READING: NECESSARY BUT NEGLECTED ROUTINE

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There is not a day when one does not read. From the words in the cellphone or the commercials in televisions and the prints on shirts or brands of appliances, letters are just everywhere. Even in the bathroom, one has to read labels on soaps and shampoos. In the kitchen, one has to read tags from packs and bottles of ingredients. In buying food from the grocery, one reads a lot. Thus, reading is part of human life. Reading is perceiving a written text to understand its contents. It can be done silently (silent reading). The understanding that results is called reading comprehension. Accordingly, reading is saying a written text aloud (oral reading). It can be done with or without an understanding of what was read. Reading is producing the sounds of the letters combined to become a word.

Children are first taught to read at kindergarten. It all starts with identifying the letters and their sounds (Phonics). When the letters combine and create meaning, it becomes a word. It means all terms have different meanings and pronunciation. Reading words starts by introducing words with Consonant-Vowel-Consonant (CVC) pattern with simple pronunciation. Eventually, words with silent sounds and glides are introduced and reading longer words follows. Before entering high school, students at the elementary level are expected to be able to read. However, some nonreaders can enroll in high school and, unfortunately, graduate in secondary schools without the mastery of reading. On the other hand, it is unlikely that they will enter college for there are entrance examinations in colleges. There are many factors that resulted in nonreaders. Some of the factors contributing to reading problems as Jennings enumerated are cognitive, environment, emotional, intellectual, physical, and language.
Cognitive is the brain's function and reaction during the act of learning or reading. Researchers have used functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI) to understand the brain's neurological factors while the students read. They found differences in the brain function of students who can read and who cannot. Early detection is crucial to intervene and remedy this situation since the brain is still developing at an early age. The role of the parents and teachers play a significant part. Once detected, children with such difficulty can undergo differentiated instruction since they will not be able to cope with the reading phase of children without difficulty.

Environmental factors include the environment of children in the home, school, society, and cultural context. Home is the first exposure for children. How the home and family members hone the children significantly affects their goals and attitude. A family that does not value reading will likely produce a student with no regard for reading. Children spend most of their waking hours in school, that the school environment significantly affects the children's behavior. A school with teachers and classmates who do not value reading will not make students value reading. A society that does not prioritize reading will not motivate children to learn and read. The cultural belongingness of children also plays a very crucial part. For instance, English is not the vernacular language in the Philippines; such leads students not to prioritize learning to read in English.

Children need to be exposed to an environment where reading is essential and is not to be ignored. To a child who is not able to read, the inability to read is a failure. When magnified with other shortcomings, such failure can lead to emotional difficulties, and as the child grows and matures, such difficulty will be harder and harder to be tackled. Parents and teachers can help the child by motivating the child. Giving a simple task like sentence completion activity will mean accomplishment for him/her. Sometimes, a tap on the shoulder can mean a great deal to students undergoing such difficulty. Intelligence also affects the child's ability to read. The way students learn vary from child to child.
Some students easily understand, while some need remediation. Teachers can give differentiated instruction and remediate to aid this difficulty.

Language factors include speech and language problems. Speech problems comprise articulation problems (the inaccurate production of sounds), voice disorders (improper pitch or intonation), and stuttering (breath or rhythm problems), while language problems refer to the slow or atypical development of receptive and expressive oral language (Jennings et al., 2013). There are language specialists who can deal with these cases. It is vital to identify a child's language disorder at an early age to be remediated immediately. Physical factors include hearing impairment, visual inability, health, and nutrition. Different approaches are available for these physical factors. The most important thing is to help the child and make such approaches available to them. However, proper nutrition and health can be solved by eating healthy food. It is difficult for a child to learn to read while their stomach aches of hunger.

Learning to read is very important. If left undetected and ignored, children with difficulties in reading are deprived of many things. Reading is part of life. An hour cannot pass without one reading something. That is how crucial but usual it is.

"Reading is not optional." — Walter Dean Myers.

References:
