

Journal of Trainee Teacher Education Research

“Once upon a time...”: A proposed case study of pupils’ perspectives on Reading for Pleasure in Year 5 and 6

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(PGCE Primary, 2020-2021)

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Abstract

This proposed case study looks to explore how pupils view Reading for Pleasure in year 5 and 6 and how this may influence future pedagogical practice of teachers in their classrooms, with regards to the promotion of Reading for Pleasure. It considers, in an extended literature review, how Reading for Pleasure links to attainment improvement not only in reading but across the curriculum, as well as its impact on socio-emotional development. The proposal outlines how this could be investigated further to explore pupils’ perspectives using a mixed-methods approach and highlights the benefits of collecting both quantitative and qualitative data. Finally, it concludes with consideration of the implications for future practice that have resulted from reviewing the literature, particularly the importance of promotion of Reading for Pleasure as an activity in its own right.

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Note

In 2020-2021 the COVID-19 crisis disrupted the second assignment for Primary PGCEs meaning that they were unable to undertake research in classrooms. As a result the assignment was changed to make it a research proposal instead. Therefore, the articles included from the Primary PGCEs do not include results and discussions, but do provide detailed proposals for researching pupil perspectives about different aspects to school and learning.

1. “Once upon a time...”: A proposed case study of pupils’ perspectives on Reading for Pleasure in Year 5 and 6

Chloe Miles

Reading for Pleasure (RfP) has taken increasing prominence on the stage of educational research in recent years, including as a key aim in the most recent Primary English National Curriculum update (Department for Education (DfE), 2013). There has been a flurry of literature considering its significance in relation to attainment and how best to integrate it into the classroom (Clark & Rumbold, 2006; Clark & De Zoysa, 2011; Cremin, Mottram, Collins, Powell & Safford, 2009; 2014; Sullivan & Brown, 2015). However, exactly what RfP looks like in practice is not necessarily a universally accepted notion, with Burnett and Merchant (2018) going so far as to describe it as a ‘fuzzy concept’ (p.62). Indeed, there is some disparity in what constitutes RfP, with the National Curriculum (DfE, 2013) promoting reading as something that “opens up a treasure-house of wonder and joy for curious young minds” (p.4). However, it makes limited reference to text types other than books, while others strongly emphasise the broader nature of RfP in the modern age, with the development of technology and electronic text types (Cremin et al., 2014).

An avid reader myself, I have been fascinated to see different approaches adopted by schools in their promotion of RfP and am proposing to further explore how pupils view it themselves. Given the links between attainment, enjoyment, and attitude towards reading, and the influence of teachers on these attitudes, understanding the current literature and pupils’ perspectives on the topic will have significant implications for my own future teaching practice (Clark & De Zoysa, 2011; Cremin et al., 2009; McGeown et al., 2015). Clark and Douglas (2011) discovered enjoyment of reading declines between KS2 and KS3 pupils, and I therefore would seek to understand pupils’ attitudes towards RfP in year 5 and 6, where students are on the cusp of this.

My proposed future research would address the key question: what do pupils in year 5 and 6 think about Reading for Pleasure? It may also address the question of what pupils choose to read outside of required reading in school (text types), and also whether there are links between views on RfP and attainment levels across the curriculum.

Reviewing the literature

Why should we consider pupils' perspectives?

Pupils' perspectives provide a unique insight into the views of those on the receiving end of changes in pedagogical practice (Hanke, 2014; Wood, 2003; Wray & Medwell, 2006). All too often in educational policies, pupils' perspectives are neglected or not taken into account at all, something Wood (2003) describes as 'the educational equivalent of an "own goal"' (p. 368). Not infrequently, teachers make incorrect assumptions about pupils' perceptions, as highlighted in Hanke (2014), with "significant mismatches between teachers' perceptions of pupils' preferences and interests and those expressed by the pupils" (p.377). Similar misconceptions in literacy were also seen in Wood (2003), and again in Wray and Medwell (2006). A theme seems to emerge when regarding this literature, in that there is frequently a discord between pupils' perspectives on aspects of literacy, and teachers' beliefs about what these perspectives may be. Speaking to pupils themselves is therefore essential to truly understand their views.

There is some contention as to whether pupils' perspectives can be effectively integrated into educational research and school improvement, with Wood (2003) describing it as "desirable, but problematic" and cautioning that "what pupils say may also clash with dominant discourses about effective practice" (p.368). Nevertheless, despite these apparent difficulties, the fact remains that they should be an important contributor, as they can provide insight into the efficacy of educational policies that teachers must otherwise guess at, which, as we have already discovered, is often inaccurate.

What is Reading for Pleasure?

Reading for Pleasure (RfP) is referenced frequently in educational research and policies, but not often clearly defined (DfE, 2013; Garces-Bacsal, Tupas, Kaur, Paculdar, & Baja, 2018; Parry & Taylor, 2018; Sullivan & Brown, 2015). This may contribute in part to the apparent lack of cohesion between research, policy, and practice. For the purposes of this proposal, the definition provided by Clark and Rumbold (2006) for RfP will be used, that it is "reading that we do of our own free will anticipating the satisfaction that we will get from the act of reading", and that it "typically involves materials that reflect our own choice, at a time and place that suits us" (p.6).

Cremin et al. (2014) have produced a significant body of work on the topic of RfP, and define it in a similar manner, with emphasis on the fact that a central tenet of RfP is that it occurs at the own readers' volition. This element of "self-determination and free choice" is also highlighted in Alexander and Jarman (2018, p.78), and naturally leads on to the question of whether independent reading in schools can ever truly be considered as RfP, given that there is some element that is always dictated by the class teacher. It is certainly a viewpoint worth considering but, if given freedom of text choice and lack of expectation of outcome when reading independently, students still should be able to gain some pleasure from their reading.

The complex links between RfP and Literacy attainment

RfP is a significant contributor to many aspects of children's development and learning, with probably the most obvious link being that to improved attainment in literacy (Cremin et al., 2014). This will likely come as no surprise, given it increases word exposure and develops comprehension, two dimensions of reading promoted in the National Curriculum (Cremin et al., 2009; DfE, 2013).

In their large-scale study conducted in five Local Authorities, Cremin et al. (2009) noted that, following a programme of RfP pedagogical development, children were reading more both in school and at home. While the project focused on schools recruited opportunistically, often already with an interest in developing RfP practice, this did not necessarily mean that the schools had an effective RfP pedagogy initially (*ibid.*). By the end of the project, incidental improvements in both attitude and attainment were noted, highlighting the benefits of development of pedagogy around RfP. Though the views of some children were considered during the study, the focus children were the 'disaffected reader', and were not, therefore, fully representative of the majority (*ibid.*). Exploring a wider range of pupils' perspectives would be beneficial for a truly representative understanding of pupils' opinions on RfP.

It is equally necessary to consider the role of reading attitude, enjoyment, and confidence in relation to attainment. Clark and De Zoysa (2011) mapped these complex interrelationships using data from more than 4,500 students, highlighting reading enjoyment as a "doubly powerful source of influence" (p.5), that can be linked to attainment both directly and indirectly. As the authors acknowledged, it is difficult to unpick the different strands, as "enjoyment, behaviour and attainment reinforce one another" (*ibid.*, p.22), but it remains important to encourage children, so they adopt healthy lifelong reading habits. Positive correlations between reading attitude, confidence and attainment were also

noted in Cremin et al. (2009), demonstrating the importance of fostering “positive reading mindsets” (p.21). This was further exhibited in Clark and Douglas (2011), where those working at, or above expected reading levels reported higher levels of reading enjoyment.

Does reading attainment then always correlate with enjoyment of reading? Not necessarily. McGeown et al. (2015), found reading attitude and confidence to be more significantly correlated to reading skill than enjoyment. Additionally, Smith et al. (2012) established that reading achievement increased between the ages of 8-12, whilst reading enjoyment actually declined. Moreover, despite a continuing rise in reading achievement with age, a significant decline in both reading enjoyment and self-efficacy with age was noted between year 4 and 8 (*ibid.*).

Internationally, the average reading score in the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) has been seen to increase in recent years, but England still remains significantly behind other high-performing countries (McGrane et al., 2017). Interestingly, English pupils perform relatively better on high-level comprehension questions than some international counterparts, and report high levels of confidence with reading, but are more likely to dislike reading (*ibid.*). Those English students who reported higher levels of enjoyment were also more likely to score higher. What could be inferred from this, then, is that reading focus in England may be on comprehension and attainment to the detriment of enjoyment levels. With national data collected from over 5000 year 5 pupils in England, the results of the study certainly are a good representation of the majority but, as a result of the scale, the more individualised qualitative element, which might help to offer more insight into these results, is somewhat lost amongst the statistics.

Making links across the curriculum

The benefit of RfP is not just visible in literacy attainment. Sullivan and Brown (2015) considered the impact on both literacy and mathematics in a large cohort study of 17,000 people in the UK born in 1970, the 1970 British Cohort Study (BCS70). Reading habits were noted, and 3,583 of the cohort participated in vocabulary and mathematics testing age 5, 10 and 16, following which the scores were compared to the reported childhood reading habits (Sullivan & Brown, 2015). The paper noted that, at age 16, higher vocabulary scores were associated with high frequency of childhood reading, and noted higher childhood reading to be associated with a significantly higher score in mathematics. Where results were controlled for scores at age 5 and 10 the results remained statistically significant, leading to the conclusion that “reading for pleasure is actually linked to increased progress over time”

(ibid., p.986). Text type was also noted to have some statistical significance, positively where books and broadsheet newspapers were read, but negatively with the reading of tabloid newspapers (ibid., p.984).

These results supported the authors' initial thoughts, that "if reading ability and vocabulary are central to further learning in all disciplines, we may expect the influences on vocabulary development to also drive attainment in other subjects including mathematics" (Sullivan & Brown, 2015, p.972). Undeniably, results from such a large scale do indicate a definite link between cross-curricular attainment and RfP. However, it is important not to disregard several limitations which may have some bearing on the weight afforded to these results. In the first instance, the authors themselves acknowledge the use of multiple-choice questionnaires for assessing attainment in mathematics and vocabulary is not necessarily the most representative measure (Sullivan & Brown, 2015). Additionally, data collected for reading habits was self-reported, and consequently its accuracy is somewhat hard to determine. Another consideration is that, whilst a large volume of data was collected, the age of it is less likely to be representative of current reading habits and therefore its current applicability is less robust. Nevertheless, a link between cross-curricular attainment and RfP is clearly demonstrated and would merit further exploration as to whether it is a case of correlation or causality.

The study is not the only example demonstrating cognitive benefits of reading beyond the realms of literacy. Cunningham and Stanovich (1993) found significant links between print exposure and differences in general knowledge. A further paper considered a smaller number of children, following up 27 students with a mean age of 16 years and 9 months, who had completed a series of reading tests age 7 in a previous study (Cunningham & Stanovich, 1997). They concluded that early reading ability could predict scores in a range of literacy and general knowledge tasks, suggesting once again that reading can be linked to general attainment, not just in the field of literacy (ibid.). Admittedly, these studies were considering reading generally as opposed to specifically RfP, but given the evidence above that has demonstrated that those with higher literacy attainment are more likely to read for pleasure, it could be inferred that those with higher reading ability were those who were partaking in more RfP.

The holistic benefits of RfP

There is no denying RfP significantly impacts attainment, but there are other factors to be considered, such as socioemotional development. Several studies highlight the emotional engagement that reading fosters, and the role that it plays in social development (Burnett & Merchant, 2018; Clark & Rumbold, 2006; Cremin et al., 2014; Parry & Taylor, 2018). Clark and Rumbold (2006) emphasise the “importance of reading to personal well-being and development” (p.7), and that “we must see reading for pleasure as an activity that has real educational and social consequences” (p.28). More recently, these effects have been demonstrated in the Annual Literacy survey conducted by the National Literacy Trust (Clark & Picton, 2020), which had the added dimension this year of considering reading before and during the first COVID-19 lockdown. The survey underlined the importance of reading for children’s mental health, with 59.3% of students reporting that reading made them feel better during lockdown, and 3 in 10 reporting it helped them when they were sad about being unable to visit family and friends (*ibid.*).

Intriguingly, while the number of children reporting enjoyment in reading was at the lowest level since the surveys started pre-lockdown, reading enjoyment had somewhat increased from this low point during the lockdown (Clark & Picton, 2020). The project reports increased autonomy in reading choice and time to read just for the pleasure of it as the key reasons for this (*ibid.*). This highlights the importance of pupil choice in reading material, and the need for time to integrate RfP into their daily lives, particularly when doing so has a benefit on mental health and wellbeing. Further exploration into pupil opinion of RfP when there has obviously been a significant shift in perception would allow better understanding of why the mindset of some pupils has changed and may allow application to more reluctant readers. Having such a large body of over 4000 students sampled certainly accredits some validity to these results, but is it likely that a survey about reading would have been participated in by the most reluctant readers (*ibid.*)? Such improvement in attitudes to reading therefore cannot be assumed to be applicable to all pupils. While the effects of lockdown on RfP have slightly increased the number of students reading, the fact remains that there are fewer children reporting that they read for pleasure than ever before (Clark & Rumbold, 2006; Clark & Picton, 2020). The reasons for this need to be fully explored, and the best people to ask as to why are the children themselves.

Despite the seemingly apparent benefits of RfP, there still appears to be something of a conflict between the promotion of the development of reading skills and of RfP, with the National Curriculum espousing the virtues of RfP whilst simultaneously pushing an agenda of development of word reading and comprehension above all else (Cremin et al., 2009; DfE, 2013; Hempel-Jorgensen, Cremin, Harris & Chamberlain, 2018). Indeed, as Cremin et al. (2014) contend, it seems that the National Curriculum “views literacy as a set of cognitive skills owned by individuals, and as separable from both the text and the context in which a particular book, magazine or blog is being read, shared and potentially enjoyed” (p.16). If reading is promoted as skills-based above everything, with accountability testing turning it into something of a chore, then children who struggle with the technical aspects will quickly become disillusioned with the enjoyment they can derive from it (Burnett & Merchant, 2018; Cremin et al., 2014).

One area of RfP that seems to be somewhat neglected by the National Curriculum is the variety of text types now available to children (Parry & Taylor, 2018). With focus mainly on fiction books when considering fostering a love of reading, there is minimal acknowledgement of the plethora of text types that children may wish to read for pleasure (Burnett & Merchant, 2018; Cremin et al., 2014; DfE 2013). Given that Clark and Picton (2020) found an increase in audiobook usage during lockdown and the use of technology to engage in reading, the lack of acknowledgement of other text types does not appear to be the best way of fostering a love of reading. In fact, where non-fiction is mentioned, it is mainly within the context of finding information for comprehension exercises, with little reference to reading non-fiction purely for enjoyment (DfE, 2013).

Alexander and Jarman (2018) considered RfP of non-fiction texts in the context of information science books, in a project involving around 300 pupils aged 8-14. They found that non-fiction sources can be a source of pleasure for children, from both an emotional and cognitive point of view. Whilst there are some limitations in the reliability of these results, given that the reading challenge involved a reward scheme of stickers, calling into question whether the books were being read with genuine free choice, there was still evidence that some pupils were reading non-fiction for the associated intrinsic value (*ibid.*). It does not detract from the fact that, if emphasis is constantly put on the use of non-fiction texts purely for classroom fact finding, then children will associate them simply as a means to finding information out at school and may be less likely to choose a non-fiction text in the future. Further understanding of pupils’ views of different text types, including the full range of media currently in circulation such as online reading and audiobooks, would therefore be

useful to better understand pupils' preferences, so that RfP can be promoted in a way that will engage all readers. As Clark and Rumbold (2006) argue, "in addition to motivation, another important factor in fostering lifelong readers is choice" (p.26). It is therefore important to ensure pupils have access to the choices they would prefer.

The significant role of the teacher

What is the teacher's role then, in the promotion of RfP? We have seen the links between RfP, attainment and wellbeing, but where there is a heavy emphasis on accountability testing, teachers may relegate RfP to the role of "optional extra" (Cremin et al., 2014, p.1). Hempel-Jorgensen et al. (2018) considered the role of RfP in low socio-economic primary schools, looking at schools who reported RfP was a priority. In spite of this, the study found that "the teachers' understanding of reading was predominantly related to reading as technical proficiency. Pleasure and volition were not seen as central to reading, and it was mostly not recognised as a social practice" (Hempel-Jorgensen et al., 2018, p.89). This attitude to reading was something that children themselves seemed to be aware of during the study, which highlights the importance of the teacher's attitude when fostering a love of reading amongst their pupils, and the need for a genuine RfP pedagogy that isn't focused on meeting accountability requirements (Clark & Rumbold 2006; Hempel-Jorgensen et al., 2018).

The necessity of the teacher's role in encouraging RfP is not necessarily something that all teachers appear to be aware of, and in fact, some even go so far as to say that it is not their role (Garces-Bascal et al., 2018). Garces-Bascal et al. (2018) surveyed 146 teacher training students in Singapore and noted that a large portion of teachers felt that promoting lifelong reading habits fell under the remit of English teachers only, and that it was not their job. Regardless of this attitude, or the reading habits of the teachers themselves, the study found that they were still able to successfully promote strategies that encouraged reluctant readers to read, suggesting that teachers do not have to be 'readers' themselves to motivate their students (*ibid.*). Admittedly, this small-scale study was conducted in Singapore and not directly in reference to primary school teachers, and therefore does not immediately appear to be applicable to English system. However, Singapore is also amongst the highest performing countries in the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) (McGrane et al., 2017) and is particularly noted to have an examination-based school culture, which one could argue is also present in our system, so the comparison is therefore one of value. This links to the work of Clark and Picton (2020), where we gain an appreciation of how students perceive their

teacher's role with regards to RfP, as some pupils were noted to be missing the reading recommendations and scaffolding for RfP provided whilst at home in lockdown.

Cremin et al. (2014) extoll the virtues of teachers as readers, and strongly argue that, not only is it the teacher's responsibility to promote RfP for their pupils through their pedagogy, but also to develop their own mindset and identities as 'Reading Teachers' so they are able to model RfP and engage in meaningful discussions that then spark enthusiasm for reading in their students (Cremin et al., 2009). The focus of this work, however, was largely on that of the teacher and their perspectives. Having an awareness of pupils' views with regards to reading and the text types they enjoy would help with working out how best to implement this kind of pedagogy and teaching practice into the classroom, and further research from the perspective of the students would therefore be useful to ensure pupil and teacher views are considered in collaboration.

Proposed methodology and analysis

Case studies – benefits and misunderstandings

To further research RfP, I would conduct a case study to ascertain pupils' perspectives. Demetriou (2017) defines a case study approach as "an in-depth exploration from multiple perspectives of the complexity of a real-life classroom or school" (p.124). By choosing the option of a case study, different kinds of data can be collected, allowing deeper insight into specific contexts (Hamilton, 2011), in this case that of pupils' perspectives with regards to Reading for Pleasure. Conducting a case study can help the researcher to gain a more "holistic perspective" (Simons, 1996, p.225), and case studies can be used in this way both as part of larger research projects, as seen in Cremin et al. (2009), or as a primary research method. In this instance, a case study of a small number of pupils in a primary school in England would offer insight into how pupils actually perceive RfP in practice.

As Flyvbjerg (2006) discusses, there are often misunderstandings that occur with regards to the efficacy and validity of case studies. Commonly, there is an assumption that because the evidence is from specific cases, it is not possible to generalise findings (*ibid.*). However, as stated, "it depends on the case one is speaking of and how it is chosen" (*ibid.*, p.225), and in fact, "That knowledge cannot be formally generalized does not mean that it cannot enter into the collective process of knowledge accumulation in a given field or in a society" (*ibid.*, p.227). Dismissing case studies

because one does not believe they can be generalised ignores the context-dependent knowledge that is gained, which can offer valuable insight into how policies and pedagogical theory stand up to application in a classroom scenario (Demetriou, 2017; Flyvbjerg, 2006).

Adopting a mixed-methods approach

Hamilton (2011) poses that “use of multiple perspectives and different kinds of data collection is characteristic of high-quality case study and lends weight to the validity of the findings” (p.2). This assertion is also made by Warwick and Chaplain (2017), as well as the argument that use of only one method type limits perspectives and may result in key ideas being missed. By using a mixed-methods approach, I would therefore hope to develop a well-rounded view of pupils’ perspectives of RfP.

However, as Creswell and Garrett (2008) highlight, there is some lack of clarity as to what ‘mixed methods research’ consists of as a concept. Burke Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004) discuss disputes between quantitative and qualitative ‘purists’, with each side of the debate certain that their paradigm is the most appropriate, pontificating the philosophy that the two study types cannot and should not be used in conjunction. The authors were keen to consider how their use in combination means it is possible to “draw from the strengths and minimize the weaknesses of both in single research studies and across studies” (*ibid.*, p.14) and argue for its importance in educational research. It stands to reason that the more detail available to answer a proposed research question the better, and a combination of both quantitative and qualitative data can facilitate this (Burke Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004; Hamilton, 2011; Warwick & Chaplain, 2017).

An example of where this has been used effectively in practice is in Blatchford (2005), where a multi-method approach was used to consider the effect of class size differences on attainment, to “help reconcile inconsistencies in previous research” (p.197). This large-scale study of around 10,000 pupils was conducted over 7 years, and successfully used mixed methods to examine class size differences in a way that other single method literature had not been able to (*ibid.*). Inevitably, there were times when integrating the data to establish causal relations was challenging, but Blatchford acknowledges that “Clearly qualitative and more interpretive data have purposes other than establishing causality” (*ibid.*, p.204), and a large volume of useful data was collected from the study, which has since been published in a number of papers. The scale and time period of the study allowed the development of consistent and valid research method techniques to a degree that will not be possible within the confines of a small-scale mixed methods case study, but it certainly justifies the

benefits of using a mixed-methods approach to develop a deeper understanding of a proposed research question.

The proposed sample and research design

The intended sample for this small-scale case study would ideally be a class of year 5 and 6 pupils in an English primary school, with three focus children for further qualitative data collection. Given that the research would need to be conducted within the constraints of teaching, there is an element of convenience sampling to this, but the 9-11 age group in particular would be useful, as the transition point from primary to secondary is an age where reading enjoyment appears to decline and therefore a beneficial moment to capture pupils' perspectives (Smith et al., 2012).

Preferably there would be an equal mix of genders, as a gender gap is frequently noted in both reading attainment and enjoyment, and understanding perspectives of both boys and girls is therefore imperative (Clark & Picton, 2020; McGrane et al., 2017). In the same vein, having a mix of genders within the focus group would also help to explore perspectives of all children. Whilst a large proportion of the literature on RfP takes place within the context of large-scale research projects, the benefits of small-scale research to ascertain pupils' perspectives can be seen in Hanke (2014), where the small-scale nature allowed thorough exploration of pupils' perspectives on guided reading. A small-scale case study to ascertain pupils' perspectives on RfP is hoped to have a similar effect, allowing more of a deep dive than may be possible in larger research projects.

The proposed research design for this study would follow Terrell's (2012) 'sequential explanatory stage' approach to mixed methods data collection, where initial data collection would involve a survey given to a class of year 5 and 6 pupils to collect quantitative data on pupils' perspectives of RfP, such as: number who like or dislike it as an activity, choice of literature, whether they read at home etc. This would allow the generation of "standardised, quantifiable, empirical data" (Wilson, 2017a, p. 189). These surveys would then be analysed and used to identify individuals with interesting perspectives who would be suitable for follow-up interviews, to gather more qualitative data and gain a deeper understanding of these perspectives.

Whilst the design of such a survey can be challenging, there have fortunately been several successful, large- scale studies into reading whose questions can be used as models for this small-scale case study, adding some weight of validity to the results, given their efficacy in large numbers of pupils,

such as PIRLS ‘Liking of reading scale’ (McGrane et al, 2017) and the Annual Literacy Survey from the UK Literacy Association (UKLA) (Clark & Picton, 2020). A proposed survey has been generated through the adaptation of their questions to suit the proposed research questions, suggested sample and small-scale nature of the study. Ideally, this survey would be trialled on a small group of students before being used on the sample class in the proposed research project, with adaptations made as necessary (Wilson, 2017a).

Undeniably, there are limitations in using surveys as a method to collect data on pupils’ perspectives, as children may feel that there are ‘right’ answers expected from them and subsequently might express views that they believe their teacher wishes to hear, rather than their true opinions (Wilson, 2017a). However, emphasising that there is no right answer when giving out the survey and surveying the whole class would hopefully mitigate this to some extent.

Given the significant time that analysis of qualitative data can take (Blatchford, 2005; Terrell, 2012), a proposed three children would be picked for interviews, to allow for the constraints on time and people. These students will be identified using Moss’ (2000) ‘Three categories of readers’; that is, “those readers who can and do read freely; those who can but don’t read freely; and those who can’t yet and don’t read freely” (p.102). This categorisation was successfully used by Cremin et al. (2009) to identify focus children and is a useful way of identifying what Flyvbjerg (2006) refers to as ‘critical cases’, as exploring perspectives of pupils in each of the three categories will likely afford valuable insight into why contrasting attitudes to reading exist.

The use of semi-structured interviews enables questions that can be flexible to elicit responses in a more natural, conversational way, and results in a manageable amount of data that can be analysed given the small-scale nature of the study (Warwick & Chaplain, 2017). This flexibility would also allow any specific interesting views expressed in the questionnaire with regards to RfP to be addressed, as it would allow some deviation in the line of questioning. The establishment of rapport with the group of students beforehand would help to facilitate a more natural discussion so students felt comfortable, and the interviews would therefore ideally be conducted after several weeks in the classroom working with the students.

Undoubtedly, there is still the possibility of acquiescence response bias, where students give answers that they think the interviewer wants to hear as opposed to expressing their actual opinions, but the use of open-ended questions may help to moderate this to some extent (Warwick & Chaplain, 2017).

Conducting the interview as a group rather than individually would also go some way to putting students at ease so they feel they can express their true opinions in a more relaxed manner, rather than one-to-one with an adult, and this is the proposed approach that would be undertaken. Of course, conducting this interview as a group may lead to some influencing of answers between the students, and the personalities of the individuals will need to be considered to prevent one student dominating the conversation, but the collaborative nature of the discussion may also provide a richer dialogue than would be gained from a one-to-one interview (*ibid.*). Video recording of interviews would be beneficial for the purposes of transcription and would allow the possibility of recording non-verbal cues as well as dialogue, but if not available or not permitted, audio recording to help with transcription would be ideal.

How might the data be analysed?

Following the collection of questionnaire data and subsequent semi-structured interviews, the results will be collated and analysed, looking at pupils' perspectives of RfP, and considering this alongside cross-curricular class attainment data to see if there is any noticeable correlation. I would aim to collate the results within a table to display responses to survey questions, considering the proportions of students who responded to the questions in a certain way. For example, the percentages in each response to a question on reading enjoyment could be compared, and this data could be presented in a bar chart, as in Clark and Picton (2020), so that key results are clear and easy to visualise. I could also consider these factors in relation to other features such as gender and cross-curricular subject attainment (Wilson, 2017b). I would aim to plot some of this data in scatter graphs to test for correlation, for example to consider if a correlation could be noted between pupils' perspectives of RfP and their attainment, using a correlation coefficient such as Spearman's Rank correlation coefficient, depending on the data type (*ibid.*).

To analyse the qualitative interview data, I will follow a pattern of analysis that appears to be common in qualitative research, including some of the RfP papers discussed in the literature review of this proposal; the transcription of interviews and coding of data to identify common themes (Cremin et al., 2009; Evans, 2017; Hanke, 2014; Hempel-Jorgensen et al., 2018). I will transcribe the semi-structured interviews and then will review these transcriptions to explore the themes that emerge (Evans, 2017). Given the relatively small amount of data, I will manually apply open coding using an inductive approach, looking for similarities and differences in responses to develop common

themes (*ibid.*), similar to the thematic analysis undertaken in Hanke (2014). Whilst use of coding analysis programmes, as in Hempel-Jorgensen et al. (2018), has some benefits, such as application of several codes to the same fragments of text and the option of displaying some aspects of the data, access to such software is not guaranteed (Evans, 2017). The manual approach allows the “retention of an overall view of the data” (*ibid.*, p.269), which is more challenging when using computer software for coding. Obviously, data analysis in this way is subjective, and the resulting analysis will be dependent on the coding system applied, but where it is applied thoughtfully, it can identify underlying patterns and help to generate meaning and deeper understanding (Evans, 2017).

Ethics

When undertaking any research with children, there are several ethical considerations that need to be taken into account, and I would follow the guidelines set out by the BERA (2018) throughout my research project. I would ensure to treat all participants in the study with respect and without prejudice throughout the process. I would also seek informed consent from both pupils and parents, providing a written explanation of the research in a letter along with a consent form for the students selected for the semi-structured interview. For the capture of audio and visual recording in the semi-structured interviews, I would specifically seek written permission from parents/carers with regards to this aspect of data collection, and would store such recordings on a secure server, ensuring they are only used for the specific research purposes and are deleted once transcripts of the interviews have been produced (BERA, 2018; Stutchbury, 2017).

I would ensure that all participants were aware that they could withdraw from the study at any time, and that participation is not mandatory. I would maintain confidentiality and make sure that all data stored securely has been anonymised so that identification of individuals from the data is not possible (BERA, 2018). I would attempt to minimise disruption to pupils by discussing the timing of surveys and interviews carefully with the class teacher, so that participation in the study did not have a negative impact on their learning (BERA, 2018; Stutchbury, 2017).

I would carefully consider my selection of pupils for the participation in the focus group, having clear rationale for my choices and ensuring that they are truly willing to participate in the semi-structured interviews, and would make sure that doing so will not put them at academic disadvantage through time missed (Stutchbury, 2017). I would ensure that I conducted my research to the highest standards,

maintaining integrity and engaging in critical analysis that is beneficial for the wider educational community (BERA, 2018; Stutchbury, 2017). When reporting data, I will do my best to do so accurately and draw conclusions only where there is enough evidence to do so (Stutchbury, 2017). I would also make sure that I remain critical in my analysis of the data I collect, considering and reporting on the limitations of the results (*ibid.*). In this way I would hope to uphold the ethical principles of the BERA.

Implications for future practice

Constructing this research proposal has provided me with many implications for my future teaching practice. Reviewing the literature has afforded me an insight into RfP that I previously did not have, developing my understanding of what it actually consists of and looks like in practice in the classroom. I have discovered how RfP may have an impact not only on attainment in literacy, but also across the curriculum, including in subjects such as mathematics. Not only that, but the literature has revealed the link between RfP and socioemotional development, something I would previously not have necessarily considered. This has highlighted to me the vital importance of RfP and the allowance of time for it as an activity in its own right, not something merely to be used as a filler activity for the moments between lesson transitions, as so often occurs.

Another interesting factor for consideration has been the role of pupils' perspectives when conducting research in education. Through review of the literature, I have found that pupils' perspectives can offer a unique insight into a given situation, and that not infrequently teachers will have misconceptions and incorrect assumptions about the views of their pupils. With pupils' perspectives on reading, I have discovered an alarming trend of decline in enjoyment and engagement in reading, which appears to worsen with age. Given the benefits I now know occur as a result of engagement with RfP, this is something I would be keen to further understand and improve if possible. I have seen how curriculum pressures to teach the skills of reading, such as decoding and comprehension, may be in conflict with the development of a RfP pedagogy, and how there is a need to reconcile teaching reading for accountability with teaching RfP.

These things are all likely to have a significant impact on my future practice as a teacher. I will attempt to adopt a RfP pedagogy into my everyday teaching, championing RfP and involving pupils in regular discussions to develop their love of reading. I will promote RfP using a range of different

text types, so that a love of reading can be fostered in all types of reader. I would be keen to conduct the research project proposed in a future Masters level study to further explore pupils' perspectives on this topic, attempting to understand why it is that children appear to be falling out of love with reading, in the hope that this can be reversed in the future for the pupils that I teach.

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