AOSIS

Using mobile reading devices to encourage positive leisure reading practices amongst adolescents – a case study from Zimbabwe

CrossMark
click for updates

Authors:
Anna J. Hugo[1]
Ivan Bachisi[1]

Affiliation:
[1]Department of Language Education, Arts, and Culture, College of Education, University of South Africa, Pretoria, South Africa

Corresponding author:
Anna Hugo, annajohugo@gmail.com

Background: Literacy is an important skill that is necessary for people – especially adolescents – to access electronic media, including mobile devices. The only way to develop competence in reading is by reading more. Young people who enjoy leisure reading are usually more successful readers. In this study, the authors did research into a group of adolescents' leisure practices by using mobile reading devices.

Objectives: The objective was to identify the adolescents' leisure reading identities, as the authors wished to know whether one model of leisure reading support suits everybody.

Method: A qualitative research approach was employed, making use of literacy practice interviews, the adolescent participants' mobile reading diaries, focus group discussions, and the researchers' personal field notes.

Results: Three distinct leisure reading identities were identified: eager readers, 'fifty-fifty' readers, and non-readers. It was thus evident that leisure reading practices require different types of support and encouragement from teachers and parents. Three reading identities surfaced during the study and it is acknowledged that there could be more reading identities.

Conclusion: The influence of certain systems and antecedents that could influence the leisure reading habits of the sampled group also surfaced. It became evident that there should be differentiation when groups of adolescents are supported to enhance their leisure reading and, eventually, their reading abilities.

Contribution: The article contributes to a better understanding of literacy practices among adolescent learners regarding the use of mobile devices to encourage leisure reading. It could also contribute to language teachers' knowledge about factors in the education system that could influence learners' reading abilities and the necessity to make provision for different reading identities in their teaching.

Keywords: Differentiation; leisure reading; leisure reading identities; literacy; mobile reading devices.

Introduction

Today's adolescents are identified by a number of names, labels, and tags, including 'post-Millennials', 'iGen' (internet generation), or 'Dotcom' generation. These ascriptions simply emphasise the idea that this cohort was born into a world where individuals are immersed in, and surrounded by, technology. For this generation, computers, mobile devices, mobile applications, Wi-Fi, cellular phones, digital content and technological gadgets have been part of their lives since birth (Dumock, 2019). Being able to read and write are essential skills that have become synonymous with the current technological milieu, which defines the context in which this generation of adolescents interacts with the world around them. Well-developed literacy skills are thus necessary for the current crop of youths to access digital content via different electronic media, including mobile devices.

According to Spaull (2017) young learners usually learn to read during their first three conventional years of schooling. After that, they start to read to learn, when schooling becomes more formal. In the higher grades, learners have to study prescribed books which usually introduce them to various genres of literature. At school, the words and actions of teachers are very important in encouraging or discouraging learners to develop into either readers or non-readers. Unrau, Ragusa and Bowers (2015:128) stress the importance of interpersonal interactions between

learners and teachers about reading, motivation to read, and the learners' reading development. It is a given that not all learners become good readers. Reading is a very important skill at school, and when studying post-school. The only way to develop and maintain a proficient and competent reading level is by reading more, and especially by indulging in leisure reading. Young people who enjoy leisure reading outside of school hours are usually more successful readers (Mullis, Martin, Foy & Drucker 2012). The question arises whether learners in the higher grades read for pleasure, or only do so when they have to study.

Literature review

Leisure reading is reading for pleasure, not for study purposes. It is done at the reader's discretion, and the material is of the reader's choice. It is done at a place and at a time that is suitable for the individual (Tlou & Snyman 2020:1–2). Readers play an active role in leisure reading, as they can make predictions about events and characters as stories unfold. For many, leisure reading is about escaping from everyday life and entering a world of mystery, charm and new experiences (Garro 2014:15). Leisure reading is easily influenced by feelings and emotions – aspects that tend to fluctuate easily in adolescents' lives (Tlou & Snyman 2020:2). The texts that are read during leisure reading could include fiction and nonfiction, picture books, blogs, websites, newspapers, and magazines. Parents and caregivers who act as role models because they enjoy reading may have a positive influence on young persons' performance in the engagement and enjoyment of reading (International Reading Association 2014:2).

Children and adolescents can benefit from leisure reading, as it helps to expand their literacy skills and vocabulary, while boosting their overall development. It can help them to develop cognitively, but also socially. For young people, reading offers a way of escaping from the realities of the world, and for relaxing (McKool 2007:111). Garro (2014:4) opines that leisure reading helps adolescents to become decision-makers and address problems in their everyday lives. For young people in impoverished circumstances, reading represents a means of learning about new things and unknown places. Leisure reading has further been found to advance adolescents' communication skills and improve their academic success (Phasha, 2012:322). There is a strong correlation between reading during leisure time, and improved success at school. Leisure reading is far removed from the exercises and homework given by teachers, covering different types of texts and platforms, including reading digitally (Early 2011:3).

The iGen learners of today will enter a work environment in which they will have to become even better acquainted with the internet if they wish to access digital information. It is thus necessary to know whether these learners access the internet to read, and also to do so to read for leisure, while becoming more proficient at reading. By using mobile devices, the authors sought to understand the leisure reading

needs and habits of these young study participants. The long-term aim was to provide teachers with an understanding of the importance of using some form of mobile reading devices to enhance their learners' reading – and especially their leisure reading – by taking each learner's reading abilities and habits into consideration.

Reader identity is a product of the reader's self-understanding or self-conceptualisation as a reader (Meier 2016:21; Scoggin & Scheenwind 2021; Wagner 2020:3). Learners are fully aware of the different processes that build positive reader identities with time. A positive reader identity develops when readers feel confident and good about themselves as readers. This would not happen if readers do not feel confident about themselves as readers (Meier 2016). In the twenty-first century, technology could also play a role in the reading process and thus adolescent learners have to cultivate and adapt their reader identities in the digital age.

Worldreader, a mobile reading application used in this study, was developed by a non-profit organisation. This application has as its goal to deliver as many books in digital format as possible, to as many students, teachers, and families as possible. Another of its key aims is to promote a global, lifelong mobile reading culture (Kwauk & Robinson 2016:5). The other application Wattpad used in this study is, by contrast, a self-publishing mobile, or online reading platform which connects self-published writers with readers and audiences. In the words of Wattpad co-founder, Allan Lau, Wattpad represents books' response to digitisation (Tirocchi 2018:93).

Conceptual framework

The conceptual framework for this study was Bronfenbrenner's bioecological systems theory, according to which a person is influenced by the various systems in which he or she lives and functions (Nel, Nel & Macalane 2022:23). Children's development occurs within the micro-, meso-, exo-, and macrosystems – four subsystems which work together within the chronosystem. Notably, the microsystem relates to the people and events that feature in a person's life: in the case of youths, it would be the home, community, and school. The mesosystem is a system of interrelated microsystems, while the exosystem refers to those environments in which children are not directly engaged, albeit being influenced by them: examples include parents losing their jobs. The macrosystem encompasses the beliefs and values of the society and various cultures (Nel et al. 2022:23–25). An example of the macrosystem is the policies of various departments of education.

Bronfenbrenner's conceptual framework guided the researchers to a deeper understanding of the literacy-related influences which the various systems could have on readers' leisure reading activities. This article reports on a study that leveraged technology in the form of mobile devices, to enhance adolescents' leisure reading habits. The researchers acknowledge that mobile devices are an integral part of the

life of most iGen adolescents, including the sampled group of iGen learners in Zimbabwe. During the investigation, the influence of occurrences in certain systems and antecedents that could influence the leisure reading habits of the group of young people arose.

Research methods and design
Qualitative research

Data for the study were collected using a qualitative approach. Researchers use a qualitative approach when a variety of empirical materials are used such as case studies, life stories, personal knowledge, interviews, cultural texts, as well as observational, visual, and old texts (Denzin & Lincoln, 2017:1-2). In this study a case study was used. It was conducted at one private college.

Participants

The participants of this study comprised a group of secondary school learners at a private college in Zimbabwe. Aged between 14 and 17 years, 23 learners acted as participants. This heterogenous group hailed from different suburban households, with diverse economic backgrounds. Despite this, they shared a homogenous urban culture which could have influenced their reading practices outside of school hours.

Data collection

Literacy practice interviews were conducted, the adolescents' mobile reading diaries were studied, focus group discussions were held, and the authors' personal field notes were perused. In this study, mobile reading devices were used to support the young participants to read for leisure. The Bring Your Own Device Model (BYOD) was used where each participant was asked to bring their own smartphone or tablet to use during the mobile reading study. The participants used two mobile reading applications, namely Worldreader and Wattpad, to access the books they wished to read. During literacy practice interviews the researcher obtained information about the various learners' pre-mobile reading leisure reading habits and questions about where and when they read for leisure and what they read were asked. Weekly focus group discussions were held to find out if progress was being made using mobile reading devices with regard to their leisure reading. The participants' feedback and other information such as their attitudes were captured in the field notes. Participants were requested to keep diaries which facilitated self-evaluative reports of the participants evolving their leisure reading practices.

Data analysis

The data obtained from the literacy practices interview, participant and researcher mobile reading journals, and focus group discussions were analysed inductively and thematically, after which triangulation was used to verify data from one data collection instrument against another.

The analytical framework facilitated the decoding, synthesis, and interpretation of the data on the adolescent participants' mobile reading narratives while simultaneously allowing for the generation of inferences from within and across the data sources used in the study to identify emerging and recurring themes, patterns, and experiences of mobile reading amongst the group of adolescent participants. In the data analysed from the literacy practices interviews, the participants raised aspects such as their attitude and perceptions towards leisure reading, their reader identity, the influence of family in their reading lives and their philosophy towards reading. The mobile reading diaries allowed the participants to tell their own mobile reading stories An analysis of the mobile reading diaries enabled the researchers to address questions surrounding the typical mobile reading experiences and the processes that underlined the changing and unchanging reading habits of the adolescent participants. Analysis of the focus group interviews enabled the participants to capture reflective moments in their mobile reading experiences. The participants expressed their successes and failures during mobile reading. They also expressed their feelings about mobile reading and the lessons they learned from reading on mobile devices.

Ethical considerations

Written permission to take part in the study was obtained from the learners and their parents. The principal of the Forward in Faith Christian College in Harare gave written permission for the research to be undertaken at his school. Ethical clearance was obtained from the Ethics Review Committee of College of Education at the University of South (reference no.: 2017/11/15/34560556/44/MC). Confidentiality regarding the data was maintained as the authors were the only persons who had access to the data. The school where the participants were enrolled had a policy that learners could not bring mobile devices to school, or use them on the premises. Special permission was obtained from the principal to allow the participants to bring their mobiles to school on the days when the research was conducted.

Results

When the data were analysed, three distinct leisure reading identities were identified, when the participants used mobile reading devices. Reading identities are usually shaped by readers' opinions of leisure reading, and as Smith (2014:36) opines, the reader identities of young people are created as a result of their self-conceptions in respect of their own literacy-related capabilities. The three reader identities that were discovered, were those of eager readers, 'fifty-fifty' readers, and non-readers.

The participants of this study who defined themselves as readers did so based on some reading behaviours and practices like reading frequently, reading independently, and reading voluntarily. The fifty-fifty readers are undecided about their reader identity. They are the middle-of–the-road

kind of readers who often sit on the fence as they occasionally engaged in limited reading. Non-readers, as the term implies, refer to individuals who describe themselves as disliking any kind of reading, are withdrawn from reading and will avoid reading at all costs (Hall 2012b:244). It is acknowledged that the reader identities discussed in this study are not the only reader identities that could exist. Other reader identities could arise in other studies.

Eager readers

Altogether 13 eager readers were identified in the study. Considering Fountas and Pinnel's (2011, cited in Meier 2015:21) definition of eager readers, these 13 participants exhibited most of the positive attributes cited in the definition: they liked to talk about reading, and read willingly. They were acquainted with authors and reflected on their own reading habits.

It was interesting to note that some of the young readers who acted as participants indicated that reading could improve their general intelligence. One participant wrote in his mobile reading journal: 'I read because reading makes me bright and intelligent' (Bachisi 2021:191). Another participant spoke about gains and improvements about the English language, stating: 'Yes, it has changed the way I read; I used to read for two hours a week but now I read three-quarters of the day. It has helped me to improve my grammar and pronunciation of words' (Bachisi 2021:188).

During the literacy practices interviews, some eager readers admitted that they had become addicted to reading. As one participant explained, '[w]hen I don't read a novel in a whole month, it's like there's a fire shut up in my bones' (Bachisi 2021:168). During a focus group discussion, a participant admitted that her addiction to reading on her cellular phone had landed her in hot water with her parents. She said: 'I feel bored these days, because my parents took my phone because I was up at 3 am [*still reading*], which is likely to disadvantage my reading' (Bachisi 2021:169). It was also clear from the data that some participants who were eager readers would rather read a book they had already read, than read nothing at all. During a literacy practices interview, a participant stated: 'I [*cannot*] spend a day without reading a book; I would rather repeat a certain book than read nothing' (Bachisi 2021:169). Being addicted to reading could be a desirable habit for young people, as it opens up a new world of knowledge for them.

It was significant to note that a group of the adolescent participants regarded reading as a way of gaining life experience and being motivated by what they read. Two participants explained that they looked for opportunities to use what they had read in their own everyday experiences. One participant said: 'I read motivational books and biographies of successful people. This is because when I read their life stories of what the people had to adjust to, [*in*] becoming the great amazing people they are today. It just gets into my head, then I have the motive to become an amazing person by becoming a better version of myself and taking steps to become successful' (Bachisi 2021:170). This approach was confirmed by another participant: 'I love reading motivational and inspirational books, adventurous as well as true-life stories. Motivational books, as the name suggests, motivate me to just stop sitting and do something' (Bachisi 2021:170).

Another positive issue mentioned by the eager readers was the close link between reading and writing, and the reciprocal influence of the two language skills. This was very clear from the quality of the entries the eager readers wrote in their mobile reading journals. Most entries were clear and concise, which aligns with Sakurai's (2017:142) reporting of a positive link between the level of extensive reading undertaken by a group of university students, and their writing abilities.

The home is arguably the most important sphere in moulding young people's personalities as readers. A group of the eager readers attributed their love of reading to the support and encouragement they received at home. During a focus group interview, a participant remarked: 'On my past birthdays, he would always get me books to read, so I guess I have my father to thank for helping me realise my reading skills' (Bachisi 2021:179). Some readers reported that they were fortunate to have a reading companion in the family. One participant highlighted the positive influence this has had on her reading identity: 'I used to read with my uncle [*be*]cause my uncle really loves novels as well, but now he is in Gweru. He used to read me these stories that would tell me about the life of humans and how they would interact with their everyday environment' (Bachisi 2021:179).

Friends and classmates at school also helped to create reader identities. As one participant noted, a friend had a positive influence in shaping her to become an eager reader: 'The novels I used to read in primary [*school*], my friend, she is the one who bought them for me. She is the one who told me that these novels are very interesting. So now, I gave those novels to my younger sister; she is in grade five and she loves them as well and shares them with her friends at school' (Bachisi 2021:183).

'Fifty-fifty' readers

The term 'fifty-fifty reader' was created by a participant in the study, who stated: 'I honestly like and dislike reading. I am more of a fifty-fifty kind of person when it comes to reading as a leisure habit' (Bachisi 2021:172). A fifty-fifty reader tends to be undecided about his or her reader identity. This type of reader can be described as middle-of-the-road kind of reader who occasionally engage in limited reading. It seemed as if the fifty-fifty reader was sometimes torn between two worlds, as one participant indicated: 'I do not really read that much to call myself a bookworm, but I read in-between' (Bachisi 2021:172).. It is, however, important to consider the reasons why the fifty-fifty reader was torn between two worlds.

In the study, it seemed as if these readers read when they felt like it. One participant stated: 'I usually read three to four novels a term; that's when I am in the mood' (Bachisi 2021:173). They are what can be called conditional readers, but they do recognise the value of reading. One participant defined her reading moods as follows, in her mobile reading journal: 'Not that reading is bad or anything, it is just that it depends on which book I am reading and for what [*purpose*]' (Bachisi 2021:173).

The fifty-fifty reader can at best be portrayed as an individual situated at the reading crossroads and who, once confronted with a choice on which route to take (between reading and not reading), most likely chooses the option not to read. As one female participant succinctly pointed out: 'I do not read often, mostly because I come out of school at five o'clock ... On weekends, I have a choice. This is either to read or watch television … During the week, I do not have the time to watch TV because I have a lot to do, so I choose to watch television on the weekend. Once I start watching it, I don't stop, then I end up not reading' (Bachisi 2021:172-173).

Notably, fifty-fifty readers were usually efficient and skilful readers who simply remained indifferent, nonchalant, and disinterested in leisure reading, even if books were accessible in mobile format. Fifty-fifty readers only tended to read what was assigned in school and, unlike the eager readers, did not go the extra mile or take the initiative to read for leisure.

Non-readers

Of the 23 participants who were part of the study, nine were identified as non-readers. Hall (2012:244) describes non-readers as persons who state that they dislike any kind of reading. It was especially in the mobile reading journals of this study, that the non-reading participants' dislike of reading became apparent. Most non-reading participants did not write more than five accounts of their reading experiences. In a few extreme cases, those participants did not finish reading a single book during the study.

The researchers who conducted the study grappled with the use of mobile reading devices to stimulate leisure reading amongst all the adolescent learners acting as participants. It soon became evident that some of the young people's leisure reading (or lack thereof) was influenced by their inability to read at the level expected of learners in secondary schools. This may have influenced their personal reading identity, and eventually their self-conception regarding reading.

In the analysis of the data, it became clear that the participants who turned out to be non-readers were reading below the expected reading level for their grade. This meant that the texts they had to read (and eventually study) were becoming increasingly inaccessible and demanding, which probably proved frustrating to them. During an interview, one participant admitted to having made an effort to read, but added that some texts were 'like deep English' (Bachisi 2021:175).

Most non-readers in this study were young men. One of the researchers wrote in his field notes: 'The male participants were yet to get round to start reading – claim lack of time – sense lack of motivation' (Bachisi 2021:164). It could be a trend that boys and young men shy away from reading, but it will have to be researched. Readers seemed to prefer to use a range of technologies for various forms of leisure and entertainment, rather than using a mobile device to read. In his mobile reading journal, one of the non-reader participants wrote: 'I try not to read most of the time and tend to play video games. The last time I read was the time I was forced by my elder brother to read a novel. In my life, I have never finished a novel properly' (Bachisi 2021:177).

The special and sometimes difficult home circumstances that some participants experienced surfaced during the interviews. Such circumstances did not encourage positive reading activities amongst the participants: as one participant explained, his parents were working outside Zimbabwe, and were thus absent from his school (and reading) life. This did not mean they were irresponsible parents – they merely had to make sacrifices to provide for their child. Another participant mentioned that she could not read at home, as she was too busy helping her mother 'doing other things' like 'cooking, washing plates, chores' (Bachisi 2021:180).

Discussion

The school is the place where most children learn to read. Once learners become literate, they acquire the vital skills necessary to study academic subjects. Research has shown that success in academic subjects across all grades is linked to the ability to read independently (Australian Christian College 2019). Teachers have a role to play in improving the literacy of their learners and promoting the habit of leisure reading (Kutay 2014:16). Teachers thus ought to realise and acknowledge that the reading habits of 21st-century learners are becoming increasingly digital in nature. Although it was not the aim of this study to investigate the role of teachers in improving the reading abilities of their learners, or to encourage leisure reading, only one participant referred to the teachers' input in his or her reading abilities, be it for academic purposes or for leisure. This is rather distressing, as the researchers expected language teachers in particular to encourage reading in general, as well as mobile digital reading.

During the interviews, one participant referred to 'deep English', which indicated that some reading texts were too intricate and complex for him or her as a non-reader. If a reader cannot understand words or sentences, he or she also cannot read a full text with comprehension. The question arises whether the teachers operating in the participants' literacy microsystem have ever questioned the language and difficulty level of the texts their learners must read. Every teacher is a de facto teacher of language – an idea which emerged in the 1970s, and was captured in the 1975 Bullock Report. In the secondary school system, learners are expected to use and understand 'high-status languages for academic

purposes' (Van der Walt & Ruiters 2011:84). In the end, it is only the teachers who teach specific subjects who can teach and support their learners to understand subject-related words and texts, thus enabling them to read and study with comprehension. This is especially true in many multilingual countries in Africa, where learners are not taught in their home languages but often in English or French (their second language). Wolff (2018) opines that, in many countries on the African continent, education systems are failing because learners must learn and read in languages they do not comprehend and have not acquired.

Some participants touched on the critical link between reading and writing, and the reciprocal, and positive influence of these two language skills. In a systematic review of studies conducted between 1970 and 2019, Jouhar and Rupley (2021:136) found that independent reading positively influences writing, and that independent writing could also positively influence reading comprehension. These authors report that reading could improve the quality of narrative and descriptive writing, the way texts are organised, as well as spelling, and grammar accuracy. They also advocate that the link between reading and writing should be brought to the attention of language teachers, especially in the senior classes (Jouhar & Rupley 2021:136).

A language-related aspect to mention to language teachers, is that most language competencies can be developed by having learners read more. One specific way of developing language competencies is to read more, to read what is understandable, and what one prefers to read. This peculiarity, which several of the participants displayed, is known as the 'Matthew effect' (Didau 2012). In literacy development, it refers to a situation where, if someone reads more, he or she usually becomes a better reader, while those who do not read cannot develop literacy practices. It confirms the need for fifty-fifty readers and non-readers to be supported and motivated to become readers.

Another issue on the micro level, was the fact that the non-readers and fifty-fifty readers presented reading problems. The participants, who were aged 14–17, had spent many years in the school system. That begs the question whether the reading problems of this group of learners, like so many others, were ever attended to in the classroom. Also, did this group receive any support at home? On the mesosystem level, one might consider whether there was any interaction between the school and home about a learner's reading problems. At the macro level, policies regarding the teaching of reading and support for reading problems, by the Department of Education, could prove invaluable.

As regards the fifty-fifty readers, it was evident that support and encouragement from their parents and the school were necessary to help them become real readers. They should be encouraged and motivated to become natural readers, as they have the potential to do so. According to Hall (2012:370), the so-called fifty-fifty reading phase helps form an adolescent's reader identity, as this in-between stage is when the reader identity (formed by the school) should be transformed into a real, self-made reader identity.

The impact that parents and the home environment could have on children's reading abilities emerged during this study. If parents enhance their child's verbal interaction, read stories to their child and are themselves readers, if there is access to enough reading material at home and opportunities for the child to read at home, that will develop his or her reading skills and leisure reading (Kutay 2014:24). In the study, only eager readers referred to the positive encouragement they were fortunate enough to receive at home, which they deemed to have enhanced their reading and love of leisure reading. As became evident, not all the participants' parents had the privilege or the opportunity to be involved in the formal schooling of their children. At the exosystem level, this scenario could surely influence children's progress and success at school, including the development of their reading abilities and their love of reading.

The school, as one of the major role players at the micro level, should use any opportunity to inform and educate parents, as well as caregivers, in supporting their children's reading development. Information should be provided to parents and caregivers and, if possible, they should attend meetings at school on the importance of developing their children's reading abilities. Thus, the two main interrelated systems at the micro level could help to strengthen the mesosystem of young readers.

Certain circumstances that influence the leisure reading of participants cannot necessarily be changed, while others might even be improved. In respect of adolescent readers, Ibarra-Guyos (2013:1) remarks that it is necessary to 'make the antecedents of their leisure reading better, higher, and more positive.' It is suggested that the various stakeholders (parents, teachers, curriculum developers, policymakers and publishers) who steer adolescent learners' literacy connect with the reality that mobile reading devices constitute a legitimate vehicle for fostering positive leisure reading habits amongst learners. These stakeholders were noted in the study to be gatekeepers who fiercely guarded and defended the hegemony of the printed book as the only acceptable medium for adolescent literacy development, thereby ignoring this cohort's technologically driven reading needs. It is suggested that these stakeholders break the barriers that restrict adolescent learners from engaging in leisure mobile reading, by providing them ample opportunity to develop their digital literacy in formal, non-formal, and informal learning contexts alike.

Learners at the school where this study was conducted were not allowed to bring devices to school, or use their mobile phones at school. This is understandable, as modern learners tend to (over)use their mobile phones to access social media. School management and teaching staff should, however, rethink the use of mobile phones to encourage learners to do real and leisure reading on screen, if technological devices such as computers are not available at a school. The

International Reading Association (2014: pp. 3–4) advises that teachers should scaffold leisure reading at school by not assessing certain tasks, and by rather reflecting on what was read, to motivate learners to engage in leisure reading.

Considering leisure reading of adolescent learners, there were many issues in the home environment and especially in the school system that are interrelated. These interrelated leisure reading issues in the microsystem formed the mesosystem in this study.

The issue regarding the difficulty index of the texts that had to be read and learned at the school where the research was conducted lies on the macro level. Usually, the Department of Education decides which textbooks to use in schools, or which publishers should offer a selection of textbooks for teachers to choose from. In terms of the leisure reading books in the school library, the question arises who decides which books will appear on the shelves – if leisure reading is reading for enjoyment, is the librarian best suited to decide what young readers will enjoy? Mobile reading afforded the participants of this study the luxury of choice, which the conventional, and traditional modes of book delivery in schools usually do not. Through their mobile devices the participants could read on demand, and on Wattpad, they could even go as far as influencing the plot of their favourite book.

It was not the intention of the researchers to investigate the use of home languages in this study. One of the participants did, however, mention that she liked to read in English and in Shona, her home language. In Zimbabwe, as is the case in many countries in Africa, most learners start their first three years of schooling learning in their home languages, but after that, they are taught in their second language. If learners are encouraged to read (and especially to read for leisure) in their home languages, they might learn more about the literature and culture of their own people (Nhong & Tshotsho 2020: 11). In that way, a love of that which is part of their identity can be fostered. The difficult issue regarding the use of learners' home language in the school situation has to be addressed on the macro level by the various departments of education.

Preparing learners to master the requirements of a constantly changing and technology-friendly workplace is also something that all departments of education at the macro level will have to consider. According to Engelbrecht and Hugo (2019:10) the workplace of the 21st century is characterised by change. Mastering the many forms of technology could become a requirement or even a condition in the workplace of the future. Reading is a requirement for using most technological devices, while other forms of literacy (i.e., multiliteracies) have also entered the arena. The education system has a role to play in preparing learners for the changing world of work.

Conclusion and recommendations

Efforts to enhance young readers' reading abilities and their leisure reading habits should acknowledge any antecedents that could have influenced the development of their reading identities. In this study, such antecedents were found in all of Bronfenbrenner's systems, and especially on the micro level. It would be encouraging if the leisure reading antecedents of adolescent learners could be improved, better planned, and more positive in nature.

The advent of the mobile book signifies a critical turning point for adolescent leisure reading. The researchers believe related developments in the literacy arena could provide a broad platform for the literacy-related growth of adolescents, particularly in an age where accessing and handling information in electronic and digital format are becoming vital for career success. Future research should address mobile reading pedagogy, with a specific focus on the different approaches, methods, and techniques language teachers can employ to make effective use of mobile reading, as well as other technological devices in teaching reading across all levels of the curriculum and in all school phases.

The objective to identify adolescents' leisure reading identities was attained in the study. It became clear to the authors that one model of leisure reading would not suit all learners. Teachers should be conscientised that differentiated support should be offered across all the systems related to education that could conceivably play a role in adolescents' lives and their leisure reading development.

Acknowledgements

References

Australian Christian College, 2019, 'Reading daily improves comprehension and student performance', https://www.acc.edu.com.

Bachisi, I., 2021, 'The impact of mobile reading devices on the reading habits of a group of adolescent learners in Zimbabwe', Unpublished PhD degree in Education, University of South Africa, Pretoria.

Denzin, N.K. & Lincoln, Y.S., 2017, 'Introduction The discipline and practice of qualitative research' in N.K. Denzin & Y.S. Lincoln (eds.), *The SAGE handbook of qualitative research*, pp. 1–19, Sage Publications, Newbury Park, California.

Didau, D., 2012, 'The Matthew Effect – why literacy is so important', https://learning spy.co.uk.

Dumock, M., 2019. 'Defining generations: Where Millennials end and Generation Z begins', Pew Research Center, https://www.pewresearch.org.

Early, J., 2011, 'Leisure reading habits: Students' attitudes toward their in-school reading compared to out-of-school reading', Unpublished MS degree in Literacy Education, St. John Fisher College, Rochester, NY.

Engelbrecht, A., & Hugo, A.J., 2019, 'Introduction and orientation', in A. Engelbrecht (ed.), Multiliteracies in education, pp. 1–19, Van Schaik, Pretoria.

Garro, L., 2014, 'The importance of reading fiction' Unpublished Master's thesis, University of Central Missouri, USA.

Hall, L.A., 2012, 'The role of reading identities and reading abilities in students' discussions about texts and comprehension strategies', *Journal of Literacy Research* 44(3). https://doi.org/10.1177/1086296X12445370

Ibarra-Guyos V.P., 2013, 'Antecedents of leisure reading', *International Journal of Information Technology and Business Management* 13(1), 1–11.

International Reading Association, 2014. Leisure reading, https://www.literacyworld wide.org.

Jouhar, M.R. & Rupley, W.H., 2021, 'The reading–writing connection based on independent reading and writing: A systematic review', *Reading Writing* 37(2), 136–156. https://doi.org/10.1080/10573569.2020.1740632

Kutay, V., 2014, 'A survey of the reading habits of Turkish high school students and an examination of the efforts to encourage them to read' Unpublished PhD thesis, Loughborough University, Leicestershire, UK.

Kwauk, C. & Robinson, J.P., 2016, *WorldReader: Creating a culture of e-reading around the globe*. Available at SSRN: https://ssrn.com/abstract=3956797 or http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3956797

McKool, S.S., 2007, 'Factors that influence the decision to read: An investigation of fifth-grade students' out-of-school reading habits', *Reading Improvement* 44(3), 111–131.

Meier, L., 2015, 'Choice and the reader's identity', *Journal of Teacher Action Research* 2(1), 21–29.

Mullis, I.V.S., Martin, M.O., Foy, P. & Drucker, K.T., 2012, 'PIRLS 2011 international results in reading', TIMSS & PIRLS International Study Center, Lynch School of Education, Boston College, Boston Massachusetts.

Nel, M., Nel, N. & Hugo, A., 2022, 'Inclusive education: An introduction', in M. Nel, N. Nel & M. Macalane (eds.), Learner support in a diverse classroom, pp. 3–40. Van Schaik, Pretoria.

Nhongo, R. & Tshotsho, B.P., 2020, 'The Problematics of Language in-Education Policies in Post Independence in Zimbabwe', *Journal of Asian and African Studies* 1–14. https://doi.org/10.1177/0021909620962529

Phasha, N., McClure, L. & Magano, D., 2012, 'The book and the banknote: Reading for leisure amongst 10th-grade learners in South Africa', *Anthropologist* 14(4), 319–326. https://doi.org/10.1080/09720073.2012.11891253

Sakurai, N., 2017, 'The relationship between the amount of extensive reading and the writing performance', *The Reading Matrix: An International Online Journal* 17(2), 142–162.

Scoggin, J. & Schneewind, H., 2021, *Trusting readers: Powerful practices for independent reading*, Heinemann Portsmouth, Portsmouth, NH.

Smith, M., 2014, 'The critical nature of reader identity and its relationships with literacy engagement, motivation and efficacy' Unpublished PhD thesis, University of Washington, Washington, DC.

Spaull, N. 2017, 'Learning to read and reading to learn', Stellenbosch Policy Brief No. 04/2016, https://resep.sun.ac.za/wp.content/uploads/content/uploads/2017/10/RESEP-Policy-Briefs Nic Spaull-EMAIL.pdf.

Tirocchi, S., 2018, 'Wattpad', in C. A. Scolari (ed.), 'Teens, media and collaborative cultures. Exploiting teens' transmedia skills in the classroom, pp. 93–97. Transliteracy H2020 Research and Innovation Action, Barcelona Spain.

Tlou, C. & Snyman, M., 2020., 'Leisure reading: A case study of adolescent readers at Letlhabile Community Library', *South African Journal of Libraries and Information Sciences* 86(1), 1–13. https://doi.org/10.7553/86-1-1795

Unrau, N., Ragusa, G. & Bowers, E. 2015, 'Teachers' focus on motivation for reading: "It's all about knowing the relationship"', *Reading Psychology* 36, 105–141. https://doi.org/10.1080/02702711.2013.836582

Van der Walt, C. & Ruiters, J., 2011, 'Every teacher a language teacher? Developing awareness of multilingualism in teacher education', *Journal for Language Teaching* 45(2), 84–98. https://doi.org/10.4314/jlt.v45i2.5

WOLFF, E., 2018, 'Africa failing to address linguistic imperialism', *University World News*. https://www.universityworldnews.com.