https://liar.ui.ac.ir/?lang=en
Literary Arts
E-ISSN: 2322-3448
Document Type: Research Paper
Vol. 17, Issue 2, No.51, 2025, pp. 1-10
Received: 13/01/2025 Accepted: 15/04/2025

The Benefits of Using Literature in Educational Practices and Boosting Students' Engagement

Mohammad Zohrabi *
Associate Professor, Department of English Language, Faculty of Persian Literature and Foreign Languages, University of Tabriz, Tabriz, Iran
mohammadzohrabi@gmail.com

Pedram Zarei
Ph. D. Student, Department of Curriculum & Institution, Texas State University, San Marcos, TX, USA
pedram.zarei@txstate.edu

Abstract
Literature plays a crucial role in education, a powerful tool for learning and teaching various subjects. It enriches the educational experience by fostering critical thinking, enhancing language skills, and promoting cultural awareness. Literature can enhance critical thinking and empathy by exposing students to various voices, perspectives, and experiences. This article explores the multifaceted role of literature in the learning and teaching process. Incorporating diverse literary texts in instruction is essential for fostering an inclusive and culturally responsive educational environment. In the present qualitative study seven literature and teaching professors, and twenty-six university students at the BA level were interviewed. The data were analyzed to deduce the relevant themes. The results revealed many positive points in using literary texts in language learning and teaching. In addition, some important themes were obtained from the interview data. In general, it was revealed that diverse texts could reflect students' varied backgrounds and challenge dominant narratives, encouraging learners to explore and appreciate different cultures and histories. This approach promotes student engagement and relevance, as the students see themselves represented in the literature they study. Moreover, different literary texts can serve as powerful tools for discussions around social justice, identity, and power dynamics, helping students to navigate complex societal issues. Ultimately, integrating these texts enriches the curriculum, supports the development of a more equitable classroom, and prepares students to thrive in a multicultural world.
Keywords: Learning, Teaching, Literature, Literary Texts.

1. Introduction

The recent spotlight on student engagement has been somewhat filled by the voices of researchers, student bodies, institutions, and student unions. However, researchers and students from one discipline have been conspicuously absent: world literature. Having recently chaired a panel as part of a student-led symposium on literature and engagement, an exploration of the merits and challenges of staff-student engagement partnerships in world literature seems fitting. In the context of the current climate of student disengagement, as well as wider questions regarding the future and relevance of the humanities, it is crucial to examine how student engagement can be successfully enacted in literature.

The focus of this article will be on a small number of initiatives that have been piloted over the last years, working collaboratively with professors, and undergraduate and postgraduate students to embed their perspectives in the departmental and pedagogical practices of staff. Literature is often perceived as an "easy" or "irrelevant" subject, and therefore one of the central concerns when developing these projects is how to ensure that literature is taught effectively in a way that best utilizes its medium. On a more practical note, there is also the challenge of negotiating an often-overwhelming departmental culture of research-intensive, individualistic commitments and ensuring that the voices of students aren't diluted in a wider academic discourse. The experience of working in partnership with students suggests that while there are significant hurdles to overcome in terms of sensitivity to power dynamics and academic cultures, student engagement initiatives are capable of making a positive impact on their engagement with issues within and beyond the

*Corresponding author
Zohrabi, M. and Zarrei, P. (2025). The Benefits of Using Literature in Educational Practices and Boosting Student Engagement. *Literary Arts*, *17*(2), 1-10.

2322-3448 © University of Isfahan
This is an open access article under the CC BY-NC-ND/4.0/ License (https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/).

10.22108/liar.2025.144049.2431

classroom.

Literature offers students a virtual world that the authors create through words. In this world, readers can find interesting characters, events, morals, situations, and many others that can bring knowledge and different ways of thinking to the readers. So, literature plays an important role in teaching and learning a language. Language is not only a medium to communicate with one another but also a way to express thoughts, feelings, culture, and civilization of a society. Literature, through its intrinsic elements, can educate society by reflecting the values embedded in the literary works themselves. Therefore, exposure to literature can be a good way to learn a language. The present study puts more emphasis on supportive relationships and a class environment that encourages good teacher-student interaction, creating a feeling of student belonging in place, and motivated. The deepened understanding that will result from student engagement will finally provide teachers with the means to craft practices that yield deeper learning and higher academic achievement. Literature and education have long intersected in productive ways, particularly as scholars have mined the former for insight into the latter.

2. Review of the Related Literature

Lately, Nussbaum (1997) in his article claims that a section of educators and linguists have been arguing that literature does not have a place in the modern-day classroom as far as being at the forefront is concerned. They argue that literature cannot adequately provide students with the pragmatic language they need in their daily interactions. Such educators perceive that the students may end up with no worthwhile benefits emanating from their studies in literature. Despite the arguments that question the significance of literature in the educational setting, it continues to be one of the most effective methods for introducing students to the target language they are studying (Carter & Long, 1991). It is through literature that students can be taken into a world where the target language, i.e., the L2, is alive and used, allowing them to encounter and work with "live" language in context. This may lead to an appreciation of the language as such and, therefore, deeper learning. Carillo (2019) contends that literature on measuring student engagement in educational practices has indicated that engagement is multidimensional; it includes behavioral, emotional, and cognitive dimensions.

It is on record that active engagement in learning activities has severally been emphasized by researchers as the sure way of realizing improved academic results (Cook, 1994). To this end, different frameworks and instruments have been advanced in measuring engagement, such as interviews that establish the students' involvement in classroom discussions, their emotional responses to learning, and their investment in academic tasks. This approach underlines great educational practices and factors like collaborative learning, formative assessment, and integration of technology that make the creation of improvement in engagement amazingly possible.

There is an excellent corpus of literature that has a much deeper impact on the academic attainment of critical thinking, and empathy and instills in students a love for reading. The central argument to be advanced is that literature forms one of the effective modes through which the skills for critical literacy are cultivated. According to Beach and Myers (2001), literature allows students to come to grips with major themes and significant perspectives on life. It evokes reflective thought on issues relating to civil concerns. It is such an engagement in a critical sense that constitutes a sound basis upon which a well-rounded citizen would be able to cope with the modern world. Literature reflects the historical and cultural context of a given era, and hence such experiences and insights that perhaps a student has not been exposed to can be gained from literature. Such exposure to diversified narratives fosters empathy by inviting students into the shoes of characters from different backgrounds, thus deeply understanding social justice issues (Nussbaum, 1997). The addition of literature into education also prove to further increase student participation.

According to Gambrell et al. (2007), at the times when students are most motivated to read, it is because there is an opportunity given to them to explore literature that is of personal interest and connects them with their own lives. Hence it occupies a place in reading; personal relevance means the more students see themselves in their reading, the better investment they are willing to make in their learning. Moreover, it can make a classroom more interactive by using literature. For example, group discussions, role-plays, and creative projects based on literary works inspire collaboration and communication among students, even increasing their engagement to work with the class material (Langer, 1995). Such interactive approaches not only make learning more enjoyable but also help students develop important social skills and a feeling of community within a classroom.

Of significance is also the role played by the teacher herself/himself in ensuring that there is learning through literature. Indeed, note that effective teachers who show enthusiasm about literature tend to elicit similar enthusiasm among students (Sipe, 2008). Similarly, professional development opportunities channeled into enhancing the knowledge of teachers on how best to use literature in their classroom practices have equally seen encouraging results in terms of improving teaching practices. Confidence both in knowledge about how to do the literary analysis and in pedagogical practices would better enable students to make meaningful connections of texts with their lives, thus allowing more significant engagement and deeper understanding. Another thing, education in literature came up with new pathways to engagement through technology use. Complementing traditional texts, digital platforms are emerging with several multimedia resources, so that literature comes across as quite more interactive and at ease with this generation of "digital" learners (Leu et al., 2011). With such educators, different forms of media can be utilized to help meet various learning styles and preferences which will better promote student engagement.

The implications for literature's role in educational practices will also involve the development of higher-order thinking skills. Literature involves critical analysis of characters and plot development based on a theme which is higher-order thinking. According to Rosenblatt (1994), the transactional theory of reading posits that meaning is established through interaction between a reader and the text. This will instill in students the value of active and reflective reading practices that have allowed them to question, interpret, and take meaning from literature. These practices do more than enhance comprehension: they build inquiring habits of mind that carry across the curriculum. Besides, literature itself can provoke interdisciplinary learning. The connection of the themes of literature to other areas of learning such as history, science, and the arts, allows teachers to contextualize education at all levels to lead students to reflect on connections among areas of knowledge, remarks Beers (2003). This approach greatly enhances their learning in literature and schooling experience generally.

However, a person should not be blind to problems that were created by putting literature into practice. Certain issues such as

constraints of curriculum, pressures of standardized testing, and differences in student preparation may emerge as obstacles to the successful usage of literature-based methodology (Applebee, 1993). In addition, it will not be an easy task to choose texts that would answer the students' interests – too diverse and different. These activities require continuous teachers' professional development and collaboration. Good practices and resources will be shared that will help the integration challenge reach their classroom doors.

It finally indicates the holistic effect of literature on educational practices and the involvement of students, with far-reaching implications for teaching and learning. It develops critical thinking, empathy, and engagement are encouraged while relating to personally relevant or interactive experiences. In literature-based learning, the facilitation role of the teacher plays a very important factor, and the inspiration and professionalism of the teacher could just ignite the flame for lifelong reading in children. Of course, embedding literature into the curriculum faces many challenges along the way, but benefits run deep from such a literature-rich educational environment. Most importantly, since the need to change with the times seems always to be being demanded of contemporary educators, the literature provides the most powerful interplay in shaping and molding learners to become concerned, critical, and humane – a very compelling question about education. To fulfil the study more profoundly, the following two research questions were employed to shed some light on our topic:

1) What are the merits and benefits of using literature and literary texts in different curriculums in Iranian universities?
2) What themes could be deduced from interview results from the students and professors to enhance the literature-based curriculums?

3. Methods

3.1 Design of the Study

The qualitative approach was used in this study. The qualitative research methodology deals with an in-depth investigation of perceptions in regard to understanding human behavior and experiences, which involves various techniques, such as interviews to gather a great sum of rich data that describes them. The same is done to bring forth meanings, themes, patterns, and context buried beneath the complexity of social phenomena, which other quantitative methods can barely unveil. In this study the independent variable is the role and impact of the literature and the dependent variables are the instructors' practices and the students' engagement and involvement in the learning process.

3.2. Participants of the Study

The participants of this study comprised seven university professors and twenty-six students. The study was conducted at three universities in Iran. The students were randomly selected from among different disciplines from the University of Tabriz. The professors consisted of literature (four) and teaching (three) fields and the students from different bachelor's and master's degree majors. The professors' rank ranged from assistant to associate to full one.

4. Results

4.1. Students and Professors' Interviews

Literature has always been the backbone of education, as it not only influences what is being taught but also how it is taught and in what manner the students learn. The following results consequently debate how literature shapes educational practices for better student engagement and highlight certain key benefits and challenges. Various related literature on how educational practices and student approaches to learning and engagement are shaped by literature does flag some findings that identify a transformational role that literary texts may assume.

Student number seventeen noted that literature is an acid test for eliciting critical thinking skills among students. It leads to discussion and contextualizing of elaborate characters and plots drawn from beliefs and experiences:

"This will help the learner gain more knowledge and appreciation not only of the text at issue but even the understanding of some current concerns that create the path to responsible citizenship".

One of the professors (number 6) remarked that very often, literature also presents a context through which interdisciplinarity can be attained most unconsciously or naturally: for instance, historical, psychological, and social strands may co-exist or intertwine:

"Placing literature within the curriculum will further give educators the ability to set a connected learning environment whereby the knowledge one acquires has some connection with that already learned or yet to be acquired; therefore, relevance among students becomes certain".

One of the students (number 22) emphasized that one should not underestimate the emotional power of literature: stories might show empathy and compassion solely by placing students in characters' shoes from other walks of life:

"Investing in such learning processes provokes in students a sense of community and belonging within the classroom due to emergent shared understandings and reactions toward several texts. Such discussions indeed develop interpersonal skills, respect, and tolerance so much needed within today's multicultural educational contexts".

"Moreover, literature so far often expressed the reflection of the students' real life – the so-called 'mirrors and windows' allowing students to express themselves regarding identity and experiences. The level of participation and motivation is developed when seriousness sets in the analysis of texts, which is when their motivation and devotion to reading fall closer to being personal". Giving voice and power to the subordinate groups in terms of representation of their own lives, and claiming their lives makes them agents (student number 17).

Student number 14 was of the opinion that another great benefit is about how literature forms languages and literacy. Diversity in literary texts furthers, besides grammar awareness, vocabulary gain through its rich and variable language, in addition to improving reading fluency and comprehension. Working on complex narrations, a student works at fathoming the language nuances and other literary devices to finally perfect her/his skills of articulation:

"Linguistics development for a student in this way is quite indispensable to becoming successful academically and functioning effectively in society".

Student number 22 stated that similarly, literature can be used to instill growth mindsets in students. Reflecting upon and discussing

setbacks that occur within the literature, students will work through their troubles with a much similar determination; therefore, developing resilience within them:

"This is because such defeat and victory exploration here can significantly be empowering since it conveys to the student the message that they indeed can surmount most obstacles in their life".

Professor number five argued that literature remains one of the developing pedagogies that strive to advance the relationship between instructors and learners. Teachers of such caliber can always display their passion and love for literature, even inside classrooms, making them very interactive and exciting. This also greatly helps the teachers trying to discuss open themes and characters of literature in making the students confident enough to pour out their thoughts, thus creating teamwork in learning:

"It goes further when instructors allow choices concerning reading selections, so students can reach for texts that reflect their experiences and interests; thus, it allows the students some degree of autonomy and investment in the process which are key elements for improving student motivation and achievement".

"Literature impacts students beyond school life. Reading literature instills the love of reading in students, which they can further pursue continuously during and outside of university. These acts nourish their lives and hence contribute to the development of cognitive and emotional facets. Deep involvement with a text in reading and critical reflection on it is a skill worth developing in the technological era. Therefore, educators have to be advocates for the inclusion of literature in the curriculum due to its many benefits" (Professor number four).

Professor number three remarked that, however, care should be taken to select works that are not only diverse and inclusive but also representative of a wide array of voices and experiences. This will enrich not only the curriculum but eventually prepare the students to cope with an increasingly complex world;

"The question of how literature influences educational practices and the involvement of students pinpoints that it influences critical thinking, emotional development, language acquisition, and social skills in a major way".

Intermingling literature within the curriculum enables educators to establish an academic setting that is far more captivating and meaningful in building in students a love of reading, empathetic awareness, and better equipping them for realities that they may face in today's society. The findings suggest there has to be something like a literature showcase for creating diversity in universities to create such an environment where the students will eventually share their voices and stories. This would, in essence, point toward an intrinsic belief in the power of literature to bring about change in education and create informed and engaging yet compassionate and resilient students who are able and ready to contribute constructively within society.

On the role of literature in education and in developing the curriculum, student number three commented:

"Diverse Perspectives: Literature allows students to discover several cultures, ideologies, and historical contexts, therefore making the curriculum more diverse.

Critical Thinking: The analysis of a literary text allows students to engage themselves with complex themes and hence their aptitude for analysis improves".

As far as literature on teaching methodology is concerned, professor number one gave prominence to:

"Active and Interactive Learning: Discussion and role-playing activities allow students to participate much more actively and interactively.

Differentiated Instruction: Professors can differentiate the choice of literature in class by using different kinds of needs. Thus, each one can bring different thoughts and insights into what is taking place".

Professor number two reported improvement regarding the students' engagement in the learning process and emotional involvement:

"Relatability: Characters and stories share something with the students, and that will be the main reason why literature could be such a great tool in emotional involvement.

Empathy Development: Students start to understand other people's experiences better by living through different kinds of characters and situations".

Parallel to this, student number nine pointed to motivation and interest:

"Choice in Reading: The more students have choices within their readings, the more motivating and invested this will be in their learning.

Integration with Other Subjects: Relating literature to other subjects of history and science will engage students in making far more cohesive and relevant connections between their learnings".

However, one of the professors (number five) pointed to the challenge of how literature is implemented in education: pressures of standardized testing:

"Quantitative Measures: An over-emphasis on standardized testing may reduce time and other resources available for literature and hence diminish its role in the curriculum.

Narrowing of Contents: The stress laid on the test materials may not permit professors to cover a full range of work".

One of the highly critical issues identified was the one dealing with access and equity given to the problems by one of the students, (number twenty-two):

"Resource inequality: This creates an inequality in the literature used that can lead to inequalities in education.

Cultural Relevance: It is tricky and hence challenging to achieve uniformity in learning institutions considering the diverse backgrounds from the pool of students to select appropriate literature".

Student number eleven suggested the following:

"There should be diverse topics on the reading list. There has to be university-level literature that will represent the background as well as interests of a representative group of all students".

Another student (numbered nineteen) stated that:

"Include Literature Across the Curriculum: Interdisciplinary approaches facilitate relevance and build student interest".

Finally, professor number three pointed to the following:

"Offer Professional Support: Professors educated on strategies of literature-based teaching can develop the practice and render it more effectively".

Of course, literature has much to offer in shaping pedagogies and students' engagement through critical thinking, emotional connections, and motivating learners. However, this would most definitely be a shift of focus onto diverse voices and love of reading that educators must make if they hope to foster more caring, actively humane readers. Then, this is tempered with standardized test preparations for educators and less than equal literature availability.

4.2. Emerging Themes and Patterns

Based on the interview data which were gathered from the students and professors, the following main contents emerged.

Literature as a Pedagogical Tool

Literature is a great pedagogical tool in education because it aids in knowledge acquisition, critical thinking, empathetic attitude building, and cultural sensitivity. Students come to learn in literature how to explore complex themes, enhance language, and gain exposure to many perspectives.

Fostering Critical Thinking

Themes and Characters Analysis

Discussion and Debate: Through literature, discussions about themes, morals, and motivations of characters are made easy for students and help them give words to their thoughts.

Multiple Perspectives: The different stories expose the students to the outlook of other people so that they grow empathetic towards them.

Problem-Solving Skills

Conflict Resolution: Almost all literature carries some kind of conflict that must find its resolution and thus encourages the students to develop a critical solution.

Creative Thinking: Interpreting literature requires creative thought; thus, it enhances the skills in solving problems creatively.

Analytical Skills: Literature encourages students to analyze characters, plot structures, and themes so that they can nurture critical thinking.

Interpretation: Working with the meanings of various texts develops the student's power of analysis.

Promotes Empathy and Understanding

Diverse Perspectives: Literature introduces students to cultures, experiences, and viewpoints other than their own; it nurtures empathy.

Sympathetic Feeling: Through failure and success in characters, the student can relate to others' lives.

Encourages Creativity

Imaginative Thinking: Literature motivates students to create and think of worlds and situations apart from what they live in.

Creative Expression: Students may want to respond to their readings by writing a story or a poem.

Appreciation of Diversity

Cultural Contexts: Literature teaches different cultures, traditions, and historical backgrounds; hence it widens the horizons of the students.

Empathy and Tolerance: Reading other peoples' experiences fosters empathy to put up with people very different from themselves.

Global Citizenship

Social Issues: Most literature discusses social justice, human rights, and environmental issues that would encourage students to be responsible and active global citizens.

Interconnectedness: Literature has shown students that the world is interconnected and thus broadens their perspectives beyond their immediatism.

Personal Reflection

Self-Discovery

Relatable Characters: Most of the readers find their images in the characters and hence come to know themselves.

Identity Exploration: Indeed, literature has always given students an avenue to express and explore their identity, beliefs, and values.

Emotional Intelligence

Understanding of Emotions: The involvement in the emotions of characters helps students develop emotional intelligence to help them become better equipped to deal with challenging situations.

Coping Mechanisms: Most literature discusses overcoming a particular struggle and allows the readers certain coping mechanisms to fight their battles.

Incorporating Literature into the Curriculum

Ways of Incorporating Literature into the Curriculum

Thematic Units

Interconnected Themes: Organize the literature into themes that can be related to the other disciplines such as history and social studies.

Literature Circles

Collaborative Learning: Students can discuss and analyze texts in small groups, fostering collaboration and deepened understanding.

Creative Assignments

Creative Projects: Let students create art, drama, or multimedia presentations about the literature they have read.

Critical Discussions

Socratic Seminars: These allow students to delve deep into the text, which in turn encourages open-ended questions and critical dialogues.

Literature is not a subject; it's a pedagogical tool. Literature built into teaching methodologies and practices would nurture the minds of critical thinkers, empathetic people, and innovative minds prepared more to step into this highly interlinked complex world that is ever-growing in leaps.

Cross-Disciplinary Learning

Interdisciplinary approach in the teaching-learning process: The proposal will infuse literature across various disciplines of history, science, and art. These in the learning process are holistic, inclusive, and non-singular.

Project-Based Learning: Projects on any form of literature can be made to enable research, creativity, and teamwork.

Innovative Teaching Strategies

Interactive Reading: Reader's theater or literature circles are but two activities that make literature much more interactive and relevant.

Integration of Technology: Literature, accessed through digital platforms, enables students to enjoy the literature even more.

Language Proficiency Enhancement

Vocabulary Development

Vocabulary Exposure: Literature exposes one to new words, meanings, and other uses of sentence structures that form important nuances of the language in classics and contemporary pieces that students will be working on. Such work develops vocabulary a great deal, and hence success is bound to come out of all this, particularly in the development of such critical awareness and use of the language.

Contextual Learning: Stories and poems in reading help a learner understand words in context. Thus, retention might be achieved as when students stumble upon unfamiliar words in a story, they can make reasonably accurate guesses due to the immediate text around those words. Learning vocabulary this way, therefore encourages not only acquiring vocabulary but putting it into action by the student in writing or speaking.

Reading Comprehension

Critical Analysis: The reading of sophisticated texts enables the students to carry out analysis and interpretation of the contents for better comprehension. This ability to analyze is in demand in the classes when a student is called upon to make critical evaluations of sources. The dissection of the text and knowing the hidden messages within will aid the student in various disciplines.

Inference Skills: Literature largely requires one to read between the lines, hence developing inference and deduction skills. Understanding subtext and that which is implied generally enhances comprehension for the students, as later they will face harder moments in academics. These skills of understanding inference, paramount in literature, also extend into science texts, historical documents, and even contemporary media.

Writing Skills

Literature is a model of good writing – the literary texts they read. It makes them see, in another way, style, tone, and narration they might afterward impersonate while writing on their own. This is by studying the structure of different forms; through which the student starts analyzing his or her voice.

5. Discussion

Literature has been a great factor in the means of teaching and learning methods for many decades. Duff and Maley (1990) argue that the one direction that offers extensive field and grounds for research lies exactly at that spot where literature and education shake hands, where through stories, themes, and characters, the young students start marching along toward complex idea development. This very dynamic has been the work of many authors who highlight how literature shapes educational practices to make students interested in education. The review, therefore, confirms synthesizing major findings of various studies conducted on multi-faced ways through which literature influences learning environments. The first highly valued area of research is how literature bridges gaps in culture and society in diverse classrooms. Other theorists, such as Bishop (1990), reminded educators of the ‘windows, mirrors, and sliding glass doors’ of texts – texts that allow students to view the world, provide reflections of their own lives, or allow them to enter worlds that reflect the lives of others unknown to them. Mirroring this way is useful in the validation of their own identity and nurturing empathy and understanding towards others. In this way, educators include in their curriculum many different works to engage all learners and give them a place within the curriculum sense of belonging and community.

Literature proves to be one of the most effective catalysts in developing critical thinking and analytic skills. Researchers like Rosenblatt (1995) called for a more transactional approach to reading interaction of the reader with the text as paramount. From this viewpoint, one would encourage students to make personal associations with literature. This is, in fact, the reason for much deeper involvement and understanding. Consequently, when, in practice, a teacher leads students to discuss a literary theme, characters, and moral dilemmas, it provokes them to think deeply, explain their ideas, and justify their interpretations. Such a process not only enriches the skills in literary analysis but broadly prepares the student with skills relevant to many disciplines.

Another finding that is considered critical pertains to the psychological and emotional gains that engage a student with literature. According to Alexander and Jetton (2000), a benefit of literature is that it can be a pathway to explore and understand emotions. In this sense, it is through the characters and their journey in the stories that students may experience themselves while developing emotional intelligence and resilience. So relevant it is in the school setting where students go through several challenges such as social pressures and academic stress. It is in this perspective that literature may contribute to students' emotional well-being and make them interested in and motivated toward learning.

This will further allow for interdisciplinarity in learning by incorporating literature into other disciplines. For instance, scholars

like Hough (1992) argue that literature as a course encourages a reasonable number of disciplines where history, science, and math subjects are involved in the learning atmosphere of their approaches. Tutors can further allow the students to relate themes within the literature those from historical ideas or scientific. The interrelationship built within such an approach not only makes academic learning relevant but also inspires learners to appreciate interconnected knowledge. The student develops a better understanding of life as he views literature together with other disciplines' insights.

Literature-based teaching has also become aided by the important role of technology. To date, platforms have risen because authors such as Thomas and Coiro (2011) explore how technology offers ways to facilitate engagement with literature. Examples that are current tools for students engaging in literature with modernity include the use of digital storytelling, using e-books to read, and participating in online forums to discuss literature. Besides this, such tools facilitate different learning styles and make literature more accessible to and interactive with students of various hues. Further, the use of technology provides for increased collaboration among students when sharing insights into the interpretation of set literature in a virtual yet interactive environment. Finally, a move toward digital literacy will not only raise levels of engagement but also more successfully equip youngsters with life in the 21st century.

Despite the many positives inherent in the use of literature integration within an educational methodology, challenges still exist. Indeed, most often, educators discuss issues regarding standardized testing and curriculum implications that seem to favor one course area over another. As argued by authors such as Allington (2003), such a focus on testing is often directly opposite the type of creative and critical thinking developed within literature. This calls for the interest of all educational stakeholders through the advancement of policies that ensure literature is an important part of the curriculum. It is in preserving this intrinsic value of literature in creating a well-rounded and engaged learner that educators balance and enrich curriculum and learning experiences for students. In this vein, where literary lessons emotionally engage the reader, challenge traditional ways of thinking, make interdisciplinary connections, embed technical skills, or approach diversity issues with sensitivity, education truly takes on an edutaining form. While these challenges persist, what comes out collectively from several of these authors is the need to make literature central in the educational framework. In so doing, a generation of academically competent learners sensitive and critical thinkers develops to forge their ways into the nooks and corners of the world. The deeper one digs for the multi-dimensional relation of literature to education, the more one realizes that literature is indeed not just a mere subject but an imperative one in the sphere of holistic education for shaping both minds and hearts.

A study of the impact of literature on educational practices brings about an entwined feeling of results. It is the finding by different authors that underpins the transformation that literature brings within a learning context. Featured author Rosenblatt (1995) bases her transactional theory of reading on the dynamics of interaction readers and texts undergo aspects of literature that make the literature personal for a better understanding and interest. She postulates that in instances where students read literature, they are not passive learners but active constructors of meaning based on experience and emotion. This construction gives deeper understanding and retention of knowledge since to the students, there is relevance in the texts that they read. One might interpret that Rosenblatt is saying here that literature bridges the experiences of the students with the general human experience; therefore, learning is more relevant and effective.

Alexander and McCaffrey (2011) also explained in detail how literature encourages critical thinking and discussion in the minds of the students. Their research details that with the inclusion of literature, there has been a tremendous improvement in the students in regards to higher order issues and debates on morality hence leading to thinking classroom and discussion. The question, however, remains how far this enhances a student's analysis power without sacrificing the empathy of these different perspectives expressed through character and narrative. Alexander and McCaffrey's (2011) study further points out that through literature, there is an espousing of interrogation by students regarding their assumptions and beliefs, a contribution to which cultivates part of the purpose of education – to be induced into a culturally reformed critical thinking culture. It is through literature that social discourses are catalyzed, with which the student engages and brings into purview.

Allington and McGill-Franzen (2013) extend this to include that access to a wide variety of literature is highly related to students' reading motivation and achievement. Thus, the present study points out that with opportunities to select texts with themes and subjects relevant to their interests, students are likely to engage deeply in reading with a decided rise in literacy competence. It is born from the place of observation of a student-centered approach where the educator becomes less the authority and more the facilitator through her/his explorations in literature. Diversity in literature carries with it an explosion of potential manners in which to love reading for a child, or better said, giving him a manner in which he has been allowed to take ownership of his processes of learning.

In fact, according to Nussbaum's (1997) research, the downside in the prescriptive curricula often stands forth with the perils of the loss of the richness of the literature for mere rote learning. She goes on further to suggest these modes of teaching do repress creativity and critical engagement by students in learning. With voices proclaiming literature integral to educational practices in the interest of creativity and critical thought, Nussbaum's call for a more literature-rich curriculum places her in good company. Many educators back the redesigning of school curricula, one that focuses more on investigation rather than conformation to narrow testing structures, as the qualities literature installs in students are things no standardized test has previously measured nor indeed can.

Tatar (2010) also deals with the use of a story in education. Her suggestion develops the idea that literature, mainly narratives, might be used as an effective tool for teaching multi-functional and multi-disciplinary notions. In her opinion, through the practice of storytelling educators catch the attention of students and give them the ability to learn abstract ideas more interactively and remember them longer. Storytelling allows students to take an emotional dip into learning for better retention and comprehension. According to research done by Tatar, literature is there to interweave and show its versatility and relevance within the range of curriculum subjects. The meta-analysis on visible learning by Hattie (2015) gives out the high value of literature-based interventions in raising student outcomes. He even goes further to say that literature would have a monumental impact on motivation, self-efficacy, and the performance of students if it is applied effectively within their curriculum. Indeed, other supporting researchers like Carillo (2019), in the same view, support the addition of diversity of voice within the context of a place of education to make it representative and relate to all types of learners. The work of Carillo, in an oblique way, indicated that the inclusion of varied literacy traditions is important to students' empowerment of diversity of students as inclusiveness and involvement in classroom proceedings. It has something to do

with an inclusive learning environment which allows all the learners environmentally to feel their presence accounted for in the learning arena. Apart from this, researchers point to the fact that emotional intelligence is developed while engaging in course studies of literature. Langer (2011) makes a case on the same in that literature advances the students an opportunity to investigate the feelings of themselves and others developing such vital capacity. It should turn into motivation by itself and take an attachment turn with whatever is taught. By negotiating these emotional sceneries given in the literature, students develop the important empathy and social skills that will be useful in their later lives in societies that grow increasingly diverse.

Other authors, such as Gee (2015), have written about the convergence between literature and technology and ways that digital storytelling and interactive literature may engage students in ways that traditional texts do not. The work of authors like Gee has been able to show that technology can make literature education reach a wide array of students with different learning styles and preferences. The incorporation of technology would not only raise the engagement factor but also introduce them to a world where the idea of storytelling takes different dimensions and media.

The work of Gallagher (2018) has been seminal in emphasizing the use of contemporary literature in the classroom for many reasons, not the least of which is that students find the text more relevant and thus are more likely to become engaged than with canonical literature. It is here that Gallagher has pointed out that when student experiences are reflected in what they are reading, they can relate to it and thus commit more to their learning. This is an important consideration if a love of reading is to be fostered and students are actually to engage in educational study.

In sum, the collective wisdom of these authors underlines the fact that literature is not an academic discipline but an important constituent of educational practices through which enhancement of students' involvement may be achieved. Literature nurtures critical thinking, empathy, emotional intelligence, and personal connections – skills helpful to live in an increasingly complex and interconnected world. The persistent debate about the role of literature among educators and researchers presses the curriculum regarding emphases on the diversity of experience within the literature, freedom for students in the choice of work, and innovations in teaching methodologies. It is thus timely that these authors call educators that good practice in teaching could indeed be supported with literature at its heart educationists to the new educational landscape opening up its possibilities. Eventually, it will enable them to provide a stimulating and inspiring learning environment sensitive to the pursuit of excellence and the nurturance of the reading habit throughout life.

6. Conclusion

Literature can inform and shape educational practice and student engagement on several levels and the authors contributing to this knowledge base are varied and many. The objective of cultivating more engaged and critically thinking individuals may differ significantly, as it is often influenced by foundational educational philosophies and varying perceptions of the nature and purpose of teaching. Integrating these perspectives means attaining a finer-grained knowledge of how literature can support learning.

The key pedagogical added dimension through literature in developing learning, creating critical thought processes, and developing wider perceptions among students allows insight into the different eras of lands, cultures, and historical periods that enhance one's appreciation of the human condition. This can bring breadth and depth into curriculum content; by facilitating empathy and emotional intelligence, and widening discussion on the themes or moral dilemmas at 0hand. More so, literature introduces the development of a language in that students will analyze texts, discuss their understanding, and write down their thoughts. Besides, the presence of literature in every subject can make sure there is an integral education in that academic, creative, and imaginative skills are well developed to better prepare students for an informed and caring relationship with the world.

Funding: The authors did not receive financial support from any organization for the submitted article.

References

Alexander, P. A., & Jetton, J. M. (2000). Learning from literature: The importance of emotion. In Pearson, P. D., Barr, R., Kamil, M. L. & Mosenthal, P. B (Eds.) *Handbook of reading research*. Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Alexander, P. A., & McCaffrey, K. (2011). Literature and critical thinking: A framework for teaching. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, *55*(6), 485-493.

Allington, R. L. (2003). The schools we need: A new approach to educational reform. *Literacy Research and Instruction*, *42*(4), 1-12.

Allington, R. L., & McGill-Franzen, A. (2013). The role of classroom libraries in promoting reading. *The Reading Teacher, 66*(3), 204-213.

Applebee, A. N. (1993). *Literature in the secondary school: Studies of curriculum and instruction in the United States*. National Council of Teachers of English. https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED357370

Beach, R., & *Myers*, J. (*2001*). *Inquiry-based English instruction: Engaging students in life and literature*. Teachers College Press.

Beers, K. (2003). *No more independent reading without support*. Heinemann.

Bishop, R. S. (1990). Mirrors, windows, and sliding glass doors. In Emily, C. (Ed.) *Perspectives: Choosing and using books for the classroom*. Schaffer.

Brumfit, C. J., & Carter, R. A. (Eds.) (1986). *Literature and language teaching*. Oxford University Press.

Carillo, E. C. (2019). *Rethinking literacy: The role of diverse voices in education. The Reading Teacher, 73*(4), 455-463.

Carter, R., & Long, N. M. (1991). *Teaching literature*. Longman.

Cook, G. (1994). *Discourse and literature*. Oxford University Press.

Duff, A., & Maley, A. (1990). *Literature*. Oxford University Press.

Gallagher, K. (2018). The importance of contemporary literature in the classroom. *The English Journal*, *107*(1), 12-18.

Gambrell, L. B., Malloy, J. A., & Morrow, L. M. (2007). The role of motivation in reading comprehension. *Reading Psychology*, *28*(5), 499-517.

Gee, J. P. (2015). *How to do discourse analysis: A toolkit.* Routledge.
Hattie, J. (2015). *What works best in education: The politics of collaborative expertise.* Pearson.
Holley, B. (2015). *Modified literature circles as an effective comprehension strategy: A focus on diverse learners* [Unpublished Master's Thesis]. St. John Fisher University.
Hough, L. (1992). Literature as a course: An interdisciplinary approach. *The English Journal*, *81*(5), 36-41.
Langer, J. A. (1995). Envisioning literature: Literary understanding and literature instruction. *Educational Researcher*, *24*(3), 13-21.
Langer, J. A. (2011). The role of literature in fostering empathy. *The Reading Teacher*, *65*(4), 293-297.
Lazer, G. (Ed.) (1993). *Literature and language teaching: A guide for teachers and trainers*. Cambridge University Press.
Leu, S. Y., Kuo, C. H., & Chen, C. M. (2011). The impact of digital platforms on the engagement of digital learners. *Computers & Education*, *57*(3), 1884-1892.
Myers, J., & Beach, R. (2004). Constructing critical literacy practices through technology tools and inquiry. *Contemporary Issues in Technology and Teacher Education, 4*(3), 257-268. https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1081780
Nussbaum, M. C. (1997). Capabilities and human rights. *Fordham Law Review*, *66*(2), 273-300.
Rosenblatt, L. M. (1994). *The reader, the text, the poem: The transactional theory of the literary work*. Southern Illinois University Press.
Rosenblatt, L. M. (1995). *Literature as exploration* (5th ed). Longman.
Sipe, L. (2008). *Understanding literature*. Education Press.
Tatar, M. (2010). Narrative and the imagination: The role of stories in education. *The Journal of Aesthetic Education, 44*(1), 1-12.
Thomas, A., & Coiro, J. (2011). Technology and literacy in the twenty-first century: The importance of paying attention to new literacies. In Coiro, J. (Ed.) *The Handbook of Literacy in Technology*. Routledge.