

Research on the Establishment of Extracurricular Reading Environments for Rural Primary School Students

Yang Boran

University of the Northeast Federation of Russia, Yakutsk, Russia

Keywords: Rural Primary School; Primary Students; Extracurricular Reading Environment

Abstract: The establishment of extracurricular reading environments for rural primary school students is a critical initiative aimed at addressing educational disparities and fostering a culture of reading and learning among children in rural areas. Research has consistently highlighted the importance of reading in shaping a child's cognitive development, language skills, and academic success. However, in rural areas, the lack of access to adequate reading materials and conducive environments impedes students' ability to develop a habit of reading and exploration of various subjects beyond their textbooks. The construction of extracurricular reading environments for primary school students in rural areas has become a widely discussed topic in the field of education. Due to the relatively limited educational resources in rural townships, students face numerous challenges in extracurricular reading. Issues such as insufficient reading time, lack of guidance, and absence of critical thinking skills are prevalent among rural primary school students. This article proposes strategies for building extracurricular reading environments from three perspectives: home, school, and society. By fostering collaborative efforts among families, schools, and the community, a conducive extracurricular reading environment can be created for rural primary school students, enhancing their reading abilities and academic performance. This, in turn, contributes to the advancement of rural education.

1. Introduction

Reading is an infinite path to knowledge and insight. Through books, we can appreciate the diverse aspects of the world, broaden our perspectives, and enrich our inner wisdom. It is not merely an extension of classroom learning but also a refinement and manifestation of mental abilities. Reading is not only about acquiring information and stories from authors; it is a cultivation of cognitive skills, training in information selection, and logical reasoning. Simultaneously, the spiritual essence conveyed by authors subtly influences us, strengthening our spiritual pursuits and fortifying our beliefs. In the realm of learning, this solid spiritual support endows us with unwavering convictions, resilient willpower, and an unending desire for continuous learning. Hence, reading is not just the acquisition of knowledge; it is the cultivation of abilities, aiding us in adapting to the constantly changing modern society. In an era of rapid advancement and continual

progress, it is paramount to embrace the concept of "lifelong learning." Through reading, continuously grasping the pulse of society, understanding the world's changes, constantly renewing and improving oneself to better adapt to society, and serving society becomes feasible.

2. Significance of School Environment Construction for Reading among Rural Primary School Students

2.1 Conducive to Optimizing Learning Resources for Rural Primary School Students

A well-organized school environment serves as the foundation for cultivating reading habits and enhancing reading capabilities among primary school students in rural areas. The emphasis placed by school leadership and the establishment of relevant systems provide necessary support and motivation for student reading. Moreover, the harmonious teacher-student relationships and the campus cultural atmosphere stimulate students' interest in reading. Learning resources at the primary level primarily consist of specialized resources such as textbooks. However, in rural schools, supplementing teacher resources can be achieved through extensive reading. Besides the physical environment and cultural atmosphere, a favorable school environment encompasses the richness of educational philosophies. Teachers continually update educational philosophies through continuous reading, while students accumulate knowledge, compensating for deficiencies in teaching staff. Standardized school behavior guidelines and the development of online reading platforms are also vital components in optimizing learning resources and enhancing students' moral and ethical upbringing^[1].

2.2 Promoting Balanced Compulsory Education for Urban and Rural Primary Schools

The concept of balanced educational development focuses on addressing the educational disparities existing among regions, schools, and different student groups in our country. This balanced development is reflected in three crucial aspects: ensuring fairness in admission opportunities, guaranteeing equality in the educational process, and achieving equality in educational outcomes. However, in the current educational landscape, there still exists significant imbalance in compulsory education between urban and rural primary schools, particularly evident in the educational processes between urban and rural areas. This disparity mainly manifests in the unfair allocation of funds and resource distribution. Unequal government education investment stands as one of the primary reasons for the imbalance in urban and rural education. Additionally, the campus environment plays a crucial role, considered a "hidden curriculum" that subtly influences students. Quality physical campus environments, rich reading cultures, well-established school organizational systems, and harmonious interpersonal relationships provide essential support and foundations for reading activities in rural primary schools. However, compared to urban schools, rural primary schools face substantial disparities in their reading environments, lacking adequate reading facilities and resources. Therefore, rural primary schools should draw from the experiences of urban schools, emphasizing the construction of a conducive reading environment to promote the balanced development of compulsory education between urban and rural areas.

2.3 Fostering the Construction of Bookish Campuses in Rural Primary Schools

Creating a superior campus physical environment that imbues every corner with the power of education. Every wall within the campus acts as a medium for teaching, spreading the culture of books from classroom walls to libraries and campus corridors, integrating educational content into the campus environment, and achieving the educational goal of "plants and trees encouraging

learning, walls speaking." Throughout various campus locations such as classroom walls, libraries, and corridors, display boards with quotes from famous individuals or stories of famous figures' love for reading aim to help students comprehend their meanings, sparking their enthusiasm for learning and interest in reading. For instance, stories like KuangHeng carving a hole in the wall to gain knowledge can inspire students to have lofty aspirations, while the story of Mencius' mother breaking the loom to teach her son emphasizes the importance of learning. Utilizing school libraries, classroom reading corners, and online platforms to provide convenient conditions for students, integrating reading into their daily learning life through measures such as regularly updating books, extending open hours, and teachers recommending books, contributes to the pervasive atmosphere of reading within campus culture. Diverse and engaging reading culture activities are pivotal in shaping a bookish campus, such as organizing events like "Accompanied by Good Books," selecting "Little Bookworms," creating small bookmarks, among others, encouraging active student participation. Teachers play a guiding and exemplary role in reading by actively engaging in reading, sharing their reading experiences and insights with students, practicing the philosophy of Sukhomlinsky that a teacher's own reading can enlighten students. Schools are committed to encouraging student reading, establishing sound organizational mechanisms, actively responding to the Party Central Committee's advocacy for building a society with a love for reading, providing comprehensive support for student reading activities, and contributing to creating a campus environment steeped in a strong love for reading^[2].

3. Challenges in Extracurricular Reading Environment for Rural Primary School Students

3.1 Limited Reading Time for Students

Rural primary school students have shown commendable progress in self-control and self-discipline, allowing them to focus on an activity for extended periods, such as the duration of a class, typically around 40 minutes, making sustained reading feasible within this time frame. However, due to the lack of diverse extracurricular activities and only having academic tutoring institutions in the vicinity of rural townships, coupled with a relatively tranquil lifestyle where parents might not have urgent expectations for their children's studies, lacking a strong sense of competition, children are only considered for tutoring when their academic performance is perceived as inadequate. Moreover, the rural environment presents fewer distractions, resulting in fewer external influences on elementary students. Consequently, in such a context, rural primary school students have relatively ample extracurricular time. However, investigations indicate that many students allocate only around half an hour for extracurricular reading. This prevalent issue of inadequate extracurricular reading time among rural primary school students demands our attention and concern.

3.2 Lack of Guided Reading for Students

While reading preferences vary from person to person and choosing a reading method that suits personal preferences is important, considering the characteristics of elementary students and their learning stage, there are certain restrictions on the reading methods suitable for them. Aimless flipping through pages or reading inattentively is not advisable. Irrespective of the purpose of extracurricular reading, understanding and grasping the content of reading materials are crucial. The ability for rapid reading comprehension requires gradual development through long-term accumulation and training. However, due to the limited extracurricular reading time for rural primary school students, they often lack the ability to extract the main content of reading materials quickly. Therefore, a haphazard reading approach is not suitable for them. Merely having a general

understanding of the plot while reading is also not advisable. Especially in the foundational education stage, particularly in elementary school, they are in a critical phase of knowledge accumulation. Establishing a solid foundation in reading aids in deeper comprehension of reading materials. Hence, reading methods that only grasp the surface plot are not encouraged. In summary, rural primary school students, in their extracurricular reading activities, should not adopt a hasty, speed-driven reading approach but rather choose a method that suits them, achieves reading effectiveness, and fulfills their reading objectives.

3.3 Lack of Emphasis on Critical Thinking in Student Reading

Reading is not merely the act of transferring words from a book to one's eyes; such a simplistic behavior lacks practical significance, a notion widely accepted by many. True reading should encompass the process of extracting the essence from the book—a metaphor that encapsulates the essence of reading. During reading, the first step involves discovering the essence within the book. This requires not merely skimming through but delving deep into the content during the reading process. Continuous contemplation and engaging in a mental dialogue with the author are necessary. Reading should not be confined to merely extracting beautiful phrases; rather, it should involve wholehearted engagement, deep contemplation, and exploration. Only through this can we truly internalize the content of the book into our own thoughts. This depth of reading is the authentic method that enables us to effectively extract the essence of the author's ideas, achieving more with less effort. After concluding the reading, summarizing and recording the gains from the reading is essential. This not only consolidates the reading achievements but also promotes improvement in writing skills. The habit of annotating or excerpting phrases in rural primary school students' readings only scratches the surface of comprehension; what truly needs to be cultivated is the habit of reflective reading^[3].

3.4 Development Needed in Reading through Online Mediums

Undoubtedly, modern society heavily relies on the internet. Electronic reading, as a form of online media, possesses advantages incomparable to traditional print media, including immediacy, convenience, and information richness. These characteristics align with the trends of rapid information dissemination and accelerated pace of life in modern society. Elementary students exhibit a strong capacity for embracing new things, and adeptly utilizing online mediums can create favorable conditions for their extracurricular reading. However, online mediums also carry some disadvantages. Given the coexistence of pros and cons, the role of online mediums in extracurricular reading for elementary students has limitations. Regarding the source of book acquisition, only a negligible number of students opt for using the internet. Yet, this does not imply that we should abandon online reading resources; instead, there's a need for the rational and comprehensive development and utilization of online reading resources.

3.5 Lack of Emphasis on Critical Thinking in Student Reading

Reading is not merely the act of transferring words from a book to one's eyes; such a simplistic behavior lacks practical significance, a notion widely accepted by many. True reading should encompass the process of extracting the essence from the book—a metaphor that encapsulates the essence of reading. During reading, the first step involves discovering the essence within the book. This requires not merely skimming through but delving deep into the content during the reading process. Continuous contemplation and engaging in a mental dialogue with the author are necessary. Reading should not be confined to merely extracting beautiful phrases; rather, it should involve

wholehearted engagement, deep contemplation, and exploration. Only through this can we truly internalize the content of the book into our own thoughts. This depth of reading is the authentic method that enables us to effectively extract the essence of the author's ideas, achieving more with less effort. After concluding the reading, summarizing and recording the gains from the reading is essential. This not only consolidates the reading achievements but also promotes improvement in writing skills. The habit of annotating or excerpting phrases in rural primary school students' readings only scratches the surface of comprehension; what truly needs to be cultivated is the habit of reflective reading.

3.6 Development Needed in Reading through Online Mediums

Undoubtedly, modern society heavily relies on the internet. Electronic reading, as a form of online media, possesses advantages incomparable to traditional print media, including immediacy, convenience, and information richness. These characteristics align with the trends of rapid information dissemination and accelerated pace of life in modern society. Elementary students exhibit a strong capacity for embracing new things, and adeptly utilizing online mediums can create favorable conditions for their extracurricular reading. However, online mediums also carry some disadvantages. Given the coexistence of pros and cons, the role of online mediums in extracurricular reading for elementary students has limitations. Regarding the source of book acquisition, only a negligible number of students opt for using the internet. Yet, this does not imply that we should abandon online reading resources; instead, there's a need for the rational and comprehensive development and utilization of online reading resources.

4. Strategies for Developing Extracurricular Reading Environments for Rural Primary School Students

4.1 Construction of Family Reading Environment

4.1.1 Provision of Reading Spaces

Extracurricular reading plays a highly efficient role in enhancing students' reading abilities and fostering their interest in reading. For effective extracurricular reading, students require a comfortable learning environment. With the prevalent improvement in the economic status of rural families and the implementation of the single-child policy, the financial burden on rural primary school students' families is relatively light. Hence, they possess the capability to provide an independent and comfortable learning environment for their children. Parents can allow children to arrange their rooms according to their preferences. When choosing desks, parents should consider the age-specific characteristics of children, opting for desks with cartoon designs or unique features that attract students to reading and help them swiftly engage in the reading process. Additionally, creating a quiet environment while children are reading and adjusting family entertainment activities, such as reducing mahjong or television time, helps cultivate a serene and comfortable reading atmosphere for children. As the closest individuals to children, parents can actively participate in their reading activities. Increasing parent-child reading time and engaging in discussions about reading materials effectively foster a culture of family reading, enhancing students' fondness for reading and contributing to their improved reading abilities. This subtle influence alters students' perceptions of extracurricular reading, making them value and enjoy the reading process more^[4].

4.1.2 Provision of Extracurricular Books

The quantity of books in a household's possession is a critical indicator of the family's reading

environment, reflecting parental attitudes towards and the importance placed on children's extracurricular reading. Despite rural primary school families spending a relatively smaller proportion of their expenses on books, economic advancements have improved cultural literacy and quality of life. Parents should support their children's extracurricular reading within their financial means, moving beyond verbal concerns or attention. Schools should support it through practical actions, such as purchasing extracurricular books that children need or find interesting. These books not only serve for children's reading but also aid in note-taking, repeated readings, and sharing with classmates, fostering exchanges and sharing of reading cultures. In daily life and studies, parents can praise children through means like rewarding books. A substantial collection of books at home provides an ambient reading environment for students. The arrangement of family books should align with children's preferences; for instance, displaying books on shelves with cover designs that attract children might encourage them to randomly pick up a book, promoting more sustained reading.

4.1.3 Ensuring Reading Time

Elementary school students are at an age where playfulness often takes precedence, especially among boys, who typically spend comparatively less time on extracurricular reading. This reflects their relatively weaker resistance to external distractions, incomplete development of willpower, and nascent self-control awareness. In such circumstances, parents should not overly restrict children, yet avoiding an excessively permissive attitude is crucial. Setting a reasonable daily schedule for children's extracurricular reading is essential—not overly extended to prevent fatigue but not too short either to foster good reading habits. Rural primary school students tend to live in close-knit communities, making it easier for peers to gather together. This environment might incline them to engage in extended playtime with friends, diverting attention away from extracurricular reading. Hence, parents should minimize excessive exposure to television and electronic games for elementary students to ensure they have ample time for timely extracurricular reading.

4.2 Construction of School Reading Environment

4.2.1 Utilizing the Role of Teachers

Teachers play a crucial role in demonstrating behaviors, especially in the early stages of elementary education. Due to the young age of students and their still-developing self-awareness, they often regard teachers as role models and look up to them. Particularly in rural primary schools, where students' social circles might be limited, teachers become significant figures whom students frequently interact with, besides their parents. Teachers' actions and words wield a profound influence on students. Teachers should cultivate a reading habit, engage in regular reading, and willingly share their reading materials with students. They can frequently introduce extracurricular knowledge to students, share intriguing information, demonstrate the power and depth of knowledge, showcasing an attractive personality with extensive knowledge. Such exemplary behavior by teachers inspires students to admire them and kindles a deeper interest in extracurricular reading. Teachers should recommend books suitable for students regularly, not solely confined to materials directly related to their subjects. Introducing healthy, beneficial extracurricular reading materials to students is pivotal, as a particular book might have a profound impact on a student. Furthermore, teachers should impart reading methods and techniques, encouraging students to actively employ these skills in extracurricular reading^[5].

4.2.2 Harnessing the Role of Activities

Educational philosopher Dewey emphasized learning through activities, highlighting its

significance as a crucial teaching method. Therefore, the role of activities in education should not be underestimated, particularly in extracurricular reading among rural primary school students. Schools should actively organize various forms of activities with clear practical significance, such as story sessions, reading festivals, among others. Additionally, collaborative larger-scale events with other rural primary schools could garner joint attention from teachers and students. Importantly, activities should not merely exist as formalities; each activity should be summarized to ensure practical relevance. Besides school-level activities, classes should regularly organize events related to extracurricular reading. Given the smaller class sizes in rural areas, organizing activities is more manageable and efficient at the class level, becoming an essential format for extracurricular reading activities. The variety of activity formats can increase, and their frequency can be enhanced. Furthermore, student involvement should be encouraged by incorporating their opinions in organizing activities to stimulate their enthusiasm. For instance, organizing regular book-sharing sessions, in small groups or as a whole class, or even presenting reports before class. Moreover, teachers and students can collaborate on creating games, like guessing book titles or playing idiomatic phrase games, to share knowledge from extracurricular reading in a fun way. This method not only avoids dull learning but also stimulates student interest, with minimal time and space constraints, requiring only two students to engage in the activity.

4.2.3 Leveraging the Role of the Library

Every school, regardless of its size, should have a library. This is not only an essential place for student learning but also a crucial spot for nurturing students' reading interests and improving their reading abilities. Libraries play a crucial role in broadening students' horizons and fostering talent. Additionally, they exert a subtle educational influence by promoting the formation of a reading culture on campus, providing cultural education for students. Rural primary schools should capitalize on resource integration advantages, establishing diverse and comprehensive libraries that meet students' needs, along with developing corresponding supporting services, such as convenient book lending services. Library opening hours should be flexible, teaching students efficient methods to quickly find books to avoid wasting time. Furthermore, library layout and design should be comfortable, offering ample space for students to read and study, with hardware facilities catering to children's physiological characteristics to promote learning and health. Each classroom should have a book corner, encouraging inter-class borrowing, complementing the school library, showcasing unique features, and facilitating quick access to desired books. Be it at the school or classroom level, conditions should be provided for students to read books at any time. With limited resources, schools should focus on developing online resources, establishing electronic reading rooms. The construction of libraries, book corners, and electronic reading rooms significantly fulfills the extracurricular reading needs of primary students, providing expansive reading space and resources.

4.3 Development of Social Reading Environment

4.3.1 Organizing Cultural Events

In rural areas, social activities are relatively scarce, potentially resulting in diminished interest and awareness of reading. To change this scenario, educational or cultural authorities in rural areas should spearhead various cultural events. However, these activities should avoid being overly complex, opting for formats that people are eager to participate in, with easily comprehensible content. This approach will engage a broader audience, allowing them to actively participate, experience the allure of culture, and transform their attitudes toward reading. Reading should not be exclusive to intellectuals; it should be an inclusive activity for everyone. These cultural events can also assist parents of primary school students in more actively improving the family's reading environment.

4.3.2 Construction of Public Cultural Facilities

There is a relative lack of public library facilities in rural areas, and government investment in this area remains limited. The government should increase investment in cultural facilities, especially public libraries, to provide more reading resources. Beyond government funding, encouraging affluent locals to make donations can supplement government investment, expanding the variety of public library resources. Additionally, collaborating with local bookstores and providing subsidies can offer a broader range of extracurricular books, such as providing books to rural primary school students through rental schemes.

4.3.3 Enhancement of the Book Market

With the development of the market economy, there are issues within the book market where unsuitable books for primary school students are published and sold. Therefore, there should be stricter regulation of the book market, especially concerning literature for young children, ensuring the appropriateness of book content. Publishing houses should rigorously review the content of children's literature, prohibiting materials that are detrimental to children from entering the market. Furthermore, encouraging original authors to create suitable children's literature and tailoring content according to the needs of different age groups should be promoted. For best-selling original children's book authors, rewards should be provided to fuel their creative enthusiasm. Additionally, introducing more publications featuring original articles by primary school students will amplify the impact of extracurricular reading through wider dissemination in magazines or periodicals.

5. Conclusion

The shaping of a reading environment involves various factors, constituting a complex and intricate issue. Reading activities themselves are influenced by multiple interconnected and constraining elements. Placing reading activities within a broader micro-environment necessitates consideration of influences from different facets like family, school, and society. With the intensification of material pursuits and the materialistic assessment of success standards, people are gradually disregarding the profound, subtle impact that reading brings. Failing to genuinely comprehend the significance of reading, spiritual poverty may be more severe than material deprivation. To construct beautiful new rural areas and promote sustainable rural development, it is imperative to eliminate obstacles on the path of progress. Therefore, creating a conducive reading environment for rural primary school students and providing abundant cultural resources for the wider rural population is a task deserving significant attention.

References

- [1] Liu Hongling. *Methods and experiences of stimulating students' interest in extracurricular reading [J]. Modern Rural Technology*, 2023, (02): 76.
- [2] Li Kun, Zhang Jingyi. *Exploration of Strategies for Cultivating Reading Habits in Primary School Students [J]. Journal of Chifeng University (Natural Science Edition)*, 2022, 38 (11): 99-103.
- [3] Chen Xinkui, Zeng Leyuan. *A Study on Extracurricular Reading Behavior of Rural Primary School Students: A Case Study of Yunfu District, Guangdong Province [J]. Library Research*, 2022, 52 (01): 1-8.
- [4] Wang Shuli. *Curriculum oriented and Leisure oriented: The Promotion Path of Extracurricular Reading in Primary School. Chinese Language Education Academic Monthly*, 2021, (05): 101-106.
- [5] Wang Huiling. *The Importance and Application of Extracurricular Literature Reading in Primary School Chinese Composition Teaching [J]. Cultural Industry*, 2021, (01): 124-125.