

READING HABIT AMONG THE STUDENTS IN SEKOLAH KEBANGSAAN SERI PAKA, PAKA, DUNGUN, TERENGGANU

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ABSTRACT – Reading is the bridge of knowledge. Reading is a tool needed by learners to understand all other subjects. Children begin to develop lifelong attitudes toward reading in the home. Parents are the first person being identified as the agents that can enrich the language environment of a community. Anyhow, teachers play important role to cultivate good reading habits among the students. Nowadays, the children are exposed to varieties of funky gadgets which slowly taking a steady control over individual lives and gradually vanish the reading habits among them. This phenomenon will affect the quality and achievement of education in the country. The study examined the students' reading habits, the purpose of reading and the hindrances to reading. Two hundred and twenty primary school pupils were drawn to answer the questionnaires. Participants were mainly drawn from standard four, five and six. Their ages ranged from 10 – 12 years old. Results further showed that pupils spent most of the time watching television and playing games rather than reading. The availability and accessibility for reading such as convenient facilities and reading materials were provided by parents and school library. Variety of reading materials and furnishing school libraries could not attract them towards love and choose reading as habit. Yet, they refused to read during their free time. They read just to pass the examination and not for being well-informed person. Recommendations based on the results of the study for parents, teachers and schools are highlighted.

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INTRODUCTION

Background of the Study

Reading is a language skill that is given most attention and seen as the cornerstone in Malaysian Education. It is the skill to be mastered as it is the basic need in lifelong learning. It is interesting to get to know that Malaysia National Library in 2005 stated that more than half of the 60,441 Malaysians surveyed read less than 7 pages per day (Bakar, 2006). Reading is viewed as highly valued skill in our technology driven world today. According to Palani (2012), reading is an essential and important aspect for creating a literate society in this world. It molds the personalities of individual and it helps them to develop proper thinking methods and creates new ideas.

Reading skills are important throughout our life span, specifically as we respond to any current issues or changes in jobs. Lack of literacy skills in reading may cause problems for living, working and survival in general. Through reading, we acquire new ideas and knowledge, obtain needed information, relax the minds and improve command of language and vocabulary. The literacy rate in Malaysia was about 52 percent in 1957, 80 percent in 1994 and became higher throughout the coming years. Although Malaysia has fairly high literacy rate and a good educational system, the reading habit has not developed as it should.

Statement of the Problem

Reading habits among Malaysians recently surprised the Information, Communication and Culture Minister of Malaysia when he says that “reading has become an enveloping habit for Malaysians with most reading an average of eight to twelve books per year” (The, 2010). At the heart of this statement, there has been a growing concern about the decline in reading among the pupils of Sekolah Kebangsaan Seri Paka. Although there is a NILAM (Nadi Ilmu Amalan Membaca) program has been held since 2005, yet the culture of reading among pupils is not encouraging.

Research Objectives

Do the students in Sekolah Kebangsaan Seri Paka have good reading habits? What are the purposes of their reading? Do they have lack of reading materials or unavailability to reading? What are the hindrances to reading for them?

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to examine the reading habits among the students of Sekolah Kebangsaan Seri Paka . It further intends to find out how often the students read outside the normal classroom and also explores both school and home factors that motivate pupils to read .The study also intends to seek the purpose of reading for them. It also tends to investigate the availability of reading and the reading materials at home and in the school library. Lack of interesting reading materials will also make the students upset and do not have motivation to read. Teachers have to give their hands in helping the students to overcome their problems by providing good and interesting reading materials in school library. The study also intends to find out the hindrances of reading for the students.

Significance of the Study

The findings of this study will reawaken classroom teachers to live up to their responsibilities during reading time and recess time so they can help, support and motivate pupils to read. It will also be of great benefit to school authorities in the sense that their attention will be drawn to the importance of cultivating good reading habits among the students and the need to ensure maximum utilize of recess hour by providing books and reading areas for the students.

REVIEW OF THE RELATED LITERATURE

Chua (2013) revealed a limitation of the effect of the Sustained Silent Reading (SSR) program, in that it did not have any significant effect on cultivating students' after school reading habits. Students spent fewer hours reading books for leisure after school subsequent to the launch of the SSR program. The SSR program could cultivate students' affective reactions to reading books for leisure. It did not cause students to spend more time actively reading books for leisure. Liu (2005) and Pandian (2000) rose to major concerns involving Malaysian readers. According to him, only 20% of the Malaysian populations are 'regular readers' and the rest are 'reluctant readers' and the rest are 'reluctant readers'. Students' purpose of reading is only to pass exams.

According to Vygotsky all learning is mediated between the child and a knowledgeable other. His theory is often referred to as social constructivism, because he believed that teachers and older or more experienced people like parents play important roles in teaching children in a social setting.

Vygotsky's concept of the zone of proximal development theorized that students can with help from adults, master concepts and ideas that cannot understand on their own. The role parent is to facilitate cognitive growth as do teachers and other members of the child's community. Adults such as teachers and parents are the ones who provide the tools of the culture, including language and it is their responsibility to nurture early language and literacy in young children. These knowledgeable others play a powerful role in preparing young children for future school success. Reading is an essential part of language instruction at every level because it supports learning in multiple ways. By giving students a variety of materials to read, teachers provide multiple opportunities for students to absorb vocabulary, grammar, sentence structure and discourse structure as they occur in authentic contexts. When language learners using reading strategies, they can control the reading experience and gain confidence in their ability to read the language. Students may hesitate to read unless they find materials that interest them.

Reading needs to be approached as an interactive process that is embedded in meaningful activities addressed to challenge thinking. Learners enjoy working with others, sharing their ideas, asking questions and probing whether their ideas are valid. Therefore, reading practices should be complemented by pre-reading and post-reading activities aimed at developing high-order and low-order thinking skills.

Reading Habits

Perhaps, the lack of culture of reading among students could be attributed to their past experience with reading. Past experience with reading at home or at school can influence students' attitude towards reading. When parents model reading for pleasure to children and encourage them to read, they develop positive attitude towards reading in general and for pleasure in particular Asher and Wigfield (as cited in Leu & Kinzer, 1995). The culture of reading among Malaysians in general and students in particular is not encouraging. It is therefore necessary to cultivate the habit of reading as a country, since it is one of the ways people can increase their knowledge and get exposed to the experiences of other people. Bell (2001) reported that in some countries, the extent to which such programmes contribute to the overall academic performance of students is overwhelming.

Reading Motivation

There is a major concern among educators and parents about children who cannot read but more seriously about those who can read but do not have motivation to read. Teachers and parents should motivate students to become active readers by improving students' intrinsic motivation and decreasing their extrinsic motivation. Teaching children to read for the sake of literacy learning in is not an adequate goal. Motivating children to read is one of those agony-ecstasy tasks every parent and teacher faces sooner and later. There are myriad reasons children do not like to read. Helping students enjoy reading is one of the most important things as teachers and parents. Kids will learn reading skills in school but often they come to associate reading with work not pleasure. In another situation, in the News Straits Time dated 12th February 2006 reported a survey conducted by the National Union of the Teaching Profession (NUTP) on students' ability to read in various primary and secondary schools in Malaysia. From the 70 secondary schools population of 73,858 students analyzed, 1964 students could not read.

Teachers and Parents as Role Models on Reading Habits

As a result of the absence of books and reading in the home environment, schools become the sole provider of a print and language rich environment. Unfortunately, most of the schools do not provide such an environment (Alison, 2010). A role model is a person whose behavior is imitated by others. Of course, there are both good role models and bad role models. One of the most important responsibilities inherent in the title “teacher” is that of being a good role model for all students. Every person a student sees is some kind of a role model. Some are good. Some are not. It is a duty of every teacher to be the best role model that one can be. It stands to reason that if reading models affect readers than teachers will be influenced by their own model of reading or system of belief as well.

Bandura (1969, 1977, 1986) showed the importance of social behavior. A child will follow the belief and behaviors of an adult perceived to be important. Consequently, any activity that particular adult performs, the child responds with a desire to do it as well. Parents are also role models for their children. By observing the attitudes that their parents exhibit both verbally and non-verbally toward reading, children will tend to develop and demonstrate similar attitudes. In addition, because children seek and desire approval from their parents, they tend to develop the attitudes and values that parents will praise and reinforce.

The Importance of Having Good Reading Habit

According to Lloyd, P. (2013), reading can make you smarter; improve vocabulary, knowledgeable and boots creativity. Reading is a very active state exercises for your mind as opposed to watching television or listening to music. Reading forces brain cells to engage in activity as we paint a vivid image in our mind about the story that we are reading. This is the most fascinating activity. Children who are introduced to books early are more prone to develop their language skills and are in turn usually better in reading comprehension compared to children who are non-readers or reluctant readers. The more children read, the more children gain in language ability and reading comprehension. Reading thus provides opportunities for children to develop cognitively and linguistically. If we are regular reader, we are bound to come across the works of various authors and will be exposed to several different literary styles. We can keep on learning new words, phrases, idioms and learn to use them in several different ways as well. One handy tip for youngsters, keep a dictionary handy. If we come across a new word we did not know, look it up immediately in the dictionary. It will help us in reading and it will be exciting part of reading where as we can interact with new words every day with each new book that

METHODOLOGY

The design used in conducting the study is a descriptive research design. Descriptive research involves collecting data in order to answer research questions concerning the current status of the subjects of the study (Gay, 1996). It involves collection of data in order to accurately and objectively describe existing phenomenon. Thus, descriptive survey is concerned with seeking information to answer research question on current status, prevailing practices and conditions of the subjects of the study. It has a population of 80 teachers, 995 students and 10 staffs. Most of parents are employed as engineers, technicians, teachers, business owners and laborers. Parents are active in schools and participating in school activities. The target population for this study comprises all 220 pupils from Year 4, Year 5 and Year 6 of Sekolah Kebangsaan Seri Paka. The school is categorized as urban school.

RESULTS, DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

Here are the findings of this study:

- 1) 47.3% were working in private sector such as engineers and technicians.
- 2) Most of the families' incomes were in the range of RM 1000 to RM 3000.
- 3) Majority of the students do not read on a daily basis.
- 4) The pupils like reading story books.
- 5) 78.6% of the pupils do read text books.
- 6) Most pupils like playing rather than reading.
- 7) They like watching television rather than reading.
- 8) Majority of the pupils do not read for fun.
- 9) Most pupils read not for personal development.
- 10) Most of them read not to be well-informed person.
- 11) Majority of the students read not to fulfill their leisure or free time.
- 12) They agreed that the reading materials are adequate enough.
- 13) Most of them were satisfied with the library services.
- 14) They do have opportunities to borrow books from the school library.
- 15) Most of the pupils visit other library apart the school library.
- 16) They were strongly agreed that playing sports and games are hindrances to reading.
- 17) Most of them disagreed that watching television is the hindrance to reading.

- 18) Majority disagreed that attending the tuition is the hindrance of not reading.
- 19) They disagreed that doing homework as the hindrance to reading.
- 20) The pupils disagreed that they had inadequate availability as the hindrances to reading.
- 21) 76.8% were strongly disagreed that lack of interesting materials is the hindrance to reading.

Summary of the Key Findings

Here are the key findings of the study:

- a) The study found that the pupils of Sekolah Kebangsaan Seri Paka do not read on a daily basis and the like to read story books and text books.
- b) The study revealed that the pupils like playing and watching television rather than reading.
- c) The analysis made revealed that the pupils read only to pass the examination and they do not read for fun, personal development, well-informed and during leisure time.
- d) The study brought to light that school library is adequate enough in term of reading materials, services provided and opportunities to borrow books.
- e) The study found that pupils refused that watching television, attending tuition, doing homework and inadequate availability as the hindrances to reading but they agreed that playing games and sports may influence them not to reading.
- f) Another finding was that most parents in Sekolah Kebangsaan Seri Paka are working in private sector with luxurious family income. Parents also have good awareness of bringing their children to other public library.
- g) The study revealed that the pupils were provided with adequate availability and reading materials.

CONCLUSION

The pupils come from educated and well-organized family background. It means they do not have problem in getting reading materials such as books, magazines or encyclopedias. Other than that, they have adequate availability such as spacious rooms or place to do reading activities. Their parents also do bring them to the other public libraries.

The school libraries provided adequate reading materials and services to borrow and submit the books. The pupils agreed that they were not having problem in term of the services found in the school libraries. The reading materials also were adequate. The pupils do have limited time to visit the school library during the school hours. The pupils were programmed to follow a few rules during recess such as they were not allowed to be in Block B (library), they must queue up at the assembly ground five minutes before the bell ringing and they have to read the doa (prayer recitation) and listen to the announcements or information made by the teachers in charge before entering the classes. All those rules tend them not to go to the library.

Pupils pay much attention to the text books which are often tailored towards examination purposes at expense of reading for fun or pleasure. It can also be concluded that parents and teachers do a lot of activities to motivate pupils to read in the school library and other public libraries. May be parents and teachers should be more creative in order to attract the students towards reading.

RECOMMENDATION

In order to attract the students' attention towards good reading habits, all the parties like parents, teachers and library teachers should play their active roles. Below are the suggestions how they can cultivate good reading habits among the pupils. Parents are the closet person with the children and most of the time the children will be with them. They must bring up their children in such a way they cultivate the habits of reading good books and become knowledge seekers. The atmosphere in their homes should be one of education and learning. They must motivate the children by their words and actions to cultivate the habit of reading. Before the child goes for formal education to the school, he should be introduced to books. For example, the parents must read out the books to the child. They should read small and interesting stories and fables to make the child interested in books. Give the children books with lots of multicolor pictures and illustrations.

Every day, the parents or the elder siblings should read to the child a part of the book to keep his sustained interest in the contents. They should explain to the child should be asked to recount the story and tell about the illustration printed with the story. In this informal education, the parents should not make haste in teaching and should not give to him any books that are beyond his comprehension. They must first make the child interested in listening to stories then bring the process of reading out books. Continue this process till the child learns to read and write himself. Then, leave the work of reading the books to the child. Sometimes, parents can ask the opinion of the child about a new book that he has read. Discuss the contents of the books with him and continue giving attention till the child becomes habituated of reading books. Other than that, the parents must choose suitable reading materials for the child. Every child will have his own individual personality. The capability and tastes too will differ from person to person. There will be changed in the tastes of a person with advancements in years.

Therefore, the parents must gauge the taste and their capability of the child and then bring the books to suit his requirements. Do not provide difficult and boring contents on the child. This might have negative impact on the child's reading habit. Since the child is in the process of developing his personality and the books can have deep impact on his process, care must be exercised to see that books with appropriate content are chosen for him. The parents should first

read the books themselves, and then decide about their suitability for the child's reading. The child should not read any undesirable matter that might have negative impact on his impressionable mind. If he gets into the habit of reading such as literature, it might be difficult to wean him out of it.

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