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Poor Reading Culture: A Barrier to Students' Patronage of Libraries Selected Secondary School in Ado Local Government Area of Ekiti-State, Nigeria.

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Abstract

The paper examined poor reading culture: A barrier to students' patronage of Selected Secondary School Libraries in Ado Ekiti Local Government Area of Ekiti State. The design for the study is descriptive survey which utilizes questionnaire to collect data. Oral interview was also conducted. Tables and simple percentages were adopted in the data analysis. Results of the analysis show that computer and other media, harsh economic reality, societal demand for materialism, inadequate library materials among others are causes of poor reading culture of students in secondary schools. It was also revealed that materials in secondary school libraries are not organized, inadequate, not relevant, school librarians not readily available among others constitute the reasons for poor patronage of secondary schools libraries. It concluded by giving recommendations towards the improvement of reading culture of secondary school students and the enhancement of the patronage of their school libraries.

Introduction

It is axiomatic that few years back a family that produced a school certificate graduate had cause to rejoice. This was because the school certificate holder was not easy to come by in those days. The products of the missionary and government schools were better compared to the secondary school learners today. The skills of reading and writing demonstrated then by secondary school leavers made them essential commodities in the various fields of work under government and private establishment. Their fluency in English language and their reading and writing dexterity were evident to the stuff of education received then. Patronage of school libraries incorporated to secondary school system becomes highly affected because students of today have poor reading culture.

However, this has turned out to have a multiply effect as most university graduates are ill-equipped and half baked. Secondary school learners cannot take minutes at meetings while primary school leaving certificate is no more accorded recognition. The performance of students nowadays is attributed to their poor background in the reading culture which is a carryover from their primary school through the secondary and up to the University level.

To read is to get ideas from print or written materials. Reading is a way of acquiring knowledge. Oyeyemi (2005) observed that reading is a means of tapping knowledge from superior minds.

Reading is a term used to refer to an interaction by which meaning encoded in visual stimuli by an author makes meaning in the mind of the reader. It involves the recognition of printed or written symbols which serve as stimuli for the recall or meaning through the intellectual manipulation of concepts already possessed by the reader. The resulting meanings are thereafter organized into thought process according to the purpose adopted by the reader, such an organization leads to modified thought and/or behaviour, or else leads to a new behaviour which takes its place either in personal or in social development. From another perspective, reading is defined as the vocalization of words in a given passage and the process of giving meaning to materials. This definition refers to reading aloud which beginners do quite often and enables teachers to detect and to correct errors spontaneously. Although, reading can be done aloud but vocalization in the course of silent reading slows down reading pace. For reading to be effective, it should be done with a good speed. Reading speed is expressed in the number of character or words read per minute.

Johnson (1999) observed that there are two types of reading namely, reading aloud and silent reading. Reading aloud involves audible vocalization of what is being read and is good for young learners because it exposes error for timely corrective measure. Reading aloud is used for speech delivery in public gatherings, and is also the format for dictation and oral comprehensive tests. In silent reading, the reader reads in the inside of him. In other words, he does not vocalize what he reads. Wide reading imposes reading silently and this is necessary for developing the reading habit, effective reading and for a profound understanding of literate and technical tests. The ability to read is essential to being able to learn any subject taught in school. In our high-tech society, proficiency in reading is a must to compete favourably in today's job market.

Objective of the Study

In Nigeria today, reading culture of students is very poor. This makes the patronage of libraries to be affected negatively. It therefore makes it an issue of research for librarians and information professionals. A study of this nature would assist in finding out the causes of poor reading culture and negative effect it has on the patronage of libraries and also proffer useful recommendations geared towards improving reading culture of students and patronage of school libraries in Nigeria.

Literature Review

Akinbola (2007) observed that the importance of reading cannot be denied. According to him while quoting the submission of the Nigeria University Commission, reading culture is a sustained regime of reading textual and non-textual materials for the purpose of broadening the horizon of knowledge within and outside one's disciplinary interest. Reading is essential to literacy and it is an emancipatory tool that liberates one from ignorance, disease and poverty as well as providing one with the liberty for all round development. For effective and efficient living and learning Onuhaogo (2000) maintained that one should be able to read. Reading according to him is the foundation of literacy. It is therefore evident through the above submission that for literacy to be functional, durable and development oriented, reading skill is essential. Also, as the event of the world is ever-changing, reading apart from stimulating one's cognitive ability, broadening one's understating by exposing the time expands the readers knowledge to be able to cope with new challenges in life.

According to Ike (1999) the successes brought about by these campaigns on the reading habit of Nigerians are minimal. A conducive environment that can foster the inculcating of the habit of reading books among Nigerians, is non-existent, he continued. In his arguments, he stressed that a book reading culture cannot be established among illiterates. He further advised that Nigerians should be made literate in one or more Nigerian language and/or English/other foreign languages.

Bankole (1999) believes that if children have the kind of childhood exposure, they were exposed to in other areas, to books and reading, the conviction that reading is a habit will be impressed on their mind. According to him, this impression once established does not die easily. The reading habit is learnt, nurtured and cemented in the school environment. A good school should form the habit of providing the pupils with things to read whether they are books, inscription or toys. According to Johnson (1999), the level of readership is to a large extent, an index to a country's level of development. She defined readership as the number of citizens who do effective reading in relation to the population of a particular country. Based on Johnson's definition, one can infer that Nigeria has a poor readership culture because, the number of those who are not actively reading, far out-weights that of those who are actively reading. Johnson (1999) further stated that the inability to read by a large proportion of the population of a country points to under-development since reading, writing and arithmetic constitute the foundation of elementary education.

According to Nzeako (1982), the ability to read is a skill that a person can develop or acquire. This skill has become more necessary now than before because, in order to live well and succeed in our modern and complex world, which has become a reading world, one requires an effective reading skill. Nzeako (1982) maintained that the average Nigerian was neither taught neither how to read well nor how to acquire the skill for reading proficiently. Consequently, his reading is full of such faults that emanate from:

- Moving of the lips and or vocalizing what he reads
- Reading all material at the same rate
- Being frequently stopped by an unfamiliar word. Reading each word one by one which is a sign of short word-span and
- Back-tracking and re-reading words and/or lines.

All these are practices that both slow down one's reading speed and hinder comprehension.

Holte, (1998) indicated that, over 180 researcher studies to date have proven that phonics is the best way to teach reading to all students. It has also been shown that phonics is the only way to teach reading to all youths with learning difficulties such as dyslexia (difficulty in learning to read due to one or more information processing problems such as visual perceptual or auditory perceptual deficits).

Reading like writing is simply "talking on paper". Children learn to talk by imitating sounds and then combining the sounds to form words. Also, the human brain is programmed, and made to learn the same way they learn to talk.

Whilst there are about one million words in English, there are only 44 sounds. It is easier to memorize 44 sounds than to memorize hundreds of thousand of words (whole-word approach). Learning to read using the whole-word approach is not the best way to learn because it teaches through memorization of word pictures and guessing. Countries that use the phonetic language, like in the English Language should employ phonic (the study of the sounds of speech) in teaching how to read. For children, phonic is a very vital tool in teaching to read because it teaches children to read the same way they learnt to talk.

According to Yilmaz (2000), people who do not learn to read through an intensive phonic programme often have one or more of the following symptoms:

- Below grade level reading achievement
- Slow reading
- Poor comprehension
- Fatigue after reading only for a short while
- Poor spelling skills
- Lack of enjoyment from reading

According to Ilegogie (2005), reading helps in the development of one's communications skills and intellect. Development through reading is more

progress engendering, lasting, effective and beneficent to mankind when held in the reading culture. To Holte (1998), the importance of reading is essential to full participation in modern society because it adds value to life and provides access to culture and cultural heritage. Reading empowers, and emancipates citizens, and brings people together. It can be thought as a factor, which has important role to play in fulfilling the multicultural structure of our country.

Iheanacho (2007) opined that a healthy reading culture has a pivotal role to play in the social, economic and technological development of any country. Reading is a very essential commodity in the task of nation building. It is a main political weapon in the development of any nation. Development countries of the world were able to attain that height because, at a point in their history, they were able to give themselves too much reading and research. Countries like Japan, America, and Britain etc. took to reading and research to achieve technological breakthroughs. Most developing countries do not have a healthy reading culture hence they lack substantial information that could be utilized for national development. If these countries can re-orientate their citizens to have a change of attitude towards reading as well as research we can be rest assured that it is just a matter of time before the dividends of an informed people will began to manifest in such countries.

Research Methods

A survey method was used to gather information on poor reading culture. A barrier to students' patronage of selected secondary school libraries in Ado – Ekiti Local Government Area of Ekiti State. Twenty secondary schools were selected to reflect the categories of schools in the Local Government Area as follows:

- (a) Government owned public junior secondary schools.
- (b) Government owned public senior secondary schools.
- (c) Private fee paying secondary schools.

Data was collected from the schools by means of questionnaires and interviews.

The questions asked are as follows:

1. Does your school have a library of its own?
2. Is the library being consulted by students?

3. How often do you visit the library and for what purpose?
4. Do you have a professional librarian?
5. If yes, what is his designation?
6. Why do you think the reading culture of students is poor today?
7. Is your library having relevant and up to date materials?

A total of 200 copies of questionnaire were distributed to the respondents randomly selected in schools under study. The response rate of 200 (100%) was high because the questionnaire were personally administered and collected. To supplement the data gathered by questionnaire, the researcher also used interview technique. The data collected was analyzed by means of tables, frequency count and percentages.

Data Analysis and Finding

200 questionnaires were administered to the respondents. The questionnaires were analyzed using frequency counts which employs the use of percentages and tables.

Results

The results for this study are presented in Tables 1-7

Table 1 gives the total number of secondary schools in Ado Ekiti Local Government.

Table 2 gives the type of schools used in the sample.

Table 3 shows the distribution of respondents based on sex. It shows that 120 (60%) of the respondents are male while 80 (40%) are female.

Table 4 shows the availability of libraries in the schools.

Table 5 revealed the various purposes for students' patronage of their respective libraries. Top on the respondents view is reading of story books. This shows that students do not patronize the library for serious academic purpose. Borrowing of textbook for their academic pursuit is 80 (40%). This percentage is very low.

Table 6 shows the causes of poor reading culture of students in secondary schools. Computers and other media have affected reading

culture was the highest on the respondents view with 200 (100%). This is so because of advancement in technology which makes it easy for students to watch certain literature like Maebeth on the internet, video etc. This makes it difficult for lazy students to read. 186 (93%) of the respondents revealed that societal demand for materialism is a cause of poor reading culture. Of particular note is 160(80%) of respondents view that poor educational system is a major cause of poor reading culture of secondary school student. This is in line with Oyeyemi (2005) who attested to this attribution of poor readership habit to our poor educational system.

Table 7 shows the respondent's observation on reasons why secondary school students do not visit the library to read. Majority of the respondents revealed that materials are not available 190 (95%), and that materials are not organized 190 (95%). However, 185 (90%) declared that school librarians are not readily available.

The above observation give credence to the fact that most of the libraries we have in Nigerian are not well stocked enough to satisfy the information needs of clientele. It is sad to note that most secondary school libraries do not have relevant information materials for students to read.

Discussion

As have been shown in this paper, Nigerian secondary school students do not have a healthy reading culture. The situation deserves necessary attention and improvement to enhance their well being and contribution to the development of the society. The task no doubt is very challenging as it involves the entire nation with a comprehensive approach that will be far reaching and sustainable for the educational progress of the students.

Conclusion and Recommendation

It is pertinent to note that because of the vital role that libraries play in the enhancement of reading culture of secondary school students, the researcher suggests that libraries should be incorporated in all secondary schools in Nigeria with books and non-book materials especially audio- visual materials. Professional librarians should be employed. It is disheartening that none of the secondary schools surveyed has professional librarian. A professional person is essential to a good library programme. He is the innovator, coordinator and catalyst of many programmes.

Funding of school libraries should be done by the Federal Government and should be in a separate vote. The outdated books can therefore be replaced with new one. Journals should also be bought from the separate vote.

Government should stop lukewarm attitude to education in order to promote reading culture of the children. Government should organize various courses, workshops and conferences to sell the noble idea of good reading culture to students and all stake holders in the educational system. Where the above steps are taken and implanted with all sense of seriousness and commitment, the reading culture of our secondary school students will definitely improve.

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Table 1: Total No of Secondary Schools in Ado Local Government Area

School Type	No of school
Government owned junior secondary schools (J.S.S.) public school	14
Government owned senior secondary schools (S.S.S) public school	14
Private fee paying secondary school	27
Total	55

Table 2: Type of Schools in the Sample

School Type	No of school	No of student respondent	No of teachers respondents
Government owned Junior secondary school (J.S.S.) public schools	5	40	10
Government owned senior secondary schools (S.S.S) public school	5	40	10
Private fee paying secondary schools	10	80	20
Total	20	160	40

Total No of respondents: 200.

Table 3: Respondents Distribution on Sex

Sex	No	%
Male	120	60
Female	80	40
Total	200	100

Table 4: Availbale of Libraries in the Schools

School Type	No of schools with libraries	%	No of school without libraries	Libraries percentage
Government owned J.S.S. public schools	3	60	2	40
Government owned S.S.S public school	4	80	1	20
Private fee paying secondary schools	8	80	2	20
Total	15			

Table 5: Purpose for Which Students Use the Library

Purpose for which students use the library	No of Respondents (Frequency)	%
To borrow textbook	80	40
To study class work	70	35
To read story books	170	85
To write personal note	100	50
For relaxation	120	60

Table 6: Causes of Poor Reading Culture of Students in Secondary Schools

Causes	No of respondents (frequency)	%
Harsh economic reality	185	92.5
Poor educational system	160	80
Computers and other media have affected reading culture	200	100
Materials in libraries are inadequate	170	85
Poor method of teaching "reading"	178	89
Societal demand for materialism	186	93
Laziness on part of students	180	90
Problem of awareness of the need to read	182	91
Negative attitude of parents	178	89

Table 7: Reasons Why Secondary Schools Students Do Not Visit The Library to Read.

Reasons	No of respondents frequency	%
Materials are not relevant to your needs	160	80
Materials are not available	100	95
Materials are out of date	140	70
Materials are inadequate	185	92.5
School librarians are not readily available	180	90
Materials are not organized	190	95