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READING INTEREST OF JUNIOR SCHOOL PUPILS: IMPLICATIONS FOR LIBRARY PROVISIONS IN THE UNIVERSAL BASIC EDUCATION (UBE) SCHEME

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ABSTRACT

The study was designed to investigate the reading interest of Junior Secondary School Students and the implications for the UBE scheme. Three hundred and fifty-five (355) students and ten (10) Teacher-Librarians were drawn from ten (10) junior secondary schools in Epe and Ibeju Lekki Local Government Areas of Lagos State. Two sets of questionnaire were constructed and administered on the subjects for data collection. Data analysis was done by using frequency counts and percentages. Findings revealed that the schools have no qualified librarians, librarians are ill-equipped and students love reading story books, magazine, etc. Implications for the UBE scheme were discussed.

INTRODUCTION

In defining reading, Leety (1956) in Unoh (1968) says reading is a matter of searching for the thought that was in the mind of the other and which now lies in the meaning of the word which are before the reader. On their own, Braam and Sheldon also in Unoh (1968) define reading as the interpretation of reading materials, the interpretation being based on the ability of the reader to understand the purpose of the author as well as what the author is saying.

Thus, it is clear that reading means more than perusing printed or written pages. Strong, McCullough and Traxler (1971) in Unoh 1987 are of this opinion as they observed that reading is more than seeing words clearly, more than pronouncing printed words correctly, more than recognizing the meaning of isolated words, saying that reading requires one to think, feel and imagine and that effective reading is purposeful. Therefore the purpose of one's reading determines what is read, why it is read and the manner or way of reading it.

Gray and Roger (1956) in Unoh (1987) see reading as an indispensable factor in modern life, interwoven with work, recreation and other activities of people. Buttrressing this fact is the statement credited to an Indian delegate to a UNESCO conference who observes that half the population of the world has no possibility of realizing the human rights and they will remain unaware of the opportunities science and technology give to fight hunger, poverty and diseases because it is without reading ability.

Still talking about the importance of reading, Aboderin (1987) states that reading materials provide human beings with rich source of life-experience which will otherwise take very long to acquire if we rely solely on physical contacts and interactions. He goes on to say that reading helps solve some problems encountered in life by a habitual reader and that reading can serve as a source of inspiration from which new strength could be derived.

Walter (1987) observes that reading is an aspect of language, therefore part of human nature. Speaking in the same vein Bacon in Walter (1987) says reading makes a full man. Walter while observing that reading and literacy go hand in hand adds that a learner that cannot read cannot be educated concluding that literacy opens up a new chapter in life which is both challenging and liberational as the ability to read and write gives literates a new dimension in life and a most fascinating experience. In talking about literacy Ampene (1980) in Olugbodi (1999) opines that without the ability to read and write in this age a person's existence is not dignified while according to Kempfer (1973) reading and writing open the door to more food, employment, better job and even higher status. In the view of Prancosis in Olugbodi (1999) illiteracy is a clog in the wheel of development; therefore literacy should be promoted to enhance development.

Emerenini (1999) is also in support of this view when he says that literacy is the master key to human survival and that the individual or group of individuals that lacks it is doomed for life. In realization of the need for mass literacy the government launched the Universal Basic Education (UBE) that provides free and compulsory nine years of basic education for primary and junior secondary school pupils. It also includes adult and formal education and education of special groups like nomads and fishermen children, and this scheme was launched by President Olusegun Obasanjo in September, 1999.

In dealing with the expectations of the policy for pedagogy and national development, Emenanjo (2001) observes that the UBE is education for all, for value and for life which aims at providing reading, writing and numeracy skills that will enable beneficiaries live meaningful lives through the acquisition of the appropriate levels of literacy, numeracy, manipulative and life skills and ethical values; contribute to the development of society; derive maximum social, economic and cultural benefit from the society and discharge their civic obligations competently going by the scheme's blueprint. He goes on to say that the bedrock of UBE is Literacy for Empowerment or Functional Literacy. Going by what Emenanjo says about the UBE being the bedrock for Literacy-for-Empowerment it is necessary to study the reading interest of some of the beneficiaries of the programme in order to know its implications for the successful implementation of the programme. For various constraints the study may not be able to cover the various levels but it will limit itself to the Junior Secondary School Students.

The ages of Junior Secondary School students fall within the formative years thus the education given at this level should be meaningful and be the type that will prepare the beneficiaries for higher education and for adulthood. The following research questions will therefore serve as anchor for this study:

1. Do the schools under study have qualified librarians?
2. Are the schools' libraries adequately equipped with relevant reading materials for the students?
3. How often do students use the library?
4. What materials do students read regularly?
5. What do students like doing when not in school?

METHODOLOGY

Subjects

The subjects (N = 355 JS3 students - 161 males and 194 females) were randomly drawn from ten co-educational state schools in Epe and Ibeju Lekki Local Government Areas of Lagos State.

Instruments

Two sets of questionnaire were constructed (one for the teacher-librarians and the other for the students) for the study. For the questionnaire for teacher-librarians there were two sections A and B; section A sought information on the background of the teacher-librarians while section B sought information on the available library services and materials in the school libraries. The students' questionnaire too has two sections A and B. Section A has to do with the background of the students while section B sought information on the reading interest of the students. Both instruments were given to four Library Test and Measurement experts for face and content validity. The Teacher-Librarians' Questionnaire and Students' Reading Interest Questionnaire were trial-tested using the Gombach Alpha Statistical formula and the reliability of the instrument were established at .73 and .79 respectively.

Data Analysis

Appropriate permission was obtained from the authorities of the schools used in the study and with the assistance of the teacher-librarians the students' questionnaire was administered on the students. Three hundred and eighty-five (385) copies were taken to the schools for the students but 355 were returned in all which is 92.2% of the total number distributed. The ten teacher-librarians also responded to the questionnaire designed for them. Data analysis was done using frequency counts and simple percentage.

Results

Research Question 1

Do schools under study have qualified librarians?

From the questionnaire administered on the 10 school librarians, it was found that in all the schools, teachers were appointed to be in charge of the "libraries." In other words none of the school had a qualified librarian. In each of the schools library prefect was appointed to assist the library teacher.

Research Question 2

Are the school libraries adequately equipped with relevant reading materials for the students?

In the first instance, there was no standard library in all the ten schools. A classroom is usually converted to reading room or library with few bookshelves and reading tables and chairs. Generally, the schools were not adequately equipped with relevant reading materials for the students. In some of the schools, recommended textbooks in English, Mathematics, Literature in English and Yoruba and a few others are kept in the library. Subject teachers come to collect these for class use and they are returned at the end of the lesson. Some of the schools made newspapers available for readers (at least a given daily newspaper). In few of the schools, magazines are also provided.

Research Question 3

How often do students use the library?

The table below shows the analysis.

Table 1 : Frequency of use of library by the students

Always	Sometimes	Never	Total
32	293	30	355
(9.01%)	(82.54%)	(8.45%)	(100%)

From table 1, it could be seen that students have non-challant attitude towards the use of library as only 32 (9.01%) of them indicated that they always go to the library. Two hundred and ninety-three (293) (82.54%) sometime go to the library and 30 of them representing (8.45%) indicated that they never patronized the library.

Research Question 4

What materials do students read regularly?

Table 2 below shows the analysis.

Table 2: Materials students use in the library

	Materials	No. of Students	%
1	Reference books	49	13.8
2	Story books	72	20.3
3	Newspapers	39	10.9
4	Magazines and journals	64	18.03
5	Books to support texts	12	3.4
6	Others	46	12.8
7	None of the above	36	10.1
8	All the above	37	10.4
	Total	355	100%

Table 2 above shows the list of materials that students use in the library. Story books are usually read by 72 students. This is followed by magazines and journals (64 students). Reference books are used by 49 students while 39 usually use newspapers.

Table 3 below also shows the type of books students prefer reading.

Table 3: Materials students prefer reading

	Materials	No. of Students	%
1	Comics and magazines	85	23.9
2	Newspapers	34	9.6
3	Poetry books	19	5.4
4	Story books	70	19.7
5	Drama	40	11.3
6	School books	39	10.9
7	Factual books	45	12.7
8	1 - 4 only	06	1.7
9	5 - 7 only	07	1.9
10	All: 1 - 7	10	2.8
	Total	355	100%

In the table above, comics and magazines are mostly preferred by the students with 85 students indicating that. This is followed by story book with 70 students. Factual books are preferred by 45 students while 40 students preferred drama materials. Titles of Newspapers students read regularly are given below.

Table 4: List of Newspapers Students Read Regularly

	Title of Newspapers	No. of Students	%
1	Punch	36	10.1
2	Vanguard	71	20.0
3	P. M. News	23	6.4
4	Tribune	31	8.7
5	Comet	30	8.4
6	Sketch	13	3.6
7	Daily Times	120	33.8
8	Other	31	8.7
	Total	355	100%

From the list of newspapers students read regularly, 120 of them read Daily Times regularly, 71 read Vanguard regularly while Punch is regularly read by 36 students.

Table 5: List of Comics and Magazines Students Read Regularly

	Names of Comic/Magazines	No. of Students	%
1	Tell	52	14.6
2	Ovation	14	3.9
3	Hints	75	21.1
4	Hearts	84	23.6
5	Others	73	20.5
6	None	57	16.0
	Total	355	100%

From table 5 above, the Heart magazine is read regularly by 84 students and this is followed by Hints with 75 students. Fifty-two (52) of them have access to the Tell magazine, etc.

Research Question 5

What do students like doing when not in school?

The analysis is given in the table below.

Table 6: Activities of Students When Not in School

	List of Activities	No. of Students	%
1	Reading my books	87	24.5
2	Running errand for parents	61	17.1
3	Playing around (games)	90	25.3
4	Serving my siesta	47	13.2
5	Hawking	49	13.8
6	No response	21	5.9
	Total	355	100%

It is pertinent to know that playing around is done by 90 students while 87 engaged in reading of their books when they are not in school. Sixty-one (61) of the respondents ran errand for their parents etc.

In the table below, students give what their parents expected of them when they are not in school.

Table 7: Expectations of Parents When Students are Not in School

	Activities	No. of Students	%
1	Running errands for them	91	25.6
2	Reading of books	102	28.7
3	Serving siesta	41	11.5
4	Games	24	6.76
5	Hawking	57	11.2
6	No response	40	16.0
	Total	355	100%

The table above shows that most parents want their children to read books when they are not in school, as indicated by 102 students. Ninety-one (91) expects their children to run errands for them, and closely tied to running errands is that 57 of them expect their children to hawk wares for them, etc.

DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS FOR UNIVERSAL BASIC EDUCATION (UBE)

From the analysis of data, it was observed that none of the schools had a qualified librarian. It is unfortunate indeed to note that hardly could we find qualified librarians in our primary and secondary schools in Nigeria.

This is similar to the observations of Sodipo (1996) who noted that in primary and secondary schools, non-qualified personnel in form of teacher-librarians have been used. This has resulted into problems of mismanagement in policies, programmes and also book selection has suffered unimaginable setback in these schools.

It was also discovered that there were no suitable accommodation in the schools for provision of standard libraries. Classrooms were used as libraries. Apart from that, these so-called libraries

were not adequately equipped with relevant textual materials. These observations agree with the observations of Adio (1992) who found problems confronting school libraries in Abeokuta, Ijebu-Ode and Ilaro to be that of unsuitable accommodation, lack of infrastructural facilities, problems of book selection and display, etcetera. Findings are also in consonance with that of Adefara (1995) who discovered in Ogun, Ondo and part of Oyo States that libraries and their services were generally poor. This according to Sodipo (1996) is traceable to the problem of funding which has led to the inability of schools to procure new and standard books and other audio-visual materials that are relevant to children's learning.

From table 1, it could be seen that most students were not regular in the school library. The library is expected to be "the student's companion" and it is expected to be an organized collection of information materials ranging from books, journals, magazines, newspapers, discs, tape recordings, films, photographs, gramophone records, micro-reproductions, computerized information, musical recordings, maps and brailled books for the sight impaired (Awolola, 1999). When the library is ill equipped, it will definitely be unattractive and uninviting to its users. Materials there must also reflect the needs of the target learners. In the present study, the poor situation of the libraries must have made most of the students not to be regular in the libraries.

Tables 2 to 5 revealed those materials junior secondary school students like to read. These include: story books, comics and magazines, newspapers, drama books as well as reference books. It should be noted that children are passing through a transitional period from childhood to adulthood and they are faced with a lot of challenges that could lead to anxiety, confusion, frustration and conflicts that gain the attention of adults around them. It is necessary that the school and the home provide them with enriched and stimulating environment especially through reading materials that promote acquisition of information relevant to their developmental tasks (Obot, 1999).

While table 6 displays those activities students engage in when they are not in school. Table 7 shows those activities that parents expect of their children when they are not in school. It could be seen that when children are left unguided they can play for hours unending. Hence, the family plays an indispensable role in the education of the child. According to Adeyanju (1999) parental literacy level, their ability to provide relevant reading materials like pictorials, textbooks, toys, electronics and other relevant materials engender literacy in the family. For literacy to be functional especially in the execution of the UBE scheme, as opined by Obanya (1996) and Emenanjo (2001) it will involve "the ability to use reading and writing to widen and display one's intellectual horizon" (Okofe, 1991 cited in Adeyanju 1999).

In most of our primary schools just like it happens in some secondary schools, many of the pupils still sit on the floor, classrooms are overcrowded, many pupils do not have textbooks and writing materials. It can be inferred from this that a lot lies in the hands of the government towards ensuring the successful implementation of the UBE scheme.

RECOMMENDATION AND CONCLUSION

As the nation is struggling with other nations of the world to ensure that Education for All is achievable by 2015, the government should realize early that the UBE scheme can help in realizing this fast. Adequate funding must be provided for the provision of buildings and infrastructural facilities including libraries in the primary and secondary schools.

Not only that, qualified librarians should be trained and posted to man school libraries. The libraries must be equally equipped to take care of the inadequacies of poor parents.

As observed by Oden and Denga (1999), selection of books for children's reading must be done following the guidelines of Sutherland and Arbuthnot (1977) which include the following:

- ❖ Books that can impart the desired morals in children.
- ❖ Knowing children in terms of their attitudes, abilities and reading skills and interest.
- ❖ Parents and teachers must also know the books before they choose them for their children.

It is pertinent to observe that some students in the present study were reading some low quality magazines. This kind of situation was also observed by Fayose (1995) in her study that a large number of children read such low quality materials Ikebe Super Laughs. Such materials will only influence the youths negatively and lure them into antisocial acts and vices.

As rightly observed by Fayose (1995), Nigerian children read for a number of reasons which include reading "to learn, to dream, to laugh, to enjoy the familiar or explore the unknown, to gather extra information for class work or special interest" (p 102). She also observed that Nigerian children want to read but their eagerness to read is discouraged by lack of suitable reading materials and easy access to books. It is hoped that the government through the UBE scheme would be able to address the situation.

It is equally important for the government, educational administrators, curriculum developers and teachers to ensure that much of the reading materials provided in school libraries come from indigenous author for the promotion of Nigerian culture. Related to this is the encouragement of publishing literary texts in Nigerian languages and making them available in our schools. Literary texts, newspapers and magazines that are relevant to the needs of students can serve as enrichment materials for language development, acquisition of knowledge, skills, attitudes for healthy development of children and providing solutions to life's problems. These attainments are essential indices for measuring and assessing the success of the UBE scheme, that is the provision of functional literacy.

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