English Literature texts chosen for in-school study: How congruent are teachers' text choices and

adolescent students' reading interests?

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

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Abstract

This study explored the congruence between the teachers' texts choices and adolescent students' reading interests at five schools in the St. George East education district. Interviews were conducted with teachers and students to gather data for this study. The findings of this study revealed that there is a great gap between the English Literature texts chosen for in-school study and the students' reading interests at the lower secondary school level. The results from this research is in keeping with the literature which states that students' reading interests are not being reflected in the English Literature texts chosen for in-school study.

CHAPTER 1

English Literature texts chosen for in-school study: How congruent are teachers' text choices and adolescent students' reading interests?

Literacy liberates us from dependence on received wisdom and allows us to find and weigh the evidence ourselves (Ippolito et al, 2008). In pursuit of this enlightenment, adolescents have to be motivated to read. Reading is a form of communication which is undoubtedly an essential life skill in the continuous quest to improve one's level of knowledge or skill set. Teachers are faced with the challenge of choosing English Literature texts that aptly capture the majority of their students' reading interests. Thus they need to be aware of their students' interests so they can engage their students in the reading material, this is especially critical at the lower secondary school level as it is at this stage that the adolescents' reading have been proven to be declined.

Motivation is one critical concept that continually surfaces as an important factor in reading, particularly for adolescents and is often viewed as one of the determiners of adolescent literacy (Kamil, 2003). This is not to be confused with interest or attitude. According to Wigfield and Guthrie (2000), one could have an interest in reading, but nevertheless choose not to read. Thus, motivation is a crucial underlying factor that disposes one to read or not. Another important factor in sustaining adolescent reading is that of engagement. These factors are essential for teachers to be cognizant of to determine if their choice of English Literature texts are indeed congruent with their students' reading interests.

Unfortunately, adolescents today are not actively engaged in reading. Are their preferred choices taken into consideration by their teachers? This is a crucial question as it may highlight

a potential divergence between the students' reading interest and the reading expectations of the school (Harper, 2005). Adolescent aliteracy is on the rise and educators must tap into their adolescent students' interests in order to motivate them to read (Deopker & Ortlieb, 2011).

Wigfield (2000) postulated that engaged readers coordinate their strategies and knowledge (cognition) within a community of literacy (social) in order to fulfill their personal goals, desires and intentions (motivation). This means that educators have to always be remember that the students enter the classroom already filled with information from their own personal experiences and it is the challenge for the teachers to draw connections between what the students are familiar with to the content of the literature being taught in schools if they are expected to be motivated to read. Taylor (2005) emphasized that what children bring to school from home is a key ingredient in understanding their interests.

This is emphasized in the PIRLS Assessment Framework (2011), which states that reading is important for young readers to develop the ability to understand and use the written language forms required by society and/or valued by the individual; they should also construct meaning from a variety of texts and as they read to learn, they can participate in communities of readers not only in the school environment but in everyday life. Thus any student who is not interested or actively engaged in reading should be of great concern to not only those in the education system but to the entire society.

Teachers' choice of texts for reading in schools will have a great effect on the level of interest in reading in the classroom. Teachers need to be mindful of their students' reading interests and incorporate those reading material into the texts chosen for in-school study. However, Rush and Scherff (2013) aptly noted that there are a host of external and internal

forces that affect what teachers teach and externally, they are guided by the designated reading lists which unfortunately rarely change. Morgan and Wagner (2013) observed that teachers also have a traditional mindset of privileging canonical texts which drastically limits the choices students are offered as readers.

The issue of gender is prevalent in the classroom setting. Research has suggested that boys devote less time to reading than girls and their interests should be of concern to educators to engage the male students to read (Farris et al, 2009). However, Martino (2001) was more inclusive when he suggested that the effects of certain texts and reading practices which present characters and situations that both boys and girls can relate to in their everyday lives need should be explored.

Literature is a means by which to think, not a medium through which we are told what to think. Consequently Hodges (2010) posited that reading Literature is both an aesthetic and an intellectual pursuit through which students should be actively engaged in the culture of reading and not just be merely exposed to Literature. Most students may not be interested in the English Literature texts that have been selected for them to read and this may lead to their disinterest in reading. The texts used in schools for adolescent students need to pique the students' interest. This would lead to positive attitudes towards reading and students being motivated to become life-long readers. Ivey and Broaddus (2001) emphasized that reading materials selected with the students in mind was the greatest factor in motivating students to read in school.

Background

Interest in reading material will affect the level of students' engagement and their motivation to become life-long learners; the level of reading literacy among citizens is a universal concern (TTNC, 2012). There are numerous international, regional as well as local organizations that try to elevate the standard of literacy.

In the United States of America one critical study explored the various ways three secondary schools influenced their students' reading development. The findings of this study revealed that engagement and achievement were noticeably higher with students who were given a choice of their reading material as they were more inclined to read literature that they were personally interested in rather than being forced to read a text chosen for an entire class (Hodges, 2010). It is a common practice to choose texts that the teachers think will appeal to the majority of the students in the classes and despite varying backgrounds, levels of maturity and gender, they are all expected to read and show interest in the given texts. Hence, limiting students' reading material in English Literature classes can deter students from reading, their motivation and engagement would be lessened and the phenomenon of the declining levels of reading at the lower secondary school levels would continue.

Regionally there are several initiatives to encourage adolescents to read. One organization, Caribbean Literacy and School Support (CLASS) through its program Hands is focused on raising the literacy level of Caribbean children by assisting schools and libraries in Caribbean communities. According to CLASS (2012) more than 13,000 students have benefited from this program as approximately 18,362 books were distributed to 68 schools in Anguilla, Antigua, Dominica, Grenada, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Lucia, and St. Vincent and the Grenadines.

CLASS has recognized that the effect of "seeing themselves" in the books is particularly powerful for young readers and they try to provide more books about life in the Caribbean.

This initiative is essential to allow adolescents to draw reference to the reading material being presented to them and their own experiences. Kendall (2008) noted that adolescents reading interests seemed to reflect purposeful choices that reflect issues central to the lives and understandings of the readers. Adolescent students respond to reading material to which they could relate to. It is also critical that as educators, we are cognizant of the unique problems associated with gender. When choosing reading materials, teachers need to remember that boys read less fiction than girls and prefer texts that are more analytical and factual rather than narrative (Taylor, 2005).

Currently the government of Trinidad and Tobago is focused on improving the literacy level of students. The Prosperity for All Manifesto 2010 proclaims that the State would provide increased government funding for literacy programmes. The Ministry of Education (MoE, 2011) stated that the government of Trinidad and Tobago would strive to develop and promote a culture of reading in our students but also professed that part of the challenge it the alien education materials being made available to the students that are remote from their real life experiences. It is interesting to note that the MoE provides the recommended list of texts for schools which is a guide for teachers and it includes texts according to form levels and suggested age groups. Mohr (2006) suggested that providing sufficient exposure to a variety of texts can assist readers to develop and apply various literacy skills and strategies that would transfer to real-world learning.

Statement of the Problem

Students' interest in the reading material presented to them in schools is a critical factor for motivating students, especially boys, to engage in in-school and out-of school reading (Brozo, 2010). If the reading choices are not meeting students' reading interests, their engagement in reading may decrease as they progress though secondary school (Ivey & Broaddus,2001); conversely, texts students find appealing may motivate them to read, increase their vocabulary levels, and expand their literacy levels.

What texts actually get chosen for study in forms 1-3 in secondary schools in Trinidad and Tobago, what criteria teachers use in choosing them, the degree of students' satisfaction with these selected texts, and whether boys' and girls' satisfaction with the texts differ are unresearched questions in Trinidad and Tobago. This is potentially problematic since, in the absence of such data, educators, specifically English teachers, will be unaware of the extent to which their text selections are promoting in-school literacy by fostering motivated reading.

Significance of the study

The findings of this study will assist Heads of Department and teachers to examine if their currently assigned English Literature texts are aligned with their students' interests. Thus any information gleaned from this research can be utilized by the English department of schools to determine if the current reading material in the classrooms are being fully appreciated by the students and can serve to guide their future selection of texts if students' interests are not being taken into account.

Research Questions

The following research questions were used to guide this study:

- What criteria do teachers employ when selecting English Literature texts for their students in the lower forms?

- How do the genres, topics and themes of the assigned English Literature texts compare to students' reading interests?

- To what extent are there significant gender differences in students' reported satisfaction with texts chosen by teachers?

Definition of terms

To fully comprehend and appreciate this study several terms have been clarified. The following definitions are listed in alphabetical order.

- Aliteracy - the lack of the reading habit in capable readers (Anderson, 2011).

- Engaged reading - intrinsically motivated to read for knowledge and enjoyment (Guthrie, 2001)

- Interest – an interaction between the person and the environment or the context (Taylor, 2005)

- Literacy - the ability to understand and use written language forms and promote social participation (PIRLS, 2011)

- Genre -A type or category of literature marked by certain shared features. The three broadest categories of genre include poetry, drama, and fiction. (Wheeler, 2013)

- Self-efficacy – persons' judgements of their own capabilities to complete tasks and reach assigned goals (Bandura, 1997)

Overview of the following chapters

The following chapter (Chapter 2) reviews previous research studies that relate to this study. It is sectioned to highlight factors that the researcher believes are critical to understanding students' reading interest and teachers' choice of text. Chapter 3 details the research methodology employed to examine the research questions and also the data collection practices utilized during this research. In chapter 4, the findings of this study are presented and analysed. The final chapter (Chapter 5) discusses the findings and determines if the findings can be used for further research.

CHAPTER II.

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

There have been numerous studies that explore the congruence between students' reading interest and teachers' texts selections. These studies have proven that there is a decline in students' reading as they progress through secondary school (Cavas-Kottke, 2005). This can be attributed to the teachers' pedagogical skills or the texts that are available to the students do not match adolescent interests. These factors combined with a lack of motivation to read may have dire consequences on our students' literacy skills.

The PIRLS 2011 assessment framework document defined reading literacy as the ability to understand and use those written language forms required by society and /or valued by the individual. Literacy liberates us from dependence on received wisdom as it allows us to explore and analyze the information ourselves (Ippolitoetal, 2008). Thus, young readers can construct meaning from a variety of texts, read to learn, participate in communities of readers in school and everyday life and read for enjoyment.

The MoE of Trinidad and Tobago is restructuring schools and the curriculum and has moved beyond the concept of traditional literacy to a more inclusive definition that describes literacy as the foundation for all education and lifelong learning (TTNC, 2012). It is imperative that we place the students at the center of the curriculum and educators should not only acknowledge but appreciate and integrate the students' interests in the classroom to maximize their true potential. Teachers need to choose reading material that would draw connections between students' vernacular literacies and the dominant literacy of the sanctioned curriculum (Barton & Hamilton, 2000 as cited in Cavazos-Kottke, 2005).

The MoE of Trinidad and Tobago has acknowledged the challenges of the literacy education through alien education materials that are remote from the real life experiences of the students and are currently in the process of accepting recommendations to develop and promote a culture of reading and appreciation for literature (MoE, 2011).

There are two distinct means of reading which educators should strive for their students to active engagement: the effective and the aesthetic (Rosenblatt, 1995 as cited in Hodges, 2010). In our school system we tend to focus more on the efferent reading which primarily aims to glean information from a text. This is a direct result of our local education system being heavily based on an examination centered structure. Aesthetic reading, which is what as educators we should also take into account in the classroom, focuses on the readers' affective, lived experience of the text (Hodges, 2010).

Research indicates that young readers value peer and teacher opinions about books; therefore, teachers should not hesitate to suggest books for their students to read (Gerlach & Rinehart, 1992). There exists however the issue of teachers choosing English Literature texts that they themselves are comfortable teaching or personally enjoy reading. This critical factor of text selection was cited by Rush and Scherff (2013) who stated that high school students have been reading the same canonical titles for decades because teachers are familiar with them, have knowledge about them and feel comfortable teaching these texts. Though the MoE provides a list of approved texts for each form level, at each school it is at the discretion of the English department to make the final choices. This list from the curriculum most times specifies canonical texts that seek to inculcate the habits of valuing certain over others (Burroughs & Smagorinsky, 2009).

It is unfortunate that the traditional mind-set of teachers' privileging of canonical texts may drastically limit the choices students are offered as readers (Morgan & Wagner, 2013). This challenge is what Eisner (1994, as cited in Burroughs & Smagorinsky, 2009) refers to as the null curriculum; this exists alongside the stated curriculum but consists of all the texts, topics and practices that are generally disregarded. This simply means that the personal experiences and interests of the students are generally disregarded. This practice should be condoned as one of the aims of English teachers is to encourage their students to become lifelong readers. Teachers need to resist the urge to view their students as passive consumers of the literary material being made available to them and realize that students' reading interests are complex and dynamic and should be taken into consideration (Kendall, 2008).

This practice of ignoring students' reading interests is also detrimental to the students because as adolescents, the students are trying to form their identities. Identity as Reeves (2004) aptly stated is not an inflexible essential stat of being and the English Literature texts chosen can influence the students' identities. Consequently, students may choose not to read certain texts if they cannot identify with the identities of the characters and even the physical environment in the texts.

Ippolito et al (2008) posited that educators must be cognizant of adolescent developmental needs as they mature from children to young adults and if teachers are to engage their students, the reading material must capture their minds and answer the questions that they have about the word as they contemplate their place within it. It is imperative that teachers are cognizant of the power of the reader as an active subject who may resist being reconstructed against their will by being forced to read English Literature texts chosen by teachers (Reeves, 2004).

Students' Reading Interests

The issue of adolescents' reading interest in the field of education is critical. In fact, John Dewey as early as 1939 was cognizant of the importance of interest in promoting learning (Doepker & Ortlieb, 2011). Taylor (2005) defines interest as interaction between a person and the environment. Thus, if a student has a personal interest in the reading material it would motivate and facilitate the student to progress to a higher level of critical thinking and more engaged reading. This again emphasizes Dewey's conception that educators need to appreciate the importance of trying to make sense of what he refers to as the students and the environing conditions (Intrator & Kunzman, 2009). However, the problem exists that students are generally taught texts chosen for them rather than by them in a whole-group class setting (Morgan & Wagner, 2013).

The limited range of reading material in the classroom compels adolescents to either read something outside their interests or not read at all (Doepker & Ortlieb, 2011). Engaged readers tend to focus on meaning, they exchange ideas and interpretations of the texts with their peers and their reading transfers to a variety of genres which culminate in valued learning outcomes (Guthrie & Wigfield, 2000). They take pleasure in reading, unlike their disengaged counterparts who do not enjoy reading and rarely participate in this activity. If English Literature teachers are truly intent on promoting engaged readers then it is critical that they realize that each student has his/her own personal experience and background knowledge that need to be taken into consideration.

Clary (1991) noted that one of the more discerning challenges that teachers encounter is not necessarily their students' in ability to read but the students' general lack of interest,

indifference or sheer rejection of reading. If adolescents view their reading material as boring and disconnected from their lives, it is only natural they would be discouraged from reading. Intrator & Kunzman (2009) acknowledged that although not much research is needed to unearth such sentiments from the students, the breadth and depth of such claims should not be underestimated and teachers continue to downplay their students' opinions at the cost of adolescent engagement and growth. This may be attributed to the extra teacher preparation that would be required. According to Kamil (2003), educators know that something needs to be done but are daunted, understandably, by the considerable task of identifying and applying research-based literacy strategies.

The English Literature texts chosen by teachers for in-school study may not be aligned with the interests of our secondary school students as at each form level, all students are required to read the same text despite crucial factors such as gender, personal experiences and levels of maturity. According to Hodges (2010), the current examination oriented education system places pressure on educators to ensure curriculum coverage to achieve the nationally set objectives. However, as educators we must broaden our definition of literacy and should include reading practices that have not been traditionally valued within the school system (Taylor, 2005).

Teachers should be cognizant of these issues and choose the English Literature texts that would interest and actively engage students in the classroom despite the restrictions mandated by the curriculum, and other factors such as deadlines and student resistance to read. They have to cater for the needs of adolescent readers which are complex and varied (Ivey & Fisher, 2005). Thus, the challenge is for teachers to be more aware of their students' interests and to try and integrate the students' choices, especially in co-educational institutions where the gender issue would be highlighted, to actively engage and motivate their students to truly appreciate reading.

Effective teachers need to keep informed about books students might find interesting and use this knowledge of children's literature and their own professional dedication to student learning and reading to guide their efforts (Gerlach & Rinehart, 1992).

Educators have to compete in a world where texting, Facebook and YouTube videos are more appealing to adolescents (Morgan & Wagner, 2013). In this current society, there is a wide range of technological devices available to adolescents and teachers have to incorporate these when reading in classes if they want to engage their students when reading. There should be greater acknowledgement of popular culture in the classroom and teachers should recognize the importance of media such as film or graphic novels (Hodges, 2010). The physical characteristics of books are becoming increasingly important to influence readers, serving to attract or dissuade them and front covers and illustrations are now critical components when choosing texts (Mohr, 2006).

Motivation

The value of choice is a powerful motivator in adolescent literacy development (Cavazos-Kottke, 2005). Thus, having a choice in the reading material presented to them allows for student control and is a positive driving force for motivated engagement with adolescent readers (Morgan & Wagner, 2013). If teachers want to motivate adolescent to read they must determine whether they are themselves currently using literature in a way that will encourage their students to read (Clary, 1991). This point was also noted by Intrator & Kunzman (2009) who postulated that students need the opportunity to create meaningful connections to school and this process

can be cultivated by giving choices so that the students can create bridges between their personal experiences and the school curriculum.

Motivation is one concept that continually surfaces as an important focus in reading and learning to read particularly for adolescents (Kamil, 2003). Coles and Hall (2001 as cited in Taylor, 2005) emphasized that sustained literacy habits for students are based on the confidence and independence which comes from them seeing themselves as readers and they use literacy as a tool for self-expression and a means of enjoyment. This is critical as the students with the stronger cognitive skills may not spend much time reading if they are not motivated to read (Wigfield e al, 2004).

If students can associate the context of the reading material to their personal lives they will be motivated to read more, to explore these new experiences. Iser (1978, as cited in Hodges, 2010). This will lead to more engaged readers and consequently to increased levels of reading achievement. This notion is emphasized by Guthrie & Wigfield (2000) who posit that motivation is the link between frequent reading and reading achievement as motivation is the foundational process for reading engagement and is a major factor, when things go awry, that leads to disengagement to reading, it is therefore imperative that teachers choose texts that target the adolescents' emotions, needs and personal experiences in order to motivate in ownership of the literacy material provided. It is through this ownership that they would be intrinsically motivated to read and become lifelong readers.

When adolescents are intrinsically motivated to read it means they are reading for their personal enjoyment, to satisfy their personal goals. Guthrie et al (2009 as cited in Doepker & Ortlieb, 2011) likewise stated that intrinsically motivated adolescents' reading comprises of text

interaction for enjoyment, to satisfy curiosity and to gain the rewards of new knowledge that may be challenging. It is this intrinsic motivation rather than extrinsic motivation that should be fostered by the students. Unlike intrinsic motivation which is for more personal fulfillment, extrinsic motivation is stimulated by a desire to obtain external recognition such as grades, rewards or incentives (Doepker & Ortlieb, 2011). The objective of extrinsic motivation is to complete a task rather than to understand and enjoy the literary material. According to Guthrie and Wigfield (2000) the reality is that if a text is not fulfilling the adolescents' intrinsic motivational goals such as engagement, they will minimize or even terminate the cognitive activity of reading that material.

This is a key reason for the case of allowing students to have a choice in the reading material presented to them; to enhance the students' intrinsic motivation. The opportunity for students to select their own reading material for in-school study promotes increased positive feelings about reading (Worthy, Turner & Moorman, 1998 as cited in Taylor, 2005). Wigfield et al (2004) referred to this as autonomy, as the students perceive that they have control over their own learning rather than feeling isolated and controlled by their educators. The advantage of this was noted by Turner (2005) who observed that teachers who were successful at motivating students were the ones that often provide myriad of choices during a lesson. A crucial motivational function of Literature is its potential for the students to transcend reality, to recognize the distinctions and connections between real and imagined worlds (Hodges, 2010).

This leads to an important aspect of motivation, self –efficacy. Bandura (1997) defined self-efficacy as people's judgements of their own capabilities to successfully participate and execute activities. These self–appraisals stem from how well they performed at previous tasks

and the feedback and encouragement they would have received from others (Wigfield et al, 2004).

Gender

Adolescents primarily read for experience, either vicarious experiences that they wish to have or ways of dealing with problems that they are having (Clary, 2001). However, gender differences are evident in adolescent preferences of reading material and this may be connected to their varying emotional and developmental needs (Hopper, 2005). Girls have been proven to read more than their male counterparts especially with stories relating to family, friendships and home life while boys tend to prefer nonfiction, particularly sports, science and history information (Mohr, 2006). However, Taylor (2005) warily noted that boys are unique individuals and teachers must be careful not to make stereotypical assumptions about what they prefer to read.

As boys progress through school, it becomes more difficult to motivate them to read. They undergo immense pressure from their peers not to appear to nerdy or brainy (Brozo, 2010). Also, the act of being passively engaged in reading seems to detract from the stereotypical masculine image that adolescent boys try to portray. This unfortunate trend was noted by Farris et al (2009) who observed that the male students tend to devote less time to reading because they view reading as a feminine activity.

The majority of boys in the world are struggling in the area of literacy which may be as a result of the lack of availability of texts that match their interests and needs (Taylor, 2005). Martino (2001) posits that may boys do not seem to be rejecting the concept of reading but

perhaps they are just rejecting the literary texts that are sanctioned within schools. It is imperative that teachers are cognizant of the importance of Literature which helps to develop new interests and understandings. It is even more crucial that these new interests should be scaffolded from boys' current interests to foster their engaged reading (Taylor, 2005). When teachers choose English Literature texts they need to be cognizant that when boys refrain from reading, they miss out on unforgettable, identity-affirming experiences with books and other texts (Brozo, 2010). Thus to foster and encourage sustained engaged reading, boys' reading interests should be taken into account.

This is affirmed by Smith & Wilhem (2009) whose study of 49 boys from 4 different schools in 3 states in the U.S. surprisingly revealed that all the boys were enthusiastically engaged in a host of literacy practices outside of school. It is encouraging to know that the boys are engaged in reading but the issue now is to capture this engagement in the classroom. Teachers have to explore the boys' interests outside of the classroom and integrate these in the English Literature curriculum by choosing the appropriate texts. Taylor (2005) purported that in addition to including topics of interest for boys, teachers need to develop and implement innovative teaching approaches to address the specific needs of boys.

Chapter 3

METHODOLOGY

The focus of this study was to explore the extent to which there is congruence between teachers' English Literature text choices and their students' reading interests and this chapter details the methodological aspect of the research and justifies the study's design.

This study is critical because engaging students in the study of English Literature texts at the lower secondary school level is challenging and this phenomenon needs to be addressed. This trend stems from the alarming fact that as students progress through the education system, especially at the lower secondary level, the amount of time spent reading declines (Cavazos-Kottke, 2005). There exists a tension between what adolescents choose to read and what their teachers want them to read (Hopper, 2005).

Research questions

- What criteria do teachers employ when selecting English Literature texts for their students in the lower forms?

- How do the genres, topics and themes of the assigned English Literature texts compare to students' reading interests?

- Are there significant gender differences in students' reported satisfaction with texts chosen by teachers?

Research Design

The issue of concern is the degree of congruence of the teachers' choice of texts and the students' reading interests and how that congruence or lack thereof, might be reviewed to influence the type of English Literature texts that would be more effective to engage adolescent students. The study is an exploration of the dynamics of the two groups as teachers justify their choice of texts and the students voice their opinions about these texts that were chosen for them to study.

The study involved data collection from interviews of both teachers and students. Thus an emergent design of an exploratory nature that permits flexibility during the research process was chosen. This flexibility is a vital asset of qualitative research that was more suitable for this study. According to Best and Khan (2006) this design allows researchers to adapt their line of inquiry and pursue new paths of discovery if new situations or information arises, thus the researchers avoid being restricted.

Focus groups interviews are a strategy in qualitative research in which attitudes, opinions or perceptions towards an issue are explored through an open discussion between members of a group and the researcher to stimulate discussion and find out information among the members of the group (Kumar, 2011). This strategy was employed for the students' data collection and the manageable groups of three students per form level allowed for several lively and intriguing debates among the students.

Denzin and Lincoln (1994) postulated that qualitative research implies an emphasis on processes and meanings that are not rigorously measured and are concerned about the individual's point of view which can be captured through detailed interviewing. The aim of

qualitative research is to explore individual or situational perspectives and to gain an in-depth understanding of the participants' feelings and experiences (Davies, 2007).

Qualitative research is broadly rooted in the interpretive tradition and is characterized by the process of analytical induction, where inferences are made from the data collected from the individuals to construct a hypothesis or theory (Draper, 2004). Thus, semi structured interviews with the HoDs and focus group interviews with students from the five secondary schools were conducted to encourage the participants to express their opinions in their own words and also allowed the researcher to ask any follow-up questions if any clarification or details were needed. Best and Khan (2006) emphasized that the purpose of this type of interviewing was to find out what is in or on someone else's mind, to access the person's perspective rather than influence their responses. The process of induction also included the researcher to decipher the participants' body language and used that as a cue in some instances to further investigate some responses.

Participants

This study focused on five schools in the St. George East educational district. These five schools represented each type of school in the district: an all-girl school, School A, an all boy school, School B, a government secondary, School C, a SEMP school, School D and a new sector school, School E. At each school, the Forms 1-3 were chosen to participate as the study focused on the lower secondary students. Thus these young adolescents' ages ranged from 12-16 years. Of the forty-five students asked to participate in the study, twenty were boys and twenty-five were girls.

The HoDs were chosen for the interviews as they are in charge of the English departments and would have a detailed understanding of the choice selection process at their respective schools. All five HoDs were females and three were officially appointed HoDs. The two acting HoDs had a combined experience of four years leading the English Language departments.

Data collection

Accessing sites

Approval to conduct interviews at each school had to be first granted by the Ministry of Education after which consent was sought from the Principals of the five respective schools to allow the research to be conducted at their institutions. After these procedures, the HoDs were personally contacted by the researcher to organize and coordinate the students chosen from each form level. Additionally letters detailing the purpose of the study and attached consent forms were sent to the parents/guardians of the students who were asked to participate in the focus group sessions in the research.

Accessing participants

The three students from each form who were chosen for the focus group interviews were requested by the researcher to be randomly chosen by the HoDs from the respective schools. The process may have been purposive sampling at some schools, though random sampling would have given each student in the respective forms an equal chance of being chosen.

For the focus group sessions, the students were informed of the importance of expressing their honest opinions with regard to the purpose of the research. The researcher had to utilize intrapersonal skills at each school to ensure the students were comfortable. The students were also assured of anonymity and confidentiality of their responses. The researcher had to emphasize that teachers would not be made aware of their responses and it was not a test for any perceived right or wrong response.

An ideal scenario would have entailed interviews of the HoDs and several other teachers from each school to validate the responses gleaned from the HoDs. However, due to time constraints, both the HoD and an English Literature teacher were interviewed at only one school. This additional interview was necessary as it not only validated the information provided by the HoD but was also required as the HoD did not teach the lower forms. Thus, the HoD could not respond adequately to several questions in the interview which required a detailed account of the students' reactions to the English Literature texts in the classroom setting. This additional interview did however, give the researcher an opportunity to validate some of the HoD's responses and it did produce a different perspective of the same group of students' perceived interests.

This triangulation, according to Creswell (2007), makes use of different sources to corroborate evidence that would lead to detailed thick description and add value and accuracy to a study. The interviews of both the teachers and the students were recorded digitally and then transcribed verbatim for analysis (see Appendix C for samples).

Duration of data collection

The collection of data for this study spanned a three month period. The interviews with the teachers began in March, 2013 and were all concluded within a two week period. These sessions were coordinated at times when both the researcher and teachers were available during school hours. The focus group sessions were conducted during the respective schools' lunchtime periods during the last term of the schools' academic year. Collection of data for the group session interviews with the students was conducted near the end of the third term of the academic year. The data collection for the students were all conducted during the month of May, 2013. The reason for this late data collection was to ensure that the students completed most of the texts required by their schools for the respective form levels. This would guarantee that the students could compare the various texts that were chosen for them for in-school study, especially at the form 1 levels.

Instrumentation

The medium of interviews was chosen to gather the depth of responses that were required by the researcher. The interviews with the HoDs and the English teacher (see Appendix A) were semi-structured and consisted of ten questions that the researcher used to elicit the text selection process and the extent that students' interests were actually taken into account. The students' focus group interviews (see Appendix B) were divided into the various form levels for the interviews, thus the three selected students from each form were interviewed in secluded areas, away from their teacher and the other participants in this exercise.

In most cases the focus group sessions were conducted in the schools' libraries which were quiet and necessary for the audiotaping of the sessions. At one school, the auditorium which was utilized for the Caribbean Secondary Education Certificate (CSEC) examinations was used as the area was restricted to all students. Luckily there were no examinations carded for that afternoon and the auditorium which is usually a hub of activity at lunchtimes (according to the HOD), was extremely quiet.

This led to the students being more open and comfortable to express their opinions and allowed the researcher to decipher and pursue further lines of questioning when needed. Kumar (2011) aptly stated that the use of interviews is useful for collecting in-depth information as the research can explain questions to the participants if needed and the information can be supplemented by the researcher from the participants' non-verbal responses to questions posed to them. This was especially proven to be true with several of the students during the interviews conducted.

Focus of the interview questions

The questions utilized for the focus group interviews with the students were the same questions for all the forms and sought to reveal the students' views on the English Literature texts they were studying at their respective schools. Through these questions the researcher elicited the students' attitudes towards their English Literature texts chosen for them by their teachers. Questions were posed regarding all the English Literature texts they read during their respective academic form level to examine if any of the texts chosen by their teachers appealed

to their interests as adolescents. The use of this qualitative data allowed the researcher to engage in a comparative study as to what motivates students' reading texts preferences.

Through the interviews with the HoDs, the researcher hoped to identify the criteria that prompted the English Language departments in their respective schools to choose the assigned English Literature texts for each form level. The questions asked would have assessed if students' reading interests were actually taken into consideration by the teachers when the texts were chosen for in-school study. The interview would also glean how the teachers' perceived the students' attitudes towards the various English Literature texts during the classroom lessons.

Data Analysis Methods

The interviews were recorded to accurately transcribe the participants' responses. The verbal data collected from the HoDs and the students were transcribed and analysed to answer the three research questions. A total of six teachers were interviewed; at one school both the HoD and an English Literature teacher were interviewed. This extra interview was necessary as the HoD didn't teach the lower forms and as such could not adequately answer the questions that pertained to the responses of the students towards the texts in the classroom setting. For the focus group sessions with the students, forty-four students were involved, twenty-four girls and twenty boys. This number should have been forty-five but at one particular school a student who was asked to participate and did receive parental consent was absent from school on the day the researcher conducted the interviews. It was an ethical decision to just interview the two students from that form level instead of asking a student present that day to participate in the session as no parental consent was sought for that student.

After the transcription of the data collected from the semi-structured interviews of the HoDs and the focus group interviews with the students, it was manually coded. Common themes were then identified for further analysis. The researcher had to carefully go through the descriptive responses of the participants to each question in order to understand the meaning they communicated and develop from these themes that would be the basis for accurately representing and analyzing the responses (Kumar, 2011). Samples of coded interviews have been included in Appendix C.

Delimitations

This study was conducted in five secondary schools in the St. George East education district. From each of the randomly selected schools, one English Literature teacher from each school (HoD) and three students from each form level at each school were involved in the focus group interviews. As a consequence of this study being limited to only one educational district, the findings cannot be generalized but it is the hope of this researcher that the findings of this study will contribute to future research in reading.

Limitations

Due to time constraints, the study was limited to the St. George East education district. This district was chosen as the researcher currently teaches in this district and the schools in this district were more accessible and in close proximity to the researcher. The study was also limited

by the sample size of the teachers interviewed for the research, only one teacher (HoD) was interviewed at the respective schools. The sample size of the students was also limited to three students from each year group for the focus group sessions. Another limitation could have been the extent of support from the HoDs at the schools chosen to participate in the study and also the degree of the honesty of the responses from both the teachers and the students in the interviews.

Conclusion

This chapter outlined the research design, a brief description of the participants, the instrumentation used to collect the data, an outline of the methods of data analysis as well as the limitations and delimitations of the study. These methodological aspects were all critical to the advancement of the study.

Chapter 4

DATA ANALYSIS AND PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

Analysis of Data

Research Question # 1

What criteria do teachers employ when selecting English Literature texts for their students in the lower forms?

Ministry of Education and CXC's lists

At each of the five schools, the teachers were all cognizant of the recommended list of texts issued by the MoE, but at all schools this list was viewed as more prescriptive rather than as a guide when selecting their English Literature texts. The Caribbean Examination Council's (CXC) English Literature syllabus also heavily influenced the texts chosen at the schools, especially for the form 3 level. Mrs. B. emphasized:

> The book choices are guided by CXC recommendations as well as the Ministry of Education. After we look at the recommendations, we sit as a group, the department and we will decide what we want to do for the upcoming year.

Mrs. L. explained at their school, "For the form 3 we look at what is being done at the CXC level and we try to give them a head start." At Mrs. H's school they followed this same procedure, "The Form 3 book choices are determined by the CXC booklist for the particular period."

Age Appropriate

Most of the teachers also agreed that they chose texts that were age appropriate for the various form levels. Mrs. B. stressed, "we look for texts that are age appropriate that treat with teenage issues, especially as it pertains to love and family relationships." Ms. A. also elaborated on the text selection at her school:

We look at the students' age, for example *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* we know that they would be able to associate with it as well as *The Wooing of Beppo Tate* because of the character and what they go through in life.

Students' reading interest

Thus, the teachers do try to take into account what they believe are the students current interests and issues that would appeal to their specific students when they are selecting the English Literature texts for in-school study. This point was emphasized by Mrs. H. when she indicated, "Student interest is one of the main things because at this school we have difficulty engaging children in the texts, so we try to use children's interest."

In fact, it was only at one school that the HoD admitted that their English department preferred to challenge their students and thus would have chosen texts for the form 1s that would have been prescribed for the form 2 level. Mrs. G. mentioned, "We like to challenge them so we pick books that we feel that might challenge them at a higher level and those that they would like as well."

This awareness of the importance of choosing texts that would motivate and engage the students in the selected reading material was common in all five schools. Mrs. G. indicated, "We consider their taste and their preference." While Mrs. M. clearly stated:

> We choose which books we feel the children might relate too. Really it is down to mainly topics and the kind of book it is and the student interest because it makes no sense they have this grand idea of a story and the children are not interested in it.

Relevance and Relatability

Mrs. M's comments highlight an important theme. This theme of the texts being relatable and relevant to the students' own personal experiences was highlighted by several teachers such as Mrs. L., whose English department tried to:

> Examine what the children might be interested in because it is no use doing something that is totally alien to them. So that we try to have their interest sparked all the time and we look at what might be relevant too.

Mrs. L. further explained:

> One of the stories I did last term from *The Enchanted Island* was "Macbeth" because I felt that the children could relate to it because of the high incidence of crime that we have in the country. So that in reading "Macbeth" they could see that what we are experiencing now is really nothing new and that throughout history in different cultures people would have been experiencing troubled times in terms of crime and murder.

At Mrs. L.'s school they face a challenge as the students, "don't read generally" and they need to engage their students' attention through content that they can relate to their own environment, which in this case is the predominant crime situation in the country.

Local texts

This personal connection to the texts was attributed to the content being West Indian. Three teachers were adamant that more local based texts would be more appealing to their students. Mrs. B. noted:

> A lot of things we have noticed over the last couple of years is that those of West Indian origin are much more appreciated than those of any other origin.

However, at other schools the teachers realized that their students were not too keen on the local novels and thus made a decision to ensure that at least some West Indian texts are compulsory for their in-school study to expose their students to the local culture and experiences. This was the case at School B and as such Ms. A. insisted that they would always try to put a V.S. Naipaul book on the prescribed reading list for the boys to appreciate the local texts. At Mrs. G.'s school they recognize that the girls are not as engaged and motivated to read the local texts, thus:

> We are encouraging them to read the West Indian books because we want them to appreciate because everything out there is so foreign to them, the content is foreign to them although they like it, they have to know a bit about their own culture.

Gender

The issue of gender and teachers choosing texts to suit the specific needs of boys and girls was also a criterion at a few schools. Ms. A. admitted that trying to engage their students, all boys, to read was at times challenging:

Some of them don't like to read, they tell you outright. So when we choose the books we have to get what they could relate too.

Mrs. B.'s English department also tried to take into account the gender issue and stated that the texts chosen for the lower secondary school levels had "to appeal to all students, both male and female."

Teachers' Preferences

The teachers also chose texts based on their own personal preferences, familiarity with texts and in some cases texts that would require less teacher preparation. Mrs. G. revealed that the English teachers at her school:

They tend to like *Matilda* in Form 1 because they think it's light and they like the style of writing, it's very simple for the children. They loved *The Swiss Family Robinson* because many of them would have done it when they were in their secondary school and they like the idea of the content of the boys and the religion.

Thus, at this school the emotional attachment to certain texts of the teachers led to the texts being chosen for their students. They expected the same level of engagement and enjoyment in the texts they had as students to be recurrent with their own students. At Mrs. B's school the English department preferred West Indian texts for several reasons. The teachers, she

explained, appreciate them as "it requires less preparation for lessons" and the students enjoy these texts "as the content is easier to grasp" and also because of "its relevance" to their lives.

Research Question # 2

How do the genres, topics and themes of the assigned English Literature texts compare to students' reading interests?

The reading interests of the students were varied and when asked if they would change the texts that they studied, the majority agreed. This point of view was indicated at each form level at each of the respective schools. The students were enthusiastic about voicing their opinions about what texts should be removed from their classes. They all agreed that more exciting and relatable texts would be preferred.

Relevance and Relatability

What was interesting was at School A, the HoD, Mrs. G, was very confident that a text involving only boys would have been engaging to the girls:

The Swiss Family Robinson however, we choose this for Form 2, based on the idea that it is a group of boys and we felt that they would have been interested in all these boys' feelings because they would have a different perspective of a girl in Form 1 and as they are getting a bit more mature.

However, these sentiments were definitely not echoed by the girls at the Form 2 level. K. mentioned that, "It actually wasn't relevant to our lives in anyway really" and I. detailed:

> I just couldn't relate to the novel, it was about boys and I can't relate to a group of boys. It was very difficult to imagine what they were going through and how they felt which usually helps me when I'm reading a novel, you can't position yourself in their situation.

<div align="center">Local texts</div>

From the texts being studied in schools, those being local in content were more favored by the students. Reasons were varied for the preference of the West Indian novels such as being able to relate to the characters and the setting; the language was also easier to understand as it was what they were accustomed to. F, a form 1 boy at School C simply stated, "I would choose something more local from the Caribbean, it more interesting." At School B, R from form 3 explained in more detail why he preferred the local text at his school:

> *A Brighter Sun* shows the life of a Trinidadian and I could relate to it. It have things that you could understand in it like the stuff that happens I can relate to it because it is local and it makes it more interesting compared to the others.

N, a girl in form 2 who attends School E, emphasized this point of being able to relate to the texts:

> I would like to see more Caribbean novels. *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* and *A Wrinkle in Time* are from people abroad and I don't like outside

books. I prefer books that come from where I live and I can relate to. Books that

teach you about your own country for the youths.

<div align="center">Popular fiction</div>

Both boys and the girls at all form levels identified popular fiction as interesting

reading. More specifically they represented ninety-two percent of the selected population

preference to this genre. Generally they were all enthused by the *Harry Potter* and *The

Lord of the Ring* series and the girls were also excited with the *Twilight* trilogy. The

fascination with these novels can be directly attributed to the movies associated with the

texts. When the question was posed to the students, asking what books they would like to

read in their English Literature classes, the responses primarily included a popular fiction

title. At School B, this view was reiterated by R, in the form 3 level:

> I would suggest that they put books like R.L. Stein and *Lord of the Rings*. The
>
> books that young people like, they could put some but not all. That would help
>
> make the classes more interesting.

The HoD at this school, Ms. A, was aware of the students' interests in popular fiction and

approved of the idea of incorporating these novels for in-school study. However, she

again referred to the list recommended by the MoE as the determining factor:

> I think that if we do that, we will have the whole school loving Literature. The
>
> Form 1 students have actually asked why we don't do things like *Harry Potter* or
>
> a few of the other *Narnia* books. So hopefully if those books come on board, then

definitely I think our students will enjoy Literature immensely, more than they do now.

A, a form 2 student from School A was adamant that these genres should be included in the list of English Literature texts to be studied at schools. She was very passionate when she voiced her choice selections:

Hunger Games because I think it is a very popular book and I think a lot of the Form 2 students and Form 1s too know about the book. And it just would be more interested in the book and we would want to read and find out more about it. And it have other books too that children like to read Percy Jackson and *Twilight*, like a popular book that children would actually like and is interesting.

At School E, the form 2s were very eager to change their texts and T, a girl, suggested that the teachers, "Bring books like *Twilight* and vampire books."

The students are more motivated to read these modern novels because they are quite simply, popular. According to K. from School A:

I would actually like to do a book which I actually heard about than one I never heard of before. Like *Harry Potter*, everyone loves *Harry Potter*. It is such an interesting book and people heard about it and people actually read out the book. If you like Literature you would have heard about it or *Hunger Games* or any book that the child would know. But *[The] Swiss Family Robinson* we haven't ever heard of.

Students' preferred reading themes

The students all seem to appreciate popular fiction rather than the classical canons that their teachers prefer exposing them to. Adjectives such as exciting, amusing, action and interesting were commonly utilized to describe their reading interests. Unfortunately, they did not view most of their English Literature texts as reflecting their reading interests and hence their reluctance to recommend the same texts for the upcoming year groups.

From these five schools in the St George East education district the teachers did try to anticipate their respective students' interests and varying genre preferences to incorporate these types of text for in-school study. In most cases though the students indicated they would have changed most of the current texts for more exciting, credible and modern novels. The themes indicated were common at the various form levels. The students' reading interests were generally constant at all schools and popular fiction novels were cited as the most favored choice of reading.

Research Question # 3

To what extent are there gender differences in students' reported satisfaction with texts chosen by teachers?

The boys and girls from all the schools that participated in this study reported a low level of satisfaction with the English Literature texts chosen for them by their teachers. However, it was observed through this study that the boys especially were not receptive to poetry at any

school. At School E, the two boys in form 1 didn't appreciate the poetry aspect of their English Literature classes because they had difficulty analyzing the poems and stated that is was "boring." The boys in form 3 at School B expressed these sentiments:

D: I don't like the poetry; the language is difficult to understand.

A: I agree, I don't really like *A World of Poetry*, the poems are difficult to understand.

R: I definitely agree as well, I don't mind reading the poems but trying to analyze them is

challenging.

Thus, the problem stemmed not from the reading of the poetry but the comprehension of the content. R. emphasized this point:

A World of Poetry, confusing. It could be more explanatory, after each poem they could have like a little explanation or something.

When asked if they would change any of their current texts, A. promptly responded:

Probably just the poetry book I would change because it needs to be more explanatory and it is confusing and the way the teachers explain it, it helps a bit but in the long run it not like it helping with all poetry, only with that particular poem.

Consequently, both boys and girls expressed a high degree of dissatisfaction with the texts chosen for them to study by their teachers. The girls wanted changes and knew exactly what they would have preferred to read during their English Literature classes. The boys also wanted changes but were more easily appeased. They agreed that changes needed to be made but were generally willing to keep the current texts if certain issues were addressed such as more

notes being given in classes. Thus, the issue of gender was not a significant factor in determining the extent of students' satisfaction with the English Literature texts chosen for their in-school studies.

Summary

This study sought to explore the congruence between teachers' choice of English Literature texts and students' reading interests. In this chapter the methods of data collection were outlined and the findings after the analysis of this data were produced. The three research questions used to guide this study were explored through detailed narrative and verbatim responses from the participants of the study.

Chapter 5

DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

The focus of this study was to investigate the congruence of teachers' choice of English Literature texts and students' reading interests at the lower secondary school levels. Understanding students' reading interests would lead to more engaged readers and create life-long readers who are intrinsically motivated to read. Thus, it would be beneficial to all if educators assess the reading interests of the students and try to align their in-school texts to better suit their students.

The research questions used to guide this study were:

- What criteria do teachers employ when selecting English Literature texts for their students in the lower forms?

- How do the genres, topics and themes of the assigned English Literature texts compare to students' reading interests

- To what extent are there significant gender differences in students' reported satisfaction with texts chosen by teachers?

Restatement of findings and results

The main criteria for the English Literature texts selections for the lower secondary school levels that were highlighted from the interviews with the six teachers were relevance and relatability, local texts, gender and easy teacher preparation combined with the teachers' perceived students' reading interests. However, in all cases these themes were only taken into account if they conformed to the texts in the MoE's list to which all the teachers rigidly followed.

This research revealed that teachers do try to integrate their perception of their students' reading interests into the classrooms. Nevertheless, there is a gap between what adolescents wish to read and the English Literature texts teachers provide for in-school study at the lower secondary levels. One reason for this according to Thomson (1987, as cited in Hopper, 2005) is the problem of teachers being unfamiliar with the current reading interest of students.

However, the findings of this study revealed that the teachers were aware of the students' interest in popular fiction but as these texts were not on the recommended MoE booklist and not aligned with the CSEC syllabus they were reluctant to incorporate these books in the English Literature classes. Hodges (2010) attested that teachers are heavily influenced by the intense focus on tests and target and are pressured by the need to ensure curriculum coverage of nationally set objectives are met.

The teachers in this study used the responses to the texts from previous year groups to decipher what interested the students and adjusted their choices as a department to try and best suit their students' needs. In some instances teachers were also guided by what Rush and Scherff

(2013) referred to as internal forces, what they felt most knowledgeable about in terms of genre and even their own preferences.

The teachers were cognizant of the gender issue in their classes. Some teachers tried to capture their make students' interests and incorporate these materials in the classes. However, Farris et al (2009), posited that as literacy educators, we all need to acknowledge boys' reading preferences and interests and examine what types of texts are available to encourage our male students to read.

Westbrook (2007) professed that adolescents read recently published texts rather than literary canon. This view was emphasized by Clary (1991) who stated that adolescents reported that they would read more if teachers stressed good young adult literature. This was confirmed by the students who participated in this study. The majority agreed that modern novels and texts that they could relate to would be more interesting to read in school.

The issue with trying to accommodate students' reading interests is that the students are often instructed as a whole-group setting with texts chosen for them rather than by them (Morgan & Wagner, 2013). It would be challenging to include all the students' reading interests in the classroom so the teachers would have to choose texts that would appease the majority of the preferences.

After analyzing the results for this research, there seemed to be little difference between what the girls and the boys read. They both mentioned exciting, believable and popular fiction as their preferred reading interests. The girls even cited genres that would have been traditionally viewed as male reading such as action and adventure as some of their reading interests. This

could be attributed to the fact that generally girls read more than boys and the boys seem more bound by gender than the girls due to society's stereotyping standards (Mohr, 2006).

Unfortunately, both boys and girls at each of the five schools that participated in the study expressed little satisfaction with their English Literature texts. They generally agreed that they would have replaced most of the books they were currently studying for more interesting texts. This, according to Baker (2002), epitomizes adolescents' yearning for choices and their desire for their opinions to be valued. Allowing students a choice in their reading material can be a positive driving force for engagement with adolescent readers (Morgan & Wagner, 2013).

Thus, the findings of this study do affirm the view that there is a gap between what students choose to read and what teachers provide as reading materials. This study suggests that there is a generally a lack of congruity between the English Literature texts chosen for in-school study and students' reading interests.

Conclusion

Education researchers have recognized a growing need to investigate the links between the English Literature texts that are chosen for in-school study at the secondary educational level and students' reading interests. However, locally there is still a great deficit of this type of information. It requires a commitment from all the stakeholders involved in education, especially the MoE and the teachers. The MoE needs to investigate and survey the students' reading interests and the teachers' opinions of the texts being used in the nation's classes. The data retrieved from these exercises should lead to the MoE reviewing their recommended booklist to include more of the students' varying reading interests. These efforts should succeed in

increasing the level of congruity between teachers' choice of English Literature texts and the students' reading interests at the lower secondary school level.

There is a great gap between what the students would prefer to read in their English Literature classes and what they actually read in school. As a result, this has led to a situation where there seems to be little congruity between the English Literature texts chosen by teachers for in-school study and students' reading interests at the lower secondary school levels

Recommendations

Reading is a critical life skill that needs to be encouraged in adolescents. To truly engage and motivate students to read teachers must first be aware of what books and content appeal to their students and use these texts in the classroom. It should be mandatory for teachers to survey their students at the beginning of each academic year to assess what the students enjoy reading and then try to incorporate these themes and novels into their classes. Adolescent students need to be engaged and interested in the reading material being presented to them in schools. Thus, English Literature texts chosen for in-school study should be aligned as closely as possible to reflect the students' reading interests.

Another key factor is for teachers to use the recommended list of texts provided by the Ministry of Education as a guide rather than a prescribed list and base their selections on English Literature texts that the students within their school context would enjoy reading. Doepker and Ortlieb (2011) proposed that before educators can integrate adolescents' interests into the curriculum, it is necessary to consider the depth of their interests and to discover the breadth of interest they possess.

Thus, the MoE should develop policies for the selection of texts which should begin with the collection of data locally that highlight the needs and interests of the students (Rush and Scherff, 2013).

The goal should be to increase awareness of students' reading interests through research-based knowledge. This is the best way to reveal a variety of books that the students are actually interested in reading. Without this research, the trend of adolescents reading less at the lower secondary school levels will continue. Thus it is imperative that all relevant stakeholders invest the time to acknowledge the students' views of the texts being forced upon them at schools. Teachers need to investigate their students' personal experiences and use those familiarities to engage and motivate their students to read. Students, especially at this age group are from varying backgrounds and levels of maturity, thus these factors have to be taken into account by the teachers.

The findings of these studies should then be examined to determine what English Literature texts should be offered to the students at the lower secondary school level. This strategy would undoubtedly heighten the level of congruency between the teachers' choice of texts and students' reading interests. It is also worthwhile to note that having a class of motivated and engaged readers would enable a more enjoyable and rewarding teaching experience.

If the disturbing trend of declining adolescent reading at the lower secondary levels is to be addressed, teachers must be cognizant of their students' current reading interests and try to incorporate these genres and themes for in-school study. Though some teachers advocate for canonical texts, the presentation of the content may have to be delivered in a way that the students could realize that though the language and setting may be unfamiliar, the content and

issues being dealt with are still present in today's society. Thus, teachers have a critical role to play when trying to motivate and engage their students when reading English Literature texts in classes.

It is impossible to ignore the role that technology can play in helping students to better read and comprehend texts and the computer-assisted instruction that offers an alternative or adjunct to traditional reading instruction (Kamil, 2003). Teachers need to source suitable movie versions for the English Literature texts that they utilize in schools to motivate students, if necessary, to read the actual printed texts and also to bring to life the texts for the students. Doepker and Ortlieb (2011) also stressed on the importance of acknowledging the role of technology in the lives of adolescents today and asserted that these multi-literacy practices need to be incorporated into the classrooms.

It is imperative that the exploration of the extent to which there is congruence between the English Literature texts chosen by teachers for in-school study and their students' reading interests are investigated. Thus, it is the hope of the researcher that the findings of this study could be used as a guide for educators to further examine the students' interests in reading at the various form levels and thus implement strategies and policies that would allow the integration of these reading materials in the English Literature classes

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Appendix A

Interview question protocol for English Heads of Department

1. What books do your students currently study at forms 1-3?

2. Who makes the book choices?

3. What criteria do you (person/s making the choices) use when deciding on the books?

4. Have you used any of these books before?

5. If answer to # 4 is 'yes': how have students responded to them?

6. If answer to #4 is 'no': what kind of student response are you hoping to elicit to the books?

7. Have teachers in your department expressed preference for any specific genre or author over the last 5 years?

8. How do you accommodate these requests?

9. What is your opinion about selecting popular fiction titles for students to study?

10. What would you consider 'good literature' for forms 1-3?

Appendix B

Interview protocol for selected students

1. What are your opinions of these texts?

2. Is there a particular text that appealed to you? Why?

3. What about the other text/s? Why didn't you like it/them as much?

4. If you had to choose your Literature texts, would you have chosen other texts instead?

5. Would you recommend these texts t

6. Would you recommend these texts to anyone from next year's class?