



Promoting Reading Habits of the Children of Class IV: Study of Upper Primary Student of Ramchetsekha PS, Paro

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Authors' contributions

This work was carried out in collaboration among all authors. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: This study is an attempt to understand the reading habits of class IV students in Ramchetsekha Primary School, Paro. The study also aims to promote reading habits in the students.

Design/methodology/approach: The researcher took anchor of a qualitative research design aligned to social constructivism paradigm through phenomenological approach. The researcher focused on class four children and teachers as participant sampling in the school. Semi-structure interview was used as a research tool and their information was recorded and transcribed later by the researcher.

Findings: The study found out that reading programme in the school is loosely matched with the needs of the children to develop their reading habits. Sporadic reading programme were organized in the form of onetime events without aligning with improvement priorities and goals. The school sometimes chooses faddish improvement involving one-shot programme with no follow-up support. Furthermore, it was revealed that the children depend largely on notes given by the teachers.

Keywords: Reading habits; upper primary student; teachers' experiences.

1. INTRODUCTION

It is the universal truth that students who enjoy reading are likely to choose to read more often than students who do not enjoy reading. The bottom line is that reading proficiency has been linked to a better and more productive academic, social, and civic life. Reading transfers experiences to the individual so that the reader may expand one's horizons, identify, extend and intensify his or her interest and gain deeper understanding of the world [1]. Needless to emphasize and be convinced that reading is a good thing for our students. The larger question is how do we help out students develop the reading habit?

According to the Report of the Commission on Reading [2], reading is considered as a cornerstone for success, not just in schools, but also throughout the adult life of an individual. Similar line of thought were expressed by Palani [3], that reading habit is an essential and important aspect for creating a literate society in this world. It shapes the personality of individuals and it helps them to develop proper thinking methods, and creates new ideas. However, the developments in the social media had continued to influence interest in reading. Palani [3] further added that, nowadays, reading habit has lost its importance as both the young and the old are glued to the television. The school must be in the position to mediate and mould them that the students should not be brain washed by the social media.

Our school is an organization where student comes from different environmental settings with different levels of academic achievements. Therefore, they differ in the (stylish) pattern of reading habits. While some students have good reading habits, others tend to exhibit poor reading habits. The school strives to balance between excellent readers and poor readers. "Reading habit is best formed at a young impressionable age in school, but once formed it can last one's life time [1]. Reading habits determine the academic achievements and are of interrelated and dependent on each other. Academic achievement means how much knowledge the individual has acquired from the school [4]. Therefore, this study attempt to explore the reading habits of the students and its effect on the academic performance of the Ramchetshekha Primary School.

2. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Despite great progress and advancement in the field of education, the quality of education is still questioned by the society at large. The pandemic has been affecting the entire Education system and has laid bare its fragility. Border closures, movement restrictions and confinement measures have been preventing teachers and students from accessing education, including contact teaching, and fair assessment strategy, thus disrupting the flow of educational supply chains and reducing access to reading, communicating and diverse writing [5,6]. Online teaching and learning employed during pandemic did not reflect true pictures of students' learning. Compulsory promotion to the next higher grade policy by the school has further compounded the problem. This was revealed by our children's low performance in the class. For instance, our children could not read and comprehend the simple passage given to them. Further, the home environment demands latchkey situations. In fact, many are latchkey children who leave home after parents have gone to work and return before their parents have ended working day [7,8].

Among many underlying problems identified, we prioritized and chose reading Habit as the problem statement because of its nature of the problem and its ripple effect on academic performance. The topic of the research would be very relevant to the subject which is our nation's concern as well as our school in particular. In the past the school initiated variety of reading intervention programme to build habits of reading. However, to fulfill the prescribed goal was left unachieved.

3. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the study were as follows:

- 3.1 Define reading habits in the children
- 3.2 Examine the sources of reading materials which the children wholly depend on.
- 3.3 Examine the time spent in reading on daily basis.
- 3.4 The measures to promote reading habits of the children.

4. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. Define the reading habit of the children?
2. How much time do the students spend on reading?

3. What type of reading materials do they read?
4. How can I promote reading habits for the children?

relevant books are available, low family income would prevent their purchase.

5. LITERATURE REVIEW

5.1 Definition of Reading Habit

The definition of reading has undergone through many improvements. In the past, reading was meant to interpret visual information of any given codes or systems [9]. According to writers Dadzie, [10], reading is the ability to understand words which are available in texts and use that knowledge for personal development. However, after that, reading became more complex and involved the understanding process of a whole text composed of written signs [11].

A good reading habit is necessary for a healthy intellectual growth and development and plays crucial role in enabling a person to achieve practical efficiency. It refers to the behavior which expresses the likeness of reading of individual types of reading and tastes of reading [12]. Similarly, Shen [13], identifies reading habits, as of how often, how much, and what students read. Further, Dorothy [14], states that "Kids with poor reading habits have higher chances of anti-social behavior. It has been observed that delinquency; school violence, bullying, incidence of hacking computers and even incidences of examination malpractices have a higher correlation with poor reading habits.

5.2 Sources of reading materials

5.2.1 Book Availability and Access

Access to books refers to the availability of quality literature in classroom, school community, or home libraries. Research has proven that children who have no access to books are severely disadvantaged and have trouble catching up with other children [15]. Conversely, students with adequate access to books have many books to select from on a daily basis, both in and out of school [16]. However, it could be painstakingly stated that there is a chronic shortage of relevant books and learning materials and an increasing digital divide. Mokatsi [17], state that the demands of universal primary education have put huge pressure on the education system, with rapid and dramatic increases in number of pupils, and a corresponding demand for more teachers and learning materials. He concluded that even if

5.2.2 Use of modern technology

Due to the current technological era, children spend most of their time playing games, watching television and surfing internet; therefore, giving little time for reading. It has been specified in scholarly literature that everyday reading activities of children are affected in many ways, but the most important and prominent element appears to be the engagement with modern technological tools [9]. Loan further asserts that reading habits of children are almost withering and the reason for reading time is playing with technological tools. Hastings and Henry [18] presented a report in which they clearly mentioned that 85% of children prefer to watch TV over reading. According to Loan [9], technology kills reading activity time of children. This means that unnecessary use of modern technology reduces time for reading books in the new generation; this is an issue that needs to be understood by parents, teachers and other stakeholders in education to develop effective reading habits in children in order to facilitate them.

5.2.3 Library as reading materials

A report by UNESCO [19], stated that procurement of library books in the school is not given the priority and even there is a lack of textbooks, let alone supplementary reading materials. Further, the school library is especially important as a source of books. The results of a survey of 40,000 teachers conducted by Scholastic, Inc., and the Gates Foundation showed that 83% of all students said they got books from the school library, compared to 38% from public libraries and 20% from retailers. Likewise, Collective evidence suggests that the number of books per student in a school library is a significant predictor of reading achievement. This is further enhanced when there is a school librarian to guide the choices of material and to motivate

5.2.4 Time as a factor that influences the reading habits of the students

According to Cunningham and Stanovich [20] and Wang and Guthrie [21], the more one reads, the more his reading comprehension and general knowledge increases. If a fluent reader decreases the time of reading, then sooner or

later, he/she becomes a slow reader. Anderson, Fielding, and Wilson [22] found that time spent reading books out-of-school was the best predictor of a child's growth as a reader from the second through the fifth grade. Time spent reading out-of-school has also been tied to vocabulary development, fluency, comprehension, and general intellectual development [2]. However, researchers [2] who have investigated time spent reading out-of-school and reading achievement have found that most children do very little reading out-of-school and only a small number read for extended periods of time. Researchers have documented that while most children begin their school careers with positive attitudes toward reading, many show a steady decline in reading attitudes as they progress through school [23], and these negative attitudes are reflected in a steady decrease in the amount of leisure time children spend reading [24]. By the middle and high school years, the majority of children rarely read for pleasure [23]

5.2.5 Lack of interest influence reading habit

Another factor that affect to reading habits is attitude towards reading that is interest. Of course, interest plays a vital role in our life. In academic reading students are forced to read but sure that students will not enjoy the reading and then lose the interest. [25], when a person is forced to read something, then the person will not enjoy the reading material and this leads to hating the reading material and abandoning it. In a research done by [26] their study indicates more clearly that teachers don't do much reading at all. It is true that it is very important to explore their knowledge and moreover they will learn about world. Thus, lack of interest in reading is one the greatest challenge.

5.3 Way Forward to Sustain and Promote Reading Habit

Horn. C. [27], introduced an innovative children's literature project of the Art Council of England meant to develop a national strategy for children's literature. This aim is to build nation for readers, not simply a nation of people who can read (p. 22). Likewise, [28] has launched a consultation paper to review children's literature and review covers writers, illustrators, publishing and book selling for the promotion of children's literature and education. And also "Book Flood" is used as a strategy in Fiji Singapore and Sri-Lanka to increase the amount of reading

materials available. Evidence shows that book floods bring dramatic improvements in reading, writing, listening, vocabulary and grammar, especially for younger children where learning language different from their home language. For instance, a pilot project in Sri-Lanka provided between 100 – 200 books per school for years 4 and 5. Positive changes were noticed in pupil's attitudes towards reading a valuable resource for learning [14].

Several studies have shown the evidence of the link between the availability of books and educational attainment. [29], reported that there are many potential benefits out of reading follow their specific interest and hobbies, enjoy an escape from unpleasant realities. He concluded that, once children learn to appreciate books, they will read more and improve skills. Also [30], reported that children in classes with classroom libraries out performed control school counterparts by as much as 189 percent, and were ahead by 187 months in reading scores and two years in writing scores.

Obviously, both the library and the school are inseparable twins that one ceases to function well without the other. However, our school is not well equipped with adequate libraries. Further, there is no proper yardstick to measure the standard of materials present in the library [13] stress that both the library and the school serve the same purpose to achieve a common goal; that the school educates the student through the help of teachers while the library on its own offer tutorial lecture materials to aid verbal classroom teaching which is referred to as silent function of providing materials for the pleasure of students.

According to Daniel CI [31], observes that the library remains the power house of educational institution and that an education institution without a library is like a motor car without an engine and a body without a soul. [32] opines that the school library is the backbone of functional education without which academic excellence cannot be achieved. The library therefore complements the school by encouraging private study, which is required by students and teachers who want to attain an academic height. The school library thus, stands as a symbol for the truthful expression of man's knowledge and experiences. The extent to which many young people will be creative, informed, and knowledgeable and exhibit the trait of a well cultured individual within their own years will be shaped by the boundaries of the content of the

library resources available within the support of the school.

6. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

6.1 Research Design

The Researcher used qualitative methodology to suited nature of my study. The fact that, "Qualitative research is emergent rather than tightly prefigured". [33], allows the space and liberty to change my research questions, data collection procedures depending upon the change in the situations as I get deeper into my inquiry.

6.2 Participant Sampling

The purposive sampling method was applied by inviting the experienced participants who can articulate their lived experiences. This was to understand the common experiences in order to develop deeper understanding of the reading habits of the children. To this, [34] states that "Most importantly, they must be individuals who have experienced the phenomenon being explored and can articulate their lived experiences" (p. 119). Therefore, I have invited twenty students, eight teachers through random selection. Due to the paucity of time, I confined the participants to students and teachers of my school.

6.3 Research Instruments

Researcher used semi-structured interview and gathered data through guiding questions. To gather data in-depth interviews were carried out with flexibility on changing and probing question to a layman's language. The conversation was tape recorded and immediately transcribed to retain the originality of what the participants have said. I maintained the field notes to supplements the data from participants such as the body language, gesture, and facial expressions.

6.4 Data presentations and Analysis

The interview data collected from the research site were transcribed and transcriptions were read through to get an impression of the content. Once the codes were awarded to different units of meaning, the related codes were grouped. Meanings are formulated from the significant statements and phrases, and clustered into themes allowing for the emergence of theme

common to the participants' entire transcript.[34] notes that; in open coding, codes are literally made up as the researcher works through the data. Once the codes were awarded to different units of meaning, the related codes were categorized.

6.5 Data Coding

Teacher participants: T1, T2, T3, T4, to till T7.
Student participants: S1, S2, to till S15.

6.6 Research Ethical Issues

Ethical issues are considering being the most important moral conduct of the researcher in the field of research. Ethical issues concern the conduct of the research and the willingness of the participants to participate in the research without forcing them to do so. [33] describes that researcher needs to have ethical consideration for pre-data collection and post data collection. Thus, the researcher had considered all these ethical issues during the entire course of the study.

7. DATA ANALYSIS AND PRESENTATION

7.1 Advancing the Theme and Making Meaning of the Data

7.1.1 Participant's views about reading habits

"My opinion for reading habits is it is a pattern with which a person organizes his or her reading" (Teacher No.8). Furthermore, another participant (T-2) said, "It is not an event rather it is a process. It is important to read daily to improve academic performances." "To me the reading habit means to improve English" (S4).

The study revealed that though the participants elucidated using different words to define, but they have common understanding on the concept of the definition and its importance. Many of the definition narrated by the participants seemed similar to the literature in this study.

7.1.2 Time: Hours spent by the children in reading per day

The data revealed that the majority of the participants spent between 1-2 hours per day. It is clear from the data that the reading habits of the students is not at all encouraging since there

are more children read less than an hour per day. This was found out from the 10 out of 15 students' participant and only 4(four) participants revealed that they read more than 4 hours per day.

7.1.3 Availability and accessibility of the reading materials

The data revealed that among the factors indicated as hindrances to the children's reading habit, inadequate books available in the library, inadequate level of books, outdated and uninteresting materials were a major hindrance followed by the lack of interest. Data indicates that two-third of the participants felt the existing reading materials in their library are not adequate. They are not at all satisfied with the present services of the school library. S-1 says "Current books available in the library are not enough." S-1 said "I do not get the books that I want" and another student (S-13) commented "I search and search but time up and have to choose one and bring". Further, S-9 and S-11 said that "I choose the book by cover but I could not read and therefore return on next week". Further, another teacher commented, "We are not accessible to good reading materials and those that are there in the library are not appropriate to the student's level of reading comprehension"

7.2 Measures to Improve Children Reading Habits

7.2.1 Availability of book

The data reveal that the entire teachers interview, suggested that the school should furnish with recent books. Librarian should select the books that are recently published by our Bhutanese authors during books fair conducted by REC yearly. This will encourage our young readers to read and promote reading habits. These were expressed by 50% of the participants. For instance, T-3 and T-4 says, "The books available in the library are burnt out and hardly see the recent books." Likewise, T-2 says, "The books available in the library are Goose Bumps, lady birds and hardly see the books written by the Bhutanese Authors." Further, T-5 says, "An official hours allocated in a week is not enough. The school should find alternatives to develop reading habits. 40 minutes allocated time per week would not suffice to develop real reading habit." This indicated that the school has not done enough programme to uplifting the reading habits.

Participants also expressed that motivation is the key to develop reading habit. Almost all the teachers and students felt that awarding prizes would boost the reading habits of the children. For instance, T-5 said, "Giving talk on the importance of books, doing book walk and book talk, introducing students to new books, teacher doing the book review and sharing them with students would sustain and promote reading pleasure."

8. FINDINGS

The study found that the perceptions of the research participants support the relevant literature on the concept of reading. According to many writers such as [10] Dadzi, reading is the ability to understand words which are available in texts and use that knowledge for personal development.

The study on reading habits of the children of class IV revealed that children's reading habit is not at all encouraging. The results as well confirmed these children only engage just for examination purposes and not much for personal development. As [35] states that exam results of those who lack good reading habits may not be satisfactory and may become a source of worry for teachers, parents, and stakeholders of education. The finding also reveals that textbooks are the most significant reading material. Their concentration on reading textbooks and lecture notes as given top priority attest to the fact. Anyway, this is not unexpected since it has been indicated that they read only for purpose of examination; hence their dependence on teacher's notes and textbooks are not surprising. This evident no doubt confirmed the assertions of some researchers [12], who observed and postulated that the reading culture is poor in the school if the child reads in this format. If the state of their reading remains as it is, then the academic performance remains underperformed which has direct correlation between reading and academic performance. It is true that the school will be underperformed, delinquency; school violence, bullying, incidence of hacking computers and even incidences of examination malpractices if it remains unchecked on right time. As Dorothy [36], states that "Kids with poor reading habits have higher chances of anti-social behavior, delinquency; school violence, bullying, incidence of hacking computers and even incidences of examination malpractices have a higher correlation with poor reading habits."

On the number of hours an average child of this school spends on reading daily, it was revealed that two-third of the participants read 1-2 hours on a daily basis. The result shows some children engage in reading even for less than an hour on a daily basis which is an indication that children's reading habits in this school seems bleak and poor.

He finding reveals that almost all the participants are concerned about the availability and accessibility of the reading materials in the school. It was found that there is no significant difference in the perception of the participants. Research has proven that children who have no access to books are severely disadvantaged and have trouble catching up with other children [37]. Conversely, students with adequate access to books have many books to select from on a daily basis, both in and out of school [13]. Furthermore, findings reveal that inadequate book availability coupled with the shortage of books as per the age appropriate for the children and the fact that children spend most of their time watching TV are factors identified as hindering from developing reading habits. This is perhaps relevant to what has been identified in the literature. "Providing reading materials that are within the students' level of comprehension will encourage them to read more." [38]. Otherwise, [13], argue that technology kills reading activity time for children. This means that unnecessary use of modern technology reduces time for reading and this issue needs to be addressed by the stakeholders to develop effective reading habits in children.

A compilation of evidence showed from the teachers interview, suggested that the school should furnished with recent books. Librarian should select the books that are recently published by our Bhutanese authors during books fair conducted by REC yearly. This would encourage our young readers to read and promote reading habits. Beside, a few teachers' participants also concern about our teacher's reading habit. He contended that teacher should develop and interest in reading serving as role model so that children can emulate them. Further, data also revealed that motivation is the key to develop reading habit. Almost all the teachers and children felt that awarding prizes would boost the reading habits of the children.

In general, the study found out that reading programme in the school is loosely matched with the needs of the children to develop their reading

habits. Sporadic reading programme were organized in the form of onetime events without aligning with improvement priorities and goals. The school sometimes chooses faddish improvement involving one-shot programme with no follow-up support.

9. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The research highly encourages all the stakeholders both teachers and the school to use multiple strategies for their children to improve reading habits. The study recommends stakeholders to become successful learners.

a) School

- i. The school is recommended to procure variety of reading material that is age appropriate for children. Further, the school should be mindful in selecting the books written by the Bhutanese Authors to encourage reading during the book fair organize yearly by REC (Royal Education Council), Bhutan.
- ii. Finding revealed that the recent pandemic has worsened the reading situation. To build back better, the school is asked to organize debate and essay competitions, story hours, chat show exhibitions, quiz hours etc..., at regular intervals so as to generate reading interest and gathering information habit.
- iii. International Reading Survey by Train, B. [39], found that school with comprehensive reading policy in place did well in promoting reading for pleasure and installing good reading habits in children. Thus, school is recommended to come up with stringent set of policy to develop reading habits of the children in class IV as a part of the bridging programme that has lost reading time during pandemic.
- iv. Librarian has the crucial role to play, since they provide the only environment in which most access books. Therefore, Librarian should endeavor to make the library attractive to the pupils.
- v. Since this study is restricted to the teachers and children of class IV as a participant sample. However, it has been specified in scholarly literature that parents as first teacher of their children has bigger roles to develop reading habits out of school. Therefore, study recommended

taking action research on the same topic involving parents of class IV.

- vi. The study revealed that the school lacks reading review in the past. Therefore, the school should revisit the reading policy and implement reading programme immediately and reviewed the progress of the reading. This will give a sort of reflection to evaluate the performance.

For inculcating the habits of reading from the childhood, the recommendation by [40] is very relevant here. The school library should: "Create an environment conducive so that children feel at home; request teachers to encourage children to read more books; request parents to subscribe to newspapers and magazines for their homes matching the taste of their children; and organize book talk, book review, reader's theater etc." (p. 64)

"Orientation into reading programme is a must for every child to understand the value of reading." [38]. Therefore, teacher should implement this strategy to boost reading.

b) Teachers

1. The findings from this study contended that teacher should develop and interest in reading serving as role model so that children can emulate them. In the light of this fact, teacher should know the type of books children should enjoy reading. Hence, class IV teachers need to request appropriate numbers of books for classroom.

Teaching reading is one of the daunting tasks in the educational processes of learning. There is no concrete ways to teach them. Teacher could try different approaches prescribe by the different scholars in the literature apart from the school programme.

2. According to [41], "Teachers should introduce books to the children after giving them a brief introduction about the contents. This will give children the freedom to choose according to their taste." Teachers of class IV could try out this strategy and see whether it works in our situation or not.

9.1 CONCLUSION

This study has focused on relevant issues relating to the development of reading habit of

the class IV students of Ramchetsekha Primary School, Paro. Though this is an arduous task that demands the collaborative approach of all concerned. However, with the coordination, collaboration, and communication of all the stakeholders the success is inevitable. This goal may not be attainable overnight. It may take some time because the process is not at all easy, yet certain steps need to be taken. This is alarming and should be considered as a challenge.

At the commencement of this study, my knowledge reading habits of the children was restricted to my own personal experiences. However, the perspectives of the participants involved in this simple research have broadened my knowledge in how to promote reading habits of the children of class four. It is interesting to learn how unique and varied teachers' experiences can be. Understanding the uniqueness in the experiences of teachers made me to realize my own individuality. The process of interviewing and exploring the lived experiences of the participants taught me to become more mindful and thoughtful of my role as a teacher to mold the future citizens.

The lived experiences of teachers and students participants gave me an opportunity to understand the factors determining the challenges involved in dealing with the children of Class four to promote their reading habits. This study has given me to explore new implementation guides for developing reading habits where I can immediately implement it.

LIMITATION OF THE STUDY

Although the results of this study do provide significant insight to improve reading habits of the children of class IV but it is not representative of all the stakeholders. This study was carried out in a relatively small sample of teachers and the children of class IV in our school. Because of the time factor, researcher could not include as a participant sampling thought parents plays a pivotal roles in developing reading habits of the children. Thus, the results of this study may not be understood as representative of the general population of the school.

CONSENT AND ETHICAL APPROVAL

Ethical approval are sought from the school administration, Ramchetshekha by the Research Committee, then the teachers from the upper primary classes. The necessary equipment

required to record interviews, survey and document analysis are prearranged so that information could be protected for reference. The researcher protects the interviewee's identity and maintain confidentiality. The participant's willingness, interest and convenience are considered and taken care of.

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COMPETING INTERESTS

Authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

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