



“Supporting Literacy Development In Malaysian Primary Schools”

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She has conducted a number of courses on the Early Structured Reading Programme in Malaysian primary schools and has also assisted in preparing articles and papers in relation to the teaching and learning of the English language.

ABSTRACT

The nurturing of the reading habit among children and youth has always been an important educational priority of the Ministry of Education. The Curriculum Development Centre, Ministry of Education has embarked on a number of reading programmes to support literacy development among young learners of the country. The paper discusses the rationale, objectives, structure and implementation of three important reading initiatives launched by the Curriculum Development Centre, namely the Structured Early Reading Programme, the Extensive Reading Programme and the Contemporary Literature Programme.

The introduction of these programmes exposes pupils not only to narratives but also to books on science and technology, thus, supporting the implementation of the teaching of science and mathematics in English in primary schools.



1. EARLY STRUCTURED READING PROGRAMME



The Early Structured Reading Programme was first introduced in schools in 2002. The aim of the programme was to build among the primary pupils the ability to read in English with confidence. It is hoped that at the end of the programme pupils are able to:

- i. Read fluently and understand what they read
- ii. Use reading cues such as phonics, graphic, syntactic and contextual cues to help them read new words and to correct their own mistakes.

This programme was based on the UK's literacy hour approach better known as the 'English Hour' in Malaysian schools.

In the English Hour, classroom time is structured into set activities every 15 to 20 minutes. Teachers spend the time reading with the pupils either as a whole class or in groups and pupils are not asked to start with reading on their own before they are ready.

The management of the English Hour includes:

-  Time structure
-  Class management structure

The advantage for pupils:

The class routine is clear and predictable and pupils know what is expected of them.

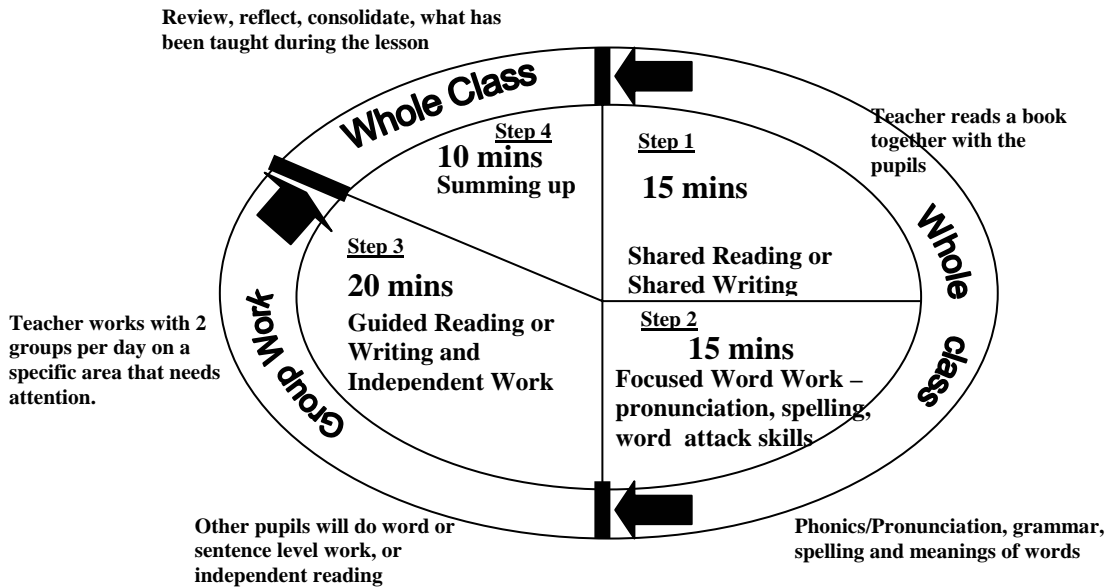
The advantage for teachers

The common structure allows teachers to share lesson plans, especially when it involves a particular book.

The English Hour

The CDC’s Structured Reading Programme or ‘The English Hour’ is based on the model used in the UK’s ‘Literacy Hour’ programme.

The ‘Literacy Hour’ of 60 minutes is organised as shown below.



Two sets of prescribed texts are used for this programme

- Ladybird Series (54 titles)
- Sound Start Series (38 titles)

Project schools

- 2,000 National (SK) and National-type (SJK) schools nationwide

Distribution of books

- Schools chosen are underachieving schools and schools in remote areas
- Number of sets given are based on the following criteria
 - 10 students - 250 students - 1 set
 - 251 students - 500 students - 2 sets
 - 501 students - 750 students - 3 sets
 - 751 students - 1000 students - 4 sets



Books are distributed during training sessions.

Orientation Programme

- The orientation programme for this programme began in January 2003.
- A 2 1/2 day orientation programme was carried out in 12 centres nation wide
- Participants are teachers teaching Yr 1 national and national-type schools, District Language Officers and State Education Officers.

Evaluation:

2 sets of questions are prepared by CDC which tested all the 4 language skills based on the prescribed text.

Feedback on Programme

Results from the two sets of evaluation conducted showed an improvement in pupil performance. Teachers were positive about the programme. They found that pupils were able to read and are beginning to sound out words that are not familiar to them. As there were not enough copies to go around for every pupil, teachers were asked to scan the storybooks and use them in the classroom using the laptops and scanners provided to them by the MoE.

2. CONTEMPORARY LITERATURE

Definition of Contemporary Literature

- 'Children's literature' can be defined as "the material created for and widely read, viewed and heard by children, that has an imaginative element." Research has shown that children learn better on their own, actively and in depth about something via Children's Literature
- Children's literature' can be divided into 5 main categories namely:
 - Fiction
 - Non- fiction
 - Folktales
 - Biography
 - Poems

Background of the programme

- At present the literature component is implemented in secondary schools and tested both for the PMR and SPM examinations. There has been an increase in the percentage of passes since the implementation of this programme. However, the level of achievement among pupils in the remote and rural areas is still not satisfactory. Students were still unable to express and write in English. Hence, the MoE decided to implement the Contemporary Literature Programme in primary schools beginning with Year 4 pupils in both SK and SJK schools in 2004.

Objectives of the programme are:

- To instil and inculcate the reading habit among students.
- To enrich the students' vocabulary and language content.
- To enhance students' thinking skills.
- To enhance the 4 language skills.

Target Group

- Years 4,5 & 6 in both National and National-type Primary schools
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Programme Design

- Intensive reading programme based on 3 prescribed texts per year.
- Genres consist of short stories and poems.
- Every student is provided with 3 books, with the assumption that a student will be able to complete 1 book in 3 months
- Different texts for National and National Type schools have been selected.

SELECTION CRITERIA FOR BOOKS

- Themes and titles that appeal to 10 –12 year olds
- Interesting storyline with embedded moral values
- Language suitable for both rural and urban students
- Interesting and suitable illustrations
- Suitable font size
- Good quality paper



- Neatly bound
- Controlled vocabulary and sentence structure
- Portrays a familiar context and accessible to students

Strength of books selected

- Suitable themes for 10 –12 year olds
- Interesting storyline and accessible to students
- Has the features of a story i.e. development, conflict, resolution
- Ends with how good over powers evil
- Incorporates clear moral values
- Language suitable for both rural and urban students
- Text of suitable length
- Controlled vocabulary and sentence structure
- Familiar setting
- Easy to read and understand

Teaching periods

SK – 1 English language period per week,.

SJK – 1 English language period every fortnight.

Implementation

January 2004 – Year 4

January 2005 – Year 5

January 2006 – Year 6

Teachers will be provided with teaching modules.

3. THE EXTENSIVE READING PROGRAMME

Along with the implementation of the Contemporary literature the MoE is also embarking on an extensive reading programme beginning 2004 for Year 3 and Year 4 pupils in both SK and SJK schools.



Rationale

- A number of difficult texts in school libraries
- Fiction and non-fiction books are supplied (40:60)
- To enhance the teaching of maths and science
- To enrich students' vocabulary
- To enhance students' grammar
- To enhance students' thinking skills
- To enrich students' knowledge of the world

Target group

- Years 3, 4, 5 & 6 SK & SJK
- Priority for under achieving schools and rural schools (40% below English Language UPSR)
- An estimated 2880 schools nationwide will be involved in this programme.
- The books chosen for each set are 40 % fiction books and 60% non-fiction books.
- Students are required to read 50 books per year.
- 1 book is to be read every week.
- Students' achievement will be recorded in Reading Cards.
- Guidelines for programme will be provided by the CDC.
- Implementation
 - January 2004 – Years 3 and 4
 - January 2005 – Year 5
 - January 2006 – Year 6

CONCLUSION

Co-operation from the following is very important for the above mentioned programmes to be successful:

- School management
- Teachers
- Students
- Parents/ Local Community
- PPD/JPN