

Participation of Government and Non-governmental Organizations in Readership Promotion towards Educational Improvement in Bauchi State, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

This study was conducted to explore Bauchi State Secondary School Students' performance at NECO and WAEC, in relationship to their reading behaviours and participation of the stakeholders in readership promotion. The Study was based on observations and interactions of Young Readers Society (YRS) in Bauchi with stakeholders. Data concerning WAEC and NECO, result of Senior School Certificate Examination were directly obtained from their web site on the Internet, written information obtained from directors of school services and examinations respectively of Bauchi State Ministry of Education, and correspondences between the YRS and officials of the concerned Government and non Governmental ministries and parastatals as well as individuals. The data were analysed using simple percentage. The findings revealed that reading materials are scarce in the primary/secondary schools, while in majority of them, libraries were either not functional or do not even exist. Beside, the students' reading attitude was generally poor. Hence, it was considered necessary for government at all levels to set aside a reasonable amount of money out of the budget to enable them assist literary associations form and sustain, editors club in schools and execution of other readership promotion campaign.

Keywords: *Reading promotion, educational improvement, Non government Organisations.*

INTRODUCTION

Bauchi State is one of the six States in the North East part of Nigeria with a population of 6,452,720 million people, and has a total of 84 senior secondary schools across the three senatorial zones of the State in addition to tertiary institutions; with thousands of students in these schools. This study focused on the secondary students' academic performance in the State along side their reading habits and the roles played by government, non governmental agencies and wealthy individuals in Bauchi State towards promoting and sustaining reading habits, considering its importance due to its relationship with learning and students' academic performance. Conducting this study owing to the fact that Bauchi State like most other States in the northern part of Nigeria is an educationally disadvantaged state, where reading interest is generally low is a wellcome development. The fact is not far fetched, taking into consideration the secondary school students' performances at WAEC, NECO and common entrance examinations in resent years. Findings traced the students' mass failure in examinations to their poor reading attitudes, among other factors. The readership promotion campaigns embarked by the Young Readers Society (YRS) in the schools within Bauchi

metropolis that blossomed over the last 2 years seized to continue effectively for lack of support from concern agencies and individuals. The effects of poor reading culture on students and the general society is devastating. However, it is not disputable that the Bauchi state government has done so much in an effort to revamp educational standard by employing qualified teachers, the provision of subject based textbooks to pupil/student, provision of conducive learning atmosphere at all levels among other things. However, these efforts seem to have made little impact towards improving the educational standard in the State. The students decimal performance at WAEC and NECO examinations in recent time have glaringly pointed to that. For the students to record such failure inspite of the fairly conducive learning atmosphere, being provided, this can not be unconnected to their reading attitudes.

Access and efficient utilization of information is crucial to individual advancement as well as corporate educational development. Nssien (2007) identified good reading habits as the single most important determinant of a student's success in education and in our complex society. Adding that reading is the foundation upon which information and knowledge is acquired and other academic skills are built. That reading also offers a productive approach to improving vocabulary, word power, and language skills. Adedeji (1983) and Doyle (2001) proclaimed that reading facilitates learning as constant reading develops individual's intellectual capability and stability beside social values, especially now that many aspects of our ordinary life require the ability to read. Tella and Akande (2007) declare that the ability to read is at the midpoint of self-education and lifelong learning and that it is an art capable of transforming life and society. In addition, Jato (2011) asserts that a reading citizenry constitutes an informed and knowledgeable society that can contribute positively to economic transformation of its country.

Nonetheless, Malumfashi (2011) and Jato (2011) discerned that Nigerian child is not exposed to varieties of literature right from childhood and does not appreciate beauty of literature, therefore enthusiasm in reading for knowledge, intelligence or for leisure is not look upon as part of life activities, hence hardly develop interest in reading. They emphasized that to Lacking in interested reading materials, none availability and lack of access to information materials, poor reading environment like libraries and information centres, Low economic status of the citizenry, high cost of books, linguistic barrier and ICT. Regrettably, conscious attempts are not yet being made to overcome these impediments to promote reading. Some of these impediments like interested reading materials, lack of libraries were present in the public schools. These may not be unconnected to the inability of most public elementary and high school pupils/students in Bauchi State to read basic text books as YRS observed during its sensitization visits to schools. These constituted a great problem considering that in Nigeria, English language is the official medium of teaching school subjects, administration, information dissemination and entertainment etc. What's more, Nwoye (2011) associates the regression in the pupils'/students' performance to their poor reading habits when he stressed that generally poor reading habits is rife in Nigerian primary schools because a large number of people rarely read - either because they lack the skill or simply because they do not care enough to take the time to concentrate. Thus, the pupils/students' attitudes to reading along with the manner in which readership

promotion campaigns has not been given prominence in the State is responsible for their declining in reading for leisure and academic pursuit, hence decline in their academic performance. This study is therefore aimed at:

1. Finding out whether Bauchi State secondary school students' reading attitudes have relationship with their academic performance.
2. Determining whether governments, non-governmental organization, distinguish personalities and the Young Readers Society, Bauchi, as key stakeholders, participate actively or otherwise towards readership promoting activities in Bauchi State.
3. Suggesting how best the stakeholders can be active in readership promotion campaign activities to inculcate good reading habit in students and the citizenry and ensure provision of adequate and relevant reading materials.

METHOD

This study is theoretical. Data concerning West African Examination Council and National Examination Council, result of Senior School Certificate Examination were directly obtained from their website of the Organisations on the Internet, written information obtained from directors of school services and examinations respectively of Bauchi State ministry of education, and correspondences between the YRS and officials of the concerned Government and non Governmental ministries and parastatals as well as individuals. The data were analysed using simple percentage.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The devastating effects of poor reading culture have manifested in performance of primary pupils in common entrance examinations and secondary students in their final examinations. For instance, analysis reliably gathered from the director of school services and director in charge of examinations of Bauchi State Ministry of Education as revealed by table indicated that out of the 21,690 students that sat for NECO in 2011, only a few of the candidates got university entry requirements. Similarly, of the 11,504 that sat for WAEC only very few had university requirements. This extended to the national level as analysis released by WAEC (2011) on May/June Senior School Certificate Examination in Nigeria in 2011, a breakdown of the result shows that 51.71% (789,288) of the 1,540,250 candidates who sat for the WAEC SSCE examination got five credits and above. However, only 30.70% (472,906) got five credits including English and Mathematics.

Similarly, result of 2011 June/July Senior School Certificate Examination released by NECO revealed that results recorded were poor as has been the case in recent years. Statement released by Prof. Okpala indicated that 1,160,561 candidates sat for the examination. Giving a breakdown of the results, only 22.16% and 24.86% came out with credit passes in English and Mathematics respectively. In 2010 less than 25 percent of the total candidates of 1,132,357 that sat for the examination passed in English Language and Mathematics. Table 2 presents the breakdown of WAEC and NECO May/June 2011

result for Nigeria. The table 2 reveals that only less than 22% of the candidates who sat NECO (most likely far less) will have at least a credit in both English and Mathematics, as well as about 25% of those who sat for WAEC in the year under review. Similar situation was obtained in NECO and WAEC Nov/Dec 2011 examinations. It is apparent that this situation posts a great problem to students' educational, social, and national development. Taking into consideration that WAEC or NECO SSCE certificate is basic credential required for admission into tertiary institutions in Nigeria. Equally, certificate obtained from these organizations may also serve as a minimum educational qualification for obtaining certain kinds of Jobs. One may also be required to present a WAEC or NECO SSCE certificate in Jobs that require higher qualifications. In view of all that have been discoursed above, it is necessary to behold the participation of the stakeholders in promoting reading habits in the State's institutions of learning.

Government and non Governmental Organizations as Stakeholders in readership promotion: By their nature, organizations are social groups which distributes tasks for a collective goal. Through cooperation of the elements, the organization is able to solve tasks that lie beyond the abilities of the single elements. This implies to either governmental or non governmental organizations, i.e. organizations under government control and private organizations that are independent from government control, a voluntary association of people acting together on a continuous basis for some common purpose Willitts (2002). NGOs are therefore potential institutions for the promotion of readership activities. Ideally, governmental organizations such as the Bauchi State Ministry of Education, Ministry of Youth and Sports, Bauchi State Library Board, State Universal Basic Education Board (SUBEB), National Teachers Institute (NTI) Bauchi, as well as NGOs like UNISEF, DEC, USAID, Readership Promotion Associations, in addition to high profile personalities comprising commissioners, members of the State House of Assembly, Local Government Chairmen and Councilors have key roles to play in the provision of pleasant reading environment, suitable books for learning and leisure reading and more importantly give full support for readership promotion activities. This will be their part of contribution in cultivating and sustaining reading habits among pupils/students and the citizenry as Malumfashi (2011) observes. Failure to discharge these obligations can, to a large extent influence pupils/students reading habits and academic performance. This explains the reason why YRS decided to go with the above mentioned organizations and individuals in promoting reading culture in Bauchi State, at least to curtail the obnoxiously academic performance being recorded in recent years in the State.

As literary association, YRS was formed by a group of people with the primary objectives of (i) encouraging more reading by students and Nigerians at large, (ii) promoting the increase of reading materials in Bauchi both in quantity and in variety; and (iii) identifying the major impediments that restrain more reading in the State and find ways of eliminating them. Mainstream of YRS Bauchi Membership is constituted to professional librarians and para professional library personnel from the Abubakar Tafawa Balewa University, Bauchi and Bauchi state Library Board. These individuals came together voluntarily to improve the reading habits; especially among the pupils/students. Readership promotion

campaigns have been mounted at several places and receiving attention from organizations such as the National Library of Nigeria, the Reading Association of Nigeria and the Nigerian Book Development Council, in some parts of the country. Yet YRS observed that reading habits was not encouraging and readership promotion programmes are lacking in the State. In its bit to contribute its quota; YRS outlined series of programmes which include sensitization visits to several primary and secondary schools within Bauchi metropolis. Where it discovered most of the schools have no library or reading corners in the classrooms and non availability of suitable reading leisure, reading materials. Those with established libraries have very few relevant collections kept unorganized and rarely accessible to pupils/students for patronage and non existence of reading clubs. In line with its objectives, YRS swept into action from the grass root by establishing libraries, providing and organizing reading materials in some primary schools within the metropolis. These include Kobi; Kofar, Fada, Bakari, Dukku and Sa'adu Zungur primary schools. Beside this; YRS had at different times organized and engaged some schools in quiz and reading competitions, where enticing gifts pertaining to learning items like pens, exercise books and schools bags were presented to the participants.

During the sensitization and reading competitions, students were intimated on the enormous advantages of good reading which extend beyond just an exercise for academic success, but also, social, moral, language literacy economic values asserted (Doyle 2001; Nssien 2007 and Jato 2011). The readership campaign activities of the YRS have actually yielded positive impacts on Pupils/students' learning outcome and showed enthusiasm towards reading, as some of the teachers from the schools that benefited from the YRS readership promotion activities testified. This calls for the sustenance and extension of readership promotion programmes to all schools by literary associations in conjunction with all stakeholders. The successes so far recorded gave more vigor and desire to widen the readership promotion campaign across the state. Financial constrains however became an obstruction to this strive. World over, the major sources of NGO funding are membership dues, the sale of goods and services, grants from international institutions or national governments, and private donations. YRS does not hold large scale Fund raising Avenue, it solely depend on the membership dues.

Hence, wish to venture into partnership with government agencies, organizations and in order to raise money for projects, because like activities of most the NGOs, readership promotion demands significant fund raising efforts. It is unfortunate that the monthly dues normally contributed at the end of each month being the only association's source of fund was grossly insufficient for the day to day execution of the readership promotion activities. This has to a large extent crippled the smooth implementation of the YRS's outlined plan of action aimed at attaining its stated objectives. Governmental, non governmental and personalities are known to be assisting NGOs in several ways, to execute societal social, developmental projects etc. Even though the term "non-governmental organization" implies independence from governments, most NGOs depend heavily on governments for their funding. That is why YRS members opted to look outward to some governmental, non governmental and individuals for assistance, to collectively promote reading culture for

social, educational and national development. These comprise of the State Ministry of Education, Ministry of Youth and Sports, State Library Board, SUBEB, UNISEF, DEC, NTI Bauchi, USAID, some commissioners, members of the State House of Assembly, the then Bauchi local government chairmen, and councilors. Each was written to, soliciting for either suitable reading materials like story books, magazines text books and the like or financial support to among other things purchase suitable reading materials, establish reading clubs in schools, and school libraries where they do not exist and to effectively carry out other vital readership activities. On receipt of the letters, virtually all the recipients pledged to assist YRS financial. With the exception of SUBEB, NTI and DEC who pledged to donate books.

Stakeholders' unwillingness towards readership promotion

YRS formed a four man team charged with the responsibility of collecting whatever assistance that would be given by those who made pledges. The team embarked on follow up visit to concern organizations and individuals, which ran into several months. As a result, substantial amount was spent on Logistics. This further weakened the meager financial strength of the association. More disheartening, neither the governmental, non governmental organizations nor the individuals redeemed the pledges made. Eventually, Bauchi State Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Youth and Sports respectively officially replied YRS that they have no budgetary provision to accommodate such request, therefore regretted their inability to redeem their pledges.

In the case of DEC, it has categorically explained that it could not afford financial assistance; but rather; it will donate reading materials. Until this moment, that has not been redeemed. In the case of prominent personalities contacted most of whom are political office holders, they too had tactically refused to redeem whatever pledges they made to YRS. Spanning over some months, they kept giving the YRS's delegates appointment to meet with them to redeem the pledges. But none of them redeemed any pledge, to a point which members got frustrated and gave up. The table 3 clearly defines the level of response so far. One need not to mention that the outcomes are serious discouragements to members of the YRS in which no doubt has undermined its effort towards readership promotion campaigns in the State. YRS expected that as a consequence of the present educational standard, the stakeholders would not jeopardize such strive to cultivate reading habits meant to improve the situation.

Table 1: Breakdown of WAEC and NECO May/June 2011 results for Bauchi state

Bauchi State WAEC & NECO candidates	No. of candidates	Pernt
Total WAEC results released	11,506	98%
Candidates with 5 credits or more including English	89	0.77%
total NECO results released	21,690	96%
Candidates with 5 credits or more including Maths	24	0.11%

Source: WAEC May/June 2011 examination results retrieved on 16th April, 2012 from www.waecdirect.org and NECO May/June 2011 Examination results Retrieved on 16th April, 2012 from NECO Nigerian Exam website at www.nigeriaexams.com

Table 2: The breakdown of WAEC and NECO May/June 2011 results for Nigeria

WAEC: Candidates with five credit or above	No Candidates	Percentage
Total WAEC results released	1,460,003	94.79%
Candidates with 5 credits or more	789,288	51.71%
Candidates with 5 credits or more including English & Mathematics	472,906	30.70%

Source: WAEC May/June 2011 examination results retrieved on 16th April, 2012 from www.waecdirect.org and NECO May/June 2011 Examination results Retrieved on 16th April, 2012 from NECO Nigerian Exam website at www.nigeriaexams.com

Table 3: Pledges for financial and reading materials assistance fulfillment level

Organizations and individuals pledged for financial and material assistance	financial pledges	Material pledges	Percentage of fulfilled pledges
The 6 governmental organizations	Not redeemed	Not redeemed	0%
The 3 non governmental organizations	Not redeemed	" "	0%
The 7 Individuals personalities	Not redeemed	" "	0%

Source: Young Readers Society (2009). Visitation Report of some Organizations and schools Bauchi Metropolis. Young Readers Society Bauchi.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study has established that there was enormous effort by the State government in providing a very conducive learning environment in recent years, yet there are very little positive impacts on the students learning outcome. This traced to their negative attitude to reading. Worryingly, governments at State and Local levels as well as the remaining stakeholders comprising school authorities, parents, non governmental agencies, key personalities, literary associations and the society at large have not been participating accordingly, as findings have revealed. They seemed to be unmindful of the concept of readership promotion for eliciting reading habits from the grassroots at an early age through their school life and beyond. This will certainly do a lot of good to the nation's educational, economical and social developments.

Government, non governmental organizations and prominent personalities: By their significant position, governmental, non governmental organizations, and prominent personalities in the State are the key stakeholders in readership promotion activities, efforts must be made by government at different levels and private school proprietors to establish libraries in their schools and empower Public and School, Libraries, both financially and materially, to enable them carry out their functions effectively in respect of their roles in readership promotion and in an enabling environment. In addition, it is high time they considered setting aside reasonable amount of money out of their budget to enable them assist literary associations form and sustain readers club in schools and execution of other readership promotion campaigns.

The schools: Teachers must be good readers themselves and should elicit desirable reading behaviour, by teaching and encouraging pupils/students, through various activities such as establishing Readers Club, organizing reading competition, inviting experts on reading for

talk-shows regularly on the enormous benefits of reading towards the students' self-actualization. In addition schools school authorities should include reading as one of the daily regular academic activities in the lesson timetable. School should also equip their libraries with adequate, fun and compelling books and be manned by professional library staff. They are to also constantly encourage every parent to develop the habits of providing good books and other reading materials for their children so that they can be exposed to more and more reading materials. Lastly, parents and teachers should discourage their children from excess use of the Internet for social and entertainment activities instead of reading books, magazines and other printed educating materials.

Literary association and the readers' clubs: Literary association and the readers' clubs in the schools should help in inspiring pupils/students to read and broaden their knowledge and personal development. Literary associations need an efficient and effective group of professional members who are able to keep supporters informed, and motivated. A joint force strategy is the best approach that will ginger up the reading culture among the Nigerian youths thus curtailing the mass failure in examinations. Religious bodies, NGOs and CBOs, Old Students Associations, professional bodies, and individuals should be encouraged by literary associations and the relevant government agents to assist in the promotion of reading by establishing libraries or supporting already established school and public libraries. This can be done through providing libraries with good reading materials that can impact on the lives of Nigerians.

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