

Original Paper

Enhancing the Reading for Pleasure Habit of the Students of Samtse College of Education

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Abstract

Reading is an essential skill for everybody especially for the students of Samtse College of Education who are future teachers. They need to read to enhance their communication skills, upgrade their knowledge and skills and be role models in reading for their students. However, we have found that the reading for pleasure habit among the students is poor. Students generally use social media during their leisure time instead of reading which is a concern both for their lecturers and the institution. An action research study was carried out to improve students' reading for pleasure habit. Data for the study were gathered using a survey and interview. A total of 325 students completed the survey and 57 students participated in the interview. The data were collected twice; before (baseline) and after the intervention. Comparison of means was used to analyse the quantitative data and the qualitative data were analysed thematically. Following the analysis of the baseline data, three intervention strategies were employed; Our Time To Enjoy Reading (OTTER), Self-indulgence Reading, and Raffle Draw. These strategies were implemented in all the 16 classes for a period of 8 weeks. The comparison of the analysis of the pre-and post-data showed that the interventions have been effective in promoting the reading for pleasure habit of the students.

Keywords

Reading, leisure, improve, intervention, effective

1. Introduction

Reading is an essential skill and its importance in this era of information explosion cannot be undervalued. It is a skill that must be possessed by all students at tertiary level and more importantly by the students of SCE as future teachers who will be role models in reading for their students. The investment students make in reading for pleasure will pay huge dividends during their time in the

College as well as in their future. As teachers, it is their responsibility to guide and encourage their students to read. If they do not possess a love for reading, it will be difficult and impractical for them to motivate their students to read. However, it has been found that the students of Samtse College of Education (SCE) do not show an interest, or engage in, reading for pleasure despite encouragement, motivation, and persuasion from their lecturers. In addition, it has also been observed that most of the students have poor written and oral communication skills which could be attributed to their lack of reading habit. These observations are echoed by all the colleagues in the College. This attitude of students towards reading has become a serious concern for the lecturers since students do not realize the value of reading for pleasure in their personal and professional lives. Many students are found to be spending their time on social media or doing other things instead of reading which nurtures their knowledge and intellectual abilities.

The decline in the reading habits of the youths is also a concern for His Majesty the Fifth King Jig me Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck who always encourages young people to read. For example, during the launch of the National Reading Week in 2015, His Majesty said: “You must read about everything around you-not just subjects that interest you. You must learn about current events, history, science, culture, and people around the world-the pursuit of knowledge must be lifelong”. Given the importance and benefits of reading, it is essential to initiate reading activities in the College to foster students’ reading habit and promote their critical thinking, creativity, communication skills, and make them life-long readers and learners. They may cascade these reading activities into their own classrooms in future and develop their students’ love for reading. This study was conducted to promote students’ habit in reading for pleasure through the use of different intervention strategies. Since our intention was to improve this situation, action research was the most appropriate research strategy (Maxwell, 2003). The study was also aimed at providing findings on the effectiveness of the intervention strategies used.

2. Reconnaissance

Prior to establishing the precise action research question, Maxwell (2003) proposed a thorough reconnaissance. Reconnaissance is derived from a French word “reconnaitre” which means “to look at”. He identified three parts to a reconnaissance; situational analysis (looking at situation in terms of a range of factors such as resources and practices); competences (the profile and competences of researcher(s); and relevant literature (linking with the previous work in this field). Dillon (2008) contends that “reconnaissance allows investigators to be more aware of where they are at, what they hope to achieve, and how they are going to get there” (p.15).

2.1 Situational Analysis

We noted in the introduction, reading is an important skill that tertiary students, particularly SCE students as future teachers, need to possess. They need to be role models of reading for their students. However, lecturers have found that the habit of reading for pleasure among the students in the College is very poor. Students do not engage in reading for pleasure despite the encouragement and persuasion

from their lecturers. They are observed to be on social media during their leisure time rather than engaging in reading for pleasure. Most of the students lack good communication skills and Choeda et al. (2020) found that poor reading habits are a barrier to good communication skills. These behaviors of students towards reading for pleasure and their poor communication skills are concern for the lecturers.

2.2 Competence

All the authors have the experience of conducting research and have published in international journals. They also read for pleasure and four of them teach English modules in the College.

2.3 Literature Review

A review of literature on reading for pleasure, its importance, factors affecting it, and strategies to enhance it are discussed in the following section.

• **Reading for pleasure**

Reading for pleasure is defined as reading for enjoyment (Clark & Rumbold, 2006). It is also referred to as independent reading (Cullinan, 2000), voluntary reading (Krashen, 2004), leisure reading (Greaney, 1980), or recreational reading (Manzo & Manzo, 1995). The process of reading for pleasure is described as a form of play that allows the reader to experience other worlds (Nell, 1988) and a creative activity (Holden, 2004). Reading for pleasure is done at a place that suits the reader with the material of his/her choice (Clark & Rumbold, 2006). According to Moore et al. (1999), “pleasure reading today has become an endangered activity, particularly among the youth” (p. 3).

Research indicates that reading for pleasure has great influence on students’ academic performance (Pearson, 2015). Reading has the power to stimulate and promote development, instil discipline (Danladi & Yohanna, 2018) and develop imagination, induction, reflection, critical thinking, and vocabulary (Wolpert, 2009). Reading is an important gateway to personal development, social, economic, and civic life (Holden, 2004). It is not a discrete skill but consists of several skills and procedures in which the readers interact with printed words for content and pleasure thereby teaching oneself to write, speak, spell, grammar structure, vocabulary, and other language skills (Salehi et al., 2015). This shows that reading for pleasure is linked to increase of cognitive progress over time (Alvermann, 2017). Further, Krashen (2004) advocates the power of reading for pleasure in literacy development. Reading for pleasure is shown to affect readers’ wellbeing. Reading deepens the feelings of empathy, and presents the reader with a greater understanding of others’ mental states (Koopman & Hakemulder, 2015). Furthermore, a positive association of reading for pleasure with emotional and personal well-being is identified in studies which states that “reading for pleasure enhances empathy, understanding of the self and the ability to understand one's own and others’ identities” (BOP Consulting, 2015, p. 11). Reading is also essential to obtain information and success. Capps and Huang (2015) in their study revealed that the rate of high academic performance is directly proportional to one’s reading. Clark and Rumbold (2006) have pointed out that reading for pleasure develops text comprehension and grammar, builds positive reading attitudes, pleasure in later life as well as increased general knowledge. A study done by Diaz (2016) found that reading for pleasure impacts personal, academic/professional,

and linguistic spheres of individuals. A study by the Institute for Education (University of London) highlighted that people who read for pleasure had a 14.4% advantage in vocabulary and a 9.9% advantage in math (Sellgren, 2013). According to Moore et al. (1999, p.3), “adolescents entering the adult world in the 21st century will read and write more than at any other time in human history”. Though reading is important and its benefits are infinite, the reading habit among the “born digital” generation, bewitched by facebook, texting, and multichannel stimulation is on the decline (Nicholas, 2008).

- **Factors affecting reading for pleasure**

The factors affecting reading for pleasure include positive attitude (Twist et al., 2007), reading frequency (Clark & Douglas 2011), access to resources and having books of their own (Clark & Poulton, 2011), choice (Clark & Phythian-Sence, 2008), role model (Cremin et al., 2009), and rewards (Clark and Rumbold, 2006). Conversely, reading for pleasure is impeded by lack of time, work overload, a desire to socialize, or a decision to spend time in other ways (Gilbert & Fister, 2010). Additionally, Andrianatos (2019) found that students did not engage in reading for pleasure owing to lack of reading abilities.

- **Strategies to enhance reading for pleasure**

Literature shows that the reading for pleasure habit of the students can be promoted through different strategies. For example, Dewan (2010) contends that libraries play a vital role in boosting the reading interest of the students by creating popular reading and having a place in the library for students to relax and read, opportunity for book discussion (Salter & Brooke, 2007). Currently the library at Samtse College of Education has limited books for recreational reading and there is lack of space for students to read and relax. Literature highlights that where appropriate teachers and parents could lead by example, provide time for daily independent reading, host reading-related events, assign a reading log or host a book club (Stinchcomb, 2007) and share reading experiences, invite authors to speak, and teaching reading strategies (Aguilar, 2013). People who have books of their own enjoy reading more and read more frequently (Clark & Poulton, 2011). Literacy-targeted rewards, such as books (Raffle Draw) or book vouchers (Clark & Rumbold, 2006), opportunity for independent reading (Our Time To Enjoy Reading-OTTER), and self-indulgence reading (Tyson, 2013) are found to be effective strategies for promoting reading for pleasure. These are the major strategies that will be employed in our intervention.

3. The Action Research Question

Based upon this reconnaissance, the following action research question was formulated:

How can we enhance the reading for pleasure habit of the students of Samtse College of Education?

4. Research Design and Methodology

The action research was implemented because improvement was desired (Maxwell, 2003). The research participants were 16 classes of SCE who were Bachelors of Education, Masters in Education, and Bachelors in Social Work students. To ensure effective results, two approaches to data collection (questionnaire and interview) were used. Data were collected twice: baseline data and post data. The collection of baseline data was followed by the collection of post data in order to see if improvements in the reading for pleasure habit of the students have occurred. The methodology details follow:

4.1 Questionnaire

A six-point Likert questionnaire (1= strongly disagree, 2 =disagree, 3 = somewhat disagree, 4 = somewhat agree, 5 = agree, and 6 = strongly agree) was constructed and administered to gather objective data on students' interest, motivation, benefits, and barriers to reading for pleasure. The participants were students from all the 16 different classes. A total of 325 students (142 Bachelors in Education, 123 Masters in Education, and 60 Bachelors in Social Work) completed it. Following each administration, the data were analysed first using descriptive statistics through the measure of mean and then inferential statistics. Participants' ratings on the frequency were grouped into six distinct levels employing Best and Kahn's (1988) criteria. They suggest that each grouping needs to maintain an interval width of 1.0. For clarity, the mean scores of the frequency were interpreted in terms of the ranking as reflected in Table 1. The ranking of the mean range is classified according to the range of mean scores that indicate the frequency of occurrence.

Table 1. Likert Scale Converted to Numerical Mean

S1. No Mean Range Rank		
1	0.01-1.00	Strongly disagree
2	1.01-2.00	Disagree
3	2.01-3.00	Somewhat disagree
4	3.01-4.00	Somewhat agree
5	4.01-5.00	Agree
6	5.01-6.00	Strongly agree

4.2 Interview

A semi-structured interview was conducted to gauge participants' understanding of reading for pleasure, its benefits, barriers, motivation, and reading behaviour (number of books read in a month and daily time spent on reading for pleasure). A total of 57 participants participated in the interview. Random sampling was used to select the participants. The interview was conducted before and at the end of the intervention. For the baseline data, the interview was audio recorded and transcribed, however, for the

post data, email interview was conducted owing to restrictions imposed by Covid 19. Following each interview, the data were thematically analysed.

5. Action Plan

The study followed the action (interventions) presented in Table 2. The action plan was adapted from the Kemmis and McTaggart (1988).

Table 2. Action Plan

Activity	Timeline	Details
Action research proposal	February 2021	Develop action research proposal
Baseline data collection	First week of March	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conduct survey with all students in the class Interview 57 students
Data analysis	2 nd week of March	Analyse the baseline data
Interventions	3 rd week of March to end of 2 nd week of May	Implement the following intervention strategies: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Out Time to Enjoy Reading (OTTER) Self-indulgence reading Raffle Draw
Post-intervention data collection	3 rd week of May	Collect post data
Post-intervention data analysis	Last week of May	Triangulate the data
Write the final report	June-July	Write the final research report

5.1 Interventions

Based on the literature review and the findings of the baseline data, the following interventions were implemented for 8 weeks to enhance students' reading for pleasure habit. Prior to the implementation of the interventions, the lecturer in each of the 16 classes created awareness on the importance and benefits of reading for pleasure. The students were encouraged to lend their books to their friends after they finished reading them.

- Our Time To Enjoy Reading (OTTER):** It was implemented for 20-30 minutes every block period(2 hours) to overcome the barrier students had in not being able to read owing to their excessive workload and time constraints. There are two block periods in a week. The lecturers were also engaged in reading with the students;

- **Self-indulgence reading:** A group chat was created on WeChat/WhatsApp/telegram for each class. After the class hours, students spent some time every day on reading for pleasure. They shared the summary/quotes/interesting lines from their reading on the group chat for other members to read and comment; and
- **Raffle Draw:** A raffle draw box was created for each class. As soon as a student completed reading a book, he/she wrote the name of the book, title, his/her name on a piece of paper, rolled it and put it in the raffle box. The raffle was drawn on the last day of the intervention period and book prizes were awarded to the winners.

Results

The results show a comparison between baseline data and the data at the end of the intervention.

Questionnaire

The comparison of the quantitative data is provided in Table 3.

Table 3. Comparison of Baseline and Post Data Means and Standard Deviations (SDs)

Item	Baseline		Post data	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
I like reading in my leisure time.	4.80	1.033	5.04	.958
I read for pleasure.	4.71	1.004	4.86	1.010
I am self-motivated to read.	4.83	1.013	4.97	.949
Reading positively affects my academic performance.	5.07	1.029	5.17	.878
Reading develops my multiple reasoning.	5.27	.733	5.36	.653
Reading enables me to express my feelings.	5.21	.804	5.33	.668
My lecturers motivate me to read.	5.11	.925	5.22	.800
My lecturers are my role models for reading.	4.50	1.088	4.70	1.154
My lecturers guide me to read.	4.25	1.155	4.58	1.016
My lecturers encourage me to read.	5.01	.920	5.17	.788
I have access to reading materials.	5.18	.802	5.26	.734

As evident from Table 3, there is an apparent increase in the mean for all the items after the intervention. This indicates that the interventions are likely to have enhanced the reading habit of the students by providing them time to read, access to more reading materials, and through external motivation of the lecturer. As shown in the Table3, students are likely more enlightened on the benefits

of reading through the first-hand experience of the intervention strategies for there is also increase in the mean for the items on the benefits of reading. It can also be deduced from the table that both external and internal motivations are essential in promoting the reading habit of the students. A paired samples t-test was also conducted to compare the mean scores of baseline and postdate as shown in Table 4.

Table 4. Comparison of Pre Data and Post Data Mean Scores

Mean Score	Mean	Mean Difference	SD	Sig(2 tailed)
Baseline data	4.90		.32	
Post-data	5.06	.17	.26	.000

As depicted in Table 4, the t-test result shows a statistical significant increase in the mean scores from baseline data ($M=4.90$, $SD=.32$) to post data ($M=5.06$, $SD=.26$), $t(11) = -6.914$, $p < .001$. The result suggests that the interventions have been effective in promoting the reading for pleasure habit of the students.

5.2 Interview

The comparison of the qualitative data showed that following the interventions, the number of books read in a month increased to two to three from zero to one. Similarly, the number of hours spent on reading for pleasure increased to two from half an hour. Participants also pointed out that the interventions allowed them to have more access to reading materials since they could borrow books for reading from their friends and tutor. Further they also indicated that they were motivated to read more by their lecturers and friends and that they would continue reading in future. All the participants highlighted that the interventions were effective in enhancing their reading for pleasure habit.

In the post data interview, the following two additional questions were asked to the participants:

- a. Out of the three intervention strategies, which one was the most effective and why?
- b. How have the interventions benefitted you?

The participants stated that if they have to choose the three interventions, majority would prefer OTTER followed by self-indulgence and raffle draw respectively. This is exemplified in the following quote by one of the participants:

I loved all the three interventions but if I have to choose, it will be the OTTER time. It was a real-time everyday practice that motivated me to enjoy reading independently, rather than reading only specific module related materials.

Furthermore, all the participants have contended that the interventions have benefitted them by encouraging them to read; inculcating a reading habit in them; nurturing their critical thinking,

creativity and communication; and expanding their horizons of intellectual and language development. For instance, one of the participants said:

Interventions have benefited me in many ways. I could read more books compared to (the) other semester. I was able to read more if not I would not have got time to read because we have been loaded with work and it was hard to manage time to read. It was a great idea to have the interventions because it gave us (a) specific time to read so, I fully utilized this time to read. Furthermore, when we read together it created (a) peaceful reading environments so I enjoyed reading. It enhanced my interest towards reading and it also enhanced my way of thinking and reflection.

All the participants recommended that all the interventions must be implemented in future to enhance the reading for pleasure habit of the students. Further they also pointed out that there should be a variety of books for recreational reading in the library and that the College must create awareness on the importance and benefits of reading to motivate students to read more.

6. Data Triangulation

In summary, triangulating the analysis of the quantitative and qualitative data, revealed improvement in students' reading for pleasure habit. From reading one or no book in a month, over time the participants read two to three books in a month. Similarly, the time spent on reading for pleasure also increased. Additionally, the participants also identified a repertoire of benefits of reading for pleasure. The participants had more access to books as they could borrow them from their friends and tutors. The participants attributed these positive outcomes to the different interventions used in the class.

6.1 Reflection

The three strategies (OTTER, Self-indulgence and Raffle Draw) were used to enhance students' reading for pleasure habit. The lecturers encouraged and motivated the students to read and explained the unparalleled benefits of reading. After reflecting on the first action research cycle, it is evident that this study has possibly helped enhance students' reading for pleasure habit. If a second action research cycle were to be developed as an extension to the first, it would be on the different comprehension strategies to assist students in deriving maximum benefits from the act of pleasure reading.

7. Conclusion

The present study was carried out to promote students' reading for pleasure habit. It employed a comparative analysis of the pre- and post-intervention results to find out the effectiveness of the interventions used. Reflecting on the action research cycle and comparing the findings of the baseline and the post-intervention data, it can be concluded that students demonstrated an overall improvement in their reading for pleasure habit owing to the interventions. This finding is in line with literature that shows that some of the strategies to enhance students' reading for pleasure habit are literacy-targeted rewards, such as books-Raffle Draw (Clark & Rumbold, 2006), opportunity for independent reading (Our Time To Enjoy Reading-OTTER) and self-indulgence reading (Tyson, 2013). The finding also

showed that the interventions have helped nurture students' critical thinking, creativity and communication and expanded their intellectual and language development. Consistent with this finding, literature highlights that reading for pleasure develops imagination, induction, reflection, critical thinking and vocabulary (Wolpert, 2009). In the technology dominated world, reading for pleasure is an endangered activity but with the right interventions, it can become a part of students' daily activity.

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