BG Pulse Journal USA
ISSN:1947-2536 http://www.bgpulseusa.com/index.php/bg

INTEGRATING THE PIRLS INTERNATIONAL ASSESSMENT PROGRAM INTO THE EDUCATIONAL PROCESS: THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES

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Abstract. This article examines the theoretical perspectives of integrating the PIRLS international assessment program into the educational process of primary education. PIRLS, organized by the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement, assesses fourth-grade students' reading literacy through literary and informational texts, comprehension processes, and contextual questionnaires. The article argues that PIRLS should not be understood only as an external ranking instrument. It can function as a pedagogical framework for improving reading instruction, designing competency-based tasks, developing formative assessment, and strengthening evidence-based decision-making at school level. The analysis is based on official PIRLS reports, assessment frameworks, technical documentation, and research on reading comprehension. The paper also proposes practical directions for connecting PIRLS criteria with classroom methodology.

Key words: PIRLS, international assessment, reading literacy, primary education, educational process, theoretical perspectives, formative assessment, competency-based learning.

Аннотация. В статье анализируются теоретические основы интеграции международной программы оценки PIRLS в образовательный процесс начального образования. PIRLS оценивает читательскую грамотность учащихся четвертого класса на основе художественных и информационных текстов, процессов понимания и контекстных анкет. В статье PIRLS рассматривается не только как инструмент рейтинга, но и как педагогическая модель, направленная на совершенствование обучения чтению, разработку компетентностных заданий, развитие формативного оценивания и принятие решений на основе данных.

Ключевые слова: PIRLS, международная оценка, читательская грамотность, начальное образование, образовательный процесс, теоретический подход, формативное оценивание.

Annotatsiya. Mazkur maqolada PIRLS xalqaro baholash dasturini boshlang'ich ta'lim jarayoniga integratsiya qilishning nazariy asoslari tahlil qilinadi. PIRLS 4-sinf o'quvchilarining o'qish savodxonligini adabiy va axborot matnlari, tushunish jarayonlari hamda kontekst so'rovnomalari orqali baholaydi. Maqolada PIRLS faqat reyting vositasi emas, balki o'qish ta'limini takomillashtirish, kompetensiyaviy topshiriqlarni loyihalash, formativ baholashni kuchaytirish va maktab darajasida dalillarga asoslangan qaror qabul qilishga xizmat qiluvchi pedagogik model sifatida izohlanadi.

Kalit so'zlar: PIRLS, xalqaro baholash, o'qish savodxonligi, boshlang'ich ta'lim, ta'lim jarayoni, nazariy yondashuv, formativ baholash.

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ISSN:1947-2536 http://www.bgpulseusa.com/index.php/bg

Introduction

International large-scale assessments have become an important part of contemporary education policy and school development. They do not only compare national education systems but also provide a conceptual language for discussing curriculum quality, learning outcomes, teaching methods, and equity. Among these programs, PIRLS occupies a special place because it focuses on reading literacy at the primary level, where the foundation for further learning is formed.

PIRLS, or the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study, is conducted by the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA). It assesses how well fourth-grade students read and understand texts, and it collects background information about students, parents, teachers, and schools . This makes PIRLS both an achievement study and a contextual study. Therefore, integrating PIRLS into the educational process means more than preparing students for a test; it means using its framework to improve the quality of reading instruction[1].

The relevance of this topic is connected with the global shift from knowledge reproduction to competency-based learning. In reading lessons, this shift requires students not only to read words correctly but also to locate information, infer meaning, interpret ideas, evaluate language, and justify their answers with textual evidence. These operations are directly reflected in the PIRLS reading framework . Thus, the theoretical value of PIRLS lies in its ability to connect assessment with pedagogy[2].

Materials and methods

The study uses theoretical analysis, comparative interpretation, and pedagogical generalization. The main sources include PIRLS 2021 International Results in Reading, PIRLS 2021 Assessment Frameworks, the PIRLS 2021 Technical Report, and the PIRLS Encyclopedia . These documents were examined to identify how the program defines reading literacy, what types of comprehension processes it evaluates, and how contextual information can be used for educational improvement.

The first theoretical basis of PIRLS integration is the concept of reading literacy. In the PIRLS framework, reading literacy is not limited to the technical ability to decode written symbols. It includes understanding and using written language forms required by society and valued by the individual . This definition is pedagogically significant because it presents reading as a purposeful intellectual activity. A pupil reads not only to pronounce words but to construct meaning, learn from information, enjoy literary experience, and participate in social life.

The third basis is the model of comprehension processes. PIRLS distinguishes processes such as focusing on explicitly stated information, making straightforward inferences, interpreting and integrating ideas, and evaluating content and textual elements . These processes provide a theoretical ladder for classroom questions. A teacher can begin with simple information retrieval and gradually move students toward inference, interpretation, and evaluation. This prevents reading lessons from being limited to retelling.

Table 1. Theoretical components of PIRLS integration into teaching

PIRLS component	Theoretical meaning	Classroom application	Expected outcome

[1]Mullis I. V. S., von Davier M., Foy P., Fishbein B., Reynolds K. A., Wry E. PIRLS 2021 International Results in Reading. – Boston: TIMSS & PIRLS International Study Center, 2023. – P. 1.
[2]Mullis I. V. S., Martin M. O. PIRLS 2021 Assessment Frameworks. – Boston: TIMSS & PIRLS International Study Center, 2019. – P. 12.

Reading purposes	Literary and informational reading	Use stories, articles, diagrams, and short factual texts	Balanced reading experience
Comprehension processes	From information retrieval to evaluation	Design questions at different cognitive levels	Deeper understanding of texts
Context data	Home, classroom, and school factors	Analyze reading habits and learning support	Evidence-based decisions
Benchmarks	Levels of reading achievement	Identify strengths and learning gaps	Targeted instruction

Integrating PIRLS into the educational process creates several pedagogical opportunities. The first is diagnostic teaching. Traditional assessment often records whether an answer is right or wrong, while PIRLS-oriented analysis asks what type of comprehension process caused the difficulty. For example, a pupil may find explicit information successfully but fail to infer why a character acted in a certain way. This difference is important because each difficulty requires a different teaching response.

The third opportunity is formative assessment. PIRLS results and PIRLS-like classroom tasks can be used to identify learning gaps before they become stable weaknesses. If many students cannot evaluate the author's intention, the teacher may plan additional work on titles, keywords, tone, and textual evidence. In this sense, assessment becomes a tool for improving instruction rather than a final judgment.

Despite its pedagogical value, PIRLS integration has several risks. The most common risk is mechanical test preparation. If teachers simply copy test formats and drill students with multiple-choice questions, the deeper purpose of PIRLS is lost. Reading literacy cannot be developed through test repetition alone. It requires meaningful interaction with texts, discussion, evidence-based answers, and reflection.

A practical example can be built around a short literary text. At the first level, students answer who the main character is and where the event takes place. At the second level, they explain why the character made a particular decision. At the third level, they compare the character's action with another possible action. At the fourth level, they evaluate whether the title expresses the main idea. This sequence follows the PIRLS logic from information retrieval to evaluation.

Discussion

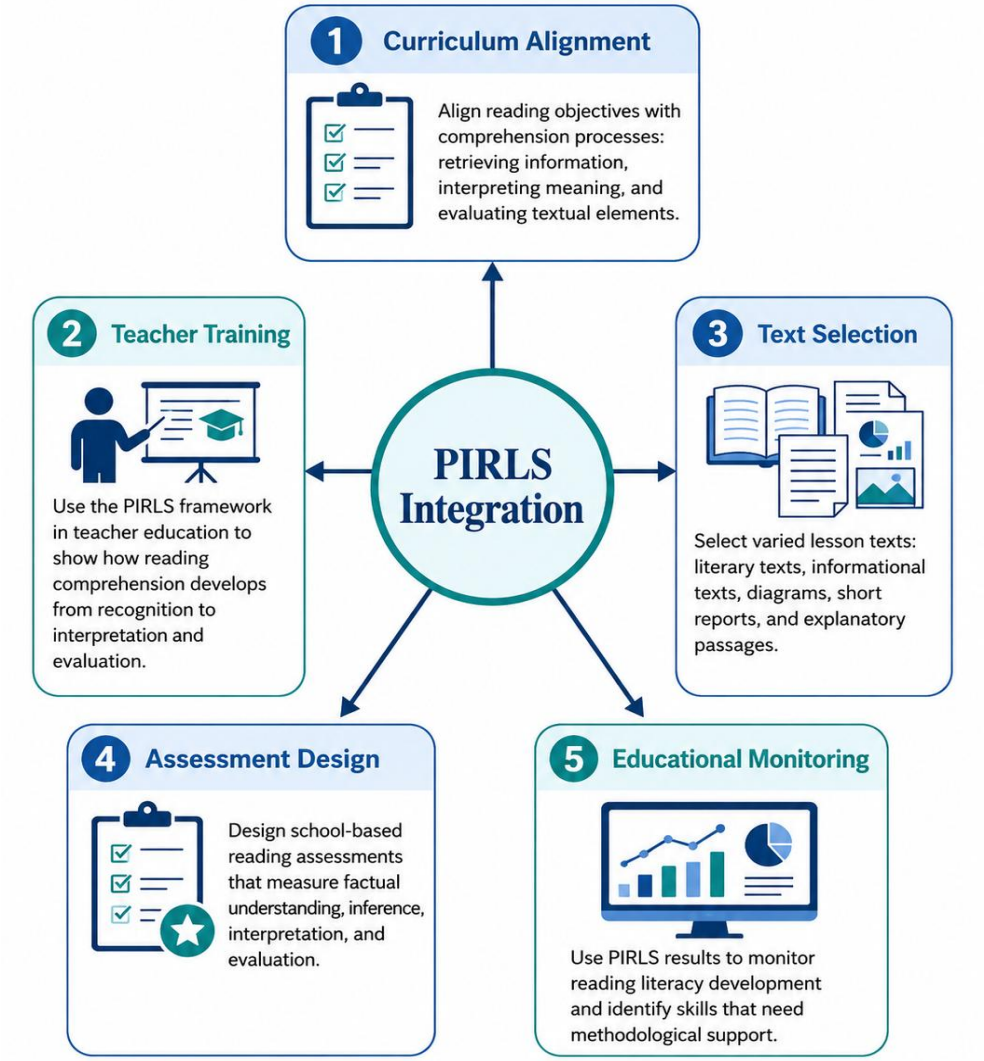
The theoretical analysis shows that PIRLS integration can renew the educational process in primary school. It shifts the focus from reading aloud and retelling to comprehension, interpretation, and evidence-based reasoning. This is especially important because reading is a gateway competence: if a child cannot understand written information, learning in other subjects becomes more difficult.

The integration of PIRLS into the educational process has direct implications for teacher preparation. Future primary school teachers need to learn how to read an assessment framework pedagogically, not only administratively. This means that they should be able to identify the reading purpose of a text, classify the cognitive demand of a question, and explain why a particular student response is complete, partial, or insufficient. Such preparation helps teachers connect assessment language with classroom methodology.

Another implication concerns lesson planning. A PIRLS-informed lesson should include not only a text and a set of questions, but also a clear sequence of thinking actions. First, pupils enter

the text through simple information. Then they move toward inference, interpretation, and evaluation. This sequence allows the teacher to see whether the difficulty is caused by vocabulary, lack of attention to textual evidence, weak reasoning, or limited experience with informational texts.

Figure 1.Theoretical perspectives on integrating PIRLS into the educational process



Teacher preparation should also include the design of feedback. In a PIRLS-oriented classroom, feedback is not limited to marks or general comments. It should guide the learner back to the text: “find the sentence that proves your idea,” “compare these two details,” or “explain how the title is connected with the main idea.” This type of feedback develops reading independence because pupils learn how to check and improve their own answers.

Finally, the theoretical integration of PIRLS supports professional collaboration among teachers. Methodical associations can analyze one common text, create questions at different comprehension levels, compare student responses, and discuss which teaching strategies are needed. In this way, PIRLS becomes a shared professional tool rather than an external requirement. Its strongest value appears when assessment results are translated into concrete instructional decisions.

Conclusion

Integrating the PIRLS international assessment program into the educational process is theoretically and pedagogically justified. PIRLS offers a clear framework for understanding reading

literacy, classifying comprehension processes, balancing literary and informational texts, and using contextual data for educational improvement.

Therefore, PIRLS should be viewed not as a separate external test but as a theoretical and methodological guide for improving reading instruction in primary education. When integrated thoughtfully, it contributes to students' meaningful reading, independent thinking, and ability to justify ideas with evidence.

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