

ASSESSMENT OF THE ROLE OF SUBEB LIBRARIES IN DEVELOPING THE READING SKILLS OF PRIMARY SCHOOL PUPILS IN OYO STATE

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Abstract

This study investigated the role of SUBEB libraries in the development and promotion of reading skills among primary school pupils in Oyo State, Nigeria. The sample population drawn from SUBEB libraries located in the five local government areas in Ibadan Township, Oyo State. A total number of 135 copies of questionnaire were administered on the respondents out of which only 133 were found useful for the study. The major findings of the study revealed the inadequacy of reading promotion programmes in the SUBEB libraries selected for the study (113 or 91.1%). Though the study revealed regular use of the library (74 or 60.2%), the attitude of the pupils towards reading were found to be negative (82 or 66.7%) which may be due to the fact that there were no interesting and relevant books that can attract the pupils to reading in SUBEB libraries included in the survey. The lack of other reading promotion programmes such as story hours and readers' club may also be responsible for the negative attitude of the pupils towards reading. The findings further revealed textbooks as the only library material that the pupils use most. The study suggested the mounting of programmes such as story hours and readers' club in SUBEB libraries.

Keywords: *Reading skills, SUBEB libraries, Reading promotion*

Introduction

The library is seen as the nerve centre of all educational institutions and a crucial factor in the educational development of individuals at all levels. It is a social institution established to provide for information, education, recreation and historical needs of the society through the collection, processing, and storage of recorded knowledge. The

library contributes to education by encouraging reading, expanding learning resources, development of learning skills, developing critical thought, developing values, attitudes and assisting with developmental tasks among others. Owing to its wealth of materials and learning opportunities it offers, the library can be seen to be ideally suited to the task of making education more relevant to current circumstances and more meaningful to students. Dike (2001) identified the different types of libraries available to users to include, academic, special, public, national and school.

School libraries are established to support the educational curriculum of schools, which could only be achieved through various means such as the provision of relevant library resources, which are relevant with the school curricula, provision of various information services ranging from technical to readers services (Markless and Streafield, 2004). However, adequate provision of information materials, staff, infrastructural facilities, and accommodation is essential for school libraries to perform its role effectively. The school library collection should be a balanced one which must include printed and non-printed materials, electronic materials and audio-visuals. The balanced collection should also include materials for leisure purposes such as novels, music, computer games, video cassettes, video laser discs and magazines etc. These kinds of materials may be selected in cooperation with the students to ensure it reflects their interests and culture without crossing reasonable limits of ethical standards. The library also serves as a place where users can develop their minds through reading.

Reading is important to everybody so as to be able to cope with new knowledge in this changing world and this can be done with the aid of a school library resources. Students grow with a wealth of knowledge academically, socially and emotionally which make them become confident in themselves and also become useful to the society they belong. The overall objective of the school library project is to improve the reading habits of our pupils and make reading more pleasurable. (Adediran. 2003). This forms the basis of a lifelong project of using reading to acquire knowledge.

A variety of resources are acquired in the school library which include serials such as magazine's newspapers, periodicals and reference books such as dictionaries, encyclopedia, atlases, maps, also non-reference materials like story books, textbooks, complementary books, monographs and non-printed materials like graphics, audio-visuals, motion picture's projectors, television, computers and transparencies so that secondary school students can appreciate books and adapt to the habit of reading. Reading is recognized as an art that is capable of transforming man's life and his entire society. Derrajah and Gray (1999) described reading as an art of interpreting printed and written words, the most effective process of conscious learning which influences the extent and accuracy of judgment and action of readers. Reading makes way for a better understanding of one's own experience and it can be an exciting voyage to one's self discovery as it is a very important issue which is not only about enjoyment but a necessity; the basic tool of education (Mokatsi, 2005). However, the world children report revealed that about one billion people entered the 21st century unable to read a book or unable to write (UNICEF, 1999).

“Reading habit” as a term, refers to the behaviour that experiences the likeness of reading of individual types for reading and taste of reading. It is seen to be a pattern with which an individual organizes his or her reading. It is a fact that reading is important for everybody so as to be able to cope with new knowledge in this changing world. Nevertheless, the heart of self education and life long learning ones ability to make use of the library to read yet, reading culture among secondary school students in Nigeria as a whole is not encouraging, we prefer to be listening and chatting rather than settling down to read or make use of library resources to boost our reading ego.

In basic and post basic schools today, the reading habit of children is waning because factors like non-availability of reading materials and reading promotion programmes in schools, yet it has been established that reading habit is best formed at a young impressionable age in school. One of the primary objectives of the school library is to provide adequate collection for student’s reading development (Udofia, 2001). The use of library resources at an early age can facilitate reading habit promotion just as schools seem to pay more attention to the cultural education of their students than they used to do. An appropriate reading skill is required in development the reading habit.

School library resources should be able promote students’ reading habit, hence school libraries need to be redefine their roles and move away from traditional emphasis on book and telling but rather encourage a good reading habit by providing sufficient reading materials and other library resources for students and also encouraging library use. Reading habit plays a crucial role in enabling pupils to achieve practical efficiency.

The introduction of the Universal Basic Education (UBE) programmes is aimed at reforming specifically, the basic education sector and the Nigerian education sector in general. One of the objectives of the blueprint for the resuscitation of the basic education sector according to Adediran (2003) is “enhancing and energising the curricular and its delivery. At the State level, it is referred to as State Universal Basic Education Board (SUBEB). The Board is put in place to help the federal government to implement the objectives of the Universal Basic Education (UBE) at State level.

For successful implementation of the programme at the local government level, the government established through appropriate legislation the Local Government Universal Basic Education Authority (LGUBEA). The LGUBEA roles in the implementation of the UBE programme include coordinating controlling, supervising, monitoring and directing the basic education of the Nigerian citizens at the grassroot level libraries are established to promote reading culture in Nigeria schools as well as enhance and energize the curricula and its delivery. They are to be able to adequately provide library and information resources and services that will meet the needs of pupils and teachers as well as support school curricula. According to Adeoye (2004) SUBEB libraries are designed to serve as model school libraries and bench mark for school libraries development in Nigeria.

IFLA/UNESCO (2000) also emphasized that school libraries should, as part of its programme, focus on improving the reading skills of pupils as well as helping them to

develop a love for books as well as aptitude for reading to enable them to learn to read critically. This study, therefore intends to assess the influence of the Oyo State Basic Education Board (SUBEB) libraries project in developing the reading skills of pupils in primary schools.

Statement of the Problem

School libraries lay the foundation of the reading habit and imparting reading skills at the formative stage of the pupils' education. A major objective of school libraries all over the world is to promote reading. The role of school libraries in countries like Nigeria, where most children in public schools have their first contact with books and reading in school, cannot be overemphasized. Libraries are means to stimulate and develop the reading interest.

However, there is a general consensus that there is a low or inadequate reading habit among pupils in our schools which may be due to lack of appropriate reading skills. The inability of the library to develop in pupils, positive attitude towards reading could be responsible for this. But no empirical evidence exists to prove this assertion. The State Universal Basic Education Board (SUBEB) libraries are very relevant in developing pupils reading skills. They may not have been performing this role. Thus, this study intends to determine the influence of SUBEB libraries project in developing the reading skills of public primary school pupils in Oyo State, Nigeria.

Objectives of the Study

The specific objectives of this study are to:

1. determine the adequacy of SUBEB libraries resources in developing the reading skills of pupils.
2. determine the pattern of the SUBEB libraries by public primary school pupils in Oyo state.
3. determine the prevailing attitude of the public primary school pupils towards reading.
4. identify the reading promotion programme available in SUBEB library.

Research Questions

- i. How adequate are SUBEB library resources in developing the reading skills of public primary school pupils in Oyo state?
- ii. How often do public primary schools make use of SUBEB library for reading skills development activities?
- iii. What is the attitude of the public primary school pupils towards reading?
- iv. What learning resources do the pupils prefer to read in the library?
- v. What reading promotion programmes are organised in SUBEB library/SLRCs?

Literature Review

The role of reading in education cannot be overemphasized as most formal learning taken place through reading. Reading, according to World Book Encyclopedia (2002), is the act of interpreting printed and written words. Okojie (2002) also emphasized that reading is a basic tool in education, and one of the most important skills in everyday life, through

which we acquire new ideas, obtain needed information, seek support for our ideas, add to our personal pleasure and broaden our interests.

Reading involves understanding written language and most importantly bringing background knowledge to play while reading James (2000). Therefore through reading what an author has written, the reader sets out to understand and respond to the author's message. According to Alegbeleye (2008) reading the written text is a skill that must be learnt because to be literate or well educated and informed in any society of the world, one must learn and be able to read. Apart from the fact that reading exposes the reader to a wealth of knowledge that cannot be acquired through any other means, it also liberates the mind from ignorance and makes an individual literate. Much importance is attached to teaching every child to read and write because it has been said that the leading nations are reading nations (Apeji, 2009).

Reading, even at primary education level, is important because a child's performance at his level can be used to predict its future performance in all other areas of life. So, reading is best taught at the primary school level, if it is to be accorded any importance at all. In Nigeria, the culture is not favourable to reading. Oyegade (2003) laments that as important as books are, it is an irony of life that most Nigerians have not fully embraced reading and exploited its potential. Reading can provide something unique in that books, education and literacy are prerequisite to Nigerian development (Alegbeleye 2008). Thus, children should be introduced to books and other learning resources early in life so as to make them interested, develop them and to nurture the reading habit in them.

Reading is a mechanical and thoughtful process requiring the reader to understand what the author is endeavoring to communicate and to contribute his own experience and thoughts to the problem of understanding (Kargbo, 2010). The reader not only recognizes the essential facts or ideas presented, but also reflects on their significance, evaluates them critically, discovers relationships between them, and classifies his understanding of ideas apprehended. Reading makes the reader to understand and contemplate, his emotions are stirred; his attitudes and purposes are modified.

Reading is perceived as a programme social phenomenon in that it is a means of implementing the task of continuing education and raising pupils skills and drawing people into a more creative life (Amucheazi, 2001). Helping pupils to read should be general concern to teachers. In modern society, literacy is essential; hence pupils must learn to read; as reading will develop into a life-long habit. Thus, a great deal of attention should be founded in school curriculum towards the promotion of children's interest in books. School libraries must also ensure the supply, deployment and classification of books, guidance in selection of appropriate books as well as training in study skills and provision of time in which to read (Kargbo, 2010). Reading in schools in Nigeria is embedded in the curriculum, and is recognized in school, as an important studying skill. Reading and comprehension is a study skill that enables pupils to read to learn for self-enhancement, experience sharing and recreation.

The school library may promote reading habits, skills and culture but the extent to which this promotion is successful is dependent largely on the school curriculum and on what materials are available to be read (Apeji, 2009). Kargbo (2010) corroborated Apeji (2009) views by emphasizing that children are complex individual growing up in a rapidly changing world where books and literacy important for early development and life-long learning. Access to books that bring wealth of learning are critical. The role of libraries is however paramount in supporting the child's reading and access to information, ensuring equitable access to all, regardless of age, gender, race, wealth, physical or intellectual ability or geographical location is crucial for the future.

The school library is a major ground for promoting readership and reading skill development among students. Dike (2001) sees school library as offering crucial help to the attainment of basic literacy and the creation of voluntary readers who will turn to books and reading for information and pleasure throughout a lifetime. Libraries are means to stimulate and develop the reading skills and reading interest of pupils. This implies that the school library is a good place to help students and pupils in developing good reading habits.

The school library helps students to develop the ability for critical thinking, become independent readers and form good reading habits. This view was supported by Dike (1998) when she avers that through the school library, children are introduced to the bread uses of reading for information, for pleasures, of personal growth over a lifetime. Children imbibe good characters during their formative years, which fall within the time a child is in primary school and transits to secondary school. Availability of school libraries during the years goes a long way to inculcate good reading habits in these young scholars.

Dike (2001) identified provision of access to book; developing reading interests of pupils; guidance' and generating resources for literacy as major roles of the library in promoting reading. The school libraries lay the foundation of the reading habit and impart reading skills at the formative stage of the pupils education. It takes a lot of reading to become a fluent reader and as Krashen (2000) notes "you can only learn to read by reading'.

Moreover, the promotion of reading habits and development of reading skills can also be done by introducing pleasurable experience with books and literature through story telling, reading together, reading clubs and literary events. Floyd (2001) emphasized that reading clubs bring children together to share books and book experiences. They can have regular story hour for young children where children are introduced to books stories. They can also encourage parents who bring their children into the library to register their children as members of the library, if they are not register members. Libraries should also stock picture books with not writing so that parents who are can read there books to their children. These books can play an important role in helping children develop emerging literacy skill such as timing pages and visual literacy. According to Wells (2000) libraries can develop lists of recommended books and distribute the lists to schools in the area. The schools can encourage the children to read the books and at the end of six months, the library could run a quiz on the books with the schools sending teams to compete.

It is observable that certain factors or reasons affect or determine why a reader reads at the level he reads. Reading may be for pleasure; to prepare what to teach, to deliver a speech; for awareness for intellectual advancement; to prepare for an examination and for other purposes. It is therefore not a gain saying that reading habit is determined by what is to be achieved through the exercise.

The importance of school libraries in developing reading interests of children cannot be overemphasized. However, it has been observed that most school libraries have insufficient stock to play this role. Fayose (1995) held the skeletal fiction collection and restrictions placed on the use of school library by children as responsible for their lack of voluntary reading. The importance of access is emphasized. Dike (1998) emphasized story-telling, reading together, reading clubs and literacy events as major activities/methods that can be used to develop the reading interest of children.

Apeji (2009) of the opinion that there should be definite programmes like story-hour or book-talk that could help children develop the habit of reading for entertainment and for enjoyment. She further highlighted the advantages of developing this habit in children to include; increasing the fluency rate and powers of comprehension; exposing the children to a range of experiences which could be used as means of testing social and interpersonal situations which the children may meet in the future; making the habit of reading for enjoyment remain for life as one of the most creative ways of using leisure time

Research Methodology

The survey research design method was adopted for this study while questionnaire was used as the major instrument of data collection. The population for the study comprises of all the pupils in the schools in which the school library resources centres (SLRCs) are situated in the five local government areas in Ibadan Township. The pupils in these schools were purposively selected because of their nearness to the SLRCs and the fact that they would have easy access to the schools. Also, only pupils in higher classes, Primary 4 and Primary 5 were selected for this study. The five local government areas chosen included: Ibadan North; Ibadan North West, Ibadan North-East; Ibadan South-West and Ibadan South-East LGAs. In all, there are 1, 801 primary schools pupils in the higher classes (Primary 4 and Primary 5) in the selected schools. Thus, due to the large population only twenty five percent (25%) making 135 of the pupils in the higher classes in the selected primary schools were chosen for the study. Only 123 out of the 135 copies of questionnaire administered on the pupils were returned with useful responses. **Data**

Analysis and Discussion

The analysis of data and discussion of findings were presented in line with the research questions for the study.

Research question 1: How adequate are SUBEB reading promotion activities in developing the reading skills of primary school pupils in Oyo state?

Table 1: Pupils' Opinion on Adequacy of SUBEB Library Reading Promotion Activities?

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Adequate	-	-
Inadequate	113	91.9
I don't know	10	8.1
Total	123	100.0

Table 1 revealed that majority of the pupils (113 or 91.9%) attested to the inadequacy of SUBEB library reading promotion activities in the promotion of the reading skills of the pupils. It may be inferred from the response that the reading promotion activities available in SUBEB library are not adequate in the area of promoting the reading skills of pupils, This may be due to the unavailability of programmes as well resources that may have direct influence on the development of reading skills of the pupils.

Research question 2: What is the extent of use of SUBEB library for reading skills development activities?

Table 2: Pupils Opinion on the Frequency of Use of SUBEB Library

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Daily	22	17.9
Twice a week	70	56.9
Weekly	17	13.8
Occasionally	8	6.5
Never	6	4.9
Total	30	100.0

The data from table 2 revealed that the majority of the pupils make regular use of SUBEB library with a response rate of 92 or 74.8%. This implies that the pupils make regular use of SUBEB library.

Research question 3: What is the attitude of the pupils toward reading?

Table 3: Pupils Opinion on their Attitude to Reading

Pupils' attitude	Frequency	Percentage (%)
I am unwilling to read	66	53.6
I found reading stressful	74	60.2
I enjoy reading at home /school	26	21.1
I am always disturbed to read	-	-

The information on the prevailing attitude of pupils toward reading is presented in table 3 and it showed that majority of the pupils attested to the fact that they found reading stressful and that they are unwilling to read with a response rate of 74 or 60.2% and 66 or 53.6% respectively. This implies that the pupils have a negative attitude toward reading.

Research question 4: What learning resources do the pupils prefer to read in the library?

Table 4: Pupils' opinion on their preference for learning resources

Learning resources	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Textbooks	80	65.0
Magazines	10	8.1
Newspapers	-	-
Comics	-	-
Poetry	30	24.4
Dictionary	-	-
Novels	-	-
Storybooks	-	-
Music books	13	10.6

Pupils' opinion on their preference for learning resources as presented in Table 4 above showed textbooks (80 or 65.0%) as the only learning resources preferred by majority of the pupils for use whenever they visit SUBEB library. This may not be unconnected with the fact that textbooks are being used to support the academic activities of the pupils.

Research question 5: What reading promotion programmes are available in SUBEB library/ Libraries Resources Centres?

Table 5: Pupils' Opinion on Reading Promotion Programmes Available in SUBEB Library/Libraries Resources Centres

Reading promotion activity	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Story telling	20	16.3
Readers' club	34	27.6
Literary and Debate	82	66.7
Display and Exhibition	69	56.1

Table 5 presents pupils' opinion on reading promotion activity available in SUBEB libraries/SLRCs and it showed that majority of the pupils affirmed the availability of "literary and debate" and "display and exhibition" as major reading promotion programmes available in SUBEB library/SLRCs with 82 or 66.7% and 69 or 56.1% response rates respectively. This implies that the pupils attested to the availability of literary and debate society as well as display and exhibition as major reading promotion activities available in SUBEB library.

Discussion of findings

The findings of the study revealed the inadequacy of the SUBEB library/SLRCs resources in promoting reading activities as well as reading skills of the pupils. This may be due to the unavailability of relevant resources as well as relevant reading promotion activities that can help in the development of the reading skills of the pupils. The unavailability of other reading promotion activities such as storytelling and readers' club may be responsible for the response of the pupils that the reading promotion activities of SUBEB libraries/SLRCs are inadequate for them. This corroborated the view of Apeji (2009) that reading promotion activities in most schools have become moribund just as most schools do not have what can be referred to as library at all.

Moreover, the study further affirmed the regular use of SUBEB library/SLRCs by the pupils. The regular use of the SUBEB library/SLRCs may be due to the recent library development project of the state government that emphasized the establishment of libraries and provision of learning resources in the library as well as the fact that the teachers encourage the pupils to make use of the library by giving them assignments which they are directed to do in the library. The fact that that the pupils attested to the regular use of only textbooks revealed that the students only go to the library to do assignment and not for reading.

On the prevailing attitude of the pupils toward the use of SUBEB library/SLRCs, the findings from the study revealed that the pupils have a negative attitude toward the use of the library. This is in support of Oyegade (2009) view which emphasised that most Nigerians pupils have not fully embraced reading and exploited its potential. This may be due to the fact that the pupils have many other activities catching their attention other than going to the library to read. It may also be due to the fact that they do not enjoy their stay in the library which may be as a result of the uninteresting environment of the library.

Moreover, the study revealed textbooks as the only learning resource that the pupils preferred to read. This may be due to the fact that this category of learning resource is related to the school work of the pupils. The study further affirmed the relevance of textbooks to school work of the pupils while also establishing the usefulness of the resources to make the pupils understand their school subjects as major reasons for pupils' preference for textbooks as part of learning resources they used in the school.

On the reading promotion programmes available in SUBEB library/SLRCs, the study revealed display and exhibition as the major reading promotion programmes available in

SUBEB library/SLRCs. This may be due to the fact the SUBEB library/SLRCs make display and exhibition of materials to make the pupils to be aware of the learning resources and stimulate their interest in the reading of the books. The findings of the study further revealed the provision of interesting books in the SUBEB library as a major measure for promoting reading among the pupils. This corroborates Oyegade (2009) opinion that children should be introduced to books and other learning resources early in life by parents and teachers so as to make them interested in reading and develop them and nurture the reading habit in them.

Conclusion

The type of resources available in a collection, the adequacy of such resources to pupils need and the adequacy of the reading promotion programme are major elements that determines the success of SUBEB library/SLRCs in the process of developing the reading skills of pupils. This study has confirmed the inadequacy of the SUBEB library resources and reading promotion programmes in the development of the reading skills of the public primary pupils in Oyo state. Reading promotion programme such as literary and debate and readers' club are very relevant and important to the development of reading skills among pupils as these programmes attract the attention of the pupils and sustain their interest more that what display and exhibition can do. Exhibition only stimulate their interest which may not be effective enough. The use of literary and debate as well as readers' club alongside exhibition make the programme more effective. The use of appropriate reading promotion programme will also change the negative attitude of the pupils to a positive one.

Recommendations

Government and library management should ensure holistic approach to collection development in SUBEB libraries to ensure that the collection can take care of education, information, recreation and cultural needs of the pupils. The library should be made more interesting so that pupils will see an environment that is different from classroom anytime they visit the library. This will sustain their interest in coming and making use of the library.

Reading promotion activities such as readers' club and literary and debate should be mounted in SUBEB library/SLRCs to encourage pupils' use of the library. This will further facilitate the pupils' use of SUBEB library/SLRCs and encourage discourse that can challenge pupils to want to read to know more. There may also be the need for reading hour on the time table of every class. The reading period should be used in promoting reading among the pupils. Pupils can be taken to the library where the library is within the school premises or the library can come to the school with books (in form of mobile or outreach service).

Parents are also encouraged to buy books for their children and encourage them to read it. It may be necessary that the parents would take time to read with the pupils until the pupils develop the habit of reading on their own. Also, there may be need to extend the opening hours of the libraries to give pupils the opportunity of using the library. Teachers can encourage the pupils to use the library by giving them assignments that will take

them to the library on a regular basis. Pupils too should be allowed to recommend books that attract their interest for the library to buy.

There is also the need to employ a reading specialist that can be able to diagnose the reading difficulties of pupils and help them out of it. Lastly, there should be proper evaluation of the activities of SUBEB libraries/SLRCs on a regular basis to ensure that the purpose for which the libraries/LRCs are established is not defeated.

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