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Monsuru Quadri

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AVAILABILITY AND USE OF REFERENCE SOURCE AS CORRELATES OF PROMOTION OF READING CULTURE AMONG SECONDARY STUDENTS IN OYO STATE, NIGERIA

QUADRI MONSURU OMOTAYO

TAI- SOLARIN UNVERSITY OF EDUCATION, IJAGUN, OGUN STATE

quadrimo@tasued.edu.ng

ABSTRACT

This study sought to establish the availability and use of reference source as correlates of promotion of reading culture among secondary students in Oyo state, Nigeria. Reading habit enhances the academic performance of students. Therefore, students should be encouraged to inculcate in them the reading habit by providing enabling environment and infrastructures that will stimulate students to read. The study recommended that the school authorities should employ qualified school librarians to be in charge of the school libraries. Government should equip the existing school libraries with good, up-to-date, and sufficient library resources that are rich in quality, quantity and that can be varied to reflect the school curriculum at every point in time. parents should be active and establish libraries at home where early reading culture can begin and also set high standard of reading for their children and also motivate them to read on daily basis, government should be available for reference source, particularly on reading, provision of more public libraries in the country where reading can take place without any difficulty.

Keywords: Reading, Culture, Promotion, Availability, Use of Reference Source, Students, Secondary Schools.

Introduction

In reality, the attitude of secondary school students' towards reading is a prominent issue that has generated controversy and various comments in the educational sector. However, it has been of great concern not only to the educators, but also to academic scholars and stakeholders in the country as a whole. Basically, most Nigerian students do not attach much importance to reading, very few of them read for pleasure; some read when there is any internal and external examination is fast approaching. With this fact, their reading attitude are restricted to textbooks alone, this invariably affect their performance in their examination. Library and education are two vital institutions of socialization and perpetuation of the human race. The two cannot be separated in an all-round development of a child. Education as a result of knowledge imparted develops abilities, attitudes, behaviour and technical know-how, and the agency responsible for acquiring, disseminating and imparting this knowledge is the library.

Reading is a very important activity that allows an individual to gain access to all knowledge in the world. Through reading, one has access to a wide range of knowledge found in various reading materials like books, magazines, newspapers, journals, and other electronic sources that are utilized to acquire knowledge. Reading habits are well-planned and deliberate pattern of study that has attained a form of consistency on the part of students toward understanding academic subjects and passing at examinations (Owusu-acheaw & Larson, 2014). Students therefore need to cultivate a good reading habit in order to succeed in their academic pursuit. Reading habits cultivated early in life helps a child to grow in to an independent adult. A modern saying says, "Today's readers are tomorrow's leader". One should read books and other materials to acquire knowledge. According to Rubin (2002), reading is an integrative process that starts with the reader and includes the affective, perceptual, and cognitive domains. It is pertinent to note that students' who engage in in-depth reading have developed self-confidence and they know that their ability to read open doors for them. According to Thanuskodi (2011), students have to read books other than textbooks to improve thinking and other cognitive activities. An individual's interests are determined to a considerable extent by the amount of textual materials consumed and the intensity with which he will pursue his reading activity. By reading books, one gets confirmation or rejection of one's own ideas, which in turn increases the knowledge level of the reader. In addition, reading provides people with a sense of values, which enable them to discriminate between what is acceptable in the society and what is not.

Essentially availability and use of reference source are therefore crucial and indispensable to both the primary and secondary education system. Libraries are established to advance the course of education. Library objectives are interwoven with that of education they both aim at producing intellectually developed and complete individuals in the society. Thus, libraries exist to promote and complement education. The school library has been described as the heart of the school system. It is the school learning resources centre, the laboratory of laboratories. What vital role does the school library play in education that it warrants such description? First it must be noted that in spite of the claim that the library is the heart of the school, or laboratory of laboratories, school libraries are a relatively new concept. Few schools had libraries before the 20th century. Those early school libraries had two principal objectives, both of which are still important today; to provide materials to support the curriculum and to promote reading. The school library concept gained momentum as a result of changing ideas about education. In the early years of the 20th century, the progressive education movement in the United States espoused ideas that stimulated the growth of school libraries in many countries of the world. However, widespread and systematic development of school libraries dates from the decades following World War, especially the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s. This development coincided with a number of factors, including continuing evolution of ideas for educational reform.

To Douglas (2000), every child needs to become fully competent in reading in order to succeed in school and to discharge responsibilities as a citizen of a democratic society. A citizen who reads has the capacity to actively participate in the continuity of learning. Reading is the foundation of much of the enjoyment the individual gets in life and is closely related to vocational efficiency. Reading provides a backup of information, which reduces ignorance thus empowering and promoting literacy and connection. If you are a student, a lecturer or a sales management administrator in any other field today, you must read to bring yourself abreast of what is happening in your field; you must rely on the written or digital words to convey information and data. Your ability to read well is absolutely critical to your success in life. According to Okusaga (2008), reading is the only form of entertainment that is also, an essential life skill. Reading doesn't just happen; it is a skill that must be nurtured from a child's earliest years. Once children know how to read, they still need gentle coaxing and support to reach their full potential as readers. Our children need help to develop their ability to read so that they can comprehend subjects better at school. Most children with learning disabilities have problems with reading and related language skills. The reasons for decline in reading habits among children are offshoots of technological advancements which have brought about overall changes in family, social and economic conditions. Generally, poor reading habit occur in children and young people because: reading is not considered a relevant leisure activity as it does not form part of children's social interaction; reading is considered a solitary pursuit and is not preferred in comparison with interactive chats on the internet.

Literature Review

Need For Effective Reading Culture

The importance of acquiring reading skills for individual's success in life cannot be overemphasized. 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 shame because reading offers a productive approach to improving vocabulary and word power. The acquisition of reading skills does not only affect or improve confidence in language arts, but also in other subjects such as social studies, science, and mathematics and so on. Poor reading skill can make a child develop poor attitude to school and it can create self-esteem problems later in life (Fosudo, 2010).

Literature on reading habit of children abound. Hornby cited in Ugboma (2007) opine that literature is the body of writings that are valued as works of art. It is a universal means of communicating the emotional, spiritual or intellectual concern of mankind. Giving children access to all variety of literature is extremely important for their success. Educators, parents and community members should help students develop a love and passion for reading. Not only is reading literature important in developing cognitive skills to be able to succeed in a school or work setting, but is valuable for other reasons as well. The benefit one derives from reading is enormous. According to Okonkwo (1985), a person's ability to read widens his general

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knowledge. The more one reads, the more background knowledge one acquires of other people's way of life, their behaviours and thoughts. Through reading one can know the culture of people in oversea countries without visiting them. Dike (1981) shares the same view. In her opinion, reading broadens as well as deepens our experience. She is of the view that one can overcome barriers of time through reading. Dike agrees with Okonkwo that through reading one can broaden one's range and extent of one's understanding of human experience and the world we live in. Okafor (1992) added that reading is one of the language skills, which if successfully acquired, gives the learner a new medium of communication, and the power to get information from the printed page. He added that reading as an aspect of language has an important effect on the child's general development such as his power of thinking and cognitive development. Reading not only opens up a store of experience to us but also actually influences our ability to reason. According to World Book (1994), reading provides the key to all kinds of information, enables us to learn how to build or fix things, enjoy stories, discover what other people believe, and to develop ideas and beliefs of our own. Perhaps the greatest benefit of literacy is that through reading, we learn, experience everything personally, and we can derive nearly as much from those experience as from our own.

According to internet sources (http:/esl.fis.edu) the advantages of reading are so many. These include but not restricted to the following:

Reading is an active mental process: Unlike TV, books make you use your brain. By reading, you think more and become smarter.

It is a fundamental skill builder: Every good course on the planet has a matching book to go with it. Why? Because book help clarify difficult concepts. Books provide information that goes deeper than just classroom discussions.

Improves your vocabulary: While reading books, especially challenging ones, you will find yourself exposed to many new words.

Gives you a glimpse into other cultures and places: Books can expand your horizons by letting you see what other cities, countries, and cultures seem like and what they have to offer.

Other advantage of reading include improving concentration and focus, building selfesteem, 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. Oke (1996) gives reasons why people read thus:

a) Reading is a tool of self improvement leading to do-it-yourself techniques acquisition, equipping oneself with skills for better job.

b) Reading for pleasure and relaxation.

c) Reading is status symbols- this involves the prestige and value society places on reading rather than nothing.

In Nigeria, a study carried out by Henry (2004), reveals that 40 percent of adult Nigerians never read a non-fiction book from cover to cover after they finished school. The average Nigerian reads less than one book per year, in fact only one percent of successful men and women in Nigeria read one nonfiction book per month. In the same study, 30 million Nigerians have graduated from high school with poor reading skills. Some people do not read because they are simply lazy, they are surrounded by so many distractions, especially television, radio, social activities while others never get around doing any serious reading. Some Nigerians do not read probably because they are not working in the right field(s). If regular reading and studying is a required condition of your job or profession, this in effect means you read, but under duress. This is so because people have not been told or realized how important reading is. Majority of young learners are neither learning to read nor reading to learn. Large and growing numbers of children are reaching upper elementary levels unable to read and understand class level appropriate materials. The spate of examination malpractices is a direct result of poor reading habit. The magnitude of this problem causes not only innumerable personal tragedies but also significantly draw instructions down, and jeopardizes the future of our public schools. What is most frustrating is that much of this reading problem could have been prevented if government, libraries and teachers apply what is known as reading instruction or techniques. The vast majority of the world's information today is not digitized; they are in print form, mostly in books. Reading per se among young adults is not exactly on the wane, but the delivery mechanism has changed. Communications with words is thriving, but on a new format, most reading is now online only probably, exception, been a novel or non-fiction classic (Okebukola, 2004).

Lakshmi and Kavitha (2016), in their research pointed alike, secured and trustworthy access to information is possible through libraries. Libraries are the vital sources to get these sort

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of reliable information. The work dealt with the profile of public libraries, hurdles that interrupts the frequent visit to public libraries, services provided by public libraries and the users' satisfaction towards it. Vehicle stand is the major problem for major respondents. 50 percent respondents are frustrated with vehicle stand facility. Frequency of newspaper and magazine reading relies on the age and marital status of respondents. Level of satisfaction of the users on library services even depends on the gender of respondents and time they spent in the library. Computerization and networking of resources might help in enhancing the status of public library to international standards. Kutay (2014) revealed the literature reading habits of the students. The research keenly observed the reading habit of students relying on their gender and religions. It is found through the research that literature reading habit of students varies depending their gender and religion. Amidst of the 10 provided categories most chosen genre is adventurous fiction.73.8 percent respondents had chosen adventurous fictions. Female respondents mostly prefer romance fictions (70 %) and give second preference to horror (52 %). male respondents prefer war-spy stories (56%) and then crime-detective (45%). Massis (2011), his research highly concentrates on the information literacy instruction providing behaviour of the library and its role in enhancing it among the students in a challenging teaching and learning environment. A format of literature review and commentary on this topic is taken in this approach. Librarians and faculty must collaborate in an effective way to maintain the need for cohesive enhancement and implementation of information literacy instruction in the library. Their collaborative effort would raise the level of students victory and research perception.

Strategies for promoting reading habits among Nigerians

In promoting reading culture in Nigeria, 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.

Improved Funding: Fund is crucial to the development of education and libraries; it is a sine qua none of performance. Therefore, the Nigerian government has to improve its funding of the education sector, by increasing funds allocated to schools. This would affects provision of school library services. Funds should be earmarked for establishing, equipping and maintenance of libraries (public library inclusive). Sufficient fund should be provided to acquire adequate,

current and relevant library materials - books, magazines, charts, transparencies; photographic slides, and computer instructional packages. Concerted effort should be made by the appropriate supervisory body to monitor effective utilization of funds allocated to the library.

Establishment of libraries: Efforts must be made by government at different levels to establish more libraries in their schools and for the private, club, communities, Religious bodies, organizations (NGOs and CBOs), Old Students Associations, professionals bodies and individuals should be encouraged to assist in the promotion of reading by establishing libraries or supporting already established school and public libraries. This can be done through stocking of libraries with good reading materials that can impact on the lives of Nigerians. These libraries should also be provided with professionally qualified personnel to render services to the users. Continued provision and access to books - provision of a varied collection of enjoyable and information-rich books is a major contribution of the library towards reading promotion. Availability and accessibility to instructional and pleasurable books stimulate development of reading and attainment of permanent literacy. It has been found out that school libraries are the principal source of books for supplementary instructional resources and voluntary reading. It must, however, be pointed out that many schools do not have libraries at all. Where they exist, the stock in these libraries is grossly insufficient to play the expected role.

Associating reading with pleasure:- Children and students can be motivated to read and thus form good reading habit through storytelling, reading together (shared reading), formation of reading/book clubs as well as provision of conducive reading environment devoid of unwarranted noise and distractions. Storytelling is a basic and enduring form of literacy expression in Nigerian cultures. Librarians should encourage the integration storytelling and the oral literacy tradition with the school curriculum especially at the primary school. Telling children interesting stories encourage their attention and focus, develops their listening skills and helps stimulate voluntary reading. Another way of introducing pleasure or fun to reading is by reading together. Reading together can take place in the classroom, library or at home. Parents, school librarians, teachers and children can read aloud to themselves at home, in the class or library, getting to an exciting point in the story book before stopping. The interest generated during such period will inspire many students to continue the story on their own.

Resuscitation of mobile library services: Promotion of reading habits should not be confined to students in the classroom or the physical library alone. Rather, consideration and extension of library services should be given to children and youth who, for one reason or another, are out of the normal school or library environment. This can be done through mobile library service, a formidable service provided by the public library. In the 1970s, Nigerian populace in the rural areas - farmers, nomadic fishermen and cattle rearers, used to enjoy this service. Regrettably, since the 1980s, this important library service became moribund. To attain the objective of the universal basic education as well as carry out the goals contained in the National Policy on Education, states and local governments in Nigeria need to revive the mobile library service. Once revived, the library would carry reading, vocational and instructional materials to the remote communities in the country.

Encouragement of library usage: Teachers should encourage maximum use of the library and its resources by giving pupils/students assignments/projects that would necessitate their frequent visits to the library. Such assignments/projects must be practical in nature. They may entail reading a novel and summarizing such, or using the library resources to solve an environmental problem.

Appropriate legislation: It has earlier been pointed out that the National Policy on Education statements on the provision of library has not been implemented by the stakeholders. Non-implementation stems from the absence of appropriate legislation to back up these statements. It is, therefore, been suggested that appropriate legislation(s) be enacted by various governments to enforce compliance with the policy statements. Such legislation should stipulate stiffer penalty such as closure of school(s), for non-compliance with the policy statements.

Role of Library in School System

It is incontrovertible that libraries form a vital part of the world's system of education. Libraries provide through books, films, computers or internet, recording microforms, CD-ROMs and other media knowledge that have been accumulated through the ages. Every school therefore needs a library, even if a good public library is nearby. Throughout the day, teachers and students need to use the library materials in the teaching and learning process. Fayose (1983) wrote that "the library is rendered essential for every intellectual institution, it is really essential and necessary for the primary school, since it constitutes a big and rare treasure". He proceeded and

quoted Jean Mace as saying that the "supplement of the primary school is the constitution of libraries. The first one is the key but the second one is the residence". It has also been stated that "the library is a basic element that leads to education and to the spiritual culture of students" (Onadiran, 1997). The Federal Government of Nigeria acknowledges the importance of school libraries when it states in its National Policy on Education (1981) that "libraries are one of the most important education services. Every State Ministry of Education needs to provide funds for the establishment of libraries in all educational institutions and to train librarians and library assistants for this service". As enunciated by Nicholson and Barlett (1962), the main purposes of a school library are to;

1. Encourage the reading habits of the learner

2. Develop in pupils the ability to learn from books without teachers.

3. Breakdown the rigid divisions which the school timetable often creates between different subjects.

4. Give social training

Scholars have suggested different measures to be taken to improve reading habits in children. According to Odejide (1993), to improve and develop reading awareness and reading habits of students today, there are certain policies and actions which government, teachers, publishers, teacher librarians, especially the parents will have to put in place to enhance the growth of a reading public. People may ask the question of how librarians help in improving good reading habit in children. What is the role of school library in promoting or developing reading habit? Are there any special local conditions, which influence the development of reading habit and the role of school library? The answer to the above questions is not far-fetched. The library plays an important role in the development of reading skill in children's education. It is a necessary appendage of any educational process. Whenever education is mentioned, it is not done in isolation of library. The library is the central nervous system of any educational process. Library helps to strengthen the classroom activities. Library is important to the teachers as well as the students. This may explain why the federal government in the new policy on education (1981) stated that; library is one of the most important educational services. Every state ministry of education needs to provide funds for the establishment of libraries all over educational institutions and to train librarians and library assistants for this service.

The school library has a teaching role in the education programme of the school. The teaching role comes up in the areas of imparting the library skills, study skills including planning with the subject teachers, class projects and its involvement in curriculum or lesson planning. This view is supported by Apotiade (2002) who identified the educational role of school library as encouragement of reading habit, development of student's ability to learn from books. He further elucidated that school libraries are; "to provide books and other information materials that will assist student in their study, instruct students in the use of library resources and encourage recreational reading by providing newspapers, magazines, books on sports, adventure, hobbies, folklores and fiction". Nyam and Guraj (1999) described the role of school library as the provision of information for educational research, planning and recreational purposes. He also viewed school library as essential to the establishment of school itself which should be seen as an integral part of the educational process and not just as an outside agency. Furthermore, he described the means through which school library contributes to spread education, complement teacher's work, and provide education to those without teachers. These are through;

i. Provision of primary school children with learning resources such as educational facilities, both in print and non-print, which they can use at the end of the school day and during vacations.ii. Provision of secondary school children with information assistance in homework and this may include children's encyclopedia, journals, magazines, tapes, records and cassettes.

iii. Provision of specialized resources for governmental activities through creation of a "special document" section in the library and;

iv. Provision of recreational and continuing educational facilities such as games, films and filmstrips, slides, tapes records, and cassettes, fiction and non-fiction books.

The school library assists teaching by storing instructional materials such as textbooks, audio-visual materials, magazines, newspapers, journals and reference materials. It is the function of the library to support the school curriculum by providing up-to-date information to keep teachers and students abreast of new developments. The library also promotes the development of reading skills and encourages long-term learning habits through reading, listening to and viewing a variety of materials. The library is the powerhouse of the school and it is an integral part of the school system. In spite of the value of libraries in schools, it is an acceptable fact that there are very few schools with libraries.

Library Services to Students

Among these services are that, the school librarian has the professional obligation to deal realistically but humanely with each student, to provide learning resource, and to design learning experiences which will be compatible with the needs, interests and abilities, goals, concerns and learning styles of each student. The school librarian must be accessible, approachable, and responsive; must establish a climate conducive to maximum learning a happily invitation place where the student may taste success and his disabilities are not on public display. The school librarian must personalize the services of the library media centre therefore, hold and demonstrate authentic concern for the intellectual, moral, spiritual, social and cultural wellbeing of each student no matter how rich or poor, how brilliant. He must consistently build his knowledge of the student as he works with him as mentor, counselor and friend. After the school librarian has introduced the students to variety of learning resources, he needs to teach study skills required to use the learning resources in the library. In a study on secondary school library services in Oyo state conducted by Opeke (1980) she collected data from one hundred and seventy five schools. The report of the study revealed that the resources were inadequate as virtually all the schools libraries lacked audio-visual materials. She affirmed that teachers and students make minimum use of the school library and this may be attributed to the present poor library stock. In addition to these, it was discovered that services rendered by the libraries to staff and students were mostly reading or borrowing books.

Conclusions

Conclusively, reading is one of the most fundamental principles of school curricula. For reading habit to be effective there is need for availability and use of reference source to be put in place for accessibility of relevant information. It involves the recognition and understanding of the nature of the linguistics symbols that constitute written language. Reading is an active process that requires absolute concentration of the reader. Reading proficiency is the royal road to knowledge; it is essential to success in all academic subjects. It is an essential means of acquiring success in formal education; reading plays a significant role.

Recommendations

- i. Government should imbibe the culture of acquiring, stocking current books and other educational resource materials either by purchase, donation, gift, exchange and bequeath, among others.
- ii. The school authorities should include the reading hours in the school time-table.
- iii. Teachers should use teaching methods and approaches that would make students have an interest in reading.
- iv. The government should provide an enabling environment that will stimulate students to read.
- v. The school library should be provided with adequate funds to implement its programmes by government and non-government agencies, school administrators should encourage the community for participation in school library development.
- vi. Parents should encourage their children to start reading from an early age. They should also try to provide reading materials as well as library at home under a conducive reading environment.
- vii. The teacher librarians should provide enough necessary reading materials in their school libraries to motivate the interest of the pupils. Variety of reading materials like storybooks, novels, newspapers and magazines should be provided for the students' leisure time.

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