

Literacy enhancement in practice – Collaboration between school and library

Ingebjørg Tonne, associate professor, ingebjorg.tonne@lui.hio.no and
Joron Pihl, professor, joron.pihl@lui.hio.no

Faculty of Education and International Studies,
Oslo University College, Norway
Address: Box 4 St. Olavs plass
0130 Oslo

In this paper we address the question of how the public library may contribute to provide opportunities for all students, especially to enhance literacy of linguistic minority students. We present preliminary results from our literacy project in Norway (2007-2011), which show a promising positive relation between library use, quantity of reading and reading speed. The school-library approach is found to be a natural, non-segregating, way to adapt content and form of the curriculum to each student's background and competence level. The library, serving as a different kind of learning environment than the classroom, is here also seen as a valuable supplement to the school setting for the students. In this paper we present promising literacy effects found for all children in school, and in particular good results for the minority language students in the group under study. Such effects have previously been found with similar (book-flooding) projects. The main contribution of this paper is to discuss and explicate the role of the public library, in particular the importance of a planned and organized cooperation between the school and the library, for a successful literacy project of a book-flooding type.

Keywords: reading, library, minorities

Introduction

In the present era of globalization, the population is becoming increasingly heterogeneous. How can education qualify all pupils and contribute to literacy, democratic participation and citizenship under these conditions? The theoretical assumption underpinning the following analyses is that inter-professional cooperation between teachers and librarians about pedagogical work with literacy, learning and use of the library has a great potential in contributing to enhancing literacy. The library is a cultural institution with great possibility for meeting the multiplicity in the classroom. The expertise of librarians is highly relevant to education.

In this paper, we present and analyze preliminary results from our literacy project in Norway (2007-2011), which show a promising positive relation between library use, quantity of reading and reading speed. Here, we first describe and discuss the make-up, neighbourhood and pedagogical discourses of the focus-school of this paper. The presentation serves as a back drop for our research involvement, i.e. the project initiated school-library collaboration. This collaboration is subsequently in this paper motivated by former studies of “book-flooding” programs, here just briefly mentioned and referred to. We also present general, statistical national population surveys that yield relevant background information for our study about literacy and school achievements. The particular, preliminary results from observations, surveys and reading tests of the project are then presented, discussed and analyzed, and related to the collaboration between the library and the school.

Research design

The design is a research- and development project. The project involves a partnership between two schools, two teacher education institutions and a public library. The aim of the project is the development of literacy and inclusive education on the basis of providing pupils with extensive access to reading and the use of the public and school libraries in education.

The project was initiated by us as researchers. Institutional contact and cooperation was established with the leadership of the two schools and the director of the local public library. The project period is four years, from the end of 2007 to the beginning of 2011. The project involves three classes at each school. The project has initiated a teacher-librarian cooperation about educational planning, which amounts to “book-flooding” in the classroom and extensive use of the public library. The project also involves rigorous use of the school libraries, but for one of the schools, the one in focus in this paper, the school library is only in the fall of 2009 beginning to be functioning well, i.e. with a librarian with good knowledge of the daily work in the classes, with a budget for buying new books and with a much needed reorganization of the school library premises.

Mixed methods are applied in the project: participant observation, interviews, a survey about pupils’ reading and use of the public library and two tests on reading. The reading tests and the survey data are interpreted statistically. In this paper we analyze the results in relation to the interventions in the project and relate them to the cooperation and collaboration about the “book flooding” project between teachers, librarians and researchers in the project.

The schools in the study¹

There are two schools in the project. They are both situated in the same, mid-size Norwegian city. The school which is of primary interest in this paper, has a large multicultural and multilingual population and the socio-economic status of the families is on average low. The other school in the project has a predominantly monolingual Norwegian-speaking population with a mixed labour and middle class background. Although most of the discussions in this paper concern the multicultural school, some relevant features are selected from the student survey from both schools for comparisons and contrasts.

The multicultural school has approximately 580 pupils and almost 80 staff members. 77% of the students in the school have minority language background. Many pupils were born in Norway and have a first language other than Norwegian, while others are foreign-born and have migrated to Norway at elementary school age. 85 students and six teachers, one assistant, two bilingual teaching assistants from the school, one teacher responsible for the school library (from the fall of 2009) and one librarian from the local public library are currently participating in the project. The children are divided into three classes, each with two teachers. The pupils were in third grade when the project started, and in fourth grade when the survey and reading tests reported here were administered.

The population of the municipality is comprised of a 17 per cent immigrant population, with roughly 30 different nationalities represented in the school. Approximately 25 of the staff members are bilingual, with first language instruction given in 20 different languages. Initial reading and writing education is provided in the child’s best language whenever possible. The school was opened in 1971 in a new neighbourhood of high-rise apartment buildings in the outskirts of the city. The immediate area surrounding the school is the most densely populated part of the city and has the highest number of foreign-born residents. The school is situated centrally between the high-rise apartment buildings. A branch of the public library is located in a municipal building next door to the school.

van der Kooij and Pihl (2009) discusses two different discourses that coexist in this school. They observe a “deficiency discourse” and a “resource discourse” among teachers,

¹ The information about the school and the area is information presented on official web sites. The references are not given here, for the sake of anonymity.

related to educational performance among pupils with linguistic minority background. In the resource discourse the staff views multilingualism as a resource for the individual child as well as for the school. The school has high goals of integration, equality and democratic participation for all of its students. In the “deficiency discourse”, on the other hand, which also exists in the school, according to van der Kooij and Pihl (2009), the school leaders and teachers are looking for new ways of compensating for what they characterise as “holes” in the everyday knowledge, conceptual understanding and vocabulary with which immigrant minority children come to school.

The reported deficiency discourse was a challenge to the implementation of our research and development project in its initial phase. In line with the deficiency discourse, the teachers first suggested separate educational provisions for “low-achievers”. However, an important aim in the project, to be outlined in the next section, is to find and implement educational provisions which include all children. Several studies show that segregated teaching seldom has positive educational or social effects (Amrein & Berliner, 2002; Nordahl, Kostøl, & Mausethagen, 2009). Segregated teaching is also counterproductive to reaching the school’s goals of integration, equality and democratic participation. However, the teachers were not convinced by the presentation of these research findings. Thus in the fall of 2008, the teachers in the project decided that the visits to the library were to be organised only for a small, selected group of pupils with immigrant background, who were chosen because their literacy performance was at a critically low level, as measured by reading test administered by the teachers.

Theoretical background and general outlook

Our proposition in the research- and development project is that a book-flooding program has a strong potential for the development of literacy for all pupils. Studies indicate that students’ voluntary reading of interesting books, and the reading of books to students, contribute to motivation for reading and incidental learning of language and content (see e.g. Elley 1991, Morrow et al. 1997 and Axelsson 2000).

In such book flooding programs, the students are often allowed time in class to do work which is organized in relation to the students’ reading. Such work may be illustrated by way of a sun-shaped figure which includes the activities and connect them to the literature:²

² The illustration is based on Alleklev and Lindvall 1998 who describe the activities organized in the *Listiga Råven* (‘Smart fox’) program in Stockholm, Sweden (Alleklev and Lindvall 1998, 2003)

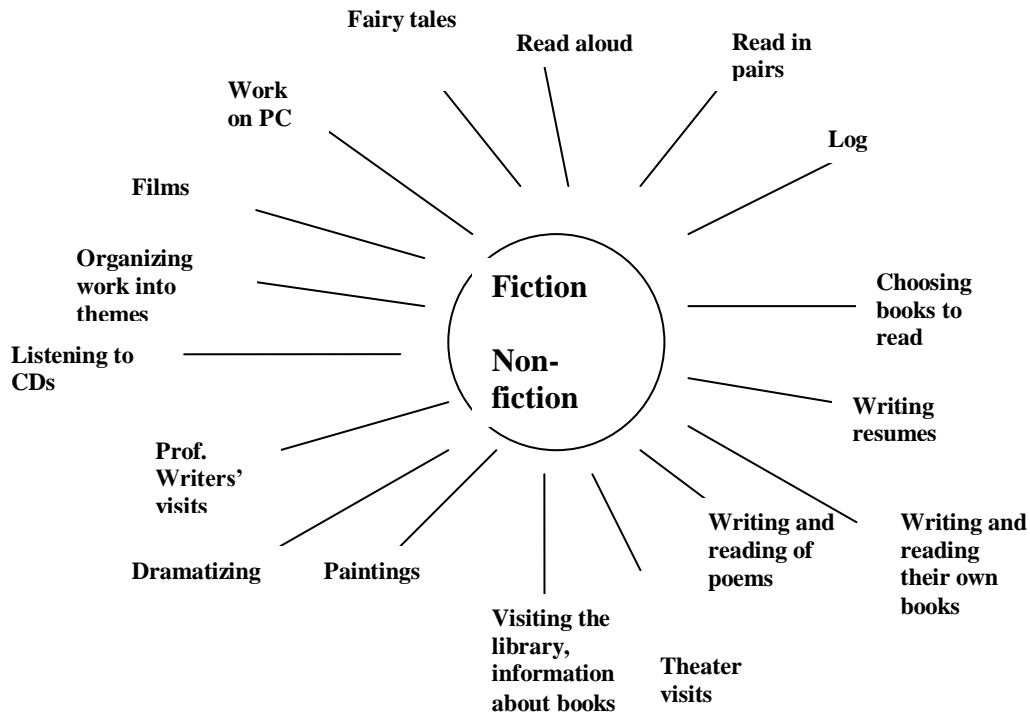


Figure 1: Typical activity types included in a book-flooding program

In addition to the research basis from the mentioned prior work on book-flooding programs, the motivations for our project are to be found in the general picture presented by surveys on literacy and school achievements covering the whole population of Norway. The statistical central bureau of Norway (SSB) reports relevant facts in the Norwegian barometer of the media 2008. The percentage of people who read on a typical day in Norway, can be seen in Figure 2 (from SSB 2008):

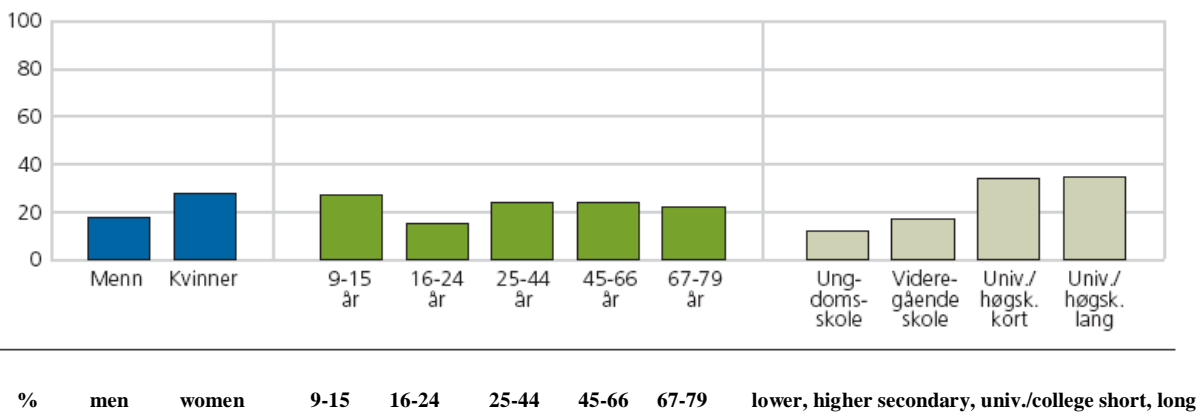


Figure 2: Percentage of book readers on an average day, according to gender, age and education. 2008.

The figure shows that people with high education read more than people with less education. In professional life, leaders and people with academic professions read more than others. Furthermore, Bakken (2004) shows how (lower and higher) secondary school students from linguistic minorities perform in school compared to students with at least one parent born in

Norway, comparing the numbers from 1992 with the numbers found ten years later: “For minority language students with parents from non-Western countries, the school achievement situation has worsened. While the gap between the achievements of the majority students and the minority students in 1992 was 7 percentage points, it has risen to 12 percentage points in 2002.” (our translation). Figure 3 illustrates these numbers:

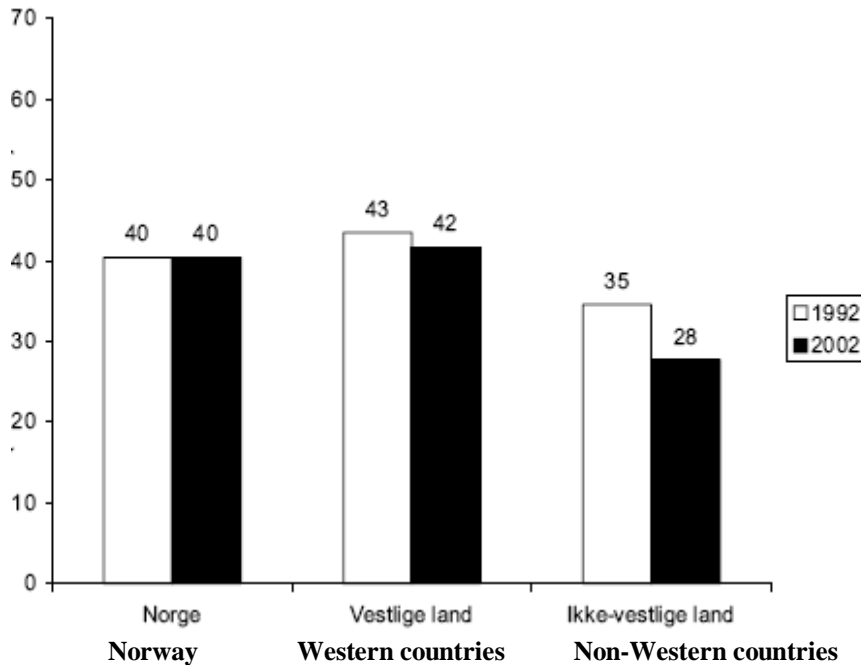


Figure 3 (from Bakken 2004)

Percentage of pupils with good grades (of the best 40 %), according to birth country of their parents. Comparing the numbers for 1992 and 2002.

Also, the number of books at home is generally known to be an indicator for cultural capital, which may pay off in the form of good school achievements. The differences that such cultural capital may lead to, also seem to increase. Bakken (2004) reports (our translation):

Figure [4 below] confirms that the access to books in the home is clearly related to the students’ grades in the theoretical subjects in school. At the same time, the results show that the access to books to an increasing extent is important for the level of achievement of the students. Students with relatively few books at home have in the ten-year period [1992-2002] weakened their level of achievements in school, while those students that grow up with many books at home achieve even better than they did ten years back. In 1992 the difference was 27 percentage points with regard to school achievements, between those that had fewer than 20 books at home and those that had more than 500. In 2002 the difference was 35 percentage points.

Figure 4 illustrates:

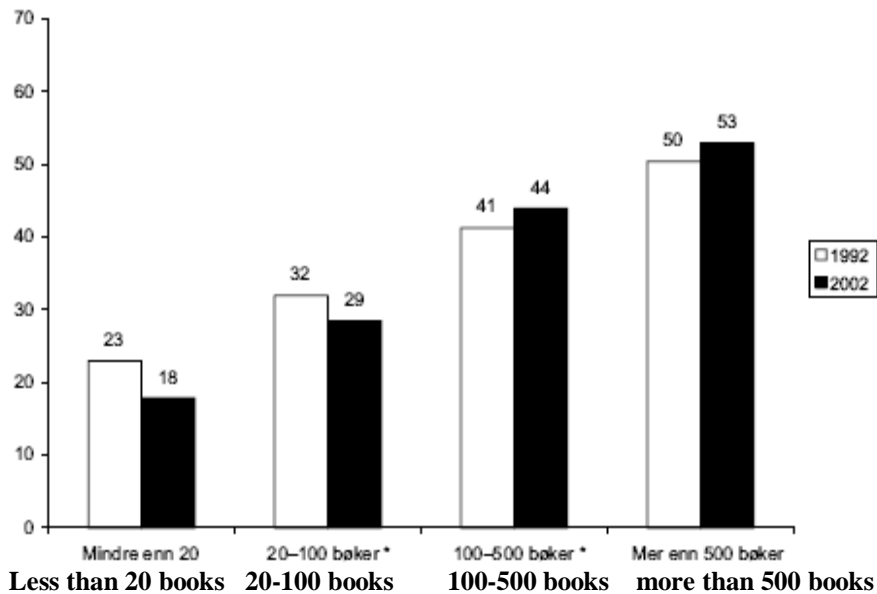


Figure 4. (from Bakken 2004)
Percentage of lower and higher secondary school students (12-16 years) with good grades, according to number of books at home.

An important principle guiding such interventions like those in our project is that all the participating pupils are given equal access to literature, which they find interesting, and that they are together when they read and write. Development of literacy is a form of social practice, which is a lot more than acquisition of skills (Barton, 2007). Within New Literacy Studies (NLS) (Street, 1995, 2003) literacy teaching and acquisition is conceptualized as a form of social practice. Street writes:

...literacy is a social practice, not simply a technical and neutral skill; that it is always embedded in socially constructed epistemological principles. It is about knowledge: the ways in which people address reading and writing themselves rooted in conceptions of knowledge, identity and being. It is also embedded in social practices, such as those of a particular job market or a particular educational context... (Street, 2003: 77-78).

This perspective leads us to an understanding that literacy is not limited to a singular literacy, which can be measured and identified in terms of a literacy score which assigns the child to a specific literacy level. Rather, we are experiencing a multitude of literacies, also connected to a variety of languages, i.e. multilingual literacies, which co-exist within different domains and sometimes in hierarchical relationships (Barton, 2007; Martin-Jones & Jones, 2000).

However, a more narrow understanding of literacy is the dominant form of literacy in Norwegian education, since the teachers feel obliged to teach for the vast amount of tests that deem their school successful or not. Also the teaching in most subjects is traditionally based on the use of one textbook for each subject. The degree of children's school success is defined in terms of their ability to show fluency in reading and writing and have oral skills in the dominant Norwegian language, as defined by the national curriculum. Furthermore, after 1997, the national curriculum has not acknowledged minority language literacies, multilingual literacies, as a goal in itself. Minority language has been taught to a minor degree, and only as a tool for acquiring the Norwegian language. Although we endorse the type of literacy that is described within New Literacy Studies, and reflected in the quote from Street above, we also acknowledge the fact that the teachers are guided by the test regime and the national core curriculum. We hold, however, that the literacy enhancement that is developed in book-flooding programs facilitated by the collaboration between school and library, does not

exclude or prevent the more narrow understanding of literacy. Our preliminary results in the project indicate this, as we shall come back to.

People develop a passion for reading in contexts where reading is social and enjoyable (Barton, 2007; Barton, Hamilton, & Ivanic, 2000; Martin-Jones & Jones, 2000). Studies show that segregated educational provisions for ‘low achievers’ give no positive results and may even give negative results in terms of literacy and educational performance (Amrein & Berliner, 2002). If people are defined in terms of categories, they tend to be confined to the categories. An example of this is the category “low-achievers”. A pupil who is defined as a “low-achiever” tends to get treated as a “low-achiever” in school, with lower expectations from the teacher (Nieto 1996). This will tend to reproduce the pupil’s situation and position as a “low-achiever” (Amrein & Berliner, 2002). Ranking and sorting is given priority over learning. If the educational focus changes from placing pupils within a specific category and group, to seeing each individual fundamentally as in a process of developing, the primary objective will be to provide the most stimulating educational environment for individual and social development and learning. It is in this light we argue for the implementation of book flooding programs in literacy education. The one textbook offered in many subjects is seldom of high literary quality. It is seldom interesting reading, and it rarely meets the multiplicity in the classroom. In other words, it is not well suited to the multiple interests and needs of children in socially and culturally complex classrooms. Here the library can make a difference.

Interventions and the collaboration between the school and the library

The school classes in the two schools of the project, have been engaged in the literature and “book flooding” program since August 2008. It is initiated by the researchers in the project and carried out in practice by the librarians and the teachers. The project emphasises the reading of a lot of varied literature, an approach which is often named “book flooding”. The main focus in our project is on high quality fiction books. Also a variety of faction literature is selected and used in class, to give more choice for the students’ reading also in particular subjects. In order to facilitate such reading, researchers, teachers and librarians collaborate to organize visits to the library and to organize borrowings of book cases of library books to be used in the class rooms, etc.

As we mentioned in the description of the multicultural school in the project, in the fall of 2008, visits to the library were organised only for a small, selected group of pupils with immigrant background, who were chosen because their literacy performance was at a critically low level, as measured by the reading test. However, after this initial phase when the teachers brought only “low-achievers” to the library, the teachers changed their practices when it came to collaboration with the librarian of the public library branch, now taking their classes to the library. There were nevertheless differences between the classes. In two of the classes, each student joined organized trips to the public library seven times during the remainder of the school year, whereas in the third class, each student only got to visit the public library once on an organized trip. Notwithstanding the differences between the classes, the case was that the teachers ended up not segregating the students into high- or low-achievers groups when visiting the library. We believe that the teachers’ changed their practice because of positive experiences with what they had seen of the book-flooding program. Our observations are that the teachers saw that book-flooding in the classroom – including books obtained directly from the library by the selected students on their library class trips – stimulated the children to extensive voluntary reading. Also, as we noted earlier, a book flooding approach to literacy stimulates both the “situated”, New Literacy Studies type of literacy as well as what we called the “narrow” type of literacy, as is dictated by the test regime and the monolingual approach to literacy in the national curriculum. Because the

broader type of literacy does not exclude the more narrow type of literacy that the teachers are obligated to observe, we believe the teachers more easily saw the value of providing all pupils in the class with extensive book resources. See van der Kooij and Pihl (2009) for further details of the discussion on this process.

It is important for the collaboration between teachers and librarians to acknowledge that there are crucial structural differences between schools and libraries which have implications for the professional roles of teachers and librarians. Related to what we previously called the narrow understanding of literacy, the teaching profession is obligated, not only to qualify pupils and students, but to rank and sort them as well.³ Assessment is based on national or local curriculum guidelines. In the present era of globalization, standards and requirements, which are applied at the national level, are increasingly based on international standards provided by OECD and international evaluation agencies which conduct educational assessments, such as the PISA, PIRLS and TIMSS surveys (Kjærnsli, 2007; Mullis, Martin, & Foy, 2008; Mullis, Martin, Kennedy, & Foy, 2007). This is characteristic for public education in Europe.

Librarians seem to have a less ambivalent professional task than teachers. Librarians are obliged to assist and qualify people who visit the public library on the basis of the wishes of the person in question. It is not the professional task of librarians to assess or control the people, who use the public library. While public education is mandatory, use of the public library is voluntary. Thus the professional relation between the librarian and the user, on the one hand, and the teacher and the student, on the other, is rather different. Dressman characterizes the library as a “liminal space” in which the autonomy of the user is decisive as regards the use of the library (Dressman, 1997). Audunson characterizes the public library as a “low-intensive” learning arena – a public space in which informal learning and social interaction is possible between people of different social and cultural background, who otherwise may not interact (Audunson, 2005). Rafste characterizes the school library as “back-stage” because it provides students with a space outside of teacher control and evaluation, which is so prominent in the classroom, which is characterized as “front-stage” (Rafste, 2005). From different theoretical disciplines and perspectives, these researchers conceptualize qualitative differences between the library and the school.

However, a look into the social mandates of the teaching profession and of the library profession can show us that the two professions have important goals in common. For instance, Pihl (2009) discusses the professional similarities and differences between teachers and librarians and notes that qualification and cultural transmission as well as development of democratic participation, inclusion and citizenship are common elements in the social mandate the teaching profession and the library profession. The social mandate is endorsed by the International Associations of Teacher Professions⁴ and the International Federation of Library Professions (IFLA).⁵ This is articulated in legislation which governs teaching and librarianship. The mandate is reflected in research about multicultural, intercultural and inclusive education (Ainscow, 2004; Allan, 2003; Banks & Banks, 1995; Gordon, 2000; Gundara, 2000; Nieto, 1992), as well as in research on democracy and inclusive aspects of librarianship (Aabø, 2005; Audunson, 2005; Kerslake & Keller, 1998; Matarasso, 1998).

³ The ranking in Norwegian primary schools does not include marks/grades or rejection of progress into the next school level, but a comprehensive national and international testing program nevertheless marks the students as high-achievers or low-achievers with regard to certain factors. Segregation is also not supposed to happen in Norwegian schools, although an extensive sorting takes place by way of special education for a big part of the student population.

⁴ Lars Inge Terum, lecture at the conference ‘Research in practice’/FoU i praksis, Trondheim 2008.

⁵ The Public Aims of the ‘Education International’ (Education International, 2008) and the Public Library Manifesto of the International Federation of Library Associations & UNESCO (IFLA/UNESCO, 1994).

The common goals which are shared by teachers and librarians are important social preconditions which are made use of in the inter-professional cooperation between the two professions in our project. We have already seen that the teachers in our project needed to see for themselves that their professional obligations, which include both qualifying students and ranking and sorting them, would probably not be in danger by cooperating closely with the librarians, for instance by including all the students in the library visits. Rather, the teachers in practice recognize that they are likely to benefit from such a close cooperation.

The survey and reading tests – presentation and discussion

In June 2009, we undertook an electronic survey among the students of our two project schools. 66 students out of 80 fourth graders in the multicultural school completed the survey, i.e. yielding a 83% answer rate. From the other school, of the fifth graders involved in the project, all 51 students completed the survey, i.e. yielding a 100% answer rate.

The purpose of the survey was to elucidate how the students relate to books and reading. That is, what the students like to read, whether they enjoy reading, what kinds of writing activities they engage in, how often they use the library and what they like to do in the library, how many books they believe that they own and how many books they think they read during the school year. An analysis of the results indicates interesting relations between the number of books that the students report to own, the number of books they report to have read the last school year, their reading development and their use of the public library. Contrasting briefly the multicultural school and the other school, also reveals some interesting features of the students' reading at the two schools.

When we look at the two project schools in our project with regard to the number of books they report to own, it may serve as an indication for the number of books in their home. The median value for books owned, reported by the students in fourth grade (i.e. from the multicultural school) was 18 books, while the median of the fifth-grade students in the other school was 40. This means that a typical student in the latter school reports to own almost twice as many books as the typical student of the multicultural school. Still, in the survey the students from the two different schools report to have read more or less the same number of books during the past school year (2008/2009), on average 37 and 36 books for the fourth-graders and the fifth-graders, respectively.

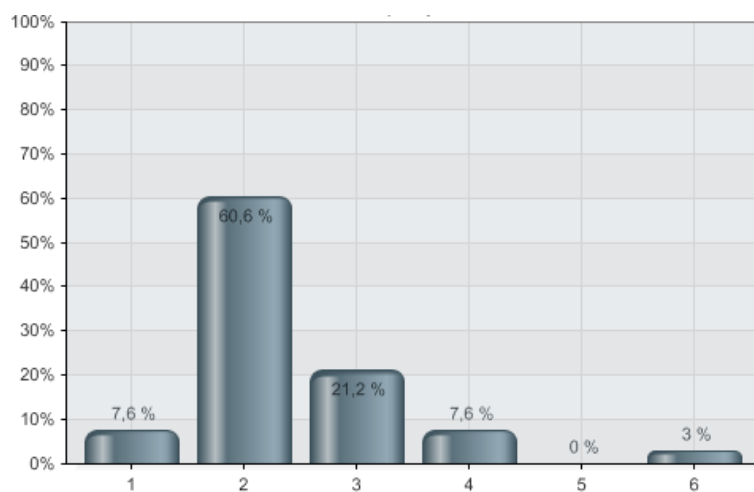
We checked the quality of the self-reported numbers of owning and reading books by comparing these numbers with some of the actual registrations done by the researchers who observed the students throughout the year, in collaboration with their teachers. For a random selection of 15 students in (the multicultural school) fourth grade, there was found to be a positive correlation ($r=0.66$) between the students' own book number reports and the numbers that are reported by the same 15 students in the survey, i.e. those with high self-reported numbers in the survey also had high numbers noted by the teachers and researchers.⁶

One objection to the numbers reported about the books read through the year is that the fifth-graders probably have read books with more text than the fourth-graders. It is clear that text size, font size and the quantity of illustrations play a role when the students choose what they want to read. Counting any book as one book in this way is not satisfying for a good comparison, and a more thorough study of the material with regard to text quantity of the various books will give a better ground for comparison. On the other hand it may also be argued that ignoring the illustration/text ratio makes it more "fair" to compare two different

⁶ The students tended to report higher numbers than those noted by the researchers and the teachers. Some of the discrepancy between the numbers is due to the timing of the survey. The main part of the electronic survey took place some weeks after the setting of the researchers'/teachers' numbers used in this paper. The students may well have read more by mid June than what was recorded by mid April. The point here is merely to show that the average numbers of the books that the students have read in the two schools are relatively similar.

grade levels, fourth and fifth. In this sense it is an interesting fact that the average number of books read during the year is the same for the students in the two schools. For now it suffices to say that the numbers are interesting, and worth looking further into in order to make a sounder comparison. For now we may use these numbers to ask: What makes the students in the multicultural school read so many books? The survey results and observations indicate that use of the public library has contributed significantly.

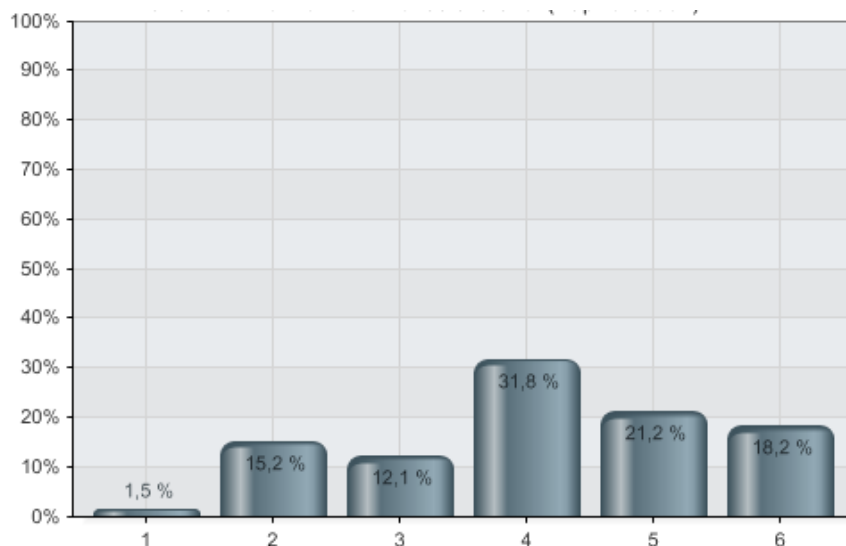
In our two project schools, there are natural differences in the use of the public library and school library. The fourth-graders attend a school situated in the immediate vicinity of a public library branch, whereas the school library offers only limited services to the students, due to lack of resources up to now (this is about to change). The fifth-graders, on the other hand, attend a school with a well-functioning school library, but the area does not have a public library. It is interesting to note what the fourth-graders, with a great percentage of minority children, report in the survey with regard to the frequency of the use of the public library situated next door to the school, as visualized in Figure 5:



1 Every day 7.6%
 2 Several times a week 60.6%
 3 Once a week 21.2%
 4 1-2 times a month 7.6%
 5 1-2 times a year 0.0%
 6 Never 3%
 Total n=66

Figure 5. The multicultural school's fourth grade students' visits to the local branch of the public library.

Figure 5 shows that 68% of the students use the local branch of the public library several times a week or more. Almost 90% visit the local public library branch at least once a week. As noted earlier, the visits to the local public library that have been organized by the teachers and the librarian during this school year, add up to 7 visits for each of the students in two classes, and one such visit for each of the students in the third class. The rest of the library visits reported by the students in the survey are visits they have made in their own free time, of their own choice. In addition, these students sometimes use the main public library in the centre of the city, as seen in Figure 6:



- 1 Every day 1.5%
 - 2 Several times a week 15.2%
 - 3 Once a week 12.1%
 - 4 1-2 times a month 31.8%
 - 5 1-2 times a year 21.2%
 - 6 Never 18.2%
- Total = 66

Figure 6. The multicultural school’s fourth grade students’ visits to the main branch of the public library.

That is, 60 % of the students visit the main public library at least once a month. A correlation test made of the visits to the local branch and the main public library shows a further interesting aspect of the patterns of library visits; there is a positive, statistically significant correlation⁷ between visiting the local branch and the main public library, i.e. a student who visits the local branch often, is likely also to visit the main public library often. At this point in time, we can only speculate whether the library competence that the students have acquired through the school initiated visits to the local library branch, makes it easier for the students also to visit other libraries.

It seems as if this overall high frequency of public library visits compensates for the relatively low numbers of books these students have reported to own and the likely correspondingly low number of books at home. Bakken’s (2004) statistics presented earlier shows the positive correlation between the number of books at home on the one hand and achievements in school on the other. It is reasonable to infer that it is of high importance for children with few books at home to have good access to books elsewhere. In this way the public library is particularly important for these children’s reading, their attitude towards reading and their reading skills, all of which are important aspects of their literacy and ultimately important for their success in school and after.

The following overview describes what these students report to do of activities when they visit the local public library branch (the students could choose one or more of the activities listed in this question in the survey):

Activity	Percentage of the students (the 44 fourth graders)
Borrow books	95

⁷ Pearson’s $r=0.362$, correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Read books	64
Be with friends	50
At the club playing computer games	38
Do homework	36
Borrow music	24
Read magazines	24
Watch movie	17
Talk to the librarian	14
Be with family	14
Learn to use the computer	12
Play chess or other board games	12
Seek information on internet	7
Look at exhibitions	5
Read papers	2
Listen to read-aloud sessions	2
Watch theatre or plays	2
Other things	19

The data shows that the students to a great extent borrow books and read at the library. It is interesting to see that 50% of the students report that being with friends is one of the things that they do at the library. It may be interpreted to the effect that the library is a social place, whether they go there with friends or with family, it is a place with interesting resources available. It may reflect the features of the library that we discussed earlier, what Dressman (1997) calls “liminal space”, Audunson (2005) names “low intensive learning arena” and Rafste (2005) characterizes as “back stage”, all concepts describing qualitative differences between the library and the school. These differences between the library and the school may be crucial for the learning in a heterogeneous student group. For many students, these somewhat complementary qualities of the resources and ambience between the library and the school may open possibilities for learning in the students’ own way and pace.

In addition to the information extracted from the survey, it is worth noting that the project students in the multicultural school, in the two subjects Norwegian and social science have had access to a lot more books than merely the ordinary school books. The two subjects were those included in the project at the present time. The fourth-grade-students had access to a variety of books connected to the selected themes ‘the ocean’, ‘spooky ghosts and other spooky stuff’ and ‘fairy tales’. Also, connected to the curriculum theme ‘the iron-age’, they circulated a book case among the classes. The book cases included 227 books in total for this school year in these themes. In addition, each student also received a book as a gift from the project.

For the multicultural school, the implications of the extensive reading of literature have also been that the teachers organize activities that involve the literature that the students read. For this school, the key intervention in the project is thus a literature-based program for literacy acquisition, which includes all of the pupils in one cohort.

In the following we describe an example of monitoring the reading achievement of the students in the project, checking that the development of the reading skills of the students are positive, and likely complying with the good results shown in the studies describe earlier (Elley 1991, Morrow 1991, Axelsson 2000). As it is a reading speed and comprehension test that is not designed primarily for research, we do not claim anything but a reassuring indication of a positive trend for the students in the project.

The students' reading development

We have studied one of the fourth-grade classes more closely with regard to the amount of reading and their reading development during a critical period of our project, from the fall of 2008 to late spring 2009. One reading test, the Carlsten-reading tests in Norwegian commonly used by teachers to assess the reading speed and comprehension of their students, was administrated by the teachers in this class in early November 2008 and again in late April 2009.⁸ In the class, 5 out of the total of 28 have Norwegian as their first language. The test results show a clear development in the average reading speed in the class, from 76 words per minute on average in November 2008, to 92 words per minute on average in April 2009, i.e. on average the class read 16 words per minute faster in April 2009. Some students showed particular improvement of reading speed, according to the two test sequences. One minority language student improved from 109 words per minute to 191 words per minute, another student, with Norwegian as a mother tongue, improved from 52 words per minute to 93.

On average, on this test, the minority language students did well, they improved their reading speed with 30 words per second, compared to the mentioned class average of 16 words per minute improvement. These tests and numbers only serve as indications that the students' literacy development go in the right direction. We cannot tell, as the test is not primarily designed for quantitative analyses, and as we do not have a control group, whether these results are causally connected with the activities in the project. However, interesting enough for the teachers, the test indicates a good development with regard to what is regarded as a critical (low) limit of reading speed. The test in the fall of 2008 showed that out of the 21 who took the reading test both in the fall and in the spring, 10 students scored below or around 50 words per minute, which is considered a critical limit of reading for fourth grade students. In the spring test, however, only one student scored around this limit, with 56 words per minute. No student scored below 50 words per minute in the spring.

An interesting correlation is found between the students recorded to have read many books (measured by way of pages read) during the school year and the students that ended up reading fast. We have the relevant data from 25 students. The correlation is statistically significant at the 0.01 level and the correlation is relatively strong, $r = 0.500$. That is, a huge amount of reading has been generated during the school year 2008/2009. This reading correlates significantly with the reading speed by the spring of 2009. i.e., the students that have read the most have a high reading speed in the spring of 2009. A slightly less clear correlation is found between the reading test results of the fall of 2008 (i.e. prior to the massive reading) and the number of pages read afterwards, in the same school year. Here the correlation was $r = 0.469$ and it was significant at the 0.05 level.

Further interesting results from the school year 2008-2009 in our project are connected to certain distributional patterns of the reading, in particular the patterns concerning potential differences between groups with different levels of competence in the language of instruction. We thus make a divide between those students who have so low competence in the language of instruction (Norwegian), that it is decided that they follow a particular kind of curriculum for the subject Norwegian. A lot of the other students also have a relatively low competence in the Norwegian language, but the students' parents and the teachers have considered them to be above a certain competence level. The two types of curricula are here called *Norwegian as second language* and *Norwegian as first language* by way of convenience. The distribution of the number of pages read in the two groups is visualized in Figure 7 below:

⁸ The Carlsten-test primarily measures the reading speed, and also some (superficial) reading comprehension, i.e. the understanding of certain words, but not the comprehension of inferences etc in the text.

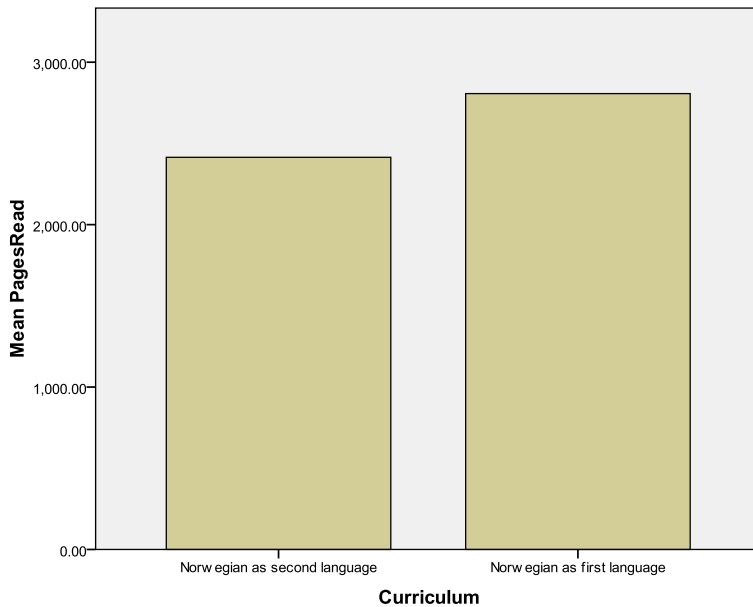


Figure 7. The distribution of pages read (mean values) for students with curriculum for second language learners (n= 14) and students with ordinary Norwegian curriculum (n= 13) in a school class in the multicultural project school 4th grade, 2008/2009).

As is seen in Figure 7, the students following the curriculum Norwegian as second language have read more pages throughout the school year than the students who follow the ordinary curriculum. More specifically, in the first group the students have read 2807 pages on average, whereas in the second group the students have read 2415 pages on average. Interestingly, the students with the curriculum Norwegian as second language also made more progress with regard to reading speed in the same period, compared to the other group, as is shown in Figure 8 below:

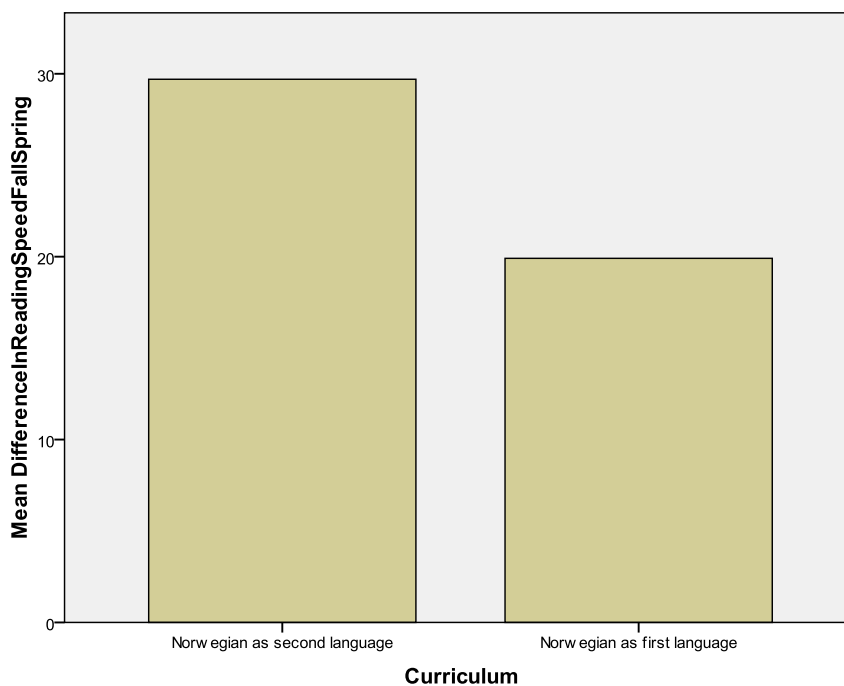


Figure 8. The distribution of pages read (average values) for students with curriculum for second language learners (n= 14) and students with ordinary Norwegian curriculum (n= 13) in a school class in the multicultural project school 4th grade, 2008/2009).

As Figure 8 shows, students with the curriculum for second language learners have improved their reading more than the students that follow the ordinary curriculum for Norwegian. In fact, in the former group the students increased their reading speed by approximately 30 words per minute on average, whereas in the latter group the students increased their reading speed by approximately 20 words per minute on average. These numbers, although taken from a small group of the surveyed students only, are interesting because they indicate that such a book flooding program may be extra beneficial to minority language students, as we will further discuss in the next section.

Discussions and analyses

The analyses of the results from our project so far, indicate that the minority language students studied here, have relatively few books at home, but nevertheless they have read a significant number of books throughout the school year 2008/2009. The amount of books read seem to be in level with (primarily) majority language students from socioeconomic groups that report to own far more books. We have also found a statistically significant correlation between the number of books read and reading speed, as measured by the teachers' testing. Furthermore, the minority students with the lowest level of competence in the language of instruction seem to have benefited to an extra degree from the book flooding program, as shown by their positive change in reading speed throughout the school year. It may be that these students more than others find such an approach to learning stimulating, since the students are not categorized in the learning process as "low-achievers", but are rather individually given a stimulating environment for development and leaning. In this setting, the students are not confined to one textbook only, but to a multitude of literature, which is better suited to meet the multiple interests and needs of children in a heterogeneous classroom.

We hold that the preliminary results presented above come as a consequence of the implemented collaboration between school and library in our project. Without this collaboration the students, with few books at home, would not have sufficient opportunities and possibilities for choosing literature from a wide variety of high quality books, to read both in connection with certain subjects in school and for leisure. Without the library serving the classes with relevant books in terms of book cases to have in the class rooms, the students would be confined to the "one fits all"-textbook for the whole class. Without organized trips to the local branch of the municipal library, the students would not as easily visit the library on their own, and would have very little access to suitable literature. Without the teachers letting the students spend time in class, reading their selected books and doing pedagogically motivated work with the literature, the students would not experience the social and motivating aspects of reading literature.

The results indicate that the accessibility of literature, where the library and the librarian are the facilitators, is important for these tentative improvements in the students' literacy. But it is also of utmost importance that the school and the teachers acknowledge the potential of quantity and quality of literature as well as the competence of the librarians, the way that we start to see in our project. As a result, the teachers incorporate reading and work

with literature into the school hours, plan ahead together with the librarians for literature selections for the book cases and for the library visits.

Our concrete project collaboration between school and library can be viewed and analyzed in a general light. As we mentioned earlier, such a discussion is undertaken in Pihl (2009). She holds that in the present situation in which discourses of accountability dominate the educational sector, the mandate of the teaching profession is acutely ambivalent. Teaching is supposed to contribute to qualification and democratic inclusion, while research documents that education contributes to reproduction of social inequality (Bourdieu, 1989; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990; Imsen, 2003; Kjærnsli, 2007; Kjærnsli, Lie, Olsen, Roe, & Turmo, 2004; Oakes, 1985; Willis, 1981). Reproduction of social inequality is mediated by high-stakes testing (Amrein & Berliner, 2000; Flinders, 2005; Pihl, 2005; Wiley & Wright, 2004). Against this background and the present state of multiplicity, the question of how teaching can qualify all pupils and contribute to literacy, inclusion and democratic citizenship is a pressing issue.

We believe that collaboration between teachers and librarians can contribute to sorting out some of the ambivalence of the teacher profession mentioned above. We also believe that this is what is happening in our project. Professional teachers and their occupational organizations need to be aware of the specific qualifications, competences and expertise of the teaching professions, as well as the limits of teacher qualifications. Fields of knowledge are becoming increasingly specialized. For example, information literacy is a field in its own right with specific requirements: information literacy is the ability to identify one's own information needs, the ability to search information, the ability to assess the information found, the ability to search relevant information and the ability to use the information, in order to solve a particular task or assignment (Barstad, Audunson, Hjørtsæter, & Østlie, 2007: 19). Information literacy is a speciality of the library profession and an argument for cooperation between teachers and librarians. The "generalist" teacher, who was educated for teaching once, and who taught many or most subjects at a certain level of education, will soon become, or may already be, an historical phenomenon.

Conclusions

In this paper we have addressed the question of how the public library – in particular collaboration between school and library – may contribute to provide opportunities for all students, especially to enhance literacy of linguistic minority students. We have presented preliminary results from our literacy project in Norway (2007-2011), which show a promising amount of use of the public library, and also indicate a positive correlation between library use, quantity of reading and reading speed.

We have argued that what makes these positive results possible, is that we acknowledge the need for professional reflection on the social mandate of teachers and the primary objectives and qualifications of the teaching profession. Recognizing the limits of teacher expertise and professionalism, in our project we have facilitated cooperation between the teachers and another profession which have expertise in fields that are highly relevant for literacy – the library profession. In this paper we have pointed out and demonstrated the value of such cooperation for the realization of the social mandate of the teacher and the school. In this paper we have argued that this collaboration has given promising results with regard to the students' use of the public library, with regard to the number of books read, and it has also with regard to the students' reading development. Furthermore, we have shown in this paper that the minority students with the lowest level of competence in the language of instruction on average seem to have even greater advantage of the book flooding program, they have

increased their reading speed comparatively well throughout the school year. We have argued that it may be that these students more than others find the book flooding approach to learning stimulating, since the students are not categorized as “low-achievers”, but are rather individually given a stimulating environment for development and leaning. In this setting, the students are not confined to one textbook only, but to a multitude of literature, which is better suited to meet the multiple interests and needs of children in a heterogeneous classroom.

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