



Chilean preservice teachers and reading: a first look of a complex relationship

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Abstract

Two pillars of the curricula for primary education and early childhood education in Chile are, respectively, the formal teaching of reading and the promotion of the pleasure of reading. These two objectives depend, in part, on the relationship that teachers themselves establish with reading. Previous studies have been critical, suggesting that teachers seem to act as “false readers,” endangering the formation of new readers. Under this premise, this research investigated the reading life of future teachers who are trained, among other things, to mediate subsequent learning, as well as the acquisition and development of committed readers. The study focused on the importance of reading, preservice teachers’ motivation to read different types of texts, reading habits, and actual reading done during 1 year. The research participants were 365 prospective Chilean early childhood ($n = 164$) and primary education ($n = 201$) teachers, who responded to Likert-type and open-ended questions. In line with previous studies, we observed teachers’ high reading valuation but low effective reading praxis. Regarding the importance of reading, we observe reading utility as a first dimension while “enjoyment” or “connecting with my history” are the least valuable dimensions. The implications of these findings for initial teacher training—and especially the role of children’s literature in this framework—are discussed.

Keywords Teacher education · Reading · Motivation

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1 Introduction

The importance of the quality and equity of education in Chile has led to proposals for improvement strategies that increasingly point to the teacher and their performance as a determining factor in their students' achievement (Cf. Elacqua et al., 2018; Mizala & Schneider, 2019). Indeed, a series of initiatives have been implemented to strengthen teaching programs and improve critical indicators, such as attracting better candidates and increasing retention (Ávalos, 2014; Centro de Políticas Públicas, 2012).

To further regulate the heterogeneity quality of initial training programs (Falabella & Rojas, 2008), Chile has published its Guiding Standards for Alumni of Pedagogical Programs (MINEDUC, 2014, 2018b). In line with the evidence that shows a literacy trajectory where reading literacy increases but reading motivation decreases (Wigfield et al., 2016), these guidelines promote pedagogical strategies that encourage students' reading for pleasure and their motivation and engagement with reading. According to these guidelines, early childhood and primary teachers are expected to acquire disciplinary and pedagogical knowledge, among other skills, to develop children's capacities for oral language and initial reading and writing.

Thus, a central element of the curriculum is that the teacher explores written material and provides a sustained practice of reading literary texts in the classroom (MINEDUC, 2014, 2018b). However, these curricular objectives require that teachers be able, first, to select age- and reading level-appropriate materials for the children and, second, to handle a vast repertoire of literary and non-literary texts across diverse genres (MINEDUC, 2014, 2018b). Despite these clear objectives, teacher training programs do not explicitly develop this aspect boosting the teacher's personal relationship with reading. Recent research in Chile shows that children's literature is absent from more than 50% of early childhood education courses, and from more than 45% of primary education courses (Peñipil et al., 2016). Even in those programs where children's literature is taught, reading and analysis focus on a classical corpus instead of contemporary children's literature (Molina, 2014). Indeed, the literature review by Dengler (2018) shows that educators privilege their personal experiences with reading—instead of academic criteria—when choosing material and implementing practices around children's literature in the classroom.

On the other hand, studies reveal that beliefs about reading are associated with personal reading practices, as teachers tend to use pedagogical practices that align with their own beliefs (Bingham & Hall-Kenyon, 2013). Likewise, these personal reading practices have an impact on their teaching practice. Thus, it has been observed that teachers' low knowledge was related to students' low knowledge (Binks-Cantrell et al., 2012).

2 Teacher's reading habits

This diagnosis of initial teacher training in Chile is compounded by issues with teacher's reading practices. The literary quality of material selected, the achievement of the learning objectives expected for each level, and the richness of the interactions with the written word all depend on the knowledge and the relationship that future teachers have developed with reading.

However, and regardless of country of origin, the reading attitudes and habits of teachers (whether in training or in service) have been described as unenthusiastic or only for personal reasons (Demiroz & Yesilyurt, 2015; Granado, 2014; Pitfield & Obied, 2010; Skaar et al.,

2018). This is a situation that is replicated in the professional arena. Studies show that teachers do not read scientific sources to enlighten pedagogical decisions. This phenomenon would be explained by comprehension difficulties or because they simply do not believe in research (Borg, 2015; Cain, 2015; Cousins & Leithwood, 1993; Zeuli, 1994). This phenomenon—which has been described as “aliteracy” (Cf. Chong, 2016; Nathanson et al., 2008)—is the disconnect between an individual’s ability to read and their personal disinterest in doing so. According to Dengler (2018), future teachers prefer to access information through summaries or by watching movies. For primary teachers, who are expected to introduce new generations to reading, this paradox has pedagogical implications at best, and threatens the quality of training programs at worst.

As a further barrier, the educational system assumes that teachers are already motivated readers, fully enabled to develop interest and motivation for reading in their students (McKool & Gespass, 2009; Merga, 2016). However, in addition to poorly established reading habits (Applegate et al., 2014; Binks-Cantrell et al., 2012), teachers consistently show a low knowledge of literary works (Cremin et al., 2008) and—more worrying still—a low self-efficacy with respect to teaching reading (Meeks et al., 2020; Meeks et al., 2016), likely as a result of their difficulties to understand basic language and reading constructs (Binks-Cantrell et al., 2012). This is a clear disconnect between the always-positive self-assessment teachers provide regarding reading and the effective time they spend on reading (Nathanson et al., 2008). This phenomenon has even been attributed the name of “false readers”: that is, individuals who, despite having a positive image of reading, restrict their practices to a functional use, appealing to external factors (for example, lack of time) to justify their lack of reading (Larrañaga & Yubero, 2005).

2.1 Reading mediation, habit, and motivation

In the present study, we understand the reader as the person engaged with written language to exercise their work functions and carry out recreational activities of various kinds. The reader assumes a social perspective of the reading activity. They do not focus on the mere decoding activity. Still, they consider that the texts are instantiations of discourses that structure and form individual and social identity (Gennrich & Janks, 2013).

Research shows that genuine teacher-readers are individuals who position themselves as another reader in the classroom, talking about their practices, preferences, habits, and stories (Cremin et al., 2009). According to research, these professionals create more opportunities to develop children’s metacognitive awareness as readers and build more openly reciprocal reading communities in their classrooms. This is, according to Commeyras et al. (2003), the true essence of teacher-readers: teachers who read and readers who teach, in other words, effective cultural mediators.

As a cultural activity, literary training and an interest in reading require the intentional mediation of significant adults (Rodríguez et al., 2017). In the school context, it is the teacher who has the social mandate to incorporate new generations into the written culture, who has the opportunity to mediate this access, and who contributes significantly to consolidate the interest for this cultural practice (Merga, 2016). This requires that teachers, right from their professional training, have a close link to this cultural practice (Falardeau & Simard, 2011).

Evidently, it is desirable that this relationship with reading goes beyond a situational interest, consolidating itself as a personal interest (Renninger & Hidi, 2016), to become a habit. Although there are various notions of reading habit, most of them

emphasize the frequency of reading (Verplanken, 2006). However, it seems important to us to consider reading not only as the practice of an automated skill, but also as the “expression of one’s identity” (Schmidt & Retelsdorf, 2016). In this sense, the reading habit is not only reached by the mere repetition of the behavior, but it also involves a series of motivational variables that would allow this behavior to remain in time (McGeown et al., 2015).

Concerning the notion of “reading for pleasure,” it is essential to note that it is not only an individual dimension. It is also considered a social practice that often takes the form of reading communities. A central aspect of reading for pleasure stems from the reader’s volition, agency, and desire to read (Krashen, 2004). This type of reading emphasizes the reader’s sense of agency and free choice. In this respect, it is distinguished from other forms of reading that follow a sense of school or professional obligation. According to this idea, the choice of reading material for pleasure responds to the direct interests of the reading subject (Clark & Rumbold, 2006). Also, this type of reading has an impact on reading engagement. So, these readers want to read and find satisfaction during the process. Therefore, they read more frequently than those who do not perceive pleasure while reading (Clark & Teravainen-Goff, 2020).

Motivation appears as a fundamental variable in explaining reading habit (McGeown et al., 2015; Vera Valencia, 2017) and reading comprehension (Nevo et al., 2020). In this context, intrinsic motivation (Ryan & Deci, 2020) plays an important role in the engagement and subsequent increase in reading amount (Troyer et al., 2019).

Beyond an explanation of how intrinsic or extrinsic motivation for reading is, or the consideration of motivational structuring factors such as expectancy and task value (Rosenzweig & Wigfield, 2017), or the impact of this variable on reading performance (Schiefele et al., 2016; Troyer et al., 2019), it is important to explore, from a phenomenographic approach, the types of reading these future mediators do (Merga, 2016).

Recent research shows that the reading of classic literature would be rather low, compared to the reading of best sellers (Munita, 2014), and that this could be characterized generationally through vernacular practices outside the margins of the literary canon. Likewise, in the case of teachers, it is likely that they will not recognize some of their readings, considering them to be far from the representation of “good reading” associated with the teaching context (Gaete-Moscoso, 2019). In this sense, a reliable and valid research device should provide unbiased information on reading practices that will allow us to know how present reading is, in all its forms, in the life of future teachers, considering that their mission is the training of readers committed to this cultural practice.

Recent studies show that one of the main obstacles would be a lack of time. This would explain results which indicate that future teachers would read for pleasure, such as, when they are on vacation (Granado, 2014). In this context, teachers (as readers) should not be understood only as people who have a daily reading habit to achieve their professional goals or for the pure pleasure of reading. In this research, we assume teachers people who “position themselves as fellow readers in the classroom community, who talked about their practices, preferences, habits and histories and explored the dynamic between their own and the children’s reading”(Cremin et al., 2009, p. 14). And this trait is perceived by the students (Merga, 2016).

2.2 The present study

If the education system expects teachers to draw upon personal resources to inspire future readers, we must examine what practices sustain the reading life of the future teacher, what genres they are self-motivated to read, how much they read, and at what time. These are the questions that guide our research, and the answers could help us to better define who this future teacher is and to provide the necessary support to strengthen their relationship with reading on a professional level.

The present study focuses on investigating the relationship of students in early childhood and primary education programs with reading, under the premise that their work is intimately linked to the first formal encounter of children with books and reading. The formation of new readers will depend on these pedagogical actions.

3 Method

This descriptive study is part of a larger project on the relationship of future teachers to reading. The data discussed in this article corresponds to a specific set of questions contained in a questionnaire applied to the general sample of the study.

3.1 Participants

A formal invitation was made for universities across the nation to participate in this study. Once authorized by the universities, we invited student teachers to answer the questionnaire in person. The questionnaire was administered as a group (paper format). In total, four hundred students from 9 universities completed the questionnaire. The complete data of 365 students are reported in this study. One hundred and sixty-four participants belonged to the career of Early Childhood Education (Nursery School), and 201 to Primary Education. Thirty-five participants were male, 329 were female, and two students preferred not to identify. Although the sample is mostly female, the proportion by sex does not differ from the national average (MINEDUC, 2018a). The average age of the total sample was 21.6 years ($SD = 3.95$).

3.2 Measures

This study uses two sets of Likert scale questions (motivation for reading specific types of texts and attributions about the importance of reading), an open question (effective readings during the last year), and a reading habit scale, all of them developed or adapted by the research team.

The first set of questions addresses the motivation for reading different types of texts through the following direct question: “How motivated are you to read?” (each type of reading constitutes a question itself: (1) literary texts, (2) messages on social networks, (3) informative texts, and (4) academic texts). Each alternative was assessed on a 6-point agreement-disagreement scale, where 1 means “completely disagree” and 6 “completely agree.”

The second set of questions addresses the importance attributed to reading (“reading is important because it allows me to...”). The alternatives were five in this case: access to culture, connecting with my history, enjoying, accessing other “worlds”/other ways of understanding life, and learning. The options presented were originated from a previous qualitative study

through focus groups; we explore the reasons why preservice teachers read (Muñoz et al., 2020).

The open-ended question inquired about texts read voluntarily during the last 12 months, identifying those that were read during vacations or during the academic year. Finally, a reading habit scale was considered, corresponding to an adaptation of the Schmidt and Retelsdorf scale (2016) ($\chi^2_{(1,2)} = 58.8$; $p < .001$; RMSEA = .06, CI [.04–.08], SRMR < .02, CFI = .987, TLI = .980). Originally constructed in a format of a 5-point Likert-type scale, we decided to transform it into a six-point Likert-type scale where 1 represents “totally disagree” and 6 “totally agree.” The scale was compounded by 10 items and was introduced by the statement “Reading in my spare time is something:” Students rated their agreement on a series of statements such as “I do frequently” and “that belongs to my daily routine.”

3.3 Analytical procedures

The motivation for reading different types of texts was analyzed in a descriptive way. The items were ranked, and their means contrasted in order to configure homogeneous subsets. The analysis of the importance attributed to reading followed a similar procedure. The reading habit scale, together with the descriptive analysis, allowed a correlation analysis of this variable with the number of texts read in the last year.

Two judges, both language teachers, carried out the classification of the texts reported by the students. The analytic procedure included two stages: top-down/bottom-up (Biber et al., 2007). The top-down analysis allows the classification of texts from two previous categories, literary and non-literary (Eagleton, 2011). This first categorization is based on the taxonomy commonly used in the Chilean school curriculum (MINEDUC, 2015). The category named “literary texts” includes texts with an artistic intention, promoters of reflection, and creative use of language. The non-literary texts category includes texts with an informative and argumentative purpose, with highly functional uses. The bottom-up stage consisted of the emergence of open-ended subcategories of genres conditioned to the characteristics of our sample. This categorization distinguishes different genres, especially inside literary texts. Despite the diversity of possible canons to describe according to literary studies (Fowler, 1979), we understand in this study as canon the texts and authors legitimized as authentic manifestations of literature by the western and Chilean literary tradition (Acosta et al., 2017; Carrasco, 2008), authors who have been anthologized or awarded, representative of some genre or period, or have been the subject of specialized criticism (MINEDUC, 2015). Therefore, the present research identifies those texts traditionally and historically recognized by academic programs of training in literature in Chile and texts outside the literary canon. For example, the genres of novels for young people, romance, saga novels, and science fiction were categorized in the second group.

4 Results

Since no significant differences were found in any of the items between the future primary teachers and the future early childhood teachers ($p > .05$), participants were characterized as a single sample.

4.1 Motivation by reading different types of texts

In response to the question “*How motivated are you to read?*” different types of texts were presented, so that participants could self-report their motivation to read them. The results are organized into four different levels (see Table 1 of homogeneous subsets), that is, a hierarchy where the motivation appears with statistically differentiated values for each type of text. Thus, the first level is motivation for reading literary texts ($M = 4.95$; $SD = 1.10$); the second, motivation for reading messages in social networks ($M = 4.74$; $SD = 1.32$); the third level, for reading informative texts ($M = 4.24$; $SD = 1.19$); and finally, academic texts (manuals, scientific articles) with corresponding lower motivation ($M = 3.88$; $SD = 1.14$).

Even though a question like this may have been subject to high social desirability, and scores tend to be on the positive side of the scale, they are relatively low and mostly closer to the midpoint of the scale (3.5) than to the top end of the scale (6).

4.2 Perception of usefulness of reading

A second question asked students their perceptions of the usefulness of reading, emphasizing functional aspects, by prompting “*Reading is important, because it allows me to...*” Response options were given on a six-level Likert scale that indicated the degree of agreement with respect to the statements (1 is “completely disagree” and 6, “completely agree”). The options proposed were as follows: “*access to culture*,” “*connect with my own history*,” “*enjoy*,” “*access to other worlds, other ways of understanding life*,” and “*learn*.”

The results suggest high recognition of the usefulness of reading in all the potential benefits suggested, at a range of 5.41 to 5.83 (in a scale of 1 to 6), where both the mode and the median reached the maximum value of the scale (6). However, although these scores are high, it should be noted that there is no evidence of a ceiling effect with respect to the maximum score of the scale ($p < .001$).

In a first global analysis, significant differences are observed between three homogeneous subsets. On a first level of hierarchy, without significant differences ($t = .094$; $p = .366$), reading is grouped as an important means of “learning” ($M = 5.82$) and as a “way of accessing other worlds” ($M = 5.79$) and, on a second level, the importance of reading as a way to “access culture” ($M = 5.71$). Finally, in a third block, with averages statistically different from the previous groups, we find “enjoyment” ($M = 5.42$) and “connecting with my history” ($M = 5.36$).

Table 1 Homogeneous subsets: *how motivated are you to read...?*

	1	2	3	4
Literary texts (novels, short stories, poetry)	4.95			
Messages on social networks (Twitter, Facebook)		4.77		
Informative texts (paper or digital newspapers)			4.22	
Academic texts (manuals, scientific articles)				3.87

Significant differences $p < .001$

4.3 Reading habits and reading reports for pleasure

The reading habit was measured through two different strategies. First, through a self-reported scale on how habitual it was for the person to read and, second, via an affirmative report of which text(s) they had read for pleasure during the last year. Special emphasis was placed on talking about “texts” and not “books,” to avoid biasing the response and to provide an opportunity for vernacular reading practices to appear, which, under normal conditions, may have otherwise been omitted or self-censored as “undesirable reading” by the participants (Barton et al., 2000).

Reading habit reports showed a mean of 3.61 (SD = 3.88), statistically lower than the midpoint of the scale ($t_{(1,364)} = -3.47, p = .001$) and suggestive of a perception of a rather declined reading habit. These results correlate significantly with the measurement of texts read during the year ($r = .524; p < .001$).

The second strategy to explore the reading habit of the future teacher (open question) resulted in more than half of the participants (53.7%) reporting a maximum of two texts read for pleasure during the 12 months prior to data collection. This was the mode for reading habits (26.5%).

Table 2 shows the number of texts that the participants in the sample declared having read voluntarily during the last year. It should be noted that 13.1% of the students did not read any text on their own initiative during the last year at the time of data collection, and 40.8% stated that they read only between one and two texts. Notwithstanding, 16.9%, the students who read the most, declared six texts read on their own initiative during the last year. The annual average of texts read outside the curriculum for the entire sample was 2.8 books.

4.4 When do future teachers read for pleasure?

Along with requesting a report of texts read during the previous 12 months, participants were asked to indicate when reading occurred. Participants were asked to distinguish between texts read during the academic year and during the vacation period.

A total of 861 texts were reported. In response to the instruction “Please indicate the texts that you have read voluntarily during the last 12 months,” the students referred to titles (e.g., “*The Little Prince*”) or genres (“Biography”). Of the total reported, 57.4% of the texts were read during the academic period (in Chile, between the months of March and December), while 42.6% were read during the vacations (see Table 2).

Table 2 Number of texts read for pleasure in the last 12 months

Texts reported	Frequency	Percentage	Accumulated percentage
0	41	13.1	13.1
1	44	14.1	27.2
2	83	26.5	53.7
3	29	9.3	62.9
4	38	12.1	75.1
5	25	8.0	83.1
6	53	16.9	100
Total	313	100	

The comparison between early childhood education students and primary education students revealed no differences in the amount of reading done during the academic year. However, the comparison of readings made by these groups during the vacations reveals significant differences in favor of future primary teachers, who read more voluntarily than their peers during that period of the year ($F = 10.41$; $p = .01$).

4.5 Genres

With respect to the genres that students in our sample read on their own initiative, 64.6% correspond to literary texts and 32.8% to non-literary. Within these two major categories, various genres were distinguished (see Table 3).

Of the total number of texts read, 26.5% corresponded to novels of non-canonical genres and, therefore, not commonly dealt with in the literature programs in universities (e.g., youth novels such as *The Fault in Our Stars*), and 24% corresponded to novels belonging to the literary canon (e.g., *The Divine Comedy*). It is worth noting the low percentage of sub-genres that differ from the narrative text, such as dramatic (0.2%) and lyrical (0.9%) texts.

Remarkably, 86% of the titles evoked can be found available or suggested in the Digital School Library (MINEDUC, 2020a) or as suggestions for reading the Curricular Bases (MINEDUC, 2020b). These results suggest that much of the literature evoked as “reading for pleasure” comes from their previous experience as readers in school. On the contrary, the number of children’s literature texts reached 6.2%.

Table 3 Frequency of declared genres and sub-genres

Genre	Frequency	%	Sub-genres	Frequency	%
Best seller fiction	229	26.5	Youth novel	78	9.1
			Novel saga	70	8.1
			Romance novel	46	5.3
			Science fiction novel	14	1.6
			Horror novel	12	1.4
			Police novel	9	1
			Literary canon	211	24.5
Academic/professional	122	14.1	Story	34	3.9
			Poetry	8	0.9
			Theater	2	0.2
			Manual	46	5.3
			Monograph	45	5.2
			Article	13	1.5
Self-help/non-fiction best seller	60	6.9	Regulatory framework	13	1.5
			Essay	10	1.1
			Self-help	44	5.1
Humorous stories	60	6.9	Humorous stories	16	1.9
			Children’s	54	6.2
Essay	46	5.3			
Dissemination	29	3.3			
Biography	27	3.1			
Comic book	27	3.2			
Religion	25	2.9			
Report	20	2.3			
Informative (MCM)	11	1.2			

5 Discussion and conclusions

The present article discusses the self-reported motivation and reading interests of future early childhood and primary education teachers and contrasts them with their effective reading practices.

The results are suggestive of a complex panorama. On the one hand, future teachers in the sample declare themselves particularly motivated to reading literary texts (clearly more motivating for them informative or academic texts, typical of their training). However, their perceptions regarding the usefulness of reading showed that its functional aspect, as a tool for access to knowledge, is the predominant facet for consideration. In this respect, authors such as Colomer (2002) show that the social functions of literature have been reduced in the school space, relegated to a “type of text,” among many others, where reading takes on a strictly functional character. This result coincides with qualitative research carried out with student teachers from diverse programs in the country, reflecting the evident dissociation between the discourse about reading and the effective reading practices of future teachers (Muñoz et al., 2020). Regarding the quantity and quality of readings reported by the study participants, it is striking that those student responses considered only books and not other types of printed material, like reading. That is described in the specialized literature as the preeminence of the book as support (Chartier, 2013) and particular readings, over others, making vernacular reading practices invisible (Chartier, 2004; Gaete-Moscoso, 2019).

Secondly, the titles evoked show a high prevalence of “bestsellers” over other readings, a fact that coincides with previous studies (Granado, 2014; Larranaga & Jimenez, 2019). In this sense, our study adds to a series of evidence across latitudes, weaving a broad understanding regarding the relationship of future teachers with reading. Where the teacher is unable to exercise their role as a reading model at school, their literary knowledge places a restrictive margin of possibility on reading mediation (cf. Peter Effect in Applegate et al., 2014; Merga, 2016). Also, contrary to expectations, recreational reading does not increase during vacations, and future elementary school teachers show higher reading habits than future early childhood educators.

While this diagnosis may seem negative at first glance, it may also represent an opportunity for developing reading promotion. The non-conventional readings mentioned (e.g., fan fiction) can provoke a better understanding and closeness to young people’s reading preferences and practices in school. This knowledge can be positive if the teacher uses it to bridge the genres known and appreciated by the student and the corpus of readings that the school intends. Research with diverse approaches and methodologies has shown that reading motivation is enhanced when students’ interests are considered when they are given a vast repertoire of reading options and provided with challenging reading opportunities that allow them to demonstrate their progress (Gambrell, 2011; Guthrie, 2015).

This similitude of literary tastes and preferences brings future teachers and their future students closer generationally. In this sense, our participants seem not to have broadened or complexified their interests and preferences with respect to the young readers with whom they will have to work. This phenomenon poses a challenge for teacher education programs. To avoid this stagnation and make a more sociocultural approach, pedagogy programs should recognize the vernacular reading practices of the future teacher and broaden their literary background to enrich it. This situation supposes a challenge for pedagogy programs in Chile and demands an updating of literary collections in university libraries to improve the literary training ecosystem of future teachers.

6 Future teachers and children's literature

A major challenge remains in reading training for future teachers of early childhood and primary education. In our study, the reading of children's literature—precisely the privileged medium for the first approach of children to the written word—appears to be underrepresented within the preferences of self-directed reading. Shared reading in early childhood has diverse positive effects on cognitive and socio-affective development (Hoyne & Egan, 2019; Sénéchal, 2017). Future educators are not inclined to read this type of literature “for pleasure,” and this belies that they see this kind of readings in a professional light, only meant to be read in fulfilling the mandate of “reading to children.” There is also another explanation for this result related to the type of question proposed in our study. It seems obvious that reading books “for children” does not seem appropriate for older people. So, we must revise these results with caution. However, such disinterest calls into question their knowledge of specific works for this age range. In this regard, it is important to remember the recommendation from Chambers (1996) regarding the creation of a “cultural ecology” where people have the opportunity to grow “as healthy and engaged readers” (p. 1). This can only be done in teacher training programs that center around reading and enrichment of the reading background of their students. The reading, analysis, and formation of the criteria for selecting literary and non-literary texts are essential themes in the formation curriculum of these educators. Teaching literature requires didactic skills that are formed not only from the curriculum's conceptual knowledge but also from life experiences associated with literary reading (Asfura & Real, 2019). Something similar can be said in the case of future primary school teachers, where there is a minimal allusion to the reading of literary texts from genres like lyrical or dramatic. The restricted handling of literary genres and sub-genres may prevent students from opening their minds to the knowledge of new worlds and new representations of reality.

An alternative explanation for this result lies in the type of question posed to participants. When asked about voluntary readings done by students, this question probably activates in the student's memory only those readings they effectively do for pleasure and unrelated to their teacher training.

7 The reading paradox: self-perception versus habits

On a complementary level, it is striking that, although literary texts are indicated by the participants as more motivating, enjoyment does not appear as a relevant dimension when judging the importance of reading. Similarly, the connection of readings to the story itself does not seem to be an important element for participants. This should lead us to reflect on how these future teachers will mediate reading at school, between rote praxis or enjoyment when providing spaces for children to establish links between their lives and their readings when considering criteria for readings. It is known that the evaluative aspect prevails in the readings present in the school space, and that assessing or “controlling the readings” usually displaces the work of mediation tending towards knowledge, esthetic appreciation, and valuation of works (Munita & Pérez, 2013).

In the same line, the information gathered allows us to conclude some discrepancies between participant self-perceptions of reading and their real reading habits as a leisure activity. While students perceive themselves as highly motivated to read various texts (Table 1), the report of the number of texts read shows a low value with respect to the

standards for number of texts that a good reader should read annually (Pew Research Center, 2016). The fact that almost 80% of the participants have not read more than five texts on their own initiative during the last year is a figure that is worrisome, if we consider that teachers must not only manage disciplinary knowledge, but also possess a broad cultural background that enables them to be ambassadors of culture in the school environment (Muñoz, 2015).

Indeed, comparing our results with reader consumption surveys at the national and international level shows similar trends. The Survey of Reading Behavior (Dirección de Estudios Sociales UC, 2014) reported that 48% of Chilean adults did not read any book during the last year; 39% declared that they read between 1 and 5 books; 8%, between 6 and 10 books; 4%, between 11 and 20; and 2%, more than 21 books in the last year. Overall, the average number of books read on their own initiative in the country is just 2.4 books per year. While these data correspond to Chileans over 18, but does not the level of studies, our sample of student teachers read just 2.8 books per year. In other words, there is no considerable difference between the reading habits of student teachers and the general Chilean population. This figure is striking when we consider that our sample corresponds to future professionals who will play a role of mediator and reading promotion.

Perhaps the low rate of motivated reading in our pedagogy students is due to the lack of free time to read, indeed, the main reason given by teachers in training and in service in other studies (Skaar et al., 2018). However, this argument is not consistent with the data found in the question about when they read texts on their own initiative during the year. Respondents indicated that 57% read during the academic year and 42% read during the vacation period. According to these results, most of the students organize their free time in such a way as to allow them to read some type of text for their own motivation. This reality contrasts with the opinions of our sample regarding the importance of reading. In other words, these future teachers are fully aware of the positive value of the reading activity in the intellectual and emotional development of people; however, this assessment does not determine the real reading habits of our future teachers. These findings allow us to connect our results with the notion of *false readers* (Elche & Yubero, 2019; Larrañaga & Yubero, 2005). According to the research of these authors, about 55% of the participants in their study disagree with their statements regarding the number of books read during the last year and the time they dedicated to reading as a leisure activity. This dissonance is likely due to *social desirability*: with reading as a cultural activity associated with the school (synonymous with literacy), and the teacher as the key agent of this task (the literacy teacher par excellence), the social mandate imposed on the teacher makes it unavoidable that the teacher declares himself not to be a reader.

Beyond stigmatization of any “non-reader,” our study has sought to contribute with a first survey about the reading reality of the future Chilean teacher. Only from a serious and rigorous diagnosis can we take measures to improve the situation of reading in the country.

One important limitation of this study is that no records were kept linking the identity of the participants which has made it impossible to consult them for feedback on the analysis of the data they produced, a clear methodological shortcoming of the study. Also, the limitations of this study referred specifically to the not-representative sample design and make us cautious in our conclusions. Nevertheless, we are encouraged by the fact that certain trends present in the international literature have been confirmed. In fact, that the profile of the “teacher-reader” is similar across latitudes leads us to believe that certain proven intervention initiatives—such as Teachers as readers (Cf. Commeyras et al., 2003; Cremin et al., 2014)—could be a way to transform future teachers and their relationship with reading on a personal and professional

level. In both experiences, reading is the center of the intervention: it is a means and an end in itself; it is a door to dialog, reflection, and construction of teaching identity.

In this sense, although the Guiding Standards for Alumni of Pedagogy Careers (MINEDUC, 2014, 2018b) calls to provide teachers with a wide repertoire of literary and non-literary texts to face their role as mediators of culture in the school context, it seems that pedagogy programs abstract the reader–future teacher as subject as not being the same person they are training.

In summary, this study shows the need to consider the reader–future teacher as a formative dimension from the beginning of the teacher training path. The reading trajectories of our students of pedagogy—heirs also of a long trajectory of school culture—need to be reinforced through explicit interventions. True reading teachers can reconcile the demands of the curriculum and student agency so that their students can find their own way of being a reader in the world.

A possible projection of this study would be to characterize the future teachers who declared to be frequent readers versus those who claimed to have read one or no books and identify the factors that determine this difference in their reading habits. This could be achieved through interviews and focus groups. The present research has adopted a descriptive design focused on future teachers' self-perceptions and reading habits. However, as an additional projection, we consider the determination of the possible impact of reading habits declared in teaching practice. In this sense, it would be important to relate how these habits influence the promotion of early grade reading.

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Data availability The data that supports the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author, upon reasonable request.

Declarations

Conflict of interest The authors declare no competing interests.

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