

Promoting Reading Through The use of Book Talk, Story books and book mobile Among Children in Selected Schools in Lagos Mainland.

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Abstract

This paper is the findings from existing literature on the mechanics of using book talks, story books and book mobile to stimulate reading and the steps necessary in developing good reading culture in children. This work is an action research work carried out in selected primary schools in Lagos Mainland area of Lagos State. It has so far been established that the use of story hour, book talk and readers' club is making impact in promoting reading and good reading culture among children. This is evident from the satisfaction expressed by teachers, parents and teacher-librarians on the first phase of this research, after which books were freely given out to children followed with questionnaire that was administered to get reactions on their view about the challenges and joy of reading books.

The paper therefore recommend ways by which teacher- librarians, parents and government can encourage children to develop good reading culture starting with simple picture story books. A continuous exercise on book talk and introduction of book mobile could make book more accessible to develop reading in other to inculcate good reading culture in children thereby bringing back book to sustain education.

Keywords: Reading culture, book talk, story book, book mobile, School Children

Introduction

From the Roman Empire, book has been a thing of joy to acquire and read as the increase of readers' population became enormous for the love of reading. Reading was a thing of pride and affluence that elites circulated and exchanged books among themselves. Gutenberg's development of printing machine in the fifteen century enhanced publications and printing of more titles, thus anxious readers put much pressure on the printing industries that more titles were printed to answer to the yearning of the elites.

To a large extent, there is much difference in the fascinating similarities of love for reading then which is now contrary to the reading culture of today, Johnson, (2010). Reading is a powerful tool of communication without words being said. At the evolution of reading this tool was appreciated and peace was then maintained. Reading develops the brain for good imagination,

taking a reader far away from his domain. According to Oyewunmi, and Ebijuwa(2009), reading and its advantages is known to Africans but there were challenges like environmental dislocation, ethnic clashes and poverty among other factors which deprived them of reading during the colonial era. All these in addition to poverty platform were the bases of low reading culture among the natives. This is identified as a cultural problem that has reduced African to an oral culture people who love to talk and interact with one another rather than reading book Commeyras, (2001). It is a common knowledge that one cannot give what he does not have, apparently since parents do not have good reading culture it cannot be passed to the children, also that charity begins from home. An average market woman on the street who does not have time for reading cannot pass reading culture to her children neither can the educated ones who are busy with collar jobs having no time to read after the needed exams is passed and done with have the reading habit that children can emulate.

However time is of essence, according to Olubor and Osunde (2007) time is one of the most important human resources available to individuals and families irrespective of their socio-cultural, economic and intellectual backgrounds. Parents need time to read and display the joy, love and thirst for reading in order to encourage their children to emulate them and develop good reading culture.

Therefore if reading is well developed in children, it can form part of an individual to become a man who feels incomplete without reading in a day: at such a habit is formed to the extent that it may be very difficult to break. The art of reading could be an interesting experience for children if they are properly guided and nurtured to reading. A reading habit cultivated at tender age in life helps the child to grow into an independent adult with great imagination that can breed ingenuity. Mtshweni (2003), Okoro (2004), opined that reading book will be of immense advantage for children if introduced to the art of reading early in life, especially at preschool age which is best done by parents at bed time. Also it is essential that children are led to the library to pick books as going shopping having cultivated the love for reading.

As school librarians, our job is to promote reading for lifelong learning in children by providing books for different age status regardless of location. Thereby books can be taken to remote areas to develop and meet the need of the natives. The present trend of digital age of e-book is posing great challenges on good reading habit as children are more exposed to electronic devices mostly for games than physical book. It is an era of web 2.0 a direction of digital library services where the brick walls of the library has been broken by information superhighway; but suffice it to say not all citizenry can afford the tools for assessing the information in these media. Therefore the librarian is still the supper link between book and the readers as information provider.

The scourge of e-books and e-reader, television, e-games is a problem which slows down reading book and affects the opportunity of developing vocabulary which is a key advantage in reading. Reading and read along programme enable children to know better pronunciations and punctuation. However the dearth of physical books in libraries due to reduced budget must be managed to balance good reading habit and bring back book to sustain education. It is these

challenges that this paper intends to resolve to explore if the use of book talk, story books and book mobile could promote reading among school children in Nigeria schools.

Literature Review

Promoting reading among children is faced with challenges that are not peculiar to Nigeria. According to the British Broadcasting Corporation News (2005) book is often difficult and expensive to acquire by individuals, this reduces availability of book to be read. Reading book is not well taken because of environmental setting in Africa; few African countries including Nigeria are accredited as having low significant book trade unlike developed countries. Dean and Dan (2009) opined that poor reading habit could also be due to dearth of books in the library, long distance to the library location, library setting and library service in addition to parental financial capability to buy books. However regardless of distance and dwindling budget library must make book available to reader who reads for different purposes. Onwubiko (1998) identified that people read for pleasure, for information and for knowledge. Readers far distance to library location, environmental pollution and crises around library location, static library traditional service in addition to other challenges cannot promote good reading habit. It is therefore pertinent to improve library services with new innovation that will help adults' love for book so as to factor ways to develop children reading habit through the use of book talk, story books and book mobile.

Children are very inquisitive always ready to explore at every available opportunity. At their age they imagine what is making the sound in a box and will like to see who is making that noise or talking in radio, television and phones. This shows that children like to know and get information to satisfy their curiosity. They tend to be informed this shows why they love information books in other to expand their knowledge. Literacy educators know that children like to read information books (Ramos 2012, Doiron, 2003) at every opportunity children like to have a glimpse of the unknown. If children are given adequate instruction on how to explore the wealth of ideas and information from books it will develop their inbuilt urge for knowledge which can be channelled towards reading book.

Book talk literacy programme is one of the key ways of encouraging children to read book. This may include reading to children while they hold same book title to follow as the instructor reads on. Doiron (1999) is of the opinion that children may be missing out where information book are not used in book talk and also giving out to children to read. In collaborating Doiron' opinion, at the first phase of this research, books were given out to children during book talk programme. As we do the talking we observed they were eager to read the books in their hands. It was intentional as we wish to stimulate their interest and channel their love to reading and see if they will read the book if eventually given to them. We did some read along with them and stopped before getting to the concluding part of the first story, then instructed them to finish it up before our next meeting with them. This they did and produced good result. It was observed that children love reading information book over and again if it gives them a view of their dream thus the books were left with the children as donation to their school library.

Promoting children reading using story book

Giving out story book to the children was to lunch out and sees the effect of using story book to promote reading habit in children. The use of story book in promoting reading takes joint efforts of the parents, teacher and the teacher –librarian, they are to help in motivating children to read. To a large extent, government can develop and use library to disseminate storybook to children to encourage reading culture. According to Musabe (2012) the deputy director general in the Rwanda Education Board, provision of storybooks and education material to children will help improve reading culture among children, that contracts were signed with publishers to deliver storybooks, learning and teaching materials to schools through mobile libraries. Children read what is of interest to them such as story that is purposeful and life motivating experience of mentors or action packed story that is of life benefit. This will motivate a reader in children. A researched conclusion about learning according to Roger (2013) shows that student will put in the time and energy necessary to learn if they are interested in what they are reading and if they can relate to it. This explains the fact that no particular story book title should be imposed on children. To motivate children to read is a big task which involves serious observation on the part of the guardian before picking story books for children.

Children spend more hours at home; therefore it presupposes that they spend more time with their parents than with the teachers at school hours. Parent must create time to ignite the art of reading in their children, read along methods to develop their toddlers' speech and encourage vocabulary and pronunciation. They are also to complement the teachers' efforts in children of school age to read the assigned books as given from school. Finding time to read with children is an important part of developing literacy skills for all kids. According to Carol (2013) it is important for parents to be good reader, for kids who see their parents reading are likely to imitate them and become readers too!

Also school librarian must go out of the traditional waiting service delivery to creative result oriented services possibly taking the library to users. These include book mobile, symposium, book week, library club etc since school library is more than a store house for books or a mere reading room. Bacon (2006) described a library as an organised collection of books and other materials (both print and non-print) used for study, research, recreation and a repertoire of knowledge. There is no gain saying that knowledge is power and books of course are full of knowledge which must be professionally disseminated by librarians in which ever creative manner. The task of encouraging positive reading interest and sustaining a love for reading which will in turn promote a reading habit is a task for librarians. This is where the school and public libraries should take charge of their local community to promote reading through diverse methods that encourage reading. The unique role of school and public libraries is that they are fundamental to the development of literacy which should manifest in a viable reading habit. This in turn provides a background for a lifelong learning process. Philip (2009) observed that reading habit is the link between libraries and literacy development. That once people develop the reading habit, they will come to the libraries looking for books. In the words of Oyewunmi and

Ebijuwa (2011) as quoted from Kalago (2010) posted that to sustain a viable reading habit among the populace, there is the need for libraries to get books to the reach of those who need them. Building new library in different communities may not suffice for her clam because the effect of the dwindling economy. In Nigeria worsening economic situation has left many construction project uncompleted or totally abandoned. Therefore building libraries around communities may become a case of white elephant which in turn will ruin the little available resources. It can therefore be argued that established libraries should develop ways of moving library to users without moving the building; by creating a new initiative of how to make users patronise them and being in hot demand for their products which include appropriate literacy campaign, collections, book talk, and taking books to users through bookmobile.

BOOK MOBILE PROMOTES READING

According to Wikipedia, bookmobile is a mobile form of transporting books to prospective users. This can be used as a library, an animal (camel in Kenya, donkey in Siberia) saddle with moving books to users in mountainous areas or a canoe to serve users in reverie areas. It is designed to hold books on shelves such that the vehicle is parked for users to access books therein to borrow and read. It is also referred to as mobile library which are often used to provide library services to villages and suburbs communities that have no library buildings.

This suffices to say that library need not be built all over every community because a functional library is the answer for fostering reading and as a tool for societal development.

Bookmobile has long being established and still in use in developed countries, The British Workman and Warrington perambulating library were established in 1857 and 1858 respectively. It was to service group of users who have difficulty in accessing libraries; such as residents of old people's home, people in remote areas to bridge cultural differences and to elites who could not visit the library due to work schedule are served at break time. Today bookmobile service has being improved and extended to all; school children, inmates, children in remind homes etc. Musabe (2012) opined that with bookmobiles books and education materials can be delivered to homebound people and distant schools through the library extension services.

CHALLENGES OF BOOKMOBILE SERVICES IN NIGERIA

- i. Lack of awareness campaign for promoting reading habit among children is a neglected task by librarians and all stakeholders in education arena.
- ii. Bookmobiles were in use, operated by libraries, schools, activists, and other organizations up till 1970s but for some counter opinions bookmobile is seen as an outdated service
- iii. Reasons like love for library, high costs of running bookmobile, advanced technology, disrupted bookmobile service
- iv. Lack of continuity of projects such that different government enact new rules that were not in favour of library and its extension services
- v. Lack of freedom and working tools for librarians to improvise and innovate accordingly

- vi. Also that the running of bookmobile service may be more costly than building new branch libraries due to economic meltdown.

METHODOLOGY

The focus of this research project is to explore the use of book talk, story books and book mobile in selected primary schools and demonstrate how these strategies can be used to increase student motivation to read. The intent of this research is to examine the following:

1. Find out the reading habits of the children
2. Ascertain how story books, book talk and book mobile can be utilised in a reading program
3. find out the extent at which children are motivated by book talk, story books and book mobile
4. ascertain teachers and librarians' view on the role of book talk, story books and book mobile in promoting reading and reading culture among primary school children

This study aimed to answer the question: What is the experience of primary school children in using book talk, story books and book mobile in promoting reading?

A case study approach was useful for this type of research because this research can illustrate situations in which book talk, story books and book mobile have successfully been implemented in schools. The study was carried out on group of students and event for a defined period of time. Questionnaire was used in capturing the experiences of the children as they used story books and book talk as well as bookmobile in their school and environment.

Sample and Sample Size

The sample consisted of 50 students, ages 7-12. The site was two elementary public schools in Lagos mainland. Ten teachers (5 from each school) and two librarians were interviewed on their perception on the use of book talk, story hour and book mobile in promoting reading among school children in Nigeria.

Biographical Data of Respondents

At the two schools the teacher-librarian and library assistance helped in distributing the questionnaire after the book talk program, same were collected back instantly. Therefore with proper orientation all the questionnaires were fully answered and returned in all the schools

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Findings and Discussion

A total number of 50 questionnaires making 25 in each school were administered. Thirty two (64 %) of the respondents were boys while eighteen (30%) were girls. This indicates that there are more boys in public primary school in Mainland primary schools in Lagos State. The data collected for the study also revealed that 6 (12.0%) of the total respondents were between 7-8 years of age, 29 (58%) respondents were between the ages of 9-10; while only 15 (30%) respondents were between the ages of 11-12 years.

In all 3(6.0%) were in primary II, 6(12%) were in primary IV; 26(52%) were in primary V and 15(30%) in primary VI respectively.

Table 1: PUPIL READING HABIT

Reading Daily	Frequency	Percentage	Ranking
Read Story Book	23	46%	1 st
Play	15	30%	2 nd
Watch Television	12	24%	3 rd
Total	50	100%	

As shown in table 1 above, all the respondents from Lagos mainland area engaged in one programme or the other that shows the level of their daily reading habit. As indicated 23(46%) do like to read and read story book daily while 15(30%) enjoy playing all day and 12(24%) enjoy to glue to watch television at home. The percentage that enjoy reading express that they pick the story books from the school library as encouraged by their school librarian. However the other sets of respondents who do not read regret to say that their parents do not give them the chance to finish up with the books at home. That in the process they lost the books and stop going to the library.

Table 2: READING AMONG PUPILS/ CHILDREN

Statement	Frequency	%	Ranking
During library hour	18	36%	1 st
During book club hour	13	26%	2 nd
During school holiday periods	3	6%	5 th
During Summer school	10	20%	3 rd
During week end	1	2%	6 th
After school	5	10%	4 th
Total	50	100%	

As indicated in table 2 above, reading in the library is rated higher 18(36%) in first position as promoting reading among children. Reading has to do with book which is synonymous to library; this explains the place of library as a conclusive arena where books are made available to readers regardless of economic situation.

Since school library is the custodian of relevant books and information material (story books and school academic stationary) pupils find it appropriate to constantly read in the library. Reading regularly during book club hour is followed with 13(26%) respondents in the second place. It suffices to say that children enjoy being monitored and then they become more compliant to instructions. Reading during summer holiday indicated 10 (20%) this is another good place that

motivate respondent reading daily. While the percentage of respondents that read after school 5(10%) and those that read at the week-end 1 (2%) is in the 5th position.

Table 3:

EXTENT AT WHICH PUPIL ENJOY BOOKTALK, STORY BOOK AND BOOKMOBILE

Statement	Frequency	Percentage	Ranking
Book Talk	13	26%	3 rd
Reading Story Book	21	42%	1 st
Having Bookmobile	16	32%	2 nd
Total	50	100%	

The above table shows that the respondents 13 (26%) enjoy book talk mostly when they are introduced to book, read along programmes and how to read. This yield good result as larger percentage of respondents 21(42%) enjoys reading story books which will launch them to being good readers, 16(32%) indicated that they enjoy bookmobile as it will enable them have easy access to story books around their vicinity.

Recommendation

Learn to read in order to read to learn. This is no more gain saying that children who are mentored to read from tender age advance better in life and are faster in knowledge and exposure. Reading books is an interactive way of decoding printed letters to gain meaningful interpretation of information thereby communicating. There is need for school libraries to devise effective means of promoting reading among the pupils in other to bring back the love for book. School library are custodian of school information resources therefore librarians must make effort to take the book back to the pupils through book talks, provision of storybook, reading competition among schools in each local council and book exhibition.

There is the willingness for discovery in every child; therefore this act should be channelled towards good use by introducing book to children at tender age. Dan and Dean (2009) encouraged introducing book to babies. As librarians they introduce ‘Babies Book Club’ where they rewrite their library mission statement, organised programs where mothers come with their babies to reading club and organise reading competition among babies.

School librarian should devise means to repackge library services for awareness and service delivery which must be an effective means of promoting reading culture. Book clubs should be set up in schools and communities to develop the love for book to encourage kids to reading, making books of interest available and easily accessible to kids through bookmobile. Also there should be campaign to book lovers, book publishing houses and philanthropists who may be ready to give back to the society by donating story books and sponsor literacy programs that will boost reading.

Companies should be encouraged to partner with school libraries that in turn will be exposed to wealth of advantages by advertising their products on every library material (consumables) as sponsored. In all, librarians should not be tired or undaunted to reach out to the society and the government for support.

Parents must learn to bring their children close by reading with them as a way of developing good reading habits in their children .Laura Justice and Johan Kaderavek (2002) suggested that parents should encourage their children to be actively involved in shared reading in order to develop their skills and emergent literacy. Choosing eye catching story book for toddler will boost the love for book while children sense for curiosity will drive him or her to reading as parents read to them. Children should be giving freedom to flip through the pages of the story book to develop them on how to handle book. It is patient to monitor what children are reading and should be given the space to read. Sharing storybook to read develop good reading habit.

CONCLUSION

Bringing back the book is a big task that is faced with challenges of the digital era where children chat online, play e-games that are easily accessed through handheld devices, also economic situation is sending book publishers parking and or publishing less quality story books. Parents are giving less attention to monitor and mentor their children; these have greatly affected the standard of education.

Different positive steps should be taken to motivate the return of books and good reading habit to the society in other to improve standard of education and also have a well informed society. Improved economic situation will bring book publishers back with good quality publications rather than going abroad to publish. A well stocked school library with standard interesting books managed by professional librarian with well packaged creative ideas will motivate reading among school children to bringing back the love for book.

Companies, individuals in the society and the local government councils should partner with school library in all ways to see to making children read thereby develop an informed society. There must be a return of bookmobile service to make book available and easily assessable. Bookmobile was in Nigeria but went to oblivion in the 70s, in America bookmobile started around 1904 and its still on , Kenya started in 1996 with 2 camels now having 8 camels to serve more areas, library ship is practiced in Western Norway; these are efforts to extend library services in other to make an informed society.

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