

THE ROLE OF THE PIRLS INTERNATIONAL ASSESSMENT PROGRAM IN OUR COUNTRY'S EDUCATION SYSTEM: ENHANCING STUDENTS' READING LITERACY

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Abstract

This article highlights the significance of the PIRLS international assessment program in our country's education system and its role in identifying and developing reading literacy among primary school students. Through the PIRLS program, opportunities are created to assess and enhance students' competencies such as text comprehension, analysis, and evaluation.

Keywords: PIRLS, international assessment program, reading literacy, creative thinking, primary education, text analysis, reading culture, conscious reading, creative thinking.

Introduction

In our country, shaping the intellectual abilities of young people and developing their creative and critical thinking skills is one of the most pressing issues of today. Educating the younger generation in accordance with international standards is among the key responsibilities of educators. Reforming the education system and promoting the implementation of new methods and technologies in the teaching process make it possible to improve the quality of education. One of the current challenges is to cultivate in students such qualities as intellectual maturity and a broad worldview that meet the demands of the 21st century. Therefore, the application of modern technologies and innovative didactic tools in education, as well as the development of students' creative abilities, is of great importance.

Achieving the future progress and development of the nation by accomplishing great goals is among the significant responsibilities entrusted to the younger generation. Instilling feelings of patriotism, loyalty to history, and respect for the scientific and cultural heritage passed down from our ancestors is considered essential. Enhancing the spiritual potential of young people and utilizing advanced pedagogical technologies in the processes of teaching and upbringing represent an important educational task.

Within the framework of PIRLS, one of the international assessment programs, the competencies, knowledge, and skills acquired by primary school students are evaluated. In the 2016 PIRLS international assessment of fourth-grade students' reading comprehension skills, 50 countries participated worldwide. Each country demonstrated varying levels of achievement, ranging from basic to advanced reading comprehension. On average, fourth-



grade students from the Russian Federation and Singapore achieved the highest results in reading literacy. Moreover, approximately one-quarter of students from these countries demonstrated advanced-level reading comprehension skills. Students who reached this level were able to interpret, integrate, and evaluate information presented in narrative and relatively complex texts.

Additionally, about one-fifth of students from Hong Kong, Ireland, Finland, Poland, and Northern Ireland demonstrated advanced reading comprehension skills. The results are presented in numerical form in the table below [1].

Russian Federation	581
Singapore	576
Hong Kong (SAR)	569
Ireland	567
Finland	566
Poland	565
Northern Ireland	565

PIRLS is an international assessment system that evaluates the quality of reading and comprehension skills of primary school students across different countries. It provides opportunities for evidence-based decision-making to improve reading education. When tasks prepared according to the requirements of the PIRLS international program are used, students' interest, creativity, and engagement increase significantly. The texts and stories employed during preparation should be educational and pedagogically impactful, aimed at developing students' scientific and analytical thinking. In addition, the physiological and psychological characteristics of the age group must be taken into account.

PIRLS tasks comprehensively support the student and can provide practical assistance in developing competencies aligned with educational standards. They assess students' ability to read and analyze both literary and informational texts. Reading literacy is understood as the ability to perceive and analyze written material. PIRLS tasks are designed as an international assessment program specifically for fourth-grade primary school students. In this study, students' knowledge is evaluated in terms of two types of reading literacy: during school hours and in extracurricular time.

1. Determining and developing students' literary reading literacy.
2. Developing the ability to assimilate and utilize information enriched with new content.

To assess literary reading literacy, students are presented with texts featuring literary and figurative expressions. Students read the text and answer several related questions. For informational texts, students are presented with content enriched with new information. They study the text carefully and search for answers to the questions based on the text. PIRLS tasks not only improve reading literacy among primary school students but also directly enhance their creative thinking and imaginative skills. They develop the ability to remember and comprehend texts, contributing significantly to broadening students' worldview and cognitive development.



Texts used in PIRLS are selected based on the following criteria:

- Text length (standard: up to 1,000 words);
- Relevance of the topic;
- Simplicity and clarity of language;
- Sequence of events;
- Suitability for the age group.

In PIRLS tasks, the text length is up to 1,000 words; for countries with lower literacy levels, the length ranges from 400–500 words. PIRLS tasks are translated into more than 40 languages, so accurate translation is essential. The content of the text must correspond to the age characteristics of children around 9–10 years old. Additionally, the logical structure of events and the sequencing of the storyline must be considered. Importantly, texts used as tasks should be thematically and substantively close to topics found in primary school reading textbooks. PIRLS tasks not only develop reading literacy but also foster students' creative thinking. Key elements include identifying the main ideas in the text, understanding the sequence of events, and guiding students to express their own thoughts freely.

In conclusion, the implementation of the PIRLS international assessment program in our education system allows for evaluating the reading literacy and cognitive abilities of primary school students according to international standards. Furthermore, it contributes to educating the younger generation as independent, creative individuals with strong analytical and imaginative potential. PIRLS provides opportunities to teach students how to analyze literary texts, while the reading process develops both literacy and conscious reading skills. Using PIRLS tasks, students can be guided toward cultivating reading habits and establishing a culture of reading. Simultaneously, their ability for free and creative thinking can be developed and refined at a high level.

References

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