



INVESTIGATION OF FACTORS RESPONSIBLE FOR POOR READING HABITS AMONG SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN LAGOS STATE, NIGERIA

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A cultivated reading habit is crucial in education because it is the vehicle that drives and enhances learning in any field. One thousand students who were randomly selected from twenty senior secondary schools in Lagos city constituted the sample for the study. The study revealed that 60% of the respondents' considerable part of their time watching European football matches on the television instead of reading their textbooks. The study also revealed that 80% of the students spend their prime time watching home videos on African Magic or Nollywood as against reading their textbooks. The study further shows that most of the students pay more attention to modern technologies like cell phones, social media and computer games. Furthermore, the finding of the study shows that reading activities are not encouraged in most of the sample schools. Therefore, the study recommends that stakeholders in education should set up a monitoring team to go round schools to monitor study habits of students. Also, parents should be encouraged to monitor their children reading habits at home. The study also recommends that functional libraries should be developed and equipped in secondary schools to encourage reading among senior secondary school students in Lagos State. In addition, awards should be given to students who are found to have developed meaningful reading habit.

Keywords: Poor reading habits, Secondary school students.

Introduction

Among the four skills of language acquisition, reading, speaking, writing and listening, reading is said to be the most important skill that need to be developed. According to EnglishClub (2015), while ones reading skills improve, the listening, speaking and writing skills improved too. They maintained that:

- Constant repetition of words and patterns in reading helps the learner to learn and remember vocabulary and grammar structures.
- Unlike conversation, reading is something you can do on your own.
- Good reading skills can improve your other language skills.
- Reading is the best way to learn and remember the proper spelling of words.

The ability to read is one of the greatest acquisitions by humans because it is a prelude to liberation from ignorance. Sustained reading culture can result in improved life conditions because of the wealth of experiences that lies therein. According to Doughas (2000), every child must become fully competent in reading if he must discharge responsibilities as a citizen of a democratic society.

In fact, through reading, humans possessed the tools to transmit knowledge to each succeeding generation (Okebukola 2004). Therefore, cultivated reading habit is crucial in education because it is the vehicle that drives and enhances learning in any field of endeavour.

Apart from the academic value of reading, reading is also psychologically valuable because it is used by many of us to calm our nerves through pleasurable reading of certain materials. But reading culture seems to have suffered setback because of the galaxy of new technologies and other social activities that have virtually taken over every aspect of human life. Although the new technologies and these social activities are welcome and are contributing successfully to human advancement, but they seem to be conflicting with the academic life of the new generation of our students. For example, the performance of Nigerian students in public examinations like West African School Certificate (WASC) conducted by West Africa Examination Council (WAEC) and Nigeria Examination Council (NECO) has been on the decline in recent years as indicated in Figure and Table 1.

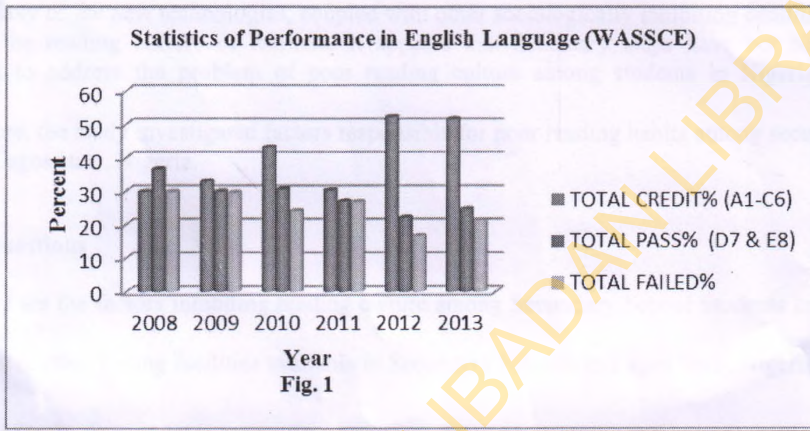


Table 1. Statistics of Performance in English Language (Wassce, 2007-2012)

YEAR	TOTAL ENTRY	TOTAL SAT	TOTAL SAT %	TOTAL CREDIT (A1-C6)	TOTAL CREDIT% (A1-C6)	TOTAL PASS (D7 & E8)	TOTAL PASS% (D7 & E8)	TOTAL FAILED	TOTAL FAILED%
2008	1292910	1274166	98.55	379831	29.81	466378	36.60	379006	29.75
2009	1373009	1355725	98.74	446285	32.92	405942	29.94	400122	29.51
2010	1331381	1307745	98.22	563344	43.08	400424	30.62	314964	24.08
2011	1540141	1514164	98.31	459404	30.34	407722	26.93	405677	26.79
2012	1695878	1658887	97.82	866692	52.25	366376	22.09	275923	16.63
2013	1686990	1660056	98.4	856991	51.62	408210	24.59	353428	21.29

Source: Test Development Division of WAEC 2014

There seems to be a correlation between students dwindling performance in these examinations and the poor attitude of students to reading. On the other hand, new technologies like cell phone, computer games, social media, and other social activities like European football matches and Nigerian home videos tend to be dominating the lives of some secondary school students in Nigeria.

It is not uncommon to see a number of adolescent playing computer games as against reading and preparing for their examinations in school. Neither is it strange seeing some students chatting on their cell phones even at night while they are suppose to be studying seriously. Perhaps, it is worst with European football and Nigerian home videos. Many secondary school students spend very useful hours watching European football matches and Nigeria home videos on televisions and other gargets to the detrement of their academic work. Reading ofcourse boosts academic work, sustained reading increases academic performance.

Statement of the Problem

Reading culture in some societies, including Nigeria seems to be on the decline following the advent of new technologies in recent years, especially among the new generation of students in our elementary and secondary schools.

The galaxy of the new technologies, coupled with other sociologically inhibiting conditions seems to be eroding the reading culture of learners. It appears that necessary steps have not been taken by stakeholders to address the problem of poor reading culture among students in Nigerian secondary schools.

Therefore, the study investigated factors responsible for poor reading habits among secondary school students in Lagos state, Nigeria.

Research Questions

1. What are the factors inhibiting reading culture among Secondary School Students in Lagos state, Nigeria?
2. What are the reading facilities available in Secondary Schools in Lagos State, Nigeria?

Scope of the Study

The study covers Senior Secondary School Three students in Lagos State alone.

Significance of the Study

The findings of the study is likely to be useful to stakeholders in the sense that the result of the study may reveal necessary steps to be taken to separate reading and study time from other social activities and emphasis the importance of reading to boost academic achievement.

Methodology

Research Design

The study is a survey type of research in which there was no manipulation of existing variables as they were used as they exist.

Population

The target population of the study comprises all Senior Secondary Schools in Lagos State, Nigeria.

Sample and Sampling Techniques

One thousand Senior Secondary School Students constitute the sample for the study. The respondents were selected from 20 Secondary Schools in Six Educational Districts in Lagos State through simple random sampling techniques.

Instrumentation

Two research instruments, designed by the researcher were used for data collection. The instruments are:

1. Students Reading Habit Questionnaire
2. School Questionnaire
 - 1) The Student Reading Habit Questionnaire had two sections – section ‘A’ contains bio-data of the respondents while section ‘B’ of the questionnaire had items on the reading habits of the students.
 - 2) The School Questionnaire contain items on the reading facilities available in the school to facilitate reading in the schools.

Data Collection

The researcher trained two research assistant on the use of the two research instruments. The two trained research assistants with the researcher eventually administered the instruments and collected the data over a period of two weeks.

Data Analysis

The data so collected were analysed, using simple percentages.

Results

Table 2. Distribution of Responses on Students Reading Habits and Reading Facilities

S/NO	STUDENTS READING HABITS AND READING FACILITIES	Disagree	%	Agree	%
1	I spend below two hours reading my textbooks every day	450	45	550	55
2	I chat on whatsapp while reading my textbooks	450	45	500	50
3	I am very active on facebook than I am active in reading	300	30	700	70
4	I found computer games more interesting than reading my school textbooks	350	35	650	65
5	I spend more time watching football European football matches than reading my school textbooks	400	40	600	60
6	I spend a lot of time watching home videos on African Magic Channels than reading my school textbooks	200	20	800	80
7	I spend more time on my mobile phone than I spend reading my books	300	30	700	70
8	There is no functional library in my school	290	29	654	65.4
9	There are no relevant reading materials in our school librarian	347	34.7	698	69.8
10	There is no reading club in our school	310	31	700	70
11	The reading club in our school is not functional	276	27.6	734	73.4

From table 2, 55% of the respondents agreed that they spend less than two hours daily reading their textbooks while 45% of the respondents agreed they spend more than two hours reading their textbooks. The findings also show that 60% of the students spend considerable part of their time watching European football matches on the television instead of reading their textbooks. The study further revealed that 80% of the respondents spend their prime time watching home videos on African Magic and Nollywood as against reading their textbooks. Also, 70% of the respondents claimed that they are very active on facebook than they are in reading their textbooks. In the same vein, 70% of the respondents reported that they spend more time using their mobile phones than they spend reading their books. On the issue of reading facilities, 76% of the students agreed that they do not have functional libraries in their schools while 34% of the student agreed that they have functional libraries in their schools. Furthermore, 65% of the respondents agreed that they do not have relevant reading materials in their libraries while also 70% of the students claimed that they do not have "Reading Clubs" in their schools.

Discussion of Findings

The findings of the study revealed that majority of the students spend their prime time on social media instead of reading their textbooks. This revelation is a serious concern to stakeholders in education because, presently in Nigeria, students' performance in public examination is very poor. In these examinations, hardly can 50% credit passes be recorded in major school subjects like Mathematics and English Language. It is more worrisome, if one realizes that, there is correlation between acute social media use and poor academic performance (Carter 2013; red Orbit 2013; Firek 2011).

The findings also show that 60% of the sampled respondents spend a lot of their prime time watching European football matches on television and other devices instead of reading the school textbooks. It is very disheartening to see learners spending their precious time watching football matches while their academic work suffers. Many Nigerian youths have become so obsessed with European football that it has become opium to them. Ofcourse, there is nothing wrong in viewing or taking part in sporting activities, but it becomes a problem when this is done to the detriment of academic performance in school. Perhaps, the worst scenario is the home video films which Nigerian Secondary School Students spent considerable part of their useful hours watching on television channels and other devices on daily basis. Definitely this is harmful to academic progress. According to the New Scientist Life (2007), "Teenagers who watch several hours of television a day do worse at school and are less likely to graduate with their peers". Also, according to American Academy of Pediatrics, adolescents should be limited to one or two hours per day watching television to avoid harmful effects on their academic.

Public Secondary Schools in Lagos Nigeria appear not to be helping matters regarding students reading habits. Majority of the sampled students agreed that they do not have functional libraries in their schools. Also, majority of the students also claimed that they do not even have relevant reading materials to read in the school. While majority of the students also agreed that they do not have "Reading Clubs" or "Reading Associations" in their schools. This is a serious matter because learners are suppose to be encouraged by the school authorities to read their books and study hard to improved their academic performance. Some of the ways of encouraging reading culture in an institution is the provision of suitable libraries, current and relevant textbooks and other motivational approaches that could encourage reading for enhanced academic performance.

Recommendations

1. School authorities should encourage reading among students by setting apart, time for leisure and time academic work.
2. Parents should monitor the activities of their children, especially at home to ensure maximum time is dedicated to ready and study instead of the children devoting too much time on social media and other social activities.

3. Teachers should encourage students to devote more time to reading than engaging in other social activities.
4. Educational authorities should provide basic infrastructure and facilities that could enhance reading activities among students.

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