study, the number of informal reading places has increased significantly. The analysis of the use of school libraries is also relevant. In this sense, taking into account the studies of these three academic years, it can be seen that there is an increase in the activities carried out in public and private centres in Primary Education and Special Education, as well as in Secondary Education and Vocational Training in the promotion of reading, teaching and learning to support the development of the curriculum and those related to the treatment of information and digital competence. This item considers the Primary Education stage despite the fact that the PISA study is contextualised in Secondary Education, but given that reading is a continuous process and that its practice improves results, it has been decided to include it. In the first study, the categories analysed were teaching and curriculum development, reading promotion, information processing and digital literacy, user training, and others such as conferences, seminars, artistic performances, etc. However, in successive studies, as a result of changes in the different dimensions, other categories were included in the analysis, such as cultural activities and literary encounters, activities with the participation of families (2015-2016 academic year) or virtual and face-to-face reading clubs, STEAM activities, gender equality, film forum and school radio programmes (2019-2020 academic year). The change of variables makes the analysis difficult as the period ranges between the academic years 2010-2011 and 2019-2020. Nevertheless, in a descriptive way, some issues are stated, such as the use of teaching and learning for curriculum development, which starts with 88.4% in the total number of centres, but decreases to 63.8% in the 2015-2016 academic year and then, in the last year, increases again to 73.9%. Reading promotion activities also have a gradual decrease over the years in the total number of centres, starting from values of 90.9% to finally register a percentage of 77.6%. Activities related to information processing and digital competence and cultural activities follow the same trend. Finally, for comparative purposes, we take into account the activities related to attention to diversity and those which include families, where, in both cases, the data improve from one report to the next, with more schools using the school library for these purposes. For the remaining items, the percentage of all Primary and Secondary schools using their libraries for such purposes is small, e.g., for virtual reading clubs (2.1%), STEAM activities (8.4%) or film forum (9.8%). On the other hand, activities that work on gender equality register values of 46.2% of all schools or 37.5% in Primary and Compulsory Secondary schools.

It is also interesting to note the possibilities for families and other persons outside the educational community to participate in the same, through their access. In the study carried out in the 2010-2011 academic year, the total number of centres providing access to families was 38.2% and to other persons 11%, with Extremadura, Andalusia and Aragon, respectively, being the Autonomous Communities that are most open to the outside world. This aspect continues to grow and in the 2015-2016 academic year, the percentage of centres that provided access to their libraries was 43.2% for families and 8.8% for users outside the educational community, with a higher percentage in public centres compared to subsidised or private centres. In the last academic year analysed, the figures were 43.3% and 9.1% for families and external users, which, although increasing in the total, decreased slightly in Primary and Secondary Education centres with respect to the previous year [35].

Therefore, although the number of libraries and reading stations and reading promotion activities has decreased over this time, the uses to which this resource is being put have changed, encouraging other types of activities such as virtual reading clubs, film forums, improving digital

competences, etc. These changes may be due, among other factors, to changes in other sectors and, therefore, to meet the changing demands of the educational community.

Thinking about these aspects, as well as the data produced by PISA over time, it is clear that the relationships between reading literacy and other aspects of a different order, such as educational investment, do not directly affect reading comprehension. This is due, among other elements, to the key aspect of comprehension, which is influenced by certain elements, variables, dimensions, etc. According to [36, p.8], among the "basic dimensions of comprehension are the text, the activity of the subject, the linguistic system used and the context". The text takes into account its structure (organisation, schema, models, etc.), functions (communicative and cognitive) and properties (text elements, readability, etc.). In relation to the subject's activity, biological, socio-cultural (school and family) and personal (motivation and learning) aspects are located. In the dimension of the linguistic system there are the non-linguistic, structural linguistic and substantive linguistic codes. As for the context, it encompasses multiple possibilities such as situational, interpersonal or cognitive. That is why it is not in vain that the PISA report tries to include different aspects in order to link them and look for a causal relationship between the results obtained and other variables, analysed from a general perspective with national and international comparative units. Therefore, taking into consideration that one of the factors that determine students' results in the PISA reports is the socio-economic background of the families, the school is not fulfilling the objective of reducing educational inequalities among students by not providing equitable results, despite the exceptions that exist among the participating countries [37]. Moreover, these reports reveal that the best results tend to be in private schools, being determined by the student profile as they have a higher socio-economic status compared to public schools.

In this sense, it is relevant to assess the influence of the index of social, economic and cultural status (ISEC) on academic performance, which is represented in the PISA reports by social status, education and level of household resources. [38], following the 2009 PISA report, analyses these issues in the Spanish context, both at individual and regional level, and concludes that there is a relationship between the scores obtained in reading literacy and the socio-economic and cultural level of the students. At the regional level, no such relationship can be observed; the regression slopes are similar in most of the Autonomous Communities. [37] state that, despite the existence of a common education system in Spain, there are various elements, such as regional education policies and contextual factors that can produce different results between the Autonomous Communities, exacerbated by the dual network of schools (public and private) which highlights the school segregation within the Spanish education system. Therefore, it is not only necessary to look at the existing differences in the student body, but it is also important to consider the socio-cultural dimensions and the level of well-being of the different countries studied as factors to be considered when interpreting the results and making comparisons between them and even when reformulating educational policies and practices [39] and, in the Spanish case, to the different Autonomous Communities, as education is a competence acquired by the Autonomous Communities. Therefore, coinciding with these aspects, there is also the influence that the cultural environment exerts on the performance of these tests, as reading is not only limited to the school environment [32].

[40] note that the differences in the PISA reports may be due to the typology of school systems, whether integrated or differentiated, with the former being more egalitarian as the school seeks to address differences in families' cultural resources.

[41] in their study on student performance, highlight that the elements that influence reading comprehension include vocabulary (higher level equals better results), school level, students' cognitive ability (higher ability- better reading performance) and type of school (private and subsidised vs. public schools).

On the other hand, there are multiple factors that can improve reading proficiency. [42] argue that fluency and reading proficiency are positively related through mutual feedback where the level of reading comprehension facilitates fluency in essential aspects and reading comprehension in essential aspects facilitates comprehension of the text. [18] found that systematic phonics instruction leads to an improvement in both reading and writing skills. Fluency is also a necessary factor for comprehension, improving significantly with practice. As for comprehension, as a key factor in the development of reading skills, it is articulated around three aspects: that it is a complex cognitive process which includes the development and teaching of vocabulary; that it is a process which requires active participation through intentional and reflective interaction between the reader and the text; and that teacher training is necessary to be able to develop different strategies with the students to improve reading comprehension and, therefore, improve performance. Furthermore, [41] point out that vocabulary is essential in reading comprehension, especially in the early years, being crucial for its acquisition given that the lexicon favours access to the full meaning of a text, interfering in both directions according to its level of development.

Along the same lines are the resources that schools make available to pupils, such as libraries. Libraries are powerful resources for improving reading skills. [43] argue that they are an appropriate tool for dealing with the educational changes of the 21st century, going from being an auxiliary instrument to being integrated into the curriculum, becoming a Learning Resource Centre from which to carry out an active and interdisciplinary methodology.

Finally, we cannot end this analysis without mentioning Information and Communication Technologies (ICT), since they have brought about a substantial change in the way we access content, reading and writing, text design, among others, but are teachers and learners prepared to address and include these changes in the classroom? Clearly, given this scenario, it is necessary to adapt the teaching-learning methodology. According to studies such as that of [44], digital reading requires different skills and competences to cope with the characteristics of digital texts and it is therefore necessary to provide students with "cyberlinguistic" competences for digital reading and writing. To this must be added greater teacher training in this area, as well as resources to be able to deal with this important change for information societies. In this regard, new perspectives that contribute to the integration of ICT in education must be incorporated into teacher training [45].

V. CONCLUSION

As it has been explaining and as it has been contrasted with completion rates in ESO, there are numerous studies that demonstrate the positive relationship between reading comprehension and school performance [46, 47, 48, 49, 50], due to read is not only perceiving, it is not only recognising words, but it is entering a higher intellectual world, a process of reflection that enables the reader to read, a process of meaning texts, to analyse and interpret them critically [51], to understand, in short. This is why language and literature are key in the pedagogical process, because "all schooling is listening, speaking, reading and writing" and "a school is a linguistic environment" [52, p. 233].

Reading competence should be based on three complementary and influential axes: learning to read, reading to learn, and learning to enjoy reading [53, 11]. Because reading is learning and enjoying: "By reading, I physically settled into a happiness that still lasts" [54, p. 81].

For the authors [42], reading literacy is vital for the exercise of citizens' rights in today's society by being able to access, understand and reflect on information, as well as for the economic growth of different countries.

Starting from the idea that reading skills are involved in most human tasks and considering the principle of equal opportunities that emanates from the Spanish education system, despite its multiple interpretations from the perspectives of being free, compulsory, etc., mathematics, science and reading skills must occupy central places in it. And especially reading, since, without adequate performance in this area, the others will be biased. This is why it is considered an essential instrument and its adequate development is largely responsible for school learning [41] and lifelong learning [18], considered, therefore, a methodological strategy that organises and strengthens the different cognitive, social or metacognitive skills and abilities [55]. Following this trend, [11] also states that the relationship between competence and learning is unquestionable, although it is true that reading should not be circumscribed to a strictly instrumental level, since the relationship between both has greater depth insofar as learning requires personal involvement, as well as the processing of information where the understanding of what is learned is present.

On the other hand, if reading is understood as a process involving the extraction, comprehension, interpretation and application of what is read and, therefore, as a complex act in which simplistic views are overcome, it cannot be relegated to the background and subordinated to other subjects. This thesis is based on the fact that reading has its own identity and without it, school failure is guaranteed, since, if students are not able to give meaning to the content, they will undoubtedly not be able to acquire the corresponding knowledge, regardless of the figures shown in the different areas and national and international studies. The commitment to improving competence in reading and, if possible, in the subject of Language and Literature, from the different educational policies, is synonymous with improving the quality of education as it is understood both as a means of access to knowledge and as an epistemological instrument that enables learning and thinking [11]. Likewise, the acquisition of this skill empowers all those who learn it by accessing and contributing to knowledge [26]. Because reading is learning.

Their analysis through various national and international evaluations is conducive to understanding them. However, this will depend on the prism from which these studies are reviewed. If we understand evaluations as instruments that help in the reordering of educational policies by being based on data obtained in a reliable manner and with the transparency required, they become tools for the search for solutions aimed at the quality of educational systems. If, on the other hand, they are used without perspective and in a pernicious manner, far removed from any critical and well-founded analysis, they become political tools that are far removed from the purposes for which they were created.

In future lines of research, it would be advisable to analyse other variables such as reading methods, teaching methodologies, comparative studies between different stages and even, following the timeline, to include the results of the 2022 and 2025 studies in order to observe the academic consequences that Covid-19 and the methodological changes resulting from it may have had on pupils' reading comprehension.

We would like to conclude as we began, recognising once again that reading is learning, and vindicating the importance of the study and recognition of language and literature at school, because school is a privileged place for the study of language and literature. The reader is made, and is made with good pedagogy. Here lies the capital importance of a correct didactics of language and literature, because it is necessary to learn correctly and practice grammar and lexis, because study increases register, improves comprehension, memory and school grades [56].

It seems a contradiction, then, to defend the culture of reading, writing and language at school, when school was created to transmit culture. However, the instrumentalisation of language and reading as something useful in commercial and immediate terms, and not as a vehicle for enrichment and as an end in itself, has generated a disdain for the humanities, and a feeling of futility in the study of reading and language. The evidence is clear [57, 58], which is why the use of language and the promotion of reading is essential, especially when the disastrous results in the PISA tests are observed. Students are responsible, as are families and society itself. But in the face of so much nonsense against the humanities, language and literature teachers must lead the resistance, and from a position as critical intellectuals [59] work on reading, writing and oral language as indispensable pillars of the school. And this requires perseverance, because being a good reader requires time and effort, but the benefits are high: good readers handle tools that improve their reading comprehension, tools and strategies that have been acquired at school [60], which is why proper training in language and literature didactics and a serious commitment to working on them at school on the part of teachers are so relevant, especially when their benefits have been demonstrated, both on a literary level and on an emotional level [61].

To read is to understand the world, to broaden horizons, to dialogue with others, to travel in time and space, to share ideas and reflections. To read is to create, to develop language, to broaden knowledge and, in short, to build the personality. Language and reading are firm pillars of the educational process, which is why we say that all education is language learning. Not only do we learn language and reading in language and literature classes, but reading comprehension is essential for the development of all subjects, it forms an inseparable part of thinking, and is a sine qua non of critical thinking. Because reading is learning.

VI. REFERENCES

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