The Importance of Reading Books in students' life

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Abstract

Books play an important role of a teacher, guide, and friend in our life. Why is it important to read books? Why do students need books? This is the great research question we have raised, according to the chairman of the Publishers Association, Petrit Ymeri, which was invited to the UET Forum, in a conversation with students and lecturers at the end of of the 20th edition of the book in Tirana: where he showed the problems facing the book, from VAT to bad translations. One of the concerns raised by UET students in their questions, was the battle of paper book with the digital book and the world of social networks that has involved young people. Concretely, he argued that, "the book is always fashionable, it's a paper or a digital book, we get it online, download it or not, we read, as Umberto Eco said that we need to flip our eyes when we read on the phone or ipad. The book of paper, continues to be the winner everywhere, because the book of the paper can be re-read. We all know, besides the pleasure we have in our hands, but even when you make a note, you go back to read it again". (Mapo, 2018). A study published in Social Science & Health shows that reading books has a significant relationship to increase lifespan. A team of public health researchers from Yale University looked at data for 3,635 Americans over age 50 collected from 1992 to 2012. Adjusting for age, sex, race, education, wealth, marital status, and depression they found, that those who read books were more likely to live longer. (Flood, 2016). In this study, we want to measure book readership of students. How many students are currently reading and how to encourage readers of the future?

We have compiled a self – questionnaire that measures student involvement with the genre of reading, engagement in fairs, the participation in city libraries, etc. About 80 questionnaires were distributed to see the current situation of students in a Private University (European University of Tirana).

*   **Key words:** Books, Students, Genre of reading, City libraries, Book Fairs, Digital books.*

Introduction

Why is it important to read books? In the digital world reading books, is placed face to face with digital book and the traditional book. The study we are going to present does not intend to identify the losers or winners of each category of reading. The concern that arises is whether we will have readers in the future in a world that is fragmented by the rapid evolution of technology? Is the level of readership of books reduced by students? How many students are currently reading according the tool they choose to read, why they choose one of these tools, the way they read, their membership in a book club, their favorite book genre, the form of reading (for example, alone, accompanied, loudly), the time they spend to read, attendance in city libraries, book fairs, their favorite author and books, etc. According to a study, which is published in the September issue of the *Journal Social Science & Medicine*, by three autors from Yale University, on average, book readers were found to live for almost two years longer than non-readers, the paper also specifically links the reading of books, rather than periodicals, to a longer life. "We found that reading books provided a greater benefit than reading newspapers or magazines. We uncovered that this effect is likely because books engage the reader's mind more – providing more cognitive benefit, and therefore increasing the lifespan". (Bavishi, Slade, Levy, 2016). There are two cognitive processes involved in reading books that could create a "survival advantage". First, reading books promote the "slow, immersive process" of "deep reading", a cognitive engagement that "occurs as the reader draws connections to other parts of the material, finds applications to the outside world, and asks questions about the content presented". "Cognitive engagement may explain why vocabulary, reasoning, concentration, and critical thinking skills are improved by exposure to books," they write. Second, books "can promote empathy, social perception, and emotional intelligence, which are cognitive processes that can lead to greater survival".(Bavishi, Slade, Levy, 2016).

Enjoy Reading

As teachers, as parents, as educators, we all want the best for our students. We're probably all aware that it's important to make sure they are confident, fluent readers who enjoy reading, but often it's hard to know where to start. What can we do as teacher to help our students get familiar reading with books? And how do we help them progress at school when the teaching is different nowadays? The big challenge for teachers is not simply getting students to read – it's getting them to enjoy it too. It's one thing for students to trudge through set texts in a lesson, but will they open another book when they got home at the end of the day?

But reading for pleasure is so much more than just a form of play or escapism – it is also a way of connecting with text. According to Pullman (2004), writing on the features that make reading pleasurable: "Consider the nature of what happens when we read a book…. It isn't like a lecture: it's like a conversation. There's a back-and-forthness about it. The book proposes, the reader questions, the book responds, the reader considers". And we are active about the process… We can skim or we can read it slowly; we can read every word, or we can skip long passages; we can read it in the order it presents itself, or we can read it in any order we please; we can look at the last page first, or decide to wait for it; we can put the book down and … we can assent or we can disagree. (Clark & Rumbold, 2006, p.6).

According to Krashen(1993), who is a major proponent of the value of reading for pleasure he found when children read for pleasure, when they get "hooked on books", they acquire, involuntarily and without conscious effort, nearly all of the so-called "language skills" many people are so concerned about: they will become adequate readers, acquire a large vocabulary, develop the ability to understand and use complex grammatical constructions, develop a good writing style, and become good (but not necessarily perfect) spellers. Although free voluntary reading alone will not ensure attainment of the highest levels of literacy, it will at least ensure an acceptable level. Without it, I suspect that children simply do not have a chance. (Ibid.).

For Ames (1992), students with learning goals seek to understand content, master skills, and gain competence. In contrast, students with performance goals attempt to maximize their grades, test scores, or public recognition for achievement (Guthrie et. al, 2000).

The benefits of reading books

- According Clark and Rumbold (2006), research has shown that reading for pleasure is positively linked with the following literacy-related benefits:

- reading attainment and writing ability (OECD, 2000) for reading that is done both in school and out of school (Krashen, 1993; Anderson et al, 1988; but also see Taylor et al., 1990);
- text comprehension and grammar (Cipielewski and Stanovich, 1992; Cox and Guthrie, 2001), even after a variety of health, wealth and school factors were statistically controlled for (Elley, 1994);
- breadth of vocabulary (Angelos and McGriff, 2002), even after other relevant abilities such as IQ or text-decoding skills are controlled for (Cunningham and Stanovich, 1998);
- positive reading attitudes (Guthrie and Alvermann, 1999), which are linked to achievement in reading (McKenna and Kear, 1990);
- greater self-confidence as a reader (Guthrie and Alvermann, 1999);
- pleasure reading in later life (Aarnoutse and van Leeuwe, 1998). (p.9)

Similar findings PISA (OECD, 2002), explored the reading habits of 15-year-olds in 32 countries. In this study, UK students came seventh in terms of mean performance, below Finland, Canada, New Zealand, Australia, Ireland and Korea. Overall, 72% of students said that they read for enjoyment on a daily basis: 12% read for more than one hour a day on average, 23% for between 30 minutes and one hour, and 36% for up to half an hour. Those who were high achievers in reading literacy were much more likely than low achievers to read for enjoyment: 87% compared with 55% said they did so. Girls were much more likely than boys to read for enjoyment: 78% of girls, compared with only 65% of boys, said they did so on a daily basis. At all levels of achievement in reading literacy, girls were significantly more likely than boys to read for enjoyment. Among the 25% of students who were most proficient in reading literacy, 90% of girls, compared with 84% of boys, read for enjoyment every day. Among the least proficient 25% of students, however, the difference was much more marked: 64% of girls, compared with only 48% of boys, did so.(as cited at Clark, Rumbold, 2006).

A Nestle Family Monitor (2003), which surveyed 914, 11-18-year-olds attending state and public schools across England and Wales, reported that four in five (83%) of young people read books in their spare time, with 16% reading books everyday. Only one in ten (11%) said that they never read books outside school hours. Overall, 40% agreed with the statement that books are important to them. However, a third also agreed with the statement that they have better things to do than read books, while a quarter agreed that they would be disappointed if somebody gave them a book as a present. This survey also reported that girls read more books for pleasure than boys. More specifically, one in five boys (16%) said that they never read in their spare time compared with 7% of girls. Overall, two-thirds (65%) of young people reported that they find reading enjoyable, with 21% also claiming that it is very enjoyable. (Ibid.).

Reading Motivation

Research findings are also likely to present only a temporal snapshot of students reading preferences. So, why do some people choose to read for pleasure while others do not? According (Mitchell, (1992); Guthrie & Wigfield, (2000); Baumann & Duffy (1997), indeed, "motivation for learning is thought to be one of the most critical determinants of the success and quality of any learning outcome" and it is therefore likely "that motivational processes are the foundation for coordinating cognitive goals and strategies in reading …reading motivation is defined as "the individual's personal goals, values and beliefs with regard to the topics, processes, and outcomes of reading, reading motivation is a multifaceted construct that includes reading goals, intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, self-efficacy and social motivation for reading" and "motivation to read and reading ability are synergistic, mutually reinforcing phenomena".(as cited at Clark and Rumbold, 2006).

According Mazzoni, Gambrell and Korkeamaki (1999) two related aspects of reading motivation are reading attitude and reading interest: *Reading attitudes* "refer to the feelings and beliefs an individual has with respect to reading ", *Reading interest* "relates to people's preferences for genres, topics, tasks or contexts and *Reading motivation*, "as outlined above, refers to the internal states that make people read". (Ibid.) In addition to motivation, another important factor in fostering lifelong readers is choice.

According Sanacore (1999), Krashen (1993), Flowerday & Schraw (2000), "encouraging and respecting reading choices are important steps toward helping children, young people and adults develop a sense of ownership and self-determination", "students who choose what they read and have an informal environment in which to read tend to be more motivated, read more and show greater language and literacy development", similarly, "teachers like to provide choice in the classroom because they believe that it increases motivation, effort and learning"(as cited at Clark and Rumbold 2006).

Motivation often is domain specific, according Wolters (2003), "motivation also is important for the maintenance of behavior, particularly when activities are cognitively demanding". Reading is one such activity, as many different cognitive skills are involved. These range from processing individual words to generating meaning from complex texts. Furthermore, although reading is required for many school tasks and activities, it is also something students can choose to do or not; "Am I going to read or do something else?" Given these characteristics, motivation is especially crucial to reading engagement. (as cited at Guthrie & Wigfield & You, 2012, p.602 – 603).

One of the most frequently cited studies is the study carried out by Gambrell et. Al (1996) where they found six classroom characteristics that influence

pupils' reading motivation. This characteristics include having a teacher who (1) models reading, provides access to both, (2) large amounts and (3) wide variety and reading material in the classroom, (4) provides opportunities for children to choose reading material, (5) offers opportunities for students to interact with other students and adults in the classroom about their reading interest and (6) provides incentives directly related to reading.(Pečjak, Košir, 2004).

Objectives

The purpose of this study is to explore: Why do students need books? In this study, In this study, we want to measure book readership of students. The two research questions are: How many students are currently reading and how to encourage readers of the future? We have compiled a self – questionnaire that measures student involvement with the genre of reading, engagement in fairs, the participation in city libraries, and so on. The objectives of this study are to identify some variables of their relationship with the book, more concret, we want to analyze:

- students currently reading;
- The tool they choose to read;
- Why they choose one of these tools;
- The way they read;
- Their membership in a book club;
- Their favorite book genre;
- The form of reading (for example, alone, accompanied, loudly);
- Time spend reading;
- Attendance of city libraries;
- Book fair;
- Their favorite author and books etc.

Method

Participants

The questionnaire was administered to 80 students 19 – 35- year – old students.
    The most involved age group was 19 - 21 years old with 27% of students, 22-25 years with 23% of students, 26-35 years old with 15% of students, and abstention resulted 15% of responses; 28% of the sample were females. 22% of the sample were male and 21% have abstained.

Instruments

To evaluate students readership at books, we have used a self – administered questionnare about this study. In the questionnaire designed, we have made a cross-section of the research methods, both quantitative and qualitative. The questionnaire contains a total of 17 questions. In the quantitative method are included all the variables encoded in response, while the inclusion of the qualitative method consists in their personal responses (the title and author of the book they are currently reading or have just completed, the way they read, the favorite book genre, their presence at a book fair, also marking the publishing house, their book or their favorite author).

Procedure and Design

Faculty of Education evaluated and authorized the collection of data by allowing researchers to use the data for scientific purposes. Understanding the situation in which students are concerned with the development of critical thinking as a situation that can be presented to the university's governing bodies to make possible solutions. Students volunteered to participate in the research, without receiving any reward, after presenting a statement of informed consent signed by their pedagoges and agreeing to anonymously complete the questionnaire. A self – reported questionnaire was administered to the students while they were in school, after researchers from the Department of Education (Europian University of Tirana) explained the aims of the study to them.

Data Analyses

We have used the SPSS 22 program. In this procedure the variables was analyze with the frequencies procedure. Understand the situation where students are in their relationship with the book, the level of readability and related aspects.

Results

Following are the relevant findings, in an effort to answer research questions and to validate the hypotheses of the study:

By gender 28% were Females, 22% were male, and 21% have abstained. The most involved age group was 19 - 21 years old with 27%, 22-25 years with 23%, 26-35 years with 15%, and abstention resulted 15% of responses.

The question, 'Do you prefer to read books?' 27% of students said sometimes they prefer to read books, 25% said with No answer, 15% with Yes answer, and 13% have abstained.

The question, 'Do you enjoy reading?' 35% with yes, 30% of students said to some extent because it depends on the genre of the book, and 15% have abstained.

The questions, 'Do you prefer to read E – books or Print Books' 38% of students prefer to read E – books only, 27% of students prefer to read Print Books only and 15% have abstained. Why do they own a E - Reader for the purpose of reading digital E – books, 20% said 'I read to reduce the cost of spending', 11% said 'Reading with E – books is more exciting for me', and 7% said 'I want books but buying them spends me money, so I can't buy them'.

The question, 'Are you reading any books currently or you have just finished reading it' 28% of students said 'I'm currently reading', 25% of students said 'I just finished it', and 27% have abstained.

The question, 'Where do you prefer to read more?', 24% of students said 'whenever I have time', 19% of students said 'during vacations and holidays', 17% of students said 'on bed', 10% of students said 'before I lay down to sleep', 10% of students said 'even more during the weekend'.

The question, 'Are you a member of any book clubs in or out of your school', 48% of students said 'they are not members of a book club', 25% of students said that 'they are members in a book club', and 7% have abstained.

The question, for 'What genre of books do you like to read?' Responses to the genre preference are listed below, Romance came in first; then Story from real life; Foreign writers; Modern;Historical; Classic, Crime and mystery, Diary; Comic, Fantasy; Trips; Autobiographical; Factual books; Others; Fantasy story, Horror.

The question 'How Do You Prefer to read your books?', 51% of students prefer to read alone, 18% prefer to read accompanied and 11% have abstained.

The question, 'When you read books, do you prefer to read aloud?', 48% of students said 'I prefer silent reading', 22% of students said 'I prefer aloud reading', and 10% have abstained.

The question, 'Do you prefer to talk to your friends about what you›ve read?', 42% of students said 'I prefer to talk to my friends', 26% of students said ' I don't prefer to talk to my friends', and 12% have abstained.

The question, 'How many hours a week do you spend reading books?', 30% of students said 'I probably spend about 1 hour and 30 minutes a day reading books', 21% of students said 'I probably spend about one hour a day reading books', 14% of students said 'I probably spend about 2 hours a day reading books', and 9% of students said 'I probably spend about 3 hours or more reading books'.

The question 'Do you attend the library of your city to receive books?', 40% of students said 'Yes I use city libraries to get books', 26% of students said 'I do not use city libraries to get books, and 14% have abstained.

The questions, 'Do you attend a book fair?', 45% of students said 'I do not attend the book fair', 25% of students said 'I attend in the book fair', and 10% of them have abstained.

The questions, 'Which was the last time you were at the book fair', from the answers was the 2017 annual fair, publishing houses where they bought the most are: Uet Press; Pegi; Dudaj Albas; Living.

The questions, 'What are your favourite books of all time and who are your favourite authors?'. So we are going to list cited authors and a list of student books to discover their current preferences towards books. They are listed as follows:

Honoré de Balzac ("Eugénie Grandet"; "Le Père Goriot"), **Gëte**, **Stefan Cvajg**;

Gabriel García Márquez("Love in the Time of Cholera", "One Hundred Years of Solitude");

Gustave Flaubert ("Madame Bovary");

John A. Barnes("John F. Kennedy on Leadership"), **Osho;**

J. K. Rowling("Harry Potter"), **John Ronald Reuel Tolkien, Dale Carnegie;**

Victor Hugo("Notre-Dame de Paris", "Les Misérables");

Danielle Steel("Once in a Lifetime");

Khaled Hosseini("The Kite Runner");

Zhyl Vern("Around the world for 80 days");

Jean Sasson("The Princess");

Paulo Coelho("The Alchemist");

Isabel Allende("The House of the Spirits");

Salman Rushdie, **José Saramago**, **Umberto Eco**;

Nicholas Sparks("The Theory of Everything", "A Ride to Remember" , "The Choice", "See me", "Dear John");;

Don Brown("The Da Vinci Code");

Anthony Doerr("All the Light We Cannot See");

Stephen King("Mr. Mercedes"), **Rebecca James**, **Ayn Rand**;

Joseph Conrad("Heart of Darkness");

Leo Tolstoy("War and Peace",);

Jenny Tomlin("Behind Closed Doors");

George Orwell("Nineteen Eighty-Four");

Kate Andersen Brower("The Residence");

Rhonda Byrne("The Secret");

Daniel Kehlmann("Measuring the World");

Sophie Hannah("The Human Condition");

Cecelia Ahern ("PS, I Love You");

Jojo Moyes ("Me Before You");

Anna Premoli("Please let me hate you");

John Green("The Fault in Our Stars");

Tatiana de Rosnay("Sarah's Key");

Sandra Boynton("Belly Button Book");

Federico Moccia("Three Meters Above Heaven");

Jane Austens ("Pride and Prejudice");
Gary Chapman ("The 5 Love Languages");
Students have mentioned from Albanian authors: **Migjeni**, **Martin Camaj**, **Ismail Kadare**("Arch of Triumph", "Broken April"), **Gjergj Fishta**, **Petro Marko**, **Stavri Pone**("Tears of the roses").

Discussions and Conclusions

Why should students read books?

In addition to their attitudes towards reading, students should have a reason why they need to read books. According Clark and Akerman(2006), the reasons why young people need to read is because:

- It is a skill for life;
- It teaches them how other people live and feel;
- It helps them understand the world;
- It helps them find what they want/need to know;
- They have to;
- It helps them understand themselves;
- It is fun and because it gives them a break.

Top 10 tips to help them enjoy reading:

To help make reading enjoyable and fun, we asked experts and authors what they recommend to help reading.

1. *Make books part of your family life* – Always have books around so that you are ready to read whenever there's a chance.
2. *Join your local library* – Get a library card. You'll find the latest videogames, blu-rays and DVDs, plus tons and tons of fantastic books. Allow them to pick their own books, encouraging their own interests.
3. *Match their interests* – Help them find the right book - it doesn't matter if it's fiction, poetry, comic books or non-fiction.
4. *All reading is good* – Don't discount non-fiction, comics, graphic novels, magazines and leaflets. Reading is reading and it is all good.
5. *Get comfortable!* – Snuggle up somewhere warm and cosy, either in bed, on a beanbag or on the sofa, or make sure they have somewhere comfy when reading alone.
6. *Ask questions* – To keep them interested in the story, ask questions as you read such as, 'What do you think will happen next?' or 'Where did we get to last night? Can you remember what had happened already?'

7. *Read whenever you get the chance* – Bring along a book or magazine for any time them has to wait, such as at a doctor's surgery.
8. *Read again and again* – Encourage them to re-read favourite books and poems. Re-reading helps to build up fluency and confidence.
9. *Bedtime stories* – Regularly read at bedtime. It's a great way to end the day and to spend valuable time.
10. *Rhyme and repetition* – Books and poems which include rhyme and repetition are great for encouraging them to join in and remember the words.(Pearson, 2018, p.7).

Reading books is part of the educational process, which includes all forms of formation of the individual, such as family, school, society, and mass media. All these forming components play their part in encouraging young people to read the book. In family an important role has our parents. Parental education on reading books begins when their children are babies, in preschool, in primary, and upward.

Parents are a child's most important teacher and it's never too young for a child to start, even if you're only reading with your child for a few minutes a day. Before they're born, babies learn to recognise their parents' voices. Reading to your baby from the time they're born gives them the comfort of your voice and increases their exposure to language". Also as Christopher Edge has said "Books transform children's lives - they can open windows onto new worlds, widen their horizons or even just make them laugh themselves silly! Reading for pleasure can give children the key they need to unlock their dreams".(Pearson, 2018, p.2 – 4).

In school are our teachers. A number of studies have shown that contextual variables of the classroom such as instructional practices, teacher support, and other conditions may directly impact students' reading competence. An important classroom characteristic is the quality of teacher-student relationships. When teachers emphasize collaboration and positive interpersonal relationships (between themselves and students and among students in the classroom), students motivation increases for school in general and for reading.

Furrer, Skinner, (2003) and Decker, Dona & Christenson (2007) said that "when students believe their teachers think they are important, they are likely to participate more socially in the class-room" also "as both teacher and student reports of the quality of teacher-student relationships increase, there are also enhancements in positive social interactions and engagement outcomes". (Guthrie & Wigfield & You, 2012, p.25).

Reading books tends to involve two cognitive processes that could create a survival advantage. "First, it promotes "deep reading," which is a slow, immersive process; this cognitive engagement occurs as the reader draws connections to other parts of the material, finds applications to the outside world, and asks questions

about the content presented" (Wolf, Barzillai, & Dunne, 2009). "Cognitive engagement may explain why vocabulary, reasoning, concentration, and critical thinking skills are improved by exposure to books" (Stanovich, West, & Harrison, 1995; Stanovich & Cunningham, 1998; Wolf, Barzillai, & Dunne, 2009). Second, "books can promote empathy, social perception, and emotional intelligence, which are cognitive processes that can lead to greater survival "(Bassuk, Wypij, & Berkmann, 2000; Djikic, Oatley, & Moldoveanu 2013; Kidd & Castano 2013; Shipley, Der, Taylor, & Deary 2008; Olsen, Olsen, Gunner-Svensson, & Waldstrom, 1991). "Better health behaviors and reduced stress may explain this process" (Bassuk, Wypij, & Berkmann, 2000).(as cited at Bavishi, Slade, Levy, 2016).

Promoting reading with the aim of inspiring all students to read for pleasure is a responsibility of all schools. The benefits for literacy skills, wider learning and personal development are supported by substantial research evidence.

The findings from this survey confirm the need for schools to:

- From the study responses, the number of students who prefer to read books is very little differentiated by the number of students who do not prefer to read books. Therefore, the number of readers should increase in the future and need a serious engagement of educational policies, school as an institution and family to encourage their children to read books. The book culture should be promoted to all children regardless of age, gender, social status, etc.
- We also learned from the results that the most favorite way to read is E – Book. This means that technology (E – Book) has replaced traditional books (Printed Books). However, the focus of our study is just reading books, so this aspect is not taken into account, it is enough for books to be part of students life, regardless of how students choose to read with E – Book or Printed Book.
- Another problematic point of study is the lack of attendance of students as a registered club member of books outside or within the school. School policies should be activated here to encourage students or to organize them in book clubs. Another way is to involve teachers to encourage and motivate students to read at least one or two books during the course semester that they give. Also, students in a large number of responses do not frequent city libraries and book fairs as two important aspects of the individual culture with the book.
- Their favorite authors are foreign authors and and Albanian authors are very little mentioned by students, like Migjeni, Ismail Kadare, Martin Camaj, Petro Marko, Stavri Pone. Perhaps this point should be addressed to school policies and home publishers who should find a solution to encourage readers for Albanian authors. It is necessary to create student clubs, academic forums that promote more Albanian authors.

- Create a culture in which all students are encouraged to be enthusiastic readers. To support this goal, schools with effective approaches consult with students to learn of their interests and to ensure that the range of reading materials available in school reflects those interests.
- They recognise that a diverse range of reading materials will encourage students to read, for example websites, comics and magazines. They engage students in the planning and delivery of reading and library activities, offering them the opportunity to select and purchase reading materials for their use. (Clark, & Foster, 2005, p.93).
- Consider how we can support parents in encouraging reading in the home. The role of the home is important for all children. Home-school practices that successfully involve all parents in students home and school reading, in ways they value, need to be shared between schools.

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