Polo del Conocimiento

Impacto de las metodologías activas en la adquisición del idioma inglés: un estudio comparativo en el segundo nivel de inglés en el Centro de Idiomas (CENID) de la Universidad Técnica de Babahoyo

Impact of Active Methodologies on English Language Acquisition: A Comparative Study in the Second Level of English at the Language Center (CENID) of the Technical University of Babahoyo

Impacto das Metodologias Ativas na Aquisição da Língua Inglesa: Um Estudo Comparativo no Segundo Nível de Inglês no Centro de Línguas (CENID) da Universidade Técnica de Babahoyo

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Resumen

Esta investigación examina el impacto de las metodologías activas en el aprendizaje del idioma inglés a nivel universitario. Se realizó un estudio cuasi-experimental con dos grupos de estudiantes de segundo nivel de inglés en la Universidad Técnica de Babahoyo (UTB) durante octubre y noviembre de 2024. La muestra consistió en 100 estudiantes divididos en dos grupos de 50 cada uno: un grupo control que siguió una metodología tradicional y un grupo experimental que implementó metodologías activas. Los resultados revelaron una mejora estadísticamente significativa en el rendimiento académico del grupo experimental, evidenciando la efectividad de las metodologías activas en la adquisición del idioma inglés.

Palabras clave: metodologías activas; enseñanza del inglés; educación superior; innovación pedagógica; rendimiento académico.

Abstract

This research examines the impact of active methodologies on English language learning at the university level. A quasi-experimental study was conducted with two groups of second-level English language learners at the Technical University of Babahoyo (UTB) during October and November 2024. The sample consisted of 100 students divided into two groups of 50 each: a control group that followed a traditional methodology and an experimental group that implemented active methodologies. The results revealed a statistically significant improvement in the academic performance of the experimental group, evidencing the effectiveness of active methodologies in English language acquisition.

Keywords: active methodologies; English language teaching; higher education; pedagogical innovation; academic performance.

Resumo

Esta investigação examina o impacto das metodologias ativas na aprendizagem da língua inglesa a nível universitário. Foi realizado um estudo quase experimental com dois grupos de estudantes de inglês do segundo nível da Universidade Técnica de Babahoyo (UTB) durante outubro e novembro de 2024. A amostra foi constituída por 100 estudantes divididos em dois grupos de 50 cada: um grupo de controlo que seguiu uma metodologia tradicional e um grupo experimental que

implementou metodologias ativas. Os resultados revelaram uma melhoria estatisticamente significativa no desempenho académico do grupo experimental, evidenciando a eficácia das metodologias ativas na aquisição da língua inglesa.

Palavras-chave: metodologias ativas; ensinando inglês; ensino superior; inovação pedagógica; desempenho académico.

Introduction

The teaching of English as a foreign language has undergone a paradigmatic transformation in recent decades, evolving from traditional methodologies focused on grammar and translation towards more dynamic, interactive and student-centred approaches. This evolution responds to the demands of an increasingly globalised and interconnected world, where mastery of English has become a fundamental competence for professional and academic development.

In the context of Ecuadorian higher education, particularly at the Technical University of Babahoyo, the need to implement innovative pedagogical strategies that improve English language acquisition has become imperative. This need arises from the confluence of various factors that characterize the current educational landscape: the growing internationalization of higher education, the demands of the global labor market, and the challenges inherent to teaching foreign languages in contexts where English is not the predominant language.

Historical Context of Teaching English

The historical evolution of English language teaching in Ecuador reflects global trends in foreign language pedagogy. For decades, the Ecuadorian educational system primarily adopted traditional methods based on memorization of grammatical rules and literal translation. This approach, although systematic, demonstrated significant limitations in the development of effective communicative skills.

The transition towards more active methodologies began to take shape in the 1990s, driven by international research that demonstrated the importance of meaningful interaction in language learning. However, this transition has been gradual and uneven, encountering both institutional and cultural resistance.

Current Contextual Framework

Today, the Technical University of Babahoyo, like many higher education institutions in Ecuador, faces the challenge of adapting its teaching methodologies to meet the needs of a new generation of students. This generation, characterized by its familiarity with technology and its preference for interactive learning experiences, demands pedagogical approaches that transcend the unidirectional transmission of knowledge.

Active methodologies emerge in this context as a pedagogical response that seeks to transform the English teaching-learning process. These methodologies are based on constructivist and socio-constructivist principles, which emphasize the importance of the student's active participation in the construction of his or her own knowledge.

Relevance of Active Methodologies

Active methodologies represent a paradigm shift in the conception of the teaching-learning process. Unlike traditional methods, where the teacher acts as a transmitter of knowledge and the student as a passive receiver, active methodologies position the student as the protagonist of his or her own learning.

This approach is characterized by:

1. Promoting active participation and student engagement
2. The development of critical thinking and problem-solving skills
3. Integrating authentic and meaningful learning experiences
4. Fostering collaboration and peer interaction
5. The incorporation of educational technologies as support tools

Theoretical Foundation of Active Methodologies

Active methodologies find their theoretical foundation in various pedagogical and psychological currents. Vygotsky's social constructivism provides a conceptual framework that emphasizes the importance of social interaction in learning. According to this perspective, learning occurs first at the social level and then at the individual level, through internalization processes mediated by language and interaction.

Kolb's experiential learning theory complements this view, highlighting the importance of direct experience and reflection in the learning process. This approach is particularly relevant in language teaching, where active practice and exposure to authentic communicative situations are essential.

Pedagogical Dimensions of Active Methodologies

Active methodologies in teaching English operate in multiple pedagogical dimensions:

Cognitive Dimension

The implementation of active methodologies fosters the development of higher cognitive processes in students, allowing them to analyze and synthesize information effectively. These methodologies promote critical and creative thinking, as well as the resolution of complex problems. In addition, they enhance metacognition and self-regulation of learning, providing students with tools to plan, monitor and evaluate their own academic progress.

Social Dimension

The social component of active methodologies is reflected in the strengthening of collaborative and cooperative learning, which facilitates the joint construction of knowledge. These strategies also contribute to the development of essential communication skills and encourage meaningful interactions between peers, enriching both individual and group learning.

Affective Dimension

Active methodologies address essential affective aspects of learning, such as increasing intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. These methodologies help reduce language anxiety and promote the development of self-efficacy, increasing students' confidence in their ability to learn English. In addition, they strengthen students' identity as language learners, motivating them to actively engage with their learning process.

Pedagogical and Technological Innovation

The integration of innovative educational technologies enhances the effectiveness of active methodologies in teaching English. Digital tools allow for the creation of immersive learning environments, facilitate interaction and collaboration between students, and provide access to

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authentic resources in English. These technologies also allow for the personalization of learning according to individual needs and for continuous and formative assessments, thereby improving educational outcomes.

Challenges and Opportunities

The implementation of active methodologies in teaching English presents both challenges and opportunities. Challenges include the need for ongoing teacher training, the adaptation of infrastructure and resources, and resistance to change on the part of some educational actors. However, these difficulties also open up the opportunity to align active methodologies with curricular requirements, promoting more dynamic, inclusive and effective teaching.

Opportunities for Educational Innovation

Although the implementation of active methodologies presents significant challenges, it also opens doors to various opportunities that can transform the educational landscape. One of these is pedagogical innovation, which promotes the design of more dynamic and effective strategies for learning. It also fosters the professional development of teachers by providing tools and knowledge that strengthen their skills and ability to adapt to new approaches.

These actions not only improve educational practice, but also contribute to the improvement of educational quality, ensuring that students receive more enriching and relevant teaching. Furthermore, these transformations promote institutional transformation, encouraging institutions to evolve and adapt to the current demands of the academic and professional environment.

Future Perspectives in Teaching English

The future of teaching English in Ecuadorian higher education is closely linked to the adoption of active methodologies and the integration of educational technologies. In this context, global trends point towards the personalization of learning, allowing the individual needs of each student to be met and their educational process to be optimized. In addition, greater integration of artificial intelligence and data analysis is expected, tools that facilitate the monitoring of student progress and the identification of areas for improvement.

The hybridization of in-person and virtual modalities is consolidated as a key strategy to expand access to education and combine the best of both approaches. Finally, the internationalization of higher education emerges as a fundamental goal, promoting academic mobility, collaboration between institutions from different countries and strengthening the global profile of graduates.

Table 1: Challenges, opportunities and future perspectives in teaching English

Aspects	Details
Challenges	- Need for ongoing teacher training.- Adaptation of infrastructure and resources.- Resistance to change on the part of some educational actors.
Opportunities	- Pedagogical innovation.- Professional teacher development.- Improvement of educational quality.- Institutional transformation.
Future Perspectives	- Personalization of learning.- Integration of artificial intelligence and data analysis.- Hybridization of face-to-face and virtual modalities.- Internationalization of higher education.

Elaborated by: The authors

Theoretical Framework

Fundamentals of Second Language Learning

Second language learning is a complex process that involves multiple cognitive, affective, and social factors. Krashen (2019) argues that second language acquisition occurs more effectively when students are exposed to meaningful and comprehensible input. This perspective aligns with the fundamental principles of active methodologies, which privilege interaction and the meaningful construction of knowledge.

Evolution of English Teaching Methodologies

English language teaching has undergone a significant evolution from the grammar-translation method to contemporary communicative approaches. Richards and Rodgers (2020) argue that this evolution responds to a deeper understanding of how languages are learned and the changing needs of learners in a globalized world.

Active Methodologies in Language Teaching

Active methodologies represent an educational paradigm that emphasizes the active role of the student in the learning process. According to González-Pérez (2021), these methodologies promote:

1. Problem-based learning
2. Collaborative learning
3. Gamification
4. Flipped classroom
5. Project-based learning

Díaz-Barriga (2022) highlights that active methodologies foster the development of communicative skills through constant participation and meaningful interaction. This perspective is supported by Martínez-López (2023), who emphasizes the importance of creating learning environments that stimulate spontaneous linguistic production.

Constructivist Theory and Language Learning

Constructivism, as a fundamental theoretical framework, supports the implementation of active methodologies. Vygotsky (cited in Hernández, 2021) emphasizes the importance of social interaction in learning. This perspective is complemented by the findings of Morales-García (2023), who demonstrates how collaborative activities improve the retention and application of linguistic knowledge.

Motivation and Language Learning

Motivation plays a crucial role in language learning. Dörnyei and Ushioda (2021) argue that active methodologies increase students' intrinsic motivation by providing them with greater autonomy and opportunities for meaningful participation. This argument is supported by studies by Rodríguez-Sánchez (2022), which demonstrate a positive correlation between the implementation of active methodologies and levels of student motivation.

Technology and Active Methodologies

The integration of technology into active methodologies has revolutionized language teaching. Pérez-Castro (2023) highlights how digital tools facilitate the creation of more dynamic and interactive learning environments. This perspective is complemented by the findings of Torres-Mendoza (2024), who documents the positive impact of educational technology on the development of language skills.

Assessing Learning in Active Contexts

Assessment in the context of active methodologies requires a different approach than the traditional one. According to López-García (2023), assessment should be continuous, formative and focused on the learning process. This approach is supported by Ramírez-Ortiz (2024), who proposes an assessment model that integrates qualitative and quantitative aspects of linguistic development.

Communicative Competencies and Active Methodologies

The development of communicative skills is a fundamental objective in language teaching. Castillo-Morales (2023) argues that active methodologies promote the integrated development of the four basic language skills: listening, speaking, reading and writing. This perspective is complemented by the studies of Velázquez-Ruiz (2024), which demonstrate how interactive activities improve fluency and accuracy in communication.

Sociocultural Aspects of Language Learning

Language learning cannot be separated from its sociocultural context. Méndez-Torres (2023) emphasizes the importance of incorporating cultural elements in the teaching of English through active methodologies. This perspective is enriched by the contributions of Jiménez-Vargas (2024), who documents how the integration of cultural aspects increases the relevance and significance of learning.

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Methodology

Research Design

This research adopts a quasi-experimental design with repeated measures, implementing a mixed approach that combines quantitative and qualitative analysis. The study was conducted over two months (October-November 2024) at the Technical University of Babahoyo.

Design Features

- Type: Quasi-experimental
- Duration: 2 months
- Groups: Control and Experimental
- Measurements: Pre-test and Post-test
- Approach: Mixed (quantitative-qualitative)

Population and Sample

Population

The study population comprises second-level English students from the Technical University of Babahoyo, enrolled in the 2024 academic period.

Sample

- Total size: 100 students
- Distribution:
    - Control Group: 50 students
    - Experimental Group: 50 students
- Demographic characteristics:
    - Age range: 18-25 years
    - Gender distribution: 55% female, 45% male
    - Socioeconomic level: Diverse

Selection Criteria

Inclusion Criteria

- Students enrolled in second level of English
- Regular attendance at classes
- Voluntary participation in the study

Exclusion Criteria

- Students with an advanced level of previous English
- Non-attendance of more than 20% of sessions
- Not completing all assessments

Variables

Independent Variable: Active Methodologies

Operationalization:

- Project-based learning
- Collaborative learning
- Gamification
- Flipped classroom

Dependent Variable: Academic Performance

Indicators:

- Standardized Test Scores
- Communication skills
- Class participation
- Oral and written production

Data Collection Instruments

The research used a variety of instruments to ensure comprehensive and reliable data collection. First, academic assessments were administered, including a standardized pre-test that assessed language skills in listening and reading comprehension, as well as oral and written production.

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Subsequently, a standardized post-test with the same dimensions and an equivalent level of difficulty was used, which made it possible to measure students' progress.

Additionally, evaluation rubrics were designed to assess class participation, collaborative work, oral presentations and completed projects. Finally, observation records, such as teaching field diaries, participation checklists and activity records, provided qualitative data to complement the analysis.

Implementation Procedure

The procedure was carried out in three main phases. During Phase 1: Preparation, which lasted two weeks, teachers received training in active methodologies, materials and resources were prepared, the pre-test was applied and the work groups were organized.

In Phase 2: Implementation, lasting six weeks, the control group worked with a traditional methodology based on expository classes, grammar exercises and conventional assessments, while the experimental group used active methodologies, including collaborative projects, gamified activities and the flipped classroom.

Finally, in Phase 3: Evaluation, which lasted two weeks, the post-test was applied, qualitative data was collected, statistical analysis was performed and final reports were prepared.

Data Analysis

Data analysis was carried out using quantitative and qualitative approaches. In the quantitative analysis, descriptive statistics were used to calculate measures of central tendency, dispersion and frequency distribution, and inferential statistics were used using Student's t-tests, analysis of variance and estimation of effect size to assess the significance and relevance of the results. Qualitative analysis involved data categorization, content analysis and information triangulation, ensuring a deeper and more contextualized interpretation of the findings.

Ethical Considerations

The study was conducted in compliance with strict ethical principles. Participants gave informed consent, ensuring that they understood the objectives and procedures of the research. Confidentiality of the data collected and voluntary participation were guaranteed, allowing subjects

to withdraw from the study at any time without repercussions. These considerations ensured the integrity of the process and respect for the rights of those involved.

Results

Descriptive Data Analysis

The results obtained during the research period reveal significant patterns in students' academic performance. The detailed analysis of the data collected during October and November 2024 provides substantial evidence on the impact of active methodologies on English language learning.

Academic Performance by Period

October 2024 (Pre-test)

Control Group:

- Average: 7.45
- Standard Deviation: 0.29
- Range: 7.02 - 7.89
- Median: 7.43
- Fashion: 7.40

Experimental Group:

- Average: 7.52
- Standard Deviation: 0.31
- Range: 7.05 - 7.92
- Median: 7.50
- Fashion: 7.55

November 2024 (Post-test)

Control Group:

- Average: 7.63
- Standard Deviation: 0.33
- Range: 7.15 - 8.10
- Median: 7.60

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- Fashion: 7.65

Experimental Group:

- Average: 8.75

- Standard Deviation: 0.28

- Range: 8.20 - 9.30

- Median: 8.72

- Fashion: 8.80

Analysis of Specific Competencies

Communication Skills

Analysis by specific competencies revealed significant improvements in the experimental group:

Listening Comprehension

Analysis of the results in the listening comprehension competence showed a notable difference between the two groups. While the control group achieved a 5% improvement, the experimental group recorded a significantly greater increase of 25%. This result highlights the effectiveness of active methodologies in developing listening comprehension skills, allowing students to process and understand oral information more efficiently.

Oral Expression

In terms of speaking, the data revealed considerable progress in the experimental group, with an improvement of 28%, compared to 7% achieved by the control group. This notable difference highlights how the interactive and collaborative activities used in the experimental group fostered confidence and fluency in speaking, essential factors for mastering this skill.

Reading ComprehensionThe analysis of reading comprehension also showed favorable results for the experimental group, which achieved an improvement of 22%, compared to 6% for the control group. These figures reflect the positive impact of active strategies, which included meaningful materials and dynamic exercises, on the students' ability to interpret and analyze texts in English.

Written Expression

In the written expression competition, the experimental group far outperformed the control group, achieving a 20% improvement, in contrast to 4% for the control group. This progress suggests that active methodologies, which promoted constant practice and specific feedback, facilitated a more solid development in the students' ability to structure ideas and correctly use grammatical rules in their written productions.

Inferential Analysis

Student's T test

A Student t test for independent samples was performed comparing the November results between both groups:

- $t(98) = 17.89$
- $p < .001$
- Cohen's $d = 3.58$
- Confidence interval (95%): [0.98, 1.26]

Statistical analysis reveals a highly significant difference between groups, with a large effect size (Cohen's $d > 0.8$). These results indicate that the implementation of active methodologies had a substantial impact on students' academic performance.

Qualitative analysis

Student Perceptions

Interviews and surveys conducted with students in the experimental group revealed several recurring themes:

Increased Motivation

A significant increase in students' motivation towards learning English was observed, reflected in a greater interest and enthusiasm to participate in academic activities. This change was accompanied by a reduction in language anxiety, which allowed students to approach language learning with greater confidence and security. An increase in voluntary participation was also observed, demonstrating a more active and proactive commitment to their learning process. These

advances underline the effectiveness of the strategies implemented to foster a motivating and stress-free environment.

Improvement in Self-Efficacy

A significant increase in students' confidence in communicating in English was observed, allowing them to express themselves more confidently in various academic and social situations. This positive change was accompanied by an increased willingness to take linguistic risks, such as trying to express themselves with new vocabulary or more complex grammatical structures, without fear of making mistakes. In addition, students developed autonomous learning strategies, strengthening their ability to manage their own progress in language proficiency. These results highlight the importance of fostering self-efficacy as a key element for success in learning a foreign language.

Satisfaction with the Methodology

Students expressed high satisfaction with the methodology implemented, especially highlighting their appreciation for the interactive approach, which made the classes more dynamic and engaging. They also positively valued the collaborative work, which not only facilitated group learning, but also promoted a sense of community and mutual support. Furthermore, they recognized the practical relevance of the activities carried out, identifying their usefulness for real contexts and their contribution to the development of skills applicable beyond the classroom. These results reflect the effectiveness of the methodology in generating an enriching and meaningful educational experience.

Teaching Observations

Analysis of field diaries and teacher observation records identified several significant patterns:

Class Participation

A significant increase was observed in the frequency of student interventions during classes, which shows greater engagement with learning activities. In addition, the quality of contributions made by students improved significantly, reflecting a deeper understanding of the topics addressed. Likewise, there was an improvement in peer interaction, which favored the exchange of ideas, the

joint construction of knowledge and a more dynamic and collaborative learning environment. These advances highlight the importance of encouraging active participation in the classroom as a key element for academic and social development.

Competence Development

There was a notable improvement in students' oral fluency, allowing them to express themselves with greater confidence and naturalness during academic activities. This progress was accompanied by a significant improvement in grammatical accuracy, reflecting a better command of linguistic structures. In addition, there was an increase in the use of vocabulary, expanding students' communicative tools and improving their ability to participate in more complex and enriching discussions. These results highlight the positive impact of the strategies implemented in the comprehensive development of linguistic skills.

Group Dynamics

A notable strengthening of group cohesion was observed, which allowed students to work more harmoniously and effectively as a team. This environment favored the development of collaborative skills, essential for achieving common goals and for shared learning. In addition, a mutually supportive environment was created, in which students motivated and supported each other, promoting a positive environment that facilitated both individual and collective learning. These results highlight the importance of fostering interaction and teamwork to improve group dynamics and educational results.

Discussion

The results obtained in this research provide substantial evidence on the effectiveness of active methodologies in teaching English at university level. The significant improvement in the academic performance of the experimental group, supported by both quantitative and qualitative data, suggests multiple implications for pedagogical practice.

Interpretation of Results

The statistically significant difference between the control and experimental groups ($p < .001$) shows that active methodologies generated a substantial impact on learning. Furthermore, the large

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effect size (d = 3.58) highlights that this difference is not only statistically significant, but also of great practical relevance. These results confirm that active methodologies can positively transform teaching and learning processes, with an emphasis on improving student performance. The results of this study present important implications for teaching practice.

Regarding the effectiveness of active methodologies, a significant improvement in all linguistic competencies, a comprehensive development of communication skills, and a positive impact on student motivation and participation were evident. Likewise, a notable development of transversal competencies was observed, including the strengthening of collaborative skills, improvements in critical thinking, and an increase in learning autonomy.

To ensure successful implementation, the importance of teacher training, systematic planning and institutional support is highlighted, all of which are key factors in consolidating the benefits of these methodologies. Despite the positive findings, it is essential to recognize certain limitations that could influence the generalizability of the results. In terms of temporality, the relatively short duration of the study and the possible novelty effect highlight the need for long-term follow-ups. Regarding the sample, the moderate size, the specific context of a single institution, and the particular characteristics of the participants could limit the applicability of the results to other settings. Finally, from a methodological perspective, the quasi-experimental design, the presence of potential confounding variables, and limitations in the measurement of some variables suggest areas for improvement for future research. These aspects should be considered when interpreting the results and designing further studies.

Conclusions

The significant impact of active methodologies was evidenced by their substantial positive effect on students' academic performance, showing consistent improvements in all language skills. These benefits were not limited to academic performance alone, but also extended to other aspects of student development. In terms of methodological effectiveness, the combination of various active strategies proved highly effective, favoring a comprehensive approach that promoted the development of multiple skills.

Furthermore, the active participation of students in the learning process significantly improved the retention and application of acquired knowledge. Among the additional benefits, a significant

increase in student motivation, a notable development of autonomous learning skills and improvements in group dynamics and the learning environment in general were observed.

The results obtained strongly support constructivist theories of learning, highlighting the importance of active participation in the educational process. They also reinforce the relevance of the social construction of knowledge, highlighting how context and interaction play key roles in the development of learning. These theoretical implications highlight the need for pedagogical approaches that promote meaningful and collaborative learning experiences.

The findings suggest that traditional pedagogical practices need to be rethought to align them with the demands of more active and participatory learning. This involves investing in teacher training to ensure the effective implementation of innovative strategies, developing appropriate teaching resources and materials, and adapting educational infrastructures to new teaching and learning dynamics. These actions will contribute to creating a more dynamic and effective educational environment that responds to the needs of students and contemporary educational contexts.

Recommendations

To ensure effective implementation, it is recommended to develop a systematic plan that includes well-defined transition phases and allows for constant monitoring and evaluation of progress. This gradual approach ensures that changes are sustainable and adaptable to the specific needs of the institution. In addition, it is suggested to promote professional development by offering teacher training programs that strengthen key competencies. The creation of communities of practice and action-research initiatives will contribute to the continued growth of staff. Finally, it is essential to invest in educational technology, adapt learning spaces to current demands, and develop innovative teaching materials to improve the quality of teaching and learning.

In the pedagogical field, the importance of didactic planning that includes meaningful activities, formative assessment and personalized approaches to meet the diverse needs of students is highlighted. During implementation in the classroom, it is recommended to encourage active participation, promote collaborative work and take advantage of technological resources to enrich the educational experience. Regarding evaluation and monitoring, it is essential to implement continuous evaluation processes that collect timely feedback and allow pedagogical strategies to be adjusted according to the identified needs, thus ensuring a constant improvement in educational results.

It is suggested that the scope of research be broadened through longitudinal studies that analyze the impact over time, include different educational levels, and consider diverse institutional contexts. It is also important to deepen the analysis by examining specific variables, investigating mediating factors, and evaluating long-term effects that provide a more comprehensive view. From a methodological perspective, it is recommended to implement experimental designs that allow establishing causal relationships, use mixed methods to enrich the findings, and develop specific instruments that ensure an accurate measurement of the phenomena studied.

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