The Use of Drop Everything and Read (DEAR) in Teaching Reading among Grade VI Pupils at Dassun Elementary School

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ABSTRACT

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| This study aims to evaluate the impact of the DEAR program on the reading comprehension of Grade VI pupils. The researcher employed quasi-experimental research design adopting the passages found in the Philippine Informal Reading Inventory (Phil-IRI) for the grade. The target population was given a reading comprehension pretest to identify the study's sample respondents. The thirty grade 6 learners in the mentioned locale were included in the study. The pre-test mean is 66.10 and 88.73 in the post-test, which marked a significant difference between the scores. The data strongly suggests that the DEAR program had a positive and measurable impact on the participants' reading comprehension abilities. Since DEAR program is significantly effective in Grade 6 Leviticus pupils, full implementation of the program must be given to all Grade level in elementary. This program is recommended and must be implemented in all schools to address the reading difficulties of the learners most specially those learners who cannot read and comprehend to rekindle the love of reading and lifelong learning.  The result of the study highlights the importance of targeted reading programs like Project DEAR in educational settings, emphasizing their role in promoting literacy development and academic achievement among elementary school learners. |

*Keywords: Drop Everything and Read (DEAR), reading, teaching, pupils*

1. INTRODUCTION

“Reading is a lifelong skill to be used both at school and throughout life. According to Anderson, Hiebert, Scott, & Wilkinson, reading is a basic life skill. It is a cornerstone for a child's success in school and, indeed, throughout life. Without the ability to read well, opportunities for personal fulfilment and job success inevitably will be lost” (Anderson et.al,1985). “Despite its importance, reading is one of the most challenging areas in the education system. The ever-increasing demand for high levels of literacy in our technological society makes this problem even more pressing” (Snow et. Al 2001). It plays a vital role in the teaching and learning processes.

According to Wolf, “the primary objective of reading lies in comprehension, which in turn fuels learning. Children who don't acquire reading proficiency in their initial school years face setbacks in subsequent grades as they must tackle a growing volume of print-based educational content. Limited reading abilities impede the development of effective writing skills and hinder students from becoming independent learners across other subjects. It's important to note that the essential reading skills required for literacy don't naturally emerge; individuals must actively adapt the part of their brain responsible for image recognition to recognize written letters and words. To comprehend what they read, children must read fluently” (Wolf et.al 2005).

“As learners integrate various elements of reading, including background knowledge, vocabulary, language structures, and literary awareness, with print-sound relationships and decoding skills, they progress towards becoming adept readers and comprehends, as emphasized by Scarborough” (Scarborough et.al 2009).

In the modern classroom, literacy education stands out as a crucial discipline, preparing students for higher education and adulthood. By teaching children how to read, educators equip them with essential tools not only for academic and career success but also for everyday tasks like reading news and checking weather updates. Thus, preparing them to become innovative, responsive and communicative learner to improve and develop their habit in literacy. Within the field of literacy education, reading comprehension emerges as a pivotal component. All aspects of reading instruction, including phonics, fluency, and vocabulary development, converge toward the ultimate goal of comprehension.

“Reading comprehension is sometimes defined by comprehension text. If a texts says it measures comprehension whatever that test happens to measures becomes comprehension is supposed to entail” (**Alexander, et al. 1979).**

According to Thorndike stated that “reading comprehension is the reading of a paragraph involves the same sort of organization and analysis as does thinking. It includes learning, reflection, judgement, analysis, synthesis, problem-solving behavior, selection, inference, organization, comparison of data, determination of relationship, and critical, evaluation of what is read. It also includes attention, association, abstraction, generalization, comprehension, concentration and deduction” (**Heilman, A. W. 1967**)

“Reading comprehension is a process of making a sense of written ideas through meaningful interpretation and interaction with language. Reading comprehension is best viewed as a multifaceted process affected by several thinking and language abilities” (**Heilman, A. W. 1961).**

According to Lemer, “reading skills are the basis for mastering various fields of study. If a child at early school age does not immediately have the ability to read, he will experience many difficulties in learning various fields of study in subsequent grades. Therefore, children must learn to read so that they can learn to read” **(Untari et.al 2016)**

That, reading comprehension skills are very important to be mastered by pupils. Through reading comprehension, pupils can understand the content contained in the reading, both implicitly and explicitly.

In connection with the importance of reading comprehension skills, pupils are expected to understand reading well. However, based on observations made in my classroom setting, pupils have difficulty in understanding the learning process that causes the learning outcomes of reading comprehension skills be low. Reduced ability of pupils in understanding reading shows that students have not been able to master reading comprehension well.

Reading is a skill that is needed, but it is not to explain the nature of reading.

“Reading is not only pronouncing the written language or sound symbols, but also responding to and understanding the reading content” (Pearson et.al, 2015)

Thus, Education is a cornerstone of societal development, shaping the future of nations by equipping individuals with the knowledge, skills, and values necessary for personal and communal growth.

In the Philippines, the Department of Education (DepEd) has consistently pursued initiatives to enhance the quality and inclusivity of basic education. ​ The recent implementation of "Catch-up Fridays," as outlined in DepEd Memorandum No.​ 001, s. 2024, underscores this commitment. ​ This initiative aims to address critical learning gaps, particularly in reading proficiency, and to promote essential values, health, and peace education among learners. ​

The "Catch-up Fridays" program, set to commence on January 12, 2024, dedicates all Fridays of January onwards to the "Drop Everything and Read" (DEAR) activity and orientations for field officials. ​ This strategic move is a response to the low proficiency levels in reading highlighted by national and international assessments, and it aligns with the MATATAG Education Agenda and the National Learning Recovery Program (NLRP) (DepEd Order 2024).

“The "Drop Everything and Read" (DEAR) Project is an educational initiative designed to promote reading among learners. As part of the "Catch-up Fridays" program implemented by the Department of Education (DepEd), DEAR promote regular and sustained reading habits among learners, teachers, and school personnel. During DEAR sessions, participants set aside dedicated time for uninterrupted reading, immersing themselves in books, magazines, or other reading materials of their choice. The primary goal of the DEAR Project is to enhance reading proficiency, address learning gaps, and foster a love for reading among learners” (DepEd Order 2024). ​

In the context of the DepEd Memorandum No. 001 ​, s. 2024, all Fridays of January 2024 onwards are allocated for the DEAR activity. ​ This initiative is part of a broader effort to improve academic performance, particularly in reading, and to support the overall educational development of students. ​ By setting aside dedicated time for reading, the DEAR Project aims to create a culture of reading, improve literacy skills, and contribute to the lifelong learning and personal growth of students (DepEd Order 2024).

The DEAR program can improve the learners' understanding because it will help them to concentrate on what they read. When learners solely focus on reading without doing other activities, this technique can help the students develop their reading skills and understand the content without having the additional burden.

The Drop Everything and Read (DEAR) technique can be a daily program carried out to give the learners more than a just-sit-there-and-read experience. It gives the teacher a structured time to touch base with each learner over a period of time, assess progress, and target instruction. DEAR sessions serve as opportunities for students to practice and refine their literacy skills, including reading fluency, comprehension, and vocabulary development. Through regular engagement with diverse reading materials, students enhance their ability to decode text, comprehend complex ideas, and extract meaning from written content. According to Trelease, every book (children's stories, comics, and newspapers) is able to introduce at least 30-65 new vocabularies (Trelease J). By exposing students to a wide range of reading materials, DEAR sessions facilitate the exploration of various subjects and topics beyond the confines of the curriculum. Whether delving into historical events, scientific discoveries, or literary classics, students expand their knowledge base and understand the world better.

DEAR program was applied to grade 6 class of Dassun Elementary School. Reading activities of DEAR were conducted every Friday of the week. During the implementation, the pupils have been given different learning activities in engaging to reading workshops to reduce their fears or difficulties. Differentiated activities used to encourage and motivate pupil’s interest in words, letters, phrases and sentences to develop the love of reading and make is a habit as to become an independent and competitive reader as well as learner.

In light of the pressing need to enhance reading proficiency among Grade 6 pupils, this study aims to provide empirical evidence on the effectiveness of the "Drop Everything and Read" (DEAR) program as a strategic intervention within the educational framework at Dassun Elementary School. By dedicating whole day of Friday for uninterrupted reading, DEAR not only seeks to improve literacy skills but also fosters a culture of reading that can inspire lifelong learning and personal growth among students. The findings from this research contributed valuable insights to educators and policymakers, guiding future initiatives aimed at addressing literacy challenges.

2. statement of the problem

The study aimed to evaluate the use of Drop Everything and Read Program in Improving the Reading Comprehension Performance of Grade VI Pupils at Dassun Elementary School.

Specifically, it sought to answer the following questions:

1. What is the profile of the respondents in terms of the following:
   1. age
   2. sex
   3. education Attainment of Parents
   4. available Reading Materials at Home
2. Is there a significant difference in the reading comprehension of learners when grouped according to profile?
3. What is the reading comprehension performance of the grade 6 learners before and after the implementation of Drop Everything and Read Program?
4. Is there a significant difference in the reading comprehension performance of the grade 6 learners before and after the implementation of Drop Everything and Read program?
5. What improvement plan can be proposed to enhance the reading comprehension?

**2.1 Hypothesis**

There is significant difference in the reading comprehension of learners when grouped according to profile.

There is no significant difference in the reading comprehension of the Grade 6 pupils before and after the implementation of Project Drop Everything and Read (DEAR).

3. MATERIALS AND METHOD

**3.1 Research Design**

This study employed as a one group pre- test and post- test experimental design was utilized to evaluate the effectiveness of Project Drop Everything and Read (Project DEAR) in improving the reading performance of grade 6 learners at Dassun Elementary School, Solana Cagayan, Solana North District, Division of Cagayan.

**3.2 Locale of the Study**

The study conducted at Dassun Elementary School. Dassun Elementary School is located at Dassun, Solana Cagayan and in the Northern part of the Municipality of Solana.

**3.3 Respondents of the Study**

There are 30 participants of the study. They are the grade 6 pupils of Dassun Elementary School who are enrolled during the School Year 2024-2025. Total enumeration was employed.

**3.4. Research Instrumentation**

The main instruments used in this study were the pre-test and post-test reading assessment lifted from the Philippine Informal Reading Inventory (Phil- IRI) package of 2018. These are graded passages from Phil-IRI, followed by set of comprehension questions in literal, inferential and critical levels. The reading passages used in evaluating the pre- test and post- test are of the same level to ensure the reliability and accuracy of the result.

**3.5 Data Gathering**

The researcher asked permission from the School Principal for the conduct of the study. With permission from the principal, the researcher sought permission and informed the participants about the objective, purpose and result of the reading comprehension performance of the pupils. The researcher gathered all the data on the reading comprehension performance of the participants on their pre-test which was conducted on the previous quarter of school.

The researcher conducted the DEAR program every Friday of fourth quarter and first half of Fridays with the allotted time of 140 minutes or 2 hours and 20 minutes. The 30 minutes consumed by the learners in some engaged differentiated activities like: playing games, using flash cards to highlight words or syllables, word classification game, watching video about story or poem and predicting the text to improve their cognitive as well as psychomotor skills. For the 120 minutes rendered learners collaboratively involved themselves in some challenging tasks including, role play as learners visualize scenes characters and situations, predicting what shall happen next, reading aloud, choral reading and independently reading to enhance their speaking and reading abilities And for the 30 minutes’ post reading learners involved in some inspiring activities such as, solving puzzles, crafting artworks, writing diary or journal and think-pair or group-share. With this, learners were able to appreciate the love and value of reading, its effectiveness or efficiency. The researcher also conducted the post-test in the third week of the last quarter to measure the reading comprehension skills of the learners. The guidelines on Phi-IRI assessment were followed.

**3.6 Statistical Analysis**

Frequency counts and percentage were used to analyzed the profile of the participants.

The reading level acquired by the pupils and the interpretation of the scores were as follows:

Table 1: T-test was used to determine the significant difference on the reading performance of the participants

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Reading Comprehension Level** | **Comprehension Score (in%)** | **Number of Correct Responses** | | |
| **Literal** | **Inferential** | **Critical** |
| Independent | 80% - 100% | \*Students with a total score of ≥ 50/56 need not take the PHIL IRI | | |
| Instructional | 59% - 79% | \*Students with a total score of ≥ 50/56 need not take the PHIL IRI | | |
| Frustration | 58% - below | \*Students with a total score of ≥ 50/56 need not take the PHIL IRI | | |
| Non-reader | Unable to recognize and sound-out letters | | | |
| \*Computation for reading comprehension of the respondents:  **= No. of correct answers**  **No. of questions X 100= % of comprehension** | | | | |

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4. result and discussion

The results, discussions, analysis and interpretation of data on the effectiveness of the "Drop Everything and Read" (DEAR) program in teaching reading among Grades 6 pupils at Dassun Elementary School.

**Profile of the Participants**

**Table 2.** Profile of the Grade 6 Learners at Dassun Elementary school

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Profile | f | % |
| 1. **Age** |  |  |
| 11 years old | 26 | 86.67 |
| 12 years old | 3 | 10.00 |
| 13 years old | 1 | 3.33 |
| Total | 30 | 100.00 |
| 1. **Sex** |  |  |
| Male | 15 | 50.00 |
| Female | 15 | 50.00 |
| Total | 30 | 100.00 |
| 1. **Educational Attainment of father** |  |  |
| High School Grad | 3 | 10.00 |
| College Level | 12 | 40.00 |
| College Grad | 11 | 36.67 |
| MS/MA | 4 | 13.33 |
| Total | 30 | 100.00 |
| 1. **Educational Attainment of Mother** |  |  |
| High School Grad | 4 | 13.33 |
| College Level | 12 | 40.00 |
| College Grad | 8 | 26.67 |
| MS/Ma | 6 | 20.00 |
| Total | 30 | 100.00 |
| 1. **Reading Materials at Home** |  |  |
| Book | 24 | 80.00 |
| Magazine | 6 | 20.00 |
| Total | 30 | 100.00 |

**Age.** Out of 30 respondents, 26 respondents or 86.67% were 11 years old, 3 or 10.00 % of the respondent were 12 years old and 1 or 3.33% was 13 years old. This shows that majority of the respondents are 11 years old indicating that they are at the typical age for their grade level.

**Sex.** As gleaned from the table, there are 30 participants in terms of their age, 15 or 50% male, while 15 or 50% are female. The data indicates that the total number of male and female are equal.

**Educational Attainment of father.** Based from the data presented, 3 or 10% finished high school graduate, 12 or 40% college level, 11 or 36.67% college graduate, and 4 or 13.33% master’s degree.

**Educational Attainment of mother.** As shown in the data above, mothers attained 4 or 13.33% high school graduate, 12 or 40% college level, 8 or 26.67% college graduate and 6 or 20% master’s degree. That most of them finished college level only.

**Table 3. Test of Significant difference in the reading comprehension of the pupils when grouped according to age**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Age | X | F-value | df | p | **Decision at α= 0.05** |
| 11 years old | 88.84 | .044 | 2,27 | 0.957 | Accept Ho |
| 12 years old | 87.66 |  |
| 13 years old | 89.0o |  |

Table 3 presents whether there's a significant difference in reading comprehension scores among pupils grouped by age; 11, 12, and 13 years old. The analysis uses an F-test. The data shows that the F-value -0.044 is very low, and the p-value is 0.957. The p-value 0.957 which is higher than 0.05 indicates that there is no statistically significant difference in reading comprehension scores among the three age groups. The decision at α = 0.05 is to accept the null hypothesis. This means that age, within the range of 11-13 years old, does not significantly affect reading comprehension performance in this study.

**Reading Comprehension Performance and the Sex of the Participants**

**Table 4. Test of Significant difference in the reading comprehension of the learners when grouped according to sex**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Sex | X | t-value | df | p-value | Decision |
| Male | 88.40 | -.282 | 28 | 0.780 | Accept Ho |
| Female | 89.07 |

As shown in the table, the t-value is -0.282, and the p-value is 0.780. This p-value is considerably higher than the typical significance level of 0.05. Therefore, there is no significant difference in reading comprehension scores between male and female participants.

**Reading Comprehension Performance and the Educational Attainment of Father**

**Table 5. Test of Significant difference in the reading comprehension of the learners when grouped according to Educational Attainment of the Father**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Educational Attainment Father | X | F-value | df | p | **Decision at α= 0.05** |
| High School graduate | 83.66 | 2.686 | 3,26 | .067 | Accept Ho |
| College Level | 86.41 |
| College Graduate | 92.10 |
| MS/MA | 90.00 |

The F-value is 2.686, and the p-value is 0.067. This p-value is slightly above the typical significance level of 0.05. Therefore, it is concluded that there is no significant difference in reading comprehension scores among pupils based on their father's educational attainment (High School Graduate, College Level, College Graduate, Master's/MA).

**Reading Comprehension Performance and the Educational Attainment of Mother**

**Table 6. Test of Significant difference in the reading comprehension of the learners when grouped according to Educational Attainment of the Mother**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Educational Attainment Mother | X | F-value | df | p | **Decision at α= 0.05** |
| High school grad. | 85.50 | 10.339 | 3,26 | 0.00011 | Reject Ho |
| College Level | 85.58 |
| College grad. | 88.38 |
| MS/MA | 97.67 |

As gleaned from Table 6, the F-value is 10.339, and the p-value is 0.00011. The p-value is far below the standard significance level of 0.05. Therefore, we reject the null hypothesis. There is a significant difference in reading comprehension scores among pupils grouped by their mother's educational attainment. This indicates that the mother's educational level is a significant factor influencing the child's reading comprehension. The higher the mother's educational attainment, the higher the child's average reading comprehension score appears to be.

**Reading Comprehension Performance and Reading Materials at Home**

**Table 7. Test of Significant difference in the reading comprehension of the learners when grouped according to Reading Materials at Home**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Reading Material at Home | x | t-value | Df | p-vale | **Decision at α= 0.05** |
| Book | 86.79 | -4.179 | 28 | .0001 | Reject Ho |
| Magazines | 96.50 |

The t-value is -4.179, and the p-value is 0.0001. This p-value is much less than 0.05, indicating a statistically significant difference in reading comprehension scores between the two groups. Pupils with magazines available at home have significantly higher reading comprehension scores than those with only books.

**Reading comprehension performance of the grade 6 learners before and after the implementation of Drop Everything and Read Program**

**Table 8. Reading comprehension performance of the grade 6 learners before and after the implementation of Drop Everything and Read Program**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Reading Comprehension Level | Before DEAR Program | | After DEAR Program | |
| f | % | f | % |
| Independent Level | 5 | 16.67 | 30 | 100.00 |
| Instructional Level | 18 | 60.00 | 0 | 0.00 |
| Frustration Level | 7 | 23.33 | 0 | 0.00 |
| Total | 30 | 100.00 | 30 | 100.00 |

Before the implementation of DEAR, the highest Reading Comprehension Level are at the Instructional Level. Seven pupils are on frustration level and only 5 are independent level.

After implementation of Project, the reading comprehension of the pupils improved with all Independent Level.

**Table 9. Mean and Standard Deviation of Reading comprehension performance of the grade 6 learners before and after the implementation of Drop Everything and Read program**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Variables | X | DI | sd |
| Before DEAR | 66.10 | Frustration | 10.19 |
| After DEAR | 88.73 | Independent | 6.3700 |

Table 9 shows the mean and standard deviation of reading comprehension performance for Grade 6 learners before and after implementing the DEAR program.

Before the implementation of DEAR, the mean reading comprehension score was 66.10, with a standard deviation of 10.19. The reading level is categorized as "Frustration," indicating that the participants were struggling in their reading comprehension performance. The high standard deviation suggests a wide range of reading abilities within the group.

After the implementation of DEAR, the mean score increased to 88.73, and the standard deviation decreased to 6.37. This indicates a substantial improvement in average reading comprehension. The reading level is now classified as "Independent," suggesting that the participants were able to read and comprehend the reading material without significant difficulty. The reduced standard deviation implies that the DEAR program's effectiveness was more consistent among the participants, leading to a more homogenous level of reading comprehension.

**Significant difference in the reading comprehension performance of the grade 6 learners before and after the implementation of Drop Everything and Read program**

**Table 10. Significant difference in the reading comprehension performance of the grade 6 learners before and after the implementation of Drop Everything and Read program**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Variable | X | t-value | df | p-value | **Decision at α= 0.05** |
| Before DEAR | 66.1000 | -18.466 | 29 | 0.000 | Reject Ho |
| After DEAR | 88.7333 |

As seen in Table 10, the mean score 66.1000 before DEAR is significantly lower than the post-DEAR mean score 88.7333, as evidenced by the t-value of 18.466 and a p-value of 0.000. This p-value, being less than the 0.05 alpha level, leads to the rejection of the null hypothesis.

The data strongly suggests that the DEAR program had a positive and measurable impact on the participants' reading comprehension abilities. The program's success can be attributed to its ability to enhance reading interest, fostering independent development of reading comprehension skills, and boosting confidence. The use of differentiated activities and engagement strategies further contributed to the observed improvement.

**5. CONCLUSION**

Based on the results obtained from the study, it is evident that the implementation of Project Drop Everything and Read (DEAR) is an effective program in reading comprehension performance of grade 6 learners.

**ETHICAL APPROVAL**

The study was conducted with the approval and in accordance with the standards of the elementary. The research followed all applicable ethical guidelines, ensuring respect for the respondents’ privacy and confidentiality.

Consent

I affirm that the respondents voluntarily agreed to participate after being fully informed about the purpose, nature, and potential implications of the study. Their responses have been collected with utmost respect for their privacy and confidentiality, in accordance with ethical research guidelines.

**DISCLAIMER**

The author hereby declares that NO generative AI technologies such as Large Language Models (ChatGPT, COPILOT, etc.) and text-to-image generators have been used during the writing or editing of this manuscript.

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