

# Advantages and disadvantages of reading schemes education essay



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Reading is an extremely important life skill, it is one of the most useful and used skills needed for everyday life. For instance, reading posters, newspapers, traffic signs, clothes labels are an everyday aspect of reading, as well as being able to read for the love and joy of reading, and to further education. As mentioned by Harrison and Coles about the education of learning to read they note, “ The purpose of education is to impart skills and motivation and belief in your ability to deploy those to achieve your own goals” (Harrison and Coles, 1992: 182).

Reading schemes, such as the oxford reading tree have been used for many years to help with the teaching of reading in primary schools, from the ages of around 5 years to 11 years of age (Mallet, 2005). Reading schemes mainly consist of fictional books in which progress up in stages of difficulty throughout the development of reading. However reading schemes (such as the oxford reading tree) can also incorporate word cards, context cards, core books and work books (Beard, 1990). Reading schemes are often supplemented with the use of real books to help the child develop their reading further (cited in Campbell, 1995). Some schemes focus on phonics (sounds, letters and words); whereas others focus mainly on key words (Ladybird Books, 2012). There are many requirements of reading schemes, these being; introducing books containing few words; simple and limited vocabulary; phonic regularity; word repetition; appeal to a wide audience; attention to the prevailing ‘isms’ of the day; a uniform appearance; and a grading system for administration (Browne, 2009). However it is hard to determine which reading scheme to use when teaching children to read, as

noted by Southgate (1983), many teachers tend to ask what the best reading scheme to use is.

There are many advantages of using reading schemes, for instance the children's development can be monitored by teachers, parents, and even the children themselves by using the schemes (Campbell, 1995). As well as another advantage being that in many schools, children themselves are allowed to choose the book in which they wish to read from a certain stage (Pearson, 1987). In order for reading schemes to help with the development of reading, teachers tend to support the schemes with their own strategies. For instance, some teachers will extend on the reading schemes by discussing the books in the classroom, whilst other teachers may use a variety of schemes with different structures to allow the needs and interests of all children to be met (Campbell, 1995; Pearson, 1987).

Although there are positives for Reading Schemes, there are a lot of criticisms about the schemes, such as their bland content, their uniform appearance (Browne, 1998) and even that they delay children's access to the real world (Browne, 2009). Meek, talked about the disconnection, emptiness and arbitrariness of reading schemes (Cited in Browne, 2009), just like Stebbing and Raban whom had similar believes in which they suggested reading schemes are rarely " an instrument for entering possible worlds of human experience" (Cited in Browne, 2009: 63), as well as Campbell, who states that in all types of schemes there is neither " a flow of language with a forward moving narrative and cohesive links between the sentences" (Campbell, 1995: 110). Other disadvantages of reading schemes is that they tend to make some children very competitive, for some children this can

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make them feel conscious and worried of the stages they are on. For other children, it excels their reading ability because of the competitive streak in them. However it can be questioned if these children are reading simply to be better than the rest, and not simply for the love and joy of reading? (Pearson, 1987).

Schemes can also mislead teachers and parents into thinking the scheme on its own will teach the child to read. As well as misleading teachers and parents into thinking that all that is important is to progress through the scheme (Browne, 1998). However, teachers and parents should understand that it is the appeal of reading that children should be interested in, not the constant progression (Pearson, 1987). Schemes also make it difficult for teachers to; widen the children's reading experiences; teach children the importance of reading; and teaching the skills needed to choose what they would like to read (Browne, 1998). As mentioned by Browne (1998) about reading schemes bland content, Pearson suggests that the bland and boring content in some books puts many children off reading; they become uninterested in reading and therefore no longer want to learn. Pearson also notes that the bland and uninteresting content of books is due to the authors of reading schemes concentrating simply on how it will help the children to read rather than the story itself (Pearson, 1987). Waterland and Meek suggested moving away from reading schemes to real books (Cited in Thomas, 1998).

It could be said that the research study done by Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) also support the negative criticisms of reading schemes. Whereby the study researched reading for purpose and pleasure, including how reading schemes help to develop children's reading. The study by HMI concluded <https://assignbuster.com/advantages-and-disadvantages-of-reading-schemes-education-essay/>

that reading schemes did little to encourage positive attitudes or to help develop personal interests, as well as finding that the reading schemes used by the schools were either restricted or below the ability of certain pupils. For instance, a year 3 pupil was given a book below his ability and said “ What use is that? It is too easy” (Cited in Ofsted, 2004).

Root, however, argues against all the negativity of reading schemes and states that “ it is totally irresponsible to denigrate teaching techniques which invariably have been found to achieve the required goals” (Cited in Beard, 1990: 4-5). Due to the negative criticisms of reading schemes many new schemes include colourful illustrations, natural language as well as non stereotypical characters (Browne, 1998).

Real books are well loved books (Browne, 2009); with an interaction of meaning, written in a natural language which includes colourful illustrations (Campbell, 1995) and generally relate to Children’s interest (Thomas, 1998). They are written for the purpose of telling a story and not for the purpose of teaching children to read (Campbell, 1995). As opposed to reading schemes whereby authors tend to write in order to teach children how to read. Authors whom write real books tend to have a commitment to a story and sensitive language (Browne, 2009) thus it could be said that children tend to have more of an interest in reading real books and therefore, a love for the story influences the Childs development of reading (Thomas, 1998).

There are many advantages and positive comments from using real books, such as Wade (1990), who says, “ real books with their forward moving narrative and logical connections and consequences give emotional and

intellectual sustenance to a child” (cited in Campbell, 1995: 113). As well as Wade, Bennett (1991) also comments on real books and the ways in which their relation to the real world can attract children to read and enjoy the stories of real books. Bennett suggests that, “ the intrinsic humour of nearly all the books seems to be what attracts children to them” (cited in Campbell, 1995: 113). Real books usually consist of stories that are written with a style of predictable, meaningful and repetitive units of language, as well as being written in a way that produces a rhythm and flow of words. In addition to the written story in real books, the colourful illustrations help the child to understand and extend meaning to the story. Thus, helping the child to relate the pictures and words of the page together, in order to help with the learning of reading (Campbell, 1995).

Although there are many advantages which support real books, the real books approach was criticised for the thought that teachers were completely removing the use of structured reading schemes and phonic lessons (Thomas, 1998). Another criticism made about real books was the thought that this approach of teaching suggested that all books that were not part of a structured scheme were said to be good books (Graham and Kelly, 2008). However, many of the criticisms were then argued against by Allen (1985), who stated that “ enjoyment brings achievement more powerfully than structure, sequence [and] staged materials” (cited in Thomas, 1998: 181). The teaching of reading through real books can be said to be difficult, thus being a disadvantage due to; the lack of structure; the organisation and awareness needed from the teacher; and the practicality for busy teachers. The issue of giving children real books to read without the skills needed to

teach them can be said to be pointless (Harrison and Coles, 1992). However, teachers who have a great understanding of the development of reading, know how children learn (particularly the needs of children in their classes), are well organised, and are familiar with children's books are said to have little problems with the teaching of reading through real books (Browne, 2009).

Schools now tend to try and stimulate the 'home' reading environment (reading real books, sitting on a parent/guardians lap reading to them, and reading for fun and because it is enjoyable). Rather than previous years, whereby teaching reading in schools would be done by lessons in phonics whilst the children are sat on desks, as well as using structured reading schemes. Incorporating the home environment into schools makes the learning of reading enjoyable for both children and teachers by; using a mixture of both techniques; comfortable reading corners; phonic lessons; big books; and real books (Kroop and Cooling, 1993). Using big books (larger versions of real books) in the classroom helps to replicate the home, whereby the child will sit on their parent/guardians lap and be read to. Thus, learning the process of how books work (turning pages, reading left to right) and being able to view the pictures and words in the book. These big books are read by the teachers to their class, enabling all students to view the words and pictures from afar, due to their larger print (Campbell, 1995).

However, it is hard to suggest which technique is more appropriate and adequate when teaching reading to children. For instance, a previous study done by Tunnell and Jacobs in 1989 researched whether the 2 techniques produced different standards in reading. The results concluded that 24 of 40 <https://assignbuster.com/advantages-and-disadvantages-of-reading-schemes-education-essay/>

schools favoured the real books approach to reading, as opposed to that of the 1 school which preferred the reading scheme approach to teaching, whilst 15 of the schools believed it made no difference in the standards of the children's reading (Cited in Harrison and Coles, 1992).

To enable children to learn to read effectively, the teachers and parents/guardians should support children's reading in both the home and educational environment. As mentioned above, schools now use reading corners and big books to help replicate the home environment. However there are many other ways in which schools and parents support the reading development, such as creating a home-school relationship. In order for schools to support children's reading, teachers tend to have pre planned activities or lessons set out in order to spend as much time with the children and help develop their reading. Other things teachers carry out can be such things like; enabling the children to talk about the books they have been reading with their peers or even with the teacher themselves; guided group reading sessions, whereby the teacher and students read through a book together; individual silent reading sessions; and even making games relating to books the children have read. For instance, snap cards, whereby half of the pack has picture cards relating to the book, and the other half with the corresponding words to match the pictures (Browne, 1998).

As suggested by the Department for Education, parents should try to read with their child on a daily bases, encouraging the child to try and read, or sound out words they may not have come across before. Other suggestions from the Department for Education suggest that the parents find out what letters/words and sounds their child will learn each week, and try to <https://assignbuster.com/advantages-and-disadvantages-of-reading-schemes-education-essay/>



implement these words into the home setting (Department for Education, 2012). Browne also mentions the ways in which parents support their children, in which simple things such as joining the local library, sharing books with friends and providing them with workbooks helps with the teaching of reading for children (Browne, 1998).

To conclude, the reading scheme and real books approach are both useful ways of teaching children to read. Although it could be said that real books are favoured by both teachers and children, there is not one particular way in which reading should be taught and therefore most schools tend to use a mixture approach of both reading schemes and real books. Reading schemes have being criticised greatly due to their strong structures whereas real books have also been criticised due to the lack of structure. Teachers and parents both play a great role in developing and supporting children's reading using a variety of many different techniques.

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