

PROMOTING READING HABITS AND CREATING LITERATE SOCIETY

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ABSTRACT

Reading habit is an essential and important aspect for creating the literate society in this world. It shapes the personality of an individual and it helps them to develop the proper thinking methods and creating new ideas. At present, due to the influence of the Mass Media, people could not show much interest in reading the books, magazines and journals etc, Therefore, there is the urgent need to develop the reading habit among the individuals in the society. In this paper, the author has discussed the various methods and benefits in improving the reading habits.

Keywords: Reading habit, Re-Thinking, Evaluation, Judging, Literacy, Problem solving.

INTRODUCTION:

In the recent past, educators as well as the general public were in deliberation as to which strategy was the most effective means to teach reading. Some argued that phonics, the teaching of basic skills, was the better approach whereas others believed that whole language, a more holistic philosophy of literature-based instruction, was the superior method. Although the dispute never resulted in a definitive answer, the general consensus among educators is that a combination of the two strategies provides a balanced and comprehensive method for teaching reading.

Effective reading is the most important avenue of effective learning. Reading is interrelated with the total educational process and hence, educational success requires successful reading. Reading is the identification of the symbols and the association of appropriate meaning with them. It requires identification and comprehension. Comprehension skills help the learner to understand the meaning of words in isolation and in context.

Before the advent of the TV, both the young and the old found enough time to read. Apart from teachers, other professionals used to spend their leisure time in reading both English and vernacular literature. English medium schools insisted upon extra reading from their students. But all these have become a thing of the past. Now, reading habit has lost importance as both the young and the old is glued to the TV. As far as the educational institutions are concerned, coaching students for the examinations seems to be the be-all and end-all of our educational system.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE:

Naik, S.N. (1981) studied the reading interest and abilities of adolescents and adults.

1. The aim of the study was to understand the general nature of reading interest and habit of people above the age of fifteen.
2. To study the development process of these interests.

Data were collected through questionnaire, and the data were analysed in respect of the reading of newspapers, magazines and books. Social psychology of readers and interests of various age-groups were analysed separately. A supplementary investing on the reading development of VII to XII class students was done.

The following were the important findings of the study:

1. Newspapers were read more than any other material.
2. Women in every age group read less newspaper.
3. Magazine reading increased with age.
4. Men read more than women.
5. Sports magazines were very popular up to the age of 40.
6. Development factors of reading related to psychological growth and socio-cultural advancement were different at different age level.
7. At the primary stage only the story books were read.

T.R. Nagappa conducted a survey on behalf of the Karnataka State Adult Education Council in 1988. He interviewed 410 adult in nine districts in this State. The results of the study are as follows:

1. Religion and folk literature have a high reading appeal for neo-literates. Next are the topics dealing with occupation. Topics which are already familiar to the community to some extent are preferred for reading by the neo-literates.
2. CE Books for neo-literates should take into consideration the age, sex and occupation of the readers as they influence reading interests. For example, the younger and adolescent group has a wider interest in titles related to civics and government in greater measure than elders.

W.D. Walls survey of the newspaper reading of adolescents and adults was made in Utum; 1984. It has both the advantages and disadvantages of war time conditions. The evidence suggests that the early and middle teens are as crucial in the development of newspaper reading habits, as they are in other directions. The study suggests that although newspaper reading habits are to some extent the product of environmental conditions, much could be done by specify training in school both to improve the newspaper reading habits and attitudes of adolescents and indirectly to influence the content of daily press.

McKinlay (1990) performed a study to assess whether or not teachers were aware of their students' attitudes toward reading. The participants completed an attitude survey and rated the statements on a 3 point Likert scale. Using the same survey, the teachers rated the students' attitudes as they perceived them. The results of the study showed no significant difference between the ratings of teachers and students. The comparisons revealed that

both teachers and students rated pupils' attitudes as positive.

Moffit and Wartella (1992) also examined the influence of socio-economic status on reading behaviour. The results showed that both lower class and upper class students read more than middle class children. This finding is not consistent with the outcomes of studies conducted by Banks (1986) and Duggins (1989), both of which revealed no significant difference between students of varying socio-economic status. Additional, more sophisticated studies must be conducted before any valid generalizations can be made regarding students parents' education or students' socio-economic status.

READING SKILL METHODS:

There are a variety of instructional practices and strategies that have recently been adopted in efforts to improve students' reading skills and expand student's reading habits. For example, the Accelerated Reader Program is popular among many schools. This computerized reading management system uses a reward system to motivate students to read beyond their required classroom texts. Students who participate in the Accelerated Reader Program choose from a variety of books on the program's list to read independently either during class or outside of school. Once the students have completed their books, they take a computerized multiple choice reading comprehension quiz that awards points for passing scores. Students are awarded points based on the length and difficulty of the books and the percentage of correct answers on quizzes. Individual schools set up rewards systems which offer a variety of prizes ranging from certificates and items from the school store to extra classroom credit. This program was designed to provide students with an incentive to read and was created to enhance the curriculum by balancing instruction with trade books.

SUSTAINED SILENT READING (SSR):

Sustained Silent Reading (SSR) is another program aimed to create proficient readers and is widely used in a number of schools. SSR is the practice of allotting classroom time for everyone, including the teacher, to read self-selected material. Some teachers may schedule a specific day of the week for SSR, while others may devote a portion of each class period. SSR affords students with opportunities to read a variety of authentic texts, and allows them to read for their own purposes and pleasure which enables the students to practice lifetime reading skills. According to Alvermann and Phelps (1998), this time can be significant for students who otherwise might not read at all beyond the bare minimum required for school. Programs like Accelerated Reader and SSR have been implemented to build student's reading skills, as well as to encourage better reading habits.

As Lyman (1996) stated, "Given the opportunity, the reader who finds a really good book, a book that has ideas he or she truly wants to learn about, frequently will transcend his or her level of reading performance. The approaches that emphasize the use of authentic texts and self-selection are designed to build reading skills and to create lifetime readers".

While the studies related to students' reading preferences are numerous and range in scope, a majority of the research focuses either on students' attitudes toward reading or student's reading interests. For instance, Ley, Shaer, and Dismukes (1994) conducted a longitudinal study using a reading attitudes scale to compare students' reading attitudes with their reading behaviors. The researchers found a statistically significant relationship between student's reading attitudes and student's reading behaviors. The researchers also discovered that both the students' reading attitudes and their frequency of voluntary reading declined during the 3 year investigation. These findings are corroborated by McKenna and Kear (1990), whose results also reported a decline in students' reading attitudes as they progress through school. The research of students' attitudes toward reading suggests that middle school is a pivotal time for students reading habits. These studies indicate that teachers should encourage the use of trade books and should utilize materials that will appeal to their students.

DEFINITION OF READING:

Reading is a process of thinking, evaluating, judging, imagining, reasoning and problem solving. Thordike suggests that the reading of a paragraph values the same sort of organization as analysis does to thinking. It includes learning, reflection, judgment, analysis, syntheses and problem solving. It includes attention association, abstraction, generalization, comprehension, concentration and deduction. Reading typically is the bringing of meaning rather than the gaining of meaning from the printed page.

Gray, discussing the dimension of reading process, suggested that this include recognition, understanding, reaction and integration. Shaw noted that reading is the process of seeing or perceiving independent items of observing and assimilating their interrelationships.

Hildreth pointed out that 'reading requires inference, weighing the relative importance of ideas and meanings. Seeing the relationship among them, it is a process of forming tentative judgments rather than verifying and

checking guesses.

E.L.Thorndike developed further a theory of interest in education. Satisfying or pleasurable stimuli is an aid to learning. Annoying or unpleasant stimuli have a contrary effect. Interest, the pleasurable feeling, stamps in the learning.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF READING:

The ability to read is recognised generally as one of the most important skills that a person can have, Reading is a tool of the acquisition mind; it is the vehicle for obtaining ideas that cannot be transmitted verbally. The individual who reads well has at his command a means for widening his mental horizons and for multiplying his opportunities for experience. Reading is a crucial factor affecting intellectual and emotional growth.

Reading is an important activity in the process of learning. In the movement of human history it has been gaining greater importance and becoming one of the essential aspects of the functioning of human beings who are collectively involved in the regulation of society. Explosion of knowledge and revolution in communication technology made man feel that producing reading material and its distribution for a wider circulation is indispensable. The significant developments in science and technology brought tremendous change in printing technology.

The process of material production, the modern way of life, the complexity of structural and functional aspects of present societies and other changes and transformations are responsible for the existing abundance of reading material available and its divergent and diversified nature. No doubt, the present generation is exposed to an ocean of books but the problem is in the selection of appropriate and suitable literature, which can help individuals and society at large. Unfortunately, the undesirable literature that is produced with all vested interested and a profit motive has become popular and has been diverting the minds of masses, particularly the youth from their main concerns. Thus, there is an urgent need to arrest such material and make desirable reading material available to them. Hence, selection and reading of a book today is a challenging task to be approached scientifically.

READING MODIFIES PERSONALITY:

Personality is continuously modified through reading. Reading like any other form of experience may exert either a negative or a positive influence on the reader. A well-balanced programme should keep in the development of right attitudes, ideals and appreciation. Thus it aids in developing a rich and stable personality.

READING AIDS IN PERSONAL AND SOCIAL ADJUSTMENT:

It implies that as youth measures, he must have, "a mind, a conscience and a philosophy of his own". One of the basic aims of education has been to assist the child in interpreting himself in relation to other and develop in him the power to understand better the life about him. In acquiring essential understanding attitudes and social adjustment, books render a great service to youth.

READING SERVES AS A FORM OF RECREATION AND ENJOYMENT:

Aristotle says, "the whole end and object of education is the wise use of leisure adolescence is the period when the preparation for wise use of leisure time. Reading provides recreation but also broadens the interest of readers, satisfies curiosity, stimulates goods thinking and preserves a balance and flexibility of mind. Thus, it is not only a source of pleasure but also a source of profit".

COMPONENTS OF READING:

Reading is a neuro-muscular activity. During reading, man's active participation in coordinating his neuro-muscular components takes place. As a psychomotor skill, it influences the cognitive and affective domains of man's behaviour. Following are some of the important components of reading skills:

Decoding the word and analysing the concept.

1. Grasping the meaning of the concept.
2. Grasping the logic of sentence construction.
3. Anticipating the meaning of the next sentence.
4. Moving very easily to the next sentence with a clear understanding.

CONSTRAINS IN READING:

The present study has found out that, urban people are too busy with their professions. Long traveling, multiple recreation centers and other domestic and family problems have become impediments for them to find time for reading. In spite of their busy schedule and tight time-table many have been showing some interest to read at least very short materials like advertisements, pamphlets, newspaper headlines and small bulletins rather than reading books, magazines and journals. Even at the university level, students and teachers are inclined towards secondary sources rather than original classics. Reading of original classics and first hand sources had become a thing of the past because; there is no proper encouragement at school or university level. Owing to the present competitive examination system at all levels, students are showing more interest in preparing for objective type examinations that are deteriorating their attitudes and reactive abilities.

DEVELOPING READING INTEREST:

Reading abilities widely vary among children, adults and people. Giving appropriate training at school level can easily develop reading abilities. Language teacher play a major role in developing these skills. Teachers of other subjects can create interest and motivate students to learn and they can also inculcate attitudes and aspirations that shape them into serious readers. At school level, if teachers can instill and create in children's minds the values of reading, then there is a possibility that students would continue reading for the rest of their life, with confidence.

The following are some of the general techniques to develop the reading abilities:

1. Parental guidance and encouragement.
2. Motivation by teachers.
3. Inculcation of desirable hobbies and interests.
4. Constant use of dictionary.
5. Daily newspaper reading.
6. Book reading.
7. Visiting Libraries.
8. Well constructed reading material.
9. Study improving vocabulary and language.

CONCLUSION:

Reading is an important activity in the process of learning. In the movement of human society, it has been given a greater importance and becoming one of the essential aspects of the functioning of human beings, who are collectively involved in the regulation of society and exposure of knowledge and revelation of literate society. Reading involves the people's participation growth literate society. So, reading shapes good personality, ideas, right thinking and attitude change. So, people who are involved in reading habit to create literate society in our country. The above discussion reveals how important the reading habit is? and for creating the literate society, which helps for the development of any country.

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