

Preservice Teachers as Developmental Readers: Early Experiences

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Abstract

This research investigates autobiographical life histories of preservice teachers in an undergraduate children's literature class regarding their experiences with reading. Students' written autobiographical narratives describing their development as readers were analyzed by using a framework namely content analysis in this qualitative study. The following themes emerged from the students' narratives; early reading experiences inside and outside of school environments; favorite books; why we are a reader or non-reader; who read to us as an infant, toddler, preschooler, and elementary school student; teachers throughout our schooling who fostered a love of reading and those who did not; and the strategies that helped us become an avid reader or discouraged avid reading.

Keywords

Reading, reading habits, literacy, narrative analysis, teacher education.

Introduction

In this study we asked undergraduate students, who are future teachers enrolled in a children's literature course, to write about their lives as read-

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ers to determine why they were or were not readers when they were children so that they would be able to understand the role that reading books has in helping students become better readers and students.

Özen (2001) describes our nation as “a nation who does not like to read” and a “nation of readers who do not read”. Bayram’s (2001) research on the reading habits of 504 people including different educational levels and occupations from İstanbul shows 61% of the participants describe themselves as not readers. Özen and Bayram and other researchers (Bircan & Tekin 1989, Özdemirci 1990) who examined the reading habits of Turkish people indicate that the amount of reading done in İstanbul and in Turkey was very low. Not different from the nation, our current teachers have similar attitudes toward reading. A report on the reading profile of teachers by an education union (Eğitim-sen, 1998) indicates that 36% of our teachers read only one book and only 28% of them buy a book in a month. Like us, teacher educators are stunned to find that so many Turkish students have no use for reading other than as an academic obligation. Applegate and Applegate ask what if a significant number of the teachers of the future have no love of reading themselves? They continue, “For these students, we had to lay down the foundation of a love of reading that we had hoped to find and build upon.” (2004: 555).

Overwhelmingly many studies have pointed out that a large number of students are not readers and they do not choose to read while they have an ability to do so (Anderson, Wilson & Fielding 1988, Greaney & Hegarty 1987). In the current study we focus on both the nature of reading and the educational experience of preservice teachers as developmental readers, in the hope that we might shed some light on the problem of lack of reading habits and attitudes.

The purpose of this study was to examine the early reading experiences of preservice teachers. As the teacher candidates write, discuss and remember their own reading experiences, it is hoped that these reflections will inform their own future practice in their classrooms. It is important for students who are becoming teachers to be aware of and become enthusiastic about reading so they can pass this joy of reading on to their students. Information about the reader’s nature and reading experiences would contribute to the body of knowledge in the field of literacy and reading, and this better perspective could have implications for designing educational practices, policies and research.

Literature Review

A growing body of knowledge on early literacy is referred to as emergent, family or home literacy. This research base is the foundation on which our study is grounded and therefore we will focus on early literacy in the literature review section. In addition to knowledge on early literacy, researchers can find many studies on preservice teachers and literacy narratives, as well as preservice teachers' perceptions about literacy.

Our review of the available data suggest that parental involvement in their children's literacy development, increasing the amount of time children spend on family literacy activities, teacher roles, responsibilities and their training, collaboration between the school and the home are positive conditions for improvement on literacy growth resulting with academic success.

The National Research Council, in a recent publication called *Starting out Right: A guide to promoting children's reading success* (1999) suggests the pathway to developing good readers: reading aloud to children from birth; modeling reading daily; and exposing them to books. Similar pathways described by the National Research Council this section divided into three parts include; early literacy experiences, modeling reading and read aloud, and exposure to books.

Early Literacy Experiences

Experiences with reading do not begin with formal reading and writing instruction; most of us become familiar with the nature and functions of reading long before our first day in school, through observing and participating in literacy activities in our homes. The research on the early literacy experiences points out the importance of home literacy and children's literacy development.

Tracey and Morrow (2007) describe the theories of literacy development in their book titled "Lenses on Reading; an Introduction to Theories and Models." They state that Marie Clay (1966) used the term "emergent literacy" to refer to a period in a child's life between birth and when the child can read and write at a conventional (approximately third-grade) level. Emergent literacy is a functional level of performance not a chronological age. Morrow (2005) also believes that children's development in the areas of listening, speaking, reading, and writing are all interrelated and literacy developments start at the birth.

The term "family literacy" was initially proposed by Taylor (1983) and refers to relationships between families and the development of literacy. Tracey and

Morrow explain how literacy-rich environments contribute the children's early literacy development, "Such homes provide reading environments that include books and other reading materials and family members who serve as models of involvement in literacy activities." (2007: 194). A good example can be found from Weigela, Martina, and Bennett's (2006) reports on a study that examined both the concurrent and longitudinal connections between multiple components of the home environment and indicators of preschool-aged children's literacy and language development. They collected data from 85 parents and their children at two different times. The results highlight how different components of the home literacy environment are associated with different components of preschool-aged children's literacy and language abilities, findings that become more important as educators and policy-makers look for ways to enhance children's literacy and language development. In a similar study, Dodici, Draper and Peterson (2003) looked for the relationship between parent-child interactions and early literacy skills for 27 families living in low-income households. Their study provides support for the theory that there is a strong relationship between early parent-child interactions and later skill development exists.

MacDonell summarizes the results of the huge body of research on reading that includes how we acquire reading and how important reading is to our academic and future career achievements. MacDonell finds that,

- The best predictor of how well a child will do in high school is how well they read in Grade 1.
- Readers are better writers and score higher on reading tests.
- Exposure to early reading experiences can actually increase IQ.
- Good readers acquire second languages more easily and readers get better jobs (2004: 30).

It is really important for educators to realize that not all children have rich experiences with literacy during their childhood. Both families and schools should share responsibilities at this point to support the children who have had limited exposure to early literacy experiences. Wearmouth explains that if families and schools are to work together to support the learning of students who experience difficulties in literacy development, it is crucial that educators have a clear view of how to establish home-school links in ways that take account of: "the ability of families from a diversity of social and cultural backgrounds to support children's literacy acquisition; the home-

school power relationships; and the rationale for, and model of literacy associated with particular programmes and interventions.” (2004: 6).

These accounts point to the fact that parents from every social class are often keen to help their children with reading at home. From this standpoint there appears to be a strong rationale for believing that many families across the social scale may have the potential to offer additional resources in supporting the literacy acquisition of children who experience difficulties.

Modeling Reading and Read Aloud

Many scholars (Bialostok 1992, Craig-Thoreson and Dale 1999) share the idea that children who come from a home that includes parents who read for pleasure and enjoyment no doubt will also like to read and the best approach for encouraging children to read is simply parents who themselves enjoy reading. Parents are the literacy role models for their children long before the school years by reading to children, reading themselves, and making easy access to reading materials (Lyytinen, Laakso & Poikkeus 1998, Teale 1986). It is well documented that children whose parents read to them tend to become better readers and do better in school. Bialostok states, “The single most important factor influencing children’s literacy is the amount of time someone reads to them.” (1992: 2).

Similarly Craig-Thoreson and Dale (1999) suggested that shared book reading was an ideal context for the development of children’s language skills because it provides: (1) opportunities for the development of new concepts, (2) opportunities for the adult to monitor children’s comprehension through questioning, and (3) occasions for the development of the child’s vocabulary and for listening to and practising more advanced language forms.

On the other side Smith and Elish-Piper focus on parents with low literacy and describe three reasons why primary-grade educators must be knowledgeable about the current state of adult literacy. These reasons are:

Reason 1 Adults who struggle with literacy are likely to have children who will struggle with literacy.

Reason 2 Parents with low literacy are less likely to help with their children’s school work, get involved in school activities, and communicate with their children’s teachers.

Reason 3 Adults with low literacy skills are more likely to have difficulty navigating the healthcare system and reading and understanding medical

instructions; consequently, their children's health is likely to be affected (2002: 157-159).

Exposure to Books

Any reading activity should have as its ultimate goal the development of a love for reading. Schools play an important role to help students acquire this goal. Using rewards for reading has been discussed many scholars in the context of school and home related reading activities. Lamme lists some ideas to promote reading;

- Provide access. Quality literature is enough incentive for most children. Provide books for home reading.
- Market good books. Advertise books in classrooms. Encourage children to present two-minute talks about books they have enjoyed reading.
- Read aloud to students. Every time we read aloud we are giving a commercial for reading.
- Provide time. Becoming a good reader takes practice, and it takes a certain amount of time to really engage with a piece of literature.
- Be an enthusiastic reader. Read well-written children's literature for your own recreation and share your enthusiasm for the books with your students.
- Provide opportunities for students to share and discuss what they are reading.
- Encourage children to set their own goals for reading progress. Rather than compete with each other for points, children can track their own progress as readers with goals such as the following: reading more fluently, responding more deeply, broadening their reading repertoire, or studying an author, illustrator, or topic in depth. (2002: 16)

We know that good readers are readers who are motivated to read. To be motivated readers, children need to have freedom to choose their own reading material and we have to keep in mind they are different in their personal interests. Krashen uses the term FVR or Free Voluntary Reading: "because you want to no book report, no questions at the end of the chapter.... FVR means putting down a book you don't like and choosing another one instead." (1993: x) This leads to what MacDonell states: "If children start reading for pleasure, good things will follow. Reading comprehension will improve. Their writing and vocabulary--even spelling and grammar--will get better. In other words, readers who read for pleasure are on the road to success." (2004: 32). For example research shows us that picking up vocabulary through pleasure reading is ten

times faster than vocabulary instruction (Nagy, Herman & Anderson 1985). And Wendelin and Zinc (1983), show that peer recommendation is one of the best ways to promote reading among students.

Methodology

The purpose of this study is to examine early literacy experiences of college preservice teachers who are enrolled in a children's literature course. To accomplish this inquiry we used the research methods of a qualitative study. The term qualitative is used in a broad way to refer several research strategies to gather and analyze data (Bogdan and Biklen 1992). In this study, we inquired as teacher researchers about our own college classrooms and students as Short stated; "Teacher research at the college level will help college educators to grasp more fully the potential of the theories and frameworks being implemented in public schools for transforming their own teacher education programs and classrooms." (1993: 156).

Student narratives were an essential part of this study. Wilson and Ritchre, remind us to remember the nature of stories, stating that "they are not neutral objects" (1994: 187) and "they invite us –even command us- into relationship with their tellers." (1994: 187). Using students' voices in their narrative stories provide a description that is detailed and rich. Such a rich narrative enables our study to match the criteria for trustworthiness set by Lincoln and Guba (1985) and part of establishing trustworthiness for the study involves transferability.

Data Collection: The data sources were autobiographical literacy narratives. We asked our students to write a reflexive paper on their development as readers during the first week of their college children's literature class. 125 students from four sections of children's literature courses, 86 female and 37 male, all sophomores, participated in this study.

We provided students a guideline to give them ideas for their papers:

Write a short autobiographical paper on your life history with regard to reading. Think about your development as a reader. You might interview with your family members on your early reading experiences and reflect upon your life as a reader inside and outside of school environments. Try to remember any favorite books, mention teachers throughout your schooling who fostered a love of reading and those who did not, discuss the strategies that helped you become an avid reader or discouraged avid reading.

This study is limited by the extent to which students' self-reports comprise the data for the study.

Data Analysis: Lieblich et. al. (1998) refer to narrative research as any study that uses or analyzes narrative materials. They define a model for the classification and organization of types of narrative analysis. We followed the guideline under categorical-content reading, traditionally called “content analysis” (Manning & Cullum-Swan 1994, Riessman 1993) to analyze our data. Lieblich et. al. states that this type of analysis “focuses on the content of narratives as manifested in separate parts of the story, irrespective of the context of the complete story” (1998: 16) and summarizes the steps taken in most of the variations of content analysis as “1. Selection of the subtext 2. Definition of the content categories, 3. Sorting the material into the categories, and 4. drawing conclusions from the results” (1998: 112-114).

During the process of data analysis, first we highlighted the all sentences on the students’ narratives relating to reading experiences, and then we defined the categories and sorted out these categories. Finally, we drew conclusions from the results in the light of critical, social and political theories, such as critical pedagogy, reader response theory, critical literacy and works of scholars in the field of teacher education. The data reduction and analysis provided a descriptive foundation that highlighted early literacy experiences at home and at school, reflections about learning and teaching, and the early reading habits of preservice teachers.

Findings

Home Environments that Support (or do not support) Reading

In our students’ narratives, 40 (%36) students stated they had home environments that did not support reading. Many were willing to read, but had to wait until first grade to learn because there were no books in their home environment. It was not surprising that many students stated that they met with books in first grade. As the literacy narratives of the whole group were analyzed, it was apparent that the majority of our participants had negative memories about their early literacy experiences at home. Students recalled: “Both my parents were illiterate. And no one encouraged me to read. I never had a bookcase and even if I wanted to read there was no chance to find a book around us.”; “There were no books at our home except mom’s cooking books and my older brother’s school books.” It was common that many of the participants mentioned the lack of preschool experiences, illiterate family members, and poor home environments. One student wrote: “I did not have a chance to go preschool before the first grade and I did not have siblings whose reading materials I could use. That’s why I met with books when I start to first grade.”

Only 18 (%14.4) students stated they had supportive home environments. Many mentioned that their parents were teachers, an occupation that would imply a home with access to reading materials. Discussing their positive home environments some students related it to the reading materials at home, one student wrote, "When I was a child "Türkiye" newspaper which we were getting daily, was giving books as a promotion. Each day we were getting a biography of Ottoman Sultans. That was the series of books (that) got me into reading." Some other students remembered shared reading and telling stories, a student wrote, "When I was 6-7 years old on a certain nights of week we read stories together with whole family. I had a chance to catch the real beauties of the books." Another student wrote, "Each night before the bed my grandmother told me stories and told me when I learn to read I can read all the stories in the books. These conversations made me wonder and very enthusiastic about the books." Having siblings of school age was a positive effect on many students in terms of their home environment. Having a sibling in school provided some participants with access to books. A student wrote, "I did not have a chance to meet with books before my older sisters' first year in the school."

Lack of exposure to reading aloud, lack of parents encouraging literacy behaviors, and lack of reading materials at hand were the most commonly cited reasons for many students in their narratives to explain the low level of literacy activities at home. A student reported: "I had an illiterate mother and a father who had very limited education, therefore I did not get any encouragement for reading and there was nobody around us who read regularly". Another student wrote, "Watching TV and playing games were more enjoyable for me when I was a child. My family did not try to get my attention on reading and books." Another student discussed the role of parents, "I do not remember a day that my father reminded us to read. But it was not enough for us to read. First of all, we have to be a good model for our children and we have to love reading too. In turn our children will become better readers."

It is not surprising that these negative experiences caused not only lack of reading habits but also affected students' other abilities as well. One student mentioned, "I remember choosing a picture book and making up stories from the pictures in the book. I told these stories to my parents and grandparents over and over again. But now, I cannot make up new stories from picture books anymore. I read only what is written on the pages. I was telling ten stories from a storybook, now, only one.

Role Models

Both fathers and mothers are mentioned as role models in students' narratives. A student wrote about her father and sister; "The first person who encouraged me on reading was my father. He says he learns life from books. Before I was able to read, I was watching him and my older sister while they read and I was jealous of my sister and her books." Another student mentioned his/her parent, "In my preschool years, I always remember my father reading a paper, and mom reading her favorite book in the evenings. That made me very curious about books. When they realized my curiosity about books they bought me some picture books and that made me very happy." And one student expressed her reading attitudes coming from her mother, "If I am a good reader now, I owe it to my mother and my classroom teacher who did or put the award on readings. My mom always read a book when she had a time instead of watching TV. Because of her, reading covers big part of my life."

Classroom teachers and language art teachers were the second groups of role models. A student pointed to both an elementary classroom teacher and a middle school language arts teacher as being influential in her desire to read. This student wrote, "My classroom teacher and language art teacher during middle school years were good role models for me to gain reading habits. I did not get enough support from my family because there was nobody in my family who had a positive view of reading."

Many students mentioned the name of their teachers as role models that they do not forget; "I had the biggest support from my classroom teacher ... on the way to becoming a reader." Siblings, relatives and friends were also mentioned as positive role models. A student wrote about her sibling, "I got the reading habits from my family. Especially as a bookworm my sister affected me in a positive way a lot. I followed her when she read, wrote and drew. That made me more close to books." Another wrote about her cousin, "I had a cousin who wrote poems and read them to me many many times. His passion about poetry and books was a good example to me for many years." And another mentioned her friend, "One of my friends when I was a child liked to advertise his books. He was doing that advertisement so successfully that we had to see the book. I believe he was the reason why I started (to have) an interest in these books." Lack of exposure of positive role models was also included in some narratives. A student wrote that; "No one, neither family members nor my teachers had encouraged me on reading." Table 1 indicates the number of students who reported in their narratives to have role models for reading.

Table 1: *Role Models for Reading*

Role Models	Number of future teachers
Parents	33
Classroom teachers	31
Siblings	21
Language arts teachers	23
Relatives (Uncles; Grandparents; Cousins)	11
Friends	10
Total	129

Access to Reading Materials

Classroom libraries, school libraries, book cases at homes, daily newspapers and magazines, personal books (The importance of owning books) and gifts as books were the main key areas for our students to access the books that they mentioned in their narratives.

Classroom, school and home libraries were the source of books for many students. Students could get the books from classroom libraries. One student stated, “We had a classroom library when I was in first grade. It was filled full of books. I borrowed books and returned them when I finished.” Another student indicated that public libraries were a book source and stated, “I was going to the public library regularly to read daily newspapers, because we were not buying newspapers.” For many of them home was the first place for books. A student wrote, “As a classroom teacher, my dad had a good library at home.” Another wrote, “We have a very rich library at home. And we buy a daily newspaper and a couple of magazines regularly.” And they affected them very positively, “My father’s rich library and his passion about books made me curious about books from my early years.”

Owning and getting books as a gift had much more meaning for many students. A student recalled that having first books, “My dad bought me a dozen of my first books. I read all those books with enjoyment and kept them in my bookcases for years.” Another recalled the first personal book; “I bought my first book when I was in fifth grade with the money that my uncle gave me. Reading that book was such an enjoyment for me.” Another student recalled receiving gifts; “I met with book in my early years. My father’s teacher friends brought me books as gifts when they visited us.” A few students recalled their bookstore visits. A student remembered their bookstore visit with her father, “With my father we visit the bookstores and buy books. Usually my father let me chose the books that made me more comfortable and I was getting to learn more about good books.”

For many students, access to books was not easy. A student described her poor school environment; “There was no school library for five years when I was in elementary school.” Another student mentioned the financial difficulties and poor libraries as, “I had not enough money to buy new books. Then, I decided to check out our school library. The books on the bookshelves were invisible from dust and they were too old.”

Reasons to Read/ Reasons for decline in Reading

Only a few students mentioned influences of different people as reasons for reading. But reading as class requirement can be found in many students’ narratives such as, “Through my schooling years I read only if I had to, such as reading for homework. It is a shame but it was true.” On the other side, many students wrote about how they interacted with books especially main characters in the stories, a student wrote, “I read Vasconcelos’s one of my favorite children’s books. In the story the protagonist was talking with a tree. It was interesting. I had a flower and I was talking with it.” Reading books from this perspective was another world for some students. They seemed to have found the right reading material, “I loved the book, “Poisonous Ivy” when I was a child. We had an ivy like flower in our garden and I was dreaming that one day that flower would take me away. A few times my mom caught us when we were having a talk.”

Many students mentioned lack of reading habits, standardized exams, TV, video games, and playing with friend as reasons for decline in reading times and attitudes throughout schooling. Having difficulties with reading was a common problem for many students. These difficulties turned them into not only being poor readers but also having lack of reading habits and bad attitudes toward books. A student described her experiences as; “The nightmare of being a poor reader did not leave me from the beginning of the first grade till at the end of middle school. I always tried to get away from books.” Another student wrote, “In the elementary school I tried to read couple books. I wish I had asked for some recommendations. The books I was trying to read were very hard for me, and I could not finish them. Later, I felt I was getting away from books more and more.” And another recalled, “The reading book lists provided by our classroom teachers were really on a higher level than my reading capacity. Those readings were killing my enjoyment of reading.”

School Influences upon Reading

Positive Influences

Many students remembered using their classroom and school libraries, which had a positive impact on their reading development. A student shared her memory; “There was a small library in our classroom when I was in elementary school. A group of students were responsible for the orders and lending books. Everyone in the classroom wanted to be part of that group. I was one of them. I think that was a special place for many of us. We thought we were different than others and dealing with books was great duty for many of us.” Another student shared a similar memory emphasizing the role of book clubs, “Especially during the fourth grade I was in a reading club. ... Regularly I was checking who read most and I had an idea that I should read the most books in the classroom library and my name should be on the top of the reading checklists.” And another student shared, “When I entered third grade I joined a bookclub. With our teacher’s encouragement we started to spend an hour every day with books.”

Many students in their narratives also mentioned teachers’ encouragements, awards for reading and help in finding the good books. A student remembered how her teacher encouraged them: “Our teacher encouraged us to read by giving us rewards for the person who read the most from our classroom library. To get the award I was almost reading a book on a daily basis.” Many students mentioned the awards for reading in a positive way. A student wrote, “The best thing in my elementary school years was the reading performance tests. This way, we were trying to prepare for the next tests to read more words in a minute and if we did, we would get some awards.” Some students emphasized the importance of reading from self-selected books. A student shared, “During my elementary school years we had a reading hour with self selected books. Reading a book of my interest other than boring textbooks, I was feeling very happy.”

Negative Influences

It is unfortunate to note the number of students who associated reading with unpleasant events or experiences from their early schooling. Some of the experiences related to being grading on reading, homework, lack of role models, inexperienced teachers, compulsory reading lists, competition on reading, reading as punishment, summarizing readings, and course textbooks mentioned as negative influences in students’ narratives.

Many students, especially those who were struggling readers, remembered being graded on readings. A student wrote, “Year by year the course textbooks were including more pages and different contexts. It was making me nervous. But, grading on readings and punishments for slow reading with more reading assignments were the worst.” Homework became more important than pleasure reading. A student remembered, “I was trying to read everything I found. Newspapers, magazines ... But time went by and I had low interest in reading. I started to read only textbooks and to read for homework. Of course I was playing games with friends too.”

Many students complained that their teachers were not good models for them. A student wrote, “I was not reading a lot during my elementary school years. I wish I had a classroom teacher who read a lot and made us love to read.” Another student wrote, “None of my elementary and middle school teachers advertised good books. Or I do not remember any.” Having an inexperienced teacher was also an issue for some students. One student wrote; “We had a music teacher as a classroom teacher during my elementary school years. The teacher could not support us on reading books. I learned that there are many good children’s books and authors who write for children such as “Kemalettin Tuğcu’s *Üvey Baba*, *Mercan Kolye* and Ömer Seyfettin’s *Kaşığı, Forsa* from my friends who attended other schools and classrooms.” A student remembered how she tried to avoid getting punishment by stating, “Year by year I started to read less and less. I realized that checking the list on who read how many books and compulsory reading lists made me very uncomfortable. I was reading for the list and to avoid any punishment, not for enjoyment.” Another student remembered that competition on readings did not work, as she stated in her narrative, “In third grade our teacher told us he was going to check our reading performance. And who will read the most in two minutes will get some prize. ... Everyone read but me and two other students read the same number of words in two minutes. Then the second time we had readings, but I was not the winner. I was very unhappy. It is kind of weird but I was not eager to read any more.”

Reading should never be used as a disciplinary measure when children misbehave because if it is followed on a regular basis, reading will quickly become associated in the child’s thinking with unpleasant experiences. A student remembered how she was affected by these punishments, “We had to read a certain number of books from classroom library in a month. The lowest group would get a punishment and I was always in that group of students. I was not able to finish more than two books in a month and these punishments certainly did not make me like to read.”

In students' narratives, lack of reading materials and course textbooks were also mentioned as negative influences upon their reading development. A student wrote, "All the time we were only reading passages from textbooks. We never read any children's books or novels at all. I began to hate the textbooks and got nothing from them" Another student described how they encouraged in school, "When I look back on my childhood I do not remember any favorite storybooks. I only remember the "Zihinden Problemler," a book with a yellow cover that included math problems. Instead of reading story books, we were trying to solve the problems in that book." Sometimes students were required to summarize the reading. They did not enjoy summarizing. A student remembered, "During my elementary school years our teacher was providing books for us to read, summarize and talk about it in front of class. In this method, sometimes, I had to read a book which I did not like. I wish we had been given a chance to choose our own readings."

Finally, some of the narratives included critiques of a wider context. They questioned the education system and its purposes. A student wrote, "I was thinking that the purpose of going to school was studying hard and getting good grades on exams. When I was a student in elementary and middle school, I never thought reading was as important as math or science."

Discussion

We need to know our students' initial experiences in terms of reading and literacy when they enter college classrooms so that we can prepare them well to flourish students as lifelong readers from their school classrooms. Teacher education students come to college classrooms from a life full of experiences that have impacted the way they see themselves as readers and how they behave as readers.

Our analysis gives us a direction to take as we reconsider how our schools work and how we can build strong home-school relationships. As Allington states: "Children work, teachers correct and grade, and no one ever discusses the work, the content, the thought, or the response. Thus, a first order of change in elementary schools must be in the kind of work that both teachers and children do. ... To create thoughtful readers, children must spend a large part of the school day engaged in reading and writing."(1995: 11). And he adds four principles to achieve systemic changes; "Change comes from within, not afar; change will not necessarily cost more money; there are no quick fixes; and there is no one best way."(1995: 12).

The number of books these future teachers reported having in the homes shows enormous discrepancies between students who have restricted access to

reading and their more-advantaged peers. Researchers confirm that easy availability of reading materials strongly predicts the amount of reading activity (Constantino 2005). Allington and McGill-Franzen address the long-standing reading achievement gap between low-income students and their more-affluent peers and suggest that we can do something about the lack of access to reading materials especially for poor students, during summer breaks. Because school libraries are typically the best and nearest places of age-appropriate books for poor students, they suggest that these libraries should be in charge during summer as well. They state: “We must create ways to put books into all students’ hands during the summer months — and other school vacation periods as well. Ensuring that books are available to any child at any time of the year will be a good first step in enhancing the reading achievement of low-income students and an absolutely necessary step in closing the reading achievement gap.” (2008: 23).

Another area that we must focus on is providing support for families and children especially parents who have low literacy skills and live in urban areas. Cooter provides a guideline to help urban teachers support low-income parents and children who have parents of limited literacy skills. Cooter uses the term “intergenerational illiteracy” as: “a sociocultural phenomenon that may seriously hinder their children’s reading and writing development, thus perpetuating a cycle of illiteracy. ... three or more generations of a family have low literacy skills. Contributing factors in many homes are a lack of strong language examples, little child–parent interaction, and lack of quality print materials (2006: 698).

As stated earlier researchers strongly argue that children who were read from birth have an advantage over children who come from homes where reading is not valued. Cooter lists some strategies to help mothers and low-income parents:

- Emphasize strengths: Literacy educators should concentrate on what parents *can* do within their sociocultural contexts as much as they do with children in reading instruction.
- Promote dialogic reading: Often thought of as simple picture book reading, dialogic reading has a much different face.
- Increase mean length of utterance: Simply giving children models and opportunities to lengthen and elaborate sentences significantly increases their oral language ability and fosters reading development.

- Talk and play: When parents set aside time to talk to their children there can be a long-term positive effect on academic literacy development.
- Make-believe-alouds: Reading aloud to children is one of the most common recommendations of literacy experts (2006: 699-700).

It is clear from the research that children enter schools with different experiences in literacy, which in turn make them differently benefit from formal education and often result in differences in academic achievement in reading and in other subject areas (Adams 1990). A growing body of research over the last 20 years has documented the crucial role of the home environment in which children's early literacy and language develops. Researchers usually focus on the characteristics of the home and family, such as income, parent's literacy levels and literacy habits, and parent-child engagement in literacy activities and parent's beliefs about their role in their children's literacy and language abilities. Early studies focused on social status measures such as parental education, occupation, and income (Teale 1986, White 1982). Later, researchers noted that SES alone was a weak predictor when it was studied separately from specific home environment factors. Hay and Fielding-Barnsley detailed these predictors and described five home correlational factors between childrens' reading achievement and home environment. These factors are; "(1) regular engagement in early preschool literacy activities, (2) speaking in the home, the language used in the tests to assess the child's reading, (3) having a greater number of books in the home, (4) the amount of time parents spent reading with their child, and (5) the parents' and child's attitude towards reading" (2007: 191).

One way that may be the most important to address lack of reading habits and reading attitudes is to reconsider our view on the process of reading and its application in current school systems. Over the last several decades, reader-response theories have become widely accepted in classrooms. At all levels, literature classes include central tenets of the theory, particularly the notion that learning is a constructive and dynamic process in which students extract meaning from texts through experiencing, hypothesizing, exploring, and synthesizing (Mora & Welch 2007). Many reading specialists and theorists analyzed book reading. One of the most quoted theorists on reading is Louise Rosenblatt whose theory is called the Transactional Theory of Reading. Her ideas are important to consider as we address ways to improve reading instruction in our schools. There are two aspects of the Transactional Theory of Reading. One is how an author and a reader bring different life experiences to the reading of a book. Each reading therefore is a different one, a transaction or conversation between author and reader. Called as Literature Response Theory this concept means that instead of testing children on

the content of the book, we should encourage them to respond personally and critically to the book. It is not hard to guess why book clubs or literature circles are so popular today because they provide chances to their members to discuss the books they are reading. The second part of the theory focuses on the different ways that we read. What Rosenblatt calls as efferent reading, we read to find information such as reading newspapers and informational books. Sometimes when we read for pleasure, we put ourselves living the life of main character. Rosenblatt describes this kind of reading as aesthetic reading.

It is aesthetic reading that habitually makes one a devoted and lifetime reader. However, our schools provide little instruction and time for aesthetic reading. The majority of the reading children do in school is to learn content or to answer test questions. We should provide opportunities for students to turn reading into an aesthetic experience. Karolides describes the use of certain strategies and rules for educators interested in promoting reader-response theory in the classrooms. They must:

- Understand that transaction between the text and the reader must be at the center of the classroom.
- Start discussion where the readers are, focusing on initial reactions and understandings of texts before they can focus on perceptions.
- Support and validate responses.
- Provide guidance by using thoughtful questions, personal responses, and compelling formation.
- Promote personal growth and allow readers ownership of their reading (1992: 21-32).

Similarly Beach (1993) identifies response strategies that readers can use to gain understanding of a text such as: engaging, conceiving, connecting, explaining, interpreting, and judging. In classroom context within literature circles, book clubs and journals these strategies can be enhanced through written or discussion responses, oral interpretations, role-playing, artwork, rewriting texts, or creating new ones. In Akçadağ's study (2010), teachers indicated that they needed training on methods and techniques such as demonstration, role play, preparation of the learning environment according to types of intelligence, assessment of projects and, portfolios and performance tasks. Therefore teachers need to be well prepared in their teacher education programs to use all these strategies effectively in their future classrooms.

The five broad categories of narrative analysis (Home environments; role models; access to reading materials; reasons to read/decline in reading; and

school influences upon reading as positive/negative) gives us some directions to consider, some ideas for future research and clear messages on reading and literacy education. We have to consider changes in teacher roles, training and responsibilities in addition to educational programs and policies to achieve a n aim of effective education in the home, in the school as well as in the life.

Implications for teaching include;

- Children need to be taught how to find a good book that they can read and that they might want to read.
- Teachers need to establish programs where children read for pleasure at home and teachers get to know families so they can find inspirational folks at home to promote reading.
- Teachers need to find good books that can compete with televisions for the affections of students. They need to be sure that their students' parents know about the devastating impact of large amounts of television watching, not only on reading, but also on school performance.
- Reading routines are important. Teachers need to read aloud to their students at regular times every day, such as before lunch, after lunch, first thing in the morning, just before the end of the day, etc. Story time, "circle time," reading aloud to their students, is a sacred time for developing a love of literature. They should learn to read in an entertaining way.
- Teachers should learn to love to read as a part of their teacher preparation program. They need to seek out books that they really enjoy so that they honestly do develop a love of reading.
- Teachers need to develop a large classroom-reading library of good books; subscribe to several magazines, and share their daily newspaper with their students.
- Teachers need to give their students weekly visits to the library and encourage families to make library visits routine.
- Teachers should avoid competition with regard to reading. Instead they should keep their students' reading records of what they are reading and brief responses on how they feel about the books.
- Teachers should invite children to select which books (sometimes out of a group of books) that they would like to read and teach them many different book selection strategies.
- Teachers should know that rewards (and punishments) don't have long-term behavioral effects. They should avoid grouping by ability that the kids in the bottom group feel worse.

- Teachers need to reduce the pressure on students, instead they should give them book choices, let them read at their own rate, and tailor the program to individual children.
- Sometimes teacher should let the students read just for entertainment, not always for learning purposes. And they should not test students on what they are reading; let them respond to literature.
- Teacher need to sure that students are exposed to and have some practice reading in all genres. Teachers need to encourage students to notice authors, develop favorites, and see out other books by their favorite authors.

Teachers need to be sure that students see THEM read on a daily basis.

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Okuma Gelişimi Sürecinde Öğretmen Adayları: Erken Deneyimler

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Özet

Bu araştırmada, çocuk edebiyatı dersini alan ikinci sınıftaki öğretmen adayı üniversite öğrencilerinin okuma deneyimlerine bağlı olarak yazmış oldukları otobiyografik yaşam deneyimleri incelenmiştir. İçerik analizi yönteminin kullanıldığı bu nitel araştırmada öğretmen adaylarının erken çocukluk yıllarından ilköğretimin sonuna kadar geçen devredeki okumaya ilişkin gelişimleri analiz edilmiştir. Analiz sonuçları incelendiğinde öğretmen adaylarının otobiyografik yazılarının analizinden şu temalar elde edilmiştir: okumaya ilişkin okul içinde ve dışında yer alan ilk deneyimler, favori kitaplar, iyi bir okuyucu olup olmama ve bunun nedenleri, okul öncesi ve okul yıllarında bize kitap okuyanlar ve bizleri kitaplarla tanıştıranlar, okuma sevgisi aşıl原因 ya da çaba göstermeyen öğretmenler, iyi bir okur olmamıza yardımcı olan strateji ve teknikler. Çalışmamızda analizler doğrultusunda yapılan tavsiye ve eleştiriler sonuç bölümünde dile getirilmiştir.

Anahtar Kelimeler

Okuma, okuma alışkanlığı, okuryazarlık, nitel araştırma, içerik analizi, öğretmen eğitimi.

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Будущие учителя в процессе развития навыков чтения: ранний опыт

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Аннотация

В этой статье рассмотрены автобиографические работы по теме первые навыки чтения, написанные по предмету детская литература студентами второго курса университета, то есть будущими учителями. В этом исследовании проанализировано развитие навыков чтения будущих учителей, начиная с раннего детства до конца начальной школы при использовании метода контент-анализа. В результате анализа автобиографических сочинений будущих учителей были получены следующие выводы: первые навыки чтения, будь то в школе или вне ее; любимые книги; привитие или непривитие хороших навыков чтения и его причины; те, кто познакомил с книгами в дошкольные или школьные годы; привившие любовь к чтению или не старательные учителя являются вспомогательной стратегией и техникой в становлении человека как хорошего читателя. Рекомендации и критика в соответствии с анализом даны в заключении исследования.

Ключевые слова

чтение, навыки чтения, грамотность, специальное исследование, контент-анализ, образование учителей.

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