

READING HABIT FORMATION

And

RELEVANCE OF EFFECTIVE SCHOOL LIBRARY SERVICE: PUBLIC OPINION RATING

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Abstract

This paper examined the roles played by effective school library service in reading habit formation. The analysis of the result of findings showed that majority of the respondents are females and majority of them fell within the age range of 31 years and above. The result also showed that the foundation of good reading habit is laid only at primary / secondary school levels. It went on to establish the fact that stakeholders in education are not giving school library development deserved attention. Majority of the respondents endorsed the fact that students fail various examinations because they lack exposure to library culture and that students engage in examination malpractices because they lack reading culture hence, they never get prepared. The paper went on to make suggestions and recommendations on how school library services in our society can be improved in such a way that it would encourage reading habit revolution.

Introduction

Nigeria generally lack the habit of reading (Akinolu 1993), whereas it is generally believed that reading contributes immensely to human development and extension of national

development. Ogunsanya (2006) summed it up thus “No student can make it out of college without reading. We are products of what we read — Read your textbooks! Read intensively”. This submission shows how crucial the issue of reading is to personal and national development.

Efforts have been made to effect remarkable changes in adult who could not read and/or write to now pick up the gauntlet and warm themselves into the mainstream of literate society. Ejieh(1999) makes a submission when he says “Nigeria is one of the developing countries of the world that are today confronted with the task of imparting literacy”. Towards this end, the government has launched mass literacy campaigns at various times, and has embarked on providing adult education services to this group of people.

The general believe is that, by becoming literate, adult worker will be able to contribute towards his personal development and that of the entire nation. It is however doubtful, if acquisition of “temporary” literacy skills (this way) can enable the beneficiary of the adult education (literacy) programme to acquire the type of skills needed for personal and national sustainable development.

From the above, we can deduce that the newly-literate adults will soon lose touch with his newly acquired reading and writing skills, especially when he is not in touch with reading materials and he doesn’t have opportunity to practice his writing skill. These disabilities might not be unconnected with his adult status which must have bestowed on him certain responsibilities to carry.

However, the school libraries provide a viable way out of the evil effect of lack of reading culture. Since the school library serves the **UBE** (Universal Basic Education) which is an inclusive programme-encompassing the formal school system from the beginning of primary education to the end of junior secondary school, programmes/initiatives for early childhood care and socialization, educational programmes for the acquisition of functional literacy, numeracy and life skills,

especially for adults (Nigeria, 2000); then a permanent experience can truly be established within nine years.

The problems of sustaining literacy among new literate adults would not arise with the products of **UBE** educational programme. Since **UBE** is compulsory for all Nigeria children, it then means that by the time a child completes his/her junior secondary school education, a functional literacy ability must have been formed and the product will be in good stead to sustain it. It is therefore imperative that our school libraries should be well developed, funded and managed to achieve this laudable objective. There should be no fear to invest in school libraries as such endeavour will be the right step in the right direction.

Objective of the Study

The objective of the research work include the following:

- (a) to find out at what stage in one's life is the foundation of reading habit laid.
- (b) to find out if the stakeholders in education are actually developing school libraries.
- (c) to investigate the major reason(s) for candidates/ students involvement in various examinations malpractices.
- (d) to find out the reason(s) for candidates'/ students' failure in various internal/external examinations.

Statement of the Problem

The universal (free) primary education (UPE) was launched in 1976 by the then Federal Military Government, whereby it was compulsory for parents to send their children to primary school. Any parent or guardian that failed to do this would face the wrath of the law. That was about 30 years ago; but till date, Nigerians are still grouping in the world of darkness because of our poor reading habit. Even though UPE has turned out hundred of thousand of pupils but the problem of bad reading culture has not been truly addressed.

Recently, the Federal Government again launched the

Universal Basic Education (UBE) and parents/guardians are compulsorily mandated to send their children/wards to school up to JSS III with little or no cost. As laudable and realizable this project is, if deserved attention is not given to effective habit formation which will be of immense help to the products (later in life and especially in higher institution) may still be a mirage.

This study is embarked upon to find out the important roles effective school library service play in our schools as a pre-requisite to the formation of credible reading habit.

Significance of the Study

This study when completed will answer the question — “what will be our gains if all schools (primary and secondary) in Nigeria have effective school library service for their students. Also, the result will provide an overall — insight into the contribution effective library services will make to the future educational pursuit of the products of those schools (under investigation) where the library system is effective.

Literature Review

Reading is an important aspect of nation building, but the reading culture of any society depends on the level of the literacy of its people. Wilson and Charmers (1988) opined that reading entails the processing of information in written and printed materials to be able to make meaning out of the printed materials. To Unoh (1991), reading is a complex language processing behaviour that entails interpreting or getting meaning from written or printed materials. Jegede (1991) was of the view that the relationship between reading and thinking for the non-literate is either non-existent or not a reality. Reading is thus intricately woven to the literacy level of any group of individuals.

Reading is the art of reconstructing from the printed pages, the writer’s idea, feelings, mood and sensory impression (Onifade, 2002). Olanlokun (1999) described reading as a

complex activity which links the eyes with the mind to come up with the interpretation and evaluation of written symbols.

Onaiyekan (2001) is of the view that reading is the voluntary education we give ourselves after the classroom teachers have gone home for good. Reading therefore helps to broaden our horizon as far as our surrounding is concerned.

Lexicon Webster Dictionary Encyclopaedic Edition (1980) defined reading as “the action or practice of one who reads, the extent to which one has read literacy knowledge; the recital of recorded words or an interpretation given to anything.”

Reading involves the process of thinking, evaluating, judging, imagining, decision taking and problem solving. According to Unoh (1991) “ the reading process involves both the aquisition of the meanings”. Wilson and Charmers (1988) are also of the same opinion when they expressed that reading entails the processing of information in written and printed materials to be able to make meaning out of the printed materials which Jegede (1991) reinforced that the relationship between reading and thinking for the non-literate is either non-existence or not a reality.

Ementaram (1981) pointed out that reading provides a bank of information and reduces ignorance, thus empowering and promoting literacy and communication. He went further to elucidate that reading increases vocabulary which enhances communicative skills.

Cleaver (1981) commented on the library thus:

“If a house isn’t lived in, then it’s not really a home. And if a child’s toy isn’t played with, then it’s not really a play thing. And if the books in a library aren’t read, then it’s not really a library, libraries exist only because of books and people’s desire to read them, and if people don’t want to read the book there is no point having a library”.

Dike (2001) opined that the school library is a learning laboratory where users developed the skills required for life long learning. It is a workshop for carrying out project and

individual or small group assignments. It lends itself to active and participatory methods, enquiry, team work and problem solving, as advocated in UBE. As a learning laboratory, the library should be buzzing with activity, not silent as a tomb. There should be a separate space for group work.

Dike (2001) refers to the school library as an oasis of informality in a general formal system. Elaturoti (2000) calls it a refuge, a port or all for readers in search of adventure, a tree for children who climb high in the process of discovering life. It is also a place for sharing a gallery for artwork, and an opportunity for relaxation. Hence, the school library should be a comfortable, pleasant environment with informal seating (mats, cushion, soft chairs), a quiet atmosphere for pleasure reading but also with occasion of socialization. The school library should be beautiful - well decorated, comfortable and clean.

According to the world declaration on education for all (UNESCO, 1992) basic learning needs comprise both essential learning tools such as literacy, oral expression, numeracy and problem solving and the basic learning content (such as knowledge, skills, values and attitude) required by human beings to be able to survive, to develop their full capacities to development, to improve the quality of their lives, to make informed decision and to continue learning. The document goes on to state that satisfaction of these needs empower individuals, foster positive value and lays the foundation for life long learning and human development. These sentiments are echoed in the Nigerian Implementation Guidelines (Nigeria, 2000) which gives as its objectives.

- (a) Laying the foundation for life-long learning
- (b) The inculcation of appropriate levels of literacy and numeracy.
- (c) Developing an aptitude for practical work and
- (d) The acquisition of socially desirable life skills.

It was the above educational philosophy which says education should be learner-centered, self-directed, active,

resource-based, skill oriented, functional etc., that brought the school library from the periphery to the centre of education.

The way a man ends a journey will be a reflection of how he started it. The ability to read has long been the hallmark of scholarship and learning and today illiteracy or even functional literacy is a serious handicap and a source of embarrassment (Affia, 1993). For a credible reading culture and a better pursuit of academic laurels in the future, efforts must be geared towards effective school library that will have as its regular feature well structured accommodation, relevant and motivating materials and well-qualified personnel to manage the materials.

Dike (2001) submits that the school library is a learning laboratory per excellence. In the school library, learners find the world of knowledge, interact directly with resources, acquire information literacy and develop research skills for life long learning. The library encourages active and participatory approach to learning. The library environment also facilitates team work and cooperation, sharing and dialogue. Its role in encouraging voluntary reading and personal development through literature is well-known.

Generally speaking, a library is regarded as a place where information materials are acquired, organised, preserved, retrieved and disseminated. However, not all categories of libraries can promote reading culture at our level of discussion in this paper i.e. Primary and Secondary school levels. It means that school libraries must tow a particular line of specification to serve the purpose of reading habit promotion.

A number of authors, among them, Obi (1977), Ogunsheye (2000), Elaturoti (1990) have provided specifications for school library accommodation and furniture. It is generally agreed that a central school library is more effective. This is because, it can offer many more resources and more varied accommodation than a size of two classrooms in a seperate building. Dike (2001) agreed that it should have good natural lighting and ventilation and well landscaped surrounding with flowers and shade.

Methodology

The major instrument used in collecting data for this study was a questionnaire made up of 13 items. Interview and observation methods were also used to complement this. The questionnaire was administered to public servants in Osun State. The respondents were randomly picked hereby giving every subject among the target population the chance of being selected. 450 copies of questionnaire were administered while 410 were returned. Out of those returned, only 400 were found useable consisting 88.8%. The data obtained were analysed using frequencies and simple percentage.

Data Analysis

The demographic information on our respondents showed that 100 respondents or 25% are male while 300 respondents or 75% are females. Their age range also revealed that 50 or 12.5% are between 16-20 years age range. 100 or 25% are between 21-30 years old while 250 or 62.5% are 31 years and above. Tables 1 and 2 give the graphic representation of this finding.

Table 1: Gender Distribution of Respondents.

| Response | Frequency | % |
|-----------------|------------------|------------|
| Male | 100 | 25 |
| Female | 300 | 75 |
| Total | 400 | 100 |

Table 2: Age Distribution of Respondents.

| Response | Frequency | % |
|--------------------|------------------|------------|
| 16-20 years | 50 | 12.5 |
| 21-30 years | 100 | 25.0 |
| 31 years and above | 250 | 62.5 |
| Total | 400 | 100 |

Table 3 below showed the result of respondent's response to the statement that the foundation of good reading habit is laid only at the primary/secondary school levels. 350 of the respondents representing 87.5% agreed with this assertion, while 50 or 12.5% dissented. This finding agreed with the work of Affia (1983) which asserted that the way a man ends a journey will be a reflection of how he started it.

Table 3: The Foundation of Good Reading Habit is Laid Only at Primary / Secondary School Levels.

| Response | Frequency | % |
|-----------------|------------------|------------|
| Agreed | 350 | 87.5 |
| Disagreed | 50 | 12.5 |
| Total | 400 | 100 |

Table 4 below is a graphic representation of respondents reaction to the question whether stakeholders in education are giving school library development deserved attention or not.

Out of 400 respondents that cut across different age range and sexes, 330 or 82.2% agreed that truly, stakeholders in education are not giving school library development deserved attention. Only 70 respondents or 17.5% disagreed.

Table 4: Stakeholders in Education are not Giving School Library Development Deserved Attention.

| Response | Frequency | % |
|-----------------|------------------|------------|
| Agreed | 330 | 82.5 |
| Disagreed | 70 | 17.5 |
| Total | 400 | 100 |

Tables 5 and 6 below revealed respondents' reaction to the issue of mass students' failure at various examinations and their incessant engagement in examination malpractices respectively.

Two hundred and sixty-five of the respondents agreed that students fail various examinations because of their lack of exposure to library culture while 140 or 35% dissented. The implication is that many schools do not have library facility not to talk of encouraging their students to read; where would the reading take place?

In Table 6, 300 or 75% of the respondents agreed that students engage in examination malpractices because they lack reading culture hence, they never got prepared. Only 100 respondents or 25% disagreed. This implied that pupils in our primary and secondary schools needed to be exposed to culture of reading through provision of functioning library services in all these schools.

Table 6: Students Fail Various Examinations Because They Lack Exposure to Library Culture

| Response | Frequency | % |
|-----------------|------------------|------------|
| Agreed | 260 | 65 |
| Disagreed | 140 | 35 |
| Total | 400 | 100 |

Table 6: Students Engage in Examination Malpractices Because They Lack Reading Culture Hence They Never Get Prepared

| Response | Frequency | % |
|-----------------|------------------|------------|
| Agreed | 300 | 75 |
| Disagreed | 100 | 25 |
| Total | 400 | 100 |

Summary of Findings

Information has become a basic resource for all human beings all over the world and it is as important to us as food, good air and rest. Libraries from ages have been indispensable agents of information gathering, organisation, storing, retrieval and dissemination (Ayodeji 2004). Hence, establishment of school libraries where both students and teachers can search for information and update their knowledge is a global event. There is no way a society can progress without acquiring the relevant information for development. There is no way a school can fulfill its educational objectives and give its pupils a good start in life without establishing a good school library to serve both learners and teachers.

Through this study, it has been established that the foundations of good reading habit is laid only at primary/secondary school levels. This agreed with the finding of Affia (1983) which submitted that the way a man ends a journey is a reflection of how he started it. Hence, the issue of library development in our schools should be taken more serious than what we are seeing today.

With 330 or 82.5% of the respondents agreeing that stakeholders in education are not giving school library development deserved attention it needed, the government and other agents of education need to gear up and live up to expectation in the bid to turn around the reading habit of the populace through better investment in school library development.

Majority of the respondent, 65% to be precise agreed with the fact that students fail in major examinations these days because they lack exposure to library culture. What many of our students in primary and secondary schools are exposed to are incessant pleasure derived in home videos; other are exposed to street trading — for children from less privileged homes. Engagement in examination malpractices due to lack of reading culture also drew position reactions from the respondents. Seventy-five percent of the respondents agreed

with this view and this agrees with the findings of Olu-Aderounmu (2004) to the effect that the National Teachers Institute (NTI) in 1983 at its second examination recorded cancellation of results of 3,385 candidates who cheated in 1985; 2,230 in 1986 and 947 who also cheated in 1987.

Suggestions and Recommendations

I wish to make the following suggestions vis-a-vis recommendations for the betterment of school library service in our society:

Library establishment must be given a prime of place in our schools from kindergarten to secondary school, so that pupils will be exposed to reading right from their childhood.

Library buildings must be made beautiful, well located and with good ventilation. Children hate discomfort and they always go for what is easy and enjoyable.

The facilities within the library such as reading tables and chairs must be well constructed and look modern. Shelves must be decent and painted in bright colours while the library must be well lighted and the floor rugged or at least carpeted.

Library lesson must be included in the curriculum where pupils will be given library books to read and summarize. They can be asked to state the author, title, theme and the lesson learnt inside an exercise book specially designed for such purpose. When pupils get to junior secondary school, such story books (a little advance) can be given to them for a period of one to two weeks for similar exercise.

A sizeable percentage of the holding of any school library should be on prose which stimulate reading in children. Such books as Lewis Carrol's "Alice is Wonderland" and "Through the looking glass" or Rudyard Kipling's lyric poems. It is in childhood that every individual's path to greatness or misery is made.

School authorities can from time to time solicit for the assistance of PTA and community leaders to donate literary

books to the school library. They must be specific in their request and highlight the purpose.

In Nigeria, the Nigerian School Library Association has recommended that the designation "school librarian" be used for professionals, para-professionals and teacher librarians. A minimum qualification of Diploma in library science is recommended for school librarian in primary schools and Bachelor degree for Librarians in the secondary schools. School Librarian with higher qualifications such as Master degree should be attracted to work in our secondary schools and zonal schools libraries.

Tertiary institutions should include library courses in their programme vis-a-vis curriculum so that graduates in library science with another cognate combination would be produced who will take up appointments in our school as teacher librarians or school librarians.

Box library method to be adopted in Nigeria schools. In this project, every classroom from primary three and above will have a wooden box which contained at least as many different books as there were children in the class. The wooden box is designed so that it serves as a book shelf during the days, but could be closed and locked up after school hours. Each box library has interesting story books on one shelf and simple but attractive non-fiction books on the other shelf.

Sustained silent reading period should be introduced as recommended by Abe (1985). There is plenty of opportunity for the children to borrow books during this period READ (in South Africa) provides reading charts which could be hanged on the walls where the children record the books they have read.

Posters and children's drawings showing the rules for caring for books should be hanged on the classroom walls. Children should be taught about the parts of book — the cover, spine, title page, etc., so also the author and the illustrator of the book.

Reading will be made exciting when books available in children's library are well written, colourful and beautifully illustrated. Second-hand books must be rejected and dusty, old books should be weeded or thrown out.

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