

## Reading Culture And Academic Achievement Among Secondary School Students

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### ABSTRACT

In the time past reading was a culture cultivated by school children at primary and secondary which facilitated their academic achievement at these levels and their entry into tertiary institutions. Reading culture among school children and even adults is fast being eroded and is giving way for television, home video viewing and internet exploration for phonographic pictures. This study therefore, is aimed at surveying the relationship between reading culture and academic achievement of secondary school students. To achieve this, 3 hypotheses were formulated and tested. 100 students were used for the study. Two (2) separate research instruments were used to collect data and Pearson product moment correlation analysis was employed. The findings were that reading culture in terms of time habit, and ability to concentrate was significantly related with academic achievement or performance. Students should cultivate healthy reading culture if they must do well in and outside the school. Effective reading habits, time keeping and concentration are recommended for the students for improved academic performance. Parents, teachers and counsellors have important roles to play to help inculcate good reading habits in the children to promote satisfactory academic performance.

Reading is very strategic in daily life of the literate people and students' academic progression. There is no way any individual can survive the academic rigours and demands if such a person cannot read very well or cannot read at all. It was the culture in the times past for pupils in the primary and students in the secondary schools, colleges and universities to be exposed and made to read widely and cover several class reading materials. Today is not what is experienced. Students no longer boast of the number of reading materials they cover within a given period but can tell you the number of home video films and fun oriented television programmes they have watched on daily basis.

The school in general, is a social educational institution designed for training of citizens for the national development. At any level of education, whether primary, secondary or tertiary, reading is very common and the primary thing that should characterize the student's life (Otu 2011). It is the objective of the national policy on education (NPE 2004) to use the 6-3-3-4 or 9-3-4 system of education to make individuals self-reliant, productive and efficient thereby contributing to a great extent to national development. It is expected that students in secondary schools should be able to have satisfactory academic performance but how can this be possible without efficient reading background? Bond and Tinker (1973), remark that proficient reading is necessary for success at all levels of education. It is as essential as a tool for learning a large portion of subject matter throughout successive school levels.

Ipaye (1986) believes that counsellors have very important duties to perform in the academic counselling as far as reading habits are concerned. In order to help students acquire reading skills, the counsellor will first do a need assessment, by finding out what reading habits are to determine their problems. The counsellor will then be able to guide the students on how to read; which include taking notes, methods of note taking, library skills, reading strategies, what to read, where to read and when to read (Otu 2011).

Onyejiaku (1989) study on reading habits revealed that whenever a student adopts effective reading habit, his learning skills, his understanding of learning materials and his memory processing both test and examination are improved appreciably. According to Roth (1992) psychologists and educators at every level have expressed concern over the maintenance and stimulation of achievement and the kind of social and personal problems that result from its absence. Most studies on reading habit have shown that students are usually influenced by the reading habits/culture. Thus Roth (1992) concludes that people's achievement is functional to her perception of the self and the individual is motivated by a need to achieve at a level which is consisted with his or her current habits.

In all, Bakare (1970) believes that in creative reading technique, the student must have sufficient confidence that he can study and succeed. He should be motivated and encouraged to devote equal time to all the subjects. Cultivating culture of reading has been a necessary tool to academic performance.

### **Statement of the Problem**

The problem that necessitated this study is the observed low academic performances as this is the general complain of the Nigerian people. They are complaining about students dwindling success in school work and low reading culture. Students are no longer interested to read but are more akin to fun driven activities. Can academic success be influenced by reading?

### **Purpose of the Study**

This study was designed to investigate whether students reading culture can affect their academic achievement in school. It was also intended to find out why students cannot develop positive reading culture.

### **Method**

The research design employed was the survey descriptive since the study involved observation of situations.

### **Research Area**

The research was carried out using the secondary school students in Calabar South, Cross River State, Nigeria. Calabar South is the coastal area of the south eastern part of Nigeria. The total population of the inhabitants according to the 2000 national census data is 385,687. The people are the Efiks, the Efuts and the non-indigenes.

### **Population**

The population of the study comprised secondary school students (males and females) in Calabar South. The total student's population in the area of study is 41,343 (Secondary Education Board, 2011).

### **Sample**

Four schools were selected (452 students) 222 male students and 230 female students with the use of satisfied sampling technique employing the balloting system these four (4) schools were selected. The actual sample for the study was 100 from the 452 students, 60 female and 40 male students.

### **Research Question**

The research question for the study was. Does reading culture impact on the academic achievement of students?

### **Hypotheses**

Three hypotheses were put forward and tested

1. There is no significant relationship between students reading culture and academic achievement.
2. There is no significant relationship between student's reading schedule and academic achievement.
3. There is no significant relationship between student's reading concentration ability and academic achievement.

### **Instrument**

Two sets of instrument were used; a structured questionnaire. The questionnaire was prepared in three sections with five items each designed to the hypotheses. A 4 likert scale was employed where the subjects were asked to tick (✓) against the true study habits and the statements were weighted thus:

Strongly Agreed (SA) 4, Agreed (A) 3, Disagreed (D) 2 and Strongly Disagreed (SD) 1. For academic achievement of students, the instrument used to assess the students was performance test.

Questions were selected from past question papers of the subjects in schools to prepare the performance test. The questionnaire and the performance test papers were all numbered serially from 1 - 100. Each sampled students was given a specific questionnaire to fill and was also given a performance test with a corresponding number to the questionnaire; to ensure that one student's performance was not recorded against another student's study habit.

The questionnaire was face-validated by experts in test measurement and evaluation. The instrument was pilot tested to ascertain reliability using the test-retest method with a time gap of two weeks between the two tests. The reliability estimate for the variables ranged from 0.7345 to 0.8255. The estimates were considered well enough for use in this study.

The data gathered with the instrument were analyzed using the Pearson Product moment correlation analysis.

### **Result**

**Hypothesis I:** There is no significant relationship between reading culture and academic achievement. It was tested using the Pearson Product moment correlation analysis. The result is in table I.

**Table I**  
**Pearson Product Moment Analysis of student's reading culture and academic performance**

Variables	Ex Ey	Ex <sup>2</sup> Ey <sup>2</sup>	Exy	r
Student's Reading Culture	1129	230747	230520	.098*
Student's performance	1171	238283		

\* Significant at 0.05 level, critical r = 0.19, df = 98

From table I, the Pearson Product moment analysis gave r-value of 0.98 which was observed to be higher than the critical r-value of 0.19 for 98 degrees of freedom at 0.05 alpha level of significance. The positive r-value indicates a significant positive relationship between reading culture and academic performance amongst students. In other words, students who cultivate culture of reading are likely to perform better in academic than their counterparts who do not read in school or at home.

Hence, the null hypothesis was rejected and the alternate hypothesis was retained, that is there is a significant relationship between students' reading culture and their performance.

### Hypothesis II

There is no significant relationship between student's reading schedule and academic achievement. The analysis was done using the Pearson Product moment correlation analysis and the result is shown in Table 2.

**Table 2**  
**Pearson product moment analysis of student's reading schedule and their Academic performance**

Variables	Ex Ey	Ex <sup>2</sup> Ey <sup>2</sup>	Exy	R
Student's Reading Schedule	1201	257985	245950	0.99
Student's performance	1171	238283		

\* Significant at 0.05 level, critical r = 0.19, of = 98

Result in table 2 indicated the calculated r - value as 0.99 which was observed to be greater than the critical r-value of 0.19 at 0.05 level of significant and 98 degrees of freedom. This implies that there is a significant relationship between student's reading schedule and academic performance. In other words, students who consciously provide a reading schedule and devote time to read perform better than those without reading schedule and do not devote their time for reading.

### Hypothesis 3: There is no significant relationship between the student's concentration ability and academic achievement

Pearson Product moment was adopted to analyze data. The result from the analysis is presented in Table 3.

**Table 3: Pearson Product Moment Analysis of student's ability to concentrate and their academic performance**

Variables	Ex Ey	Ex <sup>2</sup> Ey <sup>2</sup>	Exy	r
Student's Ability to Concentrate	925	151233	187065	0.98
Student's academic performance	1171	238283		

\* Significant at 0.05 level, critical r = 0.19, of = 98.

From the table above, there is a significant relationship between the students' concentration ability and their academic performance, since the calculated r-value of 0.98 is greater than the critical r-value of 0.19 at 0.05 level of significance and 98 degrees of freedom. The null hypothesis is therefore rejected and the alternative hypothesis upheld.

### Discussion

Reading culture of students and their academic achievement have been found to have significant positive relationship. This means that cultivating a good reading habit or culture would lead one to better performance in academics. It is near impossible to be an effective literate person without the culture of reading since every process and progress in academic require reading and understanding. A school pupil or student who develops effective reading culture has the potentials of succeeding in his or her academic engagements.

Whereas children in the past developed high level of reading culture and had well established readings habits, the situation today is completely different. Students in the past could buy books, newspapers and magazines and made sure they read them through and effectively discussed them with peers and teachers. The

ones of today have abandoned the buying of books, they cannot visit bookshops or stands or library rather, they are interested fun oriented activities. They explore the internet for phonography, and ciber crimes. The children equally engage themselves in violence proned activities such as constituting cult groups, gangs for rape and theft and they establish network for examination malpractice. Since they have not read the class required learning materials, they are bare and do not approach class or competitive examination with confidence thereby retorting to cheating to pass examination.

Some students see going to school in the first instance as not rewarding, after all certain dropped outs in the society are leaders in Nigeria. Findings in this study agrees with views of Denga (1984) who noted that students who regard study to be distasteful, unwholesome and unpleasurable are those who have poor reading/study habits, while those who regard it as necessary are those who have effective study habits. Students who imbibed good reading culture/habit feel free and comfortable to read their books always, and they are likely to perform better in their educational pursuits. It can be said that poor reading culture viz-a-viz, reading habit results to scoring poor grades in classroom works and thus low academic performance.

The findings of this study is also related to Nwabudike (2009) who found out that teachers exposed to well illuminated and ventilated workshops equipped with modern equipment-machines and tools were happy to demonstrate what is learnt in the classroom and this in turn enhanced their productivity. He also discovered that shortage or absence of materials, morale, decrease their commitment to their jobs, and thus result in decline in their productivity of low job performance.

It is important to remark that success in study depends not only on ability and hard work, but also on reading method and culture. This implies that to be able to excel in academic you must cultivate a positive reading culture and right reading habit.

Another finding of this study is that there s a significant relationship between student reading schedule (time) and student academic performance, this finding agrees with the study of Robinson (1982) who revealed that the best way to achieve effective study is not by studying more or more determined concentration, but changing the quality of reading methods. It may not be necessary that good students study more than the poor ones rather they use their time more effectively. Time is very important and must be used wisely. There is nothing as important as a student to have a schedule of study so as to go through his/her subjects of study effectively. A student who has no schedule of study remains a confused and unorganized being; he does good things at wrong times. This means that study without a reading schedule is absurd and non-directional.

Finally, there is a significant relationship between student's ability to concentrate and their academic performance. In order words, students who pay attention to their study are likely to perform better than their counterparts who are care-freed. Some students have the opportunity to excel in school because the learning facilities are provided for them but they lack the ability to concentrate, sit down and effectively read through their books and school work. Reading is a concentration driven process if you must produce effective outcomes. For any school child to gain success in school, he must read and be ready to engage in concentrative reading. To have a break through, courageous and focused, school children should learn to pay attention during class lessons and concentrate in their private reading activities.

One of the reasons adduced for decline in standard of education in Nigeria is the inability of the school children to read at all or effectively. On the introduction of western education, emphasis was on the "3RS", reading, writing and arithmetic, most school age children in Nigeria today can hardly read a short and simple script. They lack the reading culture, study schedule and concentration. From interview conducted and observations made, it was revealed that student cannot develop positive reading culture because of their too much indulgence in outdoor programmes such as streets loitering, watching television programmes mostly, European foot ball leagues, and dancing competition, internet-related activities. Use of cell phones, cult group activities, lack of proper parental upbringing and control; child-labor, non-commitment of teachers to teach reading at school, loss of books shops, book hawking, equipped school libraries and general laxity of children towards education, since they believe that most politicians and rich men in Nigeria who had "made it" were not the brilliant ones in school.

## CONCLUSION

There is no effort towards the promotion of literacy and academic performance that can suffice without acquiring reading skills. Reading is the centre stage of education, which means that nothing of value can be achieved if a child cannot read. No child can know any subject in school since each has to be read. It is not surprising therefore, to register the decline in academic performance today since most school children cannot read and write. They depend on cheating by copying from already prepared scripts or from the few students who can read and write.

The quality of development of any nation depends on the type of education it has. Nigeria cannot produce competent people or experts in differently fields if the foundation is poorly laid. The essence of education is in ability to read and write. To cultivate and propagate reading culture in our school children is to promote literacy and quality education, which determines the state of national development. If school children are inducted into the reading culture at the primary school, then strong based education would have been laid. Poor performance in examinations may be reduced drastically and standard of education in Nigeria will rise once again.

## RECOMMENDATION

The following are recommendation

- i. Culture is a way of life of a people, let Nigeria children imbibe the universal culture, that of reading.
- ii. Reading should be compulsorily taught at all levels of education, it should be part of pupils and students evaluation at the primary, secondary and tertiary tiers of education.
- iii. At the primary, the pupils at commencement of every term should be given the pupils' companion, what was called the "reader" in those days. That is the class English reading textbook. This they should be made to read a position or section in school and at home each day
- iv. If in the different traditions we have parents show concern on how the younger generation can be initiated into them and form part of the children. Therefore, parents have a vital role to play to develop the reading culture in their children. Let them establish a monitoring mechanism to assess the state of readership of their children. They should create conducive reading homes for the children.
- v. Sale of books should be reintroduced in schools by the book sellers as it was in the time past. The sight of books can motivate students to buy them and if they buy books, they will be motivated to read.
- vi. Yes, scientific and technological advancement are good but should not be the bane of people's reading culture.
- vii. Government's attempts to producing books for school is a welcome development, but the books should be distributed to the pupils and students free of charge and they should be made to own these books. The practice now where the books are given to the students in payment of school fees or token is not healthy. Government must not pay lip-service to its people, "free education, free books" when nothing is actually free.
- viii. School children should be de-emphasized outdoor activities. They are necessary for recreation but are harmful if there is over indulgence.
- ix. School pupils and students should practice to read texts outside the recommended text books. Devote time to read a piece of text every day, every week, every month and every year. If this practice is sustained, good reading culture will certainly evolve; and academic performance will rise to the pride and joy of the students and happiness of the adults.

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