

TEACHING EFFECTIVENESS AND ATTITUDE TO READING OF SECONDARY SCHOOL TEACHERS IN OSUN STATE, NIGERIA

by

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Abstract

The primary goal of the study was to determine the relationship between teaching effectiveness and attitude to reading among secondary school teachers in Osun State, Nigeria. Using a sample of 235 teachers, an instrument titled 'Reading Habit and Teaching Effectiveness Questionnaire' was used for data collection. Results of data analysis revealed a significant relationship between the time devoted to reading by teachers and their teaching effectiveness on the one hand and between attitude of teachers to reading and their teaching effectiveness on the other hand. The results also showed that majority of teachers devoted less than one hour weekly to reading materials outside their discipline and that a quarter of the teachers did not have any consistent plan to engage in reading outside their official working hours. The study concluded that there was an urgent need for a virile post-qualification literacy programme for Nigerian teachers with a view to improving their teaching effectiveness.

Introduction

Nigeria, a country of over 140 million with a high illiteracy level has very many challenges, a great part of which are educational. Education is central to any form of individual or societal development. An illiterate society is no doubt a limited society. Onibokun (1966) states that in terms of functional literacy, less than 60% of the Nigerian adult population can read and write in any language. Ten years later, Obasanjo (2006), declares that over 51% of Nigerians are yet to become literate. According to him, 7.3 million children of school age are not yet in school. Elley (2001) remarks that generally the literacy levels of those in school are low. This is to be expected considering the uninspiring, non-supportive learning environment surrounding the average Nigerian child before he/she starts formal education.

Formal education in Nigeria comprises (i) primary and junior secondary education, which makes up the basic education every Nigerian child is entitled to; (ii) senior secondary education; and (iii) tertiary education. The first of the seven goals of primary education (a

level upon which the rest of the education system is built; a key to the success or failure of the whole system (National Policy on Education (NPE), 2004) in Nigeria is to ‘ inculcate permanent literacy and numeracy, and ability to communicate effectively’. Yet, according to Etuk (2006), some primary school leavers do not meet this expectation; they end their primary school career as illiterates, thereby swelling up the illiterate population in Nigeria. Citing Obanya (2002), she posits that this explains why Nigeria is still listed among the educationally backward (E-9) countries in the world.

Unfortunately, a great number of these children find their way into, first, the junior secondary school and then, the senior secondary school. In recent times, particularly in developing countries such as Nigeria, there has been a continuous increase in secondary school enrolment (of these inadequately prepared primary school leavers) due to the expanded primary school programme, which is an offshoot of the millennium development goals. This phenomenon, no doubt, puts great demands on schools. While there is yet debate on the role of schools and schooling in learning, there is greater debate on the place of the teacher in the learning process. For many years, there has been lack of consensus on the variables which influence student achievement. However, there seems to be greater evidence suggesting that schools can make a great difference on student achievement and a substantial part of this difference can be traced to teachers (Anderson, 2004; Darling-Hammond et al 2005, Wenglinsky, 2000 and Easton-Brooks and Davis, 2009). Overall, teaching is central to what teachers do.

Teaching comes under the range of professional duties performed by teachers. It covers activities that attempt to impart knowledge or skills to learners. Teaching enables the teacher to help or guide the learner in the process of learning. It is an activity which is expected to facilitate learning. If teaching activities do not result in learning, it is usually believed that teaching has been ineffective. According to Angelo & Cross (1993), teaching in the absence of learning, is just talking. Teaching is seen to be valuable only in relation to the quality of learning that takes place. For teaching to be effective therefore, promotion of learning is expected to be at the centre of the teacher’s role. In this wise, teaching effectiveness could be measured in relation to what learners learn. For example, Darling-Hammond (2000) posits that differential teacher effectiveness is a strong determinant of differences in student learning. According to her, this far outweighs the effects of differences in class size and class heterogeneity. Likewise, Sanders & Rivers (1996) stipulate that students who are assigned to one ineffective teacher after another have significantly lower achievement and learning than those who are assigned to a sequence of several highly effective teachers.

It is also important to note that though teacher effectiveness is usually measured in relation to the quality of learning, the teacher’s performance and the quality of teaching are important considerations in teacher assessment. Educators realise that what a learner learns is not always within the teacher’s control. For there to be effective learning, there is a shared responsibility between the teacher and the learner. At times, learners are able to learn in spite of the teacher while others fail to learn despite the skilled efforts of the teacher. In such situations, the teacher’s performance and the quality of teaching need to be considered alongside learning results. This way, the additive and cumulative nature of teacher effectiveness can best be appreciated. According to Bloom (1972), what teachers are influences what they do; what they do, in turn, influences what, and how much, students learn. In order therefore to further understand the role of Nigerian teachers in influencing reading in school, particularly at the secondary school where a lot of reading is done and

teachers are expected to contribute very largely to its development, it is important to examine their reading attitude as an independent variable and as revealed by their reading habit. Reading is central to the idea of schooling itself.

Cunningham & Stanovich (1997) opine that reading develops language skills and knowledge bases; develops very important cognitive domains; accounts for cognitive differences; exposes readers to meaningful formal vocabulary that is not accommodated in speech; contributes to the development of aspects of verbal intelligence; prevents misinformation; helps to compensate for the deleterious effects of aging; and promotes comprehension ability and verbal intelligence. Cunningham & Stanovich (1998) further explain that reading has cognitive consequences that extend beyond its immediate task of lifting meaning from a particular passage. Reading provides a very wide avenue for readers to negotiate meaning as the reader, based on his/her cognitive level, examines what is read in the light of experiences brought into the reading task thereby training his/her mind. They conclude by saying that reading yields significant dividends for everyone. According to them, maximum benefits derived from reading will be determined by an early start and the level of participation in literacy activities that leads to a lifetime habit of reading which consequently sets the stage for future opportunities. The World Book Encyclopedia (2001) describes reading as one of the most important skills in everyday life.

However, teachers have been known to avail themselves of the opportunity reading affords. Teachers' negative reading habit has been an issue of concern for many decades. Fisher (1958) explains that back in the 1880s and 1890s due to the prevalence of poor reading habits, teachers were urged to raise their professional standards through professional reading among other activities. Reading circles for teachers, which unfortunately did not last for long, then became the order of the day. Forty-six years later, Rudland & Kemp (2004) observe that teachers have been found to engage in relatively little professional reading especially when compared to the reading habits of other professionals. While they further state that the reading undertaken by teachers is principally from periodicals that are largely pragmatic in nature, Hill & Beers (1993) observe that few teachers read journals and reviews on a regular basis.

Studies among in-service and prospective teachers (Applegate & Applegate, 2004; Nathanson, Pruslow & Levitt, 2008) depict the same grim picture. Applegate & Applegate conclude that many pre-service teachers are not avid readers themselves and that this lack of reading engagement may be passed on to students. Nathanson, Pruslow & Levitt mention a high prevalence of 'aliteracy', that is, the ability to read but a disinterest in personal reading. Teachers in their study acknowledged the importance of reading but they, themselves, did not exhibit investment in personal reading. Cunningham & Stanovich (1998) identify reasons for such negative attitudes as deficient decoding skills, lack of practice, difficult materials, unrewarding early reading experiences, and a delayed start. Powell-Brown (2003) also reported that a few of her pre-service teachers never loved to read. She continued by pointing out that although many of them know how to read, they prefer to gather information through "movies, television, websites and conversations" (285)

Nigerian teachers are not exempt from these criticisms. In spite of the numerous benefits of reading in the educational sector and its multiplier effect on individuals and the society, the Nigerian teacher who is expected to provide a better learning environment for the child than what he/she finds at home (where there is a lack of adult supportive behaviour in reading) is not fully equipped to do so. According to Etuk (2002), reading learning

environment in the school is made up of factors like time given to learners whereby they can learn to read, quality of reading instruction, the level of motivation given to learners plus their natural abilities to understand instructions given them. Several authors such as Etim (1982) Omojuwa (2005), Ikonta (2004), Maduabuchi (2006) focus on the deplorable state of teaching reading in Nigeria. Onukaogu (2001, p.184) explains that ‘ those assigned to teach reading in [Nigerian] nursery and elementary schools were never taught reading and are not aware that reading is a sophisticated discipline that cannot be handled by those who are not aware of what it is’. In the same vein, Omojuwa (2005) observes that the quality of some teachers is not impressive as they are either untrained or poorly trained for teaching instruction; they exhibit deficiencies in essential knowledge, abilities and skills required for reading efficiency in a bilingual/multilingual context. Several studies carried out on reading point to the fact that teachers are ill-equipped to teach reading.

Udosen (2006) carried out a study on 240 senior secondary one students in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria on the effectiveness of Talk-to-the-Author Metacognitive Strategy of Teaching on students’ achievement in higher order reading comprehension. She found that though the strategy enhanced students’ achievement, teachers hardly used it. Likewise, Maduabuchi (2006), in a study carried out on 232 students in Ebonyi State, Nigeria found that a relationship exists between reading ability and oral skills. In her opinion, the poor reading habit of students is a product of nonchalant attitude and ignorance of the enormous role of reading in the overall development of Man especially in language. She reiterated the need for teachers of reading to meet the challenges of teaching reading in the 21st century (which lays great emphasis on the need for a literate society) by devising adequate pedagogical strategies. According to her, ‘...most of the teachers in [the] schools cannot read let alone teach adequate reading modules to [the] children’ (p.149). Still in Ebonyi State, in a workshop organised by UNICEF ‘A’ Field Office and Ebonyi State Primary Education Board for teachers and head teachers in the State to help teachers improve their effectiveness in reading instruction and ensure literacy for sustainable development, Emejulu & Udengwu (2006) found that the conditions in the rural areas where the teachers were working would not allow such teacher training efforts to yield the desired results. Such conditions include: non-payment of salaries and incentives, lack of conducive classrooms, illiterate and hostile communities, parent-aided truancy and so on.

The study by Dike, Amucheazi, & Ajogu (2006), conducted on 96 teachers in Nsukka, Nigeria, sheds more light on the lamentable position of reading instruction in Nigeria. Teachers were asked to indicate the methods and resources used in teaching reading and list the difficulties of learners and problems of teachers with regard to reading. Out of 96 teachers, only six were of the opinion that ‘a lack of reading habit’ could be a reading difficulty or a problem of teaching reading and only one saw ‘poor teaching methods’ as a hindrance to success in learning to read!

This deplorable situation in reading and reading instruction has led to quite a number of researchers calling for urgent intervention. Anigbogu (2006) concluded from a study carried out on 120 students in Owerri, Nigeria that teachers should be mentors ready to inspire students, encourage and make them see the need for and purpose of reading. Malloy, Gambrell & Williams (2006) recommend that teachers should place a high value on making students become real-world readers with enjoyable and authentic experiences. Etim (1985) based on his study on reading interests and reading achievement posited that “the teacher must endeavour to encourage the pupils to read extensively materials outside their class texts” as a means of encouraging reading attainment (390). Interestingly, the call for teachers

to be aware of students' attitudes and work towards changing negative attitudes to reading is echoed by Agyemang (1998) in the conclusion to a study carried out on students in Ghana.

A lot of studies, some of which have been reviewed, have examined teachers' poor teaching strategies in teaching reading as a major problem and call for a change. Not enough attention has been given to Nigerian teachers' attitude to reading as a related variable to the general teaching effectiveness of teachers. Studies such as that of Etuk (2002) simply relate teachers' attitude to reading with reading problems of learners. It is believed that, as central as reading is to schooling, its influence may go far beyond reading instruction particularly in a nation like Nigeria where those who find their way to school still depend almost exclusively on the learning experience offered solely by the school. In order to fill this gap, it was hypothesized therefore that teachers' attitude to reading and their reading habit would have no significant relationship with their teaching effectiveness. Reading habit is both a reflection and an indication of attitude to reading.

There have been many attempts by psychologists to provide a theory of habit formation. Behaviourism, an empirically-based approach to the study of human behaviour, serves as theoretical framework to habit formation. According to this theory, three crucial elements are required for habit formation to occur in an organism: a stimulus, which serves to elicit behaviour; a response, which is brought about by a stimulus; and reinforcement, which brings about repetition and consequent habit formation (if positive) or suppression (if negative). According to Richards & Rogers (1986), reinforcement is a vital element in the language learning process as it increases the likelihood that the positively reinforced behaviour will occur again and eventually become a habit.

To apply this theory in this study, the organism is the teacher; the stimulus is the reading material while the response is the teacher's reaction to reading. Reinforcement could be in terms of extrinsic approval and recognition or intrinsic self-satisfaction. The extent to which reinforcement is used to motivate will determine the habitual response. Motivation is one of several other factors that lead to reading and helps cultivate a reading habit. According to Applegate & Applegate (2004), nearly all reading experts agree that the ideal, effective reader who has broad interests, who samples widely and deeply from available sources of text and who is motivated to read on a regular basis needs to exhibit skill and will.

Much of the literature on reading by teachers has focused on the need for good reading habits by practising and prospective teachers. It is believed that by virtue of the teachers' position, they should help develop a reading culture in those they teach. Unfortunately, Nigerian secondary school teachers do not appear to be doing this. There is therefore a need to examine the reading habits of teachers, vis-à-vis their teaching effectiveness. Consequently, the study investigated specific variables relating to teachers' reading habits such as number of hours devoted weekly to reading for pleasure, type of materials read, number of books bought in recent times and time devoted to pleasure reading.

Methods

The study population consisted of teachers from secondary schools in Osun State, Nigeria. A multi-stage sampling technique was used to select the sample. First, three local government areas were randomly chosen from the three geo-political zones in the state. From each local government area, ten secondary schools were purposively chosen. To qualify for inclusion, a school was required to have a minimum of 25 teachers, of which ten teachers

were randomly selected as study participants. In all, 300 hundred teachers from 30 secondary schools were approached in their schools and asked to respond to a questionnaire on reading habits and teaching effectiveness. From this initial sample, 235 teachers (male = 108, female = 127), who returned the survey questionnaire, constituted the final sample. This figure represents 78% of the initial sample of teachers who were administered the questionnaire. The age range of the eventual study participants was between 22 and 53 years; about 56% of them had the Bachelor degree, 30.2% had academic qualifications below the Bachelor degree and 13.6% had postgraduate qualifications.

The research instrument was a survey questionnaire. It was adjudged by two experts in Tests and Measurement to have content and face validity, while reliability analysis showed that it had high internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha = 0.88). The questionnaire is divided into four sections. Section 1 was designed to collect demographic information such as sex, age, academic qualifications, subject specialization and length of teaching experience. Section 2 consists of items intended to measure number of hours devoted weekly to reading for pleasure, nature of materials read, and number of books bought in the last year. Section 3 of the instrument measures respondents' attitude to recreational reading. It consists of ten statements on importance of reading for which respondents were to indicate their level of agreement on a three-point scale of 'Not true of me,' 'Partially true of me' and 'True of me.' Each statement is scored one to three, thereby cumulating in a minimum of 10 and maximum of 30 marks. A respondent's mean score on the ten items was used to classify him or her as having good, fair or poor attitude to reading. Respondents with a mean score of 1 were classified as having poor attitude to reading; those with 2 and 3 were classified as having fair or good attitude to reading respectively. Section 4 of the questionnaire contains ten items describing various aspects of respondents' teaching responsibilities. The items are intended to measure respondents' teaching effectiveness on a five-point rating scale of 'Not at All', 'Rarely', 'Sometimes', 'Most of the Time' and 'All the Time'. Each item is scored from one to five, culminating in a total score ranging from 10 to 50. The mean scores of respondents on the ten items in this section were used to classify them into three levels of teaching effectiveness i.e. poor, fair and good. Respondents with a mean score of 3 were classified as fair, those below 3 were classified as poor while those with mean score above 3 were classified as good. The higher the scores obtained in this section, the better the teaching effectiveness of respondents. Data were analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics.

Results

A major objective of the study was to describe the teachers' reading habits in terms of the number of hours they devoted weekly to reading for pleasure, type of materials read, number of books bought in recent times and time they engaged in reading for pleasure. Data collected on each of these variables were subjected to descriptive analysis using frequency counts and percentages.

As shown in Table 1, the majority of teachers (50.2%) reported that they devoted less than one hour weekly to reading for pleasure. Only few of them (11.1%) read more than two hours weekly. About 25% reported that they did not have any leisure time, suggesting that they probably had no consistent plan to engage in reading outside their official working hours. On when they usually engaged in reading for pleasure, a substantial proportion of the teachers (23.4%) admitted that it was only when they had to travel on a journey that they read for pleasure. Data on materials they usually read for pleasure indicate that religious books had the highest percentage (27.7%) followed by novels (21.3%) and books related to their

discipline (18.7%). Only 15.7% read newspapers and magazines for pleasure while 6.4% read just any materials that came their way. Data were also collected on the number of personal books bought in the last 12 months. About 41.7% reported that they did not buy any book; 40.9% bought at least one or two books while 12.8% bought three to four books. Only a small percentage (4.7) bought more than four books in the last one year.

The data in Table 2 provide a descriptive analysis of teachers' attitude to reading. On the basis of scores obtained in Section 3 of the research questionnaire, the teachers were classified as having poor, fair or good attitudes to reading. Using these categories, 67 teachers representing 28.5% were classified as having poor attitude to reading; 105 teachers representing 44.7% had fair attitude to reading while 63 teachers (26.8%) were classified as having good attitude to reading. The data in Table 2 also shows the teachers' classification according to their teaching effectiveness. Based on scores obtained in Section 4 of the research instrument, the teaching effectiveness of 22 teachers (9.4%) was described as poor; 128 (54.5%) were classified as fair while 85 representing (36.2%) were classified as having good teaching effectiveness. Further attempt was made to ascertain the relationship between the teachers' attitude to reading and their teaching effectiveness. In this respect, data obtained on attitude to reading and teaching effectiveness were subjected to correlation analysis. The results as shown in Table 3 indicate a Pearson correlation coefficient of .624 on the relationship between teaching effectiveness and attitude to reading. This value is significant at 0.05 level, which shows that there was a significant positive relationship between teaching effectiveness and teachers' attitude to reading.

Discussion

The results of this study have shown, among other things, that the majority of secondary school teachers in the study did not have a positive attitude to reading. It is apparent from data obtained on the amount of time devoted weekly to reading for pleasure that the majority of teachers did not spend enough time reading. As shown in the results, only 11% of teachers devoted more than two hours weekly to recreational reading. Data on materials they usually read for pleasure also indicate poor attitude to reading as only 10% of teachers read materials outside their discipline. In the same vein, more than 41% of teachers reported that they did not buy any personal book in the last 12 months. The responses further indicated that the majority of teachers did not have a consistent programme of reading for recreational purposes. Cumulatively, these findings point to the fact that the teachers' attitude to reading was poor and would require urgent and radical improvement.

Many scholars have lamented the poor attitude of Nigerians to recreational reading as well as the declining reading culture among teachers and students (Obah, 1980; Daraman, 2000; Ojielo, 2001; Gojeh, 2004). Reasons often canvassed for these phenomena include the notion that the Nigerian people have an elaborate oral tradition which does not support reading. According to Ojielo, Nigerians would prefer listening to a story instead of reading it; a practice which accounts for the popularity of home video among the people. Closely linked to this therefore, is the issue of ignorance of the benefits of reading on the part of the teachers. In spite of constraints, people usually find a way to get things done if they believe in it. After all, as the adage goes, "Where there is a will, there is a way". This submission is confirmed by Anderson (2004) as he lists 'a lack of awareness' as the primary reason for teachers' reluctance to change.

The poor reading culture of teachers as found in this study may also be attributed to

factors such as lack of good libraries, paucity of reading materials as well as lack of conducive reading environment in the Nigerian school system. According to Ezema & Ekere (2009), only few schools have good libraries while the majority have limited dog-eared books locked up in few cupboards in the principal or head teacher's office. The lack of adequate library facilities is compounded by teachers' unwillingness to engage in recreational reading. Findings from an earlier study by Omoniyi (2002) revealed that most teachers did not bother to use the library again once they graduated. Those who used the library occasionally did so to keep abreast of current socio-economic and political situations in the country. Only a minority used the library to widen their horizons in their various fields.

It could be argued that the poor economic situation in Nigeria is mainly responsible for teachers' inability to procure personal books for recreational reading. Apart from the fact that teachers are generally poorly paid, they are owed arrears of salaries in many states. As a result, many of them are not economically positioned to buy books whose costs continually skyrocket; they then resort to petty trading and other menial jobs after school hours to make ends meet, leaving them with little or no time for reading. Thus, poverty and economic hardship contribute to poor reading culture among teachers. It is not surprising, therefore, that the findings of this study revealed that many teachers were unable to set aside quality time for reading or buy personal books for recreational reading.

Another major finding of the study is the significant positive relationship between teaching effectiveness and teachers' attitude to reading. As shown in the results, teachers with poor attitude to reading tended to be ineffective in teaching while those with good attitude to teaching were found to be very effective in teaching. This finding is not contrary to the researchers' expectations. It reinforces the assumption that teaching effectiveness is a by-product of reading as exemplified in the works of researchers such as Delgado-Gaitan (1990), Stanovich & Cunningham (1992, 1993) and Echols, West, Stanovich & Zehr (1996). Teachers who show positive attitude to reading, and translate this to action, are able to acquire more knowledge in their disciplines than those who have negative attitude to reading. Also, teachers who read widely are likely to acquire new experiences and methods of imparting instruction to their students. Such teachers are likely to be better equipped in handling students' classroom behavioural problems than those who have less positive attitude to reading.

Conclusion

This study has demonstrated that secondary school teachers in Osun State of Nigeria have poor attitude to reading. It has also shown that teachers' attitude to reading has a significant bearing on their teaching effectiveness. These findings have far-reaching implications for teacher education programmes in Nigeria. First, teacher-training institutions in Nigeria should re-design their curriculum to emphasize the acquisition of reading skills by teacher trainees. Second, the Ministries of Education should put in place a virile post-qualification literacy programme for Nigerian teachers with a view to improving their reading habits and teaching effectiveness. This should be done through in-service training programmes and refresher courses for serving teachers. Also, the government should put in place structures that will encourage Nigerian teachers to be enthusiastic readers. Such structures would include the provision of good literacy materials in school libraries. Before providing the materials, teachers should be consulted to determine their interests with a view to ensuring that the range of reading materials to be provided reflects those interests. In addition, efforts to improve the reading culture of teachers should include strategies that

promote their economic empowerment. Improving teachers' salaries and conditions of service will reduce their level of poverty or economic hardships and make them able to buy personal books for recreational reading.

A major limitation of this study should be acknowledged. The study relied exclusively on quantitative data obtained from a small sample of teachers. This sample might not be representative of secondary school teachers in the general Nigerian population. Thus, there is need for caution in generalizing the results of the study beyond Osun State where the study was conducted. In spite of this limitation, the study provides useful insights into the subject matter of reading and teaching effectiveness of secondary school teachers in Nigeria.

Table 1: Descriptive Analysis of Variables Relating to Teachers' Reading Habits

Variable		Frequency	
		N	Percent
Weekly Reading Hours	Less than One Hour	118	50.2
	One – Two Hours	91	38.7
	More than Two Hours	26	11.1
Time for Pleasure Reading	No Leisure Time	60	25.5
	At Night	28	11.9
	Before Bedtime	31	13.2
	Morning	17	7.2
	While Travelling	55	23.4
	Any Free time	44	18.7
Type of Materials Read for Pleasure	Books Related to My Discipline	44	18.7
	Religious Books	65	27.7
	Newspapers/Magazines	37	15.7
	Books outside My Discipline	24	10.2
	Novels	50	21.3
	Just Any	15	6.4
No of Personal Books Bought in the Last Year	None	98	41.7
	One-Two Books	96	40.9
	Three to Four Books	30	12.8
	More than Four Books	11	4.7

Table 2: Descriptive Analysis of Teachers' Attitude to Reading and Teaching Effectiveness

Variable	Assessment						Total
	Poor		Fair		Good		
	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent	
Attitude to Reading	67	28.5	105	44.7	63	26.8	235
Teaching Effectiveness	22	9.4	128	54.4	85	36.2	235

Table 3: Relationship between Teaching Effectiveness and Attitude to Reading

Variables		Teaching Effectiveness	Attitude to Reading
TEACHING EFFECTIVENESS	Pearson Correlation	1	.624(*)
	Sig.	.	.000
	N	235	235
ATTITUDE TO READING	Pearson Correlation	.624(*)	1
	Sig.	.000	.
	N	235	235

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level

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