INOCULATING READING SKILLS, LIBRARY USE AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP SKILLS IN SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS: IMPLICATIONS FOR SCHOOL COUNSELLORS AND LIBRARIANS IN MAKURDI METROPOLIS, NIGERIA

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Abstract

This paper discussed the imperative for inoculating reading skills, library use and entrepreneurship skills in secondary school students and the implication on school counsellors and librarians in Makurdi Metropolis. The paper further maintained that secondary school students in Makurdi hardly read proficiently. This has been attributed to lack of school libraries, non- utilization of school library resources and lack of reading skills. As such, many students are not self -sustained after graduation due to lack of entrepreneurship skills. This has become a social challenge. In order to address the challenges, the article clarified constructs involved, identified factors inhibiting reading and use of library among secondary school students such as lack of parental guide, poverty and lack of reading materials in school libraries. It further highlighted the implication of inoculating reading skills, library use and entrepreneurship skills in secondary school students on school counsellors and librarians and concluded that, in the information age, reading and creativity are critical to individuals growth and national development as such, they must be considered by education planners in policy formulation for Nigerians from the primary to the tertiary levels of education. Finally, five recommendations were made as the way forward.

Keywords: *Inoculating reading skills, library use, entrepreneurship, secondary school students, counsellors, librarians.*

Introduction

There are evidences to show that many secondary schools students in Nigeria do not have reading skills. So, they cannot read proficiently. They may not be blamed for the fact that most secondary schools do not have school libraries and the propensity to use library resources at that level of education is relative. This could be one of the reasons why secondary school students in Makurdi metropolis cannot read well.

Generally, all secondary school students need information materials in form of textbooks, maps, dictionaries and online resources for a variety of activities including leisure and academic needs.

In Makurdi metropolis, many secondary school students lack reading skills and more disturbing is students' debility to read as well as evaluate information materials for the purposes which they are intended.

The school library being the hub of learning enterprise at that level, students are required to take advantage of its resources in order to increase their knowledge base. Virtually every human activity requires reading expertise. For instance, reading skills are required in learning environment, hospitals, space management and business enterprise. For example, the entrepreneur who repairs laptop and desktops has probably read numerous service manuals while attending training programme to master the complex computer diagnostic systems that are now standard equipment. Reading skill is required by students in entrepreneurship programmes and in all schools.

Unfortunately, in Nigeria, entrepreneurship skills are not taught in primary and secondary schools. This is a serious lacuna on the part of education planners at those levels of education. At the tertiary level, efforts are in place for teaching undergraduates entrepreneurial skills which are perceived as laudable but belated because the Nigerian labour market is already over populated with unskilled graduates and the propensity to sustain these youths by government with enabling environment is

not foreseeable yet. It is in this regard that it is expected that inoculating reading skills, encouraging students at the secondary school level to take advantage of school library's resources and entrepreneurial training by librarians and school counsellors could change the plight of youths and enhance the achievement of the 1st, 2nd, 4th and 9th Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by the year 2030 in Nigeria (Igbinovia et al, 2018; Ubale, 2018; Uduak & IG-Worlu, 2017).

Clarification of Constructs

Reading Skills: These are strategies that motivate learning in schools. In a situation where students take advantage of these strategies effectively, they help in making good grades, reduce academic stress and the learning process generally. Conceptually, reading is the process of looking at and understanding the meaning of written or printed words or symbols. The Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary (new 9th edition) further explained that reading is the activity of going through written or printed words in silence or speaking them to other people. Whereas, skills here are the abilities of doing something or performance. In this light, reading skills can be described as abilities a student possesses to go through a written work or drawing or symbols. Unfortunately, overwhelming evidence exists to show that students in Makurdi metropolis do not read and its only a few that read. This is evident in our public examinations such as West African Examinations Council and National Examinations Council (NECO) (Okojie, 2013).

Further, reading researcher such as Thelma, Obah and Okojie (2013) believed that one of the reasons for this unfortunate situation is that many teachers who teach students reading were not taught how to read for themselves. For example, the act of reading is designed to increase students' knowledge and open up new ways of thinking, not necessarily speed in reading as

students are mostly taught in schools in Nigeria. Speed matters but it is far less than what one takes away from what he has read. The key to good reading is understanding but not speed. Strategies that help students read more quickly, comprehend, retain and recall effectively are diagrammatically expressed Figure 1.
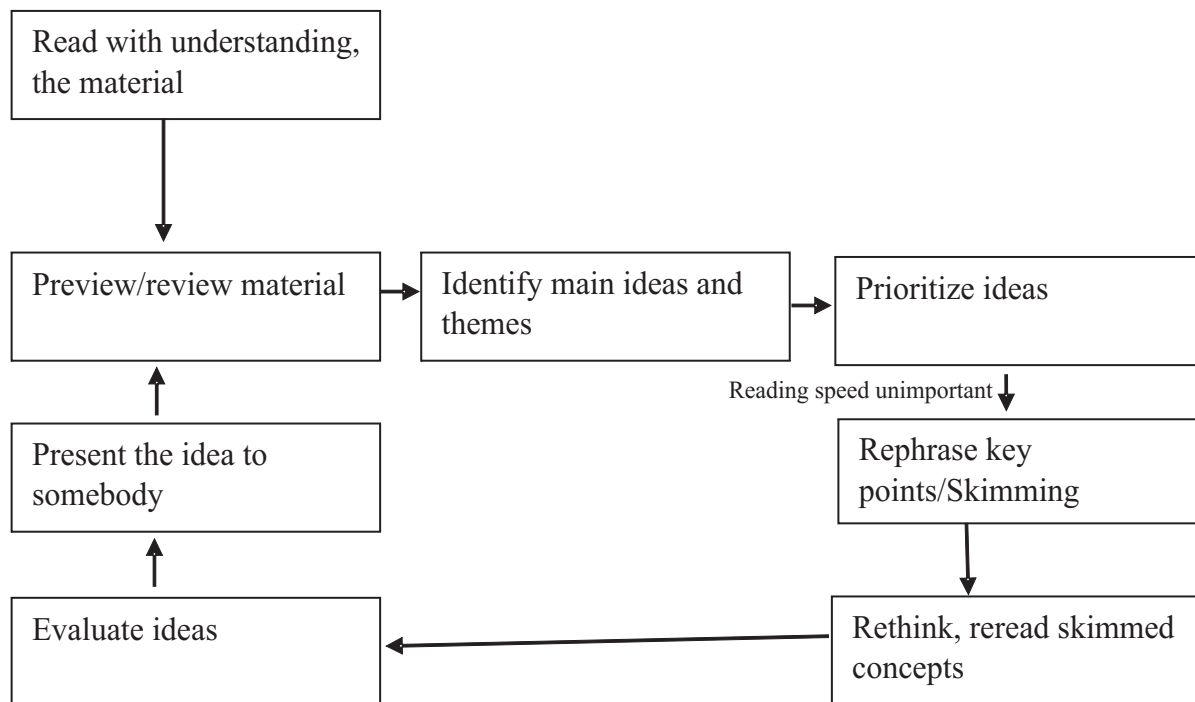
Reading Topic

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┌──────────────────────┐
│ Read with            │
│ understanding,       │
│ the material         │
└──────────────────────┘
            │
            ▼
┌──────────────────────┐   ┌──────────────────────┐   ┌──────────────────────┐
│ Preview/review       │──▶│ Identify main ideas  │──▶│ Prioritize ideas     │
│ material             │   │ and themes           │   │                      │
└──────────────────────┘   └──────────────────────┘   └──────────────────────┘
            ▲                             Reading speed unimportant │
┌──────────────────────┐                             ▼
│ Present the idea to  │                   ┌──────────────────────┐
│ somebody             │                   │ Rephrase key         │
└──────────────────────┘                   │ points/Skimming      │
            ▲                               └──────────────────────┘
┌──────────────────────┐                             │
│ Evaluate ideas       │◀──────────────────┌──────────────────────┐
│                      │                   │ Rethink, reread      │
└──────────────────────┘                   │ skimmed concepts     │
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Fig 1: Strategies that help students read quickly.

Source:
1. When you have a topic to read, read with understanding and be focused. Deal with distractions when they come into mind by taking a break, for example, make a plan or solve the challenges by writing them down on paper.
2. Identify the main ideas or themes. Try to determine the take home message from the material you have read.
3. Of all the information present in the material, which is the most crucial or relevant and which is less crucial?
4. Prioritize the ideas as they are presented and their relationship. Of course, you must read the material meticulously but disregard speed to get the grasp of it.
5. It is important to skim the information in a work and rephrase a number of the key points.
6. Reread skimmed concepts and ideas then think over them critically in order to make sense or understanding of what you have read. Rereading transfers materials from your short term memory to long term memory so that it can be remembered over a long time.
7. Evaluate ideas by being honest with yourself. It is evident that in most cases, the net result is not much different from not reading.
8. Pretend to present the material to a fellow student. that is, summarize the material aloud, as if you are talking to another person. It is only in passing through these stages that

comprehension, retention and recall can be measured.

There are other important strategies that can be inoculated in students to enhance their reading abilities. These ones are more of advisory.

1. No eye fixation: When reading, do not fix your eyes on words you are familiar with. Your brain has already captured such words and stored. Instead, always move your eyes quickly to the next words in that order, you got through the text. Tips: when you choose a topic to read, look at the opening phrases, go to the middle of the page and quickly read a few words at the end and then read the whole text. As you practice this, your eye moment will increase, you will not pick word by word but a group of words will be captured.

2. Avoid Vocalization: Vocalization kills reading speed and weakens the brain. One's brain has the capacity to capture at least 175 words per minute. With constant practice, this may increase. Most of the words are stored in the brain. One needs not to read or pronounce them aloud. If you vocalize, your reading speed drops, your voice will come down and finally, your brain will go off reading. As a result, comprehension and retention will be low and recall rate will also drop.

3. Avoid finger or arrow reading Arrow reading or finger pointing is a negative practice during reading. Using a finger or objects such as bic or stick to trace the line print in the text, the object cannot be faster than the eyes. Use your eyes to read-faster, better with high retention and recall ratio and above all, your comprehension will be higher.

As observed by Aguolu and Aguolu (2002), our children represent a generation of leaders with new problems and new opportunities. Like their counterparts in other parts of the world, they must seek to establish a balance between instructive and creative reading as a life-long endeavour. Effort should be made to equip them for intellectual battle that is now theirs. This battle must start with the school librarian who should be knowledgeable of the information needs of the users. The school librarian, when selecting materials for a school library, must know:

i. Who the readers are.
ii. What their information needs are.
iii. What subjects are taught in the school.
iv. What the teachers teaching interest is.
v. Subject and characteristics of information resources in various formats.

The reason for these facts is that a school library is required to provide the most useful and most satisfying reading materials possible on all subjects taught in the school and to meet the extra-curricular needs of the students at the highest literacy level compatible with usefulness.

Library use/or use of library

Library use as interchangeably used in secondary schools and academic libraries, is a very important programme of the libraries. A school library is an integral part of a secondary school. According to Aguolu in Aguolu and Aguolu (2002), an excellent educational programme cannot be developed without the full support of a well-stocked library. It is also true that no matter how well-stocked a library is, if it is not used, its objective/aim is defeated. For children or adolescents to grow and become true leaders, they must be taught to use library and its resources effectively.

It is noted that there is, a strong correlation between use of the reading activities in adulthood and academic achievement. Students who use school libraries effectively at the secondary school level later in life, come to show a greater appreciation of, and utilize more effectively, the resources of public libraries and libraries

of the institutions of higher learning, than those who were either denied the opportunity of using good libraries in schools or who on their own, discounted utility of a school library.

According to Ejikeme (2018), Usoro and Usanga (2007), school libraries have specific objectives in schools which include: encouraging students to participate effectively in school programmes in order to meet the needs of the students, teachers, parents and other members of the community; assisting students to acquire reading habits; providing students with library materials and services which will be helpful in their growth and development as individuals, breaking down the rigid divisions which the school timetable often create in different subjects, school libraries help to stimulate and guide students in all phases of their reading so that they may find joy, satisfaction and may grow with critical judgement and appreciation of books; provide information materials, services and opportunities for students who need them to develop literacy skills.

It is the responsibility of school librarians to ensure that school libraries' objective are achieved and one of the ways is to inculcate reading skills and positive attitude towards the use of school libraries resources and services. This approach could foster students' interest in learning and to an extent, bring about national growth and development.

In addition, inoculating reading skills and the use of school libraries will change the students' moral, physical, emotional and intellectual capacity.

Entrepreneurship Skills

These are strategies, tricks, initiatives, innovations, knowledge and attitudes infused in an individual to assist him develop his competencies with the perspective of conceiving, planning and starting an enterprise for sustainable profit (Green in Aju, 2019). The aim of providing entrepreneurship training is to make the learner acquire entrepreneurship skills and to become an organizer and manager of a commercial enterprise and by extension an employer of labour. For now the type of education provided to secondary school students in Nigeria does not equip them with the capacity to contribute meaningfully to national development and to reduce poverty in Nigeria. The reasons while it is necessary to inoculate secondary school students with entrepreneurship skills varies: They constitute a large segment of Nigerian labour force, they are not trained in any specific field and therefore graduate without specific skills; many of them are unemployed and cannot fend themselves which has become a societal problem. Sad enough, the government seems indifferent about their plight. In Nigeria, the Federal Government and Private sectors have realized the relevance of entrepreneurship for national growth and development and efforts are in place to encourage university graduates acquire entrepreneurship skills. At the secondary school level, secondary school curricula have not properly integrated entrepreneurship as a compulsory course for students. There are a number of prospects for inoculating secondary school students with entrepreneurship skills. Emene (2010) contended that entrepreneurship revolves around creativity, and self-reliance. Therefore, secondary school students stand to benefit when they take advantage of entrepreneurship training in school. They could become self-reliant, may initiate and organize a business venture and employ many others. They will contribute greatly to the economic, social and political development of Nigeria.

Factors inhibiting reading among secondary school students in Makurdi Metropolis

There are a number of factors that hinder secondary school students in Makurdi metropolis from reading proficiently. One of the factors is lack of reading skills. Lack of reading skills has affected many students.

This is evident in result from public examinations such as NECO and WAEC in these examinations, the rate of failure is high. This, to an extent, has negative impact on the individual, student and national development.

Scholars such as Abiolu (2014) conducted a study on trends in the reading habits of students in selected senior secondary schools in two South Western Nigerian States. The respondents (students) reported many barriers such as power outage (67.7%), watching television (54.7%), feeling lazy (36.6%), not enjoying reading (28.7%), not having enough reading materials (25.7%), reading materials not available in the school library (13.5%), dislike being alone with books (16.6%) and preferring to stay with friends (8.%). Apart from these, Gbadamosi (2007), Ojo and Habibu (2011) in their separate studies revealed that students could easily be distracted by social media, television and other ICTs as far as reading is concerned. They further reported that students often prefer technologies to reading textual materials for knowledge acquisition.

Aina, Ogungbeni, Adigun and Ogundipe (2011) also reported in their work that dearth of libraries in schools is a reason for poor reading skills. They further maintained that where libraries are available, they are poorly stocked with non-current materials.

A survey work in Makurdi metropolis indicated that many students do not have organized reading plan, poor parental upbringing, parents are illiterates and so do not encourage the children to read or study the tricks of reading. Most worrisome as revealed by the survey was the degrading nature of poverty level experienced by students from families of low socio-economic status. Such students hardly buy reading materials and so cannot read well in the school or at home.

Read skills, library use and entrepreneurship skills in secondary schools: The implications on school counsellors and librarians

Ensuring proficiency in reading, library use and acquisition of entrepreneurship skills by students in secondary schools in Makurdi Metropolis have significance on the school counsellors and librarians.

Denga (2019) described the role of a counsellor as a process by which a troubled person (client) is helped to feel and behave in a more personally satisfying manner through interaction with an uninvolved person (counsellor) who provides information and communicate with the client in such a way as to stimulate the client to develop behaviours which enable him to deal more effectively with himself and his environment. Counselling as a helping process involves collection of information, processing of the information and use of skills to facilitate greater understanding of self and environment for the purpose of personal growth, security and development of the clients.

Ochogwu (2018) explained the core duties of professional librarians as to select information resources, acquire, organize, preserve and disseminate the information to user community. School librarians have the analytical knowledge of the resources of a school library and presumably have the ability to develop new techniques of information storage and retrieval through the utilization of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs).

One aspect if a school librarian in this regard is to properly collect, process and provide information resources and services to students in secondary schools. Correspondently, other aspects of the work of school counsellor is to have knowledge of the school environment, library resources and services in order to provide desirable counselling service to students. That is making available to the client's knowledge of opportunities on educational carrier,

vocations, health and personal social issues so as to enable them make choices and decisions that are authentic, reliable and responsible enough. For instance, since we are in a globalized world, the librarian and school counsellor can gather information on opportunities for admission into institutions of higher learning in one part of the world for students in a local environment.

In this regard, many students who want to attend such institutions need to explore information about the nature of programmes offered in such institutions, their entry requirements, cost implication of courses of their choice and opportunities for employment after graduation by such students would certainly need the service of school counsellor or librarian. Such is the case with business opportunities. School librarians and counsellors need to be visionary to use information resources and opportunities in schools for the benefit of students by encouraging the use of library, acquisition of entrepreneurship and reading skills among secondary school students.

Conclusion

In this information age or knowledge society, reading and creativity are critical and cannot be downplayed. Therefore, school libraries must ensure that they are stocked with current and relevant information resources and as a cooperate responsibility, the librarians and school counsellors are required to encourage students to take advantage of school libraries and opportunities for acquiring reading skills and entrepreneurship knowledge that abound in secondary school libraries in spite of challenges that are characterized in the process.

Suggestions

The following suggestions are made:
1. School counsellors and librarians should take responsibility and be responsive.
2. Secondary school administrators should identity challenges inhibiting

the use of library resources, reading skills and issues that limit the acquisition of entrepreneurship skills in schools.

3. School administrators through the school counsellors should encourage students to take advantage of opportunities provided in schools.
4. Education planners at the secondary level should ensure constant review of school curriculum to reflect current trends or realities on the globe.
5. Secondary schools should adopt bibliotherapy as a means to control the behaviour of students in schools.

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