



SCHOOL LIBRARIES AND THE PROMOTION OF READING HABITS AMONG STUDENTS: A REVIEW

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Abstract

Purpose: The paper is an overview of the role of school libraries in the promoting of reading habits for the learners to develop and improve their abilities to learn and become independent learners and also imbibe in them the passion for self-development.

Design/Methodology/Approach: The method adopted was contextual analysis that involved reviewing of materials from publications, texts and the internet.

Implication: The perpetual failure of National examinations by students like in the case report from West African Examinations Council (WAEC, 2018) is the outcome of student's indifference and apathy to reading. Hence students should embrace reading and be enthusiastically to it.

Originality/value: In conclusion, it was recommended that parents, families, teachers, librarians, philanthropists, the media, religious bodies, non-governmental organization and government should put hands together to resuscitate reading culture and imbibe reading as a habit.

Keywords: Reading, School Libraries, Reading Habit, Study Skills

Paper type: Conceptual research

Introduction

The quality of every society is largely predicated on the quality of its educational system. In the light of the apparent constraints on educational resources their efficient utilization for maximum result need not be overemphasized Oyedapo, (2018). Reading is crucial in the development and improvement of people's mind. It is also defined in the work of (Ayanbimpe, 2012) as the process of restoring the dignity of man in facing societal challenges. To thrive in this modern era, one needs a variety of information, no matter how well versed one is in a field or profession. Rapid changes in every field have made information a key resource for survival in this world. Every moment of lives depends on information, without which, it would be difficult to exist in the present information oriented society Umahi, (2013).

The responsibility of improving and developing reading culture in Nigeria is for all. This ranges from the family, teachers, librarians, philanthropists, the media, religious bodies,

non-governmental organization to the government, etc. this can be done through: Provision of more public libraries in all nooks and crannies of the country where reading can take place making books and libraries easily accessible. Where it is not possible to build a library, mobile library services should be provided by the public libraries Ogbonna, (2014). The library is one of the information centres where a person can obtain information. It is also a place where a person can go to read or study.

Libraries are spaces or places where the habit of reading books can be acquired. Ajidahun (2011) posited that any country which wants its people to be informed, articulate, efficient, productive and current, must give priority attention to the development of its libraries. Not only does a library help to inculcate the habit of reading but it also helps to create a thirst for knowledge, which ultimately makes a person humble and open to other people's ideas. Nigeria, like other nations of the world has an obligation to prepare her citizens for life

in a world that is characterized by rapid social, economic, political and technological changes.

Concept of Reading

Reading is an indispensable learning skill which lays the foundation for independent studies and prepares the child for higher educational opportunities. Reading is a number of interactive processes between the reader and the text, in which readers use their knowledge to build, to create, and to construct meaning (Ogbonna, 2014). Reading is one of the most useful skills in learning language. It serves as a means by which the unbounded field of knowledge lies open before us and we are able to know new facts and relationship. Mikulecky (2011:5) states that reading is a complex conscious and unconscious mental process in which the reader uses a variety of strategies to reconstruct the meaning that the author is assumed to have intended, based on data from the text and from the reader's prior knowledge. Francis Bacon was very correct when, in one of his essays, 'Our Studies' he wrote, "Reading maketh a full man.

Reading is a complex communicative process of receiving and interpreting the written words. It involves recognizing what is written and comprehending the matter that, understands the main and subsidiary points as well as links between different parts of the written material. According to Jegbefume, 2012 while receiving and interpreting the written word, the reader is concerned with four factors, i.e. decoding, comprehending, text analysis and response. Decoding or interpreting in reading refers to the process of changing the coded message into information. As it involves understanding the written language, it requires the ability to recognize words accurately, and the manner in which words are used in varying contexts.

A written message can be decoded only if we know the language in which the message is encoded. Comprehension in reading refers to the identification of the central theme, main ideas, supporting details and writing patterns. After decoding and comprehending the literal meaning of a written message, its significance is evaluated and appropriate conclusions are drawn from it. Text analysis is essential for critical and evaluative understanding of a text.

Text analysis refers to the process of identifying relationships among different units within the text in order to distinguish between relevant and irrelevant information, explicit and implicit information, facts and opinions, examples and ideas and draw inferences and conclusions. Response is our action or reaction to the written message. It completes the reading process as it is the last step of reading.

Our response to a text depends largely on our correct understanding and evaluation of the text. We may immediately respond to the message, as in the case of reading the letter, a memo, an e-mail message. Though in some text, we may need to remember the information so that we are able to use it later Aliyu, (2013). There is no denying fact that education is a lifelong process. The habits which are cultivated during schooldays, reading is one of which, helps to mould the entire life of a person. According to Femi, (2011) gaining knowledge, recreation, self education, gaining experience are some of the benefits of reading. He also highlighted some other advantages of reading to include improving concentration and focus, building self-esteem, improving memory, learning ability to aid independently, improving creativity, giving you something to talk about, reducing stress, and finally you will make more money in reading. Reading is a tool of self improvement leading to do-it-yourself techniques acquisition, equipping oneself with skills for better job, reading for pleasure and relaxation, hence imbibing it (reading) as a habit is a virtue that can never be overemphasized.

Reading Habits

It has often been said that reading is a habit, an acquired habit that can be developed and sustained through the provision of the necessary infrastructure like a good functional library, school, education system and parental support Iloeje, (2014). Developing reading habit involves motivating students. Habit is a fundamental part of living (Ibrahim, 2014). It is that activity which is done effortlessly. Habits are routine and repetitive behavior. They are not instinctive like hunger or thirst. Therefore, good habit towards a task may lead students in the right direction, as the saying goes "habits die hard". Therefore, to develop good reading

habits, students need to be exposed to reading strategies.

Promoting a reading habit has long been a major theme of various countries in the world yet despite the all these efforts one common threat emerges: no country is satisfied with the number of active readers among its population Dike, (2017). It is felt in most countries that the methods and teaching used to boost reading must be tried again and again in order to bring people and books together in a lasting fruitful relationship. Ogwu, 2010 argues that if reading is left to continue unabated, the number of illiterates would tend to increase in future. Promotion of a reading culture aims to publicize reading among members of the general public. Reading habit or culture is an activity that is meant to popularize reading and make it a life long hobby. The promotion of reading habits cannot take place in a vacuum. It has to be initiated.

Enabling a population to read requires a publishing industry, which must engage a cadre of appropriate writers and produce their work in a pleasing form. A system of distribution, which may include bookstores, libraries and newspaper deliveries are needed. In the work of Nalusiba, (2010) educational programs that will teach the young sufficient coding skills and knowledge about subject-matter to enable them learn through reading are also required. It is very important to recognize that, parents, teachers, and librarians have vital roles to play among students to enable them to embark on voracious reading and developing good reading habits. School libraries should also organized programmes, book clubs, exhibitions, story books, pictures, computers storytelling and so forth and use them to inculcate reading culture or habit to students.

School Libraries

School libraries are libraries established in nursery, primary and secondary schools to aid and support learning and teaching activities Redford, (2011). The main purpose of establishing school libraries is to meet the information needs of pupils, students and staff of the schools. A school library is managed by a school librarian or media specialist. Hitherto, most school libraries looks like academic libraries in that they serve those whose next

library encounter will be at the university; they can also cater for young children who are pre-literate (Busayo, 2011). A school library provides a range of learning opportunities for individuals, small groups, and large groups with a focus on intellectual content, information literacy, cultural and social development.

The learner-oriented focus of a school library supports, extends, and individualizes a school's curriculum. School libraries function as a central location for all of the information available, and a school librarian functions as the literary map to the resources and materials found within the library. School libraries are similar to public libraries in that they contain books, films, recorded sound, periodicals, realia, digital media. These items are not only for the education, enjoyment, and entertainment of all members of the school community, but also to enhance and expand the school's curriculum Hassen, (2016). As information specialists, school librarians develop a resource base for the school by using the curriculum and student interests to identify and obtain library materials, organize and maintain the library collection in order to promote independent reading and lifelong learning. All these are geared towards promoting reading habit to students they are serving in their various location in the schools.

Materials in the library collection can be located using the catalogue. Often these catalogs are web-based from which students can gain access both at school and from home. This role according to Dangani, (2015) also encompasses many activities relating to technology including the integration of resources in a variety of formats: periodical databases; Web sites; digital video segments; podcasts; blog and wiki content; digital images; virtual classrooms, etc. School librarians are often responsible for audio-visual equipment and are sometimes in charge of school computers and computer networks. Students are born into a digital era that is changing literacy and information encounters as well as learning opportunities. Digital environments and participative new media tools have altered the shape and experience of learning, providing educators with new challenges, new tools and new ways of working with literacy, information

literacy and digital fluency in environments empowered by mobile devices and networked access to information (O'Connell 2012a).

Igniting a passion for reading and research is core business for school libraries, inevitably placing the library at the centre of the twenty-first century reading and learning experience. A school library according to Ibrahim, (2014) operates within a school as a teaching and learning centre that provides an active instructional program integrated into curriculum content, with emphasis on the following: resource based capabilities, thinking based capabilities, knowledge based capabilities, reading and literacy capabilities, personal and interpersonal capabilities and learning management capabilities. The school library exists to provide a range of learning opportunities for both large and small groups as well as individuals with a focus on intellectual content, information literacy, and the learner.

In addition to classroom visits with collaborating teachers, the school library also serves as a learning space for students to do independent work, use computers, equipment and research materials; to host special events such as author visits and book clubs; and for tutoring and testing Olagesin, (2012). School libraries exist throughout the world as learning environments that provide space (physical and digital), access to resources, and access to activities and services to encourage and support student, teacher, and community learning. The growth of school libraries parallels the growth in education that seeks to equip students with knowledge to operate within and contribute to the betterment of society. While the range of school library facilities and operations varies throughout the world, school libraries everywhere are focused on supporting and advancing student learning and reading habits.

Methodology

In selecting school libraries for the study, purposive and multi stage were used to select and discussed school libraries irrespective of where they are provided they are doing their job of inculcating good reading habits to students.

Need for Effective Reading Habits

Reading is a term that is often simply referred to as communication between the mind and printed materials, which involves getting the meaning, message and thought. It enriches the readers' imagination and stimulates their intellectual growth faster (Ibrahim, 2014). Reading can best be explained as a learned practice of seeking knowledge, information or entertainment through the written word. Such practice can be acquired by reading books, journals, magazines and electronic information resources. Hence, reading habit is identified as the simple most important mediators of students' achievement in education and life-long endeavour. Reading becomes a habit when a student has developed in him/her that zeal for making reading a continuous process and a life-long activity. Akande and Oyedapo (2018) opined that developing good reading habits would improve the students' comprehension skills, vocabulary, pronunciation, speed, knowledge, and lifelong learning.

Indeed good reading habits promote 'self education' which helps in the modification of personality. In (Ogwu, 2010) reading trains our mind and broadens our outlook. If one has developed a taste for reading in school days, he will realize that nothing but reading is the best utilization of his hours of leisure. Reading is very important skill that the students must be mastered, because the reading cannot be separated in the process of teaching and learning. Reading is the most important activity in any class, not only as a source of information, but also as a means of consolidating and extending ones idea and knowledge of language Owolabi, (2012). The importance of acquiring reading skills for individual's success in life cannot be over-emphasized. It is a well known fact that when there were no televisions, handsets and computers, people spent hours reading books and traveled to lands far away in their minds.

The problem is that with time, people have lost their passion to read because there are several other exciting options available, aside from books these days. This is a shameful because reading offers a productive approach to improving vocabulary and word power. The

acquisition of reading skills according to Babarinde, (2017) does not only affect or improve confidence in language arts, but also in all life endeavor and ramifications. Poor reading skill can make a child develop poor attitude to school and it can create self-esteem problems later in life (Fosudo, 2010). The impact of reading culture to the individual and society cannot be overstressed. At the individual level, (Kaur, & Jawald, (2018) listed the following as benefits:

- Reading is an active mental process - unlike TV; books make one to use his brain. By reading, one thinks more and becomes smarter.
- It is a fundamental skill builder - Every good course on the planet has a matching book to go with it.
- Improves vocabulary - while reading books, especially challenging ones, it exposes one to many new words that wouldn't be otherwise.
- Gives a glimpse into other cultures and places - Books can expand one's horizons by letting him to see what other cities and countries have to offer before visiting them. It requires a person to focus on what he is reading for long periods.
- Builds self-esteem - it helps an individual to become better informed and more of an expert on the topic read. This expertise translates into higher self esteem.
- Improves memory - Reading although not a game, helps to stretch memory muscles in a similar way. Reading requires details, facts and figures.
- Improves discipline - To add book reading to a person's daily schedule and sticking to it, improves discipline.

Factors Inhibiting Reading Habits

Many factors are responsible for the decline in reading habit or culture in our society. According to the World Book Encyclopedia (2010), some of these factors include unfamiliarity with reading on the part of many children, inadequate development of reading skills amongst children, lack of continuity with reading programmes on the part of the teachers, and language interference, amongst others. In a work carried out by Hassen, 2016

on the Reading Habits of Secondary School Teachers he outlined various factors hindering the development of good reading habits among students in Nigeria. These include: Non-functional school libraries in schools, large percentage of obsolete information materials among the library stock, inexperienced professional librarians, no conducive environment for reading, poor funding from government to procure information materials that will cover both intensive and extensive reading, non-existence of public libraries, high poverty rate, illiteracy among others.

Also Redford, 2011 highlighted inhibiting factors viz: the family background of students where few homes are conducive to reading owing to noise and lack of reading materials and the failure to provide library periods in schools; language teachers; shortage of equipment and resources for teaching reading skills; and a heavy reliance on school texts. Taking cognizance of all the aforementioned inhibiting factors, all educational stakeholders should be involved in developing and sustaining the reading habits of students. Arua and Nwaebiem (2014) state that there is a high decline rate in the reading culture of Nigeria. He examined reading culture among students in the tertiary institutions in Nigeria, and found that 60% of students had prescribed textbooks only during examination; browsing and watching television have taken most of the students' time and very few students 21% buy novels to read for knowledge and pleasure.

Ayanbimpe (2012) states that the reading habit in Nigeria has totally collapsed. One has to learn to read in order to read to learn. She states further that with the introduction of information and communication technologies, children are seen carrying their phones and texting messages, listening to music, yahoo yahoo, etc. They neither study nor read and thus are getting deformed. Their command of English language is poor, so also is their vocabulary and diction. All these are because they do not read anymore; hence all hands must be on deck both parents, teachers, government and non-governmental organizations to imbibe, inculcate and harness reading habits among our students.

Strategies for Promoting Reading Habits by School Libraries

It is pertinent to suggest strategies that can be adopted to turn the country to a reading nation and her citizens, to a reading people. Imbibing the culture of reading would assist in finding solutions to some of her socio-economic and political problems Anto, (2018). In order to improve students' academic achievement in Nigeria, the government and some Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) should organise workshops, seminars and quiz competitions with awards for the promotion of reading habit/culture in Nigeria. Also, the Nigerian Library Association (NLA), in each Chapter, should be holding an interactive session with selected schools regularly to improve and motivates students.

Government support to indigenous publishers and authors. The cost of producing books should be subsidize by the government to make it accessible to the populace at a subsidize rate. Many years ago, many Nigerian universities used to have printing presses for the production of tertiary books. This has subsequently died down. Revitalizing such projects will go a long way in producing tertiary books for higher institutions and subsequently improving reading habits of students who are the future leaders of the country. Formulation of enabling policies by government would enhance and encourage reading culture in our society. Parents and teachers should set out time for watching TV, playing video games, chatting and browsing to avoid distractions from reading. National and public libraries in Nigeria should embark on aggressive readership promotion campaigns. Nigerian citizens should encourage everyone to endeavor to read a book a day

Onuoha, (2013) highlighted the following strategies for promoting the reading habits of students. The strategies include: book exhibition; book talk: story-talk hour; creative activities or creative writing; book clubs; drama and mobile reading tents. He further suggested improved funding, establishment of libraries and associating reading with pleasure. Alawiye, 2012 said introducing pleasure or fun to reading such as group reading, excursions to libraries and book/fairs exhibitions,

appropriate legislation and resuscitation of mobile library services were some of the remedies to combat poor reading habits. However, there is need to explicitly earmark each stakeholder's responsibility.

Therefore, in developing the reading habits of students, there are major stakeholders in the society that should be actively involved, such as parents, teachers, school librarians, school counselors and the students themselves. Parents' role in nurturing the reading habits of students cannot be over emphasized because parents stand the best chance in nurturing a reading culture. Parents are the first teachers of any student right from childhood; therefore students should be introduced into the act of reading at early age. The first characteristic of an early reading environment is the availability of books and the regular modeling of reading. Nalusiba (2010) emphasized that the best way of promoting reading is the use of informal methods of reading rather than formal methods. Informal methods stimulate a desire in the child to read before trying to teach him to read. He noted that this was done through storytelling and reading by the teacher and by consulting books to find out things so that children could associate books with pleasure and usefulness.

Indeed it was also indicated that for students to be encouraged to read they should be allowed to choose the pictures in them, to read for contests, to have a classroom library and to have an author read to them at school Ibrahim (2014). Once students were exposed to different practices of reading and reading materials they were likely to broaden their imagination and engage in the practice of regular reading. In other words, the provision of classroom libraries to the students expose them to a wide range of books, magazines and other print materials in a variety of genres and at various levels of difficulty Dangani, (2015). Through such activities students were likely to become more exposed and encouraged to develop a reading culture or habits.

Conclusion

A good reading habit is a vital skill that students should possess. Students should strive to imbibe good reading habits that would enable them function well in all spheres of life.

It adds value to life and provides access to culture and cultural heritage; empowers and emancipates man from the shackles of information poverty and also enables sound reasoning and good judgment. Establishment of school libraries in primary & secondary schools which is the foundation of lifelong reading habit, inclusion of reading and writing skills and information literacy in the school curriculum were all for reading to be enthusiastic. School libraries has so many programmes that could help build and inculcate reading habits to children such as is project work which is an extended and independent learning activity based on a given topic and resulting in a documentation or presentation. While giving the project to children, topics in the school curriculum can be shared to children and may be asked to collect data through interview, pictures and then form an album while documenting results. Also creative writing and comic book writing, stories and how to write and creates them, story hour, visual literacy and socialization. Other activities are Debate clubs, book review clubs, Drama, Essay competitions can bring about good communication skills in children. All these programmes are organized by school libraries in the bid to develop reading culture to their students.

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