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A B S T R A C T

The topic was selected to probe the effectiveness of project based learning on the reading skills of the students. In this qualitative research, the prime objective was to determine that whether students can become autonomous learners through project based learning and does it improves their reading skills effectively. Literature review conducts a meticulous investigation of the research in the same area. Research of this write up has designed a case study to proceed.

The data was collected through census sampling that enabled the researcher to have detailed. The students were engaged in their projects. The results proves that project based learning not only improved their literacy skills but also made them inquisitive and independent learners. Therefore, many surveys and studies conducted before, have proven the findings of this study similar to the one conducted now and also highlights the scope of the study.

INTRODUCTION

According to Bell (2010) Project Based Learning (PBL) helps the students/ learners in becoming lifetime readers and moreover, reaching the level of critical learning which is important for success in the 21st century. PBL provides the best ways to the students in their classroom with accurate literacy experiences, which however, means making them write and read for the actual purpose. The project gives the students an actual "need to read"; so as to answer the additional questions of inquiry which students on their own, come up with. The children find answers by reading the authentic resources, which could be defined as the bases of information that is present outside of the learning in the context of writing and reading. However, an authentic framework of PBL is highly functional for improving the student learning. The students who are involved with authentic literacy projects are aware of the high stages of development in the writing ability and reading comprehension moreover, PBL engages students more deeply and meaningfully in literacy. In the vision of this, PBL is one of those methods which are highly recommended to be used. Patton (2012) stated that PBL states to a method which allows students to plan, design, and perform a comprehensive project that generates a visibly demonstrated output by the means of publication, presentation or product.

A study was done by Gultekin (2005) which was about the motivation of the students through PBL. He compared conventional teaching with PBL and found PBL to be the most effective method that should be used and introduced in the schools. He explained that when students are given the task and autonomy along with a little guide line by the teacher, the students will build their track or framework which will make them critical thinkers. Students choice and involvement are the basic elements of PBL, moreover PBL teachers act as the facilitator who gives the choice to the students to select the project and proceed themselves through guidance (Bell, 2010).

Hence many researches have been done on the language acquisition and the literacy skills that students acquire the literacy skills through acquisition which means that students learn skills from their practical work than teaching explicitly. Once they are given the chance to practice their skills they create their own ways to increase literacy skills and their learning styles. According to Gee (2001) students need social aspects to take the possession of their learning style and skills. However, Hammond (2010) refers that PBL can give that chance to make students practice and improve their literacy skills. It involves all the aspects of literacy skills than only writing and reading.

The researcher named Jones (2003) expressed that PBL has the positive advantage on the students as they are more intrinsically motivated in their learning, students like their work so they utilize more effort and time on it. Teaching of the reading skills might be noticed as the means of affected monologue. In this manner, the teacher becomes the only speaker and students become listeners which further means that the students become passive recipients rather than being active; they only listen to their teacher rather than understanding her. However, the teaching approach not only happens in grammar translation method but in fact, the learners spent years of their learning in learning English and yet several of them still are not able to use the language appropriately. They are aware of the vocabulary words but are unable to use this knowledge in their communication effectively outside their classrooms and how to put their skills (use of vocabulary) to active use.

There are several students who faced difficulty to be the focused readers as they cannot find the reason of that assigned text. However, students wanted to be engaged in such a social setting that could enable their interest towards reading which PBL provides them with. PBL provides opportunity to the students to select and create their own projects by giving them the autonomy which leads them towards success (Bruce, 2008). PBL also proves them to interact with their peers that improve their literacy skills. Through interaction with peer, the students would know that how they can use their skills in the society. Students practice variety of literacy skills while creating their projects. In this way students not only teach skills to their peers but also to themselves (Bell, 2010). Larson and Marsh (2005) in her study mentioned about the literacy skills and argued that literacy skills are not only taught through reading novels, answering the questions, writing or rote learning but by interesting with each other.

However, a teacher may form a perfect classroom condition only by presenting a strategy which will emphasize and focus on the student. Slater and Collie (1987) suggested that, putting an effort into that of the teaching of text, by motivating students to read and by encouraging their replies. The practice of the approach would not only led to the greater understanding but also to the language learning procedure on the students part and would also to make students independent learners, long life learners and critical thinkers (i.e., students will take responsibility of their own learning which will be the basis of working effectively and cooperatively with others).

Students come to TNS (The New School) from various language backgrounds and are new to PBL based learning system. A small number of students have been studying in a PBL environment since the beginning and have a good command on the language skill. In the classroom a typical learner has spent years of learning English in a majorly English medium school yet many are not fluent in the use of English language effectively. Though they are exposed to the language and know to a good extent about the language but are unable to effectively communicate their meaning in an appropriate manner outside the classroom. However, PBL is the instructional framework which is introduced to increase the interest of the students while studying.

The reason of selecting reading skills was to highlight that in conventional schools reading skills are not measured, like their fluency i.e., students have read the passage themselves but how it will be evident that they have errors or have self-corrected their errors, how to know their exact reading stage etc. Keeping in mind these questions the researcher went through different frameworks of teaching but found PBL the best framework in all. However,

there are four components of the reading skills which are: phonics awareness, fluency, vocabulary and reading comprehension. The researcher covered only those components in her research which were widely used in PBL framework. So, researcher focused fluency, vocabulary and reading comprehension which has the main role in PBL however, phonics awareness is less focused in PBL though it is important part of English Language but is not widely used/focused or highlighted in PBL framework.

The researcher used rubrics to measure each skill of reading, such as to measure the fluency of the students researcher took running records and got their exact stages through the formulae (reading percentage). The assessments taken for the leveled reading is taken from the running records either using books or small passages what must be close to the student's developmental level. This approach helped the researcher to record students reading behaviour.

In the end, the researcher put the students in similar theme to find out that how many students are not independent learners and needs a lot of scaffolding, how many students require less scaffolding and how many students are independent learners, this will give the finest results to the researcher that how many students has improved a lot or still needs to work on their skills.

However, this study tries to find out that whether the PBL could develop the students reading skills? What are the reading stages of the children and how they can be active inquirer as well as independent learners? Therefore, the choice of this study shows the practice of PBL in improving the reading skills of the young learners. The most difficult part that the researcher faced was that what is the difference between problem-based learning and project based learning. There is a slight difference between them i.e. coming up with a solution of the problem, is in fact problem based learning. After getting this idea then the researcher started to work on her research.

Statement of the problem:

The effect of project based learning on the reading skills of the students of Beaconhouse TNS DHA branch, Lahore.

Significant of the study:

Children in conventional schools read simple, familiar stories and selections. However, PBL allow students to choose the books they read which could help them in their project. They have to read every bit of the information that could help them in their project which increases not only their vocabulary but also their reading skills. It is basically the part of hidden curriculum of PBL that could improve their skills in a way by keeping evidences i.e. taking running records of their readings, taking reading logs, scanning of the project reflections and writing journals etc.

Review of Related Literature:

This chapter deals with conceptual and relevant discussion, which are discussed together on every step. It contains cognitive theory of Vygotsky, project based learning, reading skills and the running records, which are discussed in-detail with respect to the importance of their use.

Bruner's (1973) theory about project based learning was quite different that PBL is the combination of various socio-constructivist and other modern instructional schools of thought. However, the theory of socio-constructivism is based on the understanding of the learning in which the stress is on the construction of the knowledge, based on the prior knowledge and the interaction with the environment. According to Michaelson, Thomas and Mergendoller (1999) socio-constructivism is pedagogical set which is used as a strategy alike project-based learning.

Cognitive Educational Theories

Scaffolding was defined by Bruner, Wood and Ross (1976) as a 'course that allows the learner to solve the problem, complete the tasks which should be more than his individual effort. This was a concept designed by Vygotsky (1978) that zone of proximal development (ZPD) is the distance from the actual development of the learner to the potential level through the solving of problems under the guidance of adult (teacher). However, scaffolding includes the balancing support with challenges, whereas the goal is to be independent learner (Vygotsky, 1978).

A study was conducted by Krajcik and Wu (2006), who asked the students to create graphs and chart through PBL. The researchers found that students needed teachers support in understanding the project which later leads them to better understanding. They used higher level skills for instance interpreting and predicting in understanding the relationship between the graphs and charts and learned the reason behind this study. They discussed about the role of scaffolding in PBL, scaffolding plays a vital role in the classroom. Teacher explains things to the students and support them when they need, it is the part of student centered teaching. Scaffolding is used for the students to take them to the right direction and making them independent learners.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The following objectives were formulated in the light of project based learning framework and the standards of the class:

1. To give learners an opportunity to become autonomous learners in their reading skills through project based learning
2. PBL enable the students to construct their knowledge in the reading skills through inquiring
3. PBL encourage the students to read extensively and maximize the extensive reading to enrich their vocabulary

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Research Methodology:

The researcher visited Beaconhouse TNS, DHA branch to get permission for conducting the research so, the school heads took an interview of the researcher and asked several questions like 'why you want to conduct the research and what will be your variables?' etc. After getting selected as a teacher, the researcher requested that she wanted to teach year 3 and attended teachers training in order to know PBL much better. Moreover, how it works to improve students reading skills? The researcher conducted research to know which components of the reading skills are fully focused in PBL and how effective it is. So, the researcher conducted a qualitative research based on the Case Study. The data was collected through census because the population is small and detailed data is collected from each student. However, for data collection, the researcher used different tools for various reasons:

- To collect the data regularly
- To collect a snap shot of students artifacts (writing journals and reflections)

Population and sample of the study:

Beaconhouse TNS was the only school in Pakistan where students are taught through PBL. There are two branches of TNS in Lahore and the researcher was given chance to teach at DHA branch with the students of year 3 orange, as the activities and trainings were held at DHA branch. An intact group of 17 students were available, who were the used as the sample as well as the population of the study. The study was census in nature, where each and every detail of the student was recorded. The school's head permission was taken for the application of study.

Research Instrument:

The researcher practiced triangulation from comparing the variety of sources which are: running records, reading logs, observations and students artifacts (reflective journals and writing journals). The researcher got lot of information using these three different kinds of sources.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

After collection of the data, the researcher organized the data. The first step was to gather all the records of the students such as their reflections about the projects, acrostic poems, writing journals, running records etc. to analyse the data in the correct form. Moreover, students' projects were also analysed. At the end, the researcher uploaded the students' portfolios and presentations on to the laptop in order to get the results in more refined form. Once the researcher had all the data she began reading the data and made meanings out of it through coding them. All the strands were kept in mind while marking the rubrics. Marking all the three skills of reading which were

commonly used in the project was not an easy task so the researcher used Likert scale to check their levels and then to put similar codes in groups with respect to the literacy skills. Three themes were found that could emerge students' skills i.e. independent learner, literacy skills and inquirer. PBL revolves around the main element i.e. making students independent learners so, keeping in mind this element the researcher used it as a theme.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION
Recommendations:

The researcher learned from this study certain ways which can motivate students learning to the reading skills and also found that learning through projects not only teaches the literacy skills to the students but also the other skills which include inquiry and becoming independent learners. The implications of PBL can result great progress in students attitude and their learning.

Recommendation 1: The researcher worked hard in creating such activities that could uphold their curiosity. As the findings of this study reflects that how curious the students were towards their projects. They wanted to make the audience know about what they learned and apply them to their lives, the way students did. The students were highly engaged in their projects and wanted to be the best. Hence the motivation level of the students was too high that they wanted to have more readings and read more through books and over the internet. They were so excited that they started to read encyclopedias to know more in depth/detail. In other words it can be said that students took advantage of their autonomy and utilized it well. Thus, it is suggested as one of the best approaches which the teachers' should be used in their lessons.

Recommendation 2: The other influential factor which made students independent learner was giving them the choice (Jones, 2003). However, students were given many choices to make their own decisions and drive their project in their way. This is how they gain self-confidence and chose their learning style. The students chose their topics for the projects and proceeded. They found ways themselves of selecting the authentic information. Though, they mentioned that they faced difficulty in finding the appropriate information but still they did not give up. They faced all the challenges and worked very well on their projects. The students learned from their decisions rather than being fed by their teacher (Bezon et al., 2007). This element must be applied into the teaching classroom whenever it's possible.

Recommendation 3: Furthermore, students were also given creative freedom which was given to make them independent learners'. Their learning was assessed through their reflections and their creative work rather than the conventional style of taking written quizzes to know how many marks they get and finalize their results on them. The students learned about their projects in depth and so reflected them in detail. The students read about space shuttle so, they made a model of it. They wanted to demonstrate their learning so, whatever they read made the model of it too. The students had their original pieces which they created themselves through their creativity. The students have different learning styles all cannot be taught through the same style so, keeping that in mind the researcher gave them the autonomy to create their creativity and will be assessed according to it. In Bruce's (2008) study he also found that students have different learning styles and learns in their ways. In his study he observed that students made their multimedia projects to make their learning interesting and understandable to them. This is the one of the learning styles which teachers' must apply while carrying out their projects.

Recommendation 4: PBL also helps the students to increase their literacy skills. The completion of students' projects shows their effective learning. Their ownership took them to the height of learning and achievement. The students took charge of their learning by reading from various sources then, designed their projects. After reading from other sources students wrote reflections and made notes side by side as student 'p' wrote. The findings of this study is exactly the same as done by Friedman and Heafner (2008), he also found that effective learning is done through PBL which leads them to memorize their content for a long time. This makes the students remember their projects and the content as well.

Recommendation 5: Through PBL the students gained inquiry skills an ability to work hard and use meaningful resources for inquiring new and unique ideas and information. Though, it was a challenging part for them to get the authentic information but still they did not give up. However, these skills are important and valuable for the future in their everyday lives. The findings of De La Paz and Hernadez- Ramos (2009) study has the similar findings to this study that PBL lead students to collaboration skills as well as inquiry skills which could use for the future projects. This study also shows not only the literacy skills that students improved but also the skills of designing their projects and working collaboratively with others. This can make students improve their instructional strategies; craft and inquiry skills for the improvement of their reading skills.

Recommendation 6: Through PBL, students get the chance to practice their understanding of the things through communicating and interacting with their group peers. In fact, students don't memorize things or concepts, they under the things deeply which make the remember thing for long time. In other words, we can say that if students are taught through PBL they get the chance to practice their learning. Teachers should create such an environment that should give students privilege to interact with their peers face to face and share their work and responsibilities as it is done in this study.

Recommendation 7: However, students can be discouraged and frustrated by the lessons so, keeping this situation in mind the teachers should be trained and lessons should be well-organized to create a positive atmosphere of the classroom. Also, teachers' educational programs must be updated with both theoretical and practical framework of PBL. There should be proper courses and seminars to train the teachers.

These recommendations can help the teachers to implement these above strategies into their classrooms and make their teaching effective. Through this strategy they can make their Students autonomous learners'. Teachers' must be trained by how they can assess their student's creativity and their projects, as they are only familiar with the standardized tests and their marking criteria's. Project based learning is rapidly growing larger and quite successfully.

CONCLUSION

This study aims to investigate the effectiveness of PBL on the reading skills in improving the literacy skills of the students. Moreover, making student independent learners and inquiring. Project based learning (PBL) is a teaching approach in which students drive their method of instructions which leads them to demonstrate their skills and learning through project's (Bell, 2010). Teachers can motivate their students for reading through PBL, as students' are given an opportunity to create their projects and mold them in the way they want to. They are given the ability to make their own choices and decisions. The students are given the privilege to take the ownership of their learning which makes them have deep understanding of their contents which are read by them (Bezon et al., 2007). The findings of this study show that how the students were motivated towards their learning through projects, they wanted to explore every side of the content in detail and to share them all with the audience. Teachers' should give autonomy to the students to make them independent learners' in which the students will discover their learning style. The result of doing this will lead them to success and make them a better inquirer. Moreover, Boaler (1997) and Marx et al (1997) who reported the effects of PBL on student's knowledge in the subject matter and the challenges they faced during their projects.

Buck Institute for Education (BIE) helps the teachers to implement the PBL in schools. According to them the PBL is defined as: "A teaching method in which students gains knowledge and skills by working for an extended period of time to investigate and respond to a complex question, problem, or challenge" (BIE, 2014a). However, this is a case study of project-based learning which affected the students reading skills and enhanced their literacy skills, made them independent learners and inquirers. The analysis of the students reflections revealed the implementation of the projects and their skills which enhances their reading skills

which seems that PBL is slightly better than the other instructional models in academic achievements for increasing the cognitive skills. Some studies regarding PBL reports the unintended consequences on the part of teachers when they are not trained properly for the planning of the projects before giving it to the students. It is evident through many researches that PBL is comparatively challenging for the teachers to plan and ratify.

There are ample of evidences that PBL is the only method that leads the students towards problem solving, communicating, inquiring, and decision making. It takes the learning to complex procedure and process. However, there are some evidences regarding the difficulties which students face such as managing of time, using of technology, initiating inquiring, and directing the investigational process to the peers. There is a need of more researches always, what may come in the educational topic. Though, PBL helps the students to develop thoughtful decisions, be the critical thinkers and more important to exercise on making reasonable judgments. To keep this aim teachers have to provide them with tasks, scaffolding and support where is required for the development strategies.

The students are assessed on their projects, than a conventional based narrow rubric that only defines exams and the written reports. However, the marking criterion of the project based learning is quite meaningful to the students and teachers. PBL connects the academic work to the real world issues which is therefore more inspiring to be engaged or pursue with enthusiasm. On the other hand project learning gave the flexibility to the students to work in their way. In this study the students were assessed on their way of questioning in higher order thinking, their reflections, their projects, and their collaborating work with peers.

Students very well applied confusions' statement "Tell me and I will forget; show me and I may remember; involve me and I will understand". This study highlights that how PBL has make students involved in the projects and made them inquirer and independent learner than that of other instructional models in this intervention. In this study, the implementation of the running records has clearly defined their reading levels of the students in both the terms.

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