

Article Review/Summary 2

Article/Book Title: “She knows what I like”: Student-generated best-practice statements for encouraging recreational book reading in adolescents

Full APA Reference: Merga, M. K. (2015). “She knows what I like”: Student-generated best-practice statements for encouraging recreational book reading in adolescents. *Australian Journal Of Education (Sage Publications Ltd.)*, 59(1), 35-50. doi:10.1177/0004944114565115

Major Themes/Theories:

Role of Teacher, Reading Attitudes, Mixed Method, Social Factors

Abstract:

The benefit of recreational book reading is well recognized, however the role of teachers in encouraging recreational reading beyond the primary school years of skill acquisition is not clearly defined. In 2012, the West Australian Study in Adolescent Book Reading was undertaken in 20 schools in Western Australia. As part of the study, students from selected classes in Year 8 and Year 10 reflected on the encouragement of recreational book reading given by their primary school and high school teachers in the past and at present. This provided a direct end-user perspective on perceived teacher attitudes and practices that supported adolescent recreational book reading. The information was analyzed to identify specific mechanisms of encouragement that students deemed effective. Findings indicated that best practice included exhibiting personal enjoyment of recreational book reading; demonstrating willingness to instigate and support student-centered discussion around books; possessing broad knowledge of both young adult texts and youth popular culture; effectively communicating expectations that students will read at school and at home; learning about the interests and aspirations of the students; and using in-class practices that encourage reading for pleasure, such as reading aloud to students and silent reading.

Define the Research Questions:

According to Merga (2015), social influences can, and do, contribute to adolescents attitudes and values toward different recreational pursuits including recreational reading. Coming from a symbolic interactionist approach, as that by George Herbert Meade, an individuals conduct can be a product of meaningful social interactions, shaping ones attitudes and practises (Mead, 1925; Mead & Morris, 1934). From this framework, two key research questions were considered in order to consider the role of a teacher in encouraging recreational reading beyond primary school years. The questions were as follows: (1) Do adolescent students perceive primary teachers as being more or less encouraging of reading books for pleasure than secondary teachers? (2) Which characteristics and practices of secondary teachers are perceived by adolescent students to convey and promote a positive attitude toward recreational book reading?

Discuss the methodology used by the authors.

The study was mixed method, using qualitative data to build on quantitative findings. The information came from 20 different schools in Western Australia, ranging in geographic and socioeconomic backgrounds. It included 520 students, who participated in a survey, and 34 of these

students were randomly selected to participate in semi-structured interviews. Students were asked to compare levels of encouragement to read books for pleasure at primary and secondary school and through constant comparative analysis, themes were formed.

Describe the results.

The significant overall finding was that of the difference in encouragement between primary and secondary school. Undoubtedly, primary teachers provided immensely more encouragement than secondary. Many participants could identify specific primary teachers who made deliberate efforts to foster reading for pleasure. Through these findings, and the two overall questions, teacher characteristics and practises were identified to promote recreational book reading.

The first characteristic participants identified was that of excitement about books. The excitement teachers have about books was seen by participants as encouraging. When books are linked to excitement and pleasure, the appeal of engaging in recreational book reading is enhanced (Merga, 2015). Students are likely to have a positive experience when they are provided the opportunity to talk about books.

The second characteristic was a demonstrated interest in reading. When students are able to see and identify their teacher reading during silent reading, as well as observe their teacher engage in conversations about their recreational reading. Students interviewed identified these teachers as both encouraging and knowledgeable.

The third characteristic was recommendations supported by knowledge of students and youth culture. Students clearly appreciated when teachers were comfortable making recommendations. This required knowing students individually, as well as being aware of youth popular culture (Merga, 2015). This knowledge may be both respected and appreciated by students, but was found to also have no ultimate push for recreational reading in other students.

Required reading at home was the fourth characteristic identified, which brought in the link to home life, as well as competition. Prizes were found to motivate some students in the short term, but the encouragement to read at home and record it through a reading log of some sort was seen to be beneficial by many students.

Required reading at school was the fifth characteristic, and was seen as beneficial. This was especially true when the teacher created an environment conducive to reading, such as through deliberate trips to the library, allotted class time for silent reading, as well as through the including of novels in the English curriculum. This communicated to students the importance of reading. Classroom practises that included reading aloud were also identified as contributing factors.

The last characteristic was that of resisting test focus. The majority of students interviewed did not find purely grade focused approaches to reading encouraging. Some students enjoyment was reduced, as a focus was placed on short term goals and testing and assessment requirements. Contrastingly, students were able to identify teachers that emphasized reading for pleasure, and the important role this focus played in their perception of reading. As shared by the students interviewed in this study, teachers who encourage recreational book reading exhibit unique qualities that distinguish them from other teachers. Students appeared to identify 'encouraging' teachers relatively easy, and were able to articulate some of the traits that set them apart as shared above.

Connect the main ideas presented in the article.

Overall, the following are 6 vital practises and qualities that emerged through the surveys and interviews:

- . (1) Personal enjoyment of reading is clearly apparent;
- . (2) A willingness to instigate and support student centered discussion around books;
- . (3) A broad knowledge of both young adult texts and youth popular culture;
- . (4) Effectively communicated expectations that students will read at school and at home;
- . (5) A knowledge of the interests and aspirations of the students; and
- . (6) The use of in-class practices that encourage reading for pleasure, such as reading aloud to students and silent reading

It is evident that the role of the teacher is vital in fostering recreational reading in students in both elementary and secondary years. (Merga, 2015)

Reference List

- Mead, G. (1925). The genesis of the self and social control. *International Journal of Ethics*, 35, 251–277.
- Mead, G., & Morris, C. (1934). *Mind, self & society from the standpoint of a social behaviorist*. Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago press