



Discovering Ecuador: Nature and Traditions for Young and Old Explorers



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Abstract

Teaching children at an early age is essential so that they can know and explore the nature of their environment. The research aims to involve students between 3 and 4 years old in the exploration and knowledge of everything that surrounds them related to the environment. Landscape mainly in the place where they live and study, to then teach them the traditions of the different cultures and regions of Ecuador. So in their adolescence and youth, they are interested in getting to know the towns, fauna, landscapes, traditions and gastronomy of the various tourist places that exist in our country Ecuador. The descriptive and interpretive method was used as a methodology through recreational activities and significant experiences. The result was that the children were able to acquire knowledge about the geographical and cultural diversity of their environment and the country with a sense of their own identity and appreciation for their immediate environment. Likewise, adolescents and young people, through interpretations, dramatizations and presentations with costumes and the gastronomic part, acquire knowledge of the biodiversity of the regions of the country.

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1 Introduction

Educational institutions have the projection that in the first years of children's study, awaken their interest in geography, biodiversity and culture first in the context where they are educated and then instil knowledge of the country's geography, fostering a sense of belonging and respect towards, in this way, it is possible to educate future generations about the importance of protecting and valuing both the natural environment and the cultural traditions that are part of their identity (Choudhry et al., 2007; Taras et al., 2009).

Instilling a love and respect for nature in children from an early age is essential for their comprehensive development and for the construction of a solid environmental awareness that lasts throughout their lives. The connection with the natural environment not only encourages their curiosity and creativity but also helps them develop values of care and responsibility towards the environment (Bratman et al., 2015; Turner et al., 2003).

Knowing nature boosts the development of children, adolescents and young people. Various studies have shown that regular interaction with nature has multiple benefits for children, including improvements in their physical and mental health, as well as their social and cognitive skills. According to Kellert (2006), contact with nature during childhood is necessary for emotional development and psychological well-being, since it provides rich and varied sensory experiences that cannot be replicated in artificial environments.

In preschool education, from a very young age, the development of meaningful learning is playful, directly with the immediate environment, while with young people and adolescents, their learning grows through the inverted classroom, which allows the student to become creative, investigative and also helps to stage development when presenting an investigation.

And finally, the TiNi Methodology, under the Earth Project of Girls, boys and Young People for Good Living, is a highly potential educational practice to generate attitudinal and behavioral changes towards the way of seeing nature.

Furthermore, it constitutes an innovative proposal for how teaching and learning processes occur in a transversal way with the environmental approach, becoming interdisciplinary and holistic according to (Ramírez-Ramírez et al., 2023). Currently, in some educational institutions, projects are applied to improve and increase the knowledge that a child develops from an early age to adolescence, thus through exploration and investigation of the nature and culture of the country.

Children who spend time outdoors and in contact with nature are more likely to develop a sense of wonder and an emotional connection with the natural world, which is essential for the formation of pro-environmental attitudes in adult life Louv (2008). To instil a love for nature, strategies can be developed in young children, and educators and parents must facilitate direct and positive experiences with the natural environment. This includes activities such as exploring parks, gardens and nature reserves, observing wildlife, and participating in outdoor games that stimulate their curiosity and respect for nature. According to Sobel (1996), involving children in practical and sensory activities in nature helps them develop an emotional bond with the environment, which is a fundamental step for them to achieve environmental ethics.

Education plays the main role in these moments of early ages since they can develop activities that integrate outdoor learning with the academic curriculum, it is an effective tool to instil environmental values in children. This educational approach not only improves academic performance but also promotes the development of critical skills and independent thinking, as highlighted by Chawla (2006), who states that children who participate in educational programs in nature show greater environmental awareness and an active commitment to the conservation of elements that are fundamental in the current moments where society is going through severe environmental difficulties such as increasing temperatures (Atwoli et al., 2021).

Children must create an awareness of the conditions caused by the increase in global temperature and the destruction of nature, which is why they must be educated in the protection of biodiversity from their educational contexts, where the teacher plays an essential role in the strategies to be treated so that the love and care of nature is achieved in them (Fischer et al., 2010; Kowarik, 2011).

It can be said that the importance of instilling an early and positive relationship with nature in children is based on academic evidence on the benefits of interaction with the natural environment on child development. Fundamentally in the environments close to their habitat, children create skills in exploration, which could involve them in an educational and entertaining journey through natural and cultural diversity, the attention of the youngest is captured, combining information that children motivate you with engaging illustrations that make learning a fun adventure (Abbasov & Sanchez, 2020).

2 Materials and Methods

Descriptive and qualitative research was developed that allowed us to evaluate the knowledge acquired by the students through games, interpretations and other activities such as dramatization, dances, and gastronomic fairs that enhance the cognitive development of the students, in addition, patterns of behavior and behavior can be identified responses to recreational activities.

Instruments were applied to measure the cognitive, social and emotional development of children. To carry out this program or project, it was applied. According to [Ramírez-Ramírez et al. \(2023\)](#), the TiNi as a good educational practice for the construction of environmental awareness, were chosen under the criteria of the use of productions or entrepreneurship at home.

3 Results and Discussions

Children aged 3, 4 and 5 years must know and value the natural and cultural diversity of their environment and the country because it is part of the general culture. For this, teachers must prepare case programs that address the topic of biodiversity existing in their environments and the traditions of society, these precepts allow young children to learn through teaching processes the values of the natural and cultural wealth that exists and how it should be protected.

Infants learn to identify the main characteristics of their territory and as they learn they can acquire knowledge of how nature behaves in each region of Ecuador once their life development is growing they will discover its biodiversity by learning about the the most representative traditions and customs will be acquired through recreational and educational experiences, where children will explore the most influential characteristics of each region of the country based on the knowledge that began from early childhood.

Through the teaching process, children develop awareness and appreciation from an early age about the biological and cultural richness of their environment. Teachers will propose activities where respect and curiosity for biodiversity and Ecuadorian traditions are instilled in children. The elements that can be evaluated so that students can live with the typical experiences and activities that take place in each region. Figure 1 shows some of them.

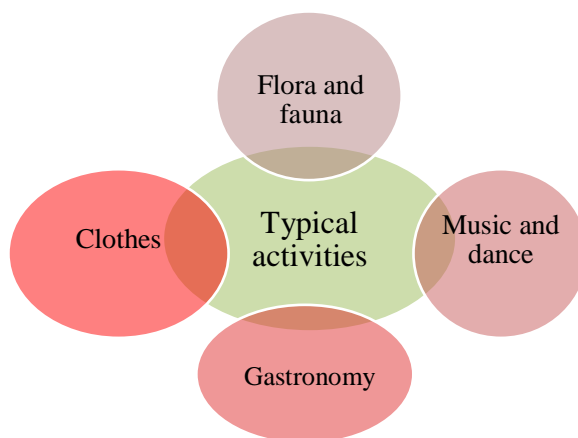


Figure 1. Typical activities and elements that children and adolescents can learn

All these observed elements can be visual and environmental materials to set the learning space. Children, adolescents and their families can participate in wearing typical costumes from the different regions of Ecuador in some special activities. Decorating the classroom with images, maps and representative objects will help create an immersive environment ([Neal et al., 1999](#); [Ateca-Amestoy et al., 2008](#)).

In this teaching process, it is important to consider children with special educational needs, adapting the activities to ensure their full participation, all activities being inclusive, and allowing each child to participate and learn at their own pace. Collaboration between educators and families is essential; parents must participate actively, supporting learning and sharing their knowledge. Teachers will guide and facilitate the process, ensuring that each activity is educational and entertaining. Annex 1

These activities can include the different ecosystems such as the Amazon, the Andes, the Coast and the Galapagos Islands, showing the richness of flora and fauna that each region houses, valuing the endemic species that highlight animals and plants that are only found in the equatorial region, helping children understand the importance of conserving these natural treasures (Antrop, 2000; Willemen et al., 2008).

Another aspect that must be introduced is customs and festivities, teaching children about the cultural traditions and festivities of the various regions of Ecuador. From indigenous festivals in the Sierra to Afro-Ecuadorian celebrations on the Coast, the book illustrates how history and culture are intertwined in the daily lives of Ecuadorians. Cultural Wealth: Through stories, legends and anecdotes, little explorers learn about the history and customs of the ancestral peoples of Ecuador, including the Amazonian and Andean indigenous people. Figure 2 shows images of the typical costumes which the children learn from, incorporating dances and songs typical of the region.



Figure 2. Typical costumes designed by teachers and parents of students

As you can see, each region has its typical characteristics, so students of early ages must learn to know the region according to its clothing. This clothing can be compared with the typical costumes of the Sierra region as shown in Figure 3.



Figure 3. Typical costumes of the Sierra
Fuente: (Pinterest, 2024)

The children also enjoy and share their typical costumes, in Figure 4 of them.



Figure 4. Children reflect the image of the typical costumes of each region
Fuente: (Pinterest, 2024)

Children are educated wearing the typical costumes and culture of their region, this means that from a very young age, they relate to their cultures and can implement what is captured in the book *Discovering Ecuador*. As technology advances and culture becomes accessible to anyone with Internet access, put the topic you want to learn about into a search engine and a list of content on culture and other topics will appear. Written by older and younger people, they will share the necessary information exhaustively and concretely through audiovisual content.

Interactive activities

Games and experiments are also developed to make learning more dynamic. The book includes practical activities such as games, simple experiments and crafts that children can do at home, related to nature and Ecuadorian traditions. They are displayed on maps and guides, which present visual information that helps children identify the regions of the country and locate the natural and cultural wonders described.

According to [Luci \(2015\)](#), through the presentation of various data and approaches, the idea is exposed that leisure experiences in contact with nature are a privileged path for the renewal of paradigms of the human being-planet Earth relationship. It also helps to care for the natural landscape that the regions offer, on the other hand, spatial knowledge is generated by playing with the sounds that are appreciated in nature, whether through the sound of animals, the wind or streams. For [Herrera & Barbosa \(2014\)](#), games favor creativity, and the investigative spirit and awaken curiosity about the unknown, which is a fundamental factor when generating questions. In this way, a game of prior knowledge, questions and answers is generated for students in adolescence.

4 Conclusion

The teachers of the initiation or nursery schools involve students between 3 and 4 years old in the exploration and knowledge of nature, and the landscape and, together with their parents, they make typical costumes that make them aware of the cultures of a multiverse country. What Ecuador is like, always keeping in mind the teaching of traditions from all regions of the country.

Conflict of interest statement

The authors declared that they have no competing interests.

Statement of authorship

The authors have a responsibility for the conception and design of the study. The authors have approved the final article.

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