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Teachers as Readers: Building Communities of Readers

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Abstract

Given the narrow scope of primary teachers' knowledge and use of children's literature identified in Phase I of *Teachers as Readers* (2006-7), the core goal of the Phase II project, was to improve teachers' knowledge and experience of such literature in order to help them increase children's motivation and enthusiasm for reading, especially those less successful in literacy. The year long project, *Teachers as Readers: Building Communities of Readers*, which was undertaken in five Local Authorities in England, also sought to build new relationships with parents and families and to explore the concept of a Reading Teacher: a teacher who reads and a reader who teaches (Commeyras *et al.*, 2004). The research design was multi-layered; involving data collection at individual, school and LA levels, and employing a range of quantitative and qualitative data research methods and tools. This paper provides an overview of the research and highlights the challenges encountered and the insights garnered. It argues that teachers need support in order to develop children's reading for pleasure, which can influence both attainment and achievement and increase young learners' engagement as self-motivated and socially engaged readers.

Key words: Reading for pleasure, teachers' knowledge of children's literature, pedagogy, Reading Teachers, reading relationships, text talk.

Introduction

Recurring evidence suggests that primary-aged children in England continue to read less independently and find less pleasure in reading than many of their peers in other countries (Twist *et al.*, 2003; 2006). In 2003, the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) found that in England children's reading attainment was high, but their pleasure in reading was low (Twist *et al.*, 2003). In 2006, the PIRLS data showed children's reading attainment dropping sharply, and their attitudes declining still further; England was ranked 37th out of the 45 countries/ provinces taking part in terms of attitudes. These results are in line with other studies which also suggest a decline in children reading for pleasure (e.g. OECD, 2002; Sainsbury and Schagen, 2004), although they are in contrast to a National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER) study which found that, following a significant decline from 1998-2003, levels of enjoyment have since held steady (Sainsbury and Clarkson, 2008).

This complex picture, whilst no doubt influenced by technological and childhood changes, is also arguably shaped by a recent and widely recognised professional focus on tests and targets. In seeking to ensure curriculum coverage of nationally set objectives, many perceive that teachers in England may have reduced opportunities for independent reading for pleasure and neglected the reason for reading in the first place (Frater, 2000; Martin, 2003; Cremin, 2007). The autonomous model of literacy enshrined in the National Literacy Strategy (NLS) (DfEE, 1998a) tended to frame reading as a set of discrete sub-skills, not a process of meaning making, and as Pullman (2003) observed, whilst there were 71 verbs connected to the act of reading in the original Literacy Strategy, 'enjoy' was not one of them.

Other professional writers and researchers have also expressed concern about the prevalence of certain literature based classroom practices, such as the overuse of text extracts (Powling *et al.*, 2005; King, 2001), the absence of meaningful interaction in shared reading (Burns and Myhill, 2004) and reduced opportunities to enjoy texts at length (Gamble, 2007; Fisher, 2005). In addition, the ways in which the NLS ‘positioned’ children’s books in the classroom to teach textual and linguistic features of particular written genres has been critiqued (Cremin *et al.*, 2008a). Although the renewed framework (DfES, 2006) does now afford a higher profile to reading for pleasure and explicitly acknowledges the power of reading aloud, the last decade of prescribed practice and the pressures of accountability are likely to continue to exert their influence upon teachers’ knowledge and use of literature for some considerable time to come.

In addition, despite the fact that studies demonstrate teachers need a wide knowledge of children’s literature (Medwell *et al.*, 1998; Block, Oakar and Hurt, 2002), this knowledge is not recognised as part of the professional repertoire in the Standards for Teachers in England (TDA, 2007), nor is it assessed within the audit established as part of Circular 4/98 (DfEE, 1998b). Furthermore, recent research undertaken by the United Kingdom Literacy Association (UKLA) reveals that whilst personally the majority of primary teachers are committed readers, professionally they rely on a limited canon of children’s authors, many of whom were their childhood favourites (Cremin *et al.*, 2008a). In this *Teachers as Readers* Phase I study (2006-7), questionnaires from 1200 teachers nationally showed that 62% of the teachers could name only two, one or no children’s picture fiction creators, and 58% only two, one or no children’s poets. Nearly a quarter of the sample named no writers at all in these

two categories. Novelists were better known, but the range was narrow and dominated by Dahl, children's laureates and 'celebrity' authors (Cremin *et al.*, 2008b)

This indicates that practitioners may not be sufficiently familiar with a diverse enough range of writers to enable them to foster reader development, make book recommendations to individuals and promote independent reading for pleasure. Given the reduction in primary phase book spending (Hurd *et al.*, 2006) and the documented decline in reading for pleasure, this lack of professional knowledge creates additional challenges. Teachers arguably need opportunities to enrich their knowledge base, and whilst libraries should be central to this, the evidence suggests they are rarely drawn upon (Ofsted, 2004; Cremin *et al.*, 2008c).

So the UKLA Phase II study *Teachers as Readers: Building Communities of Readers* (2007-8) was designed to widen teacher knowledge and pedagogic practice and extend home-school reading relationships. It also sought to broaden teachers' personal knowledge and understanding of being a reader, since research suggests the development of 'Reading Teachers; teachers who read and readers who teach' can support young readers (Commeyras, Bisplinghoff and Olson, 2003). This autobiographical work, in tune with other case study accounts from the US (e.g. Rief, 2002; Bisplinghoff, 2002; Dreher, 2003) suggests that teachers' personal and professional reading experiences can have a positive impact upon their pedagogy and influence children's engagement as readers.

This paper reports upon the overall findings of the Phase II project which, in order to increase children's independent reading for pleasure, aimed to develop:

- teachers' knowledge of children's literature
- teachers' confidence and skilful use of such literature in the classroom
- teachers as 'Reading Teachers'
- reader relationships within and beyond school.

Research design and structure

The year long project was funded by the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation, UKLA and five Local Authorities (LAs): Barking and Dagenham, Birmingham, Kent, Medway, and Suffolk. Each worked within the overall project framework and held regular local professional development sessions with the project teachers/action researchers who, alongside their LA coordinators, also attended three national days in London. These days, which involved all the teachers from the 5 LAs, were run by the research team, and included extended periods of time for book talk, when teachers in cross- LA groups, each brought, shared and discussed one adult text and one piece of children's literature they had read recently. Running parallel to and in conjunction with this professional development and action research, the design for the overall research project involved data collection at individual, school and LA levels, and employed a range of methods and tools. Collection and analysis of the data was carried out both by teachers through their research and by members of the research team. The team were able to access the teachers' data for meta-analysis, as well as data gathered through standardised tools that were administered centrally, and through observation and interviews in the case study schools. This broad array of evidence allowed the team not only to gain insight into the progress made by individual children, teachers and schools, but also to explore patterns and trends across the participating schools as a whole.

Sampling project participants

The schools involved in the project were recruited opportunistically; they were either approached by the LA Coordinators because of a perceived need or interest or, following identification of reading for pleasure in their development plan, they initiated their own involvement. The sample of 27 participating schools involved one primary-level pupil referral unit, five infant, two junior and nineteen primaries. 43 teachers were involved, 80% of whom were not responsible for literacy in their schools. Using Moss's (2000) category of 'can but don't' readers, the teachers identified three 'focus' children in their classes who were not motivated to use their competence as readers and were perceived as disaffected and reluctant.

A random sub-sample of two schools per LA was selected for case study enquiries. This allowed the research team to gain a richer picture of the development and impact of changes in pedagogy and practice drawn from observed evidence and interviews with children, teachers and headteacher in these 10 schools. The case study teachers numbered 17 as in most schools more than one teacher was involved. 49 focus children were tracked through these teachers' action research and ongoing documentation and the research team's activities. This sample, which comprised 73% boys and 27% girls, was in line with findings nationally that boys perceive reading as less interesting and display more negative attitudes than girls (OECD, 2002; Clark and Foster, 2005; Clark, Osborne and Akerman, 2008).

Data collection tools

A combination of qualitative and quantitative data collection methods was employed so that the team could explore both numerical trends and qualitative evidence from the project as a whole, and observations and interviews in the case study schools.

The data collection tools in the teachers' portfolios included:

- Baseline and end-of-project surveys of teachers (n:43) and children (n:1200)
- Project action plans and self-set reading proformas
- Focus children's National Curriculum reading levels and observation proformas (x 3, early, middle and late phase) (n:129)
- Reflections on being a Reading Teacher proformas (x 4 early, middle, interim and late phase)
- Reflections on impact proformas- these explored teachers' perceptions of the impact of their changing knowledge and pedagogic practice on themselves, the focus children and the class as a whole (x 3 early, middle and late phase)
- Final reflection proformas

In addition to the above, the data collection tools used with the case study schools included:

- Semi-structured teacher interviews (x 3 early, middle and late phase) (n:17),
- Semi-structured headteacher interviews (x 3 early, middle and late phase) (n:10)
- Semi-structured group interviews with children (x 3 early, middle and late phase) (n:49)
- Structured observations of reading-related classroom activities (x 2 middle and late phase)
- Drawing and discussion around children's constructs of readers (n:49)

Further material in the form of teachers' reading histories and researchers' notes from the book talk discussions was gathered on national days, as well as LA coordinators' ongoing reports, and additional material in teachers' portfolios (e.g. reading diaries, lesson plans, staff meeting notes and photographs).

Data analysis methods

A mixed methods approach was used for data analysis. Initially, the data were analysed inductively, each researcher working independently to draw out themes from their assigned case studies. Subsequently, using the iterative process of categorical analysis (Coffey and Atkinson, 1996) data were categorised under the project's themes/aims and under new/sub themes that emerged during the analytic process. The combination of action research by teachers and meta-analysis of their documentation, as well as analysis by the research team of the core data from the project as a whole and the 10 case study schools, created multiple data sources which additionally supported the reliability and validity of the findings and helped with triangulation. All data were analysed by more than one team member and were cross checked with an independent researcher. The researchers worked with an ethic of respect for all participants and in particular the children's rights to participate, opt out, and have their views taken seriously. Parental consent was also obtained.

In the following sections, a summary of the findings in relation to project aims is offered. The final discussion seeks to build connections between these elements.

Teachers' knowledge of children's literature

At the outset of the work, most of the 43 teachers leant heavily upon the canon of established primary writers noted in the Phase 1 survey, including Dahl, Fine, Morpurgo, Rowling and Wilson (Cremin *et al.*, 2008b). Their knowledge base with regard to picture fiction and poetry was marginally better than that indicated in the earlier study, but was still limited and again, those who were most recently qualified, demonstrated particularly weak subject knowledge. The practice of relying upon text extracts, noted by Frater (2000) was also borne out in the data, which may in part account for the restricted repertoires evidenced.

The teachers were challenged to read more widely and ‘outside our comfort zone’ as one described it, (e.g. in relation to global literature or poetry). Such reading required persistent support and encouragement, but as the year progressed, their subject knowledge broadened and their interest in and attitude to the children’s own reading material became much more positive. This was evident in interviews, written reflections, observations, final questionnaires and teacher self-ratings. By the end of the project, teachers typically voiced the view that they had become more conscious of and confident in their knowledge of children’s literature.

I feel it’s [my subject knowledge] developed immensely as I research authors more than I did before. It’s made me think more about what I am reading with the children (Interview, teacher, Barking and Dagenham).

In acknowledging the need to widen their reading repertoires, many took risks and engaged with texts that they would not necessarily have read had these not been

recommended or deemed necessary to support the learners. For example, one teacher set up a boys' library in her Year 6 class, and although in her own words, she would *not normally have read any- after all they're boys' books*, she did read them in order to discuss them with the reluctant readers. Another, reflecting the teachers' increasing awareness of children's own reading materials, observed *I'd never read a graphic novel before - it was quite demanding – the children love them*. The teachers not only sought to find out what children read at home, but also let the young readers lead them into new textual territories which further broadened their repertoires and prompted them to widen the materials available in school. Over time this variously encompassed magazines and comics, graphic novels and catalogues, books, fiction and non-fiction, poetry, newspapers, junk mail, sports reports and various downloads.

The teachers developed the habit of sharing their reading discoveries with each other, both locally and nationally. Initially however, the children's literature national book talk sessions were dominated by professional discussion of the amount of work and the objectives which could be taught from the chosen texts. Over time this shifted to focus more on content and meaning, on how particular books affected particular individuals and which texts offered significant levels of satisfaction and/or challenge.

Now we're moving away from the traditional British authors – those names on all the planning proformas - and we're sharing books that we've read and looked at ourselves. That's different to finding books from a list. That's what we've been able to do this year – at the centre sessions with Sonia and at the national days – it's been great to share with other teachers. Not just what works in the class

but what books we ourselves have enjoyed (Interview, teacher, Birmingham).

This increased knowledge of children's texts was frequently accompanied by an enthusiasm which was passed on to young readers; as a result, reciprocal recommendations occurred in many classes where children and teachers recommended texts to each other and then discussed them. It was evident that for the vast majority of teachers, their wider knowledge and passion for particular writers became a valuable and easily shared commodity, one upon which they came to depend.

Teachers' pedagogic practice

At the outset, all teachers used children's literature as a resource for teaching genres and planning units of work; the majority foregrounded using text extracts in whole class work and guided reading. Those who demonstrated weak subject knowledge appeared particularly reliant on literacy schemes, as one noted *I tend to use the book that is recommended by whatever scheme I am using that week* (Interview, teacher, Kent). There were some differences between practitioners of older and younger readers, the former tended to read aloud less frequently and offered less time to independent reading. Initially, teachers highlighted resources (e.g. audio tapes, puppets, and picture books) as evidence of their use of subject knowledge in promoting children's reading development, rather than commenting on the underpinning pedagogy. It was evident that the teachers mostly viewed reading as both instruction and assessment oriented and did not plan specifically to support children's reading for pleasure. However, through widening their knowledge and

talking about texts with colleagues, they began to consider the implicit messages being conveyed in their classrooms.

I identified really early on in the project that one of the reasons the children didn't read for pleasure in my class was that...the way I was delivering – or teaching – was kind of taking the fun out of books... we never really discussed reading with them or said, well you could read a book by such-and-such an author, that kind of made me think, well actually I've got a role to play here. One of the days we went to in London and some of the [LA] centre-days, we spent time talking about books, enjoying books and I thought 'I need to change my approach here. I need to think about how I introduce books as 'tasks' to them. (Interview, teacher, Birmingham)

This perception of reading as task-related involving work on decoding or comprehension was initially very common, although across the year, observable patterns of pedagogic development occurred which shifted both teachers' and children's perceptions. Teachers began to use their increased familiarity with literature to enhance class reading environments and organise activities which involved talk and interaction, enabling them to observe children as readers. They also developed considerable confidence in reading aloud, although it took time for them to find the space to read aloud regularly and to recognise this pleasurable practice as pedagogy. This was particularly the case for some Key Stage 2 teachers and newly qualified professionals. By the end of the project however, all teachers reported they were reading aloud 4-5 times per week and there was a growing recognition of its

intrinsic value. Their read aloud programmes varied, but nearly all included picture fiction as well as longer texts, and involved space for children to suggest texts and to read aloud to one another and/or younger learners.

Book talk also developed, teachers created frequent opportunities for discussions with the class, small groups and individuals about texts, authors, preferences, responses and so forth. In addition, children began to make time to talk to each other about their reading and more spontaneous child-led text talk emerged. Teachers realised that their growing knowledge enabled them to join these more open-ended discussions and they began to make book recommendations to individual readers, some for the first time in their teaching careers.

If a child comes up and says 'I've finished this book'... I actually feel much more able to say 'If you like that, what about trying one of these', whereas before it would be "OK, well go and choose another one. (Interview, teacher, Kent)

Initially, few schools offered time for sustained, independent reading, but by the end of the year, it was more social, more regular, lasted longer and offered access to a much wider range of texts. Teachers began to perceive independent reading as an active opportunity for learning and teaching, rather than a passive 'holding' strategy whilst they were focused on – and therefore implicitly privileging - other types of literacy instruction such as guided reading.

The reading for pleasure pedagogy that developed arguably promoted a more inclusive approach. Teachers observed that children who were previously reluctant readers, both their focus children and others, become drawn in and wanted to read, alone and with friends and began to talk about texts. Teachers too began to re-value children's books as a source of pleasure and enjoyment in their own right; they were no longer used solely as conduits for delivering curriculum objectives.

We're enjoying books more together rather than me using it as a tool for literacy if that makes sense. Just the fact that it's fine to enjoy a book together, and we haven't got to work out where the prepositions are or whether it's got a capital letter or a full stop or any of that... that will come, and of course I still use books for that, but it's different. (Written reflection, teacher, Suffolk)

Reading Teachers

The data indicated that the project rekindled a love of reading for pleasure in the vast majority of the teachers, prompting them to reflect upon themselves as readers, for many this was a novel experience. However from the outset, reservations were expressed about the idea of becoming a Reading Teacher (RT) and taking time to share something of their reading lives in school. The practical and conceptual challenges involved, meant that only around 40% of the teachers explored the transformative potential of this personal/professional identity shift. Many conflated being a RT with simply being an enthusiastic teacher of reading. However, those that positioned themselves as fellow readers in the classroom community, who talked about their practices, preferences, habits and histories and explored the dynamic

between their own and the children's reading, developed into RTs: teachers who read and readers who teach (Commeyras *et al.*, 2004). The data suggest these extended professionals created more opportunities to develop children's metacognitive awareness as readers and built more overtly reciprocal reading communities in their classrooms.

Through reflecting upon their widening reading repertoires, the evidence suggests the RTs became more conscious of the influence of purpose and context on their reading preferences. They shared this with the children, developing activities which helped the young readers consider their own purposes and preferences. Additionally, the RTs in becoming more aware of their own reading habits, began to share these, triggering new conversations about the experience of being a reader. For example, one told her class that initially she had nearly given up on *Northern Lights* by Philip Pullman but had kept going because a friend had recommended it. As a consequence, the class discussed the role of recommendations, perseverance and stamina and set themselves new reading challenges.

The RTs became aware they used various comprehension strategies such as visualising, comparing, re-reading and questioning, and in order to develop children's metacognitive knowledge and comprehension sought to make their 'strategy thinking' public (Hall, Myers and Bowman, 1999). They also began to share their emotional responses to texts and perceived this too prompted new connections and more personal responses, *the children also became much more open in saying how a story made them feel - I suppose because I had modelled it* (Written reflection, teacher, Barking and Dagenham).

As the RTs began to recognise reader diversity and the role of agency in reading, many explored Daniel Pennac's (1994) list of the 'rights of a reader' with their classes, considering for example whether children could or even should be given the right to read anything and examining the value, practice and purpose of the right to re-read. The RTs modelled their own thoughts and practices and created activities in which the children reflected upon and often re-negotiated new rights as readers, for instance many classes asserted the right not to finish each book and despite some initial concerns, this did not result in constant book changing. The RTs engaged in reading and reflected upon themselves as readers at home and at school, and this appeared to prompt a realisation of its social nature, for example,

*I see reading differently now – I'm not sure why I didn't recognise
how social it is - I just thought of it as personal book reading...
that's all changed (Interview, teacher, Medway)*

Across the dataset, conversations about reading were seen to count; the project teachers began to realise the significance of children talking about texts and the majority commented upon the marked increase in time found to discuss reading in school. The RTs in particular described the wealth of spontaneous text talk that wove like a running thread through the school day. They took part in this as readers, but did not direct such occasions; rather they saw themselves as equal participants, 'with something to say and something to learn' (Teacher, interview, Medway)..

Reader relationships within and beyond school

It was anticipated that the project would strengthen relationships by drawing people together around reading within and beyond school. However, it became apparent that teacher-child or child-child reader relationships rarely existed. A significant cultural shift was necessary in order for this to develop, since teachers were largely unaware of children's reading lives at home and offered limited choice and agency in school. Teachers led and tightly framed virtually all reading events, most of which were structured around literacy objectives and there was very little, if any, time to talk about reading or being a reader.

The sessions that we have for reading at the moment are all teacher directed and this project is encouraging us to think about having sessions that – although they are structured – are not so teacher directed and teacher-led. Now this is a dramatic move for us.

(Interview, headteacher, Birmingham)

Initially, teachers chose to focus on building relationships within classrooms, and although by the end of the project many new relationships had been brokered, relatively few stretched beyond the school to encompass parents, families and librarians in innovative ways. However, new spaces, relationships and patterns of talk within school were observed. New spaces were created for children and teachers to engage in and talk about reading for pleasure. This concept of reading space related both to physical space and time space. The former were constructed, particularly in Key Stage 2, in the form of reading tents, sofas, corners and cafés encouraging different forms of interaction around self-chosen reading materials. The latter

emerged as time in the day when relationships were less structured, book talk was more free and collaborative and child-initiated text talk was often triggered.

Talk about texts between teachers and children began to occur spontaneously, first thing in the morning, at break, in independent reading time and on other occasions. Teachers also noted an increase in child-child talk about texts and the interview and observation transcripts affirm the presence of what the team described as ‘inside-text talk’ in informal contexts. This text talk was often child-initiated and involved pairs or small groups of children quoting extracts from a known text, making inter-textual connections and referring to the text as if they were positioned within it and knew it from the inside out. Such talk demonstrated that the learners had accumulated a history of shared reading experiences and were able to draw fluidly on their knowledge in common as they playfully engaged in motivated text talk together.

Many teachers also reflected upon the growing enthusiasm for book talk amongst staff, administrators and parent helpers who became engaged in swapping texts and making recommendations. These reading networks did not go unnoticed by children, as seen in the following exchange.

Yeah, she was talking to someone else the other day about a book she had read.

Did you know she’s been borrowing books from Miss Jones too?

I heard her talking to Miss Jones about reading – they’ve been reading the same books you know.

Oh, yeah, I know, they were talking about that Philippa Gregory one- the one that she's reading at the moment.

Yeah, I know, it's on the side now, by her laptop. (Interview, Year 4, Birmingham)

In relation to local library relationships none of the schools had links at the beginning of the project, but by the end of the year nearly a quarter had established regular visits, whilst half had created links through displays, staff meetings with library personnel and events held in libraries. There were some challenges for schools in promoting library membership for children, but there was also evidence of impact in particular contexts following library visits, for example:

When two of our more challenging Y6 pupils – they were boys actually- went missing after school we had search parties out... but they turned up safely having decided to drop in at the library on their way home. This link with the library is, we believe, starting to build patterns for life with many of our children and their parents.

(Written note, headteacher, Birmingham)

In concentrating on developing classroom communities of readers, teachers had less time to devote to building new relationships with parents and families. However, some successfully strengthened links by employing traditional approaches such as parent workshops. Others found that connecting to reading lives beyond school offered alternative ways to forge relationships with families, whilst also building new, shared knowledge and understanding about reading in the 21st century.

Children's reading for pleasure

The focus children selected for this study were identified as disaffected readers, and in line with the PIRLS findings (Twist *et al.*, 2007), were seen to be largely representative of their peer group in terms of a lack of desire to read. However, in the initial questionnaire, it appeared that the teachers' views of the children's attitudes were more negative than those of the children themselves. The practitioners were surprised to find that the young people reported reading all sorts of texts at home and wondered why these 'reluctant' readers demonstrated such a marked disaffection in school? Was it in response to the range of reading material available? A product of the way reading was perceived by their peers, framed by their teachers' practice? Or was it in response to assessment pressures or other factors?

Across the year however, not only did the majority of the focus children's attitudes improve considerably, their perceptions of their abilities and self-confidence as readers also improved. These findings were multiply evidenced in the children's questionnaires and interviews, the teachers' records and interviews and the observations. Additionally, the data reveal that that for a range of reasons, including more control and more time, the numbers the numbers of children choosing to read at home and at school increased significantly over the course of the year. In the baseline and final questionnaires, the children's explanations about why they read more at home or at school were categorised in terms of place, key reason(s) and tone. Common reasons at the end of the year, as to why they were reading more included having more choice or control over both what they read and when, they

also noted having more or more preferable resources and more time to read. The focus children's more positive reading mindsets and the increase in voluntary reading at home and at school also appeared to influence their attainment. As the OECD (2002) argues, the will influences the skill.

Although this study did not set out to demonstrate the impact of reading for pleasure on reading attainment, teachers were asked to record children's reading scores at the beginning and end of the project. It is evident, as shown in Figure 1, that the children's reading scores as measured by National Curriculum (NC) standardised tests, improved considerably: 27% made four or more sub-levels progress, and 59% made at least three sub-levels progress, when two sub-levels progress is seen to be the expected norm across the year. Even the 5% who did not make significant progress in terms of the NC attainment measure made other forms of progress, for example being more confident as readers and more positive and interested in reading. Whilst a number of other factors will have contributed to the children's increased attainment levels, the teachers attributed these gains to the project's impact, to their wider knowledge, changed pedagogic practice, access to diverse reading materials and the time and space made to profile reading for pleasure which, the teachers perceived, combined to influence the children's desire to read. .

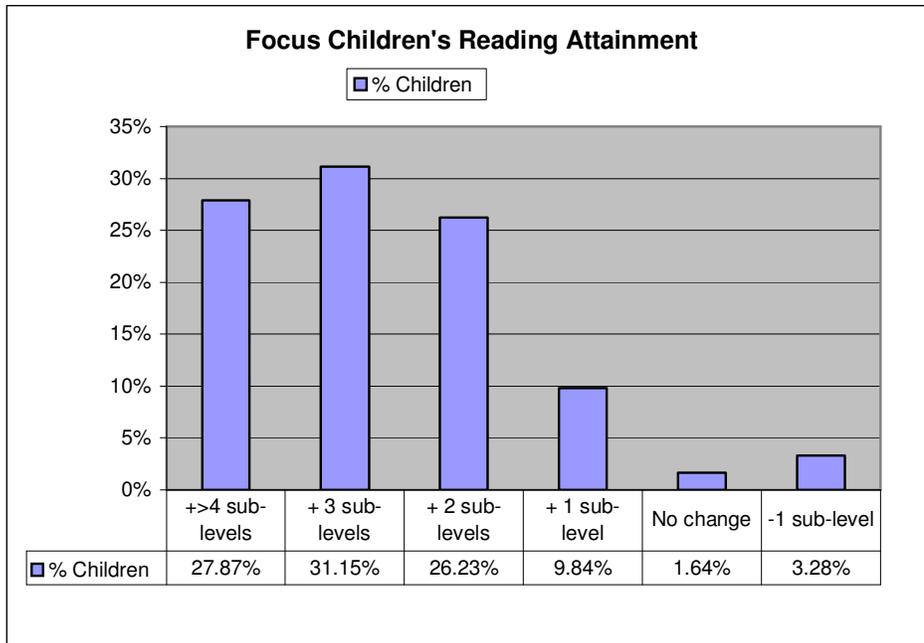


Figure 1 Data from teachers' records: Children's increases in reading attainment during the project year as shown by their NC levels.

Over time, and seemingly closely linked to the attitudinal data, additional evidence emerged of children's growth as readers. This indicated that the children developed:

- their knowledge of literature and specific authors, poets and illustrators
- an increased recognition of reading diversity
- as active participants in the shared social experience of reading
- increased awareness of their 'rights' as readers
- new perceptions of their teachers as fellow readers.

Evidence of each of these is not presented here, although the children's increased awareness of textual diversity is briefly exemplified. In the early interviews, the focus children only talked about books, but over time they brought, drew and acknowledged as acceptable in school, a much wider range of reading materials,

they also demonstrated a much broader view of reading. This more encompassing view enabled them to share their extensive reading repertoires, and re-perceive their everyday practices as part of being a reader. Various class and RT activities that increased choice and acknowledged children's preferences and practices also contributed to this widened conception, for example in one class, the teacher and children identified what they had read in 24 hours. An example included:

Christmas cards, signs on roads, instructions in swimming pools, direction signs, High School Musical book, TV programme listings, a menu, music, text messages, Christmas present tags, letters, crossword puzzles, instructions to play jacks, The Night Before Christmas book (Year 4 child, Kent)

Children frequently brought in favourite texts from home to read and share, and schools also purchased child-chosen comics, newspapers and magazines, validating these popular reading materials and helping children recognise diversity.

Conclusion

In this project, which sought to develop children's pleasure in reading, the pedagogic focus in local and national meetings broadly mirrored what teachers were encouraged to do for themselves as readers: to develop and share individual preferences and enthusiasms, to acknowledge family, community and cultural influences on reading, and to consider the pleasures of reading for enjoyment. These aspects of experience informed teachers' development and pedagogy throughout. It was evident that for some, their personal engagement and reflective involvement as adult readers helped them to re-consider the nature of reading and the experience of being a reader; this

had consequences for their professional roles as reading models and Reading Teachers. It appeared that a synergy of ongoing subject knowledge development and personal reflection opened up new pathways to effective pedagogy and more inclusive practices in the teaching of reading. The project demonstrates some of the ways in which teachers develop the craft of teaching, where both subject knowledge and pedagogic understanding mutually inform and empower professional practice (Brown and McIntyre, 1993). It also shows how teachers' professional knowledge can come into being through the interaction of subject knowledge, school knowledge, pedagogical understanding and experience (Banks, Leach and Moon 1999).

As the teachers reflected upon their own reading and began to find out more about the children's preferences and everyday practices beyond school, their conceptions of reading, initially somewhat book bound, broadened and they began to recognise textual and reader diversity more readily, re-framing their practice in response. The reading for pleasure pedagogy which developed, encompassed marked improvements in reading environments, read aloud provision, book talk and text recommendations, as well as quality time for independent reading. Such reading practices were frequently constructed and shaped as open-ended opportunities which profiled learner agency and choice, fostering spontaneous 'inside-text talk'. The subtle shift in the locus of control and the increased text talk which was engendered, particularly in the classrooms of the Reading Teachers, served to help create some classroom reading communities characterized by reciprocity and interaction. In these communities, reading for pleasure was recognised as a valuable activity in its own right and younger and older readers began to forge new relationships through sharing their reading lives.

Whilst the project *Teachers as Readers: Building Communities of Readers*, made a positive impact upon children's attainment, achievement and dispositions, and identified a coherent strategy to develop children's reading for pleasure by enhancing teachers' subject knowledge and pedagogic practice, it also revealed that reading for pleasure urgently requires a higher profile in primary education. It is clear that teachers need considerable support in order to find the time and space to widen their reading repertoires and develop an appropriately personalised reading curriculum which is both responsive and inclusive (Cremin *et al.*, 2008d). Furthermore, it is evident that there is still much work to be done to develop the concept of Reading Teachers, both in the primary and secondary sectors, and to build professional relationships based on new conceptions of reading in the 21st century. In order to support young readers it is also clear that new and more equivalent reading relationships need to be constructed with families and community members; the potential synergy between teachers', children's and parents' reading lives and practices deserves to be explored.

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