

School Library and Reading Culture Promotion among Secondary School Students in Nigeria

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Abstract

Reading is a basic life skill needed by an individual throughout one's life. Recognizing the importance of reading and the decline in reading culture, this study aims to give an overview of the school library services towards promoting reading habits of the school children through number of ways and equip them with all the necessary guides to understand and make effective use of the library and its resources in their studies. The role of library cannot be over emphasized when it comes to promotion of reading culture as it offers diverse services to users of information resources. Various ways on how to encourage the children to love and make use of the library resources which includes film shows, storytelling, plays, participating in library week etc. were discussed. Similarly, current global Information and communication Technologies (ICT) which have extended the school libraries beyond mere collection of books to the provision of variety of media learning resources, were also discussed. Problems of effective school library services together with necessary recommendations were also highlighted.

Keywords: *Reading, Reading Culture, School Libraries, Library users, Children*

Introduction

The school library provides information and ideas that are fundamental to functioning successfully in today's information and knowledge-based society. The school library equips students with life-long learning skills and develops the imagination, enabling them to live as responsible citizens (School Library Manifesto 1999). Children constitute the most important segment of the larger society and are seen as symbols of progress and development in Nation's building. Children ought to have been given the right access to education and be educated at all levels so as to be able to eventually grow into future adults who will in turn be charged with the responsibility of the continual development and survival of the nation. The educational development of a child starts right from the primary school through secondary education and eventually to higher/tertiary education.

The primary and secondary education formed the bases of the educational advancement of the children. And in order to achieve this, the development of primary and secondary education has to include consideration of the establishment and development of a well-equipped school library, which will provide necessary materials to complement teaching and learning activities in the schools. A library can be defined as a collection of printed and non-printed materials, organized and kept for reading, studying and consultation (Itsekor & Nwokeoma, 2017). According to Fotalib (2015),

a library is an institution responsible for the acquisition, organization and storage of recorded knowledge in various media for study, research and consultation. A library is therefore a room or a building where print and non-print information resources are acquired, organized and made available for use.

A school library is one of the types of Libraries which is the main focus of this write-up. The term “school library” as defined by Aguolu (2002), refers to those libraries, established as integral parts of primary and secondary schools, with the objective of providing the instructional materials to enrich the curriculum, to supplement textbooks and classroom instructions, and to give students unlimited opportunities for learning, while Harrod and Leonard (1980) on their part defined school library as an organized collection of books placed in a school for the use of teachers and pupils, but usually for pupils under the management of a professionally qualified school librarian or teacher librarian. It is further described as a physical and digital learning space, within the school, where reading, inquiry, research, thinking, imagination, and creativity are central to students’ information-to-knowledge journey and to their personal, social, and cultural growth. This physical and digital place is known by several terms such as, school media centre, centre for documentation and information, library resource centre, library learning commons) but school library is the term most commonly used and applied to the facility and functions (Barbara & Oberg, 2015).

From the foregoing definitions, it suffices to say that the school library as an integral part of the school is mainly established to provide opportunities to children with wide range of activities to encourage them to search, study, select, gather and comprehend such information towards their educational goal as well as individual needs. School library brings together four components, namely; information resources, users, library staff and the environment. The first three elements must be operating in an environment that supports learning in order for a library to function effectively (Odongo, n.d). On this note therefore, we can conclude that the establishment of school library is as good/essential as the establishment of the school itself.

The need for the establishment of a school libraries has become necessary to our dear country particularly at the present economic hardship where an average parent could not be able to purchase the required books for their children. The library can therefore serve as an important center that made available study materials (information resources) needed by the children.

Reading Culture

Different people read for different reasons. While some people read to acquire knowledge for self-improvement, others read for pleasure, relaxation or entertainment. Some others read to pass examinations. Reading is a skill, which must be consciously developed and nurtured. One needs to read, read and read. As a matter of fact, one needs to read anything one can lay one’s hands on. One needs to read until words become one’s friends. The more one reads, the more the reading skill develops. There is a saying that “continuous reading brings about brain automatism”. Reading enhances one’s writing skill. Naturally, reading precedes writing. For example, a child

first learns how to read before he or she learns how to write. Additionally, reading improves one's spoken language. It enables one to learn every part of a language like vocabulary, sentence structure and grammar. The more one reads books that are written in a particular language, the more fluent one becomes in that language (Otache, 2020).

To develop a reading culture, one has to make reading to be part of one's everyday life as define by (Gbadamosi, 2007) Reading culture is the process of building up positive reading attitude among students and children over a period of time. When an individual habitually and regularly reads books and other information materials that are not necessarily required for him to advance in his profession or career, he is said to have a reading culture. It is not a one-off reading. It even goes beyond one's ability to read. It is about reading habitually. It is also not reading because one is in school and possibly wants to pass an examination. Reading should be seen as a leisure activity if a strong reading culture must be developed. Developing a strong reading culture does not happen overnight; it takes quality time, dedication and consistency. The reading culture is viewed by many scholars as a means of boosting students' academic excellence and life-long learning (Olasehinde, Akanmode, Alaiyemola & Babatunde, 2015; Nalusiba, 2010; Dominic, 2016 & Sethy, 2018). It is therefore, expected that once a child developed a good reading skills automatically it will become habitual.

Aims and objectives of School Libraries

The aims and objectives of Nigerian Schools Libraries as cited in the library part of the inspectorate division of the Federal Ministry of Education (1983) include the following:

1. "Primary School Libraries:
 - a. Training in basic reading skills;
 - b. Encouraging, Intellectual, emotional and social growth
 - c. Developing reading for pleasure,
 - d. Providing books and other reference materials for teachers,
2. Secondary school Libraries:
 - a. Teaching each student, the necessary skills in the use of books and libraries so that they will be able to use reference and research materials;
 - b. Complementing classroom instruction by exposing the students to a wide selection of books and other resources,
 - c. Inculcating in students the habit of reading for pleasure;
 - d. Providing students with vocational information, which will help them in their selection of suitable careers,
 - e. Helping students to discover and develop their special gifts and talents;
 - f. Developing the personal attributes of responsibility through the sharing of public property, the recognition of the rights of others and observance of democratic principles,
 - g. Providing users of the library with information on current issues through the use of display materials and making available to teacher's materials on their instructional programmes and for their own professional growth.

Functions of School Libraries

Having seen the aims and objectives by which all Nigerian School Libraries are set to achieve, let us now look at the overall functions which these libraries perform to the students, teachers and the school itself.

6. The school libraries are seen to perform and fulfilled the following functions based on the aims and objectives:
7. It encourages children to improve their reading and study skills through continuous reading, Viewing and listening to variety of learning resources available in the library.
8. It enables children to the relevant materials to consult in their study areas.
9. It makes children to learn how to use books personally without solely depending on librarians or teacher librarian.
10. It provides opportunities for children to spend their leisure time even after the school hours.
11. Through constant use of school libraries, children will be able to help the teacher librarians in the selection of relevant reading materials.
12. It stimulates and guide the children in the aspects of their reading with increasing enjoyment as well as satisfaction and be able to make critical judgment and appreciation even at their tender age.

The Role of School Libraries in Reading Culture Development

The need to promote effective reading habits among the general populace of Nigeria has been receiving attention from organizations such as the National Library of Nigeria, the Reading Association of Nigeria and the Nigerian Book Development Council. Since 1981, the National Library of Nigeria has been sponsoring the readership promotion campaign in the country. This is done as part of the strategies to ginger up the reading culture in Nigeria. The objectives of the readership campaign include: - (i) To encourage more reading Nigerians (ii) To promote the increase in production of reading materials in Nigeria, both in quality and variety and (iii) To identify the major obstacles those inhibits reading in the country and find ways of eliminating them (Aina, Ogungbeni, Adigun & Ogundipe, 2011). These report by the above researchers was regards the general perspective of libraries where the school library is an integral part.

There were different types of activities, which school libraries organize and undertake in order to encourage children to love to use the library while taking into cognizance the situational realities of the community with particular reference to children's interests, needs, problems, family background etc. these services apart from reading books are called out-reach services, which increases children personality development. They include among others:

Story telling: School Libraries usually organize children into the story-telling groups. Some of the stories usually touch lives of the children; some stories motivate the children towards solving a particular problem. All the levels gather from these stories stimulate the children interest to come to the library regularly.

Book talk: book talk can be described as motivational device by which school libraries use to arrange the children interest of a particular books or books in general, in such a talk, general appeal or lessons derived from such book is usually presented. The reason behind this is to create desired and interest in reading. The basic aim of this book talk according to Umo (1978) is to:

- a. Sell the idea of reading to the children;
- b. Introduce new ideas and new fields of reading,
- c. Raise the level of reading by introducing the best books, which the audience i.e. pupils can read with pleasure and which may not have come to their notice,
- d. Developing appreciation of style and character portrayed."

Drama and plays: School library can equally organize drama and plays that is of interest to the child development in this case the children can be organized into groups with a particular topic to demonstrate in either drama or a play. Furthermore, drama could also be organized, where children take home and learn their parts properly. The drama could be presented during end of year activities or special occasions in the school, while providing entertainment, drama sharpens hidden talents of the child Diyoshak and Danladi (2022).

Music and dances: At the end or every school term, the school librarian can organize dance or a small party in which gifts can be presented to those children who patronizes the library regularly. This also encourages the children to use the library more frequently.

The School Library equally operates as a:

1. dedicated physical and digital space in a school that is open and accessible to all;
2. information space providing equitable and open access to quality information sources across all media, including print, multimedia, and curated digital collections;
3. Instructional space where pupil learn the capabilities and dispositions for engaging with information and for creating knowledge;
4. Technological space providing a diverse range of technology tools, software, and expertise for the creation, representation, and sharing of knowledge;
5. Literacy Centre where the school community nurtures reading and literacy development in all its forms;
6. centre for digital citizenship where the learning community learns to use digital tools appropriately, ethically, and safely, and learns strategies to protect identity and personal information;
7. Information environment for all in the community through equitable access to resources, technology, and information skills development that are not always available in homes; and
8. Social space opens for cultural, professional, and educational events

School Libraries as Media resources Center

With the recent move to global Information Technology, the school libraries are also not left behind. The school libraries nowadays go beyond mere collections of books they are now regarded as School Media Resources Canters/library with different stock

of prints non-prints media and other equipment's that are accessible to children and their teachers. The aim of the school media resources center/media library is to provide instructional materials and ensure that children and teachers become effective and knowledgeable about the new ideas and information. The school library media collects variety of formats that have been selected by teachers and media specialist to supplement the basic requirements of the schools. An effective and efficient school library/media center developed programmes that provide opportunities for children to learn more and give access to information in variety of formats at every level and across all disciplines.

School library/media seek to incorporate the Current technological advances in their services, they include all other formats than the printed media and allows for their storage, access and transmitted after more information than was ever. In school media library, students are taught various skills and transfer these skills to electronic search mechanisms and they are then expected to evaluate, organize and synthesis the information they retrieved. The Most Common Media Resources Found in School Library Media Centers include:

Projectors/overhead projectors: These are instruments used in projecting or moving closed a beam of light or images from transparent objects or forms a film on to a screen display. This enable school librarian to present visual images of books, pictures so that children can watch clearly from the enlarged screen the film of a particular booker pictures they are interested in. It was very educative.

Transparencies; those are small plastic sheets with transparent abilities through which rays of light can penetrate and travel from an object of a moderate distance so that that object in question car be viewed clearly School libraries usually Use transparencies to enable children to see clearly a book or pages of a book or writing from a distance. It is demonstrated w2ith the help of overhead projector

Slides: These are also small transparent objects just like the transparencies on Audio Visual equipment in which content of a book can also be illustrated. Slides if mounted can be shown to a large Audience at a time. An individual child in the library can also use it conveniently. Other media found in school libraries are

Television: This is an object by which Visual images can be transmitted by means of electro-magnetic Television waves. programmes can be shown to children most especially the educative programmes as well as those programmes that can increase the personality development of child Some Video-cassettes may be used so that children can watch interesting educational programmes.

Radio Communication: A Radio is an object through which sound or signals can be transmitted by electro-magnetic waves Wireless to the receiving end. Radio is also a means through which important children are aired from time to time. School librarian can use coverage for children to come and listen to Such programmes at the appropriate time is being aired out. It is a means through which children are educated continuously.

Computer Instructions: A Computer is an electronic device through which process data/information in accordance with the programmed instructions. With the recent advances in information and communication technology, learning of computers right from the school level will be of paramount importance. School librarian in this regard expected to acquire microcomputer and the most rated the elementary aspect in order to give the children the first hand This information of computer knowledge. Will enable them to show and become Computer literate.

Atlas, Maps and Glosses: These are also important learning materials. They can be placed in appropriate process and location in the library for the children to see. They help the school children to know more about the location of different countries, cities, land, peoples, cultures, tribes, different languages, rivers, lakes, etc. They will also learn more about different climatic conditions and ethnic distribution and enable them to appreciate different cultures at their tender age.

Role of school library in mental and psychological development of children

The school library plays an important role in the mental and psychological development of children in the following ways.

1. Providing a safe and welcoming space: the school library can be a safe heaven for children who are experiencing difficulties at home or in other areas of their lives, it can provide a quiet and welcoming space where children can go to escape from the stresses of the outside world.
2. Fostering curiosity and inquiry; the school library can also encourage children to ask questions and explore new ideas, this can help to foster curiosity and inquiry which are important traits for academic and personal success
3. Encouraging creativity and imagination; the school library can also provide access to materials that inspire creativity and imagination such as art supplies, craft books and storytelling books, this can help children to develop their creative abilities and explore new ideas in a safe supportive environment.

Problems of School Library Development

In spite of the numerous roles played by the school libraries in uplifting and stimulating the reading skills among the primary and secondary schools, there are certain factors that affect their development which may include among others:

Lack of adequate attention: Government have not given much recognition to the provision of libraries in these schools, very few schools can boast of libraries and in a situation where a library exists, they are not fully developed, poorly organized, ill-equipped and do not satisfy any purpose. Most of them remain as mere reading rooms.

Funding: Even when such libraries exist, they are not well funded. They do not have special votes so their collections are usually very small with few out dated materials acquired by their principals or received as donations which may not have conform to the curriculum of the school.

Lack of qualified staff: unqualified library attendants and clerks who do not have any form of professional training manage Most of the school libraries. So most of their

collections are neither catalogued classified or arranged according to any professional order.

Lack of user education/orientations; since they do not have any professional staff, no formed orientation to acquaint the children with facilities in the library or how to use the library or the benefits to be derived from using the library.

Lack of concern for the library by the teachers; in most cases, teachers do not educate the children on what library stands for or its importance to them. They only give notes for the children to memorize during examinations without supplementing such notes with the resources in the library.

Conclusion

The success of primary and secondary schools' education depends upon the establishment, funding and maintenance of their libraries. This will enable the children to make proper use of these libraries to supplement the efforts of their teachers in classrooms. It will also make the children exploit the library resources effectively enhance their educational performances and thereby arousing their reading culture.

Recommendation

The following among others can be considered for a Sound school library in order to promote reading culture among students:

4. Adequate financial provision: For a school library to function well and achieve it laudable objectives, it must be supported by adequate and regular budget. This will ensure the Opportunity for acquiring more relevant materials (information resources) needed by the children, which will in effect ensure proper library usage.
5. Appointment of a qualified librarian: becomes necessary so as to provide professional services devoid of any unforeseen problems. In a situation where a professional librarian is not found, a qualified and dedicated teacher-librarian or a senior member of the teaching staff should man the library with some professional training in librarianship.
6. Library Instructions: This should be organized on regular basis so as to teach and instruct the students on how to use library materials, which will go a long way in educating and enlightening them about the library and its operations. The more knowledge received from such instructors, the more they will be inclined to use the library resources.
7. Acquisition of more relevant books and other materials: Because of the present economic hardship, most parents may not have the necessary funds to buy books for their children. This therefore, necessitates the need for both government and school to use the meager resources at their disposal to acquire some of the relevant books for the use in the library.
8. Creation of library periods in School Timetable: Library utilization periods should be included in the time table. It should be in such a way that at least a class will have two hours in a week for library use. In boarding schools for instance, evening prep should be set aside for library use. During the period, the library

staff should properly supervise the students. This is invariably an instrument of reading culture development

9. Orderly arrangement of books: In order to make children to retrieve information easily, books should be organized and arranged in such a way to allow children to locate information quickly. library/teacher-librarian should device a home-based arrangement to facilitate the retrieval of materials either from the catalogue or from the shelves.
10. Selection of relevant information resources: Before consideration for purchase of relevant books, children's collections have to be carefully selected, the books to be Selected should be the ones that attract the children's attention towards reading such books. The books should have attractive pictures, paintings, fantasy, short stories, myths, animals, sports, fictions, adventures, home, etc. This will increase the curiosity of the children towards using the library.

The habit of reading should begin at an early stage and should be imbibed throughout one's lifetime. The complementary role of the library in inculcating and promoting reading habit in Nigerians should be appreciated ((Aina, Ogungbeni, Adigun & Ogundipe, 2011).

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