

REENGINEERING READING COMPREHENSION THROUGH EFFECTIVE SCHOOL LIBRARY USAGE AMONG SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS

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Abstract

The paper examines reengineering reading comprehension through effective school library usage among secondary school students. Thus, reading culture enables one to acquire knowledge, seek individual self-improvement and for re-creative purposes. The school library as a resource centre inspires a love of reading among users. This study aimed at establishing how the school library usage can be used to nurture a reading culture among students. The paper recommends that reading culture should be seen by all as a panacea for high productivity among students in not only the public schools but also in private secondary schools. Hence, it should be practiced by all levels of school management in order to quickly fast track and meet up with the aim of academic performance of students. Reading practice among students should be such that can cause motivation of students with the resultants effect of high academic productivity and performance.

INTRODUCTION

Reading is the individual ability to decode the encoded information put down in graphic representation. It is a complex process that aims at getting information from the printed representation. It involves the interpretation of signs through the sense organs. It is visual as well as mental acts. The eyes perceive the word and the brain immediately makes an interpretation of the words Olcoh (2006:23). Reading cannot be complete without comprehension. Comprehension means getting thoughts that were in the author's mind into the reader's mind. Nevertheless, there are factors that can hinder effective reading comprehension.

The factors inhibiting effective reading with comprehension could be categorized into external and internal factors. The external factors include: Distracter that can evolve spontaneous attention, illegibility of the printed materials, lack of appropriate cures to aid sound comprehension, unavailability of learning aids (facilities and infrastructures), knowledgeable instructors. The internal factors comprise all the factors that can inhibit the Childs reading comprehension through him. These include among other things: Eyo (2008), The reader's competency at a language has incalculable impact on the levels of the reader's comprehension. Language plays a vital role in reading. Its role in reading could be likened to the role of running in the game of soccer. One cannot successfully play soccer game if he or she cannot run fast.

The students therefore need to explore the needed skills and strategies so as to gain proficiencies at reading comprehension as this would help them pass their examination with flying colours. Since reading comprehension is a panacea to having the author's point of view, it is therefore necessary that all the stake holders join their resources together in making the dreams of sound reading with effective comprehension realizable in our schools today Osborne, (2010).

Generally, the problem of this study is to examine the problem of reading comprehension among secondary school students. The problem of reading comprehension principally is a thing of concern in today's fast changing world. The dynamic nature of the world is a thing of greater important, hence, it requires the application of needed skills to eradicate every hindrance toward efficient reading comprehension Osborne (2009).

It is obvious that comprehension is the ability to decode the encoded representation. Collins and Cheek (1999) see reading as a process that requires the use of complex thought processes to interpret printed symbols as meaningful unit and comprehend them as a thought unit in order to understand a printed message. According to Rubin (2002), reading is a total integrative process that starts with reading and includes the effective perceptual and cognitive domains. Students have problems of reading because they lack specific skills necessary for proficient reading. When a student has reading problem, one need to identity where specific deficiencies exist. An informal reading evaluation can provide valuable information to help one determine possible gaps in necessary reading skill Gagen, (2007).

Language plays to vital role in reading comprehension. Its role in reading can be compared to the role of running in the game of soccer as earlier stated. One cannot play soccer if he cannot run faster. One obviously cannot read comprehensively, unless he has competency in the language. If a student's knowledge of English Language is poor, then his reading comprehension will also be poor Gagen R. (2007).

Kirsten Weire (2011:46), observes that when a person attempts to speak a language in which he has not become automatic yet, he will necessarily have to divide his attention between the

content of his message and the language itself. He will therefore speak haltingly and with great difficulty. As Yap and Van Der ley (2008) explains in the Journal of Learning Disabilities, “if his skill on the primary task is automatized, it will not be disrupted by concurrent processing on the secondary task because automatic processing does not take up attentional resources. If on the contrary, the skill is not automatized, it will be disrupted by concurrent processing of a second skill because two skills are then competing for limited attentional resources. “The implication of the above is in the act of reading with comprehension. The person, in whom the foundational skills of reading have not yet become automatic, will read haltingly and with great difficulty. The poor reader is forced to apply all his concentration on word recognition and therefore has “no concentration left” to decode the written words, and as a result, he will not be able to read with efficient comprehension.

The reader’s inability to decode the written word is another bone of contention in reading comprehension. The decoding of the written words is a very important aspect of the reading act. Without being able to decode the written word, reading comprehension is impossible, Yap and van (2008). This explains why some children can “read” without understanding what they are reading. To decode the written word, the reader must be able to integrate his fore knowledge and past experiences. If one read something that cannot directly be connected to or tied in with knowledge that one already possesses, one cannot decode or decipher the content of the message. As Harries et al (2006), states in Learning Disabilities: Nature, Theory, and Treatment, “What a child gets from a book will often be determined by what the child brings to the book”

The success or failure of any meaningful learning process is largely dependent on the learner’s ability to read comprehensively. Within the last two decades, there has been remarkable increase in the number of drop-outs in schools as a result of inability to read comprehensively. Studies have equally shown that the alarming increase in examination malpractice is largely associated to the students’ deficiency in reading comprehension skills, Miscese R. Gagen (2011 p.54).

It has also been observed that students have reading problems because they lack specific skills necessary for proficient reading. When a student has reading problem and he cannot identify where the problem lies, there is bound to have difficulties in producing the solutions. These occur as a result of the learning facilitators to identify where specific deficiencies exist. An informal reading evaluation can provide valuable information to help determine possible gaps in necessary reading skills which can help provide the instruction that can help the reading facilitator to guide the students to build the needed reading skills, Reid Lyon (2008:30).

Studies have also shown that incorrect approach to reading and not processing the print phonetically have also posed hindrances to reading comprehensively. If the student does not sound out words and instead relies on visual “what the word looks like” or “whole word” recognition approaches, they are reading the “wrong way”. It is on this wise that Kirsten Weir (2011) in his test: School library Philosophy and Practice opines that for students to read proficiently they must read by converting print to sound. If there is any indication that the student is not processing print phonologically, then they must be helped to establish the essential foundation of efficient reading. He further observes that indicators showing that a student is not processing print phonologically include: whole word type errors, word guessing, memorizing text, inability to read simple phonetic words, poor spelling skills (inability to spell words that have not been memorized), knowledge of the phonetic code (print-sound relationship) not sounding out words, and reading with much effort. These students who are not converting print to sound are literally on the wrong track and should be redirected.

Overview of School Library

Libraries contain records ranging from intellectual, cultural, economic, and social materials and are essential collection of tools in learning at any level. Libraries also serve as the intellectual centers of a society (Ogbedor 2011). In addition, users are also provided with the opportunity to learn and continue learning throughout their lives. Itsekor (2012:13) notes that libraries have always served as tools for educational advancement at all levels of education. Moreover, libraries assist in individualised, group and virtual learning and improve students' performance throughout the academic curriculum. Libraries are also central to the provision of the right type of information resources that empower educational institutions to produce highly resourceful people who can have positive impact on national development (Itsekor 2012).

Concept of Reading Comprehension

Reading comprehension is the heart and goal reading since the purpose of all reading is to gather meaning from the printed page. If a student read a word in a passage without getting the word, he would hardly get the holistic meaning of the entire passage as postulated by Acligum, Adebayo (2004).

Studies show that the child by the age six to seven should be sensitive to such characteristics of stories such as the main character, sequence of event inferences, the moisture and feeling of characters, and sentence order. As they get older, children should be more efficient at recognizing and recalling facts, recognizing and inferring main themes and relationship, drawing conclusion, making judgment and generalization, predicting outcome, applying what has been learnt and following directions as further opinions by Antwi, I. K. (2006). It was in this vein that Ragan (2007), stressed that developing the skill such as skimming, adequate use of reference materials outlining for sequential assimilation, summarizing altering reading rate and focus as the purpose of reading changes, use of headings, note taking, et' cetera, for reading comprehension efficiency among students.

School Library Usage and Reading Comprehension

A study by Gamage (2006) analyzed the information needs of environmental scientists in universities in Sri Lanka. The results of the study reflect that school library users were not satisfied with the collection and services of the school library. The study recommends proper management and up gradation of school library services and the use of a standard classification scheme for the organization of school library resource.

Moreover, this study further suggests the establishment of an environmental information network in Sri Lanka for resource sharing. Prabha, Connaway, Olszewski and Jenkins (2007) concluded that the users of the school library stop to search information, when they have to confront multiple kinds of information. They expressed that when the same information is repeated in different sources, they stop to search further information. The faculty members informed that they used information for teaching, research work, preparing for lecturers and assigning presentation for classes. The results of the study pointed out some elements that affect the searching of information such as: objectives and characteristics of the information needs, external variables and internal variables.

Al-Suqri (2007) explored the information needs and seeking behavior of social sciences scholars at Sultan Qaboos University in the Sultanate of Oman. The base of the study was the model of information seeking behavior of Wilson (1996), Ellis (1989) and Kuhlthau (1991). The findings of the research show that social sciences scholars face three main problems while

seeking information i.e. limited availability of resources, poor Internet connection (low speed or internet availability) and lack of sufficient sources in Arabic language.

Qun & Onwuegbuzie (1997) in a study of school library use affirmed that obtaining a book or article is the most important reason for using the school library, followed by studying for a test, using the online facilities, and reading a textbook. Tella, Owolabi, & Attama (2009), in a similar study found out that the most common use of the school library by students is for reading, followed by using the school library for borrowing books, making photocopies and searching the school library catalogue. Oluwadare (2006) while examining the accessibility and use of the Federal Polytechnic Ado-Ekiti, Nigeria School library resources by the part-time students of the institution found out that over half of the respondents surveyed (52.6%) use the school library whenever they want to read. This was, however, in contrast with the finding of Ifedili (2009) were almost half of those surveyed (49%) claim that the school library was substandard and so was not always used.

Learning Disability in Reading Comprehension

A learning disability in reading comprehension affects the learners' ability to understand the meaning of words and passages. Kirsten (2011) in history studies of learning disabilities tells that students with learning disability in reading comprehension may be struggling with basic reading skill such as decoding words, but comprehension is the greater weakness. Some students with a learning disability in reading comprehension can read aloud with little or no difficulty pronouncing words, but they do not understand or remember what they've read. Sometimes when they read aloud words or phrases, they often read with no feeling, no change in tone, no logical phrasing, and no rhythm or pace.

Poor Language Ability: Language plays a vital role in reading. Its' role in reading could be compared to the role of running in the game of soccer. One cannot play soccer successfully if one could not run faster. Similarly, one cannot read comprehensively if one does not have language ability of the language through which the text is written with. If a student's knowledge of English language is poor then his reading will also be poor, and this particularly will affect his reading comprehension Kirsten Weire (200. P46).

The Reader's Inability to Decode the Written Words: The decoding of the written words is very important aspect of the reading act. Without being able to decode the written words in the passage, reading with comprehension would be very impossible. This then goes a long way to explain why some student can read with efficient comprehension of what they read.

Causes of Comprehension Reading Disability

A reading disability in reading comprehension likely involves difficulty with language processing and visual reasoning centers of the brain. A learning disability may result from inherited conditions or developmental differences in the brain. Rubin, Dorothy (2002). A learning disability is not solely due to vision problems, difficulty with learning or speech, or lack of appropriate instruction.

Symptoms of learning disability in reading

Students with learning disability in reading comprehension have difficulty understanding the important ideas in reading passages. They have difficulty with basic reading skills such as word recognition. In some cases, they may read aloud with little difficulty but do not understand or remember what they have read. Their phrasing and fluency are often weak.

As put by Okebukola, F.O. (2004), they frequently avoid reading and are frustrated with reading tasks in school. Naturally reading comprehension problems affect many academic areas.

Need For Effective Reading Culture

The acquisition of reading skills has a beneficial effect on all school subjects, including social studies, science, mathematics, and so on. Poor reading skill can make a child develop a poor attitude toward school and can create self-esteem problems later in life (Fosudo, 2010). Oke (1996), give reasons why people read, including self-improvement, pleasure and relationship, and a feeling of pride and prestige. According to Antwi, (1985), studies show a relationship between reading /early literacy and a child's emotional, marital health, and social behaviour. The degree of seriousness of delinquent acts was correlated to the degree of severity of reading problems. The study also showed that early in the primary grades, children who are struggling with literacy begin to experience failure and relative negative effects in interpersonal skills. These effects can include task avoidance and acting out lowered level of personal regard, and seeking of person validation in venues that are anti-social.

In Nigeria, a study carried out by 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 read less than one book per year and only few 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). If regular reading and studying is a required condition of your job or profession, this in effect means you read, even if it is under duress. The magnitude of this problem jeopardizes the future of our public schools. What is most frustrating is that much of this reading problem can be prevented if government, libraries, and teachers apply what is known as reading instructive techniques.

The vast majority of the world's information today is not digitized, it is in print form, mostly in books. Reading per se. among young adults is exactly on the wane, but the delivery mechanism has changed communication while words is thriving, but in a new format, reading on—line (Okebukola, 2004). For many years, especially in the West, there have been doubts whether the written medium of narration would survive the onslaught of technology. Will children and adult who spend most of their time in front of a television or computer continue to read books? Similar fears were expressed at the end of the 19th century with the emergence of films and cartoons. Books survived that era and maintained their position as parallel “technology”.

Topo (2005) affirms that the need today is the thoughtful integration of book reading with high tech, i.e, the integration of multi-media activities such as photography, printing and drawing, sewing and crafts, 3—D and digital art,, hip-hop, claymation, and one line services in our libraries. This will reverse the decline in book reading among children and adults. Oke (1996) affirms also that a conscious effort should be made by all stake-holders in the educational system to promote the reading habit. According to him, equipping libraries is the first practical step in these efforts.

Role of the School library in Reading Culture

The need to promote effective reading habits among the general populace of Nigeria has been receiving attention from organization such as National School library of Nigeria, The Reading Association of Nigeria and Nigerian Book Development Council. Since 1981, the National School library of Nigeria has been sponsoring the readership promotion campaign in the

country. This is done as part to strategies to ginger up the reading culture in Nigeria. The objectives of readership campaign include: -

- (i) To encourage more reading Nigerians
- (ii) To promote the increase in production of reading materials in Nigeria, both in quality and variety and
- (iii) To identify the major obstacles those inhibit reading the country and find ways of eliminating them.

The problem with the above objectives is that the readership promotion campaign has been restricted largely to Abuja, Lagos, and some few capitals. The impact has not been adequately funded to put the campaign in print or electronic media.

The above observation notwithstanding, the school library can 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 school children and youth. Without the support of efficient he 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 which school children and youth can gain and improve their skills. Libraries help introduce the use of reading for information, pleasure, passing examination, and personal growth through lifelong learning. Libraries provide materials that offer more extensive and varied information than classroom study alone. 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 topic 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 school library must provide resources to complement education. These resources can take children and youth far above technical literacy to developing reading culture 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 children and youths develop critical and independent thinking through their exposure to a wide variety of instructional resource and learning opportunities. Apart from the development of creative and critical thoughts, the role of the school library in the promotion of reading culture can be seen in the reader's development of values, attitudes, and appreciation. These are difficult to teach in the classrooms. In the process of encouraging or inculcating the reading habit in children and youth, stakeholders (parents, teachers, schools, librarians and other school library staff) should avoid nagging, bribing, judging, criticizing reading choices, and setting unreasonable goals.

Engineering School library Usage and Promotion of Reading Comprehension

Having considered some of the factors responsible for poor reading culture in Nigeria, 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 culture of reading can assist in finding solution to socioeconomic 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 Nigeria government has to improve its funding of the education sector, by increasing funds allocated to schools. This would affect provision of school libraries (public school library inclusive). Sufficient fund should be provided to acquire adequate, current and relevant school 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 school library.

Establishment of Libraries: Efforts must be made by government at different levels to establish more libraries in their schools and for the private, club, communities, religious bodies, organizations (NGOs and CBOs), Old Students Associations, professional bodies, and individual 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 Nigerians. 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 school 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: Children 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 cultures. Librarians should encourage the integration of storytelling and the oral literacy tradition with the school curriculum especially in primary school. Telling children 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. Reading together can take place in the classroom, school library, or at home. Parents, school librarians, teachers and children can read aloud to themselves at home in the class or school 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 children and encourages them develop a voluntary reading habit.

Excursions to libraries and exhibitions: Children/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, children would be introduced to the

school library and its resources. They will also be educated on the importance of books and reading to their education and future lives.

Encouragement of school library usage: Teachers should encourage maximum use of the school library and its resources by giving pupils/students assignment / project that would necessitate frequent visits to the school library. Such assignments/projects must be practical. They may entail reading a novel and summarizing it, or using the school 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 have not been implemented by the stakeholders. Non-implementation stems from the absence of appropriate legislation to back up these statements. It's 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 policy statements.

Resuscitation of Mobile School library Services: Promotion of reading habits should not be confined to students in the classroom or physical school library alone. Rather, consideration and extension of school library services should be given to children and youth who, for one reason or another, are out of the normal school or school library environment. This can be done through mobile school library service, a formidable service provided by the public school library. In the 1970s, Nigerian populace in rural area -farmers, nomadic fishermen, and cattle rearers, used to enjoy this service. Regrettably, since the 1980s, this important school library service has become moribund.

To attain the objective of the universal basic education as well as carry out the goals contained in the NPE, states and local government in Nigeria must revive the mobile school library service. Once revived, the school library would carry reading, vocational, and instructional material to remote communities. The school library would be able to serve the needs of school children, dropouts, adult illiterates, semi-literates, nomadic fishermen and cattle rearers, and other categories of people who wish to be associated with reading and education.

CONCLUSSIONS

School library is very important element in education development of any school. The recommendations are as follows that: Reading practice among students should be such that can cause motivation of students with the resultants effect of high academic productivity and performance. Moreover, seminars and symposia on reading comprehension as an academic enhancement tool should be organized by the school for their students. The recommendations also includes that the school management should endeavour to discourage the luke-worm attitude among students about reading by instilling disciplinary actions to enhance high academic productivity. In view of this for reading culture should be seen by all as a panacea for high productivity among students in not only the public schools but also in private secondary schools. Hence, it should be practiced by all levels of school management in order to quickly fast track and meet up with the aim of academic performance of students. These could be done in collaboration with all stakeholders in secondary education in the country

Recommendation of the study

Based on the findings of the research, the researcher wishes to present the following recommendations: -

- 1 Reading culture should be seen by all as a panacea for high productivity among students in not only the public schools but also in private secondary schools. Hence, it should be

- practiced by all levels of school management in order to quickly fast track and meet up with the aim of academic performance of students.
2. Reading practice among students should be such that can cause motivation of students with the resultants effect of high academic productivity and performance.
 3. Students should be made to appreciate the philosophy of reading habit by making sure that it is reward-driven in nature.
 4. The school management should endeavour to discourage the luke-worm attitude among students about reading by instilling disciplinary actions to enhance high academic productivity.
 5. Seminars and symposia on reading comprehension as an academic enhancement tool should be organized by the school for their students.

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