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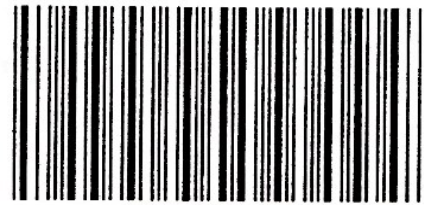
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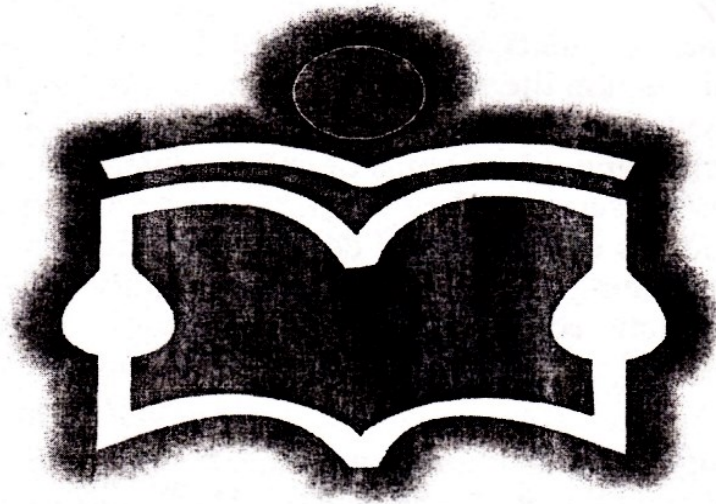
Reading, Thinking and Doing :
Repositioning the Individual

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ABSTRACT

The variables: reading thinking and doing are interrelated. Reading stimulates thinking, which triggers an attitude resulting in doing. Doing over time engraves personality development. This is a line of action which when controlled can result in changes of attitudes and behaviours. This paper posits that, barring intervening variables, reading can have a positive influence on thinking, and that taken together the two variables would definitely affect a change of behaviour (doing). This paper also discuses eight induices of the controlled situation that can produce a repositioning of an individual. Library and Information Scientists have also been identified as important agents of personality development.

Introduction

Throughout human history, communities have been concerned with the type of person that children become. Furthermore, scholars have addressed the topic for over two hundred years and over the past century, a wealth of data has been amassed concerning the personality development in children, adolescents and adults. Throughout this time, the role of adults, especially parents and professionals have been a central focus,

Learning is finding answers to questions. These questions may be self-generated or suggested by others and they may be explicit or implicit. Therefore, education has always had a natural connection to inquiry, which we may define as organized questioning. Inquiry based teaching and learning puts learners in control by encouraging them to formulate their own purposes and strategies for finding things out. Such learning involves the concepts of critical reading and thinking. By its nature, critical reading involves analysis, evaluating arguments, considering multiple perspectives, being mindful, using imagination, and projecting oneself

empathetically into new contexts and experiences. Through inquiry students also learn the tools of information literacy, as they learn to navigate their way through the myriad and growing sources of information available to them and to assess, select, distill and keep shaping focus on a defined problem.

This paper will discuss the key concepts, reading, thinking and doing, It will address eight indices of personality development that can be reposition an individual. The repositioning of Librarians and Information Scientists for optimal services in an Information Technology driven world is also addressed.

Reading

Definitions of reading are almost as numerous as the many reading experts who have committed their thoughts to it. The Webster Dictionary of English Language (2002) defines reading as simply the art of studying and understanding written characters and symbols. Chapman (1993) defines reading as "the construction of flexible and usable knowledge" outling the following operations as components of critical reading:

- Drawing on knowledge of language, previous reading and experiences
- Reading what is important in the text.
- Finding relationships and structures that help organize the content of the text.
- Monitoring understanding by forming and testing hypotheses.
- Problem-solving by reading backward and forward.
- Drawing inferences and identifying needed additional information.
- Evaluating and selecting information and inferences.
- Checking new and previous knowledge against each other.
- Organizing new understanding in a meaningful way for later use.

Thus it can be seen that the main trend in definitions of reading has shifted from earlier ideas of reading as a mechanical process towards an acceptance of it as a thoughtful process, requiring the reader not only to understand what the author is endeavoring to communicate but also to contribute one's own experiences and thoughts to the problem of understanding. Comprehension therefore results from an interaction among the reader, the strategies the reader employs, the materials being read, and the context in which reading takes place.

Table 1:   Old and new definitions of reading

|	**Traditional views**	**New definition**
Research Base	Behaviourism	Cognitive sciences
Goals of Reading	Mastery of isolated facts and skills	Constructing meaning and self-regulated learning
Reading as a process	Mechanically decoding words: memorizing by rote	An interaction among the reader, the text, and the context
Learner Role/metaphor	Passive vessel receiving knowledge from external sources	Active; strategic reader, good strategy user, cognitive apprentice
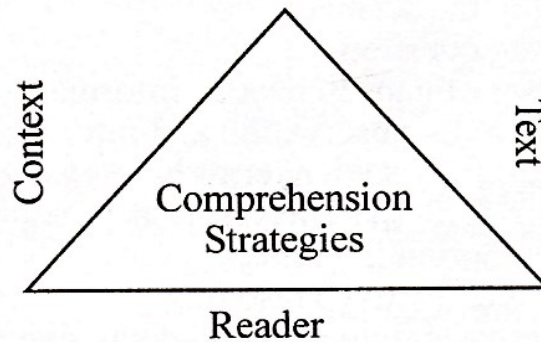
Fig.1: Reading as interaction

Defining reading as a thinking process, however, is by no means the end of the story, for the nature of thought is extremely complex and is still not fully understood. However Knuth and Jones (1991) have put forward the following important findings from cognitive science:

1.   A **reader constructs** meaning by making inferences and interpretations. Meaning is not in the words on the page.

2.   In formation is stored in long-term memory in organized "knowledge structures". The essence of learning is linking new information to **prior knowledge** about the topic, the text structure or genre, and strategies for learning.

3.   How well a reader constructs meaning depends in part on **metacognition,** the reader's ability to think about and control the learning process(i.e to plan, monitor, comprehend and revise the use of strategies); and attribute beliefs about the relationship among performance, effort and responsibility.

4.   **Reading and thinking are integrally related.** That is, readers increase their comprehension by thinking and thinking about the topic improves reading performance.

It is clear from the above that a reader does more than understand and contemplate; his emotions are stirred; his attitudes and purposes are modified: indeed his innermost being is involved. It is pertinent at this point to also briefly analyse thinking-our next variable.

Thinking

Thinking may be defined as the process of conceiving mentally; determining by reasoning: to believe to be true; to remember or recall; to intend; to engage in rational thought; to weigh in the mind; to have a particular opinion (Webster's Dictionary of English language 2002). This paper intends to arouse interest in **critical thinking** because according to Delphi report 2004, critical thinking is purposeful, self-reassessing, results in interpretation, analysis, evaluation, inferential, evidential, conceptual, methodological, criteriological and builds blocks upon which judgment is based.

Critical thinking (CT) is essential as a liberating force in education and a powerful resource in development. The ideal critical thinker is habitually open minded, flexible, fair-minded in evaluation, prudent and making judgments, willing to reconsider situations in complex matters, diligent in seeking relevant information for the selection of criteria and focused in inquiry.

Arons (1989) discusses ten thinking and reasoning processes he believes underlie critical thinking in the sciences.

- 　　Consciously raising questions
- 　　Being clearly aware of gaps in needed information and knowledge
- 　　Discriminating between observation and inference or conjecture
- 　　Using language carefully so that terms have clear and accepted definitions.
- 　　Probing for assumptions, especially on unstated assumptions, behind reasoning
- 　　Drawing valid, supported inferences
- 　　Using hypothetical/deductive reasoning
- 　　Discriminating between inductive and deductive reasoning
- 　　Developing intellectual self-reliance by testing one's own ideas for internal validity and consistency
- 　　Developing consciousness of one's own thinking / reasoning processes.

Amos goes on to argue that these processes are necessary to enlightened citizenship.

To read critically is to read alertly, but **think** open- mindedly, using one's own knowledge to understand and evaluate the information and reasoning of the text. To read critically one should be able to draw inferences, analyse line of reasoning, apply logic, weigh evidence, evaluate language and relate different readings to each other. Therefore critical reading, like critical thinking is an attitude of curiosity and judgment. There is obviously a significant relationship between reading and thinking.

　　　How do these two-reading and thinking relate to doing – attitudes, behaviors, personality development?

Doing

Doing describes the ability to perform: to cause; to behave; to execute fulfill the requirements; to carry out. Doing is equated with accomplishment. Konjonfu (1988) identifies the components of doing, as embedded in personality and moral development as:-

- 　　self-understanding.
- 　　Self-esteem.
- 　　Self- concept.
- 　　Identify

These factors mould the actions, personality and moral development of individuals from youth. Moral feeling and values are what seem to divide adolescents and even adults. What one should do (to be accepted, to keep out of trouble, to succeed) varies depending on culture, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, and even gender. Adolescents are reinforced by a variety of people: parents, church members, and possibly younger siblings. Adolescents have a hard responsibility in this critical stage of their lives because they do not have the full reign of adults. Finding their own ways of thinking and being responsible is a big effort with the strain of fulfilling the wishes or ideals of their environment.

　　　For adults, Levinson (1986) developed a series of stages of adult life that take place through an orderly sequence. He labeled the period from 40 to 45 years as mid- life transition and period from 45 to 50 years as middle adulthood. One of the major tasks of this stage of life is for adults to resolve their disillusionment and

their disappointment of not having achieved certain dreams or life goals, including career goals. Adults have to cope with this discrepancy and look at what they have to do to resolve the polarities in their lives and achieve balance. It is possible that personality development can be influenced and controlled by certain indices.

Indices of controlled behavior to repositioning an individual

A wealth of data has been amassed concerning the development of character in children and adolescents. Moral characteristics, however do not appear spontaneously nor are they disconnected from the larger core of what constitutes healthy psychology. Based on the above reasoning, eight indices of controlled behavior will be examined. These are indices that can be manipulated through reading and directed thinking to produce a controlled behavior i.e the positioning of an individual.

(1) A social orientation : Psychologists have long viewed the desire to take part in social interaction, to develop relationships, as critical to psychological health. Indeed, the absence of this desire is viewed as pathological. In the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-VI):American Psychiatric Association, (1994), a person exhibiting pervasive detachment from and disinterest in social relationships is said to have schizoid personality disorder, and one of the major signals of emerging psychopathology in childhood and adolescence is the onset of anti-social life- style in which the right of others are ignored or violated (Weiner, 1980).Directed reading and controlled thinking can reverse anti-social tendencies.

(2)   Self-control : Self- control as a personality or character trait has been studied most intensively in the pre-school years. As young children develop the ability to use cognitive mediators, such as mental imagery and private speech, they develop the capacity to resist temptation, suppress impulses, and delay gratification. The most marked gains in such cognitively- mediated self-control abilities seem to develop between approximately five and seven years of age.

   The development of self-control is a gradual and complex process in which maturation and development of the child's capacities plays a great role. Literature can be provided to support unmastered skills via guidance and feedback by creating the external controls necessary before self regulation is mastered. Such reading materials can trigger off the engineering of situations so that children are more readily controllable.

(3)   Compliance with external standards : Part of the nature of a moral being is adhesive to selected external control i.e learning to internalize external standards of behaviour. Certain books are highly influential in the development of early compliances.

(4)   **Self-esteem :** Platitudes about self-esteem abound e.g. "You have to like yourself before others like you", "Be your own best friend", etc. Lack of self esteem has been related to social dysfunctions and mental pathologies. Such as depressions and anxiety (Harter, 1997). Reading materials tailored towards the promotion of self concept and esteem can be used to encourage this personality.

(5)   Empathy : Children must be trained to become attuned not only to their own emotional reactions but also to those of others. Empathy has been defined by Hoffman (1991) as an affective response to another's distress that is "more

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appropriate to someone else's situation than to one's own. Parents who explain their parenting behaviour to the child especially with a focus on consequences of one's, actions for others have more empathic children. Children's behaviour can be tailored towards acquisition of empathy.

(6)   Conscience : Conscience is a combination of internalized standards and behaviour/affective results of adherence to or violation of those standards. Kochanska et al (1994) have described conscience as having two major aspects. The first is affective discomfort which encompasses the emotional results of transgression e.g. guilt, apology, empathy for the victim. The second regulation or vigilance, encompasses the classical internalization of standards along with confession, reparation and monitoring of other's wrongdoing. Induction through direct teaching and practice have been reported to lead to increased internalization of moral standards and guilt in children. Avoidance of power assertion increases guilt more than does force.

(7) Altruism : Perhaps one of the most widely recognized and studied aspects of moral psychology is altruism, or the giving to another at a cost to oneself. Altruism may be construed as a behaviour or as a personality trait. Eisenberg and Mussen (1989) conclude that altruistic children tend to be "active, sociable, competent, assertive and advanced in role taking, sympathetic and moral judgment". Parents of altruistic children are nurturant and supportive. Model altruism highlights the effects of action on others and establish clear expectations for mature behaviour and create opportunities for children to manifest responsibility for others.

(8)   Moral reasoning : Moral reasoning is described as the developmental progression of increasingly more effective ways of thinking about and resolving moral problems and issues. Parental discipline style and family communication patterns have been thought to account for most of the moral reasoning in children.

Table II: **Personality development outcomes for selected controlling variables**

Controlling variable	Child outcome variable
Induction	Empathy Conscience Altruism Moral reasoning
Authoritative /parenting : Responsivity/Nurturance	Social orientation Compliance Self-esteem Conscience Altruism Moral Reasoning
Demandingess	Self-control Altruism Self-esteem
Modeling	Self-control, Altruism
Democratic family process	Compliance Conscience Altruism Self-esteem Moral Reasoning

Repositioning librarians and information scientists for service

The rapid pace of development in the field of information technology and the advent of networked information services have prompted a comprehensive review of the library and information science (LIS) profession. The technological developments of the past 25 years, such as electronic databases, on-line services, CD-Roms, and the introduction of the internet, have radically transformed access to information, making information readily available, especially for the end user.

However, the information overload is such that greater expertise is demanded in retrieving and analyzing relevant libraries and information centers, and has been transformed into an industry that sells, organizes, and processes information.

In this period of constant change, the library's traditional roles of preserving, cataloguing, classifying, and reader's services are undergoing a transformation. Library schools worldwide have confronted technological challenges and adapted their curriculum according to the new development. In addition, many academic research studies expected changes that the LIS profession is undergoing. Among the central questions raised is the issue of disintermediation.

In other words, will the easy access to information completely eliminate the need for the librarian as an intermediary? Also, will there be a transformation of the traditional library into a virtual entity with the majority of the information in electronic format?

The major cause for change in the libraries is of course the internet. The world wide web consists of an enormous amount of disorganized information, which may appear easy to use at first glance but can also be confusing. First, the vast amount of retrievable information one can obtain from an internet search gives the impression that one has plumbed the depths of available information on a given topic. This is not true because the proportion of available digital content is minute, compared to the amount of printed materials available. Furthermore, many printed resources are so large that complete digital conversion is not possible. Second, much of what is available on the web does not conform to reasonably accepted standards of validation . A significant amount of web material has been "published" by individuals, without peer review or institutional affiliation. Third, there exists a minimal collection structure of organization. The information retrieved by a researcher from the internet depends on the adequacy of the search engines and which librarians can most effectively contribute to in the area of internet site development.

The librarian can initially get involved in the structuring of the site – its "architecture". Second, librarians ideally need to be involved in the structuring of the data that drives the site. An information architect (a librarian) can work primarily with designers to create a firm foundation for the site, ensuring the location of information, defining the parameters for searching the site, defining classification schemes, and generally ensuring an overall level of consistency and accuracy.

Librarians can also organize digital material- such as scanned photos, documents and digitized videotapes-and then decide how people will move from one piece of material to another. For instance, they might link videotape news with a map that shows the location of the story.

There is also the role of the analyst/knowledge interpreter, a role that librarians have traditionally shied away from, but that recently has been in great demand for reference librarians. In an environment where the available information content is expanding so rapidly, users need help retrieving relevant information and interpreting it.

New jobs are emerging and old jobs are being transformed within the library

and information science (LIS) profession. Many new jobs are at corporate libraries and information centers. Special libraries are in demand because companies increasingly recognize that librarians have excellent research skills, can target the specific need of each department and help prevent employees from wasting time surfing the internet.

Within the same period, there have been major curriculum changes in the library and information science education across the globe. Six major trends have shaped curricular change in the LIS programmers.

- LIS curricula are addressing broad based information environment and problems.
- LIS curricula are gradually predominately user-centred.
- LIS schools and programmes are increasing their investment and infusion of IT
- LIS programmes are experimenting with the structure of specialization within the curriculum.
- LIS schools are offering instruction in formats to provide students with more flexibility.

Today, there is a need for skilled librarians that are specialists in managing, retrieving, filtering and evaluating information. Just as a person walking into a library for the first time must learn to translate the original design into the ability to find a book on a shelf, anyone using database must be trained to appreciate the value and benefits of a similar investigative process. Today, many users start out searching on their own and then come back to the LIS professional for help and advice when they are tangled in an irrelevant flood of information.

Traditionally, there are two components within the LIS profession. O n e, collation of information, in written, printed and electronic formats. The other component is the intellectual "toolset" – the skill such as cataloguing, indexing, and reference work. It is important that the public library users begin to draw attention away from the collection, the objects and look at the special services that LIS professionals provide viz:-

- The ownership/holding strategy is being replaced by the access strategy forcing libraries to share materials through consortiums and interlibrary loans.
- As more information becomes available electronically via e-mail and internet access, the on-line reference librarian will be seen working from home to ensure that appropriate information reach the user on time.
- LIS professionals are required to present a more assertive and proactive behavior. They need to conduct outreach and marketing for users.

In this information revolution, libraries will remain "society's memory" by amassing and preserving valuable information for future generations, especially in an age where information seems ephemeral. Webs sites come and go, and evaluating information sources seems increasingly more difficult. But libraries and information centres will survive the information revolution because of the added value their services will continue to provide to users. However, the LIS profession will certainly change, and the LIS school will have to meet these developments and change their study programmes.

Conclusion

In this paper, we have discussed reading, thinking and doing and their interationships. We have identified eight indices (social orientation, self-control, compliance with external standards, self-esteem, empathy, conscience, altruism, moral reasoning) that can be manipulated through strategic reading targeted to stimulate critical thinking that can cause a change in behaviour –the repositioning of individuals. A re-orientation of library and information science professionals for a more proactive readers services in a technology-driven world is also advocated.

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