

Topic:

The Implication of Reading Intervention using Read Write Inc. on the lowest attaining 20% of Children in a Year 3 Class in Hackney

Abstract

This study will conduct a comprehensive review on the implication of reading interventions by using Read Write Inc. specifically focusing on the lowest attaining 20% of children in a year 3 class in Hackney. In an attempt to derive the efficacy of reading interventions RWI for children in their yearly formative years, the literature review will draw significant inferences from the existing research studies related to Phonics and Phonemic awareness in relation to the theories of Vygotsky's zone of proximal development, children's microsystem and effective approach of teaching. The methodology will encompass the qualitative technique of data collection from the teacher and TA of a primary school in Hackney whose valuable viewpoints and experiences have been useful to find the results. The data synthesis entails the thematic analysis in order to derive the findings followed by a critical discussion on the challenges and productive outcome of RWI interventions on the lowest attaining 20% of children in a year 3 class. The research concludes with an overview of findings and recommendations for the areas of improvement.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.0 Topic Background

The Read Write Inc. is the proprietary reading scheme developed by Ruth Miskin that provides systematic and structured approaches for teaching phonics in their formative years. This scheme promises an interactive and recreational approach for children by blending the sounds and letters in combination to create words. According to Miskin and INC (2008), the RWI has shown evidence of accelerating the progress, reading and writing abilities of the students who have been the lowest attaining 20% in class. On the contrary, Flynn et al (2021) have argued that the proprietary reading schemes emphasizing the integration of synthetic phonics in classroom learning for school children have faced significant criticism pointing out the lack of phonemic awareness, not suitable for the initial years of teaching and teacher's boredom. On the other hand, the children have been found to enjoy the reading intervention of Read Write Inc. which offers a joyful medium of teaching and learning to the children of year 1, 2 and 3 classes. Reports from the study by Ehri (2022) suggest that the teachers believed that Read Write Inc. allows most of their students to acknowledge the reading criteria set forth during their formative years concerning the National Curriculum.

1.1 Research Aim

This research aims at assessing the implication of Reading intervention using RWI on the lowest-attaining 20% of students in a mainstream community primary school in Hackney, UK. The current approach of teaching and reading in the school consists of Read Write Inc. to Years 1, 2 and 3 class students.

1.2 Statement Purpose

To understand the implication of Reading Intervention using Read Write Inc. (RWI) on the students of the year 3 class who are at the bottom 20% in reading ability.

1.3 Research Question

What are the effects of Reading Intervention using RWI on students of the year 3 class with the lowest attaining 20% children?

1.4 Research Objectives

To observe the implication and effects of Reading Intervention using RWI on the lowest attaining 20% students of year 3 class

To assess the progress and areas of challenges faced by the students in understanding the RWI reading intervention program employed by the teachers

1.5 Research Rationale

This research study focuses on assessing the major techniques of teaching and reading Phonics using the RWI in primary schools. On the successful integration of RWI in the teaching method of the primary school, this study will emphasize evaluating the performance and progress of the low attainment 20% of children in a year 3 class of a primary school in Hackney. The study will reflect on the significant changes in the reading and abilities of the lowest-attaining students that have been observed by the teachers. Furthermore, the resulting outcome will help in understanding the efficacy of reading intervention RWI in the school curriculum and its scope for improvement in the future.

1.6 Research Structure

The first chapter introduces the theme of research with aims, objectives, topic background and rationale. The literature review discusses the key concepts and theories associated with the chosen topic under investigation. The research Methods section presents a comprehensive overview of the selected research strategies, approaches and data collection methods that are useful for conducting the primary research in a standardized manner. The fourth chapter critically evaluates the findings and analysis that further correlates to the literature findings. The final chapter derives the conclusion and links the results to the pre-defined objectives, presenting a set of recommendations fostering the areas of improvement.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

The ability of reading and writing are the most essential skills that children acquire during their formative stage and they evolve as the necessary pre-requisite to continue education. Reports from the International Reading Literacy in the UK have asserted that the reading performance of Children has declined from 3rd rank to 19th in the world (Seamer, 2018). The spokesman of Formal Liberal Democrat schools has stated that such a stark dip in the results suggests that the reading interventions in the schools have been significantly ineffective that need a strategic reformation to improve the skills and abilities of the students.

According to Bottomley et al (2019), Phonics and whole language theory are the two major strategies involved in this debate whereas Double et al (2019) demonstrated the competing pedagogies to be referred to as "reading wars". The whole Language theory claims that learning to read is equivalent to learning to speak – which is a natural phenomenon that is fostered by the unstructured immersion of letters. Conversely, Phonics emphasises learning the combination of letters and sounds that particularly conveys 44 phonemes of the English Language (Flynn et al 2021). Phonics has been considered an effective tool for increasing the reading attainment of students right from the early years of children. Following this agenda, the government of the UK has employed the intervention of PiP (Progression in Phonics) as the recommended approach to teach phonics at an enjoyable and lively fast pace.

2.2 Phonics

Understanding the Phonemes (Sounds) which are represented by graphemes (letters) in the writing is essential to improve literacy in the English Language. According to Ehri (2022),

Phonics is the approach towards reading and teaching that creates an interlink to the letters, spoken sounds and groups of letters. Correspondingly, David Crystal, the linguist (1992) has determined the phonic approaches which are central to the objective of identifying relationships between the letter and sounds within the writing system. On the contrary, teaching children to make use of phonics helps in the construction and decoding of words. The concept of phonics suggests that children on hearing the sound 'C' while reading "Cat", can readily relate this sound to the letter 'C' whenever they find this letter in writing.

2.2.1 Phonics Debate

Phonics is a topic of debate in the field of teaching literacy. The National Literacy strategy has suggested the integration of a mixed-method approach to the teaching of literacy that encompasses the elements of phonics instructions as mandatory. However, critics argue that the phonemic approach often leads to confusion specifically in children at their formative stage (Rice et al 2022). On the contrary, there is increasing debate centred on which methods of teaching Phonics would be the most effective for young children in their formative years (Seamer, 2018). The advocates of Phonics have asserted the synthetic phonic approach as the most effective approach in teaching, and it has shown significant progress in the results of children in comparison to other programs such as mixed phonics reading programs (such as analytic and synthetic).

The reading interventions using Synthetic phonics teach the phonemes and their associated graphemes. In correspondence, Wyse and Goswami (2008) opine that children's learning process starts by hearing the phonemes in speech and then orally blending the phonemes together while reading. During the reading practice, the phonemes are generally presented by their pronunciation, and grapheme and both are blended together to develop a word. For instance,

when reading 'hen' – children would sound three specific phonemes i.e. /h/ /e/ /n/ which are blended together in the formation of the letter 'hen'.

In contrast, analytic phonics helps the children to identify the phonemes within the whole words instead of focusing on the individual graphemes (Belas, 2018). In this approach, children analyse the common phoneme within a set of words, while each of these words will contain the phoneme that is being studied. For instance, teachers may ask the children to find out the common factor in the following words i.e. tip, tree, tool and tent.

2.2.2 Phonics versus Phonemic Awareness

McCambridge, Witton and Elbourne (2014) have explained that children in school must acquire strong comprehension of spoken language before learning the written language. The knowledge of how the language is learned and understood is referred to as phonemic awareness. Conversely, phonemic awareness indicates the ability to think, notice and manipulate the phonemes within spoken words. According to Ehri (2022), phonic awareness is crucial for both teaching and reading as this refers to the acquisition of skills that only involves spoken language devoid of prints.

2.3 Read Write Inc. Intervention

Read Write Inc. is referred to as the proprietary scheme that offers a systematic and structured approach to the teaching of phonics during the early years of children (Hoad, 2013). The five key principles that strongly feature in Read Write Inc (RWI) are –

Participation

Pace

Praise

Purpose

Passion

RWI learning intervention ensures a consistent approach in which simple teaching techniques ensure that all the children participate completely in the whole lesson, a lively pace will keep them engaged in learning phonics, and teachers and students work together as partners to teach and praise that motivates the children, the purpose of teaching is to decode, encode and understand the language comprehension, and lastly to encourage children to become passionate about reading and learning (Rice et al 2022).

2.4 Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development

Zone of Proximal Development is the theory of learning and development proposed by Lev Vygotsky has mainly defined the space between the performances of a learner without assistance in contrast to what a learner can achieve with adult guidance and in collaboration with capable peers (Shabani, Khatib and Ebadi, 2010). In this theory, the term "Proximal" is referred to the skills that the learners are close to mastering with the appropriate guidance and "zone" come across as the tasks that are beyond the capability of individual learners without support or adult guidance. According to Vygotsky's theory, students within the zone of proximal development for a specific task can get an adequate boost to achieve the task if they are provided with appropriate guidance (Silalahi, 2019). This can be achieved through social interactions with skilful teachers and supportive activities by educators.

2.5 Read Write Inc. in Primary School

The integration of the RWI program is extremely crucial in elementary school in order to teach phonics in a sequenced and interesting manner (Miskin and INC, 2008). Hence, the RWI program is filtered across all the subjects in the elementary school that includes mathematics so that the children can read at the speed correctly to understand the complex question. Read Write Inc. as a reading intervention in schools has broadened the curriculum with the assurance that pupils develop exceptional reading skills.

Chapter 3: Research Design

3.1 Introduction

The chapter on methodology helps in understanding the application of suitable research tools, techniques and methods in the research study. The significance of employing the appropriate methods and techniques that accurately fits into the study is essential for deriving accurate results and findings of the research.

3.2 Secondary Research (Literature Review)

The secondary research will emphasize on reviewing the existing literature in order to derive the existing data and insights which will help in developing a strong knowledge base, identify the research gap and serve as guidance to the primary study (Clarke and Cossette, 2016). Hence, the secondary research will be based on the comprehensive literature review by using the keywords of Reading interventions, Read Write Inc, reading abilities of year 3 class children, phonics, effective teaching sequence and Read Write Inc in elementary school. The secondary data sources used in this research are mainly peer-reviewed journals, elementary school statistics, published articles, authentic websites, and school reports, which are collected from the reliable databases of online libraries, Scopus, JSTOR, Economist Intelligence Unit, and Science Direct.

3.3 Primary Research: Qualitative Data Collection

The primary data collection will focus on the qualitative research technique in order to narrative responses directly from the chosen sample (McGrath, Palmgren and Liljedahl, 2019). Qualitative research is useful for understanding the experiences, motivation and perspectives of the subjects on the chosen topic under investigation. In this particular research, the primary data is collected from the 2 teachers of a school in Hackney.

This research will focus on the interpretive philosophy to understand the objective reality based on the experience and understanding of the respondents (Alharahsheh and Pius, 2020). With respect to the qualitative interpretive approach, inductive reasoning will be suitable to move from a specific observation to a more generalized conclusion in order to produce reliable and valid findings.

3.4 Data collection methods: Semi-structured interviews (open-ended)

The data collection methods will employ semi-structured interviews where the participants are asked open-ended questions and given the liberty to express their opinion and viewpoints, which will further be evaluated to derive the findings and results in a standardized manner (Muleme et al 2017).

3.5 Sample

2 Participants (Teacher and Assistant Teacher of a school in Hackney)

3.6 Sampling Strategy: Purposive sampling

Generic purposive sampling has been employed to identify and select the participants who are directly associated with the research objectives and questions, while the final selection is done at the sole discretion of the researchers.

3.7 Thematic Analysis

The qualitative responses thus obtained will be evaluated by means of thematic analysis in which the themes are carefully derived by identifying the recurring data patterns on the narrative responses which are correlated to the literature findings to derive the results (Neuendorf, 2018).

The findings thus obtained will be critically evaluated to reach a conclusion and satisfactorily link them with the objectives

3.8 Ethical concerns

The researcher follows a specific code of conduct to ensure the respondents must participate in the interviews voluntarily based on the informed consent that dictates the overall research purpose, research aim, problem statement, schedule and duration of the interviews (Perera and Emmerich, 2018). The researcher ensures to conceal their identity to maintain anonymity and offers them the liberty to withdraw from the research process according to their will. According to the BERA ethical guidelines, the researcher must get permission through signed letters on conducting this research study involving human participants for the purpose of data collection.

In the context of secondary research, the information and secondary data are duly cited with appropriate references to acknowledge the original author.

3.9 Limitations

The selection of only 2 sample sizes may incur as a limitation as it may not provide the widespread general opinion of the teachers on the improvement process of low-attaining children after the implication of RWI reading intervention. Hence, the selection of a broader sample size would have been effective in deriving a comprehensive understanding of the chosen area of research.

Chapter 4: Findings

4.1 Thematic Analysis

Theme 1: Low achieving Pupil in Year 3 Class

The teachers have presented their viewpoint stating that "poor phonemic awareness skills" is often challenging for the children to read and learn further as they are unable to use the phonics. The participants mentioned that children lacking in phonemic awareness had faced trouble in matching the written letters with their actual sounds. The teachers emphasize on the fact that phonic awareness is highly crucial in teaching and reading for the low achieving pupil in class. Phonemic awareness is the listening skill and the majority of the children cannot develop this capacity naturally as a result of which they become the lower attainment in the class. Hence, in order to decode simple words, it is essential to acquire the skill of phonemic awareness. The low attaining 20% of children in a year 3 class do not have the ability to decode simple words, hence these pupils have inadequate options to identify the words they try to learn. Hence, they reach out to the teachers to ask for the word and then memorize it.

Theme 2: Teaching Approach of Read Write Inc Intervention

The teachers follow a structured and systematic approach to teaching following the RWI Inc. that follows the specific steps in sequence-

The children are assessed and grouped together in respect to their phonic knowledge. Each of the children in the group reads books that match their phonic knowledge.

The first phonics takes place for forty-four sounds whereas the corresponding letters are taught and introduced systematically.

In the first words, the children make use of short ditties to practise early reading and writing in order to teach more letters or sounds in correspondence.

To develop reading and writing, children read a series of levelled decidable texts that are both non-fiction and fiction, however, it does not integrate the writing activities that include handwriting practices ((Dunn, 2008).

The levelled progression focuses on the ongoing assessment where the groups are adjusted continuously to ensure the best possible progress for every child.

Consequently, the classroom skills and techniques that are developed in the Read Write Inc lessons get easily transferred across all other areas of the curriculum and the overall management of the classroom and low-attaining students results in much stronger and more focused teaching approaches across all the areas throughout the classroom.

Theme 3: Improvement in Children – low attainment 20% of year 3 class

The teachers inform that reading enriches vocabulary, spelling and writing skills. Children having access to a wider curriculum improves their self-esteem and enhances their motive for achievement. In an interview, the teachers responded on the performance of individual students following the Read Write Inc. stating that "Student X is more confident with reading and keen to get involved in the lessons". Alternatively, the teachers also identified some students are not improving up to the mark, hence they shared an example of "Student Y is still very shy and has not developed much confidence". Hence, there are various instances where the students may read the words properly, but are unable to follow the sentences, they tend to lack general knowledge and a lack of vocabulary hinders their progress. The teachers share instances where the students are not keen to read and their confidence is low in reading. Hence, children who continue to

struggle and have special educational needs are supported with all the guidance and necessary resources.

Theme 4: Efficiency of RWI on children of Year 3 Class

The Read Write Inc. intervention is specifically a teacher-led intervention. In reference to the study by Roberts-Holmes (2021), a teacher-led style of teaching and reading may not be suitable for all children. It has been stated that RWI may not consider the whole microsystem of the individual child, hence this intervention may not fit well with their individual needs of reading and learning. The microsystem of a child refers to the interactions that may occur with the immediate surroundings of a child. The teachers explained that for children in year 3 class, their microsystem is only limited to their families and teachers. However, the microsystem of a child tends to have a significant impact on the educational aspect of a child's life. The participants explain that

"some of the students receive no or negligible parental guidance on reading and learning at home". This could be further stated that the implementation of RWI interventions would not be completely effective unless the children get adequate teaching guidance from their parents at home. Hence, reading at home taking guidance from a parent is an effective approach to fostering reading abilities and fluency in children.

Theme 5: Challenges of RWI

The lack of variety in the Read Write Inc. lessons often leads to a situation where the children feel bored over time in comparison to their experience during the start of the lesson. If the

children find the lessons boring, this may have a negative impact on their engagement with the RWI lessons which in turn will have a significant dip in their reading abilities and improvement. On the contrary, there are various criticisms of the structure of lessons designed in the RWI interventions. The study conducted by Bradbury (2018) on the teachers of a primary school have responded that the repetitive structure of the proprietary reading schemes often leads to teacher's and student's boredom. This is mainly because the teachers have to utilise the proprietary reading interventions and work with the year 1 to year 3 classes for each year which makes the teachers get bored of teaching in a structured way. On the contrary, the teachers may try to vary the lessons in their own standardized way, however, this variation in pattern with no guidance dictated in the RWI scheme is considered unproductive.

4.2 Discussion

Phonic is a reading approach that correlates the linking of letters with spoken words. In criticism, Lefstein (2008) opines that children have lack of focus in learning to create a link to the letters with spoken words, rather it may simply focus on the completion of any activity to practice the spoken words. From the literature, it can be stated that learning phonics is a slow-paced activity that must be accelerated with the appropriate intervention. The Read Write Inc. is widely applied across the primary schools in Hackney that has a strong correlation with improvement in the performance of the lowest-attaining students. In interviewing the teachers, they have given clear responses on the positive impact of Read Write Inc. on their students. In the initial four months, the low attaining 20% of children in the year 3 class have scored, and children in the primary schools have made a whole level of progress in their ability to decode the texts. The diligence and expertise of teachers play a key role in the effective implementation of Read Write Inc (Gardner, 2020). The teaching approach of teachers using Read Write Inc.

follows concentrated, diligent, and systematic teaching of phonics which is central to the success of the low-achieving pupil. The children of the year 3 class can attain high reading standards only if the teaching standards are of high quality with an expert approach that follows carefully planned lesson structures to the teaching of phonics skills and knowledge. The teachers are highly trained in Read Write Inc to instil the principles of Phonics and can carefully recognise the learning needs of children and identify the barriers to overcome them successfully. The simple teaching strategies are incorporated to ensure that children can participate in the learning process so that none of the students misses out on any key elements of the teaching. The lively pace of reading and writing fostered in the RWI Inc keeps the children fully engaged. In criticism, Ellis, Mansell and Steadman (2021) argue that phonics used for teaching sounds to the children in year 3 class has been concluded that the frequency and volume of several words are way too heavy for most of the children, due to the lack of phonemic awareness, hence they are unable to absorb it diligently, hence they fall in the category of the low attainment 20% of children in year 3 Class. This deficiency in phonic awareness is interestingly correlated to the economic background of the families they belong to by Cochrane and Brooks (2022). It has been observed that children from lower-income families have less parental guidance on teaching phonics in comparison to middle-income and higher-income families where the parents are more involved in teaching their children. In addition, children from lower economic background mainly start their schooling with low levels of phonic awareness in comparison to their classmates who belong to the high-income background. The interview responses obtained from the teachers have pointed out that children from the low economic background have "low confidence in reading", "they are keen to try but usually very quiet", they face a challenge in completing the phonics related assessment such as pointing to the picture that begins with

specific phoneme. The teachers clearly expressed that the children cannot be trained in phonics before their significant development of phonic awareness. The intervention of Read Write Inc. is a fun way to teach the children that blend the sounds together to make a word. For the low attaining 20% of children in the year 3 class, the teachers introduce these children to the concept of blending phonemes using the RWI intervention in which the individual sounds refer to as the "speed sounds". The different speed sounds are the chief focus of each individual Read Write Inc. lesson while the sound is learnt through the repetitive flashcard activity. The speed of sound is then integrated into a short story which is read and repeated by the children (Weinstein, 2023). Following this repeated lesson in the class, the teachers have expressed their views on the individual students stating that "Student A would agree with the teacher's comments, however, his vocabulary and general knowledge enhances his ability to read better". In addition, the teachers also mentioned about "Student B who reads very quickly, but his fluency has improved, but he is unable to read the punctuation, and hence he struggles with comprehension". In contrast, multiple criticisms are pointing to the efficiency of RWI interventions, as teachers often come up with the judgment that RWI is simply inadequate as more than half of the common words in English are inaccessible which makes the use of a synthetic phonics approach. In correspondence, Gunter et al (2017) suggested that the systematic phonic approaches incorporated by RWI interventions make the assumption that all children are taught in the same way which is fairly inappropriate because there cannot be a "one-size-fits-all" or two-dimensional solution to the teaching and reading. There are increasing concerns raised by Lefstein (2012) who asserted that proprietary reading schemes undermine the skills of individual teachers. This is mainly because the clear step-wise instructions printed on the first page of each RWI book have shown little skills are required on the part of the teachers to provide RWI lessons

(Cochrane and Brooks, 2022). The interview responses obtained from the teachers have also indicated the repetitive nature of RWI lesson is the major cause of boredom that in adversely affect pupil motivation. Consequently, Hulme and Menter, (2011) draw a link between teacher boredom and pupil motivation with claims made that young children can pick up teacher boredom which has a detrimental impact on their motivation to partake in the lessons. However, the best way to incorporate the reading skills in the low attainment 20% children in Year 3 class is through regular assessment that ensures they are placed in the correct group to improve their readability using the RWI interventions. This systematic approach enables the teachers to identify the children who need essential support to learn learning at the level group and they are taught either by the teacher or TA who has potential expertise in the Read Write Inc. phonics training.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

5.1 Conclusion

In conclusion, it can be observed that the teaching and learning approach by using the systematic and structured phenomenon of Read Write Inc. has shown a productive outcome in children who are lowest attaining 20% in a Year 3 class. On the comprehensive exploration of the teacher's responses, it could be observed that Read Write Inc. has suitably met the needs of students in the year 3 class. However, on critical analysis of the qualitative data collected from the teachers in correspondence to the literature findings, it can be observed that several challenges of RWI interventions may not fit appropriately to all the students in a class. While the RWI scheme is a repetitive lesson that may appear to result in boredom for both the teachers and students, hence it may not have a positive motivation on the children to continue the structured process of learning for a long year within a particular class. However, their teacher's responses have shown improvement of low achievers who often benefit from the individual instructions provided by expert teachers. It is evident that teacher's expertise and their effective teaching approach is an efficient ways to improve the phonemic awareness of the low achieving pupils. Referring to the claims of Vygotsky as studied by (Silalahi, 2019), learning can occur more effectively if the children are learning within their zone of proximal development (ZPD). The ZPD is appropriately fitting to the responses obtained from the teachers that clearly reflect a child from Year 3 class is unable to learn on his own, rather they can efficiently complete their learning abilities by taking assistance from an expert and experienced teachers. However, on critical analysis of the literature studies, it can be observed that RWI intervention could be framed as a systematic and structured method of teaching, however, there are significant challenges associated with the scheme that may have a damaging impact on the children's performance

owing to the multiple criticisms raised on this approach. It has also been found that RWI has less variety of lessons which often leads to a situation of "one-size-fits-all" that may not work towards a productive outcome and significant improvement in the learning outcome of children (Bradbury, 2018). Moreover, along with the teachers, the parents of the children belong to the primary component of their micro-system, hence it has been observed that children facing a lack of learning guidance from their parents are more likely to fall in the category of low attainment 20% of year 3 Class in comparison to the children who receives guidance and support from their parents. Moreover, the teachers have made claims that RWI is highly ineffective as half of the common words in English are inaccessible as emphasises on the synthetic phonics approach that often appears to be confusing and far in advance for children who do not have simple phonemic awareness. Hence, the impact of the reading intervention of Read Write Inc. on the student's performance has shown mixed responses as obtained from the teachers. Hence, it can be recommended that the low-attaining children must be allowed to read a page of their favourite book in class at least twice a week or participate in interactive reading sessions aligned with some fun activities which will make the learning process even more lively and interesting for them.

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