

An Eclectic Approach to Addressing Poor Reading Habits of Primary Pupils in Ghana

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Introduction

The UN SDG4 argues that quality education is the hallmark of successful societies. Quality education also has the capacity to reduce inequalities in poor communities in Africa, therefore, the main purpose of this study is to investigate the cause of poor reading habits among primary school pupils in Ghana using Penteng Nwase Primary School as a case study. The study designed an eclectic approach to enhance the reading skills of pupils.

Literature review

According to Tsadidey (1993), “reading could be defined as the ability of the individual to hold converse with written materials or get a message that has been set out in a specific code”. He further explained that, in reading, the individual can look at written or printed language and understand it. For reading to take place, it should be manifested in the reader’s understanding of what has been written. The Microsoft Encarta Encyclopedia standard (2006) explains that “reading is an activity characterized by the translation of symbols or letters into words and sentences that have meaning to the individual”. From the definition, it can be deduced that reading is the ability to understand written materials, evaluate them and to use them for one's needs.

Goodman (1971) suggested that “reading is a psycholinguistic process by which the reader, the language user, reconstructs as best as he can to a message or information which has been encoded by a writer as a graphic display” (P:41). In line with Goodman’s definition, it can be deduced that reading is the ability to look at and comprehend the meaning of written or printed words as a graphic display. Similarly, Ronald & Jordan (1979) point out that a child who is slow in learning to read often must be given extensive training on each of the varieties of tasks, such as letter

discrimination, letter sound training, blending etc. in this manner, a teacher becomes aware of the fact that letter recognition can be considered and skill itself.

Eclectic Approach

It is the combination of all the foregoing makes a lot of room for innovation. This is because a method will succeed with pupils in Accra but may fail in a village somewhere in the Volta region (Tsadidey, 1993, P.44). We are aware that no single method is full of proof, that every method has advantages and disadvantages. The eclectic approach, which is a blend of two or more methods ensures that the disadvantage in one method is compensated for by the advantages in the other. A blend of the look-and-say method and the phonic method ensures that the child is able to read and understand what he or she reads.

Methodology

The research design used for the study was action research. Action research is a kind of research activity in which the researcher works collaboratively with other people to solve perceived problems. It is an approach which aims at improving a problem-related situation through change. The study relied on semi-structured interviews, observation, and survey questionnaires as data collection instruments in collecting data and gathering information. The main purpose of the use of action research was to help the researcher understand what goes on in teaching-learning situations. It would also equip the researcher to understand the various methods or approaches that best suit the children he or she teaches. The action research design is to enable the student, researcher and pupils to develop appropriate interventional strategies aimed at finding solutions to the problem.

Findings

The data analysis revealed some interesting findings about the way pupils in Ghana read and the habits they have formed which influences their ability to read. One of the major findings is that the ability of teachers and pupils to identify words in a text, cultivating the habit of reading and getting used to various reading materials from all corners improves their ability to read. This implies that focusing just on the reading activities in school is not enough to cultivate a great habit of reading for school pupils in Ghana. Moreover, the support of parents serves as a primary motivator of a pupil's

willingness to learn. Interestingly, even if parents do not know how to read and write, simply showing interest in the learning of their children has a significant impact on pupils being motivated to learn hard.

The results from the study indicate that the pupils have tremendously improved in their reading difficulties. After applying all the interventional activities to help pupils to be able to read, a clear comparison between the pre-test and post-test showed that the pupils have improved. This is because only 50% of the twenty-four pupils had a pass in the pre-test while 83.3% passed the post-test. This, however, indicates that the researcher's use of appropriate teaching and learning materials as well as techniques in teaching helped the pupils a lot to improve upon their reading disability.

Implications for policy and future research

Although the research work has been successfully done, the researcher still thinks there are other measures when put in place that would help improve and encourage pupils to read. Therefore, the researcher would like to recommend the following. Classroom teachers should make use of more teaching-learning materials and appropriate teaching techniques to facilitate teaching and understanding of reading lessons and to implant in the pupils the habit of reading.

The government and district assemblies in collaboration with the head of teachers at various schools should establish an award scheme to be given to pupils who excel in reading. The district assemblies and the communities should assist in putting up more libraries and equip them with more reading books. Teachers and parents should also make sure pupils make use of the library.

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