

CHAPTER TWELVE

STUDENTS' USE OF SCHOOL LIBRARY FOR DEVELOPING READING CULTURE IN SENIOR SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

The study examined how the school library can be used to develop a reading culture among senior secondary students. The study was carried out in Awka South Local Government Area of Anambra State. Three research questions guided the study. The design for the study was a survey while a structured questionnaire developed by the researchers, with a reliability coefficient of 0.83 was used for data collection. The data generated were analyzed using the mean. The findings of the study indicated that the extent to which students utilize the materials in the school library is very low. Most of the respondents agreed that most of the materials and books in the library have little or no relevance to them. Again, the respondents agreed that some factors such as poor organization of library information resources; outdated information resources/materials; and so on mitigate against their use of the school library and as a result hinder the development of proper reading culture among students. From the findings, recommendations were proffered and among such included that the government and NGOs should equip the existing school libraries with relevant library resources that are current, rich in quantity, quality and varied to reflect the content of the school curriculum. Also, the government should equally employ qualified school librarians to manage the school library.

Keywords: Students, School Library, Reading Culture.

Introduction

The art of reading could be a very interesting experience for children and adolescents if they are properly guided. A reading habit cultivated early in life helps the child to grow into an independent adult (Oji & Habibu, 2011). Many people believe that reading is not a passive activity; rather it is a cognitive, interactive and psycholinguistic process as posited by Otiye (2011). It is important in the all-around development of man and his society and acts as a fundamental building block in learning. Reading is an important habit that helps learners in the mastery of language and also enhances their performance in all subjects in the school curriculum. It is important in the general development of man and his society and acts as a fundamental building block in learning (Igwe, 2011). Reading is a multifaceted process that enables readers to turn information in writing into meaning and achieve independence through word recognition, critical thinking, comprehension and fluency. It is a basic tool for education. It is essential for academic and intellectual growth. Reading in its fullest sense involves weaving together word recognition and comprehension in a fluent manner. It is the ability to understand words contained in a document and make use of the knowledge for personal growth and development (Owusu-Acheaw & Larson, 2014). Though the benefits of reading are immeasurable, the reading culture

of Nigerian society is very poor. According to Karanga (2011), when an individual's pattern of reading is of low quality, he is said to possess a poor reading culture.

Reading culture has at all times and in all ages been a great source of knowledge. The value of reading culture to students is enormous; it includes a profound, precise, clear and complete understanding and appropriation of the content of the text. Arumobi and Ukwoma (2016) noted that reading should be in agreement with the interests and capabilities of the reader. To sustain students for good reading culture, it is required that students have access to books and other related materials. According to Elaturoti (2011), students can achieve their potential in life if they have developed an interest in the use of their school or class libraries. This is because reading helps to increase an individual's sense of freedom helps to develop the mind, intellect and personality of human beings. Reading culture plays a very crucial role in enabling a person to achieve personal efficiency. Reading culture defines a consistent commitment in the act of reading incessantly. It encompasses the gaining of positive attitude among students and this is vital to students' academic achievement and overall development as well. Ilogho (2015) describes reading culture as a scholarly practice for pursuing knowledge, information and/or entertainment via written words. Owusu-Acheaw and Larson (2014) define reading habits as a well-planned and deliberate pattern of study which has attained a form of consistency on the part of students toward understanding academic subjects and passing examinations. Reading culture is the process of building up a positive reading attitude. This is when reading becomes a part of the individual's life and not only certain aspects, such as school or work. 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. As students learn to enjoy reading, learning becomes relevant and in that way, their reading culture is improved.

All over the world, libraries are dedicated to providing free and equitable access to information for all, be it in written, electronic or audio-visual form. They play a key role in creating literate environments and promoting literacy by offering relevant and attractive reading materials to students, teachers and the general public as well. The library is the custodian of knowledge and information, and hence the need to use the resources in it to develop effective means of promoting reading culture. It provides physical or digital access to materials and maybe a physical building or room or a virtual space or even both. Schools with effective library programs have seen a high-performance level (NYCC School Brief, 2011). The American Association of School Librarians (AASL) notes that school libraries are crucial to the development of educational skills with their provision of physical and intellectual access to the information resources and vital for learning (AASL, 2012). Moreover, school libraries give students the chance to read about other cultures to broaden their minds, and opportunities for voluntary reading which are crucial for the development of the enjoyment of reading, which has positive benefits on learning (Akabuike&Asika, 2012). As part and parcel of a school setup, the school library exists to help the educational system achieve its goal by serving its user (majorly teachers and students) and enabling them to achieve educational objectives to play their roles in society effectively.

To bring about real development in learners intellectually, students who will contribute immensely to the development of the nation, there is the need for school libraries to play their role in inculcating a sense of reading culture among students. When habits are learnt at an early stage, they are difficult to get rid of and that is why students are encouraged to acquire reading skills early in life as they are the school library's major clientele. It has been observed that when students have greater access to books, literacy materials, literacy support and technological

instruction that school libraries provide, there is a greater likelihood that they would develop into independent readers (Issa, Aliyu, Akangbe&Adedeji, 2012).

The library is the life wire, nerve centre and heart of the academic community for it is the pivot to which all academic activities revolve. From time immemorial, libraries and librarians have played important roles in providing access to information, organizing it and assisting users in finding the information they need (Abdulsalami, Okezie&Agbo, 2013). Information is indispensable for any human activity aiming at progress. A researcher, administrator, entrepreneur, teacher and most especially, students all need the information to better equip themselves for the fruitful pursuit of their respective assignments and vocations. Indispensably, they have to read books to acquire such knowledge. Notably, a library serves as an instrument to improve the quality of life of the people, giving them education, information, recreation, intellectual stimulation and enriching their lives in all aspects.

As part and parcel of a school setup, the school library exists to help the educational system achieve its goal by serving its user (majorly teachers and students) and enabling them to achieve educational objectives to play their roles in society effectively. A school library is a collection of a wide variety of library materials and resources housed in each school, centrally organized by staff, professionally prepared to offer services to students and teachers that will enrich and support the educational enterprises (Owate&Okpa-Iroha, 2013). It provides the essential resources for all categories of learners in school through the provision of enabling environment that facilitates reading and learning.

Reading, whether for academic purposes or pleasure, is regarded as the key to lifelong learning. Though, this is hardly a subject for contention, yet, Nigeria is becoming bereft of well-read people. Most people do not read anymore except reading the daily newspaper or glancing through labels on manufactured items which they buy. Many Nigerian secondary school students do not have the zeal to read either because they do not possess the skill to do so, do not have the resources or just do not value reading. This lack of a prevalent culture of reading constitutes an effective barrier in the academic performance of students as well as in the personal growth and development of out of school graduates and this cannot be in the interest of society at large.

In most secondary schools, effective library services are either lacking or not in place and even those that have library facilities face the challenges of poor stocking and have mainly outdated books which may not inspire students to read, therefore restricting them to reading only what they are taught in the classroom by the teacher. Also as a result of Information Communication and Technology (ICT), most students are busy with phones and laptops through which they gain access to the internet, thereby active on social media platforms instead of reading. They neither study nor read, thus many are getting misinformed. Their communicative competence in the English language is poor as well as their vocabulary and diction. Bearing these issues in mind, the researchers were moved to carry out this study to examine how far the use of school libraries can go in promoting the poor reading culture of students which seems to be worse.

In addition, very little is known about the extent to which secondary school students use the school library materials available in promoting reading culture. Moreover, the relevance of the available school library materials to senior secondary school students is in question. Some of these factors may mitigate the development of reading culture among senior secondary school students.

Investigating students' use of the school library is vital because these students' academic life, in

general, depends to a large extent on their ability to process written texts. So the problem of the study is to investigate the extent to which students make use of the available materials/resources in the school library to help them develop an effective reading culture.

Research Questions

The study focused on providing answers to the following research questions:

1. To what extent do students utilize the resources/materials in the school library?
2. How relevant are the resources/materials available in the school library to the students?
3. What are the factors that hinder the use of the library to develop reading culture among secondary school students?

Several factors have been blamed for the dying reading culture of secondary school students, especially at the senior secondary school level. They are:

a. Poor quality teachers: Unfortunately, some secondary school teachers cannot read fluently. According to Otache (2020), a particular state once conducted a screening exercise for the teachers and it was discovered that a particular teacher could not read an affidavit. This is quite pathetic because, to a large extent, the quality of the teachers determines the quality of the students.

b. Irrelevant books/ materials: Books that deal with subjects that are relevant to the children's daily lives and reflect their world both inside and outside school are believed to promote engaged readers. Reading materials provided should take into consideration the culture of the learners. This is because most of the reading materials available include foreign concepts that do not relate to students' environment, which makes it difficult for them to understand and relate to what they are reading. Therefore, reading materials would be appreciated more by students if they are based on familiar experiences and culture.

c. Defective education system: The education system in Nigeria can be best described as an examination-oriented education system. Nigeria's education system does not prioritize reading for the general acquisition of knowledge, rather it prioritizes reading for passing examinations. Some students have even resorted to quoting (or cramming) to pass examinations. This is a wrong approach to reading and it does not help students to develop a strong reading culture. The implication is that such students will pass the examinations but in most cases, they cannot apply the knowledge. Ask such students questions about the same examinations that they had passed and one will be surprised that they would not be able to give correct answers. They can neither apply their knowledge nor transfer their learning properly to issues of everyday life.

d. Influence of new technology: The importance of information and communication technology to the development of students can not be under-emphasized. It should be a catalyst for educational growth and development and not a momentous curse. Students of the 21st century are children of a new generation. They are glued to the new technology which has greatly reduced their interest in reading. While technology has gradually taken steady control over the life of individuals, especially students, the reading culture is fast vanishing into thin air.

e. Societal demand for materialism: Many Nigerians usually celebrate mediocrity at the expense of intellectuals. This manifests in the rush for material things. Some people abandon their educational careers in the pursuit of money. Many have abandoned their education in search of "quick money" which they believe can be gotten in business and /or politics. Many people, at a very young age, run away from the village schools to take up jobs in urban areas. Nowadays, all

the youths want is to go into business and make money. All these throw spanners in the wheel of developing an adequate reading culture.

Some studies have been carried out by other researchers on the reading culture such as Owusu-Acheaw and Larson (2014) examined the reading habits among students in Koforidua Polytechnic and their effect on their academic performance. The study found that reading habit has an influence on students' academic performance and there is a relationship between reading habit and academic performance. The study recommended, among others that lecturers should be advised to stop providing handouts to students but rather encourage them to use the library for research and also, the current system of assessing students should be given a second thought concerning the formulae of assessment.

Again, Akabuike and Asika (2012) examined the reading habits of undergraduates and they are academic. The study was a descriptive survey. The study found that poor reading habits and a negative attitude towards reading resulted in their abysmal performance as evident in the reading test conducted. The study also showed that many students read-only to pass their examination and not for pleasure and acquiring knowledge. The study recommended that lecturers should pay special attention to developing positive reading attitudes in students by emphasizing comprehension skills and strategies to enhance effective reading.

Issa, Aliyu, Akangbe and Adedeji (2012) investigated the "Reading Interests and Habits of the Federal Polytechnic, OFFA, Students". Some of the significant findings are that utilitarian reading was more prevalent among the studied group; the students were found to read mostly their textbooks and notebooks, particularly during examination periods. Factors militating against their developing reading interests and habits include an unconducive home environment, low socio-economic status of parents, non-availability of relevant reading materials and so on. To combat these, proper home upbringing, re-orientation in parenting and effective school library system operation were recommended.

Method

The research design adopted for this study was a descriptive survey design. The study population consists of all the senior secondary schools in Awka South Local Government Area of Anambra State. The instrument used for data collection was a structured questionnaire titled 'Students' Use of School Library for Developing Reading Culture Questionnaire (SUSLDRCQ)' developed by the researchers. It was a 27 item structured questionnaire. The face and content validity was determined by two experts from the Department of Educational Foundations and one from the English Language department all from NnamdiAzikiwe University, Awka. Their inputs were given attention in restructuring the instrument. The reliability of the instrument was determined by administering it to a group of students outside the study group (Awka North LGA) who had the same characteristics as the study group. The reliability yielded a coefficient value of 0.83 using Cronbach Alpha. The instrument was administered by direct method with the help of two research assistants. The data were analyzed using the mean.

Results

Table 1: Respondents' Mean Ratings on the Extent to which Students Utilize the Materials in the School Library.

S/N	ITEMS	X	REMARK
1	I go to the library to read daily.	1.7	Disagree
2	I only go to the library once a week to borrow books then read in the classroom.	2.4	Disagree
3	I only go to the library to borrow books then read at home once a month.	2.6	Agree
4	I never borrow or read books in the library.	3.4	Agree
5	I enjoy reading in the library almost very often because I can access various books and pamphlets that help me revise for my examinations.	1.9	Disagree
6	I prefer reading in the classroom often than in the library because I can discuss difficult topics with my classmates.	2.5	Agree
7	I read in the library less often since I can use the course books issued in class to complete assignments and revise for exams.	2.7	Agree
8	I borrow and read materials in the library once in a couple of days because I can access reading materials I want from the librarian's desk or the shelves.	2.1	Disagree
9	I visit the library twice a week to read when I am free.	2.2	Disagree

Cluster means 2.39 Disagree

The results in Table 1 show that items 1,2,5,6,8 and 9 show that students rarely visit the school library or seek any services from it.

Table 2: Respondents' Mean Ratings on the Relevance of the Materials in the School Library to the Students.

S/N	ITEMS	X	REMARK
10	Some materials and books in the library are relevant for examination preparation.	2.9	Agree
11	Materials and books in the library are inaccessible.	2.5	Agree
12	Materials and books in the library are relevant towards developing an interest in reading.	2.2	Disagree
13	Materials and books in the library do not help me in any way.	1.5	Disagree
14	All materials in the school library are relevant for all reading activities.	2.2	Disagree
15	Most materials in the library are outdated and have little or no relevance.	2.9	Agree

Cluster means 2.36. Disagree

The results in table 2 show the relevance of materials in the school library. From the table, only item 10 revealed that some materials and books in the library are relevant for examination preparation while items 11 and 15 indicated that materials in the library are inaccessible and outdated. However, items 12, 13, 14 show that materials and books in the library have little or no relevance.

Table 3: Respondents' Mean Ratings on the Factors that hinder the use of Library to Develop Reading Culture among Secondary School Students.

S/N	ITEMS	X	REMARK
16	Poor organization of library information resources.	3.3	Agree
17	There is no interest in reading	2.7	Agree
18	Outdated information resources/materials.	2.9	Agree
19	The nonchalant attitude of the librarians to assist students.	2.5	Agree
20	Too many irrelevant information materials.	2.6	Agree
21	Epileptic power supply in the library.	3.3	Agree
22	The library is closed most of the time.	2.9	Agree
23	Social media interference.	3.5	Agree
24	Poor value system (interest in other things beyond reading).	2.8	Agree
25	The size and space of the library are not adequate and suitable for reading.	3.2	Agree
26	Poor arrangement and cleanliness cause library avoidance.	2.6	Agree
27	Sitting areas are not enough to accommodate readers. This discourages me from going to the library frequently.	3.2	Agree

Cluster means 2.95. Agree

The results in table 3 show that all the items i.e items 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26 and 27 are above the decision rule of 2.5 indicating that the respondents agreed that all mitigate against the development of reading culture among senior secondary school students in Awka South LGA of Anambra State.

Discussion of Findings

From table 1, the findings of the study revealed that the majority of the students rarely visit the school library. Item 3 shows that the students only borrow books once a week to read at home. The majority agree that they never borrow or read books in the library and that they read in the library

less often since they can make use of the course books issued in class to write assignments and prepare for examinations. From the findings, it was further revealed that the majority of the students disagree that they go to the library to read every day. These results correspond with the findings of OwusuAcheaw and Larson (2014) who reported that students do not use the school library regularly nor spent quality time in the library. Furthermore, the study revealed that the majority of the students disagree that they borrow and read in the library once in a couple of days and that they visit the library twice a week when they are free.

From table 2, findings of the study revealed that the majority of the students agree that books and other materials in the library are inaccessible, most of them are outdated and have little or no relevance. Items 10, 11, 14 and 15 all indicate that all the materials in the school library are of little relevance. This supports the discovery of Issa, Aliyu, Akangbe and Adedeji (2012) who reported that library materials are not easily accessible by students. It also agrees with an earlier study by OwusuAcheaw and Larson (2014) who reported that schools libraries lacked relevant materials and that some materials and most books in the library are relevant for examinations preparations only.

From table 3, findings of the study revealed that most of the respondents agree that all the listed factors militate against the use of library such as poor organization of library information resources; nonchalant attitude of the librarians and so on hinder the development of reading culture among students. Also, the findings of this study revealed that the library being closed most of the school time is among the major challenges which hinder students' use of the library for developing a reading culture. This finding is supported by the early study of Akabuike and Asika (2012) who revealed that too many irrelevant information materials and paucity of funds to purchase current information resources is one huge challenge that hinders students from using the school library materials. Furthermore, the findings revealed that social media interference and poor value system (interest in other things beyond reading) are other factors that deter students from effectively utilizing the school library. These findings are in tandem with OwusuAcheaw and Larson (2014) who reported that 'Facebook, Yahoo, Twitter, MySpace, English Premier League, European Football Leagues among other things have taken over the time students could have used for reading and studying.

Conclusion

A close perusal of the findings of this study has shown that students alone cannot be blamed for the prevalent problems of poor reading culture among secondary school students. However, the outcome of this problem affects students' academic performance, hence leading to the production of half-baked graduates. This surely affects society. The study vividly shows that the government, teachers and parents equally share in the necessary measures that can facilitate effective reading culture. On a positive note, it is believed that once the challenges of poor reading culture among secondary school students is tackled, the problem of poor reading culture in Nigeria would be resolved and the nation can enjoy human capital development in the nearest future and development would become sustainable.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations were made:

1. The government should employ qualified school Librarians to manage the school library. This is very vital. When librarians are employed to man the school libraries, students can have access to the library at any time of the school hours. The situation of having teachers as teacher librarians makes a mockery of the situation because the teacher-librarian also

- teaches with the result that whenever he or she goes to the class, the library remains locked.
2. Government should equip the existing school libraries with relevant and adequate library resources that are current, rich in quantity, quality and varied to reflect the school curriculum. Books provided should also be at the level and interest of the learners.
 3. Librarians in all schools need to regularly carry out library weeding to ensure that they remove, in circulation, all books and materials that are no longer useful to the students. Besides creating shelf space, weeding is critically important in keeping a library's collection current and in good condition.
 4. Parents should encourage their children at a tender age to go to the library so that they will familiarize themselves with the use of the library and grow with it. They should not only go to the library but also buy books the same way they buy clothes for them and insist their children read to them. Parents should also endeavour to read to their children and encourage the children to read to themselves too. This way, they will see reading as normal as wearing clothing or ever eating and drinking.

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