CREATING LEARNING ENVIRONMENT THAT FOSTERS READING MOTIVATION OF MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENTS

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Abstract

This study investigated learning environment that fosters Grade 8 students' reading motivation. Descriptive research design and survey method were used. This study based on Guthrie and Wigfield's (2000) engagement model. To examine learning environment for reading, researcher made Learning Environment for Reading Questionnaires based on Motivations for Reading Questionnaire of Wigfield and Guthrie (1997) was used in this study. In addition, the Reading Motivation Questionnaires (RMQ) modified from the Motivations for Reading Questionnaire of Wigfield and Guthrie (1997) were applied to measure students' reading motivation in this study. Findings from questionnaire surveys revealed that physical learning environment was the best for reading. According to the descriptive statistics, this result showed that the students were high curious in reading among ten scales of reading motivations. Again, *t*-test showed that students' reading motivations were significantly gender difference. This study was found that there was a significant relationship between learning environment for reading and students' reading motivation ($r = .483$, $p < .01$).The ANOVA results stated that there were significantly differences in learning environments that foster students' reading motivation among four types of schools. Tukey HSD results also indicated that learning environments of high schools were significantly different from those of middle schools and monastic schools. The results from this study showed that learning environment is the salient factor that influences students' reading motivation. Therefore, according to the results of the present study, it can be to create learning environment that fosters students' reading motivation in this study.

Keywords: Learning environment, reading motivations

Introduction

The classroom is the basic unit of the organization of the educational system. The classroom has become an important place for educational research because most learning takes place there. According to Wilson (1996), learning environments are defined as the social, physical, psychological, and pedagogical contexts in which learning occurs and which affect student achievement and attitudes. A learning environment is a combination of social and physical qualities that create the classroom experiences. It includes classroom management procedures, as well as the way the space is organized, furnished and maintained.

Motivation is the key role in learning (Edmunds & Bauserman, 2006). According to Guthrie & Wigfield (2000), motivation is what activates behavior. There is a vast amount research that supports the idea that motivation plays a major role in learning (Deci & Ryan, 1985).

Motivation for reading is an important contributor to students' reading achievement and school success. Motivation is the learners' willingness to engage in and persist at a task. Learning environment is an important factor that affects students' motivation to read. Kamil's (2003) synthesis of research on adolescent literacy found that motivation is one concept that continually surfaces as an important focus in reading and learning to read, particularly for adolescents.

Furthermore, reading researchers have expressed about reading attitudes, reading behaviour, and reading motivation. Reading motivation is a very important aspect of a student's reading process. Reading motivation is the motivational drive to read, an area of interest in the

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field of education (Internet source). According to Guthrie and Wigfield (1997), reading motivation is defined as the individual's personal goals, values, and beliefs with regard to the topics, process, and outcomes of reading. It is then one's goals, values, and beliefs that determine the degree to which one is motivated to read. Moreover, the closer the literacy activities match students' motivational beliefs, values, needs and goals, the more willing students will be to read.

Recent studies in the field of educational psychology, science education and learning environment has also emphasized the importance of the relations between students' learning environment and their motivation (Ben Ari, 2003; Jackson & Davis, 2000; Stipek, 2002, cited in Arisoy, 2007).

People who engage in reading for pleasure are motivated to read, but someone who is not reading for enjoyment is not motivated to read. Reading takes a large amount of effort, but if students are without the motivation to read, they will put little effort into the task of reading (Guthrie et al., 2004). According to Guthrie et al. (2004), a student who is motivated to read will read factor of whether we choose activities to do, or not do certain activities. This means that the more motivated a student is, the more reading the student will do.

There is a widely reported trend that middle school students are less intrinsically motivated for reading than elementary students are. Gottfried (1985) showed that as students moved from Grade 4 to Grade 7, their intrinsic motivation for reading declined. Research has shown decline in motivation and performance for many children as they move from elementary school into middle school (Eccles & Midgley, 1999).

In middle school, students are more oriented to grades, competition, and their own competence than elementary students are. The more a student reads, the more the student comprehends, which is why it is so important to increase students' reading motivation. To improve students' motivation to read in middle school, we need to create learning environment that fosters reading motivation for middle school students. Therefore, this study will be based on Guthrie and Wigfield's (2000) engagement model of reading development.

Purpose of the Study

The main aim of the study is to study learning environment that fosters reading motivation of middle school students. The specific objectives of this study are:

1. To investigate learning environment that fosters reading motivation of Grade 8 students.
2. To explore the effect of learning environment on students' reading motivation.
3. To investigate Grade 8 students' reading motivation.
4. To compare the differences between males' and females' reading motivation.
5. To compare learning environments that foster reading motivation of Grade 8 by schools.

Related Literature

Most of the students are not interested in reading. It is salient task a teacher faces. Classrooms may be filled with students who never want to read. Thus, it needs to motivate students, especially students who are not interested in reading, and to work to read each and every student (Gambrell, 1996). Motivation to read is essential in students' success throughout their education and so the types of reading activities they enjoy must be identified. Good reading skills and habits are essential for today's students. To possess these skills and habits, need to be motivated each and every student. High motivation to read is key to a successful reader.

Theoretical Framework

Both the theoretical discussion on the relevance and importance of socio-affective factors in reading development and the confirmation of a relationship between students' social and affective reading experiences on one hand, and the literacy levels or reading proficiency on the other, point towards a necessity for a socio-affective approach in reading instruction. In relation to this, Guthrie and Wigfield's (2000) model, which focuses on *engagement* through motivation to develop reading ability, is of relevance and is presented and explained below. The model is presented below and is followed by discussions of the instructional framework.

Learning goals. This instructional technique refers to the purpose for learning and is linked to performance and learning goal theory. Whereas performance goals are based on outperforming others, learning goals are based on dedication to understanding and learning.

Reward-world involvement. This technique can be referred to as authentic interactions. They refer to connections between academic curricula and the personal experiences of students. Reading instruction embedded within intrinsically motivating activities that relate to students' personal experiences, such as collecting information, observing and reporting, led to increases in reading motivation and strategy use.

Autonomy support. Students' independence and responsibility is the focus of this technique. Its application to reading involves the teacher's guidance in leading students to make responsible choices in reading. Based on the convention that choice is motivating, the technique develops independence and affords students control over topics, themes and reading materials, with teacher support.

Interesting texts. The use of interesting texts is based on the assumption that texts that are personally significant and that meet the cognitive competence of students would be motivating, and consequently develop comprehension abilities. In addition, interesting texts assist in focusing reading instruction on word recognition and word fluency.

Strategy instruction. This technique involves direct instruction of reading and comprehension strategies such as summarising, paraphrasing and synthesising through teacher modelling.

Collaboration. Social collaboration in the classroom was found to promote intrinsic motivation for reading and learning, and to maintain active learning over an extended period of time.

Praise and rewards. Praise and rewards could be in the form of marks, encouraging comments, and book awards. Students can become extrinsically motivated and depend on performance goals, which involve the use of temporal and surface strategies such as memorisation and guessing. That is, praise should be sincere, specific and sufficient and should be properly given for praiseworthy success in the manner preferred by the learner.

Evaluation. Evaluation in the form of tests, assignments and projects should reflect students' ownership and provide motivation for reading. Evaluations that are purely teacher centred are controlling and may cause anxiety and diminish intrinsic motivation, which may curtail conceptual learning. Personalized evaluations may be difficult to administer but these contribute towards instilling motivations for reading.

Teacher involvement. The teacher's knowledge of individual students; care about their progress; and pedagogical understanding of how to foster their active participation (Guthrie & Wigfield, 2000) are important avenues for increasing students' motivation and fostering engagement. Bus

(2001, cited in Boakye, 2011) showed that children who interacted positively with their parents and received parents' attention had positive attitudes towards learning, and subsequently achieved success in learning. When students feel that significant adults such as parents and teachers are involved in their learning, they become motivated and strive towards success in learning.

Struggling Readers in Middle School

In elementary level, students have to learn the lessons with a single teacher and a relatively child-centered. In middle level, they have to learn many complex things. Moreover, they also face difficulties with their lessons, and struggle them to understand clearly, especially in reading. Most fail to understand much of what they read. Moreover, Bintz (1997, cited in Guthrie & Davis, 2003) suggested that many middle school students struggle with reading because they lack interest in the kinds of reading they are typically required to do in school, such as textbooks and certain teacher selected texts.

Struggling readers are notably unmotivated. They are especially likely to have low confidence in their reading (Wigfield et al., 1998, cited in Guthrie & Davis, 2003). These students are likely to lack confidence in their reading capability; struggling readers in the middle school are more likely to be extrinsically motivated than intrinsically motivated.

Many middle school students who are low achievers in reading feel socially marginalized. Lower achievers in middle school are likely to feel disrespected and uncomfortable in school. They do not enjoy a sense of belonging in the school. These struggling students are less eager to form positive relationships in school and are less concerned with close friendships and peer acceptance than higher achieving students (Anderman, 1999, cited in Guthrie & Davis, 2003). All of these qualities struggling readers point to disengagement.

Therefore, struggling students are more likely to be motivated if their learning environment offers them choices, instruction and learning topic that are relevant to their lives, and scaffolded learning activities that encourage them with to the content, with texts, with other students and with the world.

Design and Procedure

Sampling: The samples chosen for the present study consisted of 600 Grade 8 students: male (n=289) and female (n=311) in 2013-2014 academic year. A simple random sampling technique was used in selecting students for the study. The participants for the study were chosen from 3 high schools, 1 branch high school, 2 middle schools, 3 monastic schools located in Sagaing Township in Sagaing Region,

Method: In this study, descriptive research design and survey method were used. Questionnaires were used to elicit information on students' reading motivation and learning environment for reading through a descriptive survey. For the quantitative study, the Reading Motivation Questionnaires (MRQ) (40 items) which intended to assess students' reading motivation which is modified from the questionnaires of Wigfield and Guthrie (1997) were used. To examine learning environment that fosters students' reading motivation, 15 items Learning Environment for Reading Questionnaires (LERQ) were used by the researcher.

Learning Environment for Reading Questionnaires: A researcher-made learning environment for reading questionnaire based on Motivations for Reading Questionnaire of Wig field and Guthrie (1997) was used to examine how learning environment has the effect on Grade 8

students' reading motivation. The learning environment for reading questionnaires were based on frequencies ranging always, frequently, sometimes, seldom, never respectively. The scoring was based on 5 (always) to 1 (never). After doing the pilot study, the reliability coefficient (Cronbach's Alpha) of the Learning Environment for Reading Questionnaires was .555.

Reading Motivation Questionnaires (MRQ): The Reading Motivation Questionnaires (MRQ) were modified from the questionnaires designed by Wigfield and Guthrie (1997). This scale included 40 statements that were designed by 10 dimensions (Reading Efficacy, Reading Challenge, Reading Curiosity, Reading Involvement, Reading Work Avoidance, Competition in Reading, Recognition for Reading, Reading for Grades, Social Reasons for Reading and Compliance).

With experts' reviews and analysis of pilot study, the Reading Motivation Questionnaires (MRQ) used in this study. The MRQ consisted of 40 items.

Data Collection: The data were collected by using the Reading Motivation Questionnaires (MRQ) and researcher-made learning environment for reading questionnaires (LERQ). Respondents were administered to complete MRQ and LERQ. They were given 45 minutes. In addition, the questionnaires were handed out to students during regular class hours in their classroom. Before completing the questionnaires, researcher explained respondents about instruction on how to answer the questionnaires and told them to ask questions if they do not have clarity to fill out. Again, the researcher assured to the students to answer the questionnaires honestly and quietly and not to discuss each other about the answer.

Data Analysis and Findings

An Analysis of Learning Environment on Students' Reading Motivation

Firstly, the descriptive results for all 600 respondents were presented in Table (1). The mean and standard deviation of the whole sample were 56.81 and 7.146. As described in Table (1), the mean scores across items (item 1 to 5) for social learning environment was 18.64, for physical learning environment (item 6 to 10) was 20.57 and for pedagogical learning environment (item 11 to 15) was 17.60.

Table 1 Descriptive Statistics for Learning Environment on Students' Reading Motivation

No.	Variables	*N*	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
1	**Social Learning Environment**	600	7	25	18.64	3.259
2	**Physical Learning Environment**	600	7	25	20.57	3.011
3	**Pedagogical Learning Environment**	600	8	25	17.60	3.130
	Total	600	26	75	56.81	7.146

As presented in Table (1), physical learning environment was the best among three scales (Mean=20.57) and the lowest standard deviation (3.011). This result stated that the students had better physical learning environment for reading than social learning environment and pedagogical learning environment. Again, when comparing the rest two means, it was found that social leaning environment was better for students reading motivation than pedagogical learning environment.

Analysis of Students' Reading Motivation

Table 2 Descriptive Statistics for Students' Reading Motivation

Variables	*N*	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Reading Efficacy	600	9	20	15.74	2.409
Reading Challenge	600	4	20	15.34	2.676
Reading Curiosity	600	7	20	17.27	2.122
Reading Involvement	600	5	20	15.23	2.799
Reading Work Avoidance	600	4	20	13.65	3.286
Competition in Reading	600	5	20	15.67	2.806
Recognition for Reading	600	5	20	16.78	2.310
Reading for Grades	600	7	20	16.12	2.327
Social Reasons for Reading	600	4	20	14.92	3.115
Compliance	600	4	20	15.20	3.322
Total	600	86	199	155.93	16.379

As shown in Table (2), reading curiosity was the highest among ten scales (Mean=17.27) and the lowest standard deviation (2.122). This result showed that the students had high curiosity in reading. Moreover, among 10 scales, it can be clearly seen that the mean score of reading work avoidance (13.65) was the lowest. It was found that the students were low in the avoidance of work in reading.

Mean Comparison of Reading Motivation by Gender

Moreover, to find out gender differences in reading motivation, descriptive statistics was conducted to assess the mean scores and standard deviations of the male and female students' reading motivation. The means and standard deviations of the male and female students' reading motivation were shown in the following Table (3).

Table 3 Group Statistics for Male and Female Students' Reading Motivation

Variable	Gender	*N*	Mean	Std. Deviation	Mean Difference
Reading Motivations	**Male**	289	153.87	15.885	-3.97
	Female	311	157.84	16.624	

This table showed that the results of descriptive statistics for male and female students' reading motivation were stated differently. When comparing the overall means of male and female students' reading motivation, this result revealed that females were higher than males. To sum up, it was found that females read more than males.

Again, in order to find out the differences between male and female students' reading motivation, t-test was made. The result was presented in Table (4).

Table 4 The Result of *t*-test for Reading Motivation by Gender

No.	Variables	Gender	*t*	*df*	*p*	Mean Difference
1	**Reading Efficacy**	**Male**	-2.156	598	0.031	-0.423
		Female				
2	**Reading Challenge**	**Male**	-1.092	598	0.275	-0.239
		Female				
3	**Reading Curiosity**	**Male**	-0.829	598	0.407	-0.144
		Female				
4	**Reading Involvement**	**Male**	0.803	598	0.422	0.184
		Female				
5	**Reading Work Avoidance**	**Male**	-1.877	598	0.061	-0.503
		Female				
6	**Competition in Reading**	**Male**	-1.167	598	0.244	-0.268
		Female				
7	**Recognition for Reading**	**Male**	-3.005	598	0.003	-0.563
		Female				
8	**Reading for Grades**	**Male**	-2.778	598	0.006	-0.525
		Female				
9	**Social Reasons for Reading**	**Male**	-4.942	598	0.000	-1.234
		Female				
10	**Compliance**	**Male**	0.929	598	0.053	-0.252
		Female				
	Total	**Male**	-2.984	598	0.003	-3.967
		Female				

According to the result of *t*-test, there were no significant differences in reading challenge, reading curiosity, reading involvement, competition in reading, reading work avoidance, and compliance by gender. But, significant differences were found in reading efficacy, recognition for reading, reading for grades, and social reasons for reading. To be specific, the result of t-test for students' reading motivations revealed that there was significantly gender difference.

Relationship between Learning Environment and Students' Reading Motivation

After examining students' learning environment for reading and reading motivation, it was continued to investigate the relationship between learning environment and students' reading motivation. Pearson-Product moment correlation conducted the results as shown in Table (5).

Table 5 Relationship between Learning Environment and Students' Reading Motivation

Variables	Reading Motivations	Learning Environments
Learning Environments	1	.483** 0
Reading Motivations	.483** 0	1

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The result of Table (5) indicated that learning environment for reading was correlated significantly with students' reading motivation (r=.483, p< .01). The degree of correlation was good. This result showed that there was a significant relationship between learning environment for reading and students' reading motivation. Thus, it can be concluded that learning environment for reading had the effect on students' reading motivation.

The Differences in Learning Environments that Foster Students Reading Motivation of by Schools

The learning environments for reading that foster students' reading motivation were also investigated according to the school types. By using descriptive analyses, the mean and standard deviation of learning environments for reading by school types were clearly described in the following Table (6).

Table 6 Mean and Standard Deviation for Learning Environments for Reading that Foster Students' Reading Motivation by School Types

No.	Variables	*N*	Mean	Std. Deviation
1	**High Schools**	296	57.86	6.854
2	**Branch of High Schools**	67	57.42	5.957
3	**Middle Schools**	129	55.11	7.898
4	**Monastic Schools**	108	55.61	7.188
	Total	600	56.81	7.146

Table (6) stated that the mean scores of high schools were the highest (Mean=57.86) and that of middle schools were the lowest (Mean=55.11) on learning environments for reading among school types. This meant that learning environments of high schools were the best for reading among four types of schools. But, learning environments of middle schools were the lowest mean scores for reading compared to other school types.

Table 7 The Results of ANOVA in the Differences in Learning Environments that Foster Students' Reading Motivation by Different Schools.

Variable		Sum of Squares	*df*	Mean Square	*F*	Sig.
Learning Environments	Between Groups	878.607	3	292.869	5.875	0.001
	Within Groups	29712.49	596	49.853		
	Total	**30591.09**	**599**			

Again, it was also required to compute ANOVA for finding out whether the three components of learning environments differ significantly on students' reading motivation among four types of schools. The results were described in the following Table (8).

Table 8 The Results of ANOVA for Three Categories of Learning Environments for Reading on Students Reading Motivation among Four Types of Schools

Variables		Sum of Squares	*df*	Mean Square	*F*	Sig.
Social Learning Environment	Between Groups	205.676	3	68.559	6.639	.000
	Within Groups	6154.842	596	10.327		
	Total	**6360.518**	**599**			
Physical Learning Environment	Between Groups	120.854	3	40.285	4.523	0.004
	Within Groups	5308.064	596	8.906		
	Total	**5428.918**	**599**			
Pedagogical Learning Environment	Between Groups	168.869	3	56.29	5.887	0.001
	Within Groups	5698.724	596	9.562		
	Total	**5867.593**	**599**			

According to the ANOVA results of the above Table (8), it can be clearly seen that three categories (social learning environment, physical learning environment, and pedagogical learning environment) of learning environments for reading were four types of schools. In order to get more detailed information of which pairs of schools had significantly differences among four types of schools; Post-Hoc Test was computed by Tukey HSD method. The results were shown in Table (9).

Table 9 The Result of Tukey for Learning Environments among Four Types of Schools

Variable	(I) school	(J) school	Mean Difference (I-J)	Sig.
Learning Environments	High Schools	Branch of High School	0.44	0.967
		Middle Schools	2.750*	0.001
		Monastic Schools	2.247*	0.025
	Branch of High School	High Schools	-0.44	0.967
		Middle Schools	2.309	0.132
		Monastic Schools	1.807	0.354
	Middle Schools	High Schools	-2.750*	0.001
		Branch of High School	-2.309	0.132
		Monastic Schools	-0.503	0.948
	Monastic Schools	High Schools	-2.247*	0.025
		Branch of High School	-1.807	0.354
		Middle Schools	0.503	0.948

*. The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

As shown in Table (9), it can be clearly seen that learning environments of high schools were different in those of the rest others. Moreover, it was found that between high schools and middle schools, and high schools and monastic schools. But, learning environments of branch of high school was no significant difference with those of the rest three schools. In addition, it was also found that there were no significant differences between learning environments from middle schools and monastic schools. Therefore, it was obvious that learning environments of the different types of schools or the locality affects students' reading motivation.

Summary of the Research Study and Conclusion of the Results

The responses in learning environment for reading questionnaires based on frequencies (always, frequently, sometimes, seldom, never) showed that the mean score of Grade 8 students revealed that their learning environment for reading was satisfactory. It implied that learning environment were highly associated with students' reading. According to the descriptive statistics, physical learning environment was the best for students' reading. Moreover, social learning environment was better for students' reading than pedagogical learning environment compared to mean scores.

In the present study, the result showed that the students had high curiosity in reading because the mean scores of Grade 8 students' curiosity in reading was 17.27 and the lowest standard deviation (2.122) as compared to the other mean scores. It was also found that students were low to avoid the work of reading because the mean score of reading work avoidance (13.65) was the lowest.

Gender Differences. Based on the mean comparison for reading motivation by gender, the group statistics showed that the mean scores of male and female students' reading motivation were 153.87 and 157.84. Therefore, it can be clearly seen that there were slight differences in mean scores by gender in reading motivation. Again, in order to know the gender differences in reading motivation, *t*-test was used. The result of t-test by gender revealed that there was significant difference on reading motivations and it was significant at 0.05 level. This present study found that females read more than males.

The Relationship between Learning Environment and Reading Motivation.

Continuously, Pearson correlation analyses showed that learning environments for reading had the significant relationship with students' reading motivation ($r=.483$, $p < .01$). Thus, there was a positive relationship between learning environments for reading and students' reading motivation. Above reasons, it can be concluded that learning environments for reading had the effect on students' reading motivation.

School Differences. By using descriptive analyses, the mean and standard deviation of learning environments for reading by school types. These results stated that learning environments of high schools were the best for reading among four types of schools. However, learning environments of middle schools were the lowest mean scores for reading compared to other school types. The ANOVA result showed that there were significant differences in learning environments among four types of schools at 0.05 level. This, it can be said that learning environments played an important role in reading education to foster Grade 8 students reading motivation. Learning environments were also vital predictors to motivate students' reading.

According to the Tukey HSD results, it was interestingly found that learning environments of high schools were significantly difference and better to promote students' reading motivation than learning environments of middle schools and monastic schools. So, the learning environments of the types of schools need to be considered for fostering students' reading motivation.

Conclusion

The classroom learning environment is an important place for educational research because most learning takes place there. Leaning environment researches give information and knowledge about what goes on in school settings beyond the notation of student achievement. Learning environment researchers have conducted in many areas and different forms of classroom environments (e.g. technology enhanced learning environment, science-learning environment), including especially in the area of reading. In the present study, the researcher focused on learning environment that fosters reading motivation. The researcher conducted the present study with quantitative approaches. Moreover, interviews, observation, standardized test assessment by the researcher, and qualitative research method should also be conducted.

Next studies should pay attention to students at various grades in different areas. Similarly, this study intended only for middle schools. Therefore, future studies should do primary schools, high schools, college levels and university levels in different areas and places.

To sum up, reading is essential to learning. It is a tool of education that is utilized from the elementary grade through adulthood into old age, as the individual continues his formal or informal education. Many adults do not appreciate the fact that their skill in reading has been acquired - that were not born able to read and comprehend what they read (Crow & Crow, 1979). Gradually, they become struggling readers and face many difficulties in reading. Therefore, they need to motivate. Interestingly, reading requires motivation (Anderson & Lapp, 1988). That is, motivation is very important in reading environment. Anyhow, one needs to motivate what, why, when and how to do anything. So, this study will contribute to an important role in the area of the teaching-learning process.

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