

Teachers' Perception on the Implementation of the Literacy, Numeracy and Screening (LINUS LBI 2.0) Programme among Lower Primary ESL Pupils

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ABSTRACT

The Literacy, Numeracy and screening (LINUS LBI) 2.0 programme, an educational intervention programme first implemented in 2013, aims to enhance the rate of literacy in English Language among Malaysian lower primary ESL learners. The effectiveness of this programme depends largely on the teachers, as they play a significant role in its implementation in the classroom. To a noteworthy extent, the teachers' beliefs in and perception towards the programme will help realise the successful implementation of the programme. This study provides a preliminary analysis of the effectiveness of LINUS LBI 2.0 programme based on a case study of two schools. It examined teacher's perceptions towards the implementation of the programme, in terms of its teaching contents, materials and support for the programme. Preliminary data were gathered from two English Language teachers who were engaged in the programme, through a semi-structured interview. The findings in this study suggest that the implementation of such an intervention programme seems to have a positive impact on pupils' literacy performance and learning behaviour. The findings also revealed that there were obstacles faced by the teachers in the running of the programme at the schools. Suggestions for further improvement of the programme implementation are included in the paper.

KEYWORDS: LINUS (LBI), literacy intervention programme, literacy performance, primary level pupils, perception

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Introduction

The development of basic literacy skills begins as early as before a child enters formal schooling. For many countries worldwide, these literacy skills are emphasised early in preschool education. In Malaysia, for instance, one crucial literacy skill that needs to be acquired as early as in the primary years of schooling is the English Language Literacy skills. This is stipulated in the Malaysian education policy whereby English is taught as a compulsory subject since primary one in all Malaysian public schools. Despite this emphasis, some children without learning disabilities are still unable to acquire the basic literacy skills of English during their lower primary school level. This problem is a continuing concern to teachers and policy makers alike as every Malaysian child is expected to acquire these skills after 3 years of mainstream primary education. (KPM, 2013). To address this problem, a Literacy Intervention Programme, (LBI) 2.0 programme was introduced by the Ministry of Education, Malaysia in all Malaysian lower primary schools since the beginning of 2013, for identified lower primary pupils in Year One. This initiative, which is an extension of the LINUS (Literacy, Numeracy and Screening) programme for the Malay language and Mathematics subjects aims at enhancing the rate of literacy in English among the lower primary learners.

With the implementation of the LINUS (LBI) 2.0 programme as the first English Language Literacy intervention initiative, there is a need to find out whether this early intervention programme has attained its objectives, i.e., whether it has been effective in its implementation. The findings obtained from such programme evaluation would provide teachers, school administrators and policy makers with valuable insights into information such as problems faced by teachers who are involved in the programme and how the programme could be strengthened to achieve its objectives. With this in mind, this paper reports on a preliminary case study on teachers' perspective of the programme implementation in two schools in the Sarikei district, Sarawak. The study aimed to examine teachers' perceptions toward the effectiveness of the LINUS (LBI) 2.0 programme in the two schools. It focused on the teachers' perceptions toward the programme, in terms of its contents, provided resources and facilities, as well as training and support.

Literature review

An examination of recent related literature revealed that researchers have focused on the evaluation of a systematic engagement of supplementary literacy instruction programme as a means of providing intervention into the classroom context for varied purposes.

A study by Baylis and Snowling (2012) showed a significant improvement in word reading skill and alphabet knowledge for children with Down syndrome in a phonologically based literacy programme. The programme focused on phonological skills development at the onset-rime level, alphabet work, word analysis and whole word reading within the context of reading books. This evaluation programme was a longitudinal study that spanned for four years and adopted a single case research design. The findings of the study suggested that generally as a whole substantial improvement in reading were achieved. The findings showed there were statistically significant changes between baseline and T3 for all the reading measures (BAS; EWR; ORT), which include letter knowledge, alliteration, syllable beginning, ending and completion.

In another study, Lo, Wang and Haskell (2008) evaluated the impact of early reading intervention on the growth rates in basic literacy skills of at-risk urban kindergarten students. The study sought to investigate the effect of ERI (Early Reading Intervention) programme, as

a supplemental reading intervention on phoneme awareness and letter-sound correspondence skills between the experimental and control group students. The study revealed that students at higher risks might benefit more from such program compared to the lower risks students. There was a significant impact on the students' weekly growth rates. This significant growth rates was clearly showed in both the Phoneme Segmentation Fluency (PSF) and Nonsense Word Fluency (NWF) progress monitoring assessments ($p < .001$). This indicated that a supplement reading intervention as such was worth to be done otherwise such growth rates would not be achieved.

Another study by Scull and Bianco (2008) also examined the literacy performance of low performing first grade students. The reading recovery intensive tutorial intervention programme aimed to raise the student's achievement level. The researchers' aimed to monitor and understand the processes of teacher-student interactions and secondly, to explore how referral rates of students encountering literacy difficulties and ongoing long-term support could be reduced. The findings of the study suggested that the students were able to attain an average achievement in comparison to their peers' range of achievement in their class. The teacher-student interactions were the main mechanism engaging the students into a more neutral reading confident and skill.

In a study on reading intervention, Gyovai, Cartledge, Kourea, Yurick and Gibson (2009) examined the effects of a supplemental early reading intervention on the beginning literacy skills of 12 kindergarten/first grade urban English Language learners (ELLs). They carried out a multiple-baseline design across students in investigating the effects of the instruction on phoneme segmentation fluency (PSF) and nonsense word fluency (NWF), as measured by Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS) (Good & Kaminski, 2002). The findings showed an increase in the number of phonemes segmented and the number of letter sounds produced correctly. Achievements were proportionate with the amount of instruction received.

In light of the LINUS programme, some local researchers have attempted to conduct research on different aspects related to the implementation of this programme. However, these studies seemed to focus on the Malay language and numeracy programme such as, a study by Evelyn Wong (2014), Nazariyah Sani and Abdul Rahman Idris (2013), and Marina Ramle (2012). Wong's (2014) study aimed to measure the level of management in conducting LINUS programme in one primary school in the state of Johor. A questionnaire, which focused on various dimensions, such as the management of objectives, management of communication, management of supervision and evaluation, management of curriculum, management of pupils' achievement and management of teaching and learning was administered to the LINUS teachers. The findings of the study revealed that the mean and standard deviation for each of the identified dimensions were encouraging. It proposed that a discussion between teachers and the management is needed with regards to reducing the number of LINUS (LBI) students.

In another study, Abdul Jalil Othman, Norzan Normarini, Ghazali Darusalam and Saedah Siraj (2011) examined the relationship between the implementation of the LINUS programme with the challenges that the LINUS teachers had to face in attaining the mastery of literacy skills. The study showed that having well-planned strategies, coupled with teaching and learning plans from the teachers involved could overcome the obstacles and challenges faced by the teachers in implementing the programme. This, according to the researchers, would provide an effective and meaningful learning to the pupils as required in the implementation of the LINUS programme. The findings of the study revealed that although most of the Malay

Language teachers had a positive attitude towards the subject, they still lack the skills in teaching the programme.

On a slightly different stance, Nazariyah Sani and Abdul Rahman Idris (2013) examined school leaders' understanding of the implementation of the LINUS programme based on features highlighted by Van Meter and Van Horn (1975), a model of the policy implementation adopted for the implementation of the programme in four schools in Selangor. The findings showed that the teachers and administrators' good understanding of the programme's objectives was the major factor that contributed to the success of the government programme. In other words, if the school leaders had misunderstood the purpose of the programme, its school achievement would have been affected. Thus, it was recommended that Van Meter and Van Horn's Programme implementation model, with minor modifications could be deemed useful for the implementation of the LINUS (LBI) 2.0 programme in school.

In another study, Tubah and Hamid (2011) examined the influence of demography on reading and comprehension skills of LINUS pupils. The study was built on Vygotsky's theories on the role of "scaffolding" and "ZPT". They suggested that these two concepts serve as a guide for the LINUS teachers in teaching reading and comprehension skills in the LINUS class. The study revealed that not all the demographic factors of pupils or teachers seem to influence the pupils' reading and comprehension skills. This demonstrates that the LINUS teachers must be able to determine the students' readiness, and are clear about the level or stages of guidance (scaffolding) that needs to be delivered to the LINUS students. It would be valuable for the LINUS teachers to acquire the psycholinguistic method of teaching, which emphasizes mental ability and mastery of language. This could facilitate the pupils' reading and comprehension skills.

A study by Mohamad Nubli Wahab, Maziah Mohd. Sahar and Mohd. Firdaus Mohd. Kamaruzaman (2012) evaluated the effectiveness of the Biofeedback EmWave therapy as a practical approach using the Malay language LINUS module on forty pupils of Year 1 and Year 2 in Chenor, Pahang. The protocol of Biofeedback EmWave was carried out on the pupils to measure their level of reading skills. The study employed a pre-test, Biofeedback EmWave practical approach and a post-test. The study indicated an improvement in the level of acquiring reading skills in Malay language through the therapy. Besides that, it also indicated that the pupils were able to increase their level of attentiveness in the classroom.

In another study, Marina Ramle (2012) investigated the effect of technical instruction on reading skills performance of the LINUS pupils. A one group pre-test and post-test using a pattern matching with non-equivalent dependent variable was carried out to identify the effect of the technical instruction: technique of repetition, technique of progression, technique of educate entertaining and technique of intermingling was carried out. The study shows that there was an effective improvement on LINUS pupils' achievement of reading basic skills by using the four different techniques mentioned. To date, only a limited number of research has been conducted on English language literacy among primary school pupils in Malaysia. However, these studies did not focus on the LINUS (LBI) 2.0 programme, as pointed earlier. The above studies focused on the Malay Language and Numeracy on the implementation of the LINUS programme.

A study by Hamidah Yamat, Fisher and Rich (2014) focused an ethnographic case study with three aged six primary school pupils. The study revisited a Malaysian policy of teaching English at primary school. The findings of the study indicated that acquisition of the second

language was done through play and use, and began with the pupil's development of confidence at the early stage. The implications of the results are examined in the light of English Language policy for teaching English to Malaysian primary school pupils. The study concluded that since language learning is developmental, so is the teaching and learning process. This implies that changes or interventions should be made early particularly for English Language teaching at primary schools.

Another study by Rosnani Hashim (2006), investigated the effectiveness of the 'Philosophy for Children' programme towards reading and critical thinking skills. This involved Year 6 primary school pupils who were taught using the programme in three months during their English Language classes. The study revealed that both groups elicited a higher post-score test than the pre-score test, for both reading and critical thinking skills. However, the difference was more significant for the group with a higher capability. The study also revealed there was an improvement in the pupils' acquisition of English Language.

Methodology

Research approach

A case study approach was selected to address the aim of the study in determining teachers' perceptions towards the LINUS programme in terms of its contents, resources and facilities, and training and support for the programme in the two selected schools. The approach was considered suitable as the focus of the study was to describe what had taken place or is currently taking place, or it might be an intervention in enacting changes to be studied and documented (Stevenson, 2004). As this is a qualitative case study, purposeful sampling was used (Creswell, 2014). The two schools along with the two teachers were purposely selected to participate in this study, following the suggestion of the LINUS (LBI) 2.0 programme officer at the Sarikei District office. In addition, both heads of schools gave permissions for their teachers to be interviewed and both teachers were willing to participate in the study. These teachers have been involved in carrying out the LINUS (LBI) 2.0 programme in Sarikei Year 1 primary schools. The Sarikei District was selected randomly from the list of thirteen districts in the middle zone of Sarawak. As presented in Figure 1, about 29% of schools in Sarawak has not attained more than 85% in the LINUS (LBI) 2.0 programme.

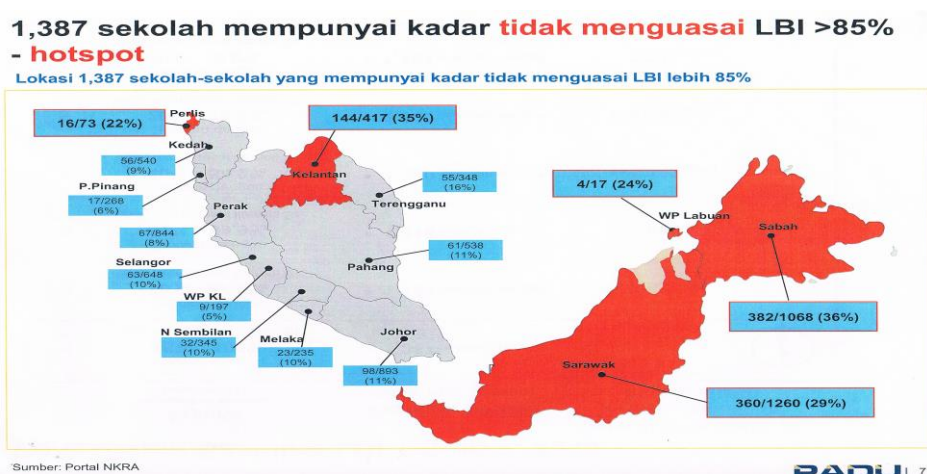


Figure 1. Schools not attaining more than 85% in the LINUS (LBI) 2.0 programme

A semi structured face-to-face interview was carried out to collect data for the study. The interview comprised 11 open-ended questions, which focused on the teachers' perceptions toward the implementation of the Linus (LBI) 2.0 programme with regards to its content, resources and facilities, and training and support of the programme. The interviews were conducted at different venues and time. Each interview lasted between 45 to 60 minutes. Data gathered from these teachers were evaluated in terms of how the teachers perceived the implementation of the Linus (LBI) 2.0 programme. The interview also aimed to elicit in-depth responses to the questions pertaining to the contents, materials and support for the programme and to what extent it has helped to overcome the reading literacy problems among the lower primary pupils.

The programme outlined twelve literacy constructs to be assessed in the screening 1 and screening 2 procedures. All the pupils who registered in a mainstream class had to take the first screening, which was usually conducted in the middle of March. The intervention started immediately after the identification of pupils who have not mastered the literacy constructs during the first screening. The identified teachers taught all the pupils registered in the class as a whole based on the English Language Curriculum Standard. The intervention was integrated into the formal teaching and learning of the subject. Individual intervention was carried out wherever and whenever necessary within the teachers' time allocation. And, this individual intervention was actually an individual session of assisting or remedial teaching specifically involving very poor pupils, who have not acquired even Construct 1 and Construct 2 of the listed twelve constructs in the programme's outline. Screening 2 was done in the month of September. Data of the pupils' outcomes was recorded as a guide or benchmark for the teachers to monitor the pupils' performance.

Participants

Two English Language teachers and their pupils, from Sarikei District, Sarawak were invited to participate in this study. Each teacher had 35 and 25 pupils respectively in their classroom. The participants from this school were selected based on the data that was provided by the Sarikei district key personnel of the LBI 2.0 programme. School A was considered a high performance school for the LBI 2.0 programme compared to School B, which has been identified as a low performance school for the LBI 2.0 programme. Both schools are located in the town area and most of the pupils live within a two-mile radius from their school. Both the teachers involved in the programme have qualifications in teaching English. One of them has a TESL Bachelor's degree whereas the other has a Senior Cambridge English Certificate. Both teachers have been involved in the programme since the programme started in February 2013. They both have attended specific courses related to the implementation of the programme.

Data analysis

The preliminary data of the study were analysed qualitatively. The data were analysed according to the specific aspects related to the implementation of the Linus LBI 2.0 programme.

Results and discussion

The results of the semi-structured interviews were identified according to themes in terms of its content, resources and facilities, and training and support of the programme.

The discussion of the results focuses on the various aspects namely contents, resources and facilities, and training and support, implications and recommendations based on the perceptions toward the implementation of the Linus LBI 2.0 programme.

Contents: What can you say about the content of the programme?

The analysis of the data revealed that both the teachers understood that the Linus LBI 2.0 programme was a government intervention initiative. It aims to overcome the pupils' inability in acquiring early literacy in reading and writing in English. This is an important factor as the success of a programme would largely depend on the practitioners of the programme (Van Meter & Van Horn, 1975). Thus it is imperative that they understand the standards and objectives of the programme. By understanding the standards and objectives of the programme, the teachers found it easier to understand the content of the programme. The twelve constructs outlined were very clear and specified with clear-guided instructions. They agreed that the contents were simple, suitable and relevant for their identified pupils who need the intervention programme. The contents emphasise phonics, phonemes blending and segmenting which is also one of the core areas in the current KSSR syllabus. However, the teachers revealed their disappointment with their pupils' results after the first screening in 2013. They found that most of the identified pupils could not master the twelve constructs. Most of them were able to acquire only construct one to construct four, which were what they had learnt in their preschool years.

The twelve constructs mentioned are (KPM, 2011; 2014):

Construct 1: Able to identify and distinguish shapes of the letters of the alphabet

Construct 2: Able to associate sounds with the letters of the alphabet

Construct 3: Able to blend phonemes into recognizable words.

Construct 4: Able to segment words into phonemes

Construct 5: Able to understand and use the language at word level

Construct 6: Able to participate in daily conversations using appropriate phrases

Construct 7: Able to understand and use the language at phrase level in linear texts

Construct 8: Able to understand and use the language at phrase level in non-linear texts

Construct 9: Able to read and understand sentences with guidance

Construct 10: Able to understand and use the language at sentence level in non-linear texts

Construct 11: Able to understand and use the language at sentence level in linear texts

Construct 12: Able to construct sentences with guidance

The concern raised by the teachers is that although the teaching contents of the LBI 2.0 programme are the same as those included in the primary school standard curriculum (KSSR) for the English subject, there is a mismatch between the contents taught in the programme and those in the mainstream. This, according to the teachers, posed problems for the pupils. The pupils were not able to cope with two different topics within the same session of learning. This is evident in the voices of both teachers being interviewed, as illustrated below:

Sample 1

“...to me the content are quite easy because they use simple English. ...yes it is relevant to the level of my pupils... only thing ...they are very poor. And...most of the parents are ...uneducated also...”

...there are varieties of activity inside the programme. Like they ask the student to write capital letter, to write small letter or to answer the question based on the text and then to fill in the blank, to match...”

“However, as I read a glance through the module, there's some part in line with the English Language Syllabus especially the phonemes but the sequence in the syllabus and the content of the programme are different. So, when I teach topic One of the syllabus as a whole, suddenly for the intervention I have to start a new topic. The problem here is that the identified pupils are known to be slow learners but have to cover two topics within a same period of time. This is killing them and I have difficulty to help them focus”.

Sample 2

“... the content is good actually. ..._the activities or the focus of the instructions in the module is relevant to the skills, and also relevant to the pupil's level of knowledge at the moment ...”

“...but ...when the topics are not going together, my pupils tend to get lost. They have problems in remembering what they had learnt. Most of the times this leads to demotivate them”.

Resources and facilities: What can you say about the resources and facilities provided in the programme?

As for teaching resources and facilities provided for the LBI 2.0 programme, the teachers were informed that they were provided with specified modules for the programme. The teacher's module was a guide for teachers to carry out lessons in the classroom.

Each unit covers a particular letter-sound combination. Blending and segmenting of the letters and sounds will be learned at the end of every four units. The module has teacher's notes, worksheets and teaching aids in the form of word and picture cards, phrase and sentence strips. The pupils' module helps to assist the pupils learning of basic literacy skills such as phonemes and graphemes to develop phoneme-grapheme correspondence and decoding skills. The activities in the module are based on the need for pupils to acquire all the four skills (listening, speaking, reading and writing) and language Arts. In addition, important sight words that are taken from the KSSR word list are also included. The screening materials provided are relevant, easy to administer and adequate in quantity for the pupils' assessment session. In this light, teacher A mentioned that what was actually outlined in the programme is what had been done long ago during the KBSR era. She said that the module focused on the core 'back to basics' needs of low literacy pupils. Generally, both teachers responded that the pupils' module was actually quite easy and suitable for the identified pupils.

Sample 1

“... the material is easy to us teacher but ...not the LINUS LBI student. ...actually mmm what was in the programme is actually real basic things for pupils to learn to read...but sometimes can't avoid to have pupils with zero knowledge...”.

Sample 2

“I received it the first week of the school when we reopen the school, early of the year... but without instruction of what to do with it, what should I do with it and when to carry out the activities there. No”.

Nevertheless, when the programme was first implemented, the screening materials were provided in the form of softcopy and teachers needed to print them out for each pupil. They commented that it was difficult for them to get the printed materials from the school and this was an unnecessary burden for them. They mentioned that they also had problems in developing the teaching aids as they had to develop all teaching materials themselves according to the provided module, which was not something that had to be done by the teachers involved in the Malay Language and numeracy programme. They felt that it was unfair that they had to bear the cost and worst of all, they had to develop these materials within given time constraints. They also pointed out that there was no teacher assistant in helping the teacher to run the programme more efficiently. As for the Malay Language and numeracy programme, there was extra help from the ‘guru permulihan khas’ and specialised LINUS teacher assistant provided by the government. During the intervention for the Malay language literacy and numeracy programme, the identified pupils were assigned to specific remedial classrooms. The specialised LINUS teacher assistant and the ‘guru permulihan khas’ carried out the intervention programme for the Malay language subject. As for the LBI programme, the pupils who were identified for the programme were not separated from their peers in the mainstream class. Thus, the teachers felt that attempting to teach these pupils effectively was a daunting task.

Sample 1

“...there is no specific room for LBI. But its one small room for LINUS only, ...I use it for my LBI session too.”

“...materials for teaching aids making is provided well by the school... time consuming...”.

Sample 2

“...we have no special room for LBI. I do in the classroom. I’m a person that doesn’t want to disturb my normal pdp (teaching and learning). So, I carry out early in the morning. ... around 7 o’clock until 7.30 because the first class will start at 7.30. So before that, I carry out at least 20 minutes. Unless we have some like on Monday, we have assembly so I cannot carry out”.

Training and support: What do you think of the training and support for the programme?

In response to the question on the aspects of training and support, both teachers emphasised they did attend the (LBI) 2.0 programme training course conducted at district level once after the programme was implemented. Initially, both teachers carried out the programme based on their own understanding of it. But after they attended the course and received some materials for the programme, they realised they had to follow the specific guidelines given by the Ministry of Education. They pointed out that the support given by the school administration, the main facilitator of the programme from the district office and other English teachers were only at a moderate level as the implementation of the programme has not been fully understood by everyone in their schools. Although the training, coaching and mentoring given by the facilitator are encouraging, there are 44 other schools in the Sarikei district which also require the attention of the English Language Literacy facilitator. To date, only one main English Language literacy facilitator who was also an officer in the district office has been appointed for the entire Sarikei district.

Sample 1

“In 2013, I attended 1 at SK Sarikei, ... district level. ... officers are also not familiar with the phonics setting ... no course or briefing was provided on how actually the screening should be done. ... there are still loops here and there so courses are needed very much” .

Sample 2

“I attended once mmmm the course was quite okay but ... too little were shared on the phonics part... we need that. ...Not satisfy with the phonic parts of training. ... Its okay except that phonetics symbols and things ... they also do not know the phonetic symbol. ...they will play the tape and they asked us to listen to the tape”.

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Besides questioning on the direct concerns of the programme, some personal questions were also raised such as: 1. Could you share your experience in carrying out the programme in your classroom? 2. What are the strengths of the programme from your point of view? 3. What are the weaknesses of the programme from your point of view? Teachers' responses were presented accordingly to its corresponding questions.

Experiences while implementing the programme: Could you share your experience in carrying out the programme in your classroom?

In the aspect of experiences, both of the LINUS (LBI) 2.0 programme teachers shared similar experiences in carrying out the programme. Both of them carried out their daily teaching of KSSR syllabus to a whole class of pupils with mixed ability. During this class session, the pupils who had been identified to undergo the LINUS (LBI) 2.0 programme were not separated from the class as in the case of the Malay Language and numeracy. Only after the KSSR syllabus session, they carried out the programme to the selected pupils. However, for teacher B, she did added extra time specifically for the programme implementation. She implemented the programme on Tuesday till Friday at 7am in the morning before the regular school's classes. The duration of the session was approximately twenty minutes.

Sample 1

“Oh. Firstly, I actually teach the class as a whole ... So after I did my normal teaching, towards the end of my lesson then I incorporated with the programme that is around 10 minutes ... So I will call the student in front and I will teach... Is quite easy...actually they were quite interested to learn when I taught them in a small group... Because I gave them my full attention... they are very active...they still very poor...there is a slight change”.

Sample 2

“... usually I do in the classroom... while those ... achieved the level... they can carry out their own activities. So, I will concentrate or focus on those needs to undergo this programme. ...during my normal pdp, I don't differentiate them. I teach them as a whole class and go to groups ... I also carry out early in the morning. ... around 7 o'clock until 7.30 because the first class will start at 7.30. So before that, I carry out at least 20 minutes. ... I ... group in 2 or 3 table so I will teach them to read, teach them how to articulate phonemes and ask them to name those pictures. That is how I did LINUS LBI. ... In term of behaviour, in term of their

knowledge, they can follow much better in the normal pdp (teaching and learning)".

Strengths of the programme: What are the strengths of the programme from your point of view?

Teachers responded that the strengths of the programme were limited but felt the strength lay in aiding the selected group of pupils. Both agreed that due to the implementation of the programme more attention were being given to cater to illiterate pupils and this had provided a chance for these pupils to improve themselves and make some positive progress. As voiced by both teachers:

Sample 1

"...maybe to differentiate the very poor students with the good students. ... is the strength that I can see. ... help to improve the poor students. ... with continuous check on them ... Take them aside and teach them more. ... if there is improvement ... it is good ... spend some time with the poor students".

Sample 2

"Yes, this programme is helpful for these students ... We keep the data in the file. We compare to the previous result and try to identify their weakness in which area, in which construct and we will be cleared on the pupils' ability. ...Oh ... there is a time appearing as a burden to me ... but with the module at least, my burden is lighten because of the instruction, the activities are there for me to just follow now. ... Actually this programme is good ... Yes, if it is carry out properly and intensively".

Weaknesses of the programme: What are the weaknesses of the programme from your point of view?

In this aspect both teachers mentioned time. Much time was needed when they are involved in the implementation of the programme. They needed extra hours to plan, make teaching aids and provide remedial. Both of them were hoping that an English assistant teacher would be provided as what had been done for the Malay Language and Numeracy LINUS.

Sample 1

"... teach the poor students for LBI ... Very time consuming ... If they want to improve the programme, they should be an English remedial teacher to focus on the selected pupils. ... Provide extra teacher purposely for the programme".

Sample 2

"... suggest courses for the teachers ... I am sorry to say ... officers cannot give useful input that useful for the teachers because they themselves are not clear, not precise on what is going on. ... There should be a course ... what we should do ... before the screening ... after the screening ... what should the teacher do to prepare the student ... help the teacher to be more clear and precise ... it should be fair if we have special teachers to help the specials students ... to help the student, to improve them ... and to make the programme, I mean really a successful one. ...It would be a stress and a burden if one has a big class of pupils to handle".

Implications and recommendations

To ensure the success of such a programme, not only the teachers but also the school administrators should play a significant role in its implementation. With proper time management, adequate support in terms of cost for the printing of teaching aids and supplementary teaching materials and proper schedule of intervention, the programme could actually help to enhance the rate of literacy in English Language among the Malaysian lower primary pupils.

Besides this, the programme is a good initiative in helping the pupils enhance their mastery of English Language literacy. It is noteworthy that this intervention is the first of its kind in the Malaysian primary education, in particular, one that focuses on English Language. The most significant aspect of this programme is that it is a data driven intervention programme specifically undertaken for each pupils. It helps teachers not only to identify pupils but also the specific skills or construct that their pupils are unable to acquire. Moreover, the teachers are able to use these data to provide better remedial classes for the identified pupils. They even carried out one to one small group intervention sessions with the pupils. Over time, the teachers and pupils become familiar with one another and thus it would be easier for them to interact and help the pupils develop their English Language literacy skills. The interaction becomes convenient and comfortable for the teachers and the pupils involved in the intervention. In this manner, parents know their children's progress, as there is continuous feedback from the teachers. Nevertheless, the major obstacle that both teachers faced in implementing the programme is time constraint. Since there is no extra help in handling the identified pupils, the teachers had to carry out the intervention programme within the mainstream schedule involving all the pupils in the classroom. Thus, the teachers felt burdened by the extra responsibilities such as extra lesson plan, extra self-made teaching materials, extra session of intervention for the one to one or one to three of the identified pupils, as well as extra documentation and filing. In view of these constraints, both teachers stated that to ensure the success of the programme, it needs a very highly committed hardworking English teacher. They hoped that the higher authority would look into improving the programme and providing a long- term measure of enhancing basic English Language literacy skills among the pupils.

Conclusion

The findings of this study provide insights into how and what happened in the implementation of the LBI 2.0 programme in two schools. The analysis of the interview data showed that both teachers had a positive perception towards the programme despite some concerns that could be addressed for the betterment of the programme. In order to develop a smooth effective LBI 2.0 programme, the administrators should understand what actually happened during the implementation at school level and the need for better training, resources, facilities, and support for teachers who are involved in the programme. Since basic literacy skills is one of the main components that is emphasised among lower primary school pupils, the Ministry of Education needs to be aware of the problems faced by teachers in implementing such a programme, in particular, in schools in rural areas such as the Sarikei district. With parental involvement in the early intervention programme and participation from all parties concerned, the burden of the teachers could be reduced and the effectiveness of the English Language literacy programme could be enhanced, which in turn would lead to the attainment of its objectives.

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