FRAMEWORK FOR INCULCATION OF READING SKILLS IN CHILDREN WITH READING DIFFICULTIES

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Abstract
Most children are likely to learn how to read but a percentage of them need special help in order to master the skill. When this assistance is lacking the reading-impaired children tend to have difficulties in learning in later years as the switch is made from learning to read to reading to learn. Reading difficulties may deter a child from progressing with peers academically. The population of the study is made up of samples taken from ten secondary schools and a public library in each of the three senatorial zones of Anambra State. The survey research design was used. Data was collected through the use of questionnaire and interview. Data analysis was done using frequency counts and simple percentages. It was found out that children in secondary schools who find it difficult to pass continuous assessments, quizzes and examinations are those who were unable to acquire proper reading skills in pre-primary and primary school stages. Findings also indicated that although no roles are assigned to school library personnel in the inculcation of reading skills to children who need them, the State Public Library has started a pilot scheme at the Onitsha Divisional Library aimed at teaching such children the needed skills. Generating statistics of children with reading difficulties and a robust partnership between school and public libraries were recommended as necessary steps in developing a framework for inculcation of reading skills in children with learning difficulties.

Keywords: Reading skills, Reading difficulties, Children

Introduction
Reading is a principal tool for academic, economic and social success in the modern society. It allows one to build knowledge, acquire information for accomplishment of

goals and to derive pleasure from the written word (Jenkins and O'Connor, 2002). Reading has been acknowledged to play a critical role in enabling learning and inculcation of literacy in children. It is a foundational skill that every child needs for academic achievement and aids in equipping the child for future responsibilities of adulthood in a civilized and democratic setting (Simisaye and Quadri, 2010). Reading requires alphabetic knowledge, phoneme awareness, phonics reading fluency, vocabulary and comprehension skills. It involves a complex set of processes – physical, neurological and cognitive which are set in motion once a word is seen. In order to read, nerve impulses from the eyes stimulate the brain and this allows one to sees the light and dark areas on a page that define each word. The brain then allows one to convert the letters into sounds and these sounds into languages. Reading as an activity therefore requires the integration of several interlocking skills and abilities that enables one to convert the written word into meaning (Morris, Bloodgood, Lomax and Perney, 2003).

Comprehension of the written language is the immediate goal of reading. However one in every fifth child has significant difficulties in being able to read or understand written words despite the presence of average to above average intelligence, suitable instruction and regular school attendance. On the other hand, lack of opportunity, incorrect and/or insufficient instruction, cultural factors and chaotic or impoverished living conditions can also make a child to develop difficulties in reading. Seventy five percent of these children who are not identified and helped before the end of junior secondary school continues to have reading difficulties and fewer than 2 percent of them attain tertiary education (Lyon, 1996). With the passage of time, the consequences of reading difficulties mount in a child and he may experience reduced opportunities for vocabulary growth, less actual practice in reading than other children receive and negative attitudes towards reading. Consequently, early detection of reading difficulties in children is a key to remediation and prevention for later academic pitfalls (Torgesen, 1998).

Through neuro-imaging, it has been established that as children master the reading skill most activity is observed in the occipito-temporal system located at the back of the brain. This area is where information about how a word looks, how it sounds and what it means is processed. However those with reading difficulties (RDs) demonstrate a pattern of under activity in that region of the brain (Shaywitz, 2003). The warning signs of RDs in children include inability to translate individual letters and letter combinations into words (Catts and Hogan, 2003) and difficulty with rhyming games, difficulty in learning alphabets and associating sounds with letters, delayed or impaired speech and a family history of learning or reading and language difficulty are also indicators of reading difficulties in children (Shaywitz, 1998). Other characteristics of RDs include inconsistent performance in school, poor retention of information, short attention span, frequent school absences, lies about assignment and schoolwork (Glascoe and Robertshaw, 2007), signs of insufficient phonological processing whereby there is a lack of understanding that sentences are made up of words and that words consist of syllables which comprise individual sounds or phonemes, difficulty in reading sight words and in decoding or sounding out words (American Psychiatric Association, 2000).

When there are no immediate interventive strategies for children with RDs, it may require intensive mediation in later years to restore them to satisfactory levels of reading accuracy and fluency. This is largely due to the amount of reading practice that would have been lost by the children each school term and year that they remain poor readers (Vaughn and Schumm, 1996). The most common cause of difficulty in acquiring reading skills is the inability to process the phonological features of a language – that is the knack to identify, think about or manipulate the individual sounds in a word. Thus for the majority of both younger and older children with RDs the provision of explicit and systematic instruction in alphabetic knowledge, phonemic relationship between words and sounds and quality time practising reading yields positive results. Intensive daily/regular one-on-one or small group instruction also aids these children to catch up with their same-age peers, reading-wise. Supplementary reading outside of classroom texts, single word activities and teaching of 'sight words' are also used as interventive strategies (Torgesen, 2003). Comprehensive classroom programmes that represent a new or the restructuring of already existing literacy interventive package could also be adopted (Barr, 2002).

These programmes are usually implemented by classroom teachers who take responsibility for solving these problems (Adeniji and Omale, 2010). However according to Kavale (1988) and McKinney (1990) typical public school interventions for children with RDs have been most unproductive though Hanushek, Kain and Rivkin (1998) using a very large sample from Texas schools found out that placing children with RDs in special classes accelarated growth in reading abilities by only .04 standard deviations over the rate the children have been achieving in normal classes. Nonetheless the school library which has been acknowledged as a necessary adjunct to education as it is meant to also help children develop good reading habits through the provision of wide reading materials and a conducive environment for reading can also aid greatly in helping children acquire reading skills(Busayo, 2011). For Ibrahim (1997) the school library serves as a platform for secondary schools teachers and students where information materials and services are accessible. On the other hand Ajegbomogun and Salaam (2011) note that the poor state of many Nigerian school libraries as well as the nochalant attitude of teachers to its existence does not make it readily available nor suitable for reading instruction to students.

The public library plays prominent roles in the reading achievement of children (Celano and Neuman, 2001). The public library is a traditional collaborator with the school library as they share similarities in some of the clientele they serve and information resources and services they offer (Clay, 2009). According to Miller and Girmscheid (2012) school and public libraries are partners that offer children the library services they need to fuel their imaginations and support their development. When public and school libraries are able to move from informal cooperative relationships into formal collaborative partnerships, a powerful and extensive learning environment is formed that invariably yields positive results in students reading skills. As schools are faced with an inadequate number of teachers to give individual attention to children with special needs, it becomes more critical for public libraries and schools to join forces through shared expertise, resources, and programmes as had been practiced by the Anambra State Library Board

who had partnered with school libraries in Onitsha, the commercial nerve centre of the State for reading and spelling competitions (Osuigwe, 2012). However it was observed during the collaborations that there were children with RDs even in secondary schools. They could neither read fluently as expected considering their level in education and the skills displayed by their same-age peers. A pilot scheme which was facilitated by the Zonal Education Officer for Onitsha Education Zone as well as concerned teachers was then initiated at the Divisional Library Onitsha to help these children with alphabetic knowledge, phonemic relationship between words and sounds and supplementary reading with classroom texts and other materials. The contact with the children is normally on Saturdays. At present only fourteen (14) children in Junior Secondary 1 and 2 are involved in the scheme but their attendance has not all been regular and an average of nine (9) children attend the sessions weekly. The Librarians started with instructions on the basics of language acquisition which is alphabetic knowledge.

Each session lasts for an average of 30-45mins. The children are being taught the alphabets, their sounds and are always encouraged to identify them by highlighting them with colourful felt pen in short passages. Only five alphabets are taught at each contact and five colours of the markers are provided, one colour for one alphabet. At the end of each day, the children exchange their scripts and do the corrections themselves and they seem to enjoy this aspect very much. The next level of instruction will be teaching them how words are made up of syllables and how they sound. A constant in each session is reading short stories aloud to them as the text is highlighted with the aid of a projector. The children are encouraged during this segment to identify with the characters in the story, say what the character they are identifying with said, predict how the story will end, relate the story to something similar that had happened to them or they have heard about or watched on television. They are encouraged to also feel free to ask questions and try to read sentences without any pressure of getting it right or otherwise. The scheme started during the long vacation of 2012. The efforts of the Library towards inculcation of reading skills in children with RDs in Onitsha Education Zone would be evaluated for improvements when the first term results for the 2012/13 of the children in the programme are out.

Statement of the problem
Reading is the basic skill for learning and for academic achievement. Children acquire this skill in a natural continuum some starting as early as pre-nursery. By mid-elementary many children are able to read simple passages. However some children find it difficult due to a variety of reasons to acquire this skill. This becomes a disadvantage that slows them down academically and that might eventually turn them into school drop-outs. It then becomes necessary that strategies are developed to help these children to acquire this skill. In view of this the study sought to establish the existence of intervention measures in secondary schools for these children and how the public library could assist in inculcation of reading skills for children with reading difficulties.

Objectives of the study
The purpose of the study is to establish how students with reading difficulties can be made to acquire reading skills. Specifically the objectives are to:

1. identify children with reading difficulties in secondary schools in Anambra State;
2. find out the strategies adopted by the schools in helping them gain reading skills;
3. establish if there are collaborations between secondary schools and public libraries in the State towards teaching reading skills to these children; and
4. ascertain perceived obstacles in helping children with reading difficulties.

Literature Review

Reading is one of the language skills that is central to learning. It increases self-esteem and equips one with the information needed to survive and thrive in all spheres of existence and is considered essential for all round development of the human being (Udosen, 2001). Reading is a mental exercise that requires active participation by the reader as he brings his social, cultural and literate knowledge and experiences to interrelate with the the text and construct meaning from it (Anstey and Bull, 2008). It is also regarded as the means of joining knowledgable communities and participating in democratic set-ups (Hampton and Resnick, 2009).
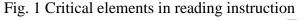
Ehri (1998) describes a four-phase pattern that outlines the developmental trend of children's ability to read. The first phase is the pre-alphabetic stage where children recognize sight words through visual and/or audio clues related to the word. For example the picture of a car and the noise a car makes while starting might prompt a child that has limited knowledge of letter names is unable to decode words to 'recognize' car where it is written down. The second stage is the partial alphabetic stage where chldren are able to read sight words by remembering one or several letters that are connected to sounds of the word; for example C is for Car. At this stage children know most alphabets and some words
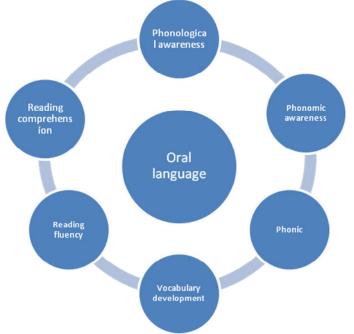
Where those alphabets are used. At the full alphabetic phase children know most of the alphabets and are able to read sight words by remebering their spellings. They can all chant together or individually in the class; c-a-r Car. By the time children get to the consolidated alphabetic stage they would have been able to have started learning spelling patterns of the language, decode unfamiliar words rapidly and are able to recognize an increasing number of words on sight. The acquisition and development of reading skills therefore serves as the foremost foundational academic ability for all school-based learning.

The inability to read limits one's opportunities for academic and occupational success. Difficulty in learning to read kills the excitement and love for learning, which most children have when they enter school. In the secondary school years, some warning signs of a reading disability may include difficulty with vocabulary development, word order, sentence patterns, and punctuation, the idea order and text patterns and/or fluency in reading (Lyon, 2003). Children in secondary schools who have reading difficulties are usually those who have problems in understanding and applying the alphabetic principle in decoding new words. These children then find it hard to apply the noted patterns and relationships between letters and sounds in words as a guide in identifying new words when they try to read (Siegel, 1989). These children also find it difficult to try to pronounce unfamiliar words and it is this difficulty in word recognition that hinders them

as they seem to spend much of their mental energy trying to identify words instead of making attempts at constructing meaning out of the text (Adams, 1990). Reading difficulties entail not just the inability to sound out printed words because of non-recognition but also the inability to draw inferential and literal meaning from text (Donahue, Finnegan, Lutkus, Allen and Campbell, 2001).

The prevention of reading difficulties through early interventive strategies at the elementary school level is regarded as a better option than providing remedial reading programmes to children after they have exhibited significant difficulties and possibly failure (Snow, Burns and Griffin, 1998). However Udosen (2011) opines that quite a number of secondary school students in Nigeria and amongst other countries whose second or third language is English find it difficult to read and understand school texts. Six critical elements have been identified by Bos and Vaugh (2002) as requisites for effective instruction for children with reading difficulties. These are phonological awareness, phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary development and reading comprehension. These components are taught through an integrated method and not in isolation. Nonetheless it's the oral language that provides the foundation for the explicit and intensive teaching of these elements to turn these children into adept readers (Stanovich, 2000).

Fig. 1 Critical elements in reading instruction

 Adapted from Bos and Vaugh (2002).

Phonological awareness is the understanding of the different ways that spoken language can be broken into smaller components. Teaching this skill involves helping children develop an awareness of how language works and an understanding that oral language is made up of many parts. These segments are the sentences which are made up of words and these words consist of syllables and sounds. An important element of phonological

awareness is phonemic awareness (Lovett, Borden, Lacerenza, Frijters and Steinbach, 2000).

Phonemic awareness is the understanding that words are made up of sounds and being able to hear, recognize and manipulate the individual sounds that make up a word. It is a foundational element in helping children with reading difficulties. Teaching a child phonemic awareness increases the likelihood of his reading and spelling success. Children who cannot distinguish and manipulate the sounds within spoken words have difficulty recognizing and learning the necessary print and sound relationship that is critical to proficient reading and spelling success (Haager and Windmueller, 2001). At the kindergarten stage and early elementary level children develop phonemic awareness by singing songs, chanting repetitive rhymes and listening to adults read word-play books. They learn the connection between phonemes and letters and begin to explore and understand it as they develop their concept of letters and alphabets. Normally, there is a natural continuum to this skill development except for children with reading difficulties. Inculcation of reading skills for these children would then need to include the fact that phonemes are speech sounds and that though the word "though" has 6 letters (graphemes) and 2 sounds (phonemes), /th/ /o/ (Torgesen, Wagner, Rashotte, Alexander and Conway, 1997).

Phonics refers to the association/agreement between letters and sounds. For example the phoneme /f/ can be represented by the letter 'f' as in 'fat', 'food', 'feel', 'fly' or 'ph' as in 'phone', 'photo', 'phobia' and 'phase'. Students with RDs do not automatically recognize, understand, and utilize the basic components of phonics. Instruction in phonics therefore needs to include teaching the children how to name letters rapidly, identification of sounds represented by letters or groups of letters and how sounds and syllables are blended into words. It also consists of instructions on how to identify inflectional endings (e.g., -s, -ed, -ing), and their effect on roots (e.g., walks, walked, walking) as well as prefixes (un-, re-, dis-). The recognition of syllables in multisyllabic words, capital letters and understanding their use and recognizing punctuation and its meaning are also components of phonic skills instruction (Mather and Goldstein, 2001).

The development of oral and written vocabulary is very crucial in the process of learning to read. Word knowledge increases a student's ability to comprehend what she/he reads as words are recognized and understood because they are familiar. Children with RDs require specific instruction in order to develop their vocabularies. Teaching of vocabulary development involves helping the children engage in a wide variety of conversations in the given language they are learning to read, their oral vocabulary will increase, which in turn will enhance their written vocabulary. Reading to students also gives teachers the opportunity to introduce new words as well as teach their meanings. Children with RDs also need to be introduced how to use the dictionary (Johns and Lenski, 2001).

Reading fluency is the ability to read words quickly, accurately, with appropiate phrasing and expression. Teaching this skill comprises giving students the opportunity to practise reading a text that is within their reading level (Beers, 2003). The improvement of reading fluency is considered one of the critical elements of reading instruction as it is

one of the main goals of teaching children with reading difficulty. Two majors methods usually adopted in teaching fluency are instructor modeling of the text the child will be required to read and repeated readings of the text by the child. The two methods are sometimes used together with the direct teaching of difficult words in the text being studied (Clay, 1993). According to Homan, Klesius and Hite (1993), these methods assist children in the improvement of oral reading rate, accuracy in sounding out words and in comprehension. The provision of corrective feedback (immediate feedback on every single error) that students receive on one reading can help them become more accurate in their next reading. Along with instructions on fluency, continued instruction of phonics skills, vocabulary development, and reading comprehension strategies are also necessary to improve the readings skills of children with RDs (Reithaug, 2002).

Reading comprehension is the ability to understand the text being read. It involves teaching children to summarize (find main ideas of the text), develop questions that they ask themselves about various aspects of the text and to relate the ideas in the text to their individual experiences and previous knowledge. Determining the meanings of unfamiliar words based on context clues, conceptualization of the text by creating mental images to represent what they have read and to connect important ideas to be able to create meaning out of the text are also elements of teaching reading comprehension(Collins Block and Pressley, 2001). This could be achieved by 'walking' through the text (or assignment) page by page and looking at pictures, illustrations and sub- headings. This helps the child prepare for the information he is about to read and this increases reading comprehension as well as concentration (Ward, 2007).

However, learning to read can be a discouraging experience for children with RDs. Such students usually need long practices in order to master what some children do only after one trial. According to Carnine, Silbert, Kameenui and Tarver (2004) the more highly motivated a remedial reader is, the greater the student's success as these children normally become discouraged with difficulties they encounter in their reading experiences. (Koran and McLaughlin, 1990) therefore advocate for some elements of play to be a part of the learning to read process so as to motivate the children. This according to Charlton, Williams and McLaughlin (2005) can be done through the introduction of educational games. Public libraries engage in Saturday programmes where children participate in many activities that enhance learning. The Story hour at Onitsha divisional library is a staple feature of the Saturday programmes and it has been proved to improve word recognition, build vocabulary, improve fluency and comprehension and is a way to develop understandings of complex written language syntax and grammar. Building up the reading skills of children with RDs can rightly be done in the public library as it has the space, resources and personnel that would it achievable (Matthews, 2010; Osuchukwu, 2012).

Methodology
The survey research design was used for this study. The population of the study comprises samples taken from ten secondary schools and a public library in each of the three senatorial zones of Anambra State, South east Nigeria. Data was collected through the use of questionnaire and interview. The questionnaire was divided into three sections

to elicit information about the bio-data of the respondents, to identify the characteristics of children with reading difficulties, intervention strategies and perceived obstacles in helping children with RDs. A hundred copies of the questionnaire were distributed to secondary schools in each senatorial zone totaling up to three hundred (300) copies. Two hundred and seventy three (273) copies were returned which represents 91% response. Data was collected from the librarians in charge of the public libraries at Onitsha, Nnewi and Abagana through interview.

Analysis and discussion of findings

The presentation of analysis and discussion were done in relation to the objectives of the study.

Table 1 – Demographic information

S/N	Demographics	Frequency	Percentage %
1.	**Gender**		
	Male	41	15.1
	Female	232	84.9
	Total	**273**	**100.0**
2.	**Working Experience**		
	2-5 years	30	10.9
	6-10 years	48	17.6
	11-16 years	61	22.3
	17-22 years	45	16.5
	23-35 years	86	31.5
	No response	3	1.2
	Total	**273**	100.0
3.	**Educational Qualifications**		
	NCE	**5**	1.8
	B.ED	220	80.6
	M.ED	48	17.6
	PhD	*	**-**
	Total	**273**	**100.0**

The findings indicate that the respondents were made up of 41 males (15.1%) and 232 females (84.9%). Their working experience as teachers range from 2-5 years (10.9%), 6-10 years (17.6%), 11-16 years (22.3%), 17-22 years (16.5%) to 23-35years (31.5%). 220 (80.6%) of the respondents have Bachelors' degree in Education, 48 (17.58%) possess Masters' degree while 5 (1.8%) have a National Certificate in Education (NCE). The details are clearly represented in Table 1.

Identification of children with RDs

Table 2: Methods of Identifying Children with Reading Difficulties

S/N	Item	Frequency	Percentage %
1.	Reading passages with difficulty	57	20.9
2.	Finding it hard to read along with others	27	9.9
3.	Difficulty in recognizing words	87	31.9
4.	Difficulty in pronouncing multisyllabic words	96	35.2
5.	Problems with writing assignment	114	41.8
6.	Always perform badly in exams	159	**58.2**
7.	Unable to ask or answer questions in class	144	52.7
8.	Others		

Respondents were asked to identify prevalent characteristics as pertains to children with RDs. Fifty eight (58.2 percent) indicated that poor performance in examinations is the highest pointer that a child has RDs. This agrees with the findings of Cunningham & Stanovich (1998) that children with RDs invariably perform badly in examinations. There are 52.7 percent of the respondents that agreed with the view that children with RDs find it very hard to ask or answer questions in the class. According to Patil, Saraswathi and Padakannaya (2009) children with reading problems often experience frustration and develop emotional problems such as low self- esteem as a result of repeated failures thus they might most likely be unable to express themselves fully in the classroom environment. This leads to withdrawal and non-participation in classroom activities. There are 41.8 percent of the respondents that expressed of the view that when children find it hard to write assignments as well as show difficulty in pronunciation of multisyllabic words (35.2%) it is an indicator of the presence of RDs. Also respondents agreed that word recognition (31.9%), difficulty in reading passages (20.9%) and finding it hard to read along with others (9.9%) are also means of identifying children with RDs. The findings are succinctly presented in Table 2.

Classes where reading difficulties are mostly noticed

Table 3: Classes where Reading Difficulties are mostly noticed

S/N	Item	Frequency	Percentage %
1.	JSS 1	188	68.9
2.	JSS 2	85	31.1
3.	JSS 3	-	-
4.	SSS 1	-	-
5.	SSS 2	-	-
6.	SSS 3	-	**-**

Table 3 presents information on classes where reading difficulties are mostly noticed and it shows that that most of the children (68.9%) with RDs are usually found in the first class of Junior Secondary School (JSS) while 31.1 percent are in the second class of JSS. The librarians in charge of the public libraries at Onitsha, Nnewi and Abagana were also of the view that most of the children they have come across with reading problems are usually in the classes as indicated above.

Age Range of Children with Reading Difficulties

Table 4: Age range of children with reading difficulties

S/N	Age range	Frequency	Percentage %
1.	9-10 years	90	32.96
2.	11-12 years	181	66.30
3.	13-14 years	-	-
4.	15-16 years	-	-
5.	17 years and above	-	-

The age range of children with RDs according to the respondents is usually within 9-12 years with the problem being more rampant in children between 11-12 years (66.3%).

Average number of children with reading difficulties identified per school session

Table 5: Average number of Children with Reading Difficulties Identified per Session

S/N	Item	Frequency	Percentage %
1.	1 child	-	-
2.	2-5 children	40	14.7
3.	6-10 children	101	36.9
4.	11-16 children	83	30.4
5.	17 children and above	49	17.9

The respondents were asked questions on the average number of children with RDs in any particular school session and all of them were unanimous that it is never just a child, rather 36.9% of them indicated that they have 6-10 children with the problem per session, 30.4% of them agreed that at least 11-16 children in that situation show up in their classes in a session while 17.9% of the respondents reveal that 17 children and even more are part of their classes in any school year. Only 14.7% of the respondents agreed that 2-5 children with RDs are part of their classes in a session.

Gender with the most reading difficulties

Table 6: Gender with the most reading difficulties

	Gender	Frequency	Percentage %
1.	Male	165	60.4
2.	Female	108	39.6
	Total	**273**	**100**

The findings as represented in Table 6 below indicate that RDs are noticed more amongst the boys (60.4%) than the girls (39.6%). This agrees with the postulations of Biddle (2010) that boys struggle more with reading than girls. This has also been confirmed by St. Sauver, Katusic, Barbaresi, Colligan and Jacobsen (2001) who opine that boys tend to fall behind in reading for various reasons one of which is that having female teachers as role models predicts increased educational attainment in girls but not in boys (Nixon and Robinson, 1999). However Colker (2001) points out that girls might just as likely as boys have RDs but that it's easier to identify boys because they act out their frustrations openly more than girls with RDs who are more likely to withdraw into themselves.

Strategies adopted by schools in helping children with reading difficulty

Table 7: Strategies school adopt in helping children with reading difficulty

S/N	Item	Frequency	Percentage %
1.	Special classes	*	0
2.	Special private lessons	*	0
3.	Special seat arrangements in the class	*	0
4.	Peer tutoring	*	0
5.	Special individual attention	*	0
6.	All of the above	*	0
7.	None	273	100

Findings on the strategies adopted by school in helping children with reading difficulty reveal that no special classes or special private lessons are arranged for children with RDs. Also, it was discovered that no special seat arrangements are made for them nor are they given any special attention in the class. It can be inferred that there is no particular strategies in place in schools to help children with reading difficulty. This practice of non-provision of intervention strategies goes against the findings of Fletcher, Lyon, Fuchs and Banes (2007) that discovered that students with RDs benefit from academic and remedial interventions. The librarians of the public libraries in their response to this question pointed out that it is only during the Saturday programmes that they read stories to children, and they try to give special attention to those who find it hard to follow the ideas of the stories.

Role assigned to school library personnel

Table 8: Role Assigned to School Library Personnel in Helping Children with Reading Difficulties

S/N	Item	Frequency	Percentage %
1.	Extra reading hours in the library		
2.	Individual follow-up by school library personnel	*	0
3.	Integration of school library personnel into reading lessons in the class	*	0
4.	Special privileges in the school library	*	0
5.	None	273	100

Attempt to discover the role assigned to school library personnel in helping children with reading difficulties shows that no particular role was assigned to school library personnel in helping children with reading difficulties in schools. This is at variance with Todd and Gordon (2010) view which established that school libraries help children to learn and to improve their reading skills. On the other hand Lance, Rodney and Hamilton-Pennell (2001) postulate that collaborative instruction between school librarians and teachers go a long way in fostering reading skills.

Collaboration between schools and public libraries for helping students with RDs

Table 9: Schools Methods of Collaborating with Public Libraries in Helping Children with RDs

S/N	Item	Frequency	Percentage %
1.	Participation in story hour programme	22	8.1
2.	Encourage students to visit and borrow books from the public libraries	194	71.1
3.	Participation in spelling bee competition organized by public library	51	18.7
4.	Encourage students to watch spelling bee competition on TV	51	18.7
5.	Excursion to public libraries	60	21.9
6.	Benefit from public library bookmobile services	48	17.6
7.	Invitation to public librarians to speak to students on reading culture and use of library	13	4.8

Respondents were asked to identify the areas in which the public libraries can collaborate with their schools in helping children with RDs. Only 8.1 percent of the respondents agreed that participation in the weekly story hour programme can help the children. This is opposed to the findings of Whitehurst and Lonigan (1998) that storybook reading can have a significant influence on the development of receptive and expressive language for

reading achievement. Most of the respondents (71.1%) agreed that visiting and borrowing books from the public library can help students with RDs. However, only 4.8 percent of the respondents indicated that inviting the librarians in the public libraries to speak to students on the importance of acquiring the reading skills would aid those with RDs.

Perceived obstacles in helping children with reading difficulties

Table 10: Perceived Obstacles in Helping Children with Reading Difficulties

S/N	Item	Frequency	Percentage %
1.	No special classes for them	45	16.5
2.	Sometimes, they are difficult to identify	32	11.7
3.	Lack of manpower to help them individually	53	19.4
4.	Few teachers managing many students at the same time and in different classes	52	19.0
5.	No special training for skills needed to help them	22	8.1
6.	Lack of adequate and efficient personnel in the school library	31	11.2
7.	Lack of access to public library facilities.	28	10.3
8.	Lack of collaboration between the school and the public library	40	14.7

Table 10 shows that lack of manpower to help individually is the greatest obstacle to helping children with RDs as perceived by 19.4 percent of the respondents. This thought is reechoed by 19.0 percent of the respondents agreed that the situation where few teachers manage many students at the same time hinders the paying of special attention to children with RDs. The fact that no special classes are designated for children with RDs (16.5%) and that sometimes they are difficult to identify (11.7%) were perceived as hindrances towards helping these children. The findings as pertains to obstacles in helping children with RDs are clearly presented in Table 10.

Recommendations
Reading difficulties among school children can set them back academically. Strategies of intervention need to be put in place to enable them catch up with their peers. The following recommendations are therefore made to that effect:
1. Authorities in charge of education should as a matter of urgency recognise that there are students with reading impediments and that they need help in order to effectively learn. This could be in form of special classes and following up the children individually. More teachers also need to be employed so that there would be adequate hands to teach the children.
2. Roles also need to be assigned to school library personnel for help in the inculcation of reading skills into children with RDs. It is also recommended that schools learn to collaborate with public libraries. This alliance would provide space and information resources as well as individual attention for these children outside of the classroom environment.

Conclusion

Reading difficulties have the capacity to draw children back academically. Identifying and helping the children with these difficulties to learn how to read the written word is a necessity. Education authorities, school teachers, school library personnel and public libraries need to join forces in order to ensure that reading skills are imparted to those who ordinarily find it difficult to decode and understand the written word.

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