

Needful Implements in Improving the Study and Scholastic Skills of Nigerian Secondary School Students

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Abstract

Showing concern about the consistent depreciation in expected study and scholastic behaviours among Secondary School students and the trailing failure in school test and exams and public exams, the authors gathered empirical report on the chosen variables among a randomly selected 1,200 secondary school students in JSS I, II, III, SSS I, II, III in 10 rural and urban centers Secondary schools among the 141 in Ekiti State. The data came from the author designed scholastic and study skills inventory on the sample. The result indicated a no significant different in the poor level of scholastic and study skills among the population. Recommendations were in the direction of the need to launching and begin the practice of the “STAR” program (Oana, 1981) by counsellors in the secondary schools as a means of reversing the trend of the unhealthy development.

Introduction

Many research reports, literary literature as newspaper headlines, informed observations and public comments both in print and electronic media in the decade past, and up to now, harp a consistent tune that a notable percentage of Nigeria’s secondary school students are unable to account for any of the objectives set for their level of education by the nation’s policy of education. In other words, many of them cannot read or write meaningfully, they are terrible in doing simple sums and communicating in the official language of the Country (English), they display uncomplimentary attitudes and many of them show evidences of people fit to be called social outcasts or of them that need some form/grade of personality reform or the other. Some of these reports make these the basis of their conclusion that there is a fall in the standard of secondary school education. They present secondary school graduates before the present crop as above average in performances, conduct, behaviour, skills and social competence.

Some of these commentators base their conclusion of the fall in the standard of secondary schools on its operational base as reflected among the teachers, who Musaazi (1982) described as the most indispensable piece of equipment in the school, and that are operating at less than average capacity, lack of provision for the needs, equipments and materials for teaching and that was making teaching appear an up-hill task for those employed to do it was pointed by Nwana (1998), teaching of poor and dated concept and syllabi was highlighted by Tracy (2001) and Baron (2001) and that has been making schooling very uninteresting for the students, poor physical plants and unkempt/dilapidated building and structure that would not encourage the students to stay on in school to attend to school demands were highlighted by Ivowi (1998).

These as it may be Medahunsi (1979) and Baron (2001) both underscored the disappearing emphasis by teachers on their students’ learning and imitating the needed skills, traits and approaches to studying beneficially. They both called attention to the growing number of extra-mural classes in every nook and crannies of Nigerian town and villages and these classes’ failure and inability to justify the much money and energy that parents and guardians expend on the student in these evening schools to acquire the expected study skills. These came against the backdrop of no change or improvement in the high incidence of failure in public exams being conducted by West Africa Examination Council (WAEC), Senior Secondary Council for Examination (SSCE), and National Examination Council (NECO).

To Medahunsi (1979), and Tracy (2001) the would-be-successful-students must have the correct/right attitudes towards reading and acquisition of knowledge as in: enjoying reading and creating the environment to get this done, been able to get the main ideas of a text under study, having high level of concentration when studying, having the right skills in taking lesson/lecture notes. One guessed that it is along this line that Bakare (1977) developed the inventory, Study Habit Inventory (SHI) that highlighted the necessary and needed skills (traits and habits) as well as rules and obligations that aid reading and developing good memory as well as make students pass examinations. He submitted of the inventory that students who have not there traits in sufficient quantity and quality may find it difficult to acquire the status of or be described as a successful secondary school graduates.

Arguing for a place for good memory, long the line of needed scholastic trait and study skills for success in school Dudley (1998) claimed that many students are not familiar or aware of how to remember daily lit of appointments, words, objects, names and faces that they come in contact with. He linked this with poor

observation, imagination and concentration and their poor responses to question that are asked them in school tests and public exams. He emphasized that these skills need be taught and modelled to the students.

Coming from the psychological point of view, Fairbairn (2001) highlighted the contributions of feeling sleepy due to mental fatigue, lack of interest due to low level of priority attached to school subjects, physical fitness and poor level of maturity and discipline as to know that books and print helps one to find out what one wants to and need to know, better than films and movies that are very common these days. To him, the two sources must be made to complement each other, not the movies taking over reading as is most common and experienced in recent times. These facts and fundamental truth need be made explicit and encouraged for practice among the students. Jennings (2001) highlighted the failure of the present crop of secondary school students to realize the need to draw a line of limitations to television and films watching spending time with school books as one of the marks of the difference of their generation and the ones that had gone on before and who do better than them at public examinations.

The questions that suffice to ask though rhetorical but needing empirical evidence are: how descriptive of study and scholastic skills and traits are Nigerian secondary school students?

- Would the demographic characteristic of the population: sex, class, age, place of domicile school type has influence on the quality or skills descriptive of possessed by the sample?

- What would be the expedient actions to take in the event of a need of redress the presenting situation?

The guiding Null Hypotheses are:

- Secondary school student's posse's sufficient scholastic and study skills that make for success at their educational level.

- There would be no significant difference in the mean scores of secondary school students by their demographic characteristic on scholastic and study skills them posses or described by.

Answers to these questions and an indication of the reality in the gap of knowledge and data on the status of scholastic and study skills of secondary school students would go a long way in suggesting solutions and helpful method to teachers, counsellor, parents, guardian, book writers and executors of ways to restore the balance in the tilt of secondary school students skills and competence in scholastic and study skills demonstration.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study is to identify which of the specifics in the spectrum of scholastic and study skills are not descriptive of secondary school students. This is with the view of making suggestion to people concerned with education and the curriculum as well as counsellors, the individual policies and practices that may encourage the acquisition of these skills and that may need be put into place in the school.

Method

This is a survey study in the context of Kennedy (1984) definition, i.e. a study set to reveal the occurrence, distribution and depth of a psychological/sociological variable among a given population. The current study is set to reveal the occurrence, distribution and depth of study and scholastic skills among secondary school students in Ekiti State of Nigeria.

INSTRUMENTATION

The Instrument

Scholastic and study skills inventory in this study is an adapted version of study habit inventory of Bakare, C.M.G (1977). While Bakare (1977) had 9 sections with a total of 45 items, the scholastic and Study Skills Inventory contain 30 items under one section. Also it has 3 response patterns in contrast to 5 of the SHI, Bakare (1977).

For each respondent in the scholastic and study skills inventory, there is um total score of the scores in each of item which goes to identify the respondent as either committed/skilful students or not for the purpose of their study.

A maximum of 90 rating the behaviour as descriptive (3) and always practiced and a minimum of 30 rating all items as un-descriptive(1) and never practiced are possible in the inventory. A mid point of fairly Descriptive (2) giving sample who rate all as fairly descriptive would total 60. However in the process of developing the inventory and pilot testing it, a cut off point of 65 was adopted for classifying sample as diligent and skilful students. Items were derived from the universe of the variable in question and the source from which they were adapted, that is The Study Habit Inventory (Bakare, 1977).

VALIDITY

Items on the instrument were derived from the universe of the variable in question, that is, Study Skills and Scholastic Attitudes and also the source from which the items were adapted. This testifies to the content and face

validities of the inventory. This notwithstanding 2 colleagues in the department of psychology and sociology of the university of Ado-Ekiti expressed agreement with the content and coverage of the instrument for the purpose for which it is to serve.

RELIABILITY

In a test-re-test exercise within 2 weeks with 50 randomly selected students in 2 secondary schools in Ado-Ekiti who were never part of the sample for the study (male N = 25, female N = 25) a reliability coefficient 0.57 was derived and qualified the inventory reliable.

SAMPLE

The sample consisted of 1,200 stratified, purposefully and randomly selected students from 30 Secondary Schools (15 rural and 15 urban) drawn from the total 176 secondary school in the 3 senatorial districts and 16 Local Government Areas of Ekiti State. They have an average age of 14.8 years. Table 1 reveals this information.

Table 1. Sample of the Study

	Rural		Urban		Total
	Male	Female	Male	Female	
JSS I	50	50	50	50	200
JSS II	50	50	50	50	200
JSS III	50	50	50	50	200
SSS I	50	50	50	50	200
SSS II	50	50	50	50	200
SSS III	50	50	50	50	200
	300	300	300	300	1,200

Mean age of the sample = 14.8 years.

Data Analyses and RESULTS

Table 2

Mean scores of the sample on the study and Scholastic Skills Inventory

	Rural		Urban		Total
	Male	Female	Male	Female	
JSS I	22	23	36	33	
JSS II	24	22	26	23	
JSS III	29	31	33	38	
SSS I	42	44	46	48	
SSS II	47	49	57	58	
SSS III	51	53	51	54	

From table 2, the mean scores of each of the groupings of the students fall short of 65 that determine whether the students are committed and descriptive of scholastic and committed students. By the mean score of 65, for being rated as committed students, all the groups of the sample fall short making room for accepting the null hypothesis. Research hypothesis usually asserts that an attribute exists while null negates it, that is, there will be no difference in the mean scores of the sample on SASI. From this result the first null hypothesis is rejected in favour of the research hypothesis that states that: students are not-committed to their studies and display poor scholastic and study skills. Issues relating to immediate response to given assignments, steady time-table for daily programmes, free access to teachers, being conversant with the library, being conversant with the use of encyclopaedia, being conversant with the reference books and relating what is learnt to real life are not descriptive of the respondents.

Table 3

Classifications of Respondents on the Inventory

	Male	Female	Male	Female	Total
Skillful	214	98	93	57	462
Non skillful	293	129	149	167	730
					1,200

Group Mean = 53

With a sample mean score of 53 which is well less than the expected 65 that rate respondents on the scale as skilful and scholastic, a total of 730 of the respondents representing 61.5% of the sample chosen classify as non-committed and poor in scholastic and skills in studying. Making room for the rejection of the first null hypothesis that the respondents are committed and have appreciable scholastic and study skills. In other words,

more than 15 of the expected characteristics and behaviours of committed students are not descriptive of a majority of the respondents (Ary, Jacobs, and Razavieh, 1979).

According to Adana (1983) one-way ANOVA is the advisable technique to analyzing the distribution and variability in the distribution of one factor at many levels of treatment. In this study, the variability in the distribution of scholastic and study skills as a factor is being analysed among selected sample of Nigerian secondary school student in the six different years of study in the secondary school in Ekiti State.

Table 4 ANOVA table

Source	SS	DF	MS	Fcal	P	Null
Between sample	741.337	5	148.267			
In this sample	641.112	00	651.112	1.74	0.05	Accept
All Total	693.500					

$P < 0.05 \Rightarrow F_{cal} < F_{critical}$ accept

$F_{cal} < F_{table} \Rightarrow$ accept null hypothesis

Where $(5, 120) = 4.36$

CONCLUSION, DISCUSSION, SUGGESTION AND RECOMMENDATION

For today's secondary school students to grow up with a meaningful outlook on life, they must be helped to come to terms with their educational, vocational, social and physical problems. Generally the sample mean serve as scholastic and study skills are low indicating that they are not described by these skills or practices in sufficient quantity. This indication appears too totally with the views of Ozigi (1979), Omolewa (1981), Jennings (2001) and Connerly (2000), who all underscored secondary school student's failure and blamed the occurrence in part and whole on the students' poor study habit and low study and scholastic skills.

The issue of characteristic as defined in the habits and doings of student had never mattered more in Nigeria educational system than it does now. This one thinks is because the context of Nigerian youths' characteristic is crucial to the revival of the fallen and decadent educational institution. Research report on the prevalent poor study and scholastic skills of the student need be considered and be made to be a focus of informed conferences on youth character and habits modifications. As indicated in this study, traits, habits and doings such as: Immediate response to given assignments, having a steady time-table for daily programmes, having free access to teachers, being conversant with the library and being conversant with the use of encyclopaedia among others need be taught, encourage, monitored and made to form part of the total assessment of the students. After all, the 6-3-3-4 system is designed to avoid wastage among the recipient. According to Medved (2000) counsellors, school psychologist and curriculum experts need to work together in a team in designing and teaching a package that would complement the effort to impart and impact the content of regular school subject on the students. Only them would we be leaving behind the poor content that many of Nigerian secondary school students' characteristics is made of. Adopting Forbes (1999) approach appears one sure way out the wilderness that the Nigerian education system had been plunged in the last few years measuring up to 10. The testimony of which is in the continual woeful trends in the results of public exams of the students. It is also the way to train the hearts and minds of the students in the spirit of the social reform that Nigeria is committed to in the new transition of government that took off recently as lead by President Goodluck Jonathan.

That Nigerians may eventually become punctilious as against being rated as villains and corrupt as presently being rated y some World bodies, e.g. Amnesty International may begin with how she sees to her youths in schools being led to appreciate and emulate correct schooling and study behaviours and attitudes. According to Oana (1981), launching the STARS programme which stands for study, Time, Activities, Responsibilities and success where students report to counsellor and special teacher appointed to assist the students for about an hour daily would be in the direction of devotion to helping the students scholastically, physically, emotionally, and socially. The sample in this study indicate a need for getting extra help, improving study habits, preparing for test and doing home work and practicing what is taught in school.

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