A RESEARCH IN ACTION TO IMPROVE SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENT'S READING HABITS

Dr. Sojia John
Assistant Professor,
Mount Tabor Training College,
Pathanapuram Kollam, Kerala,

Abstract

Education and reading are closely related. Gaining knowledge, expanding one's vocabulary, honing critical thinking skills, and interacting with people from all backgrounds all depend on reading. A young reader is able to think more clearly. Nowadays, there are many forces working to undermine the practice of reading, maybe to the point of eradication. Instead of learning new material in the classroom, students have received spoon-feeding training. Reading habits are most threatened by modern technology like TVs, tablets, and cellphones, which also account for the declining amount of reading that people do. During the investigator's trips to classrooms, she observed difficulties that students were facing when reading textbook content. Informal discussions revealing the pupils' bad reading habits were also held with the concerned secondary school teachers. Hence the present study is an action research which aims in improving the secondary school pupils' reading habits. The VIIIth standard students was selected for the study. The action plan was carried out in three phases such as Pre Intervention, Intervention and post intervention phases. It was concluded after a careful analysis of the results that the action plan's implementation resulted in better reading habits. The action plan's implementation resulted in an improvement in reading habits, as seen by the comparison of the Pre- and Post-test scores. This implies that the action plan put into place was successful in encouraging reading habits.

Key words: reading habits, action research, secondary school students,

INTRODUCTION

The foundation of education is reading, which has several significant uses in the classroom. For students to obtain knowledge from textbooks, research papers, and other educational resources in the framework of formal education, reading is an essential tool. It helps students understand, remember, and apply the material that is given in a variety of courses. Moreover, reading comprises a vast array of materials, including articles, books, and internet resources, in addition to textbooks. Interacting with a variety of literature aids in the vocabulary growth, communication ability improvement, and viewpoint expansion of kids. Furthermore, as independent study and research are essential components of education, it fosters these

activities. As so, the habit of reading that he develops in his early years will serve as his compass throughout life. Learning to read early on helps a child grow up quickly, broaden their horizons intellectually, and fully develop their personalities. His reading tastes in adulthood shift towards serious novels about family, neighbours, society, and the country as a whole. He attempts to fulfil his obligations with diligence as he starts to comprehend what they are. Children who read gain mental clarity and are able to grow into more confident public figures. The act of reading regularly has a significant impact on children's thought processes, life behaviours, and the nation's future. As the nation's future leaders, children truly are its architects, and their actions shape the country's trajectory. It is therefore imperative that youngsters be instilled with a love of books and a reading habit from an early age. Development of the kid starts early and includes social, moral, emotional, mental, and physical growth. Currently, children are becoming less and less avid readers. The reading of prescribed books with other general texts is discouraged for children. Instructors give them prefabricated responses instead of letting them figure it out on their own. Children's inventiveness is being killed as a result. The decline in children's reading habits can also be attributed to the rise of electronic media. The many components of reading, including decoding, vocabulary, comprehension, fluency, and text structure, can present a variety of challenges for students. There is a deficiency of scholarly research in Kerala that concentrates on encouraging adolescents' reading habits. To prevent a social catastrophe, it is imperative that a study on children's reading habits be carried out.

NEED AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Reading and education go hand in hand. Reading is crucial for knowledge acquisition, vocabulary growth, the development of critical thinking abilities, and the ability to interact with others from different backgrounds. A child who reads can think more clearly. The practice of reading is under assault in the current day from a number of angles, possibly to the point of extinction. Students have been trained in spoon-feeding rather than knowledge acquisition in schools. Modern devices like TVs, tablets, and cellphones pose the greatest threat to reading habits and are the reason why reading is being done less and less. During classroom visits, the investigator saw challenges that pupils were having reading material from textbooks. Students sometimes suffer with limited vocabulary and language competency, which makes it difficult for them to write well and grasp complicated texts. These issues can also make it difficult for them to understand academic material and express themselves clearly. Informal conversations with the worried secondary school instructors also demonstrated the students' poor reading habits. Research by Babalola (2020), Dorjil and Rinzin (2021), and Haliru et al. (2015) also provided evidence in favour of students' declining reading habits. A review of the literature made it abundantly evident that Kerala lacked thorough studies aimed at encouraging reading among secondary school pupils.It was

acknowledged that students with reading challenges needed to receive immediate assistance. Therefore, the researcher felt compelled to use suitable techniques and a support structure to assist those pupils in improving their reading habits. As a result, an effort has been made to carry out action research to improve secondary school pupils' reading habits.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Based on the background and need of the study the initial questions which arouse in the mind of the investigator is

- Do the secondary school students have the habit of reading books/ journals/novels etc?
- What is the general nature of reading habits among secondary school students?
- Whether the reading habits among secondary school students can be enhanced by the use of appropriate strategies?

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To identify the major difficulties associated with reading among students of standard VIII
- To prepare an action plan for improving reading habits of students of standard VIII
- To implement the action plan for enhancing reading habits among students of standard VIII

METHODOLOGY

The approach employed in this study is action research. It entails action, assessment, and reflection. Changes in practice are then put into place in response to the evidence that has been acquired. It could be a way to solve a specific issue or a way to identify other trouble spots. Action research is sometimes referred to as a "cycle of action" because it typically proceeds in this manner: education researchers iden/tify the main problem, create a research plan, gather and analyse data, integrate the results into planning, carry out, monitor, and assess the actions, and then repeat the process.

PROBLEM ANALYSIS (PRE-INTERVENTION STAGE)

During the formal and informal interaction with students of Mount Tabor Girls High School at Pathanapuram, , the investigator could find out many difficulties and lack of interest in reading among secondary school students. During the Reading Day Celebration program, the investigator was in-charge for the reading competition to evaluate students as part of National Reading Day in the school. It was found that majority of the students struggle in reading while participating in the competition. The performance of the students in the reading competition added to the felt problem. Then the investigator thought to provide an opportunity for them to improve their reading. As part of improving the educational practice, the investigator selected the topic for project based on the difficulties identified for initiating an immediate action. The problem prompted the investigator to do something immediately for the students to improve the process of reading. Thus, the topic for

the investigation was selected. Further observation and interaction in High school classes and the use of need analysis inventory help the investigator to delimit the problem for investigation.

DATA COLLECTION PHASES

Table1:Different phases of Data Collection

Phases	Data collection strategy
Pre-intervention	Discussion with the students about Pre-tests Conduction of Pre-tests Scoring of Pre-tests
Intervention	Implementation of the action plan
Post-intervention	Class observation, Conduction of Post-tests, Post-tests analysis, Informal discussion

TOOLS AND TECHNIQUES APPLIED FOR THE EVALUATION OF THE IDENTIFIED PROBLEM

a)Observation

Investigator noticed problems faced by students while reading in the normal classroom and also, during the reading competition conducted in school as part of National Reading Day. The identified difficulties related to reading were clarity issues, pronunciation challenges,reading with understanding,comprehension difficulties,vocabulary barriers,fluency issues etc. It has been felt that focused attention is required to minimise those difficulties, at the same time measures to cultivate and elevate reading practices among students.

b) Need Analysis Inventory

Need Analysis Inventory was conducted to determine the current status or existing needs with regard to a problem. Need Analysis Inventory *involves the identification and evaluation of needs. The investigator has given some prepared items concerning reading habit such as general nature of reading, choices of reading ,*reading distractions and *role of school in reading. Through this test it is noted* that an extra level of care is necessary to enhance the reading habit.

c) Tests on Reading Habit- (Pre-Tests /Post-Tests)

The investigator has prepared Pre-tests(same as Post-tests) concerning some pertinent aspects related to vocabulary, punctuation, comprehension, sentence structure and grammar questions; clarity issues, pronunciation challenges, reading with understanding, comprehension difficulties, vocabulary barriers, fluency issues etc. The Pre-tests aimed to determine the hurdles of students under consideration of the study. The investigator's Pre-written test contains exercises like finding of wrongly spelt word, fill in the blanks, rearranging words, correcting the punctuation errors, unscrambling words, comprehension passage,synonyms and antonyms, and word search. The Pre-written test contains 8 questions with a maximum mark of 20.

d) Reading Assessment Schedule

The Pre-reading test was conducted by giving a paragraph for reading by the students within the time-limit. The reading session was assessed by the concerned teacher using the Pre/Post Assessment Schedule. Tallies were marked with respect to the indicators of reading such as clarity, pronunciation, fluency, rhythms, reading with understanding, gestures and expressions, and self-correction.

PARTICIPANTS FOR THE STUDY

The VIIIth standard students of Mount Tabor Girls High School ,Pathanapuram was selected for the study. Based on the scores of Pre-tests conducted, out of the 39 students, five students(n=5) scored below 10. The pre-tests scores helped the investigator to identify those five students (n=5) with major difficulties with regard to reading habit.

1.10.4 STATISTICAL TECHNIQUES

A percentage is calculated by dividing a number by the whole and multiplying it by 100. Percentage Analysis = $n/N \times 100$

N – Total number of the items

n – Part of the total items

PHASE II

ACTION HYPOTHESIS

Hypothesis is a proposed explanation made on the basis of limited evidence as a starting point for further investigation. It is a specific, testable prediction about what you expect to happen in our study. A hypothesis of action is a statement that relates an idea with an action. That means, the hypothesis formulated in Action Research is known as Action Hypothesis.

In this study, the **Action Hypothesis** is-

The plan of action prepared will aid in reducing difficulties associated with reading and also enhances reading practices among secondary school students.

DETAILED PLAN OF ACTION

Table 2: Detailed Plan of Action

DAY	ACTIVITES/STRATEGIES USED	OBJECTIVES
Day-1	➢ Utilizing a video featuring a song about reading ➢ Using video depicting short story and a comprehension activity related to the short story	➢ To create an interest in reading practices
Day-2	➢ Revealing auditory resources encompassing narratives in common English	➢ To capture interest and acquaint with vocabulary while aiding in reading aloud
	➢ Providing newspaper and allow them to read in classroom.	➢ To familiarize the meanings of new words and

Day-3	➢ Engaging students in completing the enjoyable tasks found in the newspaper.	sentences in newspapers ➢ To develop curiosity and reading skills by participating in activities
Day-4	➢ Providing books and allot time to go through the books	➢ To grab the passage, comprehend sentence structures, and acquire vocabulary
Day-5	➢ Providing reader's digest and encourage them to read	➢ To help to overcome the difficulties in reading

❖ **The action plan was repeated for the subsequent two weeks for the selected sample**

PHASE III

OBSERVATION, COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS OF DATA

In the action research, the investigator adopted participant observation as a qualitative research method in which the researcher studies a group not only by observing the group, but also by co-coordinating and participating in the activities of the group under study as one among them. In the present study, the investigator analysed the percentage of marks scored by the students in the Pre-tests and Post-tests and made a comparison and graphically interpreted the data using bar diagram.

I ANALYSIS OF THE DATA--- PRE-TESTS

The Pre-tests were conducted to find out the difficulties of students in reading. It includes (a) Pre-written test and (b) Pre-reading test. The major areas addressed in Pre- written test were finding of the wrongly spelt word, fill in the blanks, rearranging words, punctuation errors for correction, unscrambling words, comprehension passage, synonyms and antonyms, and word search. The Pre-reading test was conducted by giving a paragraph for reading by the students within the time-limit. The reading session was assessed by the concerned teacher and tallies were marked with respect to clarity, pronunciation, fluency, rhythms, reading with understanding, gestures and expressions, and self-correction. The Pre-tests were given to the 39 students in Standard VIII of Mount Tabor Girls High School Pathanapuram. The investigator selected only students (n=5) from standard VIII for this study based on the scores obtained in Pre-tests

a.i) **Analysis of the scores of selected sample (n=5) in the pre-written test.**

Sl. No	Name of the Student	Marks Obtained (Out of 20)	Percentage (%)

1	Anupama N	4	20
2	Doniya Luckose	3	15
3	Neeraja Raj	6	30
4	Mahima Suresh	8	40
5	Veena S.R	5	25

Table 3: Data and results of scores of Pre-written test

The table 3 shows the marks and its percentage scored by the selected students in the Pre-written test. Out of 20 marks, Anupama N scored 4 (20%), Doniya Luckose scored 3 (15%), Neeraja Raj scored 6 (30%), Mahima Suresh scored 8 (40%) and Veena S.R scored 5 (25%).

b.(i) Tally Marks obtained by the selected sample (n=5) in the Pre-reading test

Sl. No:	Indicators	Tally marks of selected students(n=5)				
		Anupama N	Doniya Luckose	Neeraja Raj	Mahima Suresh	Veena S.R
	Clarity	I	I	I	I	I
2	**Pronunciation**	II	II	I	II	I
3	**Fluency**			I	I	I
4	**Rhythms**				I	I
5	**Reading with understanding**			I	I	I
6	**Gestures and Expressions**	II		I	I	
7	**Self Correction**		I	I		I

Table 4: Tally Marks obtained by the selected sample (n=5) in the Pre-reading test

b.(ii) Analysis of the scores of selected sample (n=5) in the pre-reading test

The table 5 shows the tally marks and its percentage scored by the selected students in the Pre-reading test. Out of the total 21 tally marks, Anupama N scored 5 (23.8%), Doniya Luckose scored 4 (19.0%), Neeraja Raj scored 6 (28.5%), Mahima Suresh scored 7 (33.3%) and Veena S.R scored 6 (28.5%).

Sl. No	Name of the Student	Tallies	Percentage (%)

1	Anupama N	IIIII	23.8
2	Doniya Luckose	IIII	19.0
3	Neeraja Raj	IIIIII	28.5
4	Mahima Suresh	IIIIIII	33.3
5	Veena S.R	IIIIII	28.5

Table 5: Data and results of Pre-reading test scores of selected sample (n=5)

II ANALYSIS OF THE DATA -POST-TESTS

The Post-tests were conducted among the selected students under the study using the same Pre-tests after the completion of action plan. The Post-tests were done to know the improvement of each participant and to check the effect of the action plan implemented.

a.ii) Analysis of the scores of selected sample(n=5) in the post-written test

The table 6 show the marks and its percentage scored by the selected students in the Post-written test. Out of 20 marks, Anupama N scored 12 (60%), Doniya Luckose scored 10 (50%), Neeraja Raj scored 15 (75%), Mahima Suresh scored 16 (80%) and Veena S.R scored 13.5 (67.5%).

Sl. No	Name of the Student	Marks Obtained (Out of 20)	Percentage (%)
1	Anupama N	12	60
2	Doniya Luckose	10	50
3	Neeraja Raj	15	75
4	Mahima Suresh	16	80
5	Veena S.R	13.5	67.5

Table 6: Scores of selected sample (n=5) in the post-written test

b.iii) Tally Marks obtained by the selected sample (n=5) in the Post-reading test

Sl. No:	Indicators	Tally marks of selected students(n=5)				
		Anupama N	Doniya Luckose	Neeraja Raj	Mahima Suresh	Veena S.R
1	Clarity	II	II	II	II	II

2	Pronunciation	II	II	III	III	II
3	Fluency	I	I	II	II	II
4	Rhythms	I	I	I	II	II
5	Reading with understanding	II	I	II	II	II
6	Gestures and Expressions	II	II	II	II	II
7	Self-Correction	II	I	II	II	I

Table7: Data and results of tally marks in Post-reading test

b. iv)Analysis of the scores of selected sample(n=5) in the post-reading test

The table 8: shows the tally marks and its percentage scored by the selected students in the Post-reading test. Out of 21 tally marks, Anupama N scored 12 (57.1%), Doniya Luckose scored 10 (47.6%), Neeraja Raj scored 14 (66.6%), Mahima Suresh scored 15 (71.4%) and Veena S.R scored 13 (61.9%).

Sl. No	Name of the Student	Tally	Percentage (%)
1	Anupama N	IIIIIIIIIIII	57.1
2	Doniya Luckose	IIIIIIIIII	47.6
3	Neeraja Raj	IIIIIIIIIIIIII	66.6
4	Mahima Suresh	IIIIIIIIIIIIIII	71.4
5	Veena S.R	IIIIIIIIIIIII	61.9

Table8: Data and results of Post-reading test scores of students

COMPARISON OF PRE-TESTS AND POST-TESTS SCORES

Comparison between the Pre-tests and Post-tests in Action Research helps in finding out the efficacy of the Action Plan. Comparison is an essential feature in any field to check the achievement of each specific goal.

Comparison of percentage of marks in the Pre-written test and Post-written test

Sl. No	Name of the Student	Percentage of scores in Pre-written test	Percentage of scores in Post-written test
1	Anupama N	20	60

2	Doniya Luckose	15	50
3	Neeraja Raj	30	75
4	Mahima Suresh	40	80
5	Veena S.R	25	67.5

Table9: Comparison of Data and results of Pre-written test and Post-written test scores of students

Comparison of percentage of marks in Pre-reading test and Post-reading test

Sl. No	Name of the Student	Percentage (%) of tally marks in the Pre-reading test	Percentage (%) of tally marks in the Post-reading test
1	Anupama N	23.8	57.1
2	Doniya Luckose	19.0	47.6
3	Neeraja Raj	28.5	66.6
4	Mahima Suresh	33.3	71.4
5	Veena S.R	28.5	61.9

Table 10:Data &Results of Pre-reading test and Post-reading test scores of student

PHASE IV

REFLECTION AND SHARING

During the visit to Mount Tabor Girls High School Pathanapuram, investigator felt that there are some difficulties in reading among students of standard VIII. Based on classroom observation and reading competition conducted on National Reading Day, the investigator understood their reading difficulties. Then, the investigator planned to do some activities that may benefit the children in reading. Firstly, the investigator had given a Need Analysis Inventory to standard VIII students and then, conducted Pre-tests on reading to evaluate students of Standard VIII. The Pre-tests were given to the whole class. The whole class contained 39 students. The Pre-test consists of Pre-written test and Pre-reading test.As a result, only five students were selected for the course of action based on the scores of pre-tests. Based on the results of Pre-tests and preferences of students in reading, an action plan was planned and implemented. The action plan was conducted for 2 weeks during the month of June and July. After the implementation of action plan, same Pre-tests were used as the Post-tests. Then the results of both the test were analysed and interpreted.

The results of the Need Analysis Inventory indicated the student's interests and their preferences in reading. The scores of the Pre-written test revealed that among 19 students, five students secured below 10 marks. In the Pre-reading test too the five scored below 6 tally

marks.Hence the investigator decided to select five students who were having reading difficulties for the study. After implementing the action plan, the same Pre-tests were used as the Post-tests. The results of the both the tests were analysed and interpreted.

The results of the of Pre-tests and Post-tests were graphically plotted and then analysed and compared. Following a thorough examination of the outcomes, it was determined that the implementation of the action plan led to an improvement in reading habits. When compared the scores of Pre and the Post-tests, it was found that the implementation of the action plan led to an enhancement in reading habits. This suggests that the action plan that implemented had a positive impact on promoting reading habits. An action plan typically outlines specific steps and strategies to achieve a particular goal. In the present investigation, the aim of enhancing reading habits had been successfully achieved through the action plan employed.

CONCLUSION

The Reading habit is very much essential for the secondary school students because it equips the students with necessary knowledge and understanding not only for building their own life but also for contributing positively to the socio-economic development of the nation. The promotion of the reading habits of the secondary school students and turning them into lifelong learners are quite important for building a knowledgeable society. It is understood from the study that further, the role of the school teachers is very significant and crucial in promoting the reading habit of the secondary school students.When teachers implement specific strategies and support systems, it will definitely lead to an enhancement of reading habits among students. Therefore, the investigator believe that curriculum developers should include designated library time, make available books from a variety of genres, and arrange diverse competitions to cultivate a knowledgeable next generation. All the stakeholders of the school education, the school management, the school teachers, the school librarian, the authorities on school education, and the policy maker, the school education departments of the state and central governments and the parents have to come together and work for the common and noble cause of the promotion of the reading habit of the school students. To quote the precious and thought-provoking words of Francis Bacon: "Reading makes a full man, conference a ready man and writing an exact man."

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