BUILDING READING COMPREHENSION AMONG ELEMENTARY PUPILS

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Reading comprehension is an essential aspect of reading skill (Kaya, 2015). It is the ability of the reader to understand, process and recall what is read. Acquiring this reading competency helps the pupils to academically progress in his or her studies. It is their ability to understand the meaning, to draw inferences, to identify though, to answer questions and to recognize structures used in passages or discourse (Kirby, 2007). In basic education, it is a major problem. However, there are many ways of building reading comprehension among pupils. These are building the culture of reading, provide reading materials, and the application of reading comprehension strategies. Nevertheless, these concerns not only language teachers but also teachers across disciplines.

Building the Culture of Reading. It is believed that Filipinos do not have a culture of reading. Hence, most of them, do not read actually. They prepared more visual representations rather than text. However, this does not justify that reading comprehension has to be ignored for this is the most crucial aspect of learning. A pupil to learn needs to know first how to read. Much more, he or she needs to understand what is reading. This problem can be overcome by building a culture among pupils to engage themselves to read. Reading has to be part of the habit to become a good reader with good reading comprehension (Skenderi & Ejupi, 2017). But how the culture of reading be materialized?

It begins with what interests the readers. Motivation plays an essential aspect in building a culture of reading (Mohseni Takaloo & Ahmadi, 2017). A beginner reader neither will read textbooks nor reference books. They are more engaged with books
wherein their senses will be involved. Sequential art books are effective materials, to begin with. These books can provide a concrete representation of actions to the words they convey leading pupils to understand the terms they see. Likewise, these provide humorous graphical representations enticing them to read and be engaged in reading. The hallmark of increasing reading comprehension is motivation. If pupils are motivated to read, the culture of reading begins.

**Provide Reading Materials.** It is interesting to know if how many schools in the Philippines have school libraries wherein it has sufficient reading materials that pupils can freely read. Philippines Education has a serious problem with this part. According to the Philippine National Library (2018), there are only 3% of the ideal libraries existing as prescribed by the law. This is due to a lack of funding and other external factors. This paralleled with the study of Ortego (2016) stressing that most libraries have limited print collections. These provide the assumption that public schools have a serious problem in providing library access to the pupils.

However, to augment the problem, Learning Resources Management and Development System (LRMDS) was created. It is designed to support and to increase distribution and access to learning and teaching materials. Likewise, through developmental programs, teachers are empowered to develop contextualized learning materials for their learners. Now with the absence of functional libraries, classrooms and learning hubs became portals of reading. The task now is given to the teachers to continuously create reading materials for their pupils.

**Application of Reading Comprehension Strategies.** There are reading comprehension strategies to develop the reading comprehension of the pupils. These vary from one teacher to another. Some of the effective strategies in reading comprehension are reread, activate prior knowledge, use context clues, infer and think aloud. It also includes summarize, locate keywords, make predictions, uses word attack strategies, visualizes, use of graphic organizers and evaluates understanding. Diversity
in the strategies is an acknowledgment that pupils are by nature different from each other. The effectiveness of the strategy depends on the context of the pupils. Therefore, a reading strategy may not be the same effect on others when applied to a group of readers. It is the responsibility of the teacher to discern what strategy is best for the pupils based on the observed data.

Reading comprehension is a major concern in basic education. It is because reading comprehension serves as the foundation of learning. It urges teachers across disciplines to collaborate to solve the problem. They need to tirelessly help pupils to alleviate their skill in reading (Jose & Raja, 2011). The ways provided can help pupils to develop their reading comprehension skills. These support them to reach the standards in reading comprehension level appropriate for their level. It is because possessing an enhanced reading comprehension is a great milestone in the life of pupils and as individuals.

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