

DEVELOPING A READING PROGRAM FOR JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL

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ABSTRACT

In the academe, reading takes on a gradually crucial role. Any barrier to the development of reading ability can completely debilitate a student's goals. Hence, this study analyzed and determined the reading competency level of Junior High School students in a remote National High School in the Philippines. Two hundred fifty respondents, enrolled for school year 2019-2020 were taken as subjects of the study. To gather the research data, a triangulation method was employed. A Focus Group Discussion was first conducted among the teachers to identify teaching and assessment techniques in reading. Then, due to the existing pandemic; an online survey questionnaire via google form was utilized to identify the problems encountered by the respondents in reading comprehension. Finally, a qualitative data analysis was administered to examine the lesson and curriculum guide vis-à-vis the Reading Efficiency Index results. The REI showed that majority of the respondents fall under the frustration level, with comprehension below fifty percent; thus requiring extensive assistance from teachers. Moreover, there was a low alignment in the lesson guide objectives compared with the curriculum. Techniques and assessment employed in teaching reading were limited to book-comprehension-checks. Henceforth, a reading program was designed as an intervention. The study concluded with the findings that the development of the reading program was necessary to augment the competency level of the respondents. The paper recommended for students to be constantly exposed to several reading activities in their classes to further enhance their reading comprehension skills.

KEYWORDS

Reading Program, Levels of Reading, Competency Level

1. INTRODUCTION

Today's students need to know not only the basic reading and arithmetic skills, but also skills that will allow them to face a world that is continually changing (Mullis, 2014). Furthermore, they must be able to think critically, to analyze, and to make inferences. Changes in the skills base and knowledge that these students need require new learning goals. These new learning goals change the relationship between assessment and instruction. Teachers need to take an active role in making decisions about the purpose of assessment and the content that is being assessed.

The Basic Education as the target research populace of this study is intended to meet basic learning needs which provides the foundation on which subsequent learning can be based. It encompasses kindergarten, elementary and secondary education as well as alternative learning systems for out-of-school learners and those with special needs.

Effective instruction contributes to the development of students' reading strategies and skills, motivation, and commitment to reading. It can broaden students' conceptualization of reading as contributing to success in life. Given the characteristics of successful readers, the array of reasons for reading, and the diverse outcomes of successful reading instruction, broad reading assessment is to be similarly expected. The assessment that the proponents of this paper employed describe the many beneficial outcomes of becoming a better reader. The outcomes of the reading instruction weighted in relation to the assessment that is conducted in districts, schools, and classrooms was given prime importance. An examination of widely used reading assessments revealed clear gaps between the rhetoric of the important outcomes of learning to read and what was assessed.

Most reading assessments focus narrowly on one set of important reading outcomes: the cognitive strategies and skills of reading. Familiarity with these outcomes by experience are gained by the researchers, with them in school as teachers and former students. Phonemic awareness, phonics, sight-word recognition, and fluency, as well as vocabulary knowledge (Stahl & Bravo, 2010) and literal and inferential comprehension (Snow, 2002), contribute to reading success. Although these are important elements of successful student reading, they do not fully represent the growth and development that students experience in exemplary reading programs (Afflerbach, Cho, Kim, & Clark, 2010). Related, few reading assessments measure changes in or maintenance of student motivation to read or the range of students' social uses of reading. Many reading assessments sample a small portion of student accomplishment and growth—and by implication, teacher and school success. Bracey (2001) notes that standardized tests regularly miss the following outcomes of effective teaching and student learning: "creativity, critical thinking, resilience, motivation, persistence, humor, reliability, enthusiasm, civic-mindedness, self-awareness, self-discipline, empathy, leadership, and compassion" (p. 158). If reading assessment is wanted to mirror students' accomplishments, then reading assessment practice that provides, at best, only a partial reflection of those accomplishments need to be avoided.

Realizing how crucial reading is for the studentry, the great importance of developing their reading ability was seen. To achieve this, a set of reading lessons was designed through a Reading Program as research product. It is believed that for learners to analyze historical events, English

literature, scientific and math concepts, they must be taught how to read better first. Moreover, this study deemed the importance of the reading curriculum in the entire learning process. It looked into the essence of assessment as an integral part of instruction. This evaluative procedure determined whether or not the goals of education were met. Assessment affects decisions about grades, placement, advancement, instructional needs, and in most cases curriculum. In the academia, it further motivates teachers to ask themselves whether they are teaching what they think they are teaching, whether students are learning what they are supposed to learn and whether there is a way to teach a subject better, thereby promoting better learning.

Theoretical Framework

Seels and Glasgow's (2005) Instructional Design Model comprising of the ADDIE ladder is adopted in this paper. Figure 1 describes the holistic cycle on addressing learners' reading problems. It starts with a need analysis by assessing learner's reading levels to categorize their strengths and weaknesses in reading. Through this, the researcher was able to identify the least mastered competencies and plan the suitable teaching-reading pedagogies which has an alignment to the curriculum guide of the Department of Education. Such curriculum was likewise basis on assessment which ascertained that the assessments covered all that is important in reading development, provide triangulation to support inferences about student development, so as not to over assess particular areas of reading.

Once the needs of the learners were laid out, the design of a reading program followed. This part was created based on the identified problems and the assessment tools, forms, and intervention session activities used. All of these sought to help learners read and comprehend which fostered mastery of reading with comprehension, the main objective of this study.

These concepts are subsequently discussed which aided the researchers in the design of a training program for readers of diverse reading levels. The presentation of these ideas focus on the ideas contained in the problem statement of the research. Moreover, as figure 1 shows, it places impact on the relevance of designing an apt reading program for struggling learners to master reading and gradually improve reading skills and competencies.

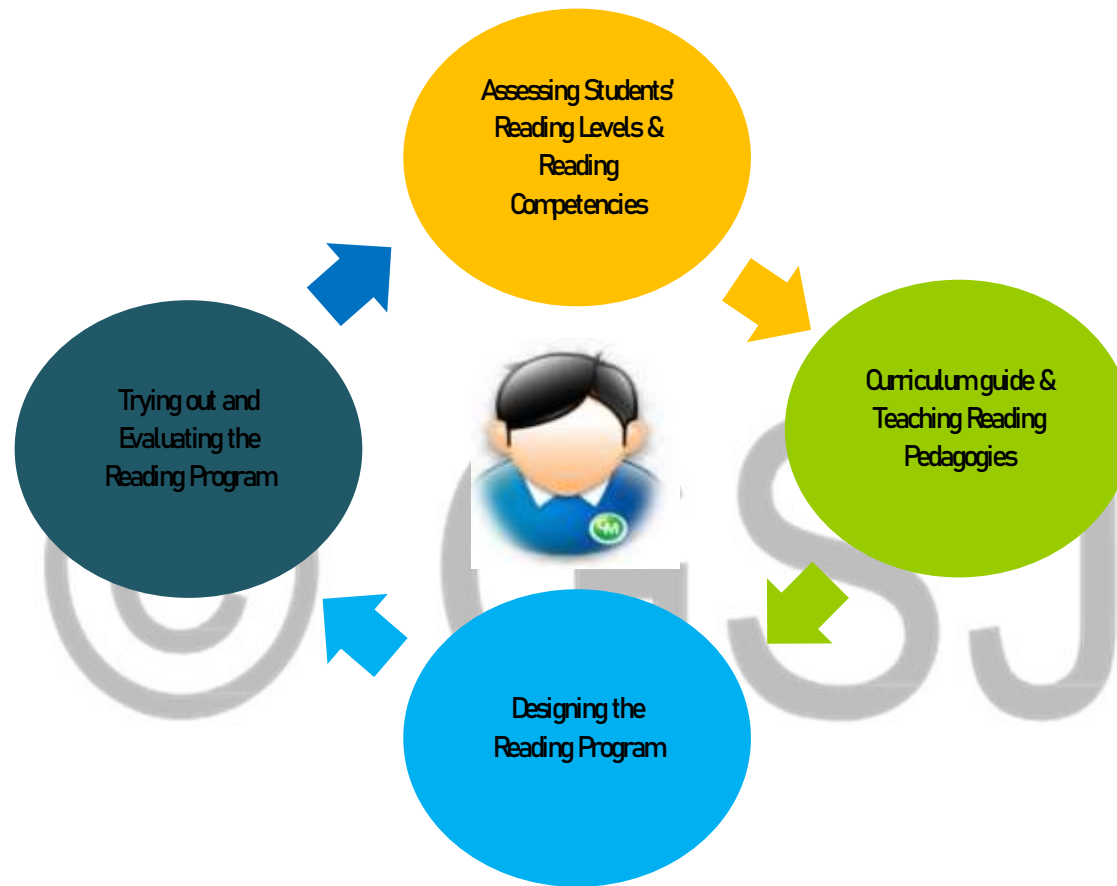


Figure 1: The Framework of the Study

Methodology

The Junior High School (JHS) students of Malibud National High School which has a total population of 200 served as respondents of this study. They are officially enrolled for school year 2020-2021. These respondents were purposively chosen based on the observation that majority of their Reading Efficiency Index level fall under the frustration level.

Designed after the Research and Development (R&D) model, the study produced a Reading Program for Junior High School. The researchers conducted the needs analysis to identify the reading comprehension needs of the respondents. The results were used to design a reading program. Moreover, in the needs assessment phase, the study employed the QDA/qualitative document analysis. This is a form of qualitative research in which documents are interpreted by the researcher to give voice and meaning around an assessment topic (Bowen, 2019). Analyzing documents incorporates coding content into themes similar to how focus group or interview transcripts are analyzed.

Furthermore, the researchers gathered data from the respondents through a focus group discussion with reading approaches and assessment techniques as the core topics. Apart from this tool, the proponents asked for the Curriculum Guide, PHILIRI and REI results, Lesson Guide, and Learner's Guide. A constructive alignment checklist developed by Zurong (2018) for Reading Comprehension Instruction was further be used. The curriculum assessment also took place which included four basic components: 1) measure reading improvement over time, 2) motivate students to read, 3) evaluate the teaching methods and 4) ranking the students' capabilities in relation to the whole group evaluation.

Results and Discussion

In the needs assessment stage of this research, it was found out that sixty-seven percent of the Reading Efficiency Index of the respondents belong to the Frustration Level. This reading level implies that readers do not have adequate background level for a topic and do not meet the criteria for instructional levels of accuracy and rate. Hence, these type of readers require extensive assistance from their teachers. The frustration reading level is also the lowest reading level where students show withdrawal from reading situations by refusing to read (Phil-Iri Manual, 2018). Additionally, the focus group discussion as one of the research instruments in this paper was likewise an avenue for the researcher to find out the teaching and assessment techniques that the respondents were exposed to in their Reading classes. The approaches in reading instruction were more extensive, varied and teacher-directed involving class and group dynamics. Yet in the new normal, these were limited to self-paced independent reading using printed modules and few digital reading resources. An alternative performance-based reading assessment was the main approach used by teachers during these trying times. They also attempted to use mobile and video-based assessment providing reading materials.

Although the basic education curriculum has three hundred ninety-one reading competencies that comprised text processing and task management skills, twelve categories stand out. Constructing an integrated text representation had the highest frequency. This competency required learners to understand texts by making inferences from the level of individual sentences to the entire passage. This implies that the highest percentage of the reading competencies in the Junior High requires learners to make inferences. Using these data points, the Reading Programs was designed and developed with various sections. The composition begins with an introduction, objectives, preliminary activities, exercises and activities and evaluative sessions. This was then tried out online among fifty respondents. The evaluation was done by the experts involving the English coordinator, faculty teaching language subjects and the respondents themselves. An evaluation instrument developed by Ong (2017) was used to rate the developed Reading Program. The results showed ninety-five percent of the evaluators composed of the 200 respondents, 5 teachers and 1 school head; rated the developed material with an excellent mark. The minor suggestions recommended for the program to be used among other students in the Municipality of Gingoog.

Findings and Recommendation

Contextualizing reading comprehension instruction places the learners in a vivid and meaningful authentic situation (Bonganciso, 2016). This can be done through designing the reading lessons and activities that center on the learners' field of interests and environment. As the study determined the effects of Contextualized Teaching and Learning on reading comprehension performance of the learners, the developed Reading Program aided the respondents in their comprehension problems. The reading comprehension performance of the learners after the intervention moved up to the Instructional Level from the lowest rank of the Frustration Level. Furthermore, there was a significant increase of the reading comprehension performance of the students from pretest to posttest. Hence, contextualizing the reading tasks of the learners had positive effects on their comprehension performance. It was recommended in helping learners improve their performance in reading.

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