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## THE BIBLIOTHERAPEUTIC APPROACH TO CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT.

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### ABSTRACT

*This paper titled: The bibliotherapeutic approach to classroom management introduces the reader to the process of using books to assist students with educational challenges especially in the classroom. The number 1 student in the classroom, which is the teacher, is being provided with a handy tool which will aid him/her in the day to day running of his/her class activities. After defining the concepts, bibliotherapy and classroom management; forms of bibliotherapy, its uses, principles for effective use of bibliotherapy in classroom management and implications of bibliotherapy for teaching were discussed. The paper concluded that bibliotherapy is an effective means of classroom management by the skilful teacher.*

**Key Words:** *Bibliotherapy, Students, Teachers and classroom Management.*

## **Introduction**

Bibliotherapy is the process of using books to help children think, understand and work on their social and emotional concerns. Reading can be therapeutic because while reading, the learners are made to enter the world described in the pages of a good book and become involved with the character there having gained insight and ideas of the intent of the book. Bibliotherapy could assist youngsters in overcoming the emotional turmoil related to real life problems by having them read literature on that topic. In the process, children are encouraged to identify with a book character and events on the story either real or fictitious. Rozalski (2010) on his part, describes bibliotherapy as a projective indirect tool that employs literature for growth of children that can be used to teach children in life's challenges by encouraging them to connect with book characters, thereby letting individuals evaluate themselves individually.

Bibliotherapy could also be used to broaden and deepen the learners' understanding of a particular problem that requires attention. The written books may educate the learners about their problems itself or could be used to increase their acceptance of a proposed treatment. The opportunity to read about emotional and behavioural disorder outside the therapist's office facilities, active participation in the rehabilitation process and promotes a strong recovery. In the past, books have been instruments of change, development and effective decision making since time immemorial. No wonder books have continued to be relevant from one generation to another. According to Ajayi (1997) Clarke, Lynch & Debar (2006), the use of books in the treatment of mentally sick people dates back to 300BC when Aristotle delineated the influence that book had on the psyche, especially the purifying or purgative effect on tragedy.

## **Concept of Bibliotherapy**

The term Bibliotherapy had diverse definitions but it depends on the context it is being used because definitions can be general and all inclusive, it can be specific, simple or complex. Herbert and Furner (1997) defined Bibliotherapy as the use of reading to produce affective change and promote personality growth and development. Riodan and Wilson (1989) defined the term bibliotherapy as the guided reading of written materials in gaining understanding or solving problems relevant to the person's therapeutic needs.

Kolo (1988) describes Bibliotherapy as closely paralleling the medical model of diagnosis, prescription and cure when he says: Bibliotherapy is the direct application of reading in order to effect changes in character and behaviour. In other words it is based on the assumption that certain

types of books prescribed for certain behaviour problems because of strong similarity between the characters in the book and the patients will have a curative effect. That is why Ehiozuwa (2002) defines bibliotherapy as the use of didactic literature to help individuals understand themselves and effect changes in their behaviour through reading of books as a way of healing oneself or solving a problem. He went further to say that bibliotherapy is a dynamic process through which you meet the author in the pages of the books, that is, a process of dynamic interaction between literature and the personality of the reader which may be utilized for personality assessment, adjustment and growth.

On their part, Schrank and Engels (1981) define Bibliotherapy as guided reading that helps an individual gain understanding of their self and environment, learn from others or find solution to problems. Mamman (1994) defined Bibliotherapy as a programme of activity based on the interaction process of the media and the people who experience it. In contrast to others' definition, Kolo (1988:4) defines Bibliotherapy as a clinical movement and more as a natural tool for reaching youngsters who need help. According to him, bibliotherapy is help through books. It provides opportunity for youngsters to identify with characters having problems similar to theirs, the social and emotional issues raised in this states can serve as springboard for meaningful discussions of the children's real problems.

In this context, Kolo (1988) who quoted Tews (1962) in more explicit terms opined that bibliotherapy is a programme of selected activity holding reading materials, planned, conducted and controlled as a treatment under guidance of the physician for emotional and other problems. It must be administered by a skilled, professionally trained librarian within the prescribed purposes and goals. The important and dynamic factors are the relationship which are established, the patient's reaction and responses and the reporting back by the physician for interpretation, evaluation and direction follow-up. For the educational settings, Bibliotherapy can be simply defined as the process where the client receives an understanding and acceptance of self and others through books and stories.

From its background and the understanding of bibliotherapy, it can be observed that it is an innovative therapy that utilizes books and storytelling to help individuals or student cope with their problems and life in general. Bibliotherapy as a technique involves the use of typed handouts, newspaper, scraps, bulletin, that give detailed, self-contained therapeutic instructions to the students to improve their study habits and aimed at contributing to the developmental needs of the individual for educational, personal and social development which is also in line with one of the objectives of this current study.

## **Concept of Classroom Management**

Classroom management according to Osakwe (2014) involves a positive classroom environment, appropriate standard of behaviours for students, effective management of daily routines and instructions, as well as engaging the students in classroom activities throughout the lesson to ensure quality secondary education. The emphasis on classroom management therefore is dependent on components such as engaging curriculum, the teacher as a role model, students as responsible citizens, classroom management skills, robust instruction and working with resistance, conflict and stress. If any of these components is neglected, the whole process is compromised leading to poor quality in education.

Classroom management is the process of enhancing the learning environment, physical interaction between teachers and students, student to student, parents and others, stimulating and motivating students to learning objectives, control and supervision throughout the school to facilitate and encourage cooperation in teaching and learning activities in the classroom smoothly will as a result improve the quality of students' performance (Wisethrinthong, Sirisuthi and Weangsamoot, 2012)

Classroom management, therefore, could be seen as an integrant part of effective teaching which deters behaviour problems through good planning, organizing and managing of classroom activities, good presentation of instructional materials and good teacher-student interaction aiming at increasing students' involvement and cooperation in learning to ensure quality secondary education. Classroom management is an art and a science with many identifiable characteristics that result in smooth period of learning flexible enough to recognize what is needed and has the ability to keep control of the situation(s) that arise. Effective classroom management begins with mutual respect and interpersonal relationship. It is vital to improve student achievement and teacher self-efficacy. It requires commitment to students and their learning, because a positive rapport with the student is the foundation upon which classroom culture is built.

Effective classroom management is an essential ingredient that promotes and enhances good teaching-learning environment which eventually leads to quality secondary education. The teachers and other members of staff must cooperate to manage the classroom, students, non-human resources and the environment. Effective classroom management revolves around the teachers' attitudes, skills, desires, setting of expectation and positive action. To improve classroom behaviour and students' social skills, teachers must conceptualize the process of teaching and understand classroom management principles for making professional decision on class

management. A well-arranged classroom should strike a balance between consistent disciplines and praise (Venkat-Lakshmi, 2010).

### **Forms of Bibliotherapy**

Kolo (1988) identified five forms of Bibliotherapy as follows: (1) Books (2) handouts (3) Brochures (4) posters (5) Newspapers.

**Books:** Book materials as forms of bibliotherapy are the selected books that are concerned with specific attitudes intended to be changed. The books to be selected for reading must be in line with what we intend to change. For instance, if one wants to change students' towards good study habit, then books written on study habit skills have to be identified and presented to clients or students. Doing so will assist the students' understanding of the consequences for the bad study habits and use some of the techniques others have applied in stopping the bad behaviour. Also, the system assist student in changing habits or attitudes positively and to improve social, educational and vocational problems on their own through the use of books.

**Handouts:** Handouts are forms of written materials produced for use as bibliotherapeutic materials which could effectively be used for easy understanding of clients or students and assisting them to change their behaviour more positively.

**Brochures:** Brochures refer to booklets written by an organization or institution for conveying information to the populace. It usually contains detailed requirements, guidelines, available policies, courses or programmes about an organization or institution for clients' direction. Brochures could be effectively used by organization or institution to change clients'/students' attitude and understanding towards their institution's programmes and policies.

**Posters:** Posters are forms of pictorial text presentation with some short sentences for the client to see and read. At times, it could only take the form of client and sentences on paper without necessarily including pictures. Major advantages of posters are that both the literate and the non-literate could see the pictures and/or designs and learn something from them. Posters could be printed in large quantity with less cost and wider coverage.

**Newspapers:** In newspapers, columns could be used as a form of Bibliotherapy. In such cases, a specific column in the newspaper is assigned a purpose.

### **The Uses of Bibliotherapy**

Many researchers have identified several ways in which bibliotherapy can be used to enhance positive changes in behaviour or attitude. According to Kolo (1988), bibliotherapy has been used in the following areas of clients' concern: Helping young people overcome many problems confronting them: School counsellors and teachers could use it to assist students with

disabilities to cope with classroom work. It could be used to help children to cope with death of loved ones. Other problems in which bibliotherapy techniques have been used include issues on conflict resolution, nurturing emotional development, self-awareness and self-acceptance in emotionally handicapped students. It could be used for individual and group counselling.

The application of bibliotherapeutic techniques includes analysing readers' needs and recommending reading materials to fit those needs since bibliotherapy has been used to give children confidence at school and parents, opportunities to discuss ideas with their children and to initiate conversation about learning. At the basic level, bibliotherapy consists of selecting materials for readers; the idea seems to spring from the human need to communicate with others through an understanding of literature and arts.

In fostering students' motivation for academics, Bibliotherapy techniques stand a chance of being effective, in addition to employing other methods to enhance motivation for achievement through the use of selected appropriate reading materials such as bibliographies, academic related motivational books, true life stories, fiction stories and so on. Students experiencing under achievement challenges and have given up the idea of furthering their education might have a rethink by reading such materials. Also, students experiencing frustration academically might be helped just by reading stories about others who passed through similar academic challenges and helping them to see the possibility of overcoming their academic challenges. For instance, the books on Ben Carson, Afe Babalola, Thomas Edyson and several others are good motivational materials for overcoming academic failure challenges. These great men have threaded the part of academic struggles and many of them were written off as failures or good-for-nothing, yet they struggled against the tides academically to become celebrities today. They are indeed achievement motivated individuals who with determination drove themselves to success.

### **Principles for Effective Use of Bibliotherapy in Classroom Management**

Using bibliotherapeutic technique for changing client's behaviour or attitudes positively requires certain basic principles. Kolo (1988) identified the following basic principles;

1. That the reading material to be used in bibliotherapy must address a specific attitude at a time. That is, the reading material should be able to address one problem and solve it at a time.
2. The reading material must be prepared or selected to match the language, cognitive and reading level of the client or people concerned.
3. The reading material must be provided constantly. That is, the reading material which will be either books, handouts or pamphlets must be programmed on regular

basis until when the problem is well treated and the desired positive attitude change is noticed.

4. The form of Bibliotherapy initiated for use must be maintained throughout the period of the program.
5. It is advisable that the counsellor using the bibliotherapy material need to know the audience that the material will be used for. That is, the counsellor need to know the category of the audience, whether it is going to be young children, adolescents or adults.

Similarly, Brammar & Shostrom (1986) gave the following principles for effective use of Bibliotherapy:

- a. The counsellor should only refer the clients to the books and reading materials they are familiar with.
- b. The books or reading materials should be appropriate in content, age, experiences and language level of the client.
- c. The counsellor should show evidence of confidence in the suggested or recommended reading materials to interest the client and to make sure that he/she accepts the ideas presented on it.
- d. The counsellor must ensure that his client properly understands and accepts the idea of reading a book or other materials at an appropriate time.
- e. Discussion of results of the client's reading is important to ascertain the effect the reading has upon the client. The client can ask questions and point out ideas which are especially valuable.
- f. Use of smaller amount of reading material rather than larger amount is far more effective for understanding. For instance, for young children and adolescents, handouts and pamphlets is more helpful than a book.

It is believed that when all these and other principles are considered in the process of using Bibliotherapeutic techniques for changing clients study behaviour problems, it will bring about positive change in attitudes and behaviour towards their studies.

### **Implication of Bibliotherapy for Teaching**

Implications of Bibliotherapy for teaching cannot be overemphasized. Teachers must see Bibliotherapy as an innovative approach that they can use to help children deal with their problems. They should use literature to enhance induction, school effort to mainstream special students, promotion of attitude, of respect and acceptance. Bibliotherapy can be used to prevent

bullying in school through supporting classrooms in modelling and promotion of intended social interaction (Health, Moulton, Dyches, Prater & Brown, 2011) and for preparing a regular primary classroom for the arrival of a student with challenges (Lok, 2009). Elementary school teachers can also construct and use interactive workbooks as a therapeutic strategy.

Bibliotherapy, the process of reading books with therapeutic intent, must be seen as an effective means to implement character education within the curriculum. Stories can create an emotional attachment to goodness, a desire to do the right thing, provide a wealth of good examples—the kind of which are missing from a child’s day-to-day environments, familiarize youngsters with the codes of conduct they need to know and help make sense out of life. Moreover, if the students are to benefit maximally from the classroom use of bibliotherapy Hanley-Hochdorfer, Bray, Kehle & Elinoff (2010) claim that one of the most popular treatments to address autism spectrum disorders is the use of social stories which is also beneficial at reducing many disruptive behaviours cannot be ignored by the classroom teacher. With these advantages, its use in the class by the teacher will help the teacher to effectively manage the classroom.

### **Conclusion**

Bibliotherapy is an effective technique which can be used to help children, teenagers and young adults to cope with their learning challenges. Bibliotherapy offers solutions to certain problems and breaks many attitudinal barriers to learning. Reading about a situation has a potential to sharpen perception and deepen understanding thereby increasing intellectual soundness of children within and even outside the classroom.

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