

Preliminary Findings on Exploring the Relationship of Different Affecting Factors on Reading Engagement and Learning Achievement

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to examine the effect of the school library and reading program by comparing reading engagement and learning achievement of students that are sponsored with reading promotion program with those of a control group. A total of 18 elementary and middle schools located in remote areas in Hunan, China were chosen as data collection sites. Among them, 9 schools were sponsored by the Reading Dreams Foundation to establish the library, provide book donations, and the supporting manpower to give reading instructions and promote reading activities. The other 9 schools without the sponsorship are chosen as the controlled group. The aspects explored for reading engagement are the motivation, behavior, and strategies of reading. A total of 4 surveys across 1.5 years for the students of both groups were conducted to determine their reading engagement level. The grades of final examinations for literature and mathematics after each surveys were also collected. The results shown that students in the schools with library and reading program sponsorship had significant positive impacts on their reading engagement level against the controlled group's. The students in the schools with library and reading program sponsorship also had significant positive impacts on their grades of literature , and partial positive impacts on their grades of mathematics in different grades.

Keywords

Reading Engagement, Family Cultural Capital, Self-Efficacy, School Library.

Introduction

One of Library's core values and fundamental principle is to enhance patrons' ability to read what they wish (Anderson, 2013). The importance of school library in supporting development of children's literacy has been addressed in multiple studies. Access to books in school and public libraries was a significant predictor of 2007 fourth grade NAEP reading scores. Access to school or classroom libraries was also a significant predictor of scores on the PIRLS test, a reading test given to fourth graders in 40 countries (Krashen, Lee, & McQuillan, 2012). Studies confirm that increased access to books is related to increased reading achievement, which also makes sense in view of findings that show that self-selected reading is a powerful predictor of reading achievement (Krashen, 2004, 2011, 2016).

Besides the positive influence of the school library, reading engagement is also considered as an important factor that affects student's reading performance and reading ability. With higher degree of reading engagement, the students would perform higher reading achievement and make higher academic performance (Wigfield et al., 2008; OECD, 2010). The PISA 2009 defined individual reading engagement as: "Individual Reading Engagement refers to the motivational attributes and behavioral characteristics of students' reading." Prominent constructs in the empirical literature on individual reading engagement include interest, perceived autonomy and social interaction. The behavioral characteristics include the amount and breadth of reading activities (Schleicher, Zimmer, Evans, & Clements, 2009).

From the previous studies we suggest reading engagement includes three aspects: reading motivation, reading behavior and reading strategies. And also from the previous studies we know that access to books in library, reading instruction and reading engagement are important factors which may affect reading achievement. However, there are some research gaps remains:

The previous studies did not tell us

- Will access to books in library and reading program (reading instruction) affect reading engagement and learning achievement?
- And previous studies mainly focus on measuring the reading achievement or language related subject's achievement. What about a non language related subject like Math?

Purpose and research questions

In the rural and remote area in Hunan, China, children usually have very little access to books at home and in their communities, with less access to good public libraries and bookstores. They attend schools with either none or poorly supported classroom libraries and school libraries. Reading Dreams Foundation provides reading

promotion program sponsorship and dedicates on helping those schools in remote area to establish their libraries and providing reading instruction and promotion. Till the end of 2017, the foundation have already sponsored more than 300 schools to establishing their own libraries and reading programs.

The purpose of this study is to examine the effect of the school library and reading program by comparing reading engagement and learning achievement (both Language & Math) of students that are sponsored with reading promotion program with those of a control group. Furthermore, this study also attempt to evaluate a model to measure the relationship of reading engagement and learning achievement and other factors.

Research questions:

- What's the difference of student's reading engagement between the students with/without the school library and reading program?
- What's the difference of student's learning achievement (Language & Math) between the students with/without the school library and reading program?

Literature Review

The measuring aspects of reading engagement

Wigfield, Allan, and Guthrie (2000) proposed the engagement model of reading development n an article "Engagement and motivation in reading." in Handbook of reading research as fig 1. The square in the center includes Achievement, Knowledge, Practices, they are sort of reading development goals. And the four sides of The Dimond are motivations, Strategy Use, Conceptual Knowledge, and social Interactions, these are the dimensions of Reading Engagement.The outer ovals are Reading instructional process to increase reading engagement. The facets of reading engagement in this model are motivations, strategy use, conceptual knowledge, and social interactions.

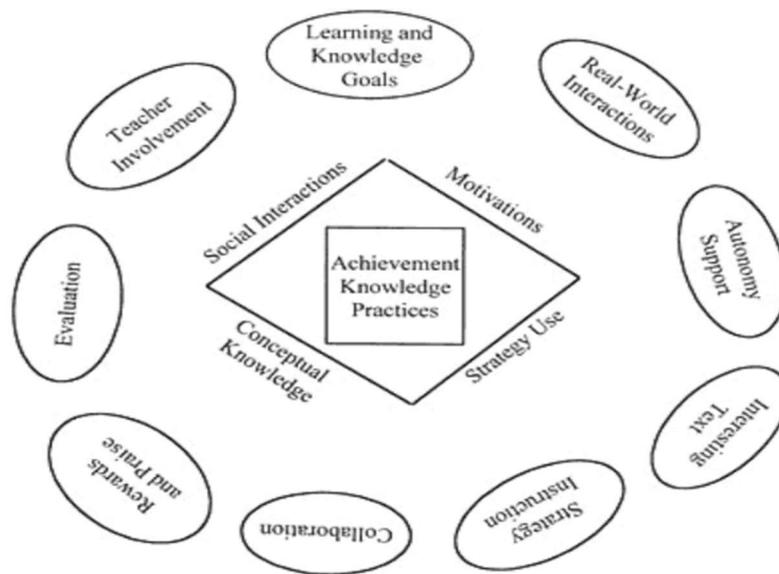


Fig 1. Engagement model of reading development

Source: Wigfield, Allan, and John T. Guthrie. "Engagement and motivation in reading." Hand-book of reading research 3 (2000): 403-422.

The fig 2 shows the model of reading engagement processes within classroom contexts illustrates the motivational, behavioral aspects of reading engagement (Guthrie, Wigfield, & You, 2012).

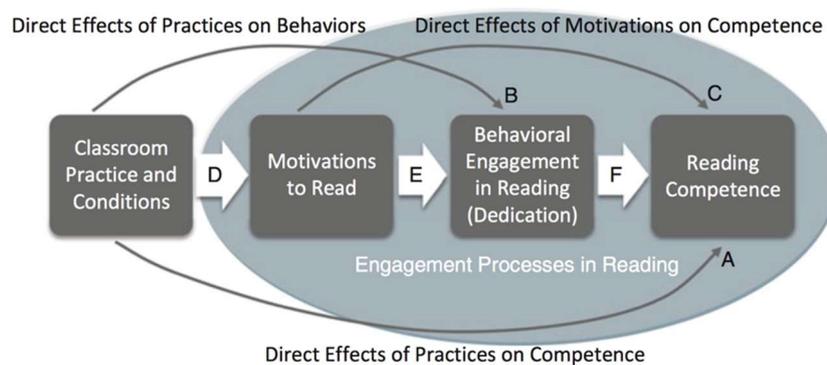


Fig 2. Model of reading engagement processes within classroom contexts

Source: Guthrie, J. T., Wigfield, A., & You, W. (2012). Instructional contexts for engagement and achievement in reading. In Handbook of research on student engagement (pp. 601-634

Cheung, Mak, Sit, & Soh, (2016) proposed a conceptual model of sets of variables pertaining to the three facets of reading engagement in the explanation of reading literacy performance. The facets are Enjoyment of reading (fondness for reading), reading Strategies (good at reading), Diversity of reading(Aspiration for reading).

This study concludes three aspects of reading engagement from previous studies:

- reading motivation
(Guthrie, Klauda, & Ho,2013; Wigfield & Guthrie, 1995, 1997; Wigfield, 1997)
- reading behavior
(Guthrie, Wigfield & Klauda,2012; Guthrie, Klauda, & Ho,2013)
- reading strategies
(Cheung, Mak, Sit, & Soh, 2016; OECD 2010)

The other factors which may affect reading engagement and learning achievement

As illustrated in PIRLS 2011 Theoretical Framework of the Contexts for Developing Children's Reading Literacy, the home and school factors also affect the reading engagement processes (Mullis, Martin, Kennedy, Trong, & Sainsbury, 2009). In this study, we choose the schools in remote area, all with a similar location and condition to reduce the affects of school factors. Though, we still need to dive into measuring home factors.

In the home aspect, many studies pointed out that the cultural capital will affect children's reading achievement (OECD, 2001; OECD 2010b) and learning achievement (De Graaf et al., 2000; DiMaggio & Mhor, 1985; Dumais, 2002; Lee et al., 2006; Tramonte et al., 2010). Therefore, the Family Cultural Capital, which is coined by Bourdieu(1986), is chosen in the study as the Home factor.

Otherwise, personal aspect is also considered as one of the measuring factors. In personal aspect, many studies have shown that self-efficacy may affect on reading literacy (Mullis, Martin, Gonzalez, & Kennedy, 2003; Mullis, Martin, Kennedy, & Foy, 2007) and learning achievement (Wigfield, Eccles, Schiefele, Roeser & Kean, 2006; Zimmerman, Banudra, & Martinez, Pons, 1992; Denissen Zarrete & Eccles, 2007).

In this study, family cultural capital and self-Efficacy are considered as the other factors which may affect reading engagement and learning achievement.

Research Design and Methods

A survey research was conducted to measure the effects of different affecting factors on reading engagement and learning achievement. A total of 18 elementary and middle schools located in rural areas in Hunan, China were chosen as data collection sites. pre-test was conducted before the intervention of the sponsorship. A total of 3 post-tests was conducted at the end of each semester. The independent samples t-test was used to evaluate the effect.

The Participants

There are 18 conveniently chosen elementary and middle schools in rural area Shuangfeng County, Hunan, China. 9 schools were sponsored by the Reading Dreams Foundation as the experiment group, the other 9 schools without the sponsorship as the control group:

- 9 schools in experiment group: 3,445 students grade1-8
- 9 schools in control group: 3,263 students grade1-8

The Intervention

This study collaborate with Reading Dreams Foundation. The school in experiment group got the Reading Dreams Foundation Sponsorship. The foundation would help on setting up a school library:

- with 1500-2000 books
- shelves, tables, chairs & other furnitures (50,000 to 60,000RMB)

The sponsorship also provides certain reading programs, including: FVR (Free Voluntary Reading) in library once a week, SSR (Sustained Silent Reading) 25-30 minutes every workday.

The Measuring Tools

The measuring tool in this study is the questionnaire for students, which includes three parts of measurement

- Reading Engagement
Motivations for Reading Information Books School Questionnaire (MRIB-S)
(Guthrie, Cambria & Wigfield, 2008)
Reading Strategy Questionnaire (Luo, 2014; Lin, 2016)
- Family Cultural Capital: Family Cultural Capital Questionnaire (Tao, 2016)
- Self-Efficacy: Children's Self-Efficacy Scale (Bandura, 2006)

The grades of final union examinations for literature and mathematics after each surveys were also collected

Preliminary Findings and Discussion

A total of 4 surveys were conducted in 18 elementary and middle schools in rural area Shuangfeng County, Hunan, China. The independent samples t-tests was used to evaluate the effect of the intervention in experimental group with control group. The survey results are divided into following sections, including Reading Engagement, Family Cultural Capital, Self-Efficacy, and Academic Performance.

Reading Engagement

We measured students' level of reading engagement via three aspects: reading motivation, reading behaviors, and reading strategies. Each aspect could be further divided into several different factors, and the p values of independent samples t-tests for each factor are shown in Table 1. Almost all factors could be found significantly ($p < .05$) positive in experimental group against control group. This demonstrates that students in the schools with library and reading program sponsorship are investing more time to read, read more, and enjoy reading more than the students in control group (respective factors: *Intrinsic Motivation for Reading*, *Self-efficacy for Reading*, *Dedication*). Otherwise, students in the schools with library and reading program sponsorship are also having a more positive attitude and belief in regards of reading, and they believe that reading is good value to the society (respective factors: *Valuing of Reading*, *Prosocial Goals*).

In terms of the use of reading strategies, students in experimental group also showed more diversity and frequently used different strategies, indicating that students in experimental group pay more attention to the details of reading texts and can memorize contents by repeated reading (respective factor: *Memorization strategy*). They also have a better understanding of note taking and text processing tips, such as marking stances, finding summaries or outlines while reading (respective factor: *Information Processing strategy*). They can also link new knowledge with prior knowledge, life experience (respective factor: *Elaboration strategy*); They also know how to ask questions about the main concepts of reading objectives and text content, and self-monitor reading activities, especially whether the content of the article is understood (respective factor: *Control strategy*). Before starting reading, they would usually also pay attention to the article title, predict the content of the article according to the title, set reading goals, plan reading steps, remind themselves to grasp the key points...etc. (respective factor: *Planning strategy*). They also understand how to change reading methods, re-read what they do not understand, and figure out what they are confused about (respective factor: *Adjustment strategy*).

Table 1. *p* values of independent samples t-tests for each factor in Reading Engagement

Aspect	Factor	Pre-test	1 st Post-test	2 nd post-test	3 rd post-test
Reading Motivation	<i>Intrinsic Motivation for Reading</i>	0.00*	0.00*	0.00*	0.00*
	<i>Self-efficacy for Reading</i>	0.00*	0.00*	0.00*	0.00*
	<i>Valuing of Reading</i>	0.08	0.00*	0.00*	0.00*
	<i>Prosocial Goals</i>	0.00*	0.00*	0.00*	0.00*
	<i>Undermining Reading Motivations</i>	0.01*	0.00*	0.00*	0.00*
Reading Behaviors	<i>Dedication</i>	0.00*	0.00*	0.00*	0.00*
	<i>Avoidance</i>	0.25	0.00*	0.00*	0.00*
Reading Strategies	<i>Memorisation</i>	0.01*	0.00*	0.00*	0.00*
	<i>Information Processing</i>	0.00*	0.16	0.05	0.00*
	<i>Elaboration</i>	0.01*	0.00*	0.00*	0.00*
	<i>Control</i>	0.02*	0.00*	0.00*	0.00*
	<i>Planning</i>	0.03*	0.00*	0.00*	0.00*
	<i>Adjustment</i>	0.45	0.00*	0.00*	0.00*

Family Cultural Capital

In addition to Reading Engagement, we found that library and reading program sponsorship also have a significant impact on students' Family Cultural Capital ($p < .05$) as shown in Table 2. Among all three factors: *Status Culture Participation*, *Parenting Style*, and *Educational and Cultural Resources*, there are positive significant differences of experimental group against control group. The results demonstrate that, the students in experimental group value more on the family cultural facts or events and participate more in cultural or reading activities. Their parents or family members also pay more attention to family education, family environment and living habits and good manners. They also invest more on family education and cultural resources.

Table 2. *p* values of independent samples t-tests for each factor in Family Cultural Capital

Aspect	Factor	Pre-test	1 st Post-test	2 nd post-test	3 rd post-test
Family Cultural Capital	<i>Status Culture Participation</i>	0.00*	0.00*	0.00*	0.00*
	<i>Parenting Style</i>	0.01*	0.00*	0.00*	0.00*
	<i>Educational and Cultural Resources</i>	0.00*	0.00*	0.00*	0.00*

Self-Efficacy

Regarding Self-Efficacy aspect, the students in the schools with library and reading program sponsorship had the significantly positive results in all four factors (including: *Self-Efficacy for Academic Achievement*, *Self-Efficacy for Self-Regulated Learning*, *Self-Assertive Efficacy*, and *Self-Efficacy for Reading Skills Learning*) than the students in control group ($p < .05$) as shown in Table 3. This indicates that the students in experimental group are more confident after the implementation of the sponsorship, and are more able to learn spontaneously, and will take the initiative to carry out pre-class preview and after-class review and other learning activities. Being positive in self-regulated learning indicates a better time management, more proactively cleaning their learning environment and finishing their homework with self-discipline. In the factor of Self-Assertive Efficacy, the results also demonstrate that, student in experimental group have more confidence, can express their views in class, answer the teacher's questions with confidence and so on. Besides, the library and reading program sponsorship may also help students develop good manne, improve hygiene habits, life routines and politeness.

Table 3. p values of independent samples t-tests for each factor in Self-Efficacy

Aspect	Factor	Pre-test	1 st Post-test	2 nd post-test	3 rd post-test
Self-Efficacy	<i>Self-Efficacy for Academic Achievement</i>	1.00	0.00*	0.00*	0.00*
	<i>Self-Efficacy for Self-Regulated Learning</i>	0.00*	0.00*	0.00*	0.00*
	<i>Self-Assertive Efficacy</i>	0.00*	0.00*	0.00*	0.00*
	<i>Self-Efficacy for Reading Skills Learning</i>	0.05	0.48	0.00*	0.00*

Academic Performance

Students in both experimental and control groups need to take the final union examinations for literature and mathematics. In the pre-test phase, most of elementary school students in control group had significant higher scores ($p < .05$) in *Literature*, while students in experimental group had significant higher scores in *Math* as shown in Table 4. After around six months of Intervention, most elementary students in experimental group had significant higher scores in both *Literature* and *Math*. Notable finding is that, higher grade and middle high school students in experimental group had significant higher scores in *Math* in this 1st post-test phase. In

the 2nd post-test phase, middle grade and higher grade elementary students in experimental group remained having significant higher scores in *Literature*. Some potential reasons for the lower grade elementary students in experimental group did not have significant higher scores in *Literature* may be due to 2nd post-test was taken in a new school year, all the 1st grade students were new students at that time. It may need to take more time for the Intervention to take effect on those new students. The other possible reason is that, the difficulty of text for lower grade students is too plain and simple to make difference.

Table 4. *p* values of independent samples t-tests for Academic Performance

Grade	Subject	Pre-test	1st Post-test	2nd post-test
Lower (1 st , 2 nd)	<i>Literature</i>	0.01*(negative)	0.00*	0.18
	<i>Math</i>	0.03*	0.00*	0.00*(negative)
Middle (3 rd , 4 th)	<i>Literature</i>	0.00*(negative)	0.32	0.00*
	<i>Math</i>	0.04*	0.00*	0.00*
Higher (5 th , 6 th)	<i>Literature</i>	0.00*(negative)	0.00*	0.04*
	<i>Math</i>	0.53	0.03*	0.88
Middle High School	<i>Literature</i>	0.10	0.28	N/A
	<i>Math</i>	0.07	0.00*	N/A

Conclusion

Overall, the level of reading engagement of students in experiential group is significantly higher than that of students in control group. From the survey results, it can be found that the students in the schools with library and reading program sponsorship are more likely to enjoy reading, affirm the value of reading, and have more confidence in completing the reading tasks. Meanwhile, in terms of social goals, the students in experiential group are more likely to abide by the school norms and cooperate with their teachers and peers. The implementation of library and reading program sponsorship can bring significant benefits to students' academic performance in Literature subject, especially after more than six months to one year of implementation. A follow-up research to track the influence of other subject like Math is suggested.

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