

Student Teachers as Readers: Enthusiastic or just Lukewarm?



What kind of reader are you? Perhaps you have never considered your reading habits, why you read, what you prefer to read, or how often. Research shows that readers can be categorised in different ways that help us to understand their behaviour and perhaps change it (Applegate et al. 2014; Rimensberger 2014). We know that adult reading attitudes and practices influence the



children around them, so understanding how adults read could help us to ensure children become motivated, engaged readers. This is important because we know the lifelong personal and academic benefits that being an enthusiastic reader brings (OECD 2002). Cremin et al. (2014) previously researched the reading practices of primary phase Reading Teachers, those who read and explore the relationship between their own practices as readers and the practices offered in their classrooms. However, less is known about student teachers' reading for pleasure and how this might influence their future as teachers.

This blog is the first in a series of three arising from **Student Teachers as Readers (STaRs)**, a pilot research study into student teachers' reading identities, experiences and perspectives on pedagogy. The team includes Teresa Cremin, Helen Hendry, SarahJane Mukherjee and Dana Therova of The Open University partnered with Eve Bearne (independent consultant), Anna Harrison (University of Roehampton) and Roger McDonald (University of Greenwich). The project involved a literature review of 33 international studies conducted between 1980-2019 that focused on student teacher reading behaviours and identities. The research team then developed an online questionnaire that was piloted with 202 new student teachers from three English HEI providers at the beginning of the academic year 2020-2021.

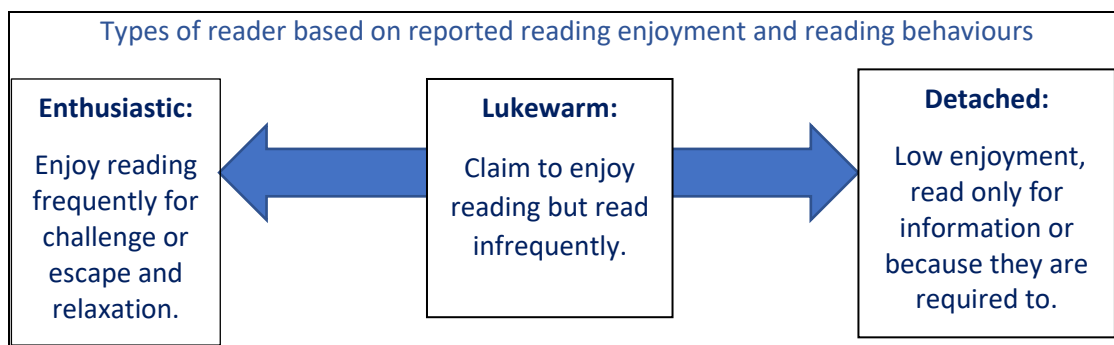


Fig 1 Student teacher reader typologies based on Applegate et al. 2014; Cox & Schaetzel 2007; Rimensberger 2014; Teksan 2019.

Previous research suggests that student teachers can be categorised on a continuum from enthusiastic to detached readers. Those who were **enthusiastic** about reading, viewed reading as intellectually stimulating or alternatively an opportunity to relax and unwind (Applegate et al. 2014). These readers experienced an emotional response to reading that they often described as joy or love (Cox & Schaetzel 2007; Teksan 2019). **Lukewarm** readers claimed to enjoy reading but read infrequently – blaming this on external factors such as lack of time or lack of interesting books to read (Applegate et al. 2014; Rimensberger 2014). **Detached** readers tended to read only as a ‘means to an end’ such as for academic purposes (Cox & Schaetzel 2007; Rimensberger 2014). They were either reluctant to read or disliked it so much that they tried to avoid reading in their personal lives wherever possible (Applegate et al. 2014).



[This Photo](#) by Unknown

A lack of frequent reading and enthusiasm about reading for pleasure in the student teacher population could have serious implication for these teachers of the future. Lukewarm and Detached readers cannot offer a positive reading role model to children and may have a limited repertoire of texts to recommend and share with young readers. In the range of previous studies reviewed for this pilot project, between 11% and 51% of pre-service teachers were ‘Detached’ readers.

Our initial findings suggest a similar picture for the students we surveyed as they began their teaching qualifications. Positively, 34% of these students reported enjoying reading very much, but 25% of the sample reported rarely spending time on reading for pleasure. Whilst this is a concern, all is not lost. This finding highlights the important work to be done by ITE partnerships, schools and HEIs to support student teachers during their training and challenge their attitude to reading for pleasure. Susan Gebhard (2006) writes powerfully about the way she was able to influence her student teachers through their positive ITE involvement:

‘... because students of any age can be positively impacted by their reading experiences, it is never too late to effect an attitude change.’

Look out for the next 2 blogs in the series that explore the influences on student teachers’ reading identities and how these might impact on their understanding of pedagogy for reading for pleasure.

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