

Article Review #17

Article/Book Title: The Reading Behavior of Junior Secondary Students During School Holidays in Botswana

Full APA Reference: Arua, A. E., & Arua, C. E. (2011). The reading behavior of junior secondary students during school holidays in Botswana. *Journal Of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, (8), 589-599.

Major Themes/Theories: Engagement, accessibility to books, stigmas and stereotypes, perceptions and involvement and socio-economic background

Abstract: Despite reports that suggest a lack of a reading culture, a survey of a group of 12- to 15-year-olds in Botswana indicated that reading for pleasure and for academic purposes was widespread outside junior secondary schools.

Define the Research Questions:

Recent reports have indicated in the continent of Africa, there is indication of a poor reading culture, which means there is a lack of reading habit among children, teens, and adults. The concerns of these reports indicate that many people, irrespective of their age, gender, and education, do not simply read. However, it is not because they choose to, but rather the continent of Africa does not have an enabling environment to develop a reading culture. Books are scarce, unaffordable, or unsuitable for these diverse groups, and the government hardly ever ensures reading materials available for students. In *The reading behavior of junior secondary students during school holidays in Botswana* authors Arua E. Arua, and Comfort Aura examine this poor reading culture in Africa by focusing their observations on the country of Botswana, which follows the trend of having a lack of reading culture in its cities. Even though research says there is a poor reading culture, the authors intend to prove that reading for pleasure and reading for academic purposes are widespread in Botswana's schools by examining the reading behaviour of junior secondary students during their school holidays.

Discuss the methodology used by the authors.

To gather research on this topic, the authors address the question: What can be learned about the reading behaviour of junior secondary school students (ages 12-15) during the second-term holiday (August 12 to September 4) of 2006?. They attempt to answer this question by collecting data from a questionnaire that was administered to 121 junior students in junior secondary schools in Gaborone, Botswana's capital city. The survey was collected immediately after the holiday period, as the reading events would become hazy if the survey had occurred afterwards. Four junior schools, designated LPEC, LKC, MJSS and GJSS, were selected for this study, where two of them (LPEC and LKC) are private, and the other two (MJSS and GJSS) are public. The grade range of the students was between the US equivalent of Grade 8-10, and class sizes were average, but considerably higher in public schools.

The questionnaire contained the following questions: 1. (a) Did you read during the last holiday?, (b) If you did, did you enjoy it?, (c) If you did not read, why not?, 2. (a) If you read, what materials did you read? (b) Where did you do the reading?, 3. Did your parents/siblings read during the holiday period?, 4. Did your parents/siblings buy reading materials for you?, and 5. Is there anything about reading that you wish to say?. These questions were open ended, which allowed students to openly express themselves. The only issue the authors had was a few language barriers, but the junior secondary teachers were able to translate them. The questionnaire took them approximately 45 minutes to complete.

Describe the results.

Looking at the results from the surveys, the authors determine that there was an overwhelming

response towards reading amongst student's activities during the holidays. About 87% of the 121 students reported that they read during the three-week holiday, with a good portion responding that they did so because they did it because they enjoyed reading. When students made comments about reading in the questionnaire, the response was majority positive, and only 10% of the students had either negative views on reading or had problems with reading itself. Students who had these views or problems characterized reading as being too boring, too difficult, too many distractions in their home, or they simply did not find any time available to read. Students also reported on the types of materials they read during the holiday, and surprisingly classnotes was the most widely read material with 74.3% of students reporting this answer. It shows that a lot of students paid close attention to improving their academic performance, and by having this time available to review their notes, they took this opportunity. Other texts that students frequently listed were novels (47.6%), textbooks (37.1%), storybooks (27.6%), newspapers (23.8%), and question papers (ie. previous exam and test questions, 5.7%).

Another interesting observation was that all of the students who mentioned that they read, also reported that their parents and/or siblings read during the holiday period as well. In their answers, the students indicated that their siblings, sisters (70.5%) and brothers (73.3%), read more than their mothers (63.8%) and their fathers (42.9%). However, even though the siblings did read more, the mother had a bigger role in supplying books for their children, as many students made reference that their mother (48.6%) or sometimes their father (33.3%) would purchase books for them to read. This pattern shows that family plays an important factor in determining whether or not a student will become a reader, as seen in these results, the students who enjoy reading and do well reading, typically have someone at home reading alongside them. It means that the family finds reading to be a valuable past time, and makes the effort to make sure their family member is engaged in the texts their reading.

Overall, the findings show that there was an overwhelming number of students who had read during the holiday period of Botswana, which is contrary to the belief in recent research that indicated Africa does not have a reading culture. The label of this "lack of reading culture" does not seem to fit, as indicated from the results there is indeed a reading culture in Africa, and many students read for pleasure and for academic purposes, which is even one of their principal leisure activities.

Connect the main ideas presented in the article.

In conclusion, there is in fact a reading culture in the country of Botswana, contrary to this academic research that states it only has a poor one. As seen in the results from the questionnaire, students actively enjoy reading, as it is a popular pastime, and students may either read for pleasure or for academic purposes. Regardless of the reasoning, it shows that reading is significant in the lives of these students, and many of them want to continue to read daily.

However, there is a problem with reading in these countries, which mostly surrounds around the accessibility to the libraries in the country. The survey reported that the home is seen as the ideal environment for reading, while the school library is not. Only during school sessions is when school libraries are being used, but due to reasons like content, distance, and outreach, not many students in Botswana choose the library as their destination to read. The authors believe this factor needs to change, in order for more students to find the enjoyment in reading, and to provide them with opportunities to read a wide variety of literature. The support available for students who are reluctant readers is limited in this country, and many students suffer because of this. To improve this, teachers need to be trained to help engage and support these types of readers, and understand the reading cultures of these diverse groups of groups. Libraries also need more content for them to read, as there is limited resources available for them to read from, which is possibly where this stigma of lack of reading culture in Africa comes from. Overall, there is a reading culture within Africa, but there needs to be improvement made for it to get better. Students are engaged in reading, but need more assistance, and by giving them more

opportunities to read, more resources, and easier accessibility, will influence their skills and habits, and it will set them on the path to become the life long readers the teachers need.