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Scientific articles

Lectura infantil y vulnerabilidad: un estudio con educadoras comunitarias del CONAFE

Children's reading and vulnerability: a study with CONAFE community educators

Leitura e vulnerabilidade infantil: um estudo com Educadores comunitários da CONAFE

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Resumen

El objetivo del estudio fue identificar las necesidades académicas de las educadoras comunitarias que trabajan en contextos rurales con recursos limitados, pertenecientes al módulo 159 del Consejo Nacional de Fomento Educativo (CONAFE) de Nealtican, Puebla, México para impulsar la lectura con los infantes de educación inicial. Se utilizó un enfoque cualitativo, con diseño narrativo y alcance exploratorio. El estudio se sustenta en la teoría de la justicia y equidad de John Rawls. Se usaron grupos de discusión mediante reuniones virtuales y un formulario con apoyo de *Google Forms*

El estudio diagnosticó las necesidades de nueve educadoras comunitarias del CONAFE, quienes carecen de material didáctico para disminuir el rezago educativo y promover la lectura. En su mayoría jóvenes y con poca experiencia, expresaron su compromiso con el aprendizaje y el servicio comunitario, así como sus dificultades para equilibrar su vida laboral y familiar. Las capacitaciones recibidas han sido útiles para su labor, destacándose la diversidad de temas abordados. Finalmente, se identificó que el principal interés de las encuestadas fue el diseño de una guía de actividades que les ayude a impulsar la lectura en la primera infancia.

Palabras clave: inclusión educativa, primera infancia, lectura infantil, educadora comunitaria y educación inicial.

Abstract

The objective of the study was to identify the academic needs of community educators who work in rural contexts with limited resources, belonging to Module 159 of the National Council for Educational Development (CONAFE) of Nealtican, Puebla, Mexico to promote reading with education infants initial. A qualitative approach was used, with narrative design and exploratory scope. The study is based on the theory of justice and equity of John Rawls. Discussion groups were used through virtual meetings and a form with Google Forms support. The study diagnosed the needs of nine community educators of CONAFE, who lack didactic material to reduce educational lag and promote reading. Mostly young and with little experience, they expressed their commitment to community learning and service, as well as their difficulties to balance their working and family life. The training received have been useful for their work, highlighting the diversity of issues addressed. Finally, it was identified that the main interest of the surveyed was the design of a guide of activities that helps them promote reading in early childhood.

Keywords: educational inclusion, early childhood, children's reading, community educator and early childhood education.

Resumo

O objetivo do estudo foi identificar as necessidades acadêmicas dos educadores comunitários que trabalham em contextos rurais com recursos limitados, pertencentes ao módulo 159 do Conselho Nacional de Desenvolvimento Educacional (CONAFE) de Nealtican, Puebla, México, para promover a leitura com a educação infantil. Foi usada uma abordagem qualitativa, com design narrativo e escopo exploratório. O estudo é baseado na teoria da justiça e equidade de John Rawls. Grupos de discussão foram usados através de reuniões virtuais e um formulário com suporte ao Google Forms.

O estudo diagnosticou as necessidades de nove educadores comunitários da Conafe, que não têm material didático para reduzir o atraso educacional e promover a leitura. Principalmente jovens e com pouca experiência, eles expressaram seu compromisso com o aprendizado e o serviço da comunidade, bem como suas dificuldades para equilibrar sua vida de trabalho e

família. O treinamento recebido foi útil para o trabalho, destacando a diversidade de questões abordadas. Finalmente, foi identificado que o principal interesse do pesquisado foi o design de um guia de atividades que os ajuda a promover a leitura na primeira infância.

Palavras-chave: inclusão educacional, primeira infância, leitura infantil, educador comunitário e educação inicial.

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Introduction

CONAFE's non-school Early Childhood Education programs have had a primarily compensatory objective and have been directed, above all, at rural and marginalized urban populations. In CONAFE and in the Directorate of Indigenous Education (both agencies attached to the SEP) non-school and semi-school models prevail (Villaseñor and Pinto, 2015). The non-school modality of care and education for early childhood has spread throughout the world to reach children living in vulnerable situations.

In Mexico, CONAFE is responsible for managing compensatory programs to reduce educational gaps, including the Non-School Initial Education Program (EINE). In this context, Villaseñor (2018) argues that currently, EINE is the most important strategy for Early Childhood Education (AEPI) applied in spaces of social inequality in Mexico. From this perspective, the socioeconomic and cultural environment of the population of the Mexican Republic generates social and educational inequalities whose repercussions are most impactful during the first years of life.

General context of early childhood education programs in Mexico

Early childhood education in Mexico has gained relevance in recent years due to its impact on the comprehensive development of children from the prenatal stage to the age of 3. This level of education focuses on addressing the basic needs of children in terms of health, nutrition and early stimulation, and has been integrated into public policy as a fundamental tool to reduce the inequality gap and guarantee a solid foundation for future learning (SEP, 2020). In this context, early childhood education programs seek not only to care for infants, but also to support families, so that they can provide enriching environments that promote early childhood development (INEE, 2019).

CONAFE and its focus on marginalized areas

CONAFE has played a key role in the implementation of early childhood education programs, especially in rural and marginalized communities. This organization has developed initiatives aimed at ensuring that children living in vulnerable contexts have access to quality educational services from early childhood. One of CONAFE's priority approaches has been to work in regions where the educational offer is limited, developing strategies that promote equity and strengthen the capacities of parents and caregivers as the first educators of children (CONAFE, 2021).

The Non-School Early Childhood Education Program and its objectives

The main objective of CONAFE's Non-School Early Childhood Education Program is to provide guidance and support to families in marginalized communities so that they can provide a favorable environment for child development. Through community sessions and home visits, the program seeks to strengthen parental skills in topics such as early stimulation, nutrition, and health care. This program, aimed at children from 0 to 3 years old, also emphasizes the importance of training qualified community promoters to accompany families in this process, ensuring early and adequate intervention for infants (CONAFE, 2022).

CONAFE's mission and vision

CONAFE's mission is to offer equitable educational services to the country's most marginalized populations, with the aim of contributing to the development of a more just and inclusive society. Its vision is to become a national benchmark in the creation of educational opportunities, promoting equal conditions and the participation of communities in the educational process (CONAFE, 2022). Through its programs, CONAFE seeks to provide children in vulnerable conditions with the necessary tools to fully develop from early childhood.

On this same topic, it is reinforced that CONAFE has the mission of providing quality basic community education, with equity and social inclusion to girls, boys, young people and adolescents who live in marginalized and socially disadvantaged localities in our country, promoting their continuity. Likewise, CONAFE's vision is to provide quality initial and basic community education, inclusive and flexible in the face of the new social and cultural contexts of the country, which guarantees the right of access to education and the

satisfactory completion of basic education (CONAFE, 2021, as cited in De la Peña and Mandujano, 2024).

From this line of analysis, various strategies are identified that could contribute to reducing differences and correcting inequalities, promoting a more socially equitable environment in Mexico; however, it is considered that AEPI is the most important way to promote this change. It is worth noting that, in Mexico, the EINE Program is under the direction of CONAFE, a decentralized entity of the Federal Public Administration (Villaseñor, 2018).

From this perspective, CONAFE's EINE Program aims to provide high-quality educational services in rural and indigenous areas with high levels of marginalization or educational and social backwardness, in order to promote the comprehensive development of children from before birth until they are three years and eleven months old. In addition, it seeks to offer support to mothers, fathers and caregivers. In this sense, since 1992, CONAFE, through the Early Childhood Education Program, has provided a quality socio-educational space for families with children under four years of age, strengthening parenting practices that favor overall development in early childhood and human development in rural and indigenous communities.

Based on the above, this article analyzes the impact of CONAFE's Non-School Early Childhood Education Program in rural communities, highlighting its contributions to educational equity.

Problem statement

This study seeks to understand the limitations to which CONAFE educational promoters are exposed from a theoretical and practical perspective, proposing strategies that favor the promotion of children's reading in rural contexts, whose non-school educational modality provides educational attention to rural and indigenous communities with high marginalization or with greater educational and social lag (Villaseñor, 2018).

In this scenario, community educators are identified who provide their services in limited spaces such as adapted houses or by making home visits to guide the process of shared parenting with children in early education. Despite these strategies, a series of needs are evident for community educators to promote children's reading in young children, which seems to be undervalued or under-stimulated.

As part of an educational community that trains teachers for Early Childhood Education at the Benemérito Instituto Normal del Estado (BINE) “Gral. Juan Crisóstomo Bonilla”, there are theoretical and didactic references that constitute solid arguments to establish the importance of promoting actions such as reading in early childhood through planned activities and the use of teaching resources. Although the BINE trains teachers with solid theoretical references, community educators face limitations related to the promotion of children's reading, derived from their lack of formal pedagogical training.

At the same time, it is recognized that community educators do not have a bachelor's degree that provides them with pedagogical knowledge to promote children's reading among the youngest children. For this reason, the interest of this study focuses on recognizing their reality and correcting these deficiencies based on studies that show data that help in reflection and decision-making that contribute to the comprehensive training of children in early childhood education at CONAFE.

In this context, the following research question is raised: What are the needs of CONAFE community educators to promote reading with children in Early Childhood Education? At the same time, the general objective is to analyze and propose solutions to the needs of community educators to promote children's reading with Early Childhood Education students.

Theoretical foundation

The Sectoral Education Program (PSE) 2020-2024 of the Federal Government of Mexico proposes to carry out priority strategies and specific actions to achieve six priority objectives of the PSE 2020-2024, by articulating 30 priority strategies, made up of a set of 274 specific actions, which will be implemented throughout the government administration to achieve the educational project of the Fourth Transformation (PSE, 2020).

At the same time, the project is based on three priority objectives, described below: Priority objective 1.- Guarantee the right of the population in Mexico to an equitable, inclusive, intercultural and comprehensive education, which places childhood and adolescence as the central pillar of care.

At the same time, the postulates of the State Development Plan 2019-2024 of Puebla (2020), highlight axis 4. Reduction of inequalities. Evidently, the present study is based on this axis, because it seeks to reduce the gaps of social inequality, to create the conditions of well-being for all.

Furthermore, the 2019-2024 State Development Plan includes the 2020-2024 Sectoral Education Program for the state of Puebla, which offers the vision of being an organization that guarantees the right to education for children and adolescents by placing them at the center of its decisions.

The 2019-2024 Sectoral Education Program of the state of Puebla establishes the 4A model as the center of its actions, which proposes four dimensions: affordability, accessibility, acceptability and adaptability. This educational model privileges the collaborative and co-responsible work of government agencies, schools and citizens, establishing strategies to reinforce attention in contexts with fewer development opportunities.

According to the General Guidelines of the Community Education Practice Training System, community educators (CE) have several obligations, functions and responsibilities, including:

- Carry out an educational practice based on a pedagogy that promotes reflection on parenting practices during early childhood.
- Carry out the community educational practice at the time agreed with the Community Education Promotion Association (APEC) for the initial education level, with a minimum of 2 hours.
- At the end of the school year, formally deliver the educational spaces, teaching materials, furniture and equipment used to the President of APEC (CONAFE, 2022).

Regarding the conceptualization of the community educator, the term has evolved from community instructor, community education leaders, educational promoters and community educators. To become a community educator, there are basic and accessible requirements such as the following: having completed secondary education, if a minor, having the consent of the guardians and successfully completing intensive training (De la Peña and Mandujano, 2024).

For the above reasons, there are many young people between sixteen and twenty-five years of age who are interested in participating as community educators, with basic or high school education, who must be trained during a one-month course to carry out teaching tasks . Sessions from Monday to Friday with daily sessions of seven hours. (De la Peña and Mandujano, 2024). Obviously, this training will present certain shortcomings when compared to people who are pursuing a bachelor's degree.

CONAFE's pedagogical proposal is based on the so-called ABCD Model (Learning based on Collaboration and Dialogue), which coincides with UNESCO's Sustainable Development goals. But what is a community educator? CONAFE (2022, as cited in De la Peña and Mandujano, 2024) defines it as the educational figure originating from the community who receives training and support for the development of learning management to share it with children, adolescents, young people, pregnant people and adults.

, on the other hand, is the educational activity offered to infants from birth to three years of age. Its main objective is to promote the overall development of students by promoting possibilities for interaction and communication with others, as well as to stimulate the areas of cognitive, motor and socio-emotional development. (MEJOREDU, 2021).

To achieve the above, the role of educational agents, understood as that figure specialized in early childhood care, is vital. Therefore, this perspective of comprehensive childhood development must prevail based on continuous work by educational agents who seek the comprehensive development of infants through nutrition, health and interaction with their peers. (MEJOREDU, 2021).

In this order of ideas and returning to the topic of vulnerability, this can be understood from economic aspects, since it is basically measured in terms of the capacity to consume and acquire goods, and on this same basis it is perceived that a certain person, family or community is vulnerable or not in relation to their economic capacity (Carrera, 2009).

Therefore, it is stated that groups or populations in vulnerable situations are defined as population groups that are statistically below the poverty line. These groups manage to receive income due to socioeconomic conditions that tend to be detrimental, not having assets that favor overcoming poverty conditions, having excessively low consumption standards per person, and being in situations of job insecurity (Carrera, 2009).

On the other hand, on the subject of reading, it is argued that infants have the right to read the same book as many times as they deem necessary, and the pedagogue, as a mediator, must be present for this gesture of repetition, lovingly (SEP, 2017). In this context, babies present a bond and first approach with books by sucking on them, shaking them, observing them, babbling, dialoguing in their own way with the characters or the circumstances that the books pose (SEP, 2017). Therefore, books provide the child with symbolic baggage so that he can begin to decipher the world, to discover who he is and can be (SEP, 2013). But if the reading opportunities are not fluid, loving and generous, these powers remain dormant in children (SEP, 2017).

From an early age, infants have highly developed senses: they perceive more than adults and have a better sense of smell, hearing and sight, as well as being able to make more complex interpretations through repetition (López, 2016). For a baby, a book is initially a toy. Therefore, they interact with books by sucking on them, shaking them, looking at them and babbling, which allows them to establish a kind of dialogue with the characters or situations in the stories. If children have been in contact with books since they were babies, most of them, by the age of 2, already clearly understand the concept of reading.

Just as long before the age of two, children distinguish letters from drawings. Observations made with baby readers show us a differentiated act of pointing for words and drawings. All of these elements are crucial in the reading experience and then in writing, and also for the growth of colloquial oral language or conversation. But if reading opportunities are not fluid, loving and generous, these powers remain dormant in children (SEP, 2017).

Good reading “accompaniment” mediators lead us to reflect on mediators, such as teachers, reading promoters and parents. We have observed that young children, far from being inexperienced readers, are avid readers. It is up to us, the adults who accompany them, to provide them with good nourishment for this voracity, and this nourishment materializes in enriching books and in adequate mediation methods (López, 2016).

The study is based on John Rawls' theory of justice (as cited in Bolívar, 2005) which states that all people have the same right to receive education, and that social and economic inequalities must meet two key conditions: first, they must be related to positions and jobs accessible to all under conditions of equal opportunities; and second, these inequalities must favor the most disadvantaged members of society, according to the difference principle.

Rawls (as cited in Bolívar, 2005) addresses the difference principle, which establishes the need to focus the greatest efforts on the most disadvantaged groups or people. This implies that, in order to achieve real equality of opportunity, not just formal equality, it is essential to implement active measures that favor the less privileged, preventing them from continuing to be at a disadvantage. Consequently, social origin should not influence access opportunities.

Rawls (2002, as cited in Bolívar, 2005), states that society must guarantee equal educational opportunities for all, regardless of family income level. In other words, two people with the same "will and talents" should have the same chances of academic success .

Materials and methods

This section describes the research approach, the instruments used to collect data, how the information was analyzed, and the results.

Qualitative approach

The research approach was qualitative, which is characterized by being “inductive, open, flexible, cyclical and emergent; that is, it emerges in such a way that it is capable of adapting and evolving as knowledge about the reality studied is generated” (Bisquerra, 2009). At the same time, qualitative research allows solving everyday problems and making the social world understandable, seeking to improve people's quality of life, focusing on human interpretation and interactive communication through serial steps such as planning, identification, execution and analysis (Alvarez-Gayou , 2003).

Qualitative researchers are sensitive to the effects they themselves have on the people they study. They have been described as naturalists, meaning that they interact with informants in a natural and non-intrusive way (Álvarez- Gayou , 2003).

Tools

The instruments for data collection were the discussion group, direct and participant observation, the field diary and a *Google form. forms* with multiple choice and open questions. Therefore, during the online sessions and using the discussion group technique, information is collected through participant observation in the field diary for later analysis.

Data collection was carried out using a field diary. This resource allowed strengthening the connection between theory and practice. Thus, practice and theory complement each other, which makes field diaries acquire greater depth in their content, given that in research there is an interdependence between both elements (Martínez, 2007).

The field diary is a constant record of the decisions taken during the initial design phase, as well as the arguments at the time. This allowed the researcher to justify the modifications and reformulations of the research problem and the strategies used, based on the information available (Monje, 2011).

Direct and participant observation

Direct observation is a key factor in the extraction of information; we all use it on a daily basis, which gives rise to common sense and cultural knowledge (Álvarez- Gayou , 2003). Therefore, using it does not only imply obtaining visual data; in fact, all the senses are involved.

Participant observation was also used as an interactive technique during virtual meetings, and field notes were subsequently written describing what happened, following the guidelines of McMillan and Shumacher (2005).

Data analysis

The analysis of the information was carried out through direct coding. The use of observation and its recording in the field diary collects data of different types: written, verbal and non-verbal language, observable behaviors and images (Hernández, et al, 2014).

Results

The initial activities consisted of managing online sessions with CONAFE managers and community educators, with the participation of 4 managers and 9 community educators, with the intention of carrying out a needs assessment using the discussion group technique, which also allowed establishing a link with the participants in the study.

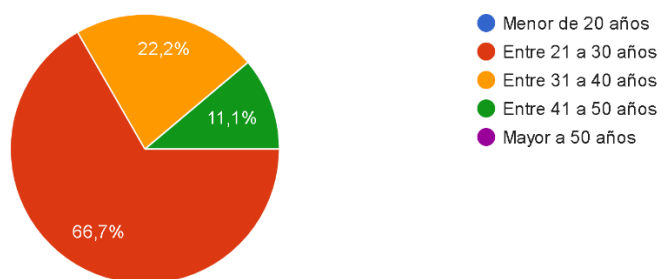
From this analysis, the problem is the lack of teaching materials by educators to reduce the delay and the lack of opportunity to promote reading in children; the needs assessment was carried out using a form with 8 reagents. It is noted that the participants of the study were nine community educators from module 159 of CONAFE, belonging to the community of Nealtican, Puebla. They were proposed by the CONAFE directors because they were part of a work area.

As part of the study, two virtual meetings were held using the *Google Meet platform* . These sessions aimed to provide a space for dialogue and reflection, where the participating community educators were able to express their concerns, expectations and needs regarding pedagogical support focused on promoting children's reading among their students. During the meetings, the teachers shared different perspectives on the challenges they face in their educational contexts, as well as the strategies they consider most effective to promote the habit of reading at an early age.

At one of the meetings, a structured form with eight items was applied to gather key information about the experiences and perceptions of the nine educators involved in the study. All participants responded to the form, providing valuable input that contributes to the analysis of the current situation of reading teaching in their classrooms. The data collected has been organized and is presented below in a series of tables and figures, which will allow a clear and precise visualization of the results obtained, as well as identifying trends and areas of opportunity for future pedagogical interventions.

Figure 1. Distribution of community educators by age range.

1. Registre su rango de edad
9 respuestas



Source: own design

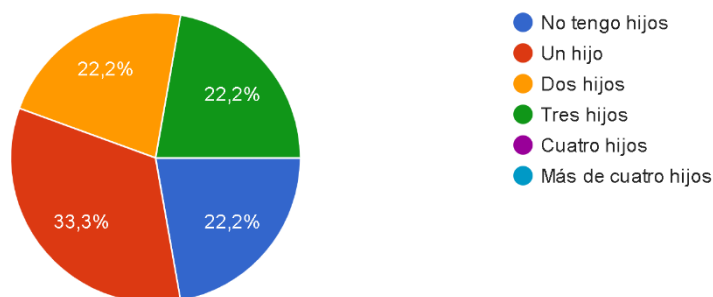
As can be seen in Figure 1, one educator is between 41 and 50 years old, two are between 31 and 40 years old, and six are between 21 and 30 years old. It is therefore perceived that the majority of community educators are a young population.

Therefore, there is a limited experience in complex situations, given that youth may be associated with less professional experience. This could be a challenge in the implementation of educational programs in highly vulnerable contexts, where it is important to know how to handle complex situations involving economic deficiencies, social problems or cultural barriers.

Consequently, while the youth of community educators can bring energy and flexibility to educational programs, it also brings challenges related to a lack of experience. However, with adequate support and ongoing training, they can become effective agents of change in the vulnerable communities where they operate.

Figure 2. Participants' responses about their number of children

2. Anote el número de hijos que tiene
9 respuestas



Source: own design

As can be seen in Figure 2, the teachers participating in the study present a variety of responses to the indicator number of children. Two of them claim not to have children, three claim to have only one child (with the highest percentage in red), with 2 and 3 children with percentages of 22.2% for two of them.

The number of children is an interesting piece of information that could influence educational work, especially in the context of community educators. Having children can have implications both personally and professionally, as educators who are mothers must balance the demands of their home with educational responsibilities. However, it should not be automatically assumed that the number of children directly affects the quality of educational care they provide. Therefore, some key points that could be considered in a more in-depth analysis are:

- **Burden of responsibilities:** Educators with children, especially with more than one, may face greater challenges in reconciling their family obligations with their professional performance. This aspect could influence their availability of time for class preparation, participation in extracurricular activities or individual support for students.
- **Empathy and understanding:** On the other hand, educators who are mothers could develop greater empathy towards children and their families, which could improve their ability to understand the emotional and contextual needs of their students.
- **External factors:** The community context and support networks (family,

educational institutions) also influence how a teacher with children can manage her time and dedication to work.

Although the number of children may be a factor affecting the educational performance of community educators, it is important not to view it in isolation. Other elements need to be considered, such as family support, access to resources, the specific demands of the community where they work, and their own organizational capacity. A more detailed exploration of these factors could provide a clearer picture of how the number of children affects (or does not affect) the educational performance of participants.

Table 1. Participants' responses about the courses taken

Informant	Answer
1	The courses have helped me improve my sessions and help mothers recognize each parenting practice they perform during the day with their little ones.
2	Course: Heart to Heart
3	Starter workshop
4	Webinar, Start-up Workshop
5	They are developed by specialists in neuroscience, nutrition, pedagogy, among others. They address topics such as: children's rights, practices and parenting, child development, emotional interactions, proper nutrition, strategies to enrich the environment of children and their families.
6	All of CONAFE
7	The workshops
8	A training on how to learn according to age
9	Training workshops, webinars

Source: own design

In response to the indicator courses taken, the participants answered about induction or support courses given by CONAFE. They also fulfilled the objective of training them and providing them with the necessary knowledge for their functions.

The analysis of the responses obtained reflects a variety of types of courses and training that the educators have received, mostly related to their work at the National Council for Educational Development (CONAFE). Below are some key points:

- Diversity of topics covered: The responses indicate that the courses offered cover a wide range of topics relevant to the work of community educators. For example, areas such as neuroscience, nutrition, children's rights, child development and affective interactions are mentioned (response 5). This diversity of topics suggests that the trainings are designed to offer comprehensive training, addressing both pedagogical aspects and personal

and family development.

- Practical application: Several responses highlight the usefulness of the courses in the daily practice of educators. For example, Informant 1 notes that the courses have helped her improve her sessions and support mothers in recognizing their parenting practices. This demonstrates that the trainings not only provide theoretical knowledge, but also practical tools that educators can directly implement in their interactions with children and their families.
- Importance of initial training: Several participants mention induction courses or workshops, such as “heart to heart” (informant 2) or “starter workshop” (informants 3 and 4), suggesting that CONAFE offers solid initial training to prepare educators for their role. These introductory courses appear to be essential to provide educators with a solid knowledge base before beginning their work in the communities.
- Continuity in training: Some responses, such as that of informant 9, mention participation in training workshops and webinars , which indicates that educators have access to ongoing training throughout their professional career. This is key to keeping their knowledge and skills up to date in areas as diverse as child development and pedagogical strategies.
- Course specialization: Response 5 highlights that courses are designed by specialists in various areas, suggesting that the training offered by CONAFE has high-level professional support. This ensures that educators receive quality training based on research and updated approaches to child development and pedagogy.

Table 2. Length of time that participants have been working at CONAFE

Informant	Answer
1	5 years
2	1 year 5 months
3	1 year 4 months
4	3 years
5	I joined a month ago
6	2 years
7	3
8	1
9	2 years 7 months

Source: own design

The group of participants in the study has been working at CONAFE for a relatively short time. With the exception of informant 1, who has 5 years of seniority, all the others have been working for 3 to 1 year. There is one case of having recently joined (1 month).

This distribution suggests that the group of participants is mostly at an early stage of their career at CONAFE, which could influence the way they perceive their work, the challenges they face and their long-term expectations within the institution. In addition, the fact that one participant has significantly more experience may provide a more mature or consolidated perspective within the study.

Table 3. Motivations of participants to work at CONAFE

Informant	Answer
1	Being able to learn more and thus be able to support my community
2	I like working with children
3	Interaction with children
4	Guide families and help them in their parenting practices
5	Knowing how important it is to provide timely care for early childhood.
6	A job that would give me time to do other activities
7	Provide information to mothers
8	Your way of working
9	How we work with children and mothers in the rural community, how we adapt to certain places to be able to give the sessions.

Source: own design

Regarding the motivations for participating in CONAFE activities, the informants project an altruistic work, of guidance, help and cooperation in shared parenting in collaboration with mothers for a better development of infants. They also reveal a strong inclination towards community service, highlighting the following aspects:

- Commitment to learning and community (Informant 1): This participant emphasizes the importance of learning more as a way to improve her ability to support the community. Her motivation is focused on personal development through work experience, suggesting that work at CONAFE is perceived not only as a job, but also as an opportunity to grow and give back to society.
- Passion for working with children (Informants 2, 3, 5, 8, 9): Five of the participants express their interest in interacting with children as a central motivation. Informant 2 simply highlights her pleasure in working with children, while informant 3 highlights interaction as a key aspect. In the case of informant 5, the motivation is focused on timely attention to early childhood, which suggests an awareness of the importance of early development. Informant 9 adds the dimension of community work and adaptation in rural environments, which shows an appreciation of the challenge of adapting to different circumstances to carry out her work.
- Guiding and supporting families (Informants 4, 7): The responses of these participants reflect a motivation that goes beyond children, focused on direct work with families and mothers. Informant 4 sees her work as an opportunity to guide families and help them in their parenting practices, suggesting a vocation oriented towards family support. Informant 7 also mentions her interest in providing information to mothers, emphasizing her role as a transmitter of knowledge.
- Work-life balance (Informant 6): This participant mentioned that she was looking for a job that would allow her to do other activities. Although her motivation seems to be more pragmatic, it is linked to personal and professional balance, which may be related to the characteristics of the position at CONAFE, which could offer greater flexibility to combine other responsibilities.
- Assessment of the working model (Informant 8): Informant 8 mentions CONAFE's way of working as her main motivation. This suggests that she values the methods or organizational structures that CONAFE offers, which could be related to the innovation or effectiveness of the institution's approach.

In general, the participants' responses highlight three main motivations:

- Altruism and social commitment: Several participants see their work at CONAFE as a way to support their community, guide families, and improve parenting practices. This reflects an altruistic vocation that connects with CONAFE's educational and social missions.
- Interaction with children and families: Working with early childhood and the community is a recurring motivation, highlighting the importance of direct contact with children and their families, and the satisfaction they find in that role. This shows a strong orientation towards education and support in rural and disadvantaged contexts.
- Work flexibility and adaptation: Some participants mention the flexibility or adaptability of work at CONAFE, suggesting that this context allows them to balance their work life with other activities or adapt to challenging environments in rural areas.

In conclusion, the set of motivations shows that work at CONAFE is not only seen as a job, but as an opportunity for personal development, social service and community strengthening. The participants project a work focused on child care and collaboration with families to generate a positive impact in rural communities, aligning with CONAFE's objectives of promoting education in marginalized areas. This altruistic and community-supporting approach suggests that work experience is not perceived solely as a professional activity, but as a life project that contributes to social well-being.

Table 4. Age of children cared for by participants

Informant	Answer
1	3 to 9 months and 1 to 3 years
2	From 3 months to 3 years
3	0 to 4 years
4	0 to 3 years
5	Between 0 and 3 years
6	Half are less than a year old and the other half are 3 years old.
7	From 1 to 3 years
8	3 years 11 months
9	From 2 to 3 years

Source: own design

The analysis of the age of the children cared for by the participants in the study reveals that the group of infants is included within the early childhood stage, with ages ranging from

0 months to 4 years. This category is key within the early education services that CONAFE offers, since it focuses on the early development of children, a crucial period for their cognitive, social and emotional development. Below, we delve into the analysis of this information:

- **Relevance of early education:** All children cared for by the participants are in the early education period. This is a crucial time for the comprehensive development of children, since at this stage the foundations for cognitive, affective, motor and social development are laid. The participants are involved in a task of great responsibility, since the interactions and experiences they provide at these ages will significantly impact the later development of the children.
- **Variety in the ages served:** While most participants focus on children in the 1- to 3-year-old range, the presence of children under one year of age in several groups adds complexity to the educators' work. These children require more specific care and personalized attention due to their rapid development in the first months of life. As children grow, their needs change, and participants must adapt their teaching practices based on the ages of the infants.
- **Challenges and pedagogical adaptations:** Participants who work with a wide age range (such as informants 1, 3 and 6) must face the challenge of balancing activities and methods that respond to both younger children and those who are already at a more advanced stage of child development. This implies a great deal of flexibility and adaptability in their educational work.
- **Implications for training of participants:** The fact that participants work with children of these ages suggests that they must be highly trained in topics related to early childhood development, since the first years of life are crucial for future development. This highlights the importance of ongoing training in areas such as early stimulation, developmental psychology, and age-differentiated educational practices.

Table 5. Materials suggested by participants to promote children's reading

Informant	Answer
1	Toys to assemble, books to encourage reading in children, sensory books, painting hoops, chalk, tamgrams, puzzles, balls, foam mats or baby mats, etc.
2	Assembly toys, puppets, cards with numbers and letters.
3	Mats, Legos, ball pits, sponge balls and hoops
4	Balls, hoops, cubes and books.
5	Anything that can help develop children's creativity and imagination, such as: stories, colored paint, musical instruments, materials for cutting, paintbrushes, and balloons.
6	Paper, leaves, paint and glue
7	Puzzles, assembly, among others
8	Hoops, paints, leaves, cones, balls, plasticine, acrylic paints, glue, etc.
9	Colorful materials, textures, stories and materials that are easy to transport.

Source: own design

Table 5 presents the materials identified by participants as useful for promoting reading in early childhood. The table shows a variety of materials suggested by participants to promote children's reading and the creative development in the early childhood. These include sensory books , building toys , balls , paints , puzzles , rugs , musical instruments , and colorful and textured materials . In addition, they mention resources such as cards with numbers and letters , stories , and materials that stimulate the imagination and the motor skills of children. In general, the materials proposed aim at the sensory stimulation , the fun learning and ease of transport , key elements to encourage the habit of reading from an early age.

Table 6. Activities suggested by participants to integrate the activity guide

Informant	Answer
1	How to improve games so that parents can support their little ones in their development.
2	Games and explanations of how they help them.
3	Games, songs and guides to create our own teaching materials.
4	About children's waste.
5	Book or movie recommendations for children that promote values.
6	Craft activities.
7	Information on how educational materials benefit children.
8	A little bit of everything, according to the children's learning.
9	Games, stories, songs and how to make some material with children and mothers step by step.

Source: own design

Within the courses that teachers in training in Early Childhood Education take at BINE, students learn to design various materials for their future teaching practice. For this reason, it is considered a priority to carry out activities linked between CONAFE and BINE, with the purpose of contributing to the comprehensive development of children in early childhood education. A relevant activity may be to implement projects and activities such as the guide (table 6) suggested by CONAFE's educational promoters.

Discussion of the results

Based on the results of the research, it is perceived that there are material needs and academic guidance for community educators to provide optimal care to children in early childhood education. The research findings are related to what was done by De la Peña and Mandujano (2024) who proposed to investigate the difficulties and strategies for the daily work of community educators, given that both authors had the opportunity to participate in the program during the 2022-2023 school year in a community in the state of Jalisco.

In this research, it is stated that the training received by community educators is not sufficient to face the challenges of teaching intervention, age (very young people) sometimes makes it difficult for them to face and solve the problems they face. They also express in their problematic approach the stress they face every day, describing that they were able to observe that a good number of community educators who enter CONAFE do so out of necessity and not by vocation, which causes their intervention with the students to be inadequate.

To collect data for the research conducted by De la Peña and Mandujano (2024), an interview script and a questionnaire were used. The results were similar to the present one, due to the fact that there is a "lack of materials and time to carry them out"

On the other hand, Juárez (2020) published a work entitled "What did being a rural teacher teach me? Experiences of young people in Mexico", which examines the experiences of young people who served as CONAFE teachers to identify what that experience left for their lives. This research is linked to the present study because there is an interest in highlighting the important and noble work carried out by community educators.

In this study, the author used a qualitative approach, since the data was collected through semi-structured interviews with 10 informants from the states of Veracruz, San Luis Potosí and Oaxaca, with an age range of 20 to 43 years, with educational levels ranging from high school to doctoral in education. The participants were 6 men and 4 women. Regarding

occupation, three were high school students, two were bachelor's students, one was a master's student, one was a housewife, one was an educational assistant, one was an industrial safety worker and one was a high school teacher.

The interview scripts were structured around four main themes: 1) Knowledge, experiences, and values acquired as rural educational figures; 2) Impact of their time in service on their lives; 3) Challenges and achievements during their period of service; and 4) Suggestions for current CONAFE figures and officials. Among the findings, it was observed that six of the ten interviewees chose to work at CONAFE due to the economic incentive. Although the scholarship is modest (\$1,200.00), it is significant in their personal circumstances.

Among the results of the Juárez study (2020), several aspects stand out, highlighting the community work of educators, the values of companionship, friendship, empathy and respect for the community. The role of young people and the great work they do in rural communities and the personal development they experience are also highlighted. The value of helping the community, the respect and recognition received from it, the autonomy they developed by becoming sociable, humble and supportive, the vision towards the needs of the community, being self-taught and learning to live on a low budget are also highlighted. Unlike what was observed by Juárez (2020), where values such as empathy and respect were identified, this study reveals greater concern about the lack of teaching materials.

These results coincide with those indicated by Zavala and Rivera (2023), authors who addressed the problem from the perspective of Community Education Leaders, who are part of the National Council for Educational Development (CONAFE) program and teach in marginalized rural communities in Guanajuato, Mexico. The research had a qualitative approach, using the focus group technique to dialogue with the participants. The results were structured into two main axes: the incorporation into teaching practice from a perspective of subjectivity and training, and the experience of the principles of the program as a pedagogical ideal that has not yet been fully consolidated. In addition, some actions are suggested that could improve the program in its objective of offering quality education for the rural and urban-marginal population in Mexico (Zavala and Rivera, 2023).

Based on all of the above and considering the results of this research based on the content, it was evident the need to establish an academic link between two institutions CONAFE-BINE for the realization of community projects (Díaz-Barriga, 2015) that enable situated and experiential learning, which is obtained through teaching interventions in real

educational settings, that is, learning based on service in community contexts, also called learning by serving. On the one hand, it would benefit teachers in training to fulfill their social service and carry out teaching practice activities and on the other hand, it would support the work of community educators to promote children's reading in rural contexts.

In fact, the new Plans and Programs for training teachers in Mexico establish the term “service learning” which refers to experiential learning approaches, based on John Dewey’s theory, which consist of significant direct learning experiences in real environments, whether institutional, work or community. That is, through the project, students of the Bachelor’s Degree in Early Childhood Education at BINE will strengthen their learning by applying activities in real scenarios.

The term project (Ander- Egg and Aguilar, 1998) refers to a set of specific, interrelated and coordinated activities that are carried out in order to produce certain goods and services capable of satisfying needs or solving problems. Therefore, service-based learning is an educational approach in which students acquire knowledge and develop by actively participating in service experiences that are carefully organized and directly connected to the needs of a community (Díaz-Barriga, 2006).

The implementation of this project would be a factor in eradicating a possible exclusion from the stimulation of reading practices in early childhood in students who live in vulnerable situations. Because the inclusive perspective focuses on some of the most pressing social problems that have to do with the various forms of injustice, discrimination and exclusion, due to the denial of differences due to social, economic, ethnic, religious or gender origin (Carbonell, 2015).

For this reason, it is proposed to follow up on this research and provide academic support to the group of community educators through the implementation of a project called "Reading Babies" which would have the purpose of establishing academic support so that the participants design teaching materials, identify their application through a guide, involve parents in the design and application of activities with infants so that they contribute to the comprehensive development of the girls and boys in their care.

Therefore, the proposal for the design of social and cultural intervention projects, presented by Ander- Egg and Aguilar (1998), is based on the need to address and resolve a problematic situation existing in a community or real context. The authors emphasize the importance of meticulous planning, and their approach has been widely recognized and used in Latin America, both in the field of socio-educational intervention and in the practical

teaching of various university courses in the social area. Particularly relevant is their strategy for the design of the project, which is based on answering 10 key questions (such as what, why, how), which are then developed in the formal sections of the project.

The aim is for students or those developing the project to begin with a first approximation by answering these questions, which will help them clarify the purpose, scope and intervention strategy. According to the authors, it is crucial that every project proposes a concrete and well-defined action plan, with clearly established products and results. It is important to note that the key elements of this approach are based on a scientific and technical approach appropriate for the field of social sciences.

The educational movement that promotes service learning has several references, initially highlighting John Dewey's ideas on democratic education and experiential learning, along with the components of Shön's reflective teaching. Approaches such as humanism and sociocultural constructivism are also mentioned (Díaz-Barriga, 2006).

Based on the above, it is expected that with the implementation of the “Reading Babies” project the following results would be obtained:

- Enthusiastic participation of the 9 community educators in the design of the “activity guide to promote reading at an early age”, contributing suggestions, ideas and experiences.
- Collaboration of community educators and parents in the design of cardboard and sensorial books, through the application in an online or in-person workshop, the latter depending on the available resources.
- Acquisition of various materials with the support of altruistic institutions to donate to community educators so that they can be useful in implementing the activities: books, mats, mobile baby libraries, puppets, puzzles, etc.
- The main beneficiaries of the project will be the children of the community of Nealtican, Puebla, who will be stimulated with activities to bring them closer to children's reading and therefore influence the development of the cognitive, social, emotional and motor areas.

Conclusions

Books are essential for children and should be seen as companions in their games, dreams and daily life. They should provide them with words and images that reflect both their immediate environment and their inner world and beyond. Books should offer them a symbolic heritage that allows them to begin to decipher the world, to discover their identity and potential, as well as awaken their interest in the written word and allow them to experience the vastness of the imagination. Rereading a book can be motivated by the desire to deepen the knowledge that is being acquired, but it can also be simply for the pleasure of reliving the emotions that that story or poem gives them, enjoying the games of language.

When you hear “reading in early childhood” you might think that it doesn’t make sense because children simply “don’t understand grammatically, nor do they know how to read and therefore it would be a waste of time.” Various authors and neurology specialists point out that it is these first interactions with books, songs, onomatopoeia, plays, etc. that will allow the child to achieve adequate development in the linguistic and social areas, thus allowing them to communicate and make known what their needs and experiences are throughout their growth.

Teachers have the opportunity and responsibility to provide children with as much cultural background as possible, and what better way to do this than through books. We must remember that as experienced adults we are the tools to facilitate children's full access to reading, or as some specialists refer to it, to be part of the zone of proximal development with them, that is, to enable the child's actions and activities in a collaborative way with us so that later they will do it by themselves and with their peers.

Appreciation for children's literature is not limited to contact with books; it can also be fostered through creative activities that stimulate the imagination and awaken significant emotions in children. Therefore, working with reading in childhood is fundamental, as it strengthens the structure of thought, stimulates brain activity and encourages self-reflection. This allows them to understand, interpret and connect a text with other knowledge and experiences, something that will make a big difference in adult life.

Therefore, based on the experience of the rapprochement between BINE and CONAFE, the possibility of establishing academic links to increase the participation of normal school students in community projects for the benefit of disadvantaged communities is seen. Preferably, to share the knowledge that normal school students are acquiring as part of their professional training, with community educators, who carry out important work,

sometimes in adverse conditions. However, with the collaboration between community educators (CONAFE) and educational agents in training (LEI-BINE), great achievements could be achieved to promote children's reading in CONAFE spaces.

Future lines of research

The study involved nine community educators from CONAFE and was only an approach to understand their needs, leaving open lines of research, such as the following:

- 1) Design and implementation of a project involving BINE teachers in training. This project will seek to offer academic support to CONAFE community educators for the development of educational materials and strategies that promote early childhood reading in children in early education, through community projects .
- 2) To further explore the experiences that community educators have had and how these have influenced their personal and professional growth.

Highlighting that these lines of research are proposed as a response to the needs detected in community educators, specifically in terms of training, educational materials and intervention strategies.

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