



CHILDREN READING HABITS AND AVAILABILITY OF BOOKS IN BOTSWANA PRIMARY SCHOOLS: IMPLICATIONS FOR ACHIEVING QUALITY EDUCATION

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Abstract

“In an age when browsing the net, playing with funky handsets and passing non-stop SMSs seem to be the order of the day, reading a book in a peaceful corner of a library has become an archaic idea for most people. While technology is slowly taking a steady control over individual lives, the reading habit is fast vanishing into thin air”(The Hindu, 2004:1). The achievement of quality basic education in all countries in Africa call for development of good reading habits of both the children and the adult. This will change the stigma already associated with Africa as a continent with a “Poor Reading Culture”. This study examined children’s reading habits and the availability of books in Botswana primary schools and considers its implications on the achievement of quality basic education in the country. One hundred and fifty (150) primary school pupils were randomly drawn from ten (10) schools and ten teachers, one from each school were interviewed in two Botswana cities i.e. Gaborone and Francistown. Participants were mainly drawn from standards 6 and 7. Their ages ranged from 10-13 years with a mean of 11.5 years. A modified questionnaire, “Children Reading Habits/Books Availability Scale” with $r = 0.79$ cronbach alpha was used to gather data. Six research questions were developed to guide the study, and the results indicate the following: Botswana primary school pupils do not have a good reading habits and have a culture with only 36.7% of them reading on a daily basis; and that of these, most read only textbooks just for the purpose of passing examinations. Those Botswana children (53.3%) read only for 1-2 hours daily; while it was also evident that some even read less than an hour per day. Results further showed that no difference was observed in the perception of Botswana pupils about the availability and accessibility of reading materials in their various schools. Furthermore, it was revealed that the pupils depend largely on the notes given by their teachers as the major source of reading material based on inadequate availability of books. Inadequate book availability, lack of interesting children’s literature, and watching television are identified as factors hindering pupils from developing reading habits. Furnishing primary schools libraries in the country with recent books, getting parents to develop an interest in reading for their children to emulate coupled with the idea that children’s literature should be made available in all primary schools constitute the major suggestions as measures to overcome the problem so that the achievement of quality basic education in the country would not be a mirage. Recommendations based on the results of the study for parents, teachers, schools, mass media and the government are highlighted.

Introduction

Reading is recognized as an art capable of transforming man's life and his entire society. However, in the state of the World Children Report by (UNICEF, 1999), it was stated that nearly a billion people entered the 21st century unable to read a book or write their names. The Hindu newspaper (2004) also put forward that in an age when browsing the net, playing with funky handsets and passing non-stop SMSs seem to be the order of the day, reading a book in a peaceful corner of a library has become an archaic idea for most people. While technology is slowly taking a steady control over individual lives, the reading habit is fast vanishing into thin air."(p.1). In Sub-Saharan Africa particularly, the problems of illiteracy and the scarcity of learning resources gravely limit the opportunities people have to learn and to transmit their circumstances. Also in a study conducted during 1995-1998, the Southern African Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality (SACMEQ) measured primary school students reading literacy against standard established by national reading experts and sixth grade teachers. It was reported that, in four out of seven countries, fewer than half the six graders achieved minimum competence in reading. Additionally, this study was compared with another done by the same SACMEQ two years later, which saw literacy scores falling even further in five out of six countries (UNESCO, 2004).

Reading is a very important issue which is not only about enjoyment but a necessity; the basic tool of education (Makotsi, 2005). Reading makes way for a better understanding of one's own experiences and it can be an exciting voyage to self discovery (Panigrahi and Panda, 1996; Eyre, 2005). It is the art of interpreting printed and written words, the most effective process of conscious learning which influences the extent and accuracy of information as well as the attitudes, morals, beliefs, judgement and action of readers (Devarajan and Gray in Panigrahi and Panda, 1996).

In the African continent, the reading habit of children is waning. The cause of this has been traced to poor reading cultures of Africans generally and other notable factors like non-availability of reading materials (books). As Choudhung (1990:87) put it "the reading habit is best formed at a young impressionable age in school, but once formed, it can last one's life." Young children acquire reading literacy through a variety of activities and experiences within different contexts. According to Sharma (1978) to know about the world and its environment, a child helps himself through reading books, newspapers, and other magazines. Based on this fact, Panagrahi and Panda (1996) explain that once the child has been taught to read and develop a love for books, he can explore for himself the wealth of human experience and knowledge. These authors went on further to say that "children missing the opportunity of getting in touch with books at this stage, find it difficult to acquire reading habits in their later years." Dave (1977) asserts that reading is an intellectual action which is possible only if a man has formed a habit of reading and practicing it since childhood.

It can be deduced from the above that the importance of reading cannot be overemphasized and this is because reading habit plays a very crucial role in enabling a person to achieve practical efficiency. Books are the most suitable medium through which knowledge is transmitted from generation to generation. Books yield their best to you if you read them at the age at which each particular masterpiece can ideally be chewed and digested (Naik, 1976).

It has been pointed out that most people in Sub-Saharan Africa have less access to books or other learning resources, and without proper access, it is hard to establish a reading culture. To Makotsi (2005), “the challenge is fundamental.” Children and adults according to him need access to a wide range of reading materials to help them acquire and maintain fluent reading skills, broaden horizons, and think independently and critically. Improving access to relevant information and promoting a reading culture are prerequisite for strengthening literacy skills, widening education and learning opportunities, and helping people to address the causes of poverty” (p.4).

The non-progressive nature of literacy in almost all African countries is more prevalent. The issue has been put forward to go beyond schooling. This is because parents who cannot read themselves are unable to help their children to read and the cycle continues. The situation in Botswana is no different from other African countries, though the literacy level is now improving. It stands at 77 % (Lauglo, 2000, p.8). This is based on the efforts by Carnegie corporation of New York in conjunction with the International Network for Availability of Scientific Publication (INASP) in which the joint project awarded grants to public libraries to extend services to those who have previously un-reached or minimally reached (Powell, 2002, p.245). There are inadequate supplies of books to primary schools in rural areas; most of them do not have a library or reading room where pupils can engage in private reading. All these factors hinder the development of reading habits by the pupils and are considered as stumbling blocks to the achievement of quality basic education.

Objectives of the Study

The main objective of this study was to assess the children’s reading habits and availability of books in Botswana primary schools. Specifically, the study aimed at identifying:

1. the reading habits of the children
2. the amount of time children spend in reading
3. the availability of reading materials (books)
4. the sources of reading materials which the children wholly depend on
5. the major factors hindering children from reading, and
6. the measures needed for the improvement of children reading habits, and books availability for the achievement of quality basic education.

Literature Review

Reading has been described as the art of interpreting printed and written words (Devarajan, 1989). It is regarded as one of the most effective processes of conscious learning. According to Devarajan and Gray, as cited in Panigrahi and Panda (1996), reading influences the extent and accuracy of information as well as the attitudes, morals, beliefs, judgement and action of readers. These authors postulate that “a creative and pragmatic education involves the habit of personal investigation requires self study to be followed by self thinking and analysis” (p.57). Strivastar, cited in Panigrahi and Panda (1996), self study, i.e. reading at one’s own accord requires a habit which is technically known as reading habit.

It has been asserted that a child can know much about his own environment only if exposing him or herself to reading books, newspapers, and magazines. As the child is

exposed to reading and develops the love for books, he finds it easier to explore the wealth of human experience and knowledge. During childhood, it is possible that children miss the opportunity of getting in touch with books and find it difficult to form reading habit at the later years. This is based on the belief that reading children become reading adults. Frequent reading is related to the development of sophisticated language structures; higher levels of comprehension, improved word analysis skills, and fluency in significant amounts of voluntary reading are associated with greater interest and skill development (Irving, International Reading Association, 2000).

Much research has provided insight into the importance of home environments for children's reading literacy. Long before children develop the cognitive and linguistic skills necessary for reading, early experiences with printed and oral language establish a foundation for learning (Verhoeven cited in Dent and Yannotta, 2005). To these authors, particular home characteristics can create a climate that encourages children to explore and experiment with language and various forms of texts. Some of the major aspects of the home that contribute to reading literacy development are:

Activities Fostering Literacy- the literacy related activities that parents or caregivers engage in with children, or encouragement and support (Gadsden, 2000). As children develop their capacity for oral language, they are learning the rules of language use. This knowledge will be translated into expectations for printed language as well. Adults and older children reading aloud to young children, and early association of enjoyment with printed text establish a positive attitude toward reading which eventually motivate young readers (Martin, Mullis and Gonzales in Dent and Yannotta, 2005).

Language in the Home- The fact that children learn to read depends heavily on their early experience with language. The language spoken at home, and how language is used, are important factors in reading literacy. Children whose knowledge of the language used in formal reading instruction is substantially below that expected of children of that age are likely to be at an initial disadvantaged. Use of different languages or dialects at home and school may cause problems for young students learning to read.

Economic Resources- Important aspects of the home environment include the availability of reading material and educational resources. Homes that make such resources available convey to children the expectation that learning to read is a desirable and worthwhile goal.

Social and Cultural Resources- Society and culture are inherent in influences on the perceived importance of reading for academic and personal success. Parents and caregivers engaged in many literacy activities foster children positive attitudes towards reading. For most children, the home provides modelling and direct guidance in effective literacy practices. Beyond modelling, parents or other caregivers can directly support reading development by expressing positive opinion about reading and literacy.

Home School Connection- Research show that students who discuss their school studies and what they are reading with their parents or caregivers are higher achievers than those who do not (Mullis, Martin, Gonzales and Kennedy, 2003 in Darko-Ampem, 2004). Involved parents or caregivers can reinforce the value of learning to read, monitor children's completion of reading assignments for school, and encourage children through praise and support.

Students' Out-of-School Literacy Activities- The child not only enjoys reading for recreation but also for practicing skills that are being learned. Reading for fun or to

investigate topics of interest is the hallmark of lifelong reading. They may choose to spend their out-of-school time reading books or magazines, looking up information on the Internet, or going to a local library to read or take out books (Shapiro and Whitney, cited in Dumea, 2001).

Furthermore, many factors in school affect reading literacy acquisition, directly or indirectly. These include:

School Policy and Curriculum- Literacy policy and curriculum at the school level establishes the context for the formal reading instruction children receive from the beginning of formal schooling. Such policies may include decisions about the emphasis on reading instruction in relation to other content areas. In turn, such decisions according to (Krolak, 2005) help to shape the environment within the school and the resources that are required.

School Environment and Resources- The school environment encompasses many factors that affect learning. The sense of security that comes from having few behaviour problems and little or no crime promotes a stable learning environment. School-wide programs that provide for the basic needs of students and their families (e.g., before- or after-school child care programs) may also be important. Other school-wide programs, which focus specifically on reading and literacy development, may directly support the acquisition of skills and attitudes toward reading literacy.

Additionally, the context of the classroom cannot be overlooked when considering factors affecting reading literacy. Even though the curricular policies and resources of the school often set the tone for accomplishment in the classroom activities are likely to have a more direct impact on their reading development than the school environment. The instructional approaches and materials used are clearly important to establishing teaching, including the curriculum; the strategies employ to teach it, and the availability of books technology, and other resources. The teacher of course is another very influential determinant of the classroom environment. This can include his or her preparation and training, use of particular instructional approaches, and experience in teaching reading. Finally, the behaviours, attitudes and literacy level of classmates may influence the teacher's instructional choice, thereby affecting a students reading development (Kurtz-Costes and Schneider, 1994 cited in Ekundayo, 2005).

Reading Habit

The term “reading habit” refers to the behaviour which expresses the likeness of reading of individual types of reading, and tastes of reading (Sangkaeo, 1999). It is a pattern with which an individual organizes his or her reading. Reading is important for everybody in order to cope with new knowledge in a changing world – that of the technological age. The ability to read is at the heart of self education and lifelong learning. Yet, reading culture in sub-Saharan Africa is not encouraging. Based on this, Sangkaeo (1999) clearly states that “we are not reading society in Africa but chatting society, the background of learning through culture; the cultural habit of people...prefer to listening and chatting more than reading”(p.2). Darko-Ampem (2005) also asserts that “the great divide between home and school, the facilities of education system to recognize the oral culture of communities, especially folklore and story telling traditions, and the lack of culturally relevant materials in indigenous languages are all factors which contribute toward the lack of a reading culture in many African communities.”

Chandilanga (2006) as well adds to the factors by stating that the skyrocketing prices of books have affected the reading culture in Africa to some extent. He makes reference to the word of the renowned writer Alfred Msadala who notes that “since the book industry was liberalized some years ago, the text book market is in the hands of the private sector and this was a book extent....But so many things have happened on the negative side. The good reading habit has been disturbed and the culture of taking pleasure in books has vanished. We have to bring more books for all age ranges, books people can read for pleasure like they used to do years ago. Even the culture of lending each other books within neighbourhoods is time dead. This is a sorry development.”

Book Availability and Access

To Darko-Ampem (2005) books impart knowledge to the reader, draw out and foster qualities such as imagination and self-understanding, and contribute to the child’s mental growth by stimulating the senses of touch, sight and hearing---the three main channels by which people learn. Saad (1996 cited in Radebe, 2001) stated that children read for many reasons; to learn, dream, enjoy, and explore both the familiar and unknown. The author raised the issue of child development, children’s rights, socialization, gender and race stereotyping. He emphasized the potential of literature for children, not only for making them aware of the pluralistic society around them but to help them understand the people of the universe. Research has repeatedly shown that children who have no access to books before they go to school are severely disadvantaged and have trouble catching up with other children (Radebe, 2001).

Access to books refers to the availability of quality literature in classroom, school community, or home libraries. Children with adequate access to books have many books to select from on a daily basis, both in and out of school (IRA, 2000). Mokatsi (2004) stated emphatically the conditions for learning to read and for sustaining literacy skills. This includes an ideal home environment where reading is encouraged, good teachers and schools, plentiful books which are relevant and up to date, and access to computers. However, it could be painstakingly stated that there is a chronic shortage of relevant books and learning materials and an increasing digital divide. He further states that the demands of universal primary education have put huge pressure on the education system, with rapid and dramatic increases in the number of pupils, and a corresponding demand for more teachers and learning materials. He concluded that even if relevant books were available, low family incomes would prevent their purchase. The 2000 Education for All Assessment revealed that “the majority of schools in Sub-Saharan Africa possess no library, where some semblance of school library existed, it was often no more than a few shelves of outdated and worn out material” (UNESCO, ADEA, 2001:27). In another report by UNESCO (2004), it was stated again that “in many schools that are trying to meet government targets for UPE, there is an acute lack of textbooks, let alone supplementary reading materials. It is common for one textbook to be shared between six or more pupils, and often there are no textbooks at all. This puts more pressure on teachers. In many low income countries some teachers do not even meet the minimum standard for entry into teaching and some have not fully mastered the curriculum” (p.10 & 20). Commenting on this issue (Mokatsi, 2004) said that both teachers and pupils need access to a wide range of learning resources to support the quality of teaching in the classroom.

Meanwhile, review of literature in this study is not complete without making reference to some noteworthy initiatives that have been put in place in some African countries to raise the literacy levels of children by providing much needed reading material. For instance, a new South African initiative called the people's book centres seeks to develop capacity in communities and create new jobs through adding value to the work being done by librarians to encourage reading and develop a book culture. It sets out a strategy for working in partnership with libraries to support reading promotion initiatives and to extend them into new areas. In particular, it seeks to popularize the concept of owning and buying books as well as reading them based on the principles of ratio of 5 books per child, and provide 10 hours of training to child-care staff. As a formative experiment, this study examined the projects impact, systematically sampling 400 3 and 4 year old children randomly selected from 50 centres across 10 regions and 100 control children from comparable child care centres not involved in the project. Children's early literacy skills (receptive language, concept of print, letter name knowledge, concept of writing, and narrative competence) were assessed prior to and following the study. The results indicated that with greater access, children in the intervention group scored statically significantly higher than the control group on four out of six assessment measures, with gain still very much evident 6 months later in kindergarten. Findings provide powerful support for the physical proximity of books and the psychological support to child care and the staff on children's early literacy development (Darko-Ampem, 2005).

To broaden perceptions, library services and book development councils have introduced children's reading tents in Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe (Mokatsi, 2004). The reading tents introduce young children to reading in a non formal environment, as an activity to be enjoyed, with games, competitions and story telling. The aim is to inculcate an enduring love of reading, which will underpin learning in the classroom. Following this effort, books are placed in schools and training provided to teacher librarians. Community reading tent are also used to encourage parents to read with their children, and to attract new users in remote rural areas.

In the UK, Caroline Horn reported an innovative children's literature project of the Arts Council of England meant to develop a national strategy for children's literature. The new strategy will focus on the process of creating children's books and getting books to children in an inspired way. The aim is to build a nation of readers, not simply a nation of people who can read (Horn, 2003:22). The Council according to Darko-Ampem (2005) has launched a consultation paper to review children's literature and the review covers writers, illustrators, publishing and bookselling, readers and libraries, the promotion of children's literature and education, training and research.

Also 'Book Flood' is used as a strategy in Fiji Singapore and Sri-Lanka to increase the amount of reading materials available. Students are immersed in high interest books designed to be read, discussed and shared in various ways. Evidence shows that book floods bring dramatic improvements in reading, writing, listening, vocabulary and grammar, especially for younger age groups and where children are learning in language different from their home language. A pilot project in Sri-Lanka provided between 100-200 books per school for years 4 and 5. All together there were parallel improvements in writing, listening and comprehension. Positive changes were also noticed in pupil's attitudes towards reading as valuable resources for learning (Mokatsi, 2005).

A 5 year project run by the Bertelsmann Stiftung in Germany from 1995-2000 supported co-operation between schools and libraries. Activities included guided tours to libraries, reading sessions and project weeks. As a result of the project, the participating libraries have gained 73% more new young members, the target group borrowed 33% more material from the library than before and 37% of students said that the project encouraged them to read for fun (Bertelsmann-, 2005).

Numerous studies have given evidence of the link between the availability of books and educational attainment. For instance (Elley, 1996) in a study reported that there are many potential benefits in a good book, provided it grasps and holds student's interest. Not only do students expand their language by reading widely, they also learn much about other times and places, stimulate their imagination, gain insights into human nature, are able to follow their specific interests and hobbies, enjoy an escape from unpleasant realities. He concluded that, once children learn to appreciate books, they will read more often and improve their skills. Also Montagnes (2001:28) gave the report of a study conducted by READ Educational Trust in South Africa. The report according to him states that children in classes with classroom libraries outperformed control school counterparts by as much as 189 per cent, and were ahead by 187 months in reading scores and two years in writing scores.

In a project carried out in Nueva Escuela and the Nueva Escuela Nunitaria of Guatemala reported by (Krolak, 2005), textbooks have been replaced by self-instructional study guides and supplemented with a wide choice of additional reading and reference materials. Results of the project show that students from these schools score highly in most cognitive and non-cognitive tests. Also, a strong research base as well support the importance of access to books. Children who are allowed to self-select to read and who have access to varied sources of print materials in their classrooms, school libraries, town libraries, and at home read more and more widely, both for pleasure and for information. Children who do a substantial amount of voluntary reading demonstrate positive attitudes towards reading, and these students tend to be the best readers (Calkins, 1996; Krashen, 1994). Additionally, research has found a relation between the amount of time that children read for fun on their own and reading achievement (National Assessment of Educational Progress, 1996, Taylor, Frye and Manuyama, 1990). Children in classrooms without literature collections read 50% less than children in classroom with such collections (Morrow, 1998). Similarly, Ramos and Krashen (1998) carried out a study that demonstrated the value of using the public library to provide children more access to books. In this study 104 children from homes that had few or no books visited their local libraries monthly. These children had limited access to print outside of the 30 minutes each week during library visits. When visiting the public library, children were allowed to check out 10 books each. Some of these books were to increase the supply of literature in their classroom library, and some books were for taking to their homes. Surveys also indicated that children requested that their parents take them back to the library. This excitement creates a positive cycle in which wider reading helps increase reading ability and interest in books (IRA, 2000).

Considering the information above, the focus of the study was to identify the children's reading habits and availability of books in Botswana primary schools with the ultimate aim of drawing out its implications for the achievement of basic education. The

study therefore is significant for Botswana where a study of this kind is very rare. To achieve the stated objectives of this study, the following research questions were raised:

1. What are the reading habits of Botswana children?
2. How many hours do Botswana children engage in reading per day?
3. Are the reading materials (books) available or accessible to the children?
4. What are the sources of reading materials that children wholly depend on?
5. What major factors hinder Botswana children from reading?
6. What measures need to be taken for the improvement of children reading habits and book availability in order to achieve quality basic education?

Methodology

This study adopts a descriptive survey design. Both quantitative and qualitative methods were employed. This is justified based on the assertion by (Silverman, 1995:2) that “depending on theories, hypothesis and research questions, methods from both approaches can be used in the same research project.” Moreover, quantitative is used because the study intends to collect from the children data that can be analyzed in terms of numbers. While qualitative is used because of the intention to gather information which cannot be expressed in numbers and quantities according to (Holmes and Savang, 1991:85-87) from the children’s teachers.

A modified questionnaire tagged ‘Children Reading Habits/Books Availability Scale was used. The items in the instrument/questionnaire were adapted from (Panigrahi and Panda, 1996) Reading Interest Scale and Darko-Ampem (2005) Reading Habits Pilot Survey. All the modifications in the questionnaire were for the purpose of clarity and relevance to Botswana primary school children reading habits. The questionnaire included both open and closed ended questions. Respondents were made to select from two options provided. To ascertain the validity and reliability of the questionnaire for the purpose it was designed, it was administered to twenty five subjects out of the envisage population. But these were not part of the sample. The essence was to determine its suitability and the level of understanding of the questions and the time it would take to complete the questionnaire. The reliability yielded an $r = 0.79$ through cronbach alpha.

Population and Sample

The population of this study was comprised of primary school children in Botswana. The study focuses on standards 6 and 7 primary school children in Gaborone and Francis Town areas of the Country. Participants were selected from both English Medium (Private) and (Public) primary schools. The questionnaire was written in English and was translated in native language Setswana to participants from non-English Medium schools. Ten schools were selected in all, six from Gaborone and four from Francis Town. Twenty participants were randomly drawn from each of the selected schools. This gave a total of 200 children that took part in the study. Their age range was from 10-13 years with a mean age of 11.5 years. In terms of gender distribution, 110 of the participants were female while 90 were male.

Procedure

All the participants were administered the questionnaire in their various schools. These were distributed with the help of the teachers of the participants. The children were intimated that there was no right or wrong answer and were also assured that their responses were confidential. A total of 200 questionnaires were administered while only 150 (75%) return rate was achieved. The administration of the questionnaire took place over two weeks.

Data Analysis

Data collected on this study were analyzed using simple percentage, frequency count and chi-square statistical tools.

Results

The results of the analysis are presented in the following tables.

Question 1: What are the reading habits of Botswana Children?

Table 1a: Children's Reading Habits

S/N	Items	YES	%	NO	%
1	Do you usually read on a daily basis?	55	36.7	95	63.3
2	Do you read the newspaper daily?	47	31.3	103	68.7
3	Do you prefer play to reading?	92	61.3	58	38.7
4	Do you prefer watching TV to reading?	96	64	54	36

The results in Table 1a show that Botswana children do not consider reading as daily routine. This is evident with the response of 95 participants 63.3% who indicated they don't read on a daily basis; while 55, 36.7% read on a daily basis. On daily reading of newspaper, 103, 68.7% said they don't read the newspaper daily while 47, 31.3% indicated they do. It was also indicated that 92, 61.3% of the participants prefer play to reading while 96, 64% prefer watching TV to reading. It is clear from this result that average Botswana children do not have good reading habits and a culture of reading.

Table 1b: Reasons for Reading

	Items	YES	%	YES	%
1	To pass an exam	122	81.7	38	18.7
2	For fun	72	48	78	52
3	For personal development	29	19.3	121	80.7
4	To while away time	93	62	57	38
5	To be well-informed	20	13.3	130	86.7

Table1b provides more information on the reading habit of the Botswana children. The results show that 81.3% of the children have the perception that reading is done only to pass exams and 62% believe it is to while away time. The responses further indicated

that the participants consider reason for reading as neither for fun, for personal development nor for to be well-informed.

Table 1c: Distribution of the Respondents Reading Material in Order of Significance

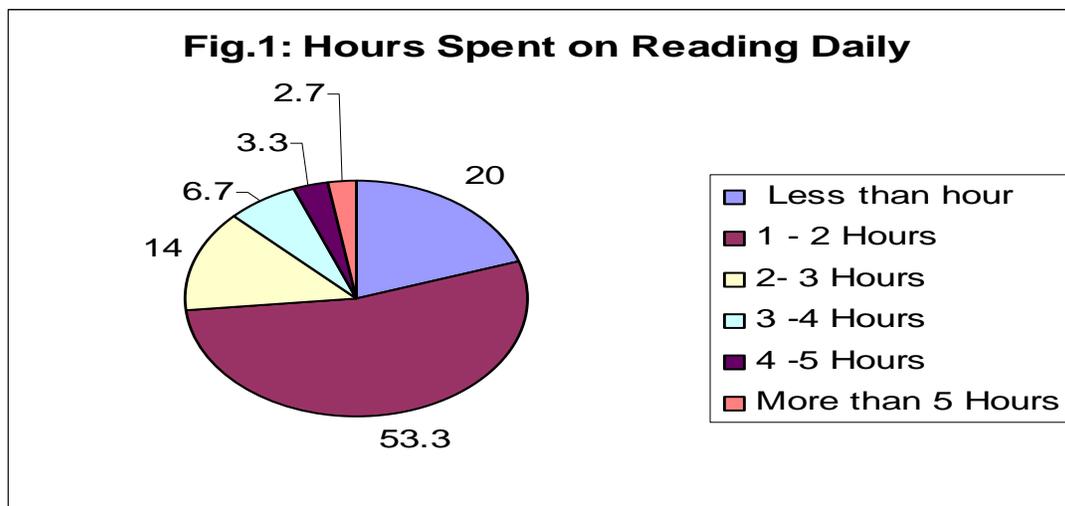
Reading Material	Top priority	%	Low Priority	%	Total
Textbooks/ Novels	137	91	13	8.6	150
Lecture Notes	120	80	30	20	150
Newspapers	112	74.6	38	25.3	150
Story Books	109	72.6	41	27.3	150
Magazines	65	43.3	85	56.6	150
Journals	60	40	90	60	150
Drama	56	37.3	94	62.6	150
Poetry	48	32	102	68	150
Comics	45	30	105	70	150

Table 1c above reveals that 137(91%) participants felt reading textbooks/novels was most significant. This is followed by lecture notes 120(80%) participants, newspaper 112(74.6%) participants and story books 109(72.6) participants in this order. However magazines, journals, drama and poetry were indicated as not so much significant while comics draw the least attention of the participants.

Question 2: How many hours do the children engage in reading per day?

Table 2: Hours Spent on Reading Daily

Times/ Hours Spent Per day	Response	%
Less than an Hour	30	20
1—2 Hours	80	53.3
2—3 Hours	21	14
3—4 Hours	10	6.7
4—5 Hours	5	3.3
More than 5 Hours	4	2.7
Total	150	100



The results in Table 2 and Figure 1 reveals that 30 participants 20% spent less than an hour on reading per day. The majority of the participants 80, 53.3% spent between 1—2 hours per day. While 36 participants 24% read for between 2—5 hours per day and 4 participants indicated reading for more than 5 hours per day. It is clear from this Table that the reading habits of the participants is not all that encouraging since there are some children that read even less than an hour per day. Before reading habits can be referred to as being good, it is expected that at least 65-70 percent of the children should read up to 2-3 hours on a daily basis without any hindrances.

Question 3: What is the perception of the children about the availability and accessibility of the reading material (books)?

Table 3: Children's Perception of the Availability and Accessibility of the Reading Material

S/N	Items	YES	NO	RT	Xo.cal	Xo.tab	df	Rm
1	Do you feel that the existing reading materials (books) in your library are adequate?	60	90	150	7.78	7.81	3	N.S
2	Are you satisfied with the present library services of your school?	84	66	150				
3	Do you have opportunities to borrow books from your school library?	102	48	150				
4	Do you visit any other library apart from your school library?	72	78	150				
Column Total		318	282	600				

Table 3 indicates that 90 participants 60% felt the existing reading materials (books) in their library are not adequate. 84, 56% of the participants indicate they are not satisfied with the present services of their school library. 102, 68% of the participants indicate they don't have the opportunity of borrowing books from their school library. And 78, 52% do not visits other library apart from their school library. It is observed that the chi-square value is lesser than that of tabulated value at 3 degrees of freedom and 0.05 probability levels. This means that there is no significant difference in the perceptions of the participants about the availability and accessibility of material in their various schools.

Question 4: What are the sources of reading materials children wholly depend on?

Table 4: Sources of Reading Materials Depend on by the Children

S/N	Sources	Responses	%
1	Library	12	8
2	Teachers	65	43.4
3	Parents	47	31.3
4	Friends	18	12
5	Others	8	5.3
Total		150	100

Fig 2: Sources of Reading Material That Children Depend On

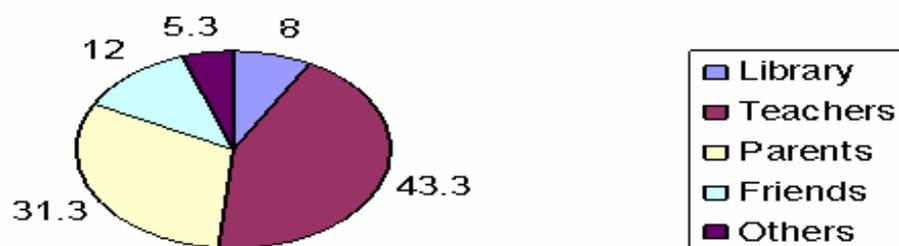
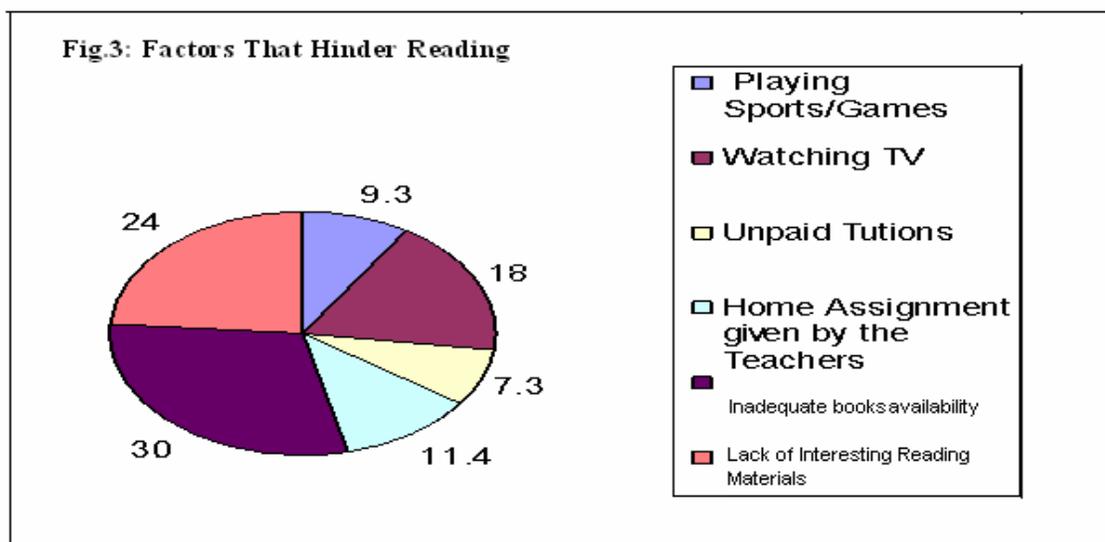


Table 4 and Figure 2 above reveal teachers are the source of reading materials children wholly depend on. This is to say that the note given by the teachers is the major source of reading material for the children. The parents were indicated by the children as the next source of reading material with 47, 31.3%. This is referring to the few books the parents can afford to buy for them. Friends were the next source of reading material with 18, 12% while libraries 12, 8% and others 8, 5.3% are the least sources depended on by the children for their reading materials. The reason why libraries attracted the least is basically due to inadequate resources of reading material there although this is more specific to rural schools.

Question 5: What are the major factors hindering children from reading?

Table 5: Hindrances to Reading

S/N	Hindrances	Responses	%
1	Playing sports/games	14	9.3
2	Watching TV	27	18
3	Unpaid Tuition	11	7.3
4	Home assignment giving by the teachers	17	11.4
5	Inadequate books availability	45	30
6	Lack of interesting reading materials	36	24
Total		150	100



In Table 5 and Figure 3 the results reveal that among the factors indicated as hindrances to the children's reading habit, inadequate books availability was rated higher with 45, 30% of the participants. This is followed by lack of interesting children literature with 36, 24% while watching TV was indicated as the next factor by 27, and 18% of the participants. Other factors that hindered the children from reading are home assignments given by the teachers 17, 11.4%, playing sports and games 14, 9.3% and unpaid tuition 11, 7.3%.

Question 6: What measures need to be taken for the improvement of children's reading habits and book availability?

Table 6: Measures of Improving Children Reading Habits and Availability of Books

S/N	Popular Suggestions	Response	%
1	Govt. should furnish all primary schools with recent books.	4	40
2	Parents should develop an interest in reading for their children to emulate them.	2	20
3	Interesting literature and story books should be made available in large quantities.	1	10
4	Library facilities should be provided in all schools.	2	20
5	An official hour should be allotted for reading in the daily school timetable.	1	10
Total		10	100

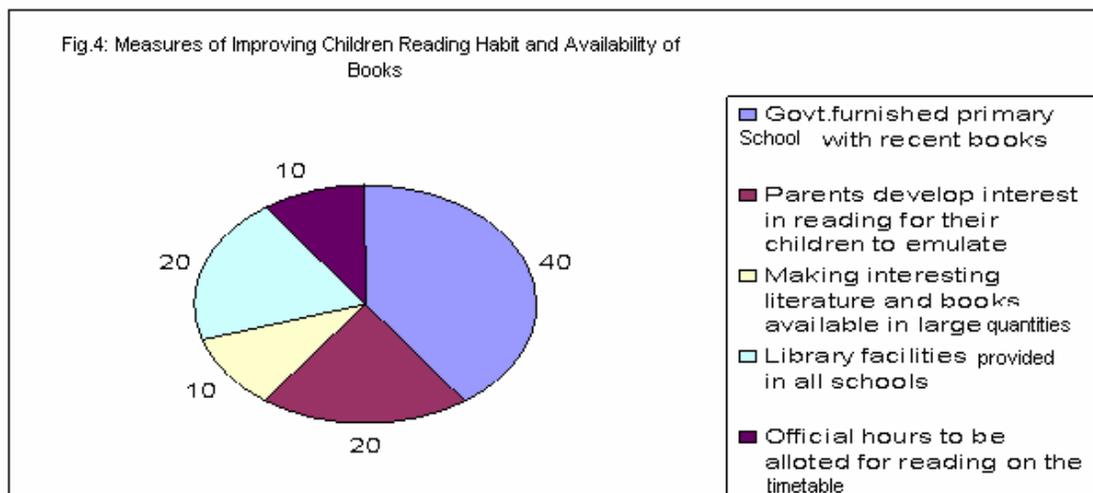


Table 6 and Figure 4 reveal that of all the teachers interviewed, 40% suggested that the government should see to it that all the primary schools are furnished with recent books. Another 20% suggested that library facilities should be provided in all the primary schools while 20% were of the view that parents should develop an interest in reading serving as positive role models. They contend that through the act, their children can emulate them. Making interesting children's literature and storybooks available and the fact that an official hour should be allotted for reading in the school timetable were each suggested by 10% of the teachers.

Discussion

It is clear from the results of the first research question in this study that Botswana children's reading habits and culture is not encouraging. The results indicate that only 36.7% the children read on a daily basis. The results as well confirmed this population only engage in reading just for examination purposes and not so much for personal development, fun, or to be well informed. The results also reveal that textbooks are the most significant reading material. This is not surprising since it was evident from the results that the participants read mostly if they had examinations. Their concentration on reading textbooks/novels and lecture notes as given top priority attest to the fact. This result no doubt confirmed the assertions of some researchers (e.g. Sangkaeo, 1999, Darko-Ampem, 2005, and Chandilanga, 2006) who observed and postulated that the reading culture of Africans is poor. It should be noted that the present generation of African children are the leaders of tomorrow. If their state of reading remains as it is, the pertinent question is what does the future holds for the development of reading culture in the continent of Africa? Isn't it true that the future of Africa as becoming a literate society seems bleak? This remains a challenge to all.

On the number of hours an average Botswana child spends on reading daily, it was revealed that 53.3% read 1-2 hours on a daily basis. The results show some children engage in reading even for less than an hour a day which is an indication that children's reading culture and reading habits in this part of Africa are not good.

Another result reveals that there is no significant difference in the perception of the participants about the availability and accessibility of reading material in their various schools. This establish what has been shown in the literature that many primary schools in the country do not have or stored enough books in their library i.e. if they even have them at all. It also raises the question of how reading habit can be developed when there is no enough books to read. However, the result corroborates what was stated by Krashen (1996) that availability of books means access and time for reading them.

The analysis also reveals that teachers are the sources of reading material on whom the children wholly depend on for their reading. Anyway, this is not unexpected since it has been indicated that they read only for purpose of examination; hence their dependence on teachers' notes and textbooks is not surprising. But the question is can good reading habits be developed through reading textbooks and teachers' notes alone? This remains a question that must be answered by all educational stakeholders in the country.

Furthermore, the results reveal that inadequate book availability coupled with the lack of interesting children's literature and the fact that children used most of their time watching TV are factors identified as those hindering them from developing good reading

habits. This is perhaps relevant to what has been identified in the literature. For instance, Krolak (2005) identified school factors like environment, the context of the classroom, the strategies employed to teach and the availability of books technology with other resources. Similarly, (Kurtz-Costes and Schneider in Ekundayo, 2005) also make reference to children behaviour, attitude, and literacy level of classmates as factors possible to exert influence on the teachers instructional choice thereby affecting children reading development. What can be said here is the fact that the value of education is yet to be well articulated by most adults in Africa. If this is done, whatever factors that may hinder it will be prevented. We must realize this otherwise the present condition may continue and many African countries will be at a disadvantage.

The last result relates to the measures suggested by the children's teachers who were interviewed. The most significant suggestions put forward by them are that the government should furnish all the primary school libraries in the country with recently published books, parents should develop interest in reading in order to set a good example for their children, library facilities should be provided in all schools; interesting children's literature and story books should be made available in large quantities, and that an official hour should be allotted in the day for reading in all primary schools.

Implications for the Achievement of Quality Basic Education

Almost every country of the world is working towards achieving the millennium development goals of achieving universal basic quality education by the year 2015; Botswana as a country is not left out. Education has been identified as the cornerstone of development. As it is now clear that societies which are underdeveloped are those which do not invest in or see education as their overriding priority. The main priority areas for development assistance are the literacy awakening education for all. Though the government of this country is investing heavily on education, perhaps there is need for their total support in the achievement of quality basic education which of course is not easy to come by. With the support of educational stakeholders, the goal cannot be too difficult to achieve. Essentially therefore, improvement of the children reading habit and reading culture generally is a step in the direction of achieving the quality education. The task of encouraging positive reading interest to foster and promote a love for reading which will promote a reading culture and society is not an easy one (Sangkaeo, 1999). All parties and concerned national institutes or private sectors should work together and all efforts should be coordinated to achieve this goal. The following recommendations if properly implemented may be of help.

Recommendations

Parents

Much research has provided insight into the importance of home environments for children's reading literacy (Adams, Ehri, Holdaway, Verhoeven in Dent and Yannotta, 2005). Reading habits need to be built and promoted from an early age. Parents who spend time reading to their children, giving them the best possible start on the road to literacy are setting a good example for their educational attainment. Many researches have also pointed out that children who do best in literacy skills at school are those who come from homes where there are books, where their parents spend time reading to their

children and where children see their parents and older siblings engaging in reading activities. In order to encourage reading habit in their children, parents should:

1. Set a good example. If the child finds you reading, instead of being glued to television, he or she may also do the same.
2. Provide appropriate reading material, controlling television viewing and helping the children in their routine to include enough time to both play and read. However, children should not be forced to read. This may make them rebel and not do as told or instructed.
3. Other suggestions include reading story books aloud, creating a learning environment by setting up a mini reading corner with reading materials, visiting the library; bookshops, and offering books as prizes or gifts to the children.

The Teachers

1. The teachers are the next set of people children spend most of their time with after their parents. In the light of this fact, they should know the type of books children should enjoy reading. Hence, they need to request appropriate numbers of books for classrooms, and school libraries.
2. Teachers should introduce books to the pupils after giving them a brief introduction about the contents. This will give children the freedom to choose according to their taste.
3. They should inform parents and policy makers the importance of access to books.
4. Teachers need to appreciate the importance of reading. This will afford them the opportunity to motivate and encourage their pupils to read widely. Fluent reading comprehension skills are the basis of quality educational attainment.

The Librarian

Librarians have a crucial role to play, since they provide the only environment in which most people can access books. Therefore, they need to:

1. Attract children who are reluctant readers, expose them to the joys and benefits of reading.
2. Help the children to develop pleasant and positive attitude towards reading. This should be done before children could develop habits of reading and love for books.
3. Sangkaeo (1999) states that “in any effective school library program the librarian should have definite responsibilities in certain areas of the curriculum and should have an active teaching role.”(p.3). To him, the role must always be coordinated with what is taking place in the classroom. By having a wide knowledge of materials and techniques for using them, the librarian can now make very strong partners in the planning and implementation of the educational enterprise.
4. The librarian working in primary schools libraries should endeavour to make the library attractive to the pupils.

School Libraries

For inculcating the habits of reading from the childhood, the recommendation by (Panigrahi and Panda, 1996) is very relevant here. That school libraries should:

1. “Create an environment conducive to reading so that the children feel at home and comfortable;
2. Request teachers to encourage the students to read more books, magazines and newspapers regularly;
3. Request parents to subscribe to good newspapers and magazines for their homes matching the tastes of their children, and;
4. Request schools to organize debate and essay competitions, story hours, chat shows exhibitions, quiz hours, etc..., at regular intervals so as to generate reading interest and information gathering habit”.(p.64).

Mass Media

Radio and television media in the country should include in their program ‘Children Reading’. This should come up at least once or twice a week.

They should as well make sure that interesting books are always read on air.

The Government

The government needs to play the greatest role if the aim of achieving quality basic education is to be realized. Parts of the role should include:

1. The government needs to be aggressive on the issue of improving primary school libraries and should stress the contribution made by libraries to the quality of education for children. Adequate funds should be provided to keep classrooms and school libraries current with quality literature.
2. The idea of giving children free books as the case of *Bookstart - the books for babies* scheme in UK should be emulated. The scheme aims at giving free books to yield extraordinary results. “If books can have such an impact on educational attainment in the UK where information is so plentiful, the impact is likely to be greater in Sub-Saharan Africa, perhaps in Botswana particularly where learning resources are so scarce and expensive (Mokatsi, 2005).
3. More library facilities need to be incorporated in all primary schools where there is none. The government should make efforts to strengthen such libraries. However, it is not enough that the shelves of such libraries are fully stacked with books. It should also be ensured that these are accessible to the pupils and devoid of unnecessary restrictions.
4. Generally, there is need to harness a myriad of opportunities brought by information communication technology ICTs. This has turned the world into a global village as the common saying. We should not be surprised if in the long run, the printed world is converted to electronic as a result of this advancing technology and thereby opening a new arena of reading promotion. Essentially, therefore, the government should consider it a welcome development to introduce multi-media in school libraries. They may provide primary and secondary schools libraries with Internet browsing facilities and CDs on different topics like Botswana music, Botswana dance and culture, monuments, historic places,

- Botswana tribal and epics. Some of these topics can be suggested by the teachers and who can ask children to summarize it. With this, children may become more inquisitive and more encouraged to use the library and search the Internet.
5. As it was suggested by some teachers during the interview session that reading hours should be allotted in all primary schools timetable, this should be considered by the authority involved. However, care must be taken that such a reading hour should not be used for taking extra classes of other subjects. Children should as well be made to summarize what they understood after reading a particular book. This will encourage them to read more and lessen the time spent on other activities.

Conclusion

This study has focused on relevant issues relating to the improvement and promotion of reading habits of Botswana primary schools pupils so that the goal of achieving universal quality basic education will be a realizable one. Though this is an arduous task that demands the cooperation of all concerned, it is assumed that with all hands on desk and concerted efforts, all directed towards the same goal, success is inevitable. This may take some time and the process may not be so easy, yet certain steps need to be taken. This is a clarion call and should be considered a challenge.

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APPENDIX

READING HABITS / BOOK AVAILABILITY SCALE

1. Name of School.....
 2. Sex (Pls. tick): Male () Female ()
 3. Class.....
 4. Age: 10- 11 years () 11- 12 years () 12- 13 years ()
 5. Rank the reading interest of the following documents by form (Pls. tick)
- | Document | Most Significant | Less Significant |
|-----------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|
| Text Books | () | () |
| Journals | () | () |
| Magazines | () | () |
| Newspaper | () | () |
| Comics | () | () |
| Story Books | () | () |
| Poetry | () | () |
| Drama | () | () |
| Novels | () | () |
6. Do you read newspaper daily? YES () NO ()
 7. Do you normally read on a daily basis? YES () NO ()
 8. Which of these do you consider as the reason why you need to read?
 - i. To pass exam
 - ii. For fun
 - iii For personal development
 - iv To while away time.
 - v To be well-informed
 9. Do you have opportunity to borrow books from your school library?
YES () NO ()
 10. Do feel that the existing resources of your library are adequate?
YES () NO ()
 11. Are you satisfied with the present library service of your school?
YES () NO ()
 12. Do you visit any other library apart from your school library?
YES () NO ()
 13. Total time spent in reading daily
 - A. Less than an Hour
 - B. 1—2 hours
 - C. 2—3 hours
 - D. 3—4 hours
 - E. 4—5 hours
 - F. More than 5 hours.
 14. Major factors hindering you from reading (pls. tick).
 - A. Playing Sport/ Games

- B. Watching TV
- C. Unpaid Tuition
- D. Home Assignment given by the teacher
- E. Lack of interesting children's literature
- F. Non-availability of books.

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR TEACHERS

1. Do you have a library in your school?
2. If your answer to question 1 above is yes, are enough books available in it?
3. Do you feel the library is meeting your pupils' reading needs?
4. What can you say about the reading habit of your school children/pupils?
Is it bad or good?
5. If it is bad, what measure do you think can be taken to improve your pupils' reading habits and availability of books?