CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

CONTENTS

1.0 Introduction
1.1 Importance of Reading
1.2 Reading as a Tool of Learning
1.3 Present Position of Reading
1.4 Statement of Problem
1.5 Definitions of the Terms
1.6 Selection of Class VI
1.7 Objectives
1.8 Limitations of the Study
1.9 Scheme of Chapterization
1.0 Introduction

Right from the later decade of the nineteenth century educationists as well as persons concerned with education have started criticizing our educational institutions at all levels, for their poor show. The comments are generally centred around the deteriorating standards of education. It has been customary to judge the standard of education from the percentage of results at the public examinations like Secondary School Certificate Examination and Higher Secondary School Certificate Examination. The failures at the public examinations and internal examination at different grades and levels have made the problem of wastage and stagnation a grave one. There may be various reasons for the huge wastage and stagnation but the striking one is probably the poor reading ability of the students. It is the feeling of most of the people, concerned with education that the lack of proper and systematic methods of teaching reading in our primary schools, as well as in secondary schools, could be considered as one of the chief reasons for the poor reading ability. As we know that the teaching of reading begins from class I of primary school and is continued up to class III or IV. Afterwards no systematic attempts are being made to
guide and improve the reading of students. It is the feeling that the development and improvement of reading is left to nature after class IV.

Bond and Bond have noted in 1941:

"The fact that in the secondary school the continued improvement in reading has been left to chance is a dark cloud on the reading horizon. No better results should be expected from this procedure than from leaving a vegetable garden to grow by itself without any outside care after it is once started."

As no systematic attempt is made to teach reading and develop reading comprehension among pupils, the pupils have become poor in reading. This feeling is supported by the findings of Thorndike. He carried out the survey of reading comprehension education in fifteen countries. He carried out this survey by taking a sample of two age groups of pupils namely 10 years and 16 years age group. The pupils of both the age groups of our country are found to be poorer in reading comprehension in comparison to other countries.

This also points out that the position of teaching reading is not sound in our country.

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In order to make people conscious of improving reading, it is necessary to bring out the importance of reading in learning and in day to day life.

1.1 Importance of Reading

Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing are the four fundamental skills of communication. Out of these, listening and reading are receptive or assimilative skills, while the remaining two are expressive skills. These skills are to be developed through the teaching of languages, for they are the basic tools with the help of which the learning of other school subjects becomes feasible. Hence much stress should be laid on the acquisition and development of these skills.

Further there are three ways of means of which one can get the knowledge and information. They are:

i. Through direct observation
ii. Through conversation with well informed people, and
iii. Through reading.

A few individuals benefit greatly from the original observation. Quite a few individuals benefit rightly from conversation, with stimulating and well informed friends who can give them all that they want. There are others who are
not dependent on others' viewpoint, but they largely depend on reading. Therefore it is through reading that man remains abreast of the continuous expansion of knowledge in his or her field of work. Thus the importance of good reading cannot be underestimated.

Besides this, it is said that the horizon of knowledge is expanding by leaps and bounds and every day heaps of new knowledge are being added either to replace or supplement the existing knowledge. Most of what we read today becomes trivial or obsolete tomorrow. Therefore in the knowledge explosion era, if one wants to keep oneself abreast of the latest developments one should cultivate good reading comprehension. Therefore it can be said that one must read not only to make oneself conversant with the latest idea but to prevent oneself from becoming intellectually static.

Besides this, technology has not yet replaced reading. The printed page reaches millions still untouched by, electronics and for those who can take advantage of the new devices, reading still serves unique purpose.

Gray and Rogers have expressed this thought well as under:
"It is an indispensable factor in modern life, interwoven with work, recreation and other activities of young people and adults. Its great value lies in two facts: printed materials provide the most illuminating and varied records of human experience that are now available; and they can be examined and restudied at time and again at the readers' convenience..... some of these values cannot be attained so effectively through other media because the individual is not free to pause and deliberate at will."

Moreover reading can also be considered as one of the major tool of communication, essential for the existence in the complex system of social arrangements. Not only this, but it is the means by which every age is linked to every other. It makes possible for the man to perceive himself in the historic process and the fluid universe around him.

In order to point out the importance of reading, John J. DeBoer has noted:

"If all the inventions of hundred years were destroyed and only books were left, man could still be man, in the sense intended by the idealists, the poets, the great creators."

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Thus this discussion leads to state that the importance of reading cannot be underestimated from the viewpoint of learning and in day to day life. Further, the justification of the statement, "Reading as a tool of learning", is given in the paragraph that follows:

1.2 Reading as a tool of Learning

Reading is a very important factor in the process of learning. We can get knowledge by reading, it is said, "if knowledge is a locked palace" reading is a key to open it or in otherwords it can be said that, reading is the common denominator in learning all school subjects. It is a submarine by which one can touch the bottom of the ocean of the knowledge. It has been considered to be an important tool of widening the horizon of knowledge and understanding.

"Reading is quite often thought of as a 'tool' that, when acquired, may be used on various occasions just as a hammer, screw-driver, or can-opener. Some educators, in fact, refer to reading as a one of the 'tool' subject. There is a common notion that a child acquires this tool-reading in elementary schools and from there onward uses it in all areas of the curriculum."4

Therefore if a person is not able to read properly he cannot comprehend what he has read. If there is no comprehension there is no reading.

From this discussion it could be threshed out that learning requires intensive reading.

"The school subject centered as it is, relies largely on the printed page for daily work in its academic classrooms. A text-book is the beginning and the end of learning so long as the school text book is the prime medium of learning, attention must be paid to the fact that the learner's ability to read the text book must be good".5

-From this discussion it could be said that reading is a king pin in learning process.

It is quite obvious that without proper reading ability one cannot understand school subjects. Therefore it is quite necessary to teach them how to read, before they read the subjects included in curriculum. In order to give proper justice to the teaching of school subjects, it is expected from teacher that he should also know how to read the subject he teaches.

5. Ibid., p. 2.
As Aukerman rightly puts it, "Every teacher is the teacher of reading."  

1.3 Present Position of Reading

In foregoing paragraphs, the importance of reading as an essential means of introducing one to the surrounding world has been discussed.

Though reading is the spinal cord of learning process and is the basic tool of acquiring knowledge used in classroom as well as in life, it is by and large, a neglected area in our country.

Therefore it is very essential to emphasize and develop this skill of reading from the beginning of the formal education and should be continued at all stages of education, but in this connection, it is regretful to note that no sincere, systematic and scientific attempt is being made to develop this skill at any level of education. The growth and development of this skill is mostly left to nature after making beginning and putting some efforts in the early years of primary education. In secondary schools the teacher if he is in mood will read the lesson from the

6. Ibid., p. 325.
text book considering that his reading will serve as model reading. But he does not even care to ascertain whether students learn to read from his model reading. This is the picture of classroom teaching learning process where mainly reading and listening skills are employed and no proper guidance is given to pupils to improve these skills.

In most of our schools efforts are made to teach the content of language rather than to teach and developing the skills of reading comprehension.

Besides this the school population largely depends on the onesided perception presented in the form of classroom notes, which generally lack in new information in the subjects. The main reason of this situation is that the students are not properly equipped with proper reading skills.

R.L. Thorndike in his book, Education in fifteen Countries observes as follows:

In population II (14 year old) India scored the lowest on reading comprehension and word knowledge although rated the highest in reading speed, in comparison to the children of other countries developed as well as developing. 7

The reasons for this may be many but because of the attempts that are being made in the school to teach reading are quite inadequate, the speed and comprehension skill is found at the lowest ebb. Especially at a primary stage of schooling the teaching of reading is often half heartedly done and the approach may not be scientific too.

Thus the treatment in developing reading skill may cause a lot of damage to the academic achievement as well as the personality of the pupils. The pupils in this stage inactively, pass their successive grades or standards with poor scholastic records at their credit. This is indeed a dismal picture of the present state of affairs in the field of reading comprehension at all levels of education.

In order to improve this situation an attempt should be made to improve reading from primary schools and gradually it should be taken to higher classes of secondary school.

It is, therefore, thought that the reading improvement programme (RIP) could be prepared and tried out to study its effect on the reading comprehension.

1.4 Statement of Problem

Impact of Reading Improvement Programme in Gujarati on reading comprehension of pupils of Class VI in relation to Intelligence and Socio-economic status.
1.5 Definitions of the Terms

(i) Reading Comprehension: Edward L. Fry has written in his book:

"It is very difficult to define reading comprehension. Reduced to its simplest elements, it might be said that comprehension is a part of the communication process of getting the thoughts that were in the author's mind into the reader's mind".8

It means understanding of words in context, understanding of significant details, and grasping of concepts that are given in the reading material on their first reading. The comprehension could be tested by assigning scores for the performance of the students on a comprehension test.

(ii) Reading Improvement Programme (RIP)

RIP could be defined as printed material in Gujarati for the pupils of Std. VIth. It is in the form of graded exercises with special directions and it is meant for improving the reading comprehension of the students of Std. VIth.

As per Smith, Otto and Hansen:

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"The developmental programme generally has a broad meaning. The goal of developmental programme is achievement in the basic school subjects that approaches the limit of each pupil's capacity. The specialized instructional programme designed for pupils with particular needs". 9

1.6 Selection of Class VI

In Gujarat the child is admitted in Class I of primary school at the age of six. According to the new pattern of education classes from I to VII are grouped under primary education. The classes from VIII to X are grouped under secondary education and classes XI and XII are grouped under higher secondary education. Therefore the child has to remain in primary school for seven years which is the longest period of all the stages of education. It is in the primary stage of class I that pupils are taught reading. Thereafter the reading develops gradually. Attempts to improve reading are generally made up to Class IV. Thereafter, the development of reading is left to nature; therefore it was thought that classes from V onwards be selected for the purpose of improving the reading comprehension, of pupils. In fact improvement should start from Class V but investigator

has chosen class VI because somebody has selected class V for the similar type of programme and the programme is in progress in Sabarkantha District. Therefore the investigator decided to take up class VI and the programme for improving reading be prepared for the pupils of class VI. On the basis of the present programme somebody may take up similar programme for remaining classes. Thus the reading programme for pupils of class VI and VII would be available to primary school teachers in future.

1.7 Objectives

1. To prepare a reliable and valid tool measuring reading comprehension in Gujarati for pupils of class VI.

2. To prepare reading improvement programme in Gujarati for pupils of class VI.

3. To study the impact of Reading Improvement Programme on reading comprehension of pupils.

4. To study the impact of reading improvement programme on reading achievement in the context of S.E.S.

5. To study the impact of reading improvement programme in relation to intelligence.
1.8 Limitations of the Study

The study is confined to class VI of primary schools run by Jilla Panchayat and primary sections attached to secondary school only. Schools are selected from Anand Taluka of Kheda District. Further the study is confined to Gujarati medium schools. The score attained by a student in the test prepared by the investigator keeping in view the components of reading comprehension has been treated as reading comprehension score.

1.9 Scheme of Chapterization

The second chapter deals with the theoretical perspective of the reading and reading comprehension.

The third chapter describes the review of the work done. In this chapter, the investigator has tried to review the work done abroad and work done in India.

The fourth chapter describes the preparation of the test to measure reading comprehension, selection of reading material, selection of items and editing the final form of the test.

In the fifth chapter the experimental try out of the test, procedure of item analysis, criteria for selecting the items for the final form of the test are discussed at length.
In the sixth chapter the reliability and validity of the test have been reported with a view to threshing out the fact that the test used for the purpose of studying the impact of reading improvement programme is reliable and valid. Hence the results obtained could be taken as dependable.

The seventh chapter describes the preparation of reading improvement programme. The selection of reading material, building vocabulary, improving sentence comprehension and paragraph comprehension are discussed at length.

The eighth chapter deals with the experiment carried out to study the impact of R.I.P. The matched group design is used.

In the ninth chapter the statistical techniques, analysis of the data and interpretation of data are described. Besides this, the impact of RIP is also studied in relation to general ability and S.E.S. and it is discussed in this chapter. Thus this chapter is the crux of the report.

The tenth chapter deals with the observation and conclusion together with suggestion for further research in this area.
In short the body of the thesis describes the full details of the account of the different steps taken to complete the research. The body also contains necessary tables, graphs etc., wherever necessary. Bibliography and appendices are given at the end of the report.