


Chapter 19

“Nobody Really Does the Reading”: Rethinking Reading Accountability Using Technology Tools

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ABSTRACT

Although quizzes and written summaries are more traditional ways to hold students accountable for reading, more than two thirds of college students report not completing assigned readings, references show. In this mixed-methods study, the researchers explored whether various technology strategies motivated undergraduate literacy education students to not only read, but also learn from these assigned texts. Collecting survey data from our literacy preparation courses, the authors examined how the students perceived these strategies.

INTRODUCTION

Instructors assign college students reading because “one of the most efficient ways of learning essential content in the curriculum is through reading” (Swanson & Wexler, 2017, p. 161). However, a mere 20- 30% of undergraduate students complete required readings (Berry, Cook, Hill & Stevens, 2011 & Hobson, 2004). This is an alarming statistic under any circumstances, but in a technology-infused era,

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where students spend up to six hours a day engaged in online activities, it is crucial that college students are thoughtful and evaluative consumers of texts (Galanek, Gierdowski, & Brooks, 2018).

Further, although failure to read required course materials is problematic across a variety of subjects, the importance of learning from course readings is crucial for future elementary educators because they will be charged with teaching students to read and learn from texts. The problem here is two-fold. If teachers are not completing assigned readings in literacy preparation courses designed to teach students how to read, future teachers may not gain the necessary skill set they are entrusted to teach their students: how to comprehend and learn from texts. Additionally, future teachers may miss out on necessary content about teaching students to read because they themselves are unable or unmotivated to learn from texts.

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Why Students Fail to Complete the Reading

While anecdotal knowledge may tell us that students are not completing course readings at an acceptable level, there are numerous studies that indicate that students are less likely to see reading as an essential component for the acquisition of knowledge. These attitudes are bolstered by long term studies that show reading compliance has dropped over the years (Bruchfield & Sappington, 2000). This trend is exacerbated by the tendency of students to exaggerate the amount they read when questioned about reading compliance (Sappington, Kinsey, & Munsayac, 2002).

In light of inaccurate self-reporting it is worth noting that intrinsic reading motivation varies across disciplines and academic backgrounds, with students that take upper level courses and those that major in “reading heavy” disciplines (such as the humanities) reporting higher internal motivation to read than other disciplines (Wang and Ribera, 2016; St Clair-Thompson, Graham, & Marsham, 2018). Adding to all of these factors, there is an apparent divergence between professors and students on the value of reading for achievement (Howard, Gorzycki, Desa, & Allen, 2018). Students often view course reading as a supplemental activity, while professors view reading as an essential method for constructing knowledge (Howard et al, 2018).

The reasons why students do not complete the readings are numerous, ranging from lack of motivation to language deficits that prevent students from learning appropriately from texts (Lei et al., 2010; Ryan, 2006; Berry, Cook, Hill, & Stevens, 2010; St Clair-Thompson, Graham, & Marsham, 2018; Leamson, 1999; St Clair-Thompson, Graham, & Marsham, 2018; Brost & Bradley, 2006). The high cost of textbooks is another contributing factor in student participation in course reading (Martin et al., 2017; Sharma, Van Hoof, and Ramasay, 2013). Time management, or lack thereof, also impacts students’ ability to complete the course readings (Sharma, Van Hoof, and Ramsay, 2019). For example, Sharma, Van Hoof, and Ramsay (2019) found that students that allotted specific time to reading and other academic activities had a higher reading compliance rate. Additionally, many college students have not developed metacognitive knowledge about reading strategies they need to read and recall information (Pintrich, 2002).

Compounding these issues, students often fail to see the importance of learning from texts. Marek and Christopher (2011) found students thought they would find less enjoyment and learn much less from a course where textbook reading was required to be completed prior to class. In their study, a large segment of their students were resistant to the idea that they were responsible for their own intellectual development. Similarly, students are not motivated to read if they have the perception that they can achieve good

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