

# Reading Habits of Secondary School Teachers: A Study of Selected Secondary Schools in Addis Ababa and Dessie

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## Abstract

This study is a small-scale study of an exploration of reading habit of high school teachers. Fifty four teachers from five schools who teach in different schools in Addis Ababa and Dessie participated in this study. Data were collected through questionnaire and in-depth interview. The result of the study shows that reading is poorly developed habit of the high school teachers. The high school teachers involved in this study admitted that reading is inevitable in their professional and personal lives; yet, it is overlooked. The common trend among the research participants is that they read by different push factors such as examinations, preparation of the regular classroom sessions of the disciplines they teach, newspapers, and some websites. Academic books of their respective disciplines are exceptionally frequently read for teaching. Of the non-academic reading materials, many teachers are fond of magazines and newspapers of recreation and politically hot issues. Although teachers are responsible to lead the society by accessing and exposing culture, knowledge and values for development and change through reading, the reality would highly weaken them to play this part of their role. Hence, the researcher recommends for stakeholders to conduct this problem at a large-scale level including the causes to contribute for the improvement of these habits to help teachers survive as scholars and leaders of the country.

**Keywords:** reading, habit, secondary school teachers

## 1. Introduction

Reading is the identification of the symbols and the association of appropriate meaning with them. It requires identification and comprehension (Palani, 2012). The reading habit is irreplaceable weapon for everyone in order to mentally grow and fulfill his or her potential. Tella and Akande (2007) assert that the ability to read is at the heart of self-education and lifelong learning and that it is an art capable of transforming life and society. Nweke (1990) states that it has a real role to play in development of the individual. Reading is interrelated with the total educational process and hence, educational success requires successful reading. Comprehension skills help the learner to understand the meaning of words in isolation and in context. According to Yusuf (2007), information bridges the gap between knowledge and ignorance. One of the major avenues for acquiring information is reading. Reading is the foundation upon which other academic skills are built. Reading is a very essential way of learning and achieving any global academic breakthrough. Readers are leaders and you are what you know promotes readership that every purposeful educational quest must seek to observe. However, this has become a challenge in the world today, especially in developing nations like Ethiopia. Reading habit becomes an inbuilt tutor that everyone carries everywhere throughout their lives.

In the context of the Ethiopian literate community, reading is generally a less developed habit. The social world where we live in is unsurprisingly full of texts. Written text is abundant. We find books, articles, magazines, newspapers, posters, dissertations, textbooks, pamphlets, blog posts, media coverage, government proclamations, analyses of government proclamations, activist manifestos, online books, posters, banners, schedules, graffiti, email, text messages, announcements of the birth of professors' children, security warnings, maps and directional signs, historical placards, captions attached to bombastic statues, conference programs, course descriptions, online discussion forums, advertisements printed on the outside of bookstore sales bags, activist pin-on buttons, ID badges, job vacancies and others. This is not an exhaustive list of the written genres. Most of these genres are themselves multimodal containing other modes within.



**Figure 1: Book, magazine and newspaper display**

The academy is nothing without a community of readers. What will be the fate of the academia with no reading culture? Teachers are obliged to read. When they become teachers, they have also become readers by default. Reading provides a source of social solidarity and a ground for further exchange. In this sense, teachers read social relations out of texts, intellectual paths and movements out of texts, stylistic drills and claims of authority or importance out of texts. The academic world would be equally inaccessible, maybe even incomprehensible, detached from reading. Reading is a form of participation. And one could go farther: reading is one of the constitutive forces of academic worlds, a practice of social and intellectual (re)production, an act of yields a cosmos where there are landscapes of ideas and concepts, immaterial “schools of thought” and “intellectual trajectories,” clashes of ideology playing out.

## 2. Statement of the problem

Reading should enhance a variety of strong emotions from our young readers including love, loyalty, empathy, a sense of happiness, rage and more importantly, a passion for reading. It should also stimulate their aesthetic and emotional development, including soft skills, generally enrich their lives and, along the way, help them to improve their lives.

Teachers need to be role models and become avid readers. Such teachers should be able to pass on the passion to their students. Teachers are the chief drivers of the education engine in schools. They design the curriculum and the behavioral goals that are its products. Since education involves interaction between learners, learning materials, and teachers, teachers must be avid readers themselves in order to ignite a lifelong reading habit in their students. Trelease (2006) observes that teachers are seldom seen reading. A good teacher must have a broad information base and should not depend on their lesson notes, which cannot contain all the information on a given topic (Palani, 2012).

In other countries, there are some studies on teachers' habit of reading. For example, Adebayo (2009) conducted on the reading habit of high school teachers in Nigeria on 100 high school teachers through questionnaire. The findings show that most of the teachers sampled read textbooks daily. Palani (2012) investigated the reading habit of teachers in India. Data were collected through questionnaire, and the data were analyzed in respect of the reading of newspapers, magazines and books. Social psychology of readers and interests of various age-groups were analyzed separately. A supplementary investing on the reading development of VII to XII class students was done. The result shows that newspapers were read more than any other material; women in every age group read less newspaper; Magazine reading increased with age; Men read more than women and Sports magazines were very popular up to the age of 40.

Reading being the heart of any academia, overlooking it becomes a serious problem. Hence, this is the existing concern or problem that this project intends to investigate.

## 3. Objectives

The general objective of this study is to understand the general nature of reading interest and habit of high school teachers in Ethiopia. Specifically the objective of this study is:-

- To determine how often high school teachers read
- To examine their purpose for reading
- To examine the type of materials they read
- To identify the role reading plays in their professional and personal lives.

#### 4. Methodology

The instruments for collecting data were questionnaire and interview. Fifty questionnaires were administered for the study. The schools selected for study are: Entoto Amba Secondary School, Minilik Preparatory School, Radical Academy High School, all in Addis Ababa and Memhir Akalewold Preparatory School in Dessie. Fifty-four questionnaires were returned. Simple percentage was used to analyze the data generated for easy interpretation and were presented in tables.

#### 5. Ethiopian High School Teachers

High school teachers work in either public or private schools. Generally, they work school hours, which vary somewhat, but most also work evenings and weekends to prepare lessons and grade papers. However, most do not teach during the summer unless they prefer to. High school teachers in Ethiopian schools must have a bachelor's degree. High school teachers generally specialize in a subject, such as English, math, or science.

High school teachers typically do the following:

- Plan lessons in the subjects they teach, such as biology or history
- Assess students to evaluate their abilities, strengths, and weaknesses
- Teach students as an entire class
- Grade students' assignments to monitor progress
- Communicate with parents about students' progress
- Work with individual students to challenge them, to improve their abilities, and to work on their weaknesses
- Prepare students for national examinations
- Develop and enforce classroom rules

High school teachers generally teach students from the 9th through 12th grades. They usually specialize in one subject area, such as math, science, or history. High school teachers see several different classes of students throughout the day. They may teach the same material, for example, Civics to more than one class if the school has many students from the 9th grade and then in the next class they may have students in 12th taking that subject.

When they do not have classes, teachers plan lessons, grade assignments, and meet with other teachers and staff. High school teachers also coach sports and advise student clubs and other groups, activities which frequently happen before or after school. High school teachers who specialize in science class may spend some of their day working in a lab. Most high school teachers work in either public or private schools. Others teach in private religious or secular schools.

Teaching is both satisfying and stressful. Some schools have large classes and lack important teaching tools, such as computers and up-to-date textbooks. Most teachers are held accountable for their students' performance on standardized tests, which can be frustrating. Occasionally, teachers must cope with unmotivated or disrespectful students.

High school teachers generally work school hours, which vary from school to school. However, they often spend time in the evenings and on weekends grading papers and preparing lessons. In addition, they may meet with parents, students, and other teachers before and after school. Moreover, teachers who coach sports or advise clubs generally do so before or after school.

Many work the traditional 10-month school year with a 2-month break during the summer. Although most do not teach during the summer, some teach in summer programs. High school teachers need to explain difficult concepts in terms students can understand. Teachers must collaborate with other teachers and special education teachers. In addition, teachers need to discuss students' needs with parents and administrators. Working with students of different abilities and backgrounds can be difficult. High school teachers must be patient when students struggle with material. High school teachers need to explain difficult concepts in terms students can understand. In addition, they must be able to engage students in learning and adapt lessons to each student's needs.

With additional education or certification, teachers may become instructional coordinators, assistant principals or principals. Becoming a principal usually requires additional instruction in education administration or leadership. High school teachers are generally considered less paid in Ethiopia. Teaching has a very low prestige and the attitude of the people towards the profession is generally inclined to negative.

#### 2. Findings and Discussions

Sixty questionnaires were administered for the study. The schools selected for the study are: Entoto Amba Secondary Government School, Minilik Preparatory Government School, Radical Academy Private High School, all in Addis Ababa and Memhir Akalewold Preparatory Government School in Dessie. Fifty four questionnaires were returned. Interview was conducted on fifteen teachers. The following were the important findings of the

study.

### 2.1. Demographic Information

The demographic data of the participants are presented below.

#### i. Gender

Gender	Frequency	Percent
Female	14	25.9
Male	40	74.1
Total	54	100.0

**Table 1: Gender**

Men read more than women. Women read less newspaper.

#### ii. Work Experience

Work experience	Frequency	Percent
less than 10 years	35	64.8
10-20 years	7	13.0
more than 20 years	12	22.2
Total	54	100.0

**Table 2: work experience**

### 2.2. Reading Habit

The reading culture is generally poor. Some teachers regularly read. Many of the teachers in the target school do not. The maximum number given on a regular basis is one book per month. This is only for some teacher who 'read'. The majority read less. Newspaper and magazines are better read weekly. Over the years, for some teachers reading habit have improved and for others it reduced. When they are asked if their reading habit was developed, the replies were:

Habit of reading	Frequency	Percent
No	29	53.7
Sometimes	15	27.8
Yes	10	18.5
Total	54	100.0

**Table 3: Habit of reading**

The sampled teachers were also asked if they could call themselves 'a reader'.

Are you a reader?	Frequency	Percent
no	52	96.3
yes	2	3.7
Total	54	100.0

**Table 4: Are you a reader?**

**A Reader:** Of all the participants in the study, very few refer themselves as a reader. When they are asked "Do you think you are a reader?" They answered, 'I cannot dare to call myself a reader'; 'No, I don't think so'; 'No; I am not a reader.'

### 2.3. Subscription of publications

The culture of publication subscription is generally not developed among the high school teachers in the study area. None of them subscribe newspaper, magazine, journals or any written materials on a regular basis. Subscription of publication on a regular basis would indicate the existence of reading as a culture. From the result, we can infer that the culture of publication subscription is not developed yet.

publication prescription	Frequency	Percent
No	54	100
yes	0	0
Total	54	100.0

**Table 5: publication prescription**

### 2.4. A Reader Club

None of the high school teachers who participated in the study are members of any reader club. Many teachers

are members of library. However, they confessed that they rarely borrow books.

### 2.5. Barriers to Read

Reading plays an important role in developing the individual (Nweke, 1990). Hence, many high school teachers do not read for many reasons. TV, and the Internet, are also among the reasons why many teachers drop out of reading.

### 2.6. Types of Materials to Read

Because of their professional requirement, high school teachers need to read literature related to their respective disciplines. Academic topics are given priority. This is an obligatory type of reading. They read such categories of literature to survive as teachers. Non-academic literature depends on the choices of individuals.

On voluntary basis, the most common preference lies on newspaper and books. Sports, fiction and politics are the top priorities of males and fiction is the top priority of female high school teachers. In terms of literature topics, sport, current issues, politics and recreation are dominant interests of high school teachers. Psychology, philosophy, religion and history are also preferences for a good deal of high school teachers. Newspapers were read more than any other material. Sports newspapers were very popular up to the age of.

**Soft or Hard copy:** Many high school teachers prefer to read the hard copy instead of soft copy. Those who are familiar with the internet, prefer soft copy to read from.

**Language:** The high school teachers read mostly in Amharic and English.

Languages	Frequency	Percent
English	21	38.9
English and Amharic	29	53.7
Amharic	2	3.7
other local languages	2	3.7
Total	54	100.0

**Table 6: language teachers read in**

### 2.7. The Internet and Reading

About the Internet, some teachers feel that their reading habit have improved because of it. For them, the interest makes it easier for them to access the reading material of their choice. Many of the teachers feel that because of the internet, people removed themselves from reading and are occupied by other irrelevant audiovisual stuff available on cyber space to make people idle. Staring at face book, for example, many spend the whole day without any meaningful or fruitful engagement. Hence, based on the result of the study, because of the internet being widely used, many read less and some read more than before.

### 2.8. Teaching and reading

Teaching and reading are two inseparable activities for teachers. The high school teachers read to teach and their teaching also help them to read more. This type of reading is a must-do and considered part of the job. Since it is not done out of choice, and since such types of reading questions the teachers to survive as teachers or not, they could not be counted as reading habit.

Most of the teachers read textbooks most often. This indicates that they read to prepare for teaching or to write lesson notes, which is consonant with literature (Sangaao, 1999; Gnawali, 2008).

### 2.9. Source of literature

The habit of buying books, magazines, newspapers, journals and other publication is very rare. Only some high school teachers buy one, two or more books monthly. The most common source of literature to read among the teachers is by borrowing from school library, friends or book stores. The habit of borrowing is also becoming common in newspaper and magazines reading as well. When there is book fair, people buy books better than what they do regularly. The most common criteria for selection of literature to read is author, title, topic and recommendation from others.





**Figure 2: Reading place in front of Minilik Preparatory School, Arat Kilo**

**Recommendations:** The high school teachers stated that the main way they discover new books is from other readers' recommendations. Talking about the books they read promotes new books to readers and reinforces that reading matters. It is important to develop among staff members to share book titles at the start of every staff meeting. This includes any topic that the staff is reading for personal enjoyment or professional development.

#### **2.10. Book Gift**

The culture of presenting book as a gift is developed among the target group. Books are given as gifts to some extent. Many teachers give and receive books as gifts. There are some teachers who stated that they receive books as gift but they never gave for anyone in their lives.

#### **2.11. Reasons to read**

High school teachers read for many reasons. They read primarily to help them teach. Furthermore, they read for knowledge, education, update information, and to some extent for leisure. Few teachers read when they don't have anything to do.

**Reading for enjoyment:** Very insignificant of the high school teachers who participated in the study enjoy reading.

**Reading for academic and purposes:** A great deal of the high school teachers considers reading as a job. They do it because it is a requirement to get the teaching job done. Only few of the teachers read for pleasure, to pass an exam, or to write lesson notes. The majority read to be current with developments. This is consistent with literature as reported by Trelease (2007).

#### **2.12. Time and place for reading**

Many prefer to read at home. Library is not preferred by many high school teachers. The most preferred time to read is bed time and weekends. The teachers sampled have no fixed time for reading. This implies that they read when they feel it necessary or when circumstance compels them (Yani, 2003).

Growing to love reading as children enhances the reading culture to develop with us along the way. To support the reading habit, reading time should be reintroduced in the timetable where group or leisure reading is done.



**Figure 3: Newspaper and Magazines reading place, Arat Kilo**

### **2.13. Motivation to read**

Teachers are the first persons to encourage their students to read. No one seems to encourage teachers to read since they already know what reading means for the academic world. That is why all of the high school teachers in this study stated that they are encouraged to read by no one.

### **2.14. Prospects**

Many high school teachers intend to read in the future. Some do not want to develop their reading habit. Reading is one of those habits that can bring great satisfaction and a sense of accomplishment to the reader. A reading habit is developed -- it doesn't happen overnight.

## **3. The Way Forward**

In order to improve the situation, the following solutions could be implemented.

### **3.1. Creation of a Readers' Club/Society in the School**

Reading club should also be created. Its aim would be to get your students reading and making reading a part of their daily life, and to establish reading as a habit that would always be needed and enjoyed – a need and leisure. This will require you getting interesting books touching a wide range of readership to be read in the club, and the members of the club may be allowed to take the books home, read them and then discuss the content with other members at the club in subsequent meetings.

### **3.2. Creating a School-Wide Reading Culture**

Creating a school-wide reading initiative could help us improve the reading culture. At the beginning of every school year, we should include developing reading habit as one of the visions for what we value to our students, parents, and staff. Declaring a year of reading at our school could help our students and teachers make it part of their lives.

### **3.3. Reading Role Model**

Teachers need to be role models: “Read more” is one of the top goals for teachers. Books can teach you about things beyond your horizons. As reading expert Stephen Krashen reminds us, “Children read more when they see other people reading.” We hope that children have reading role models at home. Unfortunately, children in our case, don't. When children see adults choose to read a wide range of texts for a variety of purposes sends a strong message that reading is important after formal schooling ends. When teachers share their own reading life with their students and staff reinforces that they believe reading enriches their lives. As much as possible, teachers should participate in the reading initiatives at school, not only as a teacher, but also as a reader!

It is important for teachers to talk with their staff about the books they read and the books that help them grow professionally. The interest and enthusiasm of teachers support the development of the literacy

culture at schools. Make sure that your children observe you reading on a regular basis. What you read is not important when your child sees you reading recipes, magazines, newspapers, books, telephone directories, and other reading materials, it will reinforce the importance of reading.

### 3.4. Reading Doors

Creating school-wide reading doors could enhance the reading culture. Teachers could be invited to display on the theme “My Reading Life” on school walls. If the culture of having showcases the books, magazines, web pages, newspapers, and comics teachers enjoy reading on notice boards in the school, the situation could improve. It is possible to enhance the display with photos of the staff members enjoying their favorites. Reading materials can tie back to content areas or personal interests like cooking, sports, and travel.

**It is also possible to create tags with messages like “I am currently reading \_\_\_\_\_.”**  
“My favorite book (author, series, genre) is \_\_\_\_\_.”

### 3.5. Establishing reading programs

There are a variety of instructional practices and strategies that have recently been adopted in efforts to improve reading habit in schools. For example, we can adapt such strategies to our culture and situation.

1. **Accelerated Reader Program (ARP):** is popular among many schools. This computerized reading management system uses a reward system to motivate students to read beyond their required classroom texts. Students who participate in the Accelerated Reader Program choose from a variety of books on the program's list to read independently either during class or outside of school. Once the students have completed their books, they take a computerized multiple choice reading comprehension quiz that awards points for passing scores. Students are awarded points based on the length and difficulty of the books and the percentage of correct answers on quizzes.
2. **Sustained Silent Reading (SSR):** is another program aimed to create proficient readers and is widely used in a number of schools. SSR is the practice of allotting classroom time for everyone, including the teacher, to read self-selected material. Some teachers may schedule a specific day of the week for SSR, while others may devote a portion of each class period. SSR affords students with opportunities to read a variety of authentic texts, and allows them to read for their own purposes and pleasure which enables the students to practice lifetime reading skills.

**3.6. Literacy Night:** it is good to set a literacy night once in a while.

**3.7. Book Fair week:** it is good to set a book fair week once in a while.



Figure 4: Book Fair, Addis Ababa

**3.8. Register a library membership**

**3.9. Provide more access to E books**

**3.10. Encouragement from family and friends**

**3.11. Setting time:** You should have a few set times during every day when you'll read for some time.

**3.12. Always carry a book.** Wherever you go, take a book with you. If there is a time when you have to wait, whip out your book and read. Great way to pass the time.

**3.13. Making a list:** Keep a list of all the great books you want to read.

**3.14. Reducing television/Internet:** If you really want to read more, try cutting back on TV or Internet



consumption.

- 3.15. Having a library day:** People do not go to libraries because it is not a culturally familiar thing to do.
- 3.16. Having a reading hour or reading day**
- 3.17. Reading in the native language:** encourage your children to read in their native language. If reading skills are developed in the native language they will transfer into English. Developing reading skills in their native language will not hinder children's ability to read in English - it will help!

## Conclusion

The findings of this study make it clear that most of the high school teachers sampled in this study developed poor reading habit. This indicates that they read mandatory materials based on push factors such as their career and may not be multitalented and all-rounded knowledgeable. Teachers should develop a love for reading because they are role models for the society at large including primarily their students. As academic leaders of societies, it is good for them to broaden their knowledge base by reading since it is one of the avenues whereby new things are learned and new information gathered. Anyone who wants to be an educator should value and have a positive attitude towards reading.

The importance of reading to the field of teaching in any educational setting cannot be overlooked. Stakeholders such as the government, the public Libraries of Ethiopia, and the Educational Bureaus should collaborate to revitalize reading habit if academic excellence is to be achieved.

It is important to encourage the reading habit so that people grow mentally and fulfill their potential at every level. Neither a farmer nor a graduate biologist can fulfill his or her potential without the cognitive growth that comes from reading widely. Such growth is every person's right and will benefit the society economically as well as individuals personally. To foster such a reading habit and forge the link between people with basic literacy skills and knowledge, it is necessary for the literature to reach out to the people. It is also necessary to provide material that is easy enough to be enjoyable so that people want to read. Reading is an important activity in the process of learning. In the movement of human society, it has been given a greater importance and becoming one of the essential aspects of the functioning of the society and exposure of knowledge and revelation of literate society. Reading shapes personality, ideas, thinking and attitude.

It is necessary to create a general awareness of the importance of books to the mental growth of the individual and to the economic growth of the nation. It is important to give books to the people in a manner that is culturally acceptable. When reading habit is developed, the demand for books will grow and the people of Ethiopia will achieve the greatness they once had.

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