

Perceptions of reading for pleasure in boys - methodology



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Methodology.

Design approach

To address the challenge of boy's perceptions of reading for pleasure and referring to relevant literature, I decided to approach the research using triangulation so that cross examination of findings could be achieved within a relatively short space of time. A mixed method research approach was used to answer my research question so that in carrying out a questionnaire, follow up interviews and observations could take place to answer further underlying causes and questions. Cresswell et al. (1993) describes the mixed method approach as collecting, analysing and integrating both qualitative and quantitative data through a single or multiple studies. In doing this Kettley (2012) writes that it allows for the analysis of both patterns and causes of behaviour which can heighten the reliability of results. However, Laws (2003) challenges this view, stating that a variety different research perspectives may not match tidily as there could be contrast and conflict between findings. Laws (2003) recommends that a researcher should critically analyse any contrasts in findings so to make meaning from them.

- What researchers have used it- why is it good
- Triangulation- what is it (ive used this method but show some insight)

Sampling-300 words

Morse and Niehaus (2009) observe that sampling methods are intended to maximise the efficiency and validity of research results. This research involved using a purposeful sample, a technique which is widely used so that individuals or groups of participants are especially knowledgeable or

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experienced in ones' line of inquiry (Palinkas et al., 2013). For this research, two year three classes both from independent schools were chosen to explore the challenge of boys reading for pleasure. My main interest for this research was to see how perceptions of reading differed between classes which had members that were thought to read more for pleasure (such as in a mixed setting) in comparison to a class where the class was all boys and were stereotyped to be disinterested to read in their free time. These schools were chosen as the number of boys in each year group were similar and were of contrast in terms of single sex or mixed. Both schools were from the same county of Oxfordshire, and all members of staff in each year group were female.

The two groups of pupils were, although determined on school establishment type, not based on predetermined viewpoints on reading for pleasure. Patton (2002) highlights that the use of a purposeful sample is to capture major variations through the analysis of results rather than to identify a common core.

Due to the lack of single sex primary schools, a private mixed school was chosen as the contrast so that in terms of types of schools these were the same.

If I were to carry out this research again, I would involve more single sex and mixed schools in my research so that my results were not generalised

Observation

Observational data is an attractive form of data collection as it allows the researcher to gather evidence from real-life situations (Cohen et al., 2000). At the beginning of each week in the schools, I observed the children in their learning environment, concentrating especially on the daily routine and how English was taught. I chose to use observations as one of my research methods as it allows you direct access to social interactions which can be of focus to the research interest (Simpson and Tuson, 1995) whilst also viewing and analysing the physical, human, interactional and programme setting (Cohen et al., 2000). Using a semi-structured observation approach allowed me to immerse myself in the situation so that I could understand how reading for pleasure was promoted within the classroom and how children reacted to reading in the classroom environment. As I was comparing two different year groups from different schools, using the unstructured approach allowed for elements of the observational situation speak for themselves, rather than preparing an observation schedule (Cohen et al., 2000). Thomas (2009) states that although an unstructured observation may be easier in comparison to structured, it involves a great deal of preparatory work so that one is able to become part of the situation and requires sensitivity, thought and commitment to analyse the findings meaningfully. Punch (1998) highlights other difficulties stating that in terms of recording data, the flexible nature of observational methods, the recording of data can potentially become flexible also. To overcome this potential barrier, simply noted characteristics from each category in terms of the physical environment, the links to literacy in lessons, children's behaviour and finally teacher's strategies. All observational methods have advantages and

disadvantages, however with careful preparation, they can be powerful tools in gaining valuable research evidence.

Questionnaire

A questionnaire was decided to be used to find out the children's viewpoints on reading for pleasure, as well finding out what other hobbies they like to do in their free time and how often they engaged in reading for pleasure in their free time. Gray (2004) recommends that questionnaires are used when working with a large audience where standardised questions are required. Using questionnaires as a research method allows an analytical approach which can be used to explore relationships between variables. Gillham (2000) highlights that there are a few advantageous aspects of a questionnaires which has led to it being a popular choice of research method. Some of these factors include low cost, quick data retrieval and the fact that questionnaires can be sent to a large scale of people in little time. Gillham (2000) also highlights that anonymity can be assured whilst using a questionnaire however he also points out that on a small scale, researchers may be aware of characteristics of respondents and therefore able to identify answers based on a character profile.

Like many research methods, questionnaires have their drawbacks. Gillham (2000) advises that if a questionnaire is to be intrinsically motivating for participants, the length should range between four and six pages. Robson (2011) further highlights that the motivation of a participant could affect the data leading to a less valid result. To overcome these barriers, I chose 12 questions, many of which were closed questions which required little

thinking time. Two open questions were used to find out their view point on why they enjoyed or disliked reading, and what would motivate them to read more for pleasure. Due to the anonymity of questionnaires, researchers are unable to identify misleading or flippant answers, and if no further follow-up observations or interviews are involved, researchers may not be able to detect true representations. As I used two other research methods alongside questionnaires, I was able to identify a more valid representation of children and teacher's viewpoints in comparison to just using one method alone.

Using the same standardised questions which have been piloted and altered if necessary, it is possible to gain a high reliability of response (Robson, 2011). Prior to the research taking place, I emailed the questionnaires to both schools and tested the questions for clarity with an external 8-year-old boy so that the questions were clear and the vocabulary was age appropriate.

Interview

I decided to use semi structured interviews with both the teachers of year three from both schools and a selection of 4 boys who were deemed 'reluctant readers' by their teachers. This was so that my research could be further supported and a deeper understanding of both teachers and boys could be achieved. Arksey and Knight (1999) comment that the method of interviewing allows participants to express their feelings and perceptions of the world around them. This further agreed by Cohen and Marion (1997) highlighting that one of the fundamental reasons for using interviews as part of a research approach is to gather information on an individual's knowledge,

value and attitude which can be used in conjunction with other methods such as a survey. These interviews were undertaken after they had completed the questionnaire, so that I was able to gain more insight into what motivated boys to read in the classroom and at home, and what would motivate them further to read for pleasure. Although the questions for each student was the same, a semi-structured approach was used so that answers could be clarified further and I could gain a more transparent understanding. Using semi structured interviews when researching children's viewpoints is ideal, especially when used alongside child-friendly language and meeting in places in which the child is familiar with (Graham et al., 2012). Each class teacher was also questioned on which strategies they used to promote reading for pleasure. As half of the teachers were from the mixed school, the questions were worded slightly differently as I wanted to find out how they motivated the boys.

All of the interviews with each student was recorded rather than making notes on what was being said. This was so that I could concentrate on their body language and verbal response at the same time rather than concentrating primarily on just verbal feedback. It has been reported that taking notes during an interview can distract the interviewer from the focus of the conversation which can result in a loss of critical information (Britten, 1995) therefore using a high quality recorder alongside note taking on the participant's body language and emotions can significantly decrease the likelihood of error or misconceptions during data analysis (Fernandez and Griffiths, 2007). As the majority of the interviews were with the children, it was important that the children could see that I had their full attention, and

that by listening to what they had to say we were showing respect (McCrum and Hughes, 1998). A researcher needs to be aware that not all respondents may be willing to participate in an interview, and if uncomfortable about the interview being recorded may inhibit honest responses (Bell, 2010). Prior to each interview, the children were asked about whether they would be willing to take part, and were assured that all information would be purely for research purposes and kept anonymous.

Speer and Hutchby (2003) see this as an essential part of social sciences, so that a researcher can investigate impeccably what a participant is doing whilst they are being recorded.

Using semi structured interviews allows for further probing of opinions and view when it is ideal that individuals answers are expanded upon (Gray, 2004).

Ethics

Due to the nature of this research being held in two schools involving students, ethics was taken into consideration prior to any research taking place. It has been highlighted that children from an early age are able to speak for themselves on a range of experiences, their views and their surrounding environment (James, Jenks and Prout, 1998) therefore if they are to be directly involved in research, they should be made aware of what is to be expected and the option whether participate or not (Cohen and Emmanuel, 1998). Prior to any research taking place, I emailed both schools stating the aims of the research and what information I was wanting from each child. Once in the school, informal meeting were arranged with the

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Heads of school, so that no further consent from the children's parents was needed.

- UK Data Protection Act ? (1988)?

How could my sample have been better?

- Bigger sample size in terms of using more than one single sex school and one mixed school
- Using state schools as well as private schools

How was the quality of data?

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