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Comparing Reading Skills of Conventionally-Schooled and Homeschooled Children

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ABSTRACT

Reading is part of our everyday life. Children enhance their reading skills through the help of different teaching reading strategies. Different reading skills are vital to children's development because reading skills are essential for one to function in our society. Nevertheless, the variety of teaching reading strategies goes with the variety of learning methodologies and the different formal education systems that may entail. This led to the conduct of this study on comparing the reading skills of conventionally-schooled and homeschooled children. In the study, an adopted questionnaire for teachers and homeschooling parents as well as different reading worksheets for kindergarten, grades 1, 2, and 3 that is sourced from various sources were administered using convenience sampling. A mixed method of research was the study's research design. Research respondents were homeschooling parents and conventional school teachers as well as select homeschooled and conventionally-schooled pupils who belong to the following grade levels: kinder, grade one (1), and grade two (2). The gathered data underwent statistical analysis -- percentage frequency, median, Mann-Whitney U - test of difference and z-score. Results revealed that homeschooled children are significantly more skilled in reading than from conventionally-schooled children. Furthermore, the data gathered revealed different teaching strategies used to improve the reading skills of conventionally- schooled and homeschooled children. These can be summed up to bottom up process, top-down process and interaction of the bottom-up and top-down process in reading.

INTRODUCTION

Some people read newspapers to catch up news on mornings to start their day. Likewise, some people read to entertain themselves like people who were exhausted after a day's work. They read and browse the internet as a means of easing their stress on their work and some read magazines. The lady of the household takes time to read magazines to rest and get hold of the chores they've been doing the rest of the day. Students read books to supplement their learning (Cabagui, 2010). These tell us that reading has become part of our everyday life.

The International Reading Association (IRA), in its publication Dictionary of Reading and Related Terms, as quoted by Bernardez (2009), defined reading as an act of recognizing printed or written symbols that serve as stimuli for the recall of meanings built up through past experiences, and the construction of new meanings through manipulation of concepts already possessed by a reader. There are several definitions of reading but Bernardez (2009) concludes that reading is simply the "process of perceiving graphic symbols and relating them to one's fund of experience." It is the art of knowing and understanding the meaning of printed words or written symbols. Hence, reading is plain comprehension.

In the teaching of reading skills, there are options available. In the Philippines, most of the parents commonly send their children to conventional schools. In a conventional school or commonly known as a traditional school (e.g. public and private schools), students learn through the

accumulation of facts and mastery of skills and concepts whereby the teachers are the main source of knowledge. Uncommon though is homeschooling. According to the Republic of the Philippines Department of Education Order 21 Series of 2019, homeschooling is one of the alternative delivery modes of a formal education system that provides learners with access to formal education while staying in an out-of-school environment. Authorized parents, guardians, or tutors replace the teachers s learning facilitators.

This reading skill acquisition modes led to the conduct of this study on comparing the reading skills of conventionally-schooled and homeschooled children. Specifically, this study aimed to answer the following questions:

1. What is the demographic profile of the conventionally schooled and homeschooled children, in terms of:
 - a. age
 - b. grade level
 - c. school?
 2. Is there a significant difference between the reading skill of conventionally-schooled and homeschooled children?
 3. What factors affect the reading skills of conventionally-schooled and homeschooled children?
 4. What strategies are used to improve the reading skills of conventionally-schooled and homeschooled children?
- Hypothesis: There is no significant difference between the reading skill of conventionally-schooled and homeschooled children?

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METHODS

This study used the qualitative-quantitative research design. According to Creswell (2014), this research design or sometimes called “mixed methods” involves the collection of both qualitative (open-ended) and quantitative (closed-ended) data, analysis of the two forms of data, and using distinct designs that may involve philosophical assumptions and theoretical frameworks. It is an empirical research that involves collecting and analyzing both qualitative and quantitative data. Johnson *et al.* (2007) as quoted by Almalki (2016) define it as “... the type of research in which a researcher or team of researchers combine elements of qualitative and quantitative research approaches (e.g., use of qualitative and quantitative viewpoints, data collection, analysis, inference techniques) for the broad purposes of breadth

and depth of understanding and corroboration.

Respondents of this researcher are homeschooling parents and conventional school reading teachers as well as selected homeschooled children and conventionally-schooled pupils belonging to the following grade levels: kinder, grade one (1), and grade two (2). 120 conventionally schooled pupils, 9 conventional school teachers, 84 parents and 120 homeschooled children were involved and were chosen conveniently. Data collected underwent this statistical analysis treatment: percentage frequency, median, Mann-Whitney U - test of difference, z-score.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The data gathered underwent statistical analysis and resulted to the following:

Table 1: The Demographic Profile of the children-respondents in terms of age

5 years old		6 years old		7 years old		8 years old	
CS	HS	CS	HS	CS	HS	CS	HS
25	36	35	49	53	27	7	8

*CS – conventionally schooled; HS – conventionally schooled

Table 2: The demographic profile of the children-respondents in terms of gender

Male		Female	
CS	HS	CS	HS
54	67	66	53

Table 3: The demographic profile of children-respondents in terms of school

Conventionally-schooled	Homeschooled
120	120

Table 4: Significant difference between the reading skills of conventionally-schooled and homeschooled children:

Variable	Factor	Mdn	U	z	Remarks
Type of school	Conventional	70.71	40.50	-3.032	Reject Ho
	Homeschool	100.00			

The tables above present the demographic profile of the children-respondents. It could be infer that there are 240 respondents in total – 120 respondents are conventionally schooled and 120 respondents are homeschooled. The respondents are 5 to 8 years old who may either be male or female.

Table 4 shows the difference of the reading skills of conventionally-schooled and homeschooled. The result indicates that homeschooled (Mdn= 100.00) is significantly more skilled in reading than those conventionally-schooled (Mdn= 70.71), U= 40.50, z=-3.032, p < .05. This result leads to the rejection of null hypothesis that there is no significant difference between conventional and homeschool in terms of reading skills. This result aligns with the findings of Ray (2022) that the majority of peer-reviewed studies on academic achievement reveal a positive effect for the homesced students compared to institutional schooled students. Also, Snyder (2011) found that the homeschooled students outperformed their traditionally schooled counterparts in all academic categories, with a statistically significant difference in both ACT and SAT scores and overall GPA. In the study of Martin-Chang & Gould (2011) which

compared the academic achievements of homeschooled children with children attending traditional public school, it was found out that, when the homeschooled group was divided into those who were taught from organized lesson plans (structured homeschoolers) and those who were not (unstructured homeschoolers), structured homeschooled children achieved higher standardized scores compared with children attending public school and exploratory analyses suggest that the unstructured homeschoolers are achieving the lowest standardized scores across the 3 groups.

Lastly, Duvall, Delquadri, & Ward (2004) found out that pre and postpost-standardizedievement test scores and rate-based measures were analyzed and indicated that homeschool students were academically engaged about two times as often as public school students and experienced more reading and math gains.

The below table shows the factors that affect the reading skills of conventionally-schooled and homeschooled children. It is noticeable that there are similiraties in the answers of the homeschooling parents and reading teachers. Both homeschooled and conventionally schooled children’s reading skill is affected by neurological

Table 5: The factors affecting the reading skills of conventionally- schooled and homeschooled children

	Neurological and Cognitive Factors	Environmental Factors	Emotional Factors	Intelligence and Intellectual Factors	Language Factors	Physical Factors
Homeschooled children	Attention Span Motivation	Age Time Distraction Home	Interest Readiness		Reading Phonics	Health
Conventionally -schooled children	Attention Span Motivation	Age Time Distraction Home Absences Heredity	Interest	Lack of retention Intellectual Learning	Reading Phonics	Health Eye to eye coordination

and cognitive factors (attention span and motivation), environmental factors (age, time, distraction, home, absences and heredity), emotional factors (interest and readiness), intelligence and intellectual factors (lack of retention and intellectual learning), language factors (reading phonics) and physical factors (health and eye to eye coordination).Homeschooling parents and reading teachers use different techniques to enhance children's reading skills. It can be summarized through: bottom-up process, top-down process or interaction of the two models. Bottom-up process model of reading used by homeschooling parents and reading teachers include phonics instruction and phonemic awareness, use of sight words, spelling drills and reading aloud. They also use the top-down model of reading. Triggerring the schema or prior knowledge through showing pictures and assessing familiarity is used by them.

CONCLUSION

In comparing the reading skills of conventionally-schooled and homeschooled children, it can be inferred that there is a significant difference between the reading skills of conventionally schooled and homeschooled children. Furthermore, homeschooled children are significantly more skilled in reading than conventionally-schooled children. Factors affecting the reading skills of conventionally- schooled and homeschooled children may be neurological, cognitive, environmental, emotional, intelligence and intellectual, language factors, and physical factors. Teaching reading strategies used to improve the reading skills of conventionally- schooled and homeschooled children are bottom-up, top-down process or interactional process.

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