CATCH THEM YOUNG: THE LIBRARIANS CONCERN

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Abstract
Education is vital in the development of a nation. The axiom "catch them young" expresses the desire to train, cater, support and guild children early in life to develop love for education in order to become lifelong learners. This is a paramount concern to librarians in school libraries to meet the intrinsic fact in nation building. The study explore literatures on school library as an integral part of education, ICT skills and competencies of librarian in the modern school libraries, Using ICT to enhance the early childhood learning environment, Reading habit as a means of lifelong learning, Application of behaviour theory on early childhood education. The study finally advocated for allocation of adequate fund in the running of school libraries, provision of relevant and adequate information resources, equipment of school libraries with ICT facilities and employment of professional librarians and, or, media specialist to direct and coordinate the activities of the school libraries.

Introduction

Education is the root of modern civilisation. For any nation to grow, there is need to promote, standardize and strengthen education system. However, the library have actively function as a catalyst for modern civilisation which have helped to spread knowledge in all stages of education through acquiring, processing, organizing and dissemination of information resources in both print and non-print resources. Therefore, for any nation to produce patriotic and responsible citizens; they need to focus attention on how best to develop and promote school libraries in order to inculcate the children with reading habit and basic study skills which will enable them become lifelong learners. Thereof, the library bestowed with such responsibility is the school library.

School library as an integral part of education

The school library is the type of libraries established in primary and secondary school, which is saddled with the responsibility to cater, train, support and provide information needs of pupils, students and staff of the school. IFLA/UNESCO (2006) describes the school library as a centre of learning that provides information and ideas that are fundamental to functioning successfully in today's information and knowledge-based society. The school libraries have distinct collections such as books, periodicals, educational media, study kits, realia, computers, instructional materials, etc. These information resources serve as viable tool for teaching,

learning and recreational activities. McAlbert et al (2015) asserts that some of the critical functions/central roles which a school library would be expected to perform are promoting learning, supporting school curriculum, expanding resources to support teaching and learning skills, offering professional advice on development and knowledge of appropriate teaching and learning materials in traditional and emerging forms (digital and non-digital).

The relevance of school library is essential to children academic growth, thereby building in them a great desire to discover themselves early in life. The World Bank (2008) describes how effective school libraries can be as "they provide additional reading opportunities for students, which in turn improve reading skills, comprehension and writing clarity of expressions, which in turn support student performance in all other curriculum subjects. According to IFLA/UNESCO (2002) school library offers learning services, books and resources that enable all members of the school community to become critical thinkers and effective users of information in all formats and media. Also the school library supports inquiry and ensures that learners are effective and ethical users and producers of information (SLA, 2012).The role of the school library, is therefore fundamental in the stimulation of learning skills, creative and reflective thinking, and more importantly, independent self-learning (Ogwu, 2010).

However, lack of professional school librarians, poor funding and infrastructural development of school libraries in Nigeria have been in the state of quagmire. As Edoka (2000) assert that in many developing countries, there are very few school libraries and the information resources in those that exist is scanty ".Sturges and Neill (2004) describes school libraries in Africa as being neglected and "Even where some semblance of a school library exists, it is frequently inadequately staffed, with an appallingly sparse collection, and is thus marginal in terms of its impact on the teaching-learning process." Aniebo (2006) indicated in his findings that school libraries in Imo state lack accommodation, materials, and funds, as well as trained staff to manage the libraries. Idiegbeyan-Ose and Okoedion (2012) in a study they carried out on the state of school libraries in Benin City, Nigeria made the same observation. It is an obvious fact, that the school libraries are not well funded, they lack staff (Librarians/Media specialist) and adequate information resources. Therefore, in realization of this axiom "Catch them young" tremendous effort should be made by all stakeholders in education to catch the interest of children in reading in education.

ICT skills and competencies of librarians in the modern school libraries
Acquisition of information and communication technology (ICT) skills and competencies of school librarians in the provision of library and information services is a necessity in the digital environment, especially now that most children are highly inquisitive on the demand of an improved system. School libraries in Nigeria need to employ ICT in their libraries to facilitate information services and also meet the global standard of information service delivery. In this digital environment, librarians must possess adequate ICT skills to manage the modern

school libraries. They need to acquire and undergo continuous training, knowledge and skills on the new emerging technologies to provide better library services to their user community.

In the changing information age, school librarians have to gain extensive knowledge and training of emerging technologies and also improve their skills to manage these technologies. This calls for high demand of competencies for librarians in handling and functioning actively to meet the information needs of the Net generation. These skills include: micro office packages, Internet and database searching, information retrieval techniques, use of social media and mobile technology in learning, use of bibliographic software packages, electronic file maintenance and familiarity with local automated systems. School libraries have to embrace these emerging technologies and librarians need to be equipped with skills and competencies to enable them manage information more widely and, in turn, transfer these skills to the users appropriately.

Using ICT to enhance the early childhood learning environment
The introduction of ICT in learning environment is tantamount to the academic performance of children. Its application will helps to improve the pedagogical skills of teachers in imparting knowledge to children, and also build a more effective learning environment. Chan, (2002) assert that it will help to promote stronger links between schools and the community, and empower students. Critics of ICT use by young children tend to take the view that ICT encourages children to be passive recipients, that it is isolating, or that young children cannot learn effectively through these kinds of experiences (Siraj-Blatchford and Whitebread, 2003). In contrast, Bolstad (2004) asserts that many other authors consider that ICT holds many potential benefits for young children, and that when used appropriately, ICT can:

> support children's cognitive and emotional development, and the development of social and co-operative skills;

> assist in the emergence of early literacy and mathematical thinking;

> "level the playing field" for children with special learning needs;

> enhance and strengthen relationships between children and adults, or give adults new ways to gain insight into children's thinking or their interests, thereby providing opportunities to better support and scaffold children's learning; and

> facilitate the emergence of "new literacies" or "multiliteracies" in children (Hill and Broadhurst, 2001; Pastor and Kerns, 1997).

Lim (2005) found that the use of ICT in teaching and learning allowed students to be active in finding information and build knowledge from information obtained by the chance to cross-link between knowledge of subjects without restricted by time and distance. Siraj-Blatchford and Whitebread (2003) assert that:

> The use of ICT in the early years has the potential to enhance educational opportunities for young children. It can be applied in a developmentally appropriate manner to encourage purposeful and

exploratory play. It can encourage discussion, creativity, problem solving, risk taking and flexible thinking, and this can all be achieved in a play-centred and responsive environment. However, all of this does demand that practitioners are well trained and skilled in the appropriate uses of ICT with young children.

The use of ICT in learning is fundamental to children's learning environment, when use appropriately it will to develop their learning and cognitive abilities. Bolstad (2004) present the three reasons why ICT matters in early childhood education. First, ICT already has an effect on the people and environments that surround young children's learning. Second, these technologies offer new opportunities to strengthen many aspects of early childhood education practice. Third, there is support and interest across the whole education sector for the development and integration of ICT into education policy, curriculum, and practice. In schools where new technologies are used, students have access to tools that adjust to their attention span and provide valuable and immediate feedback for literacy enhancement, which is currently not fully implemented in the Nigerian school system (Emuku and Emuku, 1999 and 2000). Therefore, effort need to be intensify to develop ICTs in schools in order to inculcate in young minds the right approach towards quality education and maintaining of global standard in education.

Reading habit as a means of lifelong learning

Acquisition of reading habit is the basic foundation of student's development and knowledge advancement. Reading habits is the process of habitual seeking of knowledge in different information resources for self development. Sangkaeo (1999) described reading habit as the behavour which expresses the likeness of reading of individual, types of reading and tastes of reading. It is a process of imbibing a positive attitude and regular zeal in reading of information resources. Obada (2011) asserts that reading habit is the cultivation of an attitude and the possession of skills that makes reading pleasurable, regular and a consistent activity. The rudimentary process in which students develop a culture of reading is through imbibing a habit to read. Therefore, exposing the Net generation early to reading is the necessary step in building a foundation which leads to a responsible life and patriotic citizenry.

Engaging children early to reading will help to build their self confidence, self control, emotional intelligence and awareness of the happenings around the world. Therein, placing the right information materials is the basic step to increase their appreciation and interest in reading. So the school library is shouldered with great responsibility of acquiring suitable information resources that meets the levels curriculum. The promotion of reading habit should be a paramount concern of school librarians so as to provide effective and efficient access to information services and resources that will aid and develop students' academic pursuit (Oriogu, 2015). Also he maintains that schools should equip students with the skills of learning to read and reading to learn to improve their overall capacity for life-long learning and whole-person development. Developing reading habit is a

necessity in the life of every young mind which will enable them progress in the course of life. Children develop the skills of reading and gain the habit of reading predominantly in primary school and it becomes very difficult to gain this habit in adulthood (Palmer et al., 1994; Mete, 2012).

Application of behaviour theory on early childhood education

The behavioural theory was propounded by Ivan Pavlov and B.F. Skinner in the year 1957. The theory operates on the principle of "stimulus-response." Where the learner response to environmental stimuli. The learner starts off as a clean slate (i.e. tabula rasa) and behaviour is shaped through positive reinforcement or negative reinforcement. Both positive reinforcement and negative reinforcement increase the probability that the antecedent behaviour will happen again (www.learning-theories.com).   According to Dewald (1999) B.F. Skinner is well known for his extraordinary work such as experimentation with animals in his so called "Skinner Box". He believed that if we could change the behaviour of a rat which is an animal, then human behaviour could also be changed. To behaviorists, man's actions should be controlled (Liu and Mathew, 2005). In other words, man is in fact like an animal and he has no choice but to adapt to the environment (Zimmer, 1999). According to Winkler (2003), Watson a behavioural psychologist claims that, "he could turn the creature into any type of specialist, might select a doctor, lawyer, artist…….even into beggar-man and thief." So mankind can be remanufactured to behave properly.

In the view of Stanic (2015) operant conditioning, bases its theory on the environmental conditions that shape behaviours by the addition or subtraction of rewards or punishment that leave either a desired or undesired effect on the subject. She also stated that through the use of rewards and punishment, good behaviour can be reinforced and strengthened while bad or undesired behaviour can be eliminated. Skinner used his invention the 'Skinner Box' to demonstrate the effects of operant conditioning on rats and pigeons through the use of levers and electric currents to condition their behaviours (McLeod, 2013).
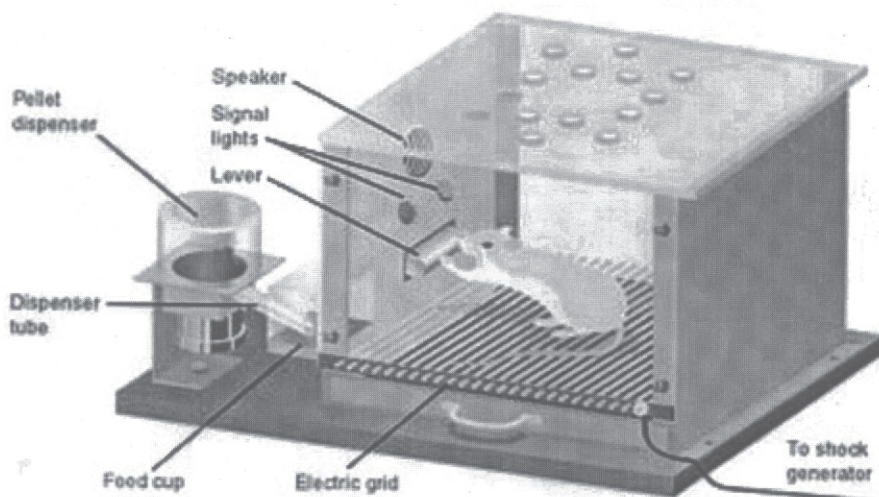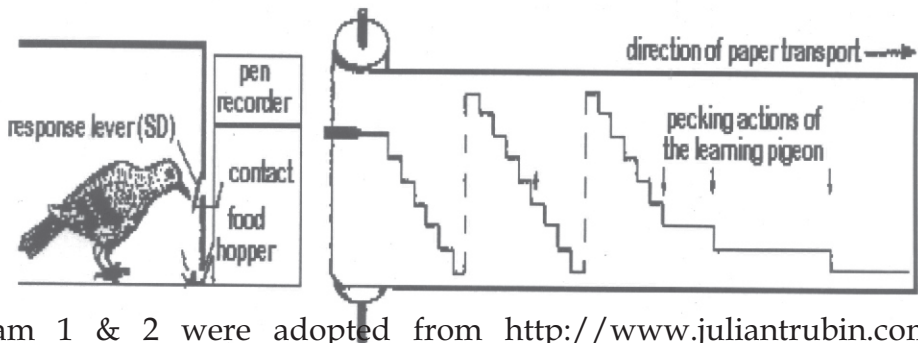
Diagram 1 & 2 were adopted from http://www.juliantrubin.com/bigten/skinnerbox.htmland Faryadi (2007)

Anaeto, Onabajo and Osifeso (2012) outlines the assumptions and principle of the behaviour theory as follows:

1. Changes in human behaviour are the result of individual response to event (Stimuli) that occur in the environment
2. The internal states could influence behaviour as external stimuli
3. We develop responses to certain stimuli that are not naturally occurring
4. People mould their behaviour after that of the dramatis personae

In the school library setting, behaviorism implies the dominance of the librarian in molding the behaviour of students to effectively cultivate reading habit, study habit and use of the library. However, when children are early exposed to love books both in print and non-print resources, it will increase their interest to read and study, which becomes part of their daily life. Therefore, the school librarian has a great role to play in the life of pupils and students in developing their interest to read and imbibe good study habit which will make them become lifelong learners. Also, Anaeto, Onabajo and Osifeso (2012) assert that behaviorism is relevant mainly to habit development and the 'substrate' (or 'condition') of learning. The behavioural school of thought believes that learning occur as a result of the organism responding to, or operating on, its environment. Therein, when children are exposed to the library early, it will part of them and also help them to have high love for education and culture their life pattern to become lifelong learners. Exposing children to reading early, is the foundation to their academic growth, because when they have been imbibed with reading culture; it will tenaciously be part of them even to adulthood. There early culturing of children towards reading will help to have great love and interest to education.

Conclusion and Recommendations

School library is a gateway to expose children to knowledge through building in them the love for books and reading. The school library is an integral part of educational system. This should be encouraged at early stage of every child. However, "Catch them Young" is the motto of the school libraries which have been inscribed in the minds of school librarian to build knowledge society. The following recommendations were made;

a. Adequate funds should be provided to school libraries to enable them to embark on the development and maintenance of school library.

b. School libraries should be equipped with adequate and relevant information resources that are tailored towards teaching and learning.

c. School administrators should see the library as a necessity in the development and improvement of learning and teaching.

d. School libraries should be equipped with ICT facilities in order to enable children to meet up with the global standard of learning.

e. Professional school librarians and, or media specialist should be employed to direct and coordinate the activities of the school library and media centers.

f. Use of Library and study skills should be introduced in school curriculum in order to equip children with skills and knowledge to help them become lifelong learners.

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