

# ***La formación de docentes como creadores de literatura infantil ecuatoriana: una experiencia de investigación acción participativa***

## ***Teaching formation as creators of Ecuadorian children's literature: An experience on Participative Action Research***

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**Resumen:** Con Investigación Acción Participativa, el proyecto realizado con estudiantes de Licenciatura en Educación ha contribuido a desarrollar escritores de cuentos infantiles. La innovación cumplida es la tarea de, a la vez que leer y analizar cuentos infantiles ecuatorianos, escribir obras para niños de educación inicial. Un indicador ha sido que sean genuinamente ecuatorianos e inéditos. El resultado ha sido la creación literaria donde han actuado personajes de la naturaleza ecuatoriana: un cóndor, un cuy, un cangrejo, una llama, un hermoso colibrí. Se han manejado técnicas de investigación cualitativa: observación participante, encuesta, entrevista y el estudio de fuentes primarias y secundarias.

**Palabras clave:** Investigación educativa; Investigación acción; Innovación; Investigación cualitativa; Observación participante

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**Abstract:** With participatory action research, the project carried out with undergraduate students in education has contributed to developing writers of children's stories. Met innovation is the task of, as well as read and analyze fairy tales Ecuadorian, writing works for children in early education. An indicator has been that they are genuinely Ecuadorian and unpublished. The result has been the literary creation where have acted characters of Ecuadorian nature: a beautiful Hummingbird, a condor, a crab, a flame, a Guinea pig. Qualitative research techniques have been managed: participant observation, survey, interview and the study of primary and secondary sources.

**Keywords:** Educational research; Action Research; innovation; qualitative investigation; participant observation

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## **Introduction**

The place that research should occupy in higher education is very important because it reveals itself as a topic of transcendent social interest for all spheres in today's world. The centrality of the research in relation to the other substantive university processes is given by the possible contributions of higher education to generate changes and innovations that overcome the great conflicts and challenges of humanity.

In this sense, despite the efforts and achievements of recent years, in the Ecuadorian context a dividing line is still established among teachers and researchers and the idea that every teacher should be a researcher, from their academic practice, it is not interpreted by all involved as a pressing need and less as a possible fact.

If this is so for the universe of higher education, it is necessary to express that for the training of teachers new and enormous efforts are needed, so that during training research is conceived as an inherent process of university life, while young people prepare and form the investigative skills necessary for them to serve as innovators in education, once they graduate. Consequently, for the improvement of teacher training in Ecuador, research is a fundamental factor. Hence, the proposal for the new training model, planned as an innovation project, recommends action research.

**The scientific problem** of the research that is exposed here has been how to influence the development of skills for Ecuadorian children's literary writing in university students of Bachelor of Education, Mention Initial Education, during the 2018 course.

The Didactic course of Children's Literature presents the different literary genres and the techniques of their use are studied according to the ages of initial education. Although Ecuadorian literature works in all genres, in the narrative generally well-known stories from the international classical tradition have been prioritized. So, in this research we worked with themes, characters, revealing arguments of the Ecuadorian nature and culture, which required previous inquiries by the students.

Young people who already work recognize that the works of the universal tradition, such as Snow White, Pinocchio, Cinderella, among others, are the ones they use because Ecuadorian children's stories are little known. Also, there is a tendency to read more to children than to narrate stories and other works. Although orality is predominant in our Latin American cultures, students do not reveal storytelling and storytelling skills or recitation skills. In this case, knowing how to narrate their own works to children was a fruitful experience, as will be explained later.

The research presented has had the objective of carrying out an educational innovation, based on participatory action research, for the training of initial education teachers as creators of Ecuadorian Children's Literature in the narrative genre using revealing themes of Ecuadorian's.

## Development

Theoretical revision of the starting point for action research and the training of teachers as creators of Ecuadorian children's literature

The strengthening of the Basic Education Curriculum in Ecuador proposes that

*This redefinition of the meaning of reading and writing also impacts pedagogical intentions, because it differentiates that teaching language is not a single teaching or a single learning (...) Teaching the practices of written culture has to do with the development of an attitude towards reading, writing, listening and speaking. For this, it is necessary to discover the surprises that language offers in its integral dimension (...) It is not mechanical or rote learning; on the contrary, it invites reflection on the language (Ministerio de Educación, 2014, p.6).*

Consequently, this orientation for the command of language starts from an integrative approach that, although in the first moments it prioritizes orality and the formation of linguistic consciousness in its phonological, syntactic, phonetic and lexical aspects, it goes into literacy and listens it with the aspiration of forming holistically competent communicators and creators. In this sense, the philologist Cassany states that:

*Reading and writing are working tools for many professionals in the literate communities in which we live. To be a good lawyer, a good engineer or a good doctor is, also, to be a good reader and writer of the texts of these disciplines. With these texts, we manage our incorporation and permanence in the respective communities of Law, Engineering and Medicine: we access their knowledge, we adopt their professional practices, we update ourselves, we make our personal contributions, etc. (Cassany and Morales, 2016, p. 1).*

In accordance with the previous approach and from a sociocultural approach, the consideration of understanding communication skills and especially reading and writing as cultural learning and communication processes in the university is the basis of this study, since “the sociocultural vision supposes that reading and writing are cultural tasks, tremendously embedded in the social context. Therefore, they vary throughout space and time” (Cassany and Morales, 2016, p. 2).

On this topic, the proposed Generic Curriculum for Education Careers, built with the participation of representatives from all the universities in the country, can read the following indication:

*"The educational model highlights the practical experience of learning from the research-action process, as the backbone of knowledge of science, technology, knowledge and educational reality, which promotes the development of knowledge, skills, attitudes, emotions and values that guarantee the integral and permanent training of future teachers, as well as their updating, permanent improvement and development at a personal and professional level"* (CES, 2015).

Therefore, in terms of the new curricular proposal for a training model, the action research practice, also declared as the backbone of the curriculum, goes through training from the university classroom to professional practice and links with society, reaching Its maximum methodological deployment in the degree stage (CES, 2015).

In the same sense, the new Curricular Designs for Education Careers guide Action Research from the first semester. The importance of qualitative research for higher education lies in the possibility it offers to study “the events, behaviors, experiences of people from their contexts, considering their own point of view, interpretations of why they assume certain behaviors, and of the results (Forero Bulla, 2010, p.16).

In this sense, it is an advantage of qualitative research to analyze the problem from the perceptions of the same context and of those who interact in it (Forero Bulla, 2010, p.

*Analyzing research in education, as in many other areas, it can be seen that a vast majority of researchers prefer to do research on a problem, rather than research to*

*solve that problem. Action Research (AI) tries to do both at the same time (...) The Action Research method, so modest in its appearances, hides and implies a new vision of man and science, rather than a process with Different techniques (...) implies a commitment to the process of development and emancipation of human beings and greater scientific rigor in science that facilitates this process (Martínez Miguélez, 2000, p.5).*

In this sense, it is necessary to point out that the tendency to investigate problems without the authentic involvement and willingness to solve them leads to the fact that many research reports put their eternal sleep to sleep, guarded, without anyone being interested in reading them and less for the continuity of the same theme.

The renowned specialist in Scientific Research, Roberto Hernández Sampieri, states that Action Research goes through cycles, in a spiral, and states them as follows:

Detect the research problem, clarify and diagnose it (whether it is a social problem, the need for a change, an improvement, etc.). Formulation of a plan or program to solve the problem or introduce the change. Implement the plan or program and evaluate results.

Feedback, which leads to a new diagnosis and a new spiral of reflection and action (Sampieri, 2014, p.498).

In this way, in general, action research goes through those moments, in which the participants remain actively immersed in all the tasks. The professional and investigative experience of the driver and counselor teacher is revealed as a fundamental factor for the quality of the results that are intended to be achieved. The teacher not only accompanies, but remains inside, immersed in the whole process, following and participating in the successes and disappointments that the research causes. In practice, you do not always become one of the groups but you do remain sensitive and attentive to the heartbeat, to the interpretation and to the critical and self-critical reflection of the group, which is achieved mainly through participant observation and immersed in acting as a counselor, researcher and literary creator in this case.

In this author's experience, what is indeed an important fact is that with Action Research, not only do students seek and learn, but also teachers. Search, curiosity and imagination overflow in this type of study. In this Paulo Freire's idea is manifested when he expressed:

The educator's learning (...) is verified to the extent that the humble and open educator is permanently available to rethink what is thought, review their positions; in which she seeks to get involved with the curiosity of the student and the different paths and paths that she makes him travel. Some of those ways that sometimes the almost virgin curiosity of the student's travels is full of suggestions, of questions that the educator had never perceived before. But now, as he teaches, not as a bureaucrat of the mind but by reconstructing the ways of his curiosity — which is why his conscious, sensitive, excited body opens up to the divinations of the students, their naiveté and their criticality — an educator who acts in this way has a rich moment of learning in the act of teaching (Freire, 2004, p.35)

Indeed, humility and full awareness about the infinity of human knowledge, as well as its relative character, are required. Also, for this type of research, it is necessary that the teacher is willing to learn with, of, from the students and also learn from the contradictions that appear in the formative socialization processes that occur naturally in the classroom and group ecosystem.

Action research not only provides knowledge, but very essentially a new interpretation and understanding of the pedagogical knowledge of the university teacher in this case, since it is learned how that knowledge is in persistent creation, which allows making “constant reproductions as it examines and modifies their actions in the classroom (...) The contents of this knowledge are referred to the conceptions of life and culture in the social historical context in which they are developed from individual reflection (González Melo et al., 2013, p.106), so the knowledge of the university teacher must be conceived in a broad and complex way.

The aforementioned, allows us to interpret the impact that this type of research has on the teacher himself, because

The teacher who research how his students learn necessarily enters a very personal and effective training process (...) these investigations on the teacher's own work, with all that is

implied by previous readings, experimentation, analysis and reflection, are possibly more effective for one's own training than attending many seminars (Morales, 2010, p.63).

According to Hernández Sampieri in qualitative research “during the process, the researcher generates working hypotheses that are gradually refined as more data is collected (...) The hypotheses are modified based on the researcher's reasoning and circumstances (Hernández, 2014, p.365)

Consequently, the main hypothetical approaches that guided the study and implementation of the innovation were expressed in the following assumptions:

- The use of a didactic strategy, based on developmental teaching and on the potential of the students, can help them create works of Children's Literature on Ecuadorian motifs.
- The application of the teaching strategy in a participatory way, attending to student diversity and supported by the Ecuadorian children's literary culture, can contribute to raising self-esteem and group work skills in students.
- The selection of Ecuadorian themes for children's literary creation, in addition to avoiding the hackneyed habit of selecting foreign themes, characters and works to work with children, provides the opportunity to learn more about the indigenous, contribute to the national culture and prepare to bring national themes and motifs to children.
- Reading Ecuadorian children's stories and preparing a list of indigenous motifs are prerequisites for writing Ecuadorian children's stories.
- Considering the difficulties that exist in literacy skills, teaching activities and tasks require careful guidance and motivation so that students can trust their own abilities.

### **Methods and research techniques**

The diagnostic study, execution and realization of the proposal was carried out with the 35 young people from the fifth semester group “A” of the Bachelor's Degree in Education,

Mention Preschool. The innovative experience was anchored in the subjects Didactics of Children's Literature and Curriculum Design.

The group of participating students had already had previous experience in action research with this author in the General Teaching subject in the third semester. The theme of that experience was related to reading comprehension skills and to the stimulation towards the act of reading, which constituted a positive antecedent for the current stage, since teachers and students knew each other and there was already frank and assertive communication, what that facilitated this new process carried out in semester A of the academic period 2017-2018. The research model is essentially qualitative, although mathematical procedures have also been required.

As qualitative research techniques, participant observation, in-depth group interview, field notes, study of teaching tasks, an initial survey for the previous diagnosis, and another survey in the final stage have been used. To carry out the study, techniques at the theoretical level have also been used, among which analysis and synthesis, induction and deduction stood out. The study of primary and secondary sources has also constituted a way of clarification and contextualization.

The legality established in Ecuador have been analyzed as primary sources; the documents that guide the work of the Early Childhood and Early Education career, the subject programs, samples of Ecuadorian Children's Literature, study guides, the tasks carried out by the students during the process of carrying out the project, as well as notes and Written observations in the teaching record. Likewise, primary sources have been considered, especially texts on qualitative research, all of which have been critically analyzed by the participants in accordance with the objectives set for the investigative and creative experience presented here. Samples of children's narratives of the universal tradition, video tutorials on literary creation and informative materials on the themes and motifs selected by the students for their works have been secondary sources.

Consequently, in the action research approach, theoretical foundations of Didactics and Qualitative Research were revealed as theoretical assumptions integrated into an idea that



became a dynamic methodological axis: Confidence in the infinite creative possibilities of students raises self-esteem, the motivation and faced with the difficulties that arise, teaching demands different and unprecedented dynamics and educational resources in the training of initial teachers.

Stages and results of action research for the training of Bachelor of Education students as creators of Ecuadorian Children's Literature

In the research that is exposed, the stages of the study and the innovation are characterized with terms as close as possible to its singularity, clarifying that there were no absolute demarcations, given the various situations and conflicts that arose. Likewise, the way traveled passed through the stadiums recognized for this type of research. In qualitative research and specifically in this action research, due to its social and cultural nature, the results are achieved in cycles forming an infinite spiral.

The stages were presented as follows:

- Participatory diagnosis and self-diagnosis.
- Immersion, gestation, incubation and expansion of the problem.
- Execution of literary creation and personalized tutorial review.
- Evaluation and disclosure.

Below are activities, particularities, dilemmas and achievements of each stage. Narration is used to achieve a better understanding of the process experienced by students and teachers.

First stage: Participatory self-diagnosis and diagnosis.

When presenting the new content of Didactics of Children's Literature and Curriculum Design, it was explained to the students that we would all investigate in the topics that the programs contain, just as we did in the previous semester that we worked together. Without mentioning the fundamental objective to be achieved in the research, they were asked to fill out an anonymous survey that essentially asked their literary tastes, known Ecuadorian authors, if they considered themselves good readers, if they liked to write, if they had written

poems, narrations or stories. , sometime in their lives The affirmative figures did not exceed 8%, but the students were confident in expressing these data in writing.

The following week, during class time, sitting in a circle, a group interview was conducted as an oral self-diagnosis. The self-diagnosis objective was not previously declared to the group. They were invited to organize the work of the semester and for that they expressed:

What children's stories did you know? Which do you use in your practices? If they count or read to their children. If they had been able to read Ecuadorian stories, legends or stories: What authors did they know? If you would like to learn to tell stories or stories and even if you would like to write. There was also talk about how children attend to and interpret the works, differentiating when they are read from when they are narrated. The students expressed and, in some cases, explained their ignorance and even referred to their causes. They argued that almost always at previous school levels, it is only required to read fragments and summaries of works. They showed confidence in the taste for reading children's literature, but not in the possibility of writing stories. In the latter they were very insecure or incredulous.

In this class they were asked as homework for the next activity to individually write a list of Ecuadorian topics: Animals, plants, flowers, customs, popular characters, important facts, any other genuinely Ecuadorian topic of interest. Thus, it was possible to count on a wide list of animals, flowers, events, customs, foods, and genuinely Ecuadorian parties.

**Second stage:** Immersion, gestation, incubation, execution, expansion of the problem and elaboration of the innovation.

With all the participants having a list of the Ecuadorian motives and / or topics sought by all, the students were proposed to develop a seed project, from which they could derive their classroom project for presentation as such at the end of the semester, which It could be valid for the third evaluation contribution.

After explaining and reading about what a seed project is, a sheet of paper was passed to them to write down the students who wanted to be coordinators of the project. As no student signed up, the teachers proposed three young people whose participation, commitment and responsibility made them worthy to represent the group.

In the same class, students were invited to perform the collective oral storytelling technique, as a game, taking care that the theme, characters, and plot were Ecuadorian, taken from the list that had been constructed. The teacher proposed two reasons for selecting one: A guinea pig and / or a crab. Images of the two animals were presented and the teacher began to create the story out loud for each student to add a fragment, considering that it was a work for children of initial. The experience was generally productive and fun, but there were students who were unable to say anything and others also failed to meet the Equatorially indicator by trying to graft pieces of well-known foreign tales.

Already in the next class, the topic of the project was proposed to the group. When there was clarity that it was about writing an unpublished work, for young children, and that it would be done individually, in duos or, exceptionally, in trios, with the topics that appeared in the list, and to be evaluated in an internal contest, the insecurities, the doubts emerged, the declaration as a confession that they could not, because they had never done it before. There were also counter proposals for the task, avoiding the fact of having to write something unpublished. After the initial immersion, several activities were carried out aimed at sowing security and self-confidence and to guarantee prior preparation. The following were notable:

- Repetition of the oral story creation exercise with different Ecuadorian themes.
- Reading and analysis of four children's stories by Ecuadorian writers.
- Watching videos with themes on children's narrative and tutorials on how to write stories and other works.
- Subsequent writing of the story done “among all” by student volunteers and storytelling practices for all.

We call these activities incubation, because they were arranging and "heating or cooking" the most important nutrients for the subsequent work. Through this stage, ignorance and knowledge were revealed, and the conflictive dimensions of the problem expanded, which in general had to do with the lack of literacy skills and specially to reveal imagination and find forms of literary text to Small children. The first writings were totally in blocks, without the use of dialogue and with writing and spelling problems.

The riskier students were handing over what they wrote in pieces. First it was reviewed directly and only with the authors, but then the pieces of stories were taken to the classroom to carry out the group analysis, with prior authorization from the authors. In this way, the group participation in learning was expanded as the corrections were made, thus achieving small works that were being reviewed, over and over again. Some did not abide by the indicator of the Ecuadorian theme and / or motive and were given the opportunity to redo.

**Third stage:** Execution of literary creation and personalized tutorial review.

At this stage, the students felt more secure and manifested themselves as authentic literary authors, accepting the observations and making them to their classmates. They were proposed to carry out a marathon of the Ecuadorian children's story as part of the classroom project, a task that took a long time of orientation. The reviews focused on the improvement of the text, its adaptation to the requirements of literature for preschool children, the retouching of the characters and environments so that the works can be used effectively in initial education and, above all, in compliance with the indicator referring to the Ecuadorian.

Finally, 9 stories were selected for the marathon. All the students joined with the selected classmates to tell the stories to the invited children. The non-chosen works were written by authors who failed to work out the uniqueness of the Ecuadorian in their texts, although they did receive the corresponding score in the subject evaluation system.

Below is a table with the titles of the stories selected for the marathon with the names of their authors.

**Table No. 1. Story Titles and Their Authors.**

	Story title	Student authors
1	"Panchito, the guinea pig, at the crab festival"	Ruth Aracely Cando Guamán y Maritza Valverde Calle
2	"Andy the adventurer llama"	María Plua Suarez y Andrea Zorrilla Badillo
3	"My best friend: Yiyi the alpaca "	Allison Burgos Ericka Gavilanes

4	"Hummingbird paradise"	Génesis Clavijo Katuska Córdova
5	"Felix and the condor"	Vanessa Ugalde Yofre Cuenca
6	"he caterpillar Martina"	Denisse Rodríguez Arteaga
7	"The turuleca hen and the camomile"	Alejandra Poveda Vargas
8	"Raül adventure with the monkeys"	Jennifer Mina Deysi Peralta
9	"Adventure through the Ecuadorian Amazon."	Adriana Roxana Maffare Cruz Mayte Judith García Llor

After the presentation of the stories in the Marathon by their own authors, a survey was applied to determine the level of student satisfaction and self-assessment of their learning. Tables and images are presented below as evidence of the results, in the words of the students themselves.

**TABLE No. 2 Number of respondents after the completion of the Ecuadorian children's story Marathon**

AMOUNT OF PARTICIPANTS	QUANTITY OF SURVEYS	% OF SURVEYS
35	29	82,5 %

**Below are some of the answers to question 1 of the survey**

<b>¿ What strengths did I discover in myself?</b>
<p>"That new goals and experiences can be achieved" "My imagination"</p> <p>That I can write a story" "The power to tell a story without fear"</p> <p>"Know how to reach children with the story" "Know how to transmit joy to children"</p> <p>"Learn to be optimistic" "First be afraid but then be happy to tell my own story"</p> <p>"That I can be a good storyteller and writer" "My fear, but then keep moving forward"</p> <p>"That you just have to put effort to achieve what you want"</p>

**Question 2: In what aspects could the classroom project of children's literary creation have influenced your professional training? Interesting responses were:**

"Know more about our Ecuador" "In the way how a story can be created, time and everything are useful for our professional project" "First take away my fear and then joys" "That reading the story is not the same as telling it, fear and joy" " Know how to write a story without complicated language" " Make stories and know how to choose words for children" " Know how to waste joys for children" " Know that I am useful writing and narrating my story" " Have the ability to create and imagine" " Exchange ideas and learn from others for my story" " That I was tired, afraid, but happy" " Know myself and what I can do" " To have better writing, spelling and development of thought "

**Below is a picture of questions and answers offered after the Marathon, carried out by students for the children of university workers and other guests with their own works:**

<p><b>Pregunta No. 2:</b></p> <p>¿En qué aspectos el proyecto áulico de la creación literaria infantil pudo haber influido en su formación profesional?</p> <p><i>Imaginación, mejorar mi voz.</i></p> <p><i>Saber contar un cuento.</i></p> <p><i>Reducir el miedo al público.</i></p>
<p><b>Pregunta No. 3:</b></p> <p>¿Cómo me sentí durante el proceso de realización?</p> <p><i>Atormentado.</i></p> <p><i>Ansioso.</i></p> <p><i>Entusiasmado.</i></p>
<p><b>Pregunta No. 4:</b></p> <p>¿Cómo me sentí durante la realización del maratón?</p> <p><i>Con ganas de que me escucharan.</i></p> <p><i>Con ganas de contar un cuento realmente Ecuadoriano.</i></p> <p><i>Muy alegre.</i></p>

When evaluating the results, it is estimated that the research presented complies with the conceptualization of Social Innovation expressed by the Organic Code of the Social Economy of Knowledge, Creativity and Innovation, approved in Ecuador in December 2016, in Title II of the Social Innovation, Chapter I, Article 74.- when it states that social innovation is:

It is the creative and collaborative process through which a new or improved good, service or process with added value is introduced, which modifies and incorporates new social behaviors

for the resolution of problems, the acceleration of individual or collective capacities, satisfaction of needs of society and the effective exercise of rights. It is oriented to generate social, economic, cultural and technological impacts that promote good living (p.20).

## **Conclusions**

Educational research constant a fundamental pillar in the pursuit of excellence in higher education in all careers, but in the training and continuing education of teachers it is an urgent task. Research is also required to be oriented to solving latent problems in practice, which implies carrying it out with a commitment to social change. It cannot be a set of formal and bureaucratic acts, since the problems of education are not truly solved by researchers who are far from the contexts and spaces of action of teachers and students.

Teachers and students are the true agents of change in education and for this, educational research needs to be contextualized and negotiated among the participants. In this sense, personal involvement is required, the construction of social relations of equality and solidarity and the creation of a mystique of service and the trend towards self-improvement. The research carried out, with the procedures of participatory action research from space classroom and autonomous work, showed that professional problems can be solved at the same time making social innovation: Creation and narration of Ecuadorian children's stories as a pedagogical contribution to the literary culture of the country, as well as loving influence for the patriotic and ethical development of initial education children.

The research demonstrated the relevance of the qualitative model and especially of participatory self-diagnosis, participant observation, group interview and study of the documentation resulting from the practice.

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