MODULE 2

Strategies for the Effective Teaching of Reading
Comprehension (Part 1)

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Description of the Module

This is the first of a two-part module in the teaching of comprehension designed for Trainers of Teachers (TOTs) who will be responsible for the training of Grades 1-3 teachers. This module has been written with a multi-level approach which assumes the following:

- Grades 1-3 students share common foundation reading skills.
- The chief distinction among the grade levels is in the area of content difficulty.
- Similar teaching & learning approaches and methodologies are recommended for lower primary students.
- Within any one lower primary class there are students performing at different reading levels.
- Students categorized as remedial readers will benefit from the content, as well as some of the approaches and methodologies deemed to be effective for the average and above average learners.

The module is structured around focus areas which aim to provide the TOTs with some key elements of reading comprehension. The areas include:

- Definition of comprehension.
- Issues in comprehension teaching.
- Comprehension taxonomies (Bloom’s and Barrett’s)
- Comprehension question development.

The module also provides support to trainers in delivering effectively to adult learners.

Introduction and Rationale

This module was developed as one of the specified deliverables of the USAID/Jamaica Basic Education Project. One of the major goals of the project is to increase early grade reading fluency and modules which address this area were therefore seen as important. The content and strategies of this module which focus on the teaching of reading comprehension were determined by the advisors and consultant of the USAID/Jamaica Basic Education Project after discussions regarding key terms such as reading, reading comprehension and listening comprehension and a search for effective strategies for teaching these critical skills for the development of reading fluency. Training modules developed under previous USAID projects- New Horizons for Primary Schools (NHP) and Expanding Educational Horizons (EEH), as well as a Ministry of Education project (Literacy 1-2-3), were also consulted and some of the content, strategies and approaches incorporated into this module.
Good foundation reading skills are critical to children’s reading development in the primary years and subsequently to their overall academic success. With this important fact in mind, every effort must be made to ensure that proper diagnosis, instruction and necessary remediation are done at this stage. The module seeks to guide the effective teaching and learning of reading comprehension skills which form a critical part of reading. It also addresses remediation needs where this becomes necessary, at Grade Three.

In the conceptualization, design and development of the module, important considerations such as the effective use of reading standards and benchmarks, the use of the Revised Primary Curriculum, and the use of the Literacy 1-2-3 Model in the Language Arts Window were borne in mind.

This module, together with the relevant training support materials, will prepare the TOTs to present the necessary content and strategies to teachers of grades 1-3 in the area of comprehension teaching.

**The Role of the Trainer of Teachers**

It is suggested that the Trainer of Teachers must, as far as possible, model the strategies advocated in the module. The Trainer of Teachers will use active adult learning principles in the strategies used in their workshop with teacher. As such they will model constructivist approaches as a means of allowing the teachers to build on their own knowledge and experiences as teachers of reading. Wherever possible, the module will begin with something concrete or experiential; for example, with teachers reflecting on their experiences and practices.

The following should also be addressed in the training of teachers where necessary:

- Differentiated instruction
- Approaches that relate to the teaching and learning of boys and girls
- Use of technology

TOTs should be flexible in their presentation. Where necessary they should adapt/adjust the activities to suit the context. Critical points must be maintained and reinforced throughout the presentation.
Aim and Objectives of the Module

The aim of the module is to prepare trainers to facilitate the training of teachers in the areas of:

- comprehension teaching at grades one to three
- remedial reading instruction at grade three.

By the end of the day Trainers of Teachers (TOTs) should be confidently able to guide teachers into:

1. Articulating a definition of comprehension.
2. Examining issues in comprehension teaching.
3. Aligning USAID/Jamaica Basic Education Standards “Standards and Benchmarks: Supporting Reading Fluency in the Early Grades” with the comprehension targets and objectives in the Revised Primary Curriculum (MOE).
4. Developing comprehension questions at the various levels of the cognitive domain, using both the Bloom’s and Barrett’s Taxonomies.

Delivery

The module will be delivered over one day (5 hrs). Methodologies include the use of interview, PowerPoint presentations, media clip, group work, and discussions. The modality of the delivery will be face-to-face.

Content Outline

1. Comprehension - What is that?
   - Definition of Comprehension
   - Issues in Comprehension Teaching

2. Levels of Comprehension
   - Comprehension Taxonomies (Bloom’s and Barrett’s)
   - Alignment of Comprehension Levels and Taxonomies
   - Standards, Curriculum and Comprehension (Comprehension question development)
Session 1 Comprehension - What is that?

Activity 1.1 Definition of Comprehension

Ask the participants to:
   a. Write down their definition of comprehension in their Response Booklet (p. 3).
   b. Compare their definitions of comprehension with the definition given (see PowerPoint/Critical Points) and identify the important components of comprehension from the definitions shared.

Activity 1.2 Issues in Comprehension Teaching

Ask participants to:
   a. Write in their Response Booklet (p. 3) two comprehension experiences they have had (one as a teacher and one as a student) and state how these impacted their ability to comprehend and to teach comprehension. Share responses with whole group.
   b. List in the Response Booklet (p. 3) three challenges they face teaching students to comprehend. Share with whole group by posting ideas on captioned flip chart (reader factor, text factor, teacher factor). Review the ideas of other participants by participating in a Gallery Walk.
   c. Dialogue with a colleague in order to find ways to overcome one of the challenges you encountered. Record colleague’s response in the Response Booklet (p. 3). Share with whole group.

Critical Points

1. Comprehension is the process of constructing meaning with one’s experiences and with the ideas and facts presented orally and in print.
2. Comprehension is impacted by:
   a. Reader factors (interest, cognitive development e.g. ability to decode and to use text cues, prior knowledge/experiences).
   b. Text factors (cultural relevance, difficulty level, clarity of presentation)
   c. Teacher factors (teaching strategies e.g. scaffolding, questioning techniques, text selection)
3. Teachers should consider integrating students’ background experiences and where these are lacking, build the prerequisite background knowledge.
4. Comprehension should be explicitly taught rather than just tested as is sometimes done.
Session 2 Levels of Comprehension

Activity 2.1  Taxonomies of Comprehension Skills

Ask participants to:

a. State what they know about comprehension taxonomies in the “Before Reading” column in their Response Booklet (p. 4). (Set a purpose for the activity by informing participants that they will revisit the table to complete the “After Reading” column when they have read copies of the taxonomies.)

b. Read and compare copies of Bloom’s and Barrett’s Taxonomies in order to confirm, clarify and extend their knowledge.

c. Complete the “After Reading” column in the Response Booklet (p. 4).

d. Compare their responses in the “Before Reading” and “After Reading” columns.

e. Record any additional information gleaned from the readings in the column captioned “Additional Notes” (p. 4).

f. Discuss in the whole group the similarities, differences and merits of both taxonomies.

g. Record in Learning Log (Response Booklet, p. 9) two significant ideas/points which they believe will improve their teaching of comprehension, including the setting of questions.

h. Share one of the ideas with a partner.

Activity 2.2  Alignment of Comprehension levels and Taxonomies

Ask participants to:

a. Read the story titled “Jamaica is Big in World Sports”. Use the taxonomy given to determine the comprehension level of questions provided (paired activity). Write responses in the Response Booklet (p. 5), and then share their responses in the whole group.

b. Use the following questions as a guide to reflect on the criteria they used to assign levels to the questions. Write responses in the Response Booklet (p. 6), and share with the whole group.

i. What are the key words in the questions that assisted you in determining the cognitive level?

ii. What process/es will the learner have to engage in, to appropriately answer the question?

iii. Is information required to answer the question stated or implied in the passage?

iv. What other criteria did you use to determine the levels of questions?

c. Respond to the following statement: “In developing comprehension questions the following profile should be used as a guide- 20% vocabulary, 40% text explicit and 40% text implicit.” Share their views with the whole group and provide rationale for responses given.

d. View a media clip that summarizes how to set questions at different levels. Trainers: See handout titled ‘Activity 2.2d Summary for Media Clip’. An additional resource may be found at http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-uq3X3hZxQs.

e. 

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Activity 2.3 Standards, Curriculum and Comprehension

Ask participants to:

a. Write in the Response Booklet, page 7, the comprehension skills that they think students should be taught (Quick Write). Share responses with whole group.

b. In groups of four or five, examine and identify comprehension skills in the Reading Standards document provided (Appendix 2, p. 13). Record briefly on page 7 the congruence between their ideas and those skills reflected in the document.

c. Compare the comprehension skills reflected in attainment targets and objectives of the RPC with those comprehension skills indicated in the standards and benchmarks document. Record their ideas on page 7 of the Response Booklet. Share ideas in the whole group.

d. Read the two texts provided titled “Jamaican Foods” and “Billy the Bully” (expository and narrative). Write one question, for an assigned level and skill, on each text. See Appendix 3 (p. 16) in the Response Booklet for story “Billy the Bully”.

e. Share comprehension questions with whole group through Gallery Walk. Comment on the questions developed.

Critical Points

A taxonomy of comprehension skills seeks to arrange a list of critical comprehension skills from the simplest to the most complex.

**Bloom's Taxonomy** assists teachers in recognizing various levels of questions (among other things). The system contains six levels:

1. Knowledge
2. Comprehension
3. Application
4. Analysis
5. Synthesis
6. Evaluation

The **Barrett Taxonomy** (Clymer, 1968), designed originally to assist classroom teachers in developing comprehension questions and / or test questions for reading, is especially useful for classroom questioning in other content areas as well. There are five levels:

1. Literal Comprehension
   *Recognition and recall*
2. Reorganization
   *Classifying, outlining, summarizing, synthesizing*
3. Inferential Comprehension
   *Cause and effect relationships, predicting outcomes*
4. Evaluation
   *Fact or opinion, judgments of appropriateness*
5. Appreciation
   *Emotional response to content, identification with characters or incidents*
Resources

References


Recommended Websites

Levels of Questions in Bloom's Taxonomy


Note. The materials used in this module may be accessed at the project’s website www.jamaicaneducatorsshare.com

a) Go to www.jamaicaneducatorsshare.com
b) Go to Course categories and then Increasing Early Grade Reading Fluency.
c) Click on Forum for Trainers of Teachers (TOTs).
d) You will be directed to the Login page. Click on Login as a guest.
e) Go to enrolment key and type in trainer.
f) Click on Enrol me in this course to view and download the training materials.