



Title Cultivating a culture of reading in business and economics education

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Cultivating a Culture of Reading in Business and Economics Education

In this article we consider the role of reading in Business and Economics education, examine the reading strategies in the classroom and look at the practices in one Business department. From the perspective of an awarding body, we consider the importance of reading case studies for exam success, and we conclude with citing how we can promote reading for pleasure in our own classrooms.

Reading a range of diverse materials, such as newspaper articles, books and case studies helps pupils to keep abreast of current issues along with developing critical thinking skills, understanding biases and evaluating arguments from different perspectives, all of which are essential in both Business and Economics. Pupils who read regularly and widely outperform peers academically regardless of socio-economic background. The ability to understand and absorb new information is impacted by reading, with those who read for pleasure being linked to greater intellectual capacity particularly in spelling and vocabulary (OECD, 2002; Sullivan and Brown 2013). Critical for success in Business and Economics, reading widely enables pupils to gain understanding of a broader perspective with access to different viewpoints in different cultural and economic contexts and can enhance understanding of complex concepts and real-world applications. Exposure to subject specific terminology, Tier 3 vocabulary, benefits pupils through encountering new words in context, a strategy posited by Quigley (2018) to close the vocabulary gap. We know that terms like 'market segmentation' and 'cash flow' and 'elasticity' have specific meanings that are essential to understand the subjects. Building familiarity with subject terminology gives pupils greater understanding and confidence to participate in class discussions and prepare for future academic success.

Reading Strategies in the classroom; a case study of one department.

In England, the percentage of secondary school pupils eligible for the pupil premium is around 27.1%. Our academy has a Pupil Premium rate that is significantly above the average for all mainstream secondary schools in England. The proportion of pupils eligible for Free School Meals is more than twice the national average and the majority of pupils have English as an additional language. Despite these factors, pupils often achieve above average with an increasing number of pupils achieving the grades they need to continue their education at the university of their choice.

Pupils remember what they think about, this is what we as teachers know and adhere to but enabling pupils to truly think deeply about a subject can be difficult due to engagement stemming from motivation (Willingham, 2009). It can be questioned how we, in Business and Economics, motivate pupils. The easy answer would be to use relevant businesses in case studies, but if pupils struggle to comprehend then we are setting an environment for failure. With the support of a reading strategy shared throughout our academy network we have been able to implement common approaches to increase levels of comprehension, so pupils have the tools needed to access the selected case studies to bring the 'stickiness' of a concept to life when applying this to their own lives (Sweller et al, 2011). One of our solutions was to select case studies relevant to the cohort to make it meaningful to them in both application and in syntax.

Many of our lessons, specifically in Key Stage 4, include a reading with short answer comprehension questions to follow. The teacher then goes through the reading with the pupils, either under the visualiser, or via PowerPoint slides to clarify the new knowledge, using assessment for learning to check understanding. Pupils self-mark their comprehension

questions using a different colour pen and cross checking with answers displayed on the board. We discovered that this increased the level of self-regulation later in the sequence when checking and correcting their own work and the pupils began to hold themselves accountable showing a level of reflection aiding in steps towards mastery.

For working with case studies in the classroom, the visualiser is key. It allows teachers to demonstrate techniques such as 'inside outside beyond', which supports pupils to unpick words they don't understand/comprehend sentences they have not seen before (Lemov et al, 2016). Reading out loud under the visualiser, modelling the thought process you could go through when reading a new text, allows teachers to demonstrate to pupils what they can do should they come across a word they don't know. We start by reading forwards and then reading backwards, using words we do know to help unpick the missing word and make sense of the sentence. If that doesn't work, we can start to unpick the root of the word, for example if it has a prefix or a suffix, discussing what it means when we see these words. After this we try to model finding the root of the word. When pupils have an armoury of different techniques they can fall back on, it is easier for them not to panic in a summative assessment situation.

When working with new business case studies in the classroom, guided annotation can lay the foundations for effortful thinking. With pupils being able to see a thinking model and process of what a specialist may do when reading new text, it becomes easier to manage cognitive load in a classroom and choose moments when deeper effort is required. It is always useful to introduce the model to pupils with prompts in mind, as using a common approach allows the process to stick and become second nature for pupils when tackling text independently. In Key Stage 4 and Key Stage 5 we use the visualiser for case studies to model the process of guided annotation, not only using 'inside outside beyond', but also guided annotation to support the action of self-regulation in future lessons and to address literacy gaps. These strategies have been of benefit within the department, not only ensuring pupils are better readers, but also seen through improved exam results, most notably at Key Stage 5, in the BTEC exams where pupils are given case studies.

Effective reading of case studies for exams; an approach for assessment.

In Business and Economics assessments, case studies provide a contextual framework for pupils to apply subject-specific theories and concepts. Whitehouse (2009) explores the features of a well written case study citing case studies as a useful tool to assess higher-order thinking skills such as analysis, selection, evaluation, judgment, and decision-making. Context-based questions activate prior knowledge and require pupils to extract relevant information, integrate theoretical concepts, and construct well-reasoned arguments. Therefore, effective reading and interpretation of case studies are crucial for exam success.

Surridge (2022) posits that context questions, used well, can support pupils in applying their learning. Before analysing a case study in detail, pupils should first review the exam questions to guide their reading. In some cases, question stems direct pupils to specific sections of the case study which should be used, or referred to, in the response. Additionally, pupils must consider how the provided context aligns with the assessment demands of the question, including the knowledge and skills required. Highlighting key information relevant to the question, and linking to relevant theories, models, or concepts helps structure analysis and develop coherent arguments in context. This question-driven approach facilitates focused and relevant reading of the case study and encourages critical engagement.

A strategic reading process involves identifying key sections, subheadings, and paragraph divisions to enhance efficiency and thematic comprehension. Numerical data, tables, and graphs should be carefully analysed, as they often provide essential insights for argument development. Interpreting quantitative data involves recognising trends, making comparisons, and identifying limitations, all while relating findings to business or economic concepts, the specific question requirements and the context.

A high-quality written response in an exam extends beyond description to incorporate analysis and evaluation within the given context. Pupils must critically assess the implications of their analysis; form reasoned judgments and justify their conclusions using evidence from the case study. Engaging critically with contextual material strengthens comprehension, analytical reasoning, and evaluative skills, ultimately enhancing exam performance.

By adopting a systematic approach to reading and interpreting case studies, pupils can effectively apply theoretical knowledge, construct logical arguments, and demonstrate a deeper understanding of business and economic principles in an applied setting.

Promoting Reading for Pleasure in the Business and Economics Classroom

Encouraging pupils to read for pleasure in business and economics classes can greatly improve their professional and cognitive growth. Reading a variety of books develops communication skills, critical thinking, and perspective-broadening—qualities that are crucial for business and economics.

Teachers can integrate leisure reading into the business course in a variety of ways. Some strategies to foster a culture of reading include establishing an atmosphere that encourages reading, providing a wide variety of reading materials, and introducing book-related conversations. According to Lockwood (2008), teachers' literary expertise is crucial in encouraging their pupils to appreciate reading. Although the focus of his research is primary education, the idea applies to all educational levels.

Teachers can also effectively promote reading for pleasure by acting as role models. Teachers can display the name of the books they are currently reading, talk about their opinions about them, and suggest leadership and business-related texts. According to research by Cremin et al. (2014), when teachers discuss their own reading experiences, pupils are more likely to develop intrinsic reading motivation. Reading literature exposes people to a range of perspectives, which fosters empathy—a critical skill in the workplace, according to Cremin and Scholes (2024).

Despite the well-established benefits, recent evidence indicates a fall in young people's leisure reading in the UK. 34.6% of children and young adults aged 8 to 18 say they enjoy reading in their free time, the lowest percentage since polls began in 2005, according to the National Literacy Trust (2024). This trend must be reversed. By promoting reading in business classes, teachers can enhance pupils' academic and professional abilities while supporting their personal growth and well-being.

Conclusion

To quote Malala Yousafzai (2017), "One child, one teacher, one book and one pen can change the world." This article highlights the value of reading strategies in Business and Economics education by enhancing comprehension through using tools such as visualisers and guided annotation. Case studies are a signature pedagogy of teaching and assessment in these

subjects, providing essential context for learning. Teachers are urged to cultivate a strong reading culture to assist pupils in using case studies as they enable pupils to interact critically and develop their analytical abilities.

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