

Identifying the Factors Affecting the Reading Habits of Advanced Level Students in the Vavuniya District, Sri Lanka

Shanmugathan, S

shan257@hotmail.com

Abstract

In the past, reading simply meant to extract visual information from any given codes or systems. However, thereafter, reading became much more complex and involved the understanding of a whole text composed of written signs. Toit (2001) describes the reading process as “reading is a process of thinking, recalling and relating concepts under the functioning of written words.” Thus, Lone (2011) defined as “reading is the ability to recognize, and examine words or sentences and understand the information within.” The objectives of the research were to find out the factors which affect good reading habits among students and the availability or adequacy of reading materials in the school, to assess the effect of reading habits on students’ performance and to ascertain how to promote better reading habits.

The problem most students have that contributes to their poor performance in tests and examinations is lack of proper reading habits. For an excellent performance, there is the need for the student to form good reading and study habits. At present, due to the influence of the mass media, people do not show much interest in reading books; magazines and journals, among others (Palani, 2012). Data was collected by using a structured questionnaire which was designed and randomly distributed to the Advanced Level students in the ten secondary schools (1AB) in the Vavuniya District.

Findings on reading habits were analyzed and it reveals that students' attitude, peer influence, literacy level of parents, environment of schools and cost of reading materials are identified factors which affect good reading habits among students. Majority of the students (78%) are satisfied with the available materials in their schools. Further, it shows a positive impact (82%) while considering the relationship between the reading habits and students' performance. In an open ended question, students complain that reading materials are more academic oriented and no magazines, novel or comics. Students suggested that the selection of books has to be more attractive and up-to-date. Like reading camp, allocating library hours, awards for best reader, competition among students, awareness programme to students have to be operationalized to motivate better reading habits.

Keywords: *Reading habits, Advanced Level Students, Vavuniya District, Secondary Schools.*