

Developing reading habits in students



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Nowadays, most students are less keen on developing their reading habits. Still, to be able to stand on the same ground as other leading countries, this habit should be instilled on the students. Many parties especially the government and teachers are concerned with the students declining reading habits. However, parents are unaware of this problem or choose to turn a blind eye towards it. Parents choose to leave this problem for teachers to handle. The government, teachers, parents and students have their own views on this matter and in this essay I will state and discuss their views so that I can decide for myself who is responsible on how Malaysia could enrich students reading habit.

After approximately 11 years in formal education, majority of Malaysian students are able to read efficiently after finishing their secondary education. However, even equipped with literacy skills particularly reading skills, the reading habits of students are still at an unsatisfactory level. The Sunday Star newspaper (8th August, 1999: p2) reports that “ the poor reading habits among Malaysians was common knowledge but, in true Malaysian fashion, it took an official survey to jolt the education sector that something had to be done fast.” There has been a debate on who is responsible for these students who are lacking in reading. Many parties are blaming parents on this matter as they lack the time to teach their children the basics of reading. They are prioritizing more on their career and making money rather than their children’s education.

The government is very much concern on this matter. Based on the statistics issued by the National Statistics Department during the year 2002, Malaysian students only read two books a year. Studies in the past have

shown that the exam-oriented educational system in Malaysia promotes routine learning and that there needs to be a standard shift in how we view education and about the way we teach (Chitravellu, 1997). The Education Minister, Datuk Najib Tun Razak, has frequently commented in the local media that most students read only to pass exams and do not read for pleasure. He has been instrumental in implementing many projects aimed at improving students' reading ability in the country. Reading skills are important throughout our lifespan, particularly as we respond to new demands and changes in jobs and reading for pleasure or recreational has been found to improve reading comprehension, writing style, vocabulary, spelling and grammatical development (Krashen, 1993). The positive and rewarding effects of recreational reading have been demonstrated in numerous studies (Burgess, 1994; Krashen, 1984, 1993). In other words, it is important that Malaysia must aim to re-evaluate the present education system, not to reverse it or simply oscillate forward and backward within the same unchanging parameters, without ever conducting a critical evaluation of where, how, and why things went wrong. The government must therefore set up an educational re-evaluation or reform program or a national enquiry committee to look seriously into the Malaysian education and develop a set of realistic, practical, and forward-looking ideas for improving the national education system in accordance with the requirements and ideals of Vision 2020. However, the more immediate task is to prepare the future human resource of the nation with the ability and intellectual skills to adapt to the expansion of the Malaysian economy and its globalization.

Parents are the most influential people in the life of a child; students normally model the behaviours and attitudes of their parents after constantly observing them since they were in diapers. Logically, if the parents have positive attitudes the child will mimic and model after them. It goes the same if the parents have negative attitudes and behaviours. If the parents themselves do not make reading as a daily activity, they should not expect their child to cultivate reading as a daily activity. In this context, parents should be good role models to the students by including reading as one of their daily activities (Clark, 2007). Other than that, parents should allocate a small percentage of their monthly earnings to purchase books and suitable reading materials for their children. They should also designate a small section in the house specifically for reading. This allows their children to always have a place to read. If the child is still an infant or a toddler, allocate some personal time with and read a story book together. By the time child is starting his or her formal education, he or she will associate reading with not only for exams but also for pleasure. Parents also can bring their child to the local library and allow them to read books which discuss the topics of their interest. If the child is fond of cars then allow him to read a book regarding the anatomy of a car. By doing so, the child is reading for pleasure and personal interest. This can translate into good academic performance and personal development in the future.

Other than parents, the school which is the primary educational institution of the society also has a crucial role to play in improving students' reading habits. The school library is one of the usual facilities found in a public school. However, it is not fully utilised by the students. Students will seldom

go and read at the school library unless it is for some special reading programme which is conducted once or twice a week by the school. This may be due to the school's library lacking certain attractive factors. The school should allocate some money to ameliorate the facilities of the school's library. Computers should be provided to enable the students to utilise the internet for research and also to locate online reading materials. Air-conditioners should be installed and quality chairs as well as tables should be provided in order to create a conducive reading ambience. The books available should be of variety of genre and topics to capture the many interests of the students. The school engender book publishing companies such as McGraw-Hill and Dawama in order to purchase suitable reading materials for the library. The elected student librarians and the teacher-in-charge should make an effort to promote the books available in the library to the student body. Most of the time students have no interest to go to the school library due to the absence of awareness regarding the books available there which may attract their interest (Clark, 2010).

Lastly, the only people that can improve the students' reading habit are the students themselves. It is futile to assist the students in improving their reading habits if they themselves have no intention of doing so. The student should be aware that reading is one of the primary key to success in the modern world. In our information-saturated globe, knowledge is constantly being updated and upgraded wherein previous information would deem obsolete or impractical. Moreover, with the advent and evolution of the internet, information can be transmitted throughout the whole world in the blink of an eye. Therefore, it is imperative for students to make reading as a

pleasurable and continuing habit if he or she wants to stay abreast with the world and have the competitive edge. Students should realise that they will have to read continuously even after finishing their formal education. The knowledge that the students studied when they were sitting for their exams may have undergone significant changes in the next five or ten years. In order to keep abreast with current development, students must read relevant publications. If the students do not hone this habit, they will not have the initiative to constantly read not only to improve their career standing but also for personal development in order to become a better and useful citizen.

There are many reasons for the deplorable reading habits of Malaysian students either due to parental, school-related or personal habits. Even so, there are innumerable numbers of ways to improve the current reading habits of students. This requires the amalgamation of the efforts of many authoritative bodies such as the school and the government. Reading is one of the most essential language abilities. I am not implying that the other language skills are of lower standard but much of the knowledge within the society is disseminated through writing. For me, personally, even after just finishing school I still allocate some time to read books concerning my area of interest such as linguistics and novels. I read such books not for passing an exam later on but for reading itself.

In conclusion, even though students are still passing exams, their reading habit is not continuous. Reading for pleasure is a far cry for Malaysian students as they are more exams oriented. Both the government and teachers have valid arguments to argue. Parents are the first teachers to

<https://assignbuster.com/developing-reading-habits-in-students/>

children. However, parents fail to nurture their children in this habit while they are young. Thus, resulting in the situation we are nowadays. In my opinion, based on the current reading habit of the Malaysian students, Malaysia has a long way to go before it can compete with a reading and successful society such as Japan.