

Promoting Reading Habit among Secondary School Students in Lagos State: The Role of Library & ICT

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ABSTRACT---- *This paper looks at promoting reading habit among secondary school students in Lagos state: the role of Library & ICT. Extensive reading habit is an imperative tool for improving academic performance of students. The important of library and ICT among secondary students reading habit in Lagos cannot be over emphasized. This is because the library and ICT are the backbone of any successful student. Education as we all know is the bedrock of any nation and if the students cannot stand up to their colleagues in other parts of the world, then the main aim of schooling is defeated. This paper presents the roles of teachers, parents, environment and materials on students reading habit. It also highlights the use of ICT resources, factors affecting reading habit and strategies to promote reading habit.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Reading removes educational barriers, allowing more equal chances in education by promoting language development, intellectual training and enhancing the possibility of adjustment to one's personal situations. Education is a deliberate act and a systematic process of learning how to learn in order to evoke, transmit, or acquire knowledge, values, attitude and skills; to develop a critical and innovative mind through the instructions in theory and practice of reading. Any effective education is anchored on developing a good reading habit. Fayose in Simisaye and Quadri (2010) extensively discussed the paramount role reading plays in students' educational pursuit and submitted that it promotes a deep awareness and build the child up emotionally and intellectually. Hence, Makotsi (2005) emphasized that "reading is a very important issue which is not only about enjoyment but a necessity; the basic tool of education". Education is a vital instrument for a sustainable national development. The focus and objectives of education according to Ifedili (2009) are to develop natural talents to enhance the quality of environment; production of skilled manpower and generation of knowledge necessary for modern economy; inspiring and enabling individuals to develop capacities to the highest level throughout life so that they can grow intellectually and contribute effectively to society; creating learning society necessary for participation in a world undergoing phenomenal change; inculcation of the right attitude and values for fostering a democratic and civilized society; and finally, to increase knowledge and understanding for their own sake and foster their application for the benefit of the economy (as cited in Igwusi U., Chimah J.N. & Nwachukwu V.N. 2012)

The development of life-long reading interests and reading habits is a constant process which begins at home, improves systematically in the school and is carried on in later life through the influences of the general cultural atmosphere and the conscious efforts of public education and public libraries (Bamberger 1975: 43). Reading habit is one of the fundamental building blocks of learning. Becoming a skilled and adaptable reader enhances the chances of success at school and beyond. Reading is not just for school, it is for life. Reading, in all its variety, is vital to our becoming better informed, having a better understanding of ourselves and others, and to our development as thoughtful, constructive contributors to a democratic and cohesive society (as cited in Ndikubwayezu, 2009: 11). Okebukola (2004) affirms that, through reading, humans have the tools to transmit knowledge to each succeeding generation; it does allow one to listen to the wisdom and people of the ages. Henry (2004), reveals that 40 percent of adult Nigerians never read a non-fiction book from cover to cover after they finish school. The average Nigerian reads less than one book per year, and only one percent of successful men and women in Nigeria read one non-fiction book per month. The same study showed that 30 million Nigerians have graduated from high school with poor reading skills. Some Nigerians may not read because they are not working in the right field(s).

Douglas (2000) asserts that every child must become fully competent in reading to succeed in school and discharge responsibilities as a citizen of a democratic society. Reading is the foundation of much enjoyment in life and is closely related to vocational efficiency. Students and employees in every field must read to keep abreast of what is happening in their fields. They must rely on written or digital words to convey information and data. The ability to read well is

absolutely critical to success in life. According to Tracy (2008), reading is the only form of entertainment that is also an essential life skill. Reading is a skill that must be nurtured from a child's earliest years. Once secondary school students know how to read, they still need support to reach their full potential as readers. Most secondary school students with learning disabilities have problems with reading and related language skills. The decline in reading among secondary school students is an offshoot of technological advancements that have brought about overall changes in family, social, and economic conditions. Poor reading habits occur in students and young people because reading is not considered a relevant leisure activity as it does not form part of students social interaction and reading is considered a solitary pursuit and is not attractive compared with interactive activity on the Internet.

According to Okusaga (2008), reading is the only form of entertainment that is also, an essential life skill. Reading doesn't just happen; it is a skill that must be nurtured from a child's earliest years. Once secondary school students know how to read, they still need gentle coaxing and support to reach their full potential as readers. Our secondary school students need help to develop their ability to read so that they can comprehend subjects better at school. Most secondary school students with learning disabilities have problems with reading and related language skills.

2. THE INFLUENCE OF PARENTS, TEACHERS AND THE ENVIRONMENT ON PROMOTING READING HABIT AMONG SECONDARY

School Students: Behrman (2004) defines a habit of reading as an integrated pattern of reading behaviours, practices, beliefs, perceptions and knowledge. Magara and Batambuze (2005) in their study on ways of creating a reading habit for Uganda refer to a reading habit to mean a habit where reading is part of the people's living and constitutes a habit that is shared by members of the society. (Vygotsky, 1993).defines habit as 'the product of man's social life and his public activity. In this regard, habit is understood as consisting of people's ways of being in the world, behaving, and acting, based on what they have observed in the society. It refers to the attitudes, manners or habits shared by a given group of people in order to achieve common goals. For this matter, a reading habit refers to the response that community member's accord to reading and writing in their everyday life. For the purpose of this paper, we consider the literature reviews influence of parents, teachers and the environment on students reading habits.

Teachers: As cited by Donaldson (2013) a study by Nathanson, Pruslow, and Levitt (2008) with 747 students, provides a good report on the influence of teachers on their students. In the study, the graduate students were examined using seven questions relating to their reading habits and behaviors in the recent past. From the study they proposed a relevant relationship between the influence of teachers and good reading habits of students. The students that were categorized as having high motivation or interest in reading were identified as influenced by their teachers who discussed their individual reading habits, shared their ideas about different literature, and recommended good reading materials for their students. Nathanson, Pruslow, and Levitt (2008) reported that the early reading experiences of the most motivated readers were positive and could be related to an enabling environment, reinforcement, and availability of reading materials. According to the study, the recommendations made were that teachers should be "reading role models," they should involve in private reading regularly and share what they read with their students in order to enthuse their students to have a love for reading. This would also encourage students to choose efficient reading strategies, and improve reading instruction in the classroom. Over the years, many studies in the field of education, have made it clear and confirmed that teachers are very likely to influence the personal lives of children especially at the early stages. (Applegate & Applegate, 2004; Daisey, 2010; Gambrell, 1996; Ruddell, 1995). Tammy Cene Francis Donaldson proposed that on the average, children spend one-third (or more) of the day with their teachers; and as they enter into adolescence, they spend even more time with their teachers during the day.

Parents :Parents serve as the primary contact for many children and in most cases the source of their attitudes and habits. As cited by Nichole Lynnette Smith, educational institutions are concerned about the educational levels of parents because lower income communities have lower reading scores on average than higher income communities (DeBruin-Parecki & Krol-Sinclair, 2003). Alternatively, those students with parents regarded as middle class are likely to have school based literacy skills through their educational engagements at home, before and throughout their entire educational encounters (Compton- Lilly, 2003). Leisure reading takes place most often when children receive encouragement from their parents, when parents read to them, and when parents act as reading models. Reading habits are likely to improve if parents make recommendations and discuss with their children

Environment :Many studies have proven that an enabling environment is vital to the development of children socially, cognitively and academically. The studies have suggested that this influence of the environment on children occurs over a long period of time, from early grades through high school. Reading habits for students develop in social contexts where they share their reading experience and interact with others such as family members, friends, and peers. Developing readers undergo various activities and experiences in home environment, and these contribute significantly to

the child's language and literacy development, especially if parents are involved in these activities and experiences. Recently, it is common to identify literate Ghanaian parents communicating with their children in English instead of the local dialects. These parents are of the view that by doing so their children would have an enabling environment both at home and in the school to facilitate literary development. Smith (2009) cited that, Children from a home with a high degree of literacy and parents who engaged in intentional oral and literate acts (i.e., speaking to the child, playing word games with the child, reading, writing, and purposefully engaging the child in those acts) developed higher levels of both oral language and literacy. Purcell-Gates (1996) conducted a descriptive study of the learning practices of 20 lower socio income families. With this study, she evaluated the literacy knowledge of 24 children, between four to six years

Material: Children have a lot of different interests when it comes to out of school activities, depending on the age, socio-economic status of parents, cognitive developments and many other factors. Covert (2009) made reference to a study by Moyer, J.E in which readers interviewed and the 26 findings of the study suggested that most good readers do not engage in a lot of television watching. Hence there was a conclusion that people spend a reasonable amount of time watching television are less likely to engage in leisure reading. Covert (2009) cited a good example of such studies as that of Strommen and Mates (2004) who found that people with good or poor reading habits spent about the same time watching television or part taking in any other fun activity during their leisure time.

3. THE ROLE OF LIBRARY IN PROMOTING READING HABIT AMONG SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENT

The library needs to play an important role in the promotion of reading habits among Nigerians. Libraries, especially school libraries, are fundamental to the design, implementation, and attainment of educational excellence. Libraries are an integral part of the educational development of secondary school students and youth. Without the support of efficient libraries, schools cannot successfully achieve the goals of education, which are:

- The inculcation of national consciousness and national unity;
- The inculcation of the right type of values and attitudes of the individual and the Nigerian society;
- The training of the mind in the understanding of the world around, and
- The acquisition of appropriate skills and social abilities and competence as equipment for the individual to live and contribute to the development of the society. (NPE, 2004).

Libraries provide access to reading materials through the school library, students and youths can gain and improve their skills. Libraries help introduce the use of reading for information, pleasure, passing examinations, and personal growth through lifelong learning. Libraries provide materials that offer more extensive and varied information than classroom study alone cannot provide. Voluntary reading helps develop reading skills and mastery of language, extends students knowledge, and assists them in their academic work. Students and youths who read are likely to have background knowledge, familiarity with new topics or subjects, and thus, find learning easier and interesting.

In Nigeria, literacy is recognized as a basic tool for personal and national development. The National Policy on Education (2004), places inculcation of permanent literacy and numeracy, and ability to communicate effectively as one of the objectives of school education. The library must provide resources to complement education and these resources can take secondary school students and youth far above technical literacy to developing reading habit which makes permanent literacy attainable.

The role of the libraries in promoting reading is especially crucial in developing scientific, reflective thinking and creativity. Librarians can help secondary school students and youths develop critical and independent thinking through their exposure to a wide variety of instructional resources and learning opportunities. Apart from the development of creative and critical thought, the role of the library in the promotion of reading habit can be seen in the readers' development of values, attitudes, and appreciation.

In the process of encouraging or inculcating the reading habit in secondary school students and youth, stakeholders (parents, teachers, schools, librarians and other library staff) should avoid nagging, bribing, judging, criticizing reading choices, and setting unreasonable goals.

Dike (1993) posits that libraries were expected to provide supplementary materials to support classroom instruction and to encourage reading, especially of imaginative literature. Notwithstanding the central roles played by school libraries in providing reading material and in developing reading habit in secondary school students, it has been observed that most secondary school students in Lagos state do not have access to libraries. The various roles of libraries in promoting reading habit include:

Creating an Enabling Environment: Libraries generally provide a very conducive environment that encourages people to engage in meaningful reading, learning and research activities. They provide space, reading carrels, reading materials and noise-free environment. School libraries offer opportunities for developing good reading habits in secondary school students.

Provision of Reading Materials: Libraries play important role in providing a wide range of reading materials. Apart from textbooks, the library provides access to supplementary learning materials such as computers, audiovisual materials like CD-ROM, tapes, videos, films. School libraries are always rich in colorful story books that capture the attention and imaginations of students to develop lifelong learning abilities. Secondary school students can be taught about basic ICT appreciation to prepare them for future use.

Library Orientation Programmes: Librarians engage in coaching fresh users on the use of library materials. People using the library for the first time may not be accustomed with retrieving information from the library. It is the onus of the librarians to educate the fresh users on information retrieval process such as the use of library catalogue, indexes and abstracts. Much more, the school librarian can encourage secondary school students to imbibe reading habit by guiding them to the right books that may interest them, by serving as a matchmaker between students and books.

4. USING ICTS RESOURCES TO PROMOTE READING HABIT AMONG SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS

ICT according to Blurton (1999) is a diverse set of technological tools and resources used to communicate and to create, disseminate, store, and manage information.. According to Dike (1993) ICT resources are “those materials which do not depend solely upon reading to convey meaning. They present information through the sense of hearing, as in audio-resources, or through the sense of sight, as in visual resources, or through a combination of senses”. These resources create a spirit of joy, fun, adventure and imagination in children and help to associate reading with pleasure, both oral and visual communication skills are learned”. At this age, parents, care-givers and teachers have to play vital roles in engaging children in learning activities especially in their developmental age and offers a wealth of reading strategies, lessons, and activities designed to help students learn how to read for lifelong learning. Owen (2011) posits that “children begin developing the foundation of literacy from as early as a few months a very important role to play by introducing pleasurable experience such as home videos that contains educational stories, games, colorful pictures, symbols, spellings, etc. The home should be made conducive for children to begin to develop lifelong attitudes toward reading. Hence, parents play a critical role in this development by initiating reading activities. Madahunsi (2001) opined that “parents can make use of personal microcomputers in their homes to foster even greater degree of interest and growth in reading”. Parents can aid in the process by reading to their children, thus acquainting them with the more formal language of books, pointing out words and letters, and engaging them in story hours (Igwusi U., Chimah J.N. & Nwachukwu V.N. 2012)

ICT facilities and audio-visual resources help children to learn a variety of subjects, from simple calculation, spelling, dictation, to educational stories. It offers children the opportunity to explore the world beyond their immediate environment. Encouraging and modeling leisure-time reading using ICT and audio-visual resources such as computers, home videos games, televisions etc. help in fostering children's reading development. Healthy viewing habits and parental supervision can help children develop positive learning experiences. Story books in video format help in capturing the attention of children, offer great lessons, extend their experience beyond their immediate environment and teach them proper reading behavior.

The new electronic gaming landscape offers a vast array of new opportunities and choices for children in playing electronic games in many different ways, including excitement, learning and communication. Home video has an interactive gaming content on children’s psychosocial development. Video-games have also been suggested as promoting co-operative behaviour and reinforcement in more educational activities. Thus, gaming activity using home videos can be a veritable educational tool for learning capable of making formal learning more pleasurable, motivating and effective. There are different kinds of game content (e.g. violent games, competition games, fantasy games, etc.). Different ICT facilities have their different effects on student learning abilities. The study carried out by Brandtzaeg and Heim (2009) revealed that “a preference for pedagogical games is associated with both high scholastic and athletic competence, as well as parental monitoring. A preference for fantasy gaming is positively related to scholastic competence, while preferences for competition games are strongly associated with athletic competence”. There is need for parental monitoring to ensure that student are not involved in watching videos that will have harmful effects on them. Active parental involvement, such as rules limiting the use of home video, and active mediation will encourage students to embrace the technology for creative, educational and developmental purpose.

5. BENEFITS OF ICTS IN PROMOTING READING HABIT AMONG SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENT

Extending experience – ICT facilities such as home videos, television, and computers can be entertaining and educational, and can open up new worlds for secondary school students, giving them a chance to travel across the globe, learn vicariously about different habits, languages and gain exposure to ideas they may never have encountered in their own local community.

Learning how to learn – With the use of ICTs and audio-visual resources such as video games, computers, etc. students can learn how to learn by playing games that involves them in simple activities that could sustain their interest in reading.

Visual Literacy – Educative home video for secondary school students are full of colorful illustrations that can help secondary school students interpret visual representations. This helps them to develop their sense of sight and ability to identify different colours and objects in the real life.

Associating reading with pleasure – The various humorous stories in video format develops the sense of humor in secondary school students and enable them develop the right attitude towards reading.

6. FACTORS AFFECTING READING HABIT OF SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN LAGOS STATE

There are a lot of factors that affect the effective development of reading habit of secondary school students in Lagos state. Among these factors which hinder secondary school students reading habit in Lagos state are: the home factors, school environment factors, poor learning environment & lack of functional library, inadequate supply of reading material, poor reading campaign, problems of inadequate teachers/librarians, problem of student's unreadiness to learn. According to Dike (1993) also listed the following factors which includes: the illiteracy of most parents, poverty, the almost exclusive association of books with schooling, the second language problem, the obstacles to literacy in the mother tongue, the lack of adequate and suitable reading materials, and the lack of reading skills. Other factors affecting reading habit in secondary school students include:

- lower levels of proficiency in reading are due to underfunding of libraries and their services (Eyo, 2007)
- poor reading skills which has been identified as the problem of Nigerian students was as a result of the following: slow comprehension rate, slow reading rate, difficulty in distinguishing main ideas from irrelevant details, inadequate vocabulary or word power, inadequate reading interests and habits, distractions from television and film viewing and lack of interest and relevant reading materials.
- Change in Nigeria's value system. The quest for material wealth has eroded the interest for the search of knowledge.
- Economic hardship that is prevalent in many homes. Most parents manage to pay their wards school fees and forget about buying book for them.
- Astronomical prices of books and other information materials have put them out of the reach of the masses. Coupled with high cost of books is poor availability of indigenous books owing to the fact that local authors are not encouraged to write books.
- Also cost of publishing books is very high. Indigenous writers are not motivated as they may not be able to finance the high cost of book publishing.
- Advent of home videos, film houses and other electronic gadgets.

Other individual problems that can affect reading habit of secondary school student as cited by N. & Nwachukwu V. N. Chimah J. (2012) include the following:

Dyslexia: This is a cognitive impairment that affects a child's ability to read by causing a disruption in the brain's ability to interpret images and sound. Secondary school students with dyslexia often exhibit difficulty in concentrating for extended periods of time, coping with written symbols, reverse letters when reading or spelling a word, have confusion between left and right and also may have poor handwriting. A child with dyslexia has normal intelligence, but his or her attainment of reading skills lags far behind others. Such students may even be unable to read words that they can spell correctly.

Speech Apraxia: It is a reading disorder that affects the reading fluency of secondary school students. Apraxia is a neurological condition that temporarily paralyzes a child's ability to speak even though he attempts to do so. Researchers believe that students with apraxia are inhibited from fully utilizing phonic sounds as part of their speech recognition. Students with apraxia may be seriously disadvantaged in developing literacy skills.

Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) or Attention Deficient Disorder (ADD)

Students with ADHD/ADD usually have poor concentration in reading. They exhibit abnormal reading pattern as they are normally restless, unable to sit at a place for more than few moments, inattentive and impulsive. Reading requires a sustained period of concentration. The use of ICTR and audio-visual resources will greatly help in capturing the attention of students with these deficiencies and consequently develop the habit of reading for lifelong learning.

Strategies that can be use in Promoting Reading Habits among Secondary School Students Having considered some of the factors responsible for poor reading habit, it is pertinent to suggest strategies that can be adopted to turn the country to a reading nation and her citizens a reading people. Imbibing the habit of reading can assist in finding solutions to socio-economic and political problems.

- **Improved Funding:** Fund is crucial to the development of education and libraries; it is a *sine qua none* of performance. Therefore, the Nigerian government has to improve its funding of the education sector, by increasing funds allocated to schools. This would affects provision of school library services. Funds should be earmarked for establishing, equipping and maintenance of libraries (public library inclusive). Sufficient fund should be provided to acquire adequate, current and relevant library materials – books, magazines, charts, transparencies; photographic slides, and computer instructional packages. Concerted effort should be made by the appropriate supervisory body to monitor effective utilization of funds allocated to the library.
- **Establishment of libraries:** Efforts must be made by government at different levels to establish more libraries in schools and for the private, club, communities, Religious bodies, organizations (NGOs and CBOs), Old Students Associations, professional bodies, and individuals should be encouraged to assist in the promotion of reading by establishing libraries or supporting already established school and public libraries. This can be done through stocking libraries with good reading materials that can impact on the lives of Lagos state. These libraries should also be provided with professionally qualified personnel to render services to the users.
- **Continued provision and access to books:** provision of a varied collection of enjoyable and information-rich books is a major contribution of the library towards reading promotion. Availability and accessibility of instructional and pleasurable books stimulate development of reading and attainment of permanent literacy. It has been found out that school libraries are the principal source of books for supplementary instructional resources and voluntary reading. It must, however, be pointed out that many schools do not have libraries at all. Where they exist, the stock in these libraries is grossly insufficient to play the expected role.
- **Associating reading with pleasure:** Secondary school students and students can be motivated to read and thus form good reading habit through storytelling, reading together (shared reading), formation of reading/book clubs as well as provision of conducive reading environment devoid of unwarranted noise and distractions. Storytelling is a basic and enduring form of literacy expression in Nigerian habits. Librarians should encourage the integration of storytelling and the oral literacy tradition with the school curriculum. Telling students interesting stories encourages their attention and focus, develops their listening skills, and helps stimulate voluntary reading.
- **Another way of introducing pleasure or fun to reading is by reading together.** Reading together can take place in the classroom, library, or at home. Parents, school librarians, teachers, and students can read aloud to themselves at home, in the class or library, getting to an exciting point in the story book before stopping. The interest generated will inspire many students to continue the story on their own. In the course of shared reading, the passage read aloud can be discussed and a new book can be introduced to the students before its shared reading commences. The experience of reading and hearing increases speed; facilitates comprehension, good pronunciation; develops reading and critical thinking skills. In addition, shared reading puts confidence in some timid students and encourages them to develop a voluntary reading habit.
- **Excursions to libraries and exhibitions:** Secondary school students/students in schools where there are no libraries can be taken on excursions to libraries in other schools or in their locality. They can also be taken to book exhibitions/fairs. During such visits, secondary school students would be introduced to the library and its resources. They will also be educated on the importance of books and reading to their education and future lives.
- **Encouragement of library usage:** Teachers should encourage maximum use of the library and its resources by giving students assignments/projects that would necessitate frequent visits to the library. Such assignments/projects must be practical. They may entail reading a novel and summarizing it, or using the library resources to solve an environmental problem.
- **Appropriate legislation:** It has earlier been pointed out that the National Policy on Education (NPE) statements on the provision of libraries has not been implemented by the stakeholders. Non-implementation stems from the absence of appropriate legislation to back up these statements. It is, therefore, been suggested that appropriate legislation be enacted to enforce compliance with the policy statements. Such legislation should stipulate stiffer penalties such as closure of school(s), for non-compliance with the policy statements.
- **Resuscitation of mobile library services:** Promotion of reading habits should not be confined to students in the classroom or the physical library alone. Rather, consideration and extension of library services should be given to students and youth who, for one reason or another, are out of the normal school or library environment. This can be done through mobile library service, a formidable service provided by the public library. In the 1970s, Nigerian populace in the rural areas – farmers, nomadic fishermen, and cattle rearers, used to enjoy this service. Regrettably, since the 1980s, this important library service has become moribund.

7. CONCLUSION

A reading nation is an informed nation. Poor reading habit has great consequences on the academic performance of every student. The development of reading habit of every individual should start from early stage of life for every student through home (i.e. parents) to the school environment. The teacher has great role to play in developing reading habit by using various teaching techniques to motivate the student's interest in reading, this will have great positive impact on the student educational performance. The librarian role in promoting reading habit is inevitable to the school system. The librarian role is very important by actively taking part in motivating the students and orientating them towards the various benefits that can be derived from information both print and non-print materials that are available in the library. Technology has really advance by using ICT in promoting reading habit of the students. ICT play vital roles in engaging children in learning activities especially in their developmental age and offers a wealth of reading strategies, lessons, and activities designed to help young children learn how to read for lifelong learning. For any educational system to be effective and to ensure sustainable development in any nation, it is therefore indispensable to inculcate reading habit from the scratch in order to have informed citizens who will intellectually advance the nation to globally competitive level.

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