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Examining the Pedagogical Implications of Teacher Leisure Reading

By *Grace Lee Min Hui*

Grace Lee Min Hui is training to be a secondary teacher at National Institute of Education, Singapore. She completed the study as part of her Undergraduate Research Experience on Campus (URECA) project.

The teacher plays a key role in encouraging student reading. However, little is known about the attitudes, beliefs and habits of leisure reading among Singapore preservice teachers. This study examined the attitudes, beliefs and habits of leisure reading among Singapore preservice teachers and how it influenced their perception of how they can support student leisure reading.

Methods

Eight semi-structured qualitative interviews and 102 quantitative questionnaires were administered to preservice teachers across the Bachelor of Arts (Education) and Postgraduate Diploma in Education programmes. Author Recognition Tests, where participants identified authors they were familiar with from a list of contemporary adult and young adult literature, were administered to the participants to measure the extent of their print exposure and familiarity with young adult (YA) literature.

Findings and Discussion

Positive Reading Habits

The majority of preservice teachers identified as avid readers but cited pragmatic considerations such as time constraints and academic workload limiting their reading frequency. Even within the small sample size, the preservice teachers shared a wide range of genres they were interested in. They utilise a combination of both print and

digital mediums such as handphones, tablets and laptops for their reading. Teachers need to be intentional in making time for their own leisure reading.

Negative Past Reading Experiences

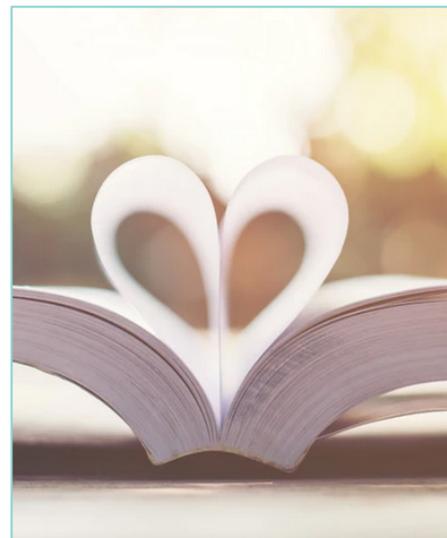
Several preservice teachers shared their negative reading experiences when they were students themselves, due to a lack of interesting reading programmes and teacher engagement. Coercive reading programmes were counterproductive, causing them to develop negative attitudes and perceptions towards reading. The overemphasis on academic outcomes caused reading to become an arduous task for many instead of fostering a genuine love and appreciation for books. This suggests that school reading programmes should be more engaging to foster a positive reading culture for students. More models of positive reading programmes can provide examples for preservice teachers looking to integrate such experiences into their future classrooms.

Lack of Print Knowledge of Popular Books

The majority of preservice teachers demonstrated a lack of awareness of titles popular among their students, and had not personally read such texts themselves. Such knowledge will be integral in fostering greater engagement with their students. Familiarity with YA titles will allow teachers to recommend good books that cater to the interests of students and encourage informal discussions around books that are familiar to both teachers and students. Providing opportunities for teachers to read and discuss YA books will be invaluable in supporting their efforts to create a positive classroom reading culture.

Application in the Classroom

Preservice teachers acknowledge the importance of their own reading habits in the classroom as they see themselves as role models for their students. They



perceive that they can influence students' reading motivation through modelling positive reading habits and utilising classroom strategies such as book recommendations and discussions. The reading habits of preservice teachers will influence the amount of time they dedicate to leisure reading, as well as the promotion of student autonomy in text selection. This reshapes their priorities, placing greater emphasis on inculcating positive reading attitudes and enjoyment rather than merely academic outcomes.

Implications

Teacher education programmes should instill within future teachers their integral role in shaping student reading and espouse the importance of their own reading. Current student reading programmes should be re-examined for greater engagement. Students should be provided with the agency to select texts they have a genuine interest in and have authentic reader-to-reader conversations to transform reading into a social activity. Increased support should be provided for preservice teachers in their leisure reading habits, through increased access to popular YA titles for incorporation into classroom instruction.

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