

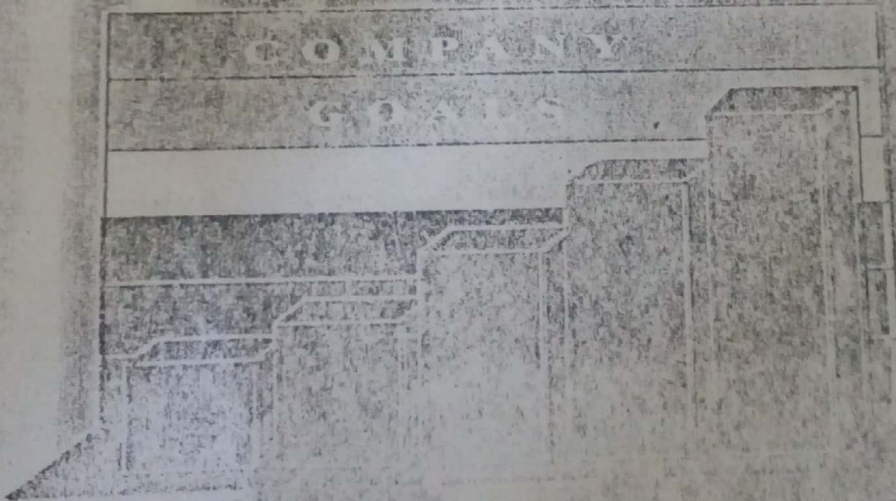
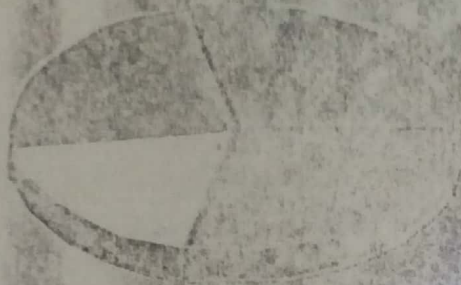
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VOL. 6 NO. 1

2008

JOURNAL OF EDUCATIONAL FOUNDATIONS AND MANAGEMENT

JEFAM



JOURNAL OF THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATIONAL
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IMPACT OF PERSONALITY AND ENVIRONMENTAL VARIABLES ON LEARNERS' READING ABILITIES

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Abstract

This paper highlights the place of reading in learners' all-round wellbeing. It looks at the poor reading abilities of students at all levels. This study was embarked upon to investigate the possible variables responsible for this anomalies. A sample of one hundred junior secondary school students were used for the study. Two hypotheses were raised. Findings revealed that learners had problems reading at home and in schools. Thus, it was concluded that the variable influencing students' reading abilities are both personal and environmental. Based on the findings, it was recommended that learners parents, teachers, school authorities and the government should provide conducive environment for learners to read, so that their ability levels could pave way for higher language proficiency.

Introduction

Globally, the accomplishment of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) by 2015 seems to drive the rate of progress of many countries. In Nigeria, the attainment of these goals especially the Universal Primary/Basic Education goal is of utmost importance to the government at all levels. Basic education is the education for all school age children. The aim is that they would be literate that is the ability to read and write. This is firmly hung on the fact that literacy is the key to educational, political, economical, material, spiritual and technological development of the individual, communities and

the nation. Literacy determines the overall level of development of a nation, (Bello 2002, Ofodu and Omolewa, 2008).

Reading is an important language skill. Reading is an essential tool for the acquisition of all kinds of human knowledge. Reading is a potent weapon. It is the key that unlocks various kinds of knowledge and skills. Generally, learners read for certain reasons among which are: to obtain required information, comprehend written information and evaluate information from printed materials. At the secondary school level, the ability to read is critical to success. The students at this level need to possess adequate comprehension skills such as the ability to distinguish main ideas from a supporting detail, being able to infer, and the ability to evaluate or pass judgments on what is read (Oyetunde, 2002). Despite these importances of reading, research and experience have revealed that many Nigerian secondary school students lack these abilities (Lawal 2005, Ofodu, 2005).

Various reasons have been advanced for these disabilities. To Lawal (1991), students' reading disabilities are traceable to certain variables called personality and environmental variables. The personality variables are cognitive, affective, psychometric and pathological factors while environmental variables include: the home, school and the society. Personality variables are factors influencing reading abilities within the learners while environmental variables are variables outside the learners. This study was designed to find out the relationship between these two variables on students' reading abilities. Two research hypotheses were raised. They are:

Ho₁: There is no significant relationship between personality variables and students' reading abilities.

Ho₂: There is no significant relationship between environmental variables and students' reading abilities.

Methodology

The descriptive research design was employed for the study. The population consisted of all junior secondary school students in Alimosho Local Government Area of Lagos State, Nigeria. Through simple random sampling techniques, ten (10) schools were sampled for the study. In each sampled school, a total of 100 (One hundred) students responded to the questionnaire titled "Variables Influencing Reading Abilities" (VIRA).

The instrument for the study was a self developed validated questionnaire which was subject to the face and content. Its validity before the administration consisted of two sections. Section A deals with the biodata while section B contains 18 items on personality and environmental variables

ng students reading abilities. The first aspect of section B deals with questions demanding responses from students based on personality variables while the second aspect deals with the environmental variables, the respondents were asked to tick the most appropriate to them.

Results

Data collected were analysed using simple percentage and chi-square statistical test. The findings are discussed below:

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant relationship between personality variables and students' reading abilities.

Table 1: Chi-Square on Personality Variables And Reading Abilities.

S/N	Items	Yes	No	X^2_{cal}
		%	%	
1	I devote much time to reading after school hours	24	76	27.41*
2	I read for two hours daily at least	40	60	4.00*
3	I read more often during exams & tests	75	25	25.01*
4	I have problems with pronunciation while reading	36	64	7.84*
5	I scribble down things while reading	37	63	6.76*
6	I write down the main points whenever I read	35	65	9.00*
7	I get the meaning from the printed page while reading	19	81	39.4*
8	I get distracted whenever I am reading	19	81	38.4*
9	I read books outside the recommended texts	40	60	4.00*
10	I often stop to recall whatever I read	20	80	36.00*

*. $X^2_{tab} = 3.84$ Df = 1 and $p < 0.05$

From table 1 above, the observed chi-square values for the variables were greater than the table value of 3.84 at 1 degree of freedom at 0.05 level of significance. The result of the X^2 test is thus rejected as there is significant difference between the X^2_{cal} and X^2_{tab} . Therefore, there is significant relationship between personality variables and reading abilities of students.

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant relationship between environmental variables and students' reading abilities.

Table 2: Chi-square on Environmental Variables and Reading Abilities

S/N	Items	%		X ² cal
		No	Yes	
1.	I like reading in the library	25	75	25.00*
2.	Lack of library facilities hinder reading	70	30	16.00*
3.	My parents buy all recommended texts	34	64	10.24*
4.	My parents read and assist me while reading	40	60	4.00*
5.	I do not like the way my teachers handle reading in my school	19	81	38.44*
6.	I will read better if teachers will pair or group me with other good readers	30	70	16.00*
7.	Teachers do not usually give reading assignments	18	82	40.96*

* X² table = 3.84 Df = 1 and p < 0.05

Table 2 reveals that the observed X² values for all the items was greater than the X² table value of 3.84 at 1 degree of freedom and at 0.05 level of significance. Therefore, the hypothesis was rejected. There is significant relationship between environmental variables and reading abilities.

Discussion

Findings clearly show that students do not devote sufficient time to reading as they do not read up to two hours daily, although they read often during exams and tests (75%), they only read to pass. These factors could affect reading, reading interest, reading abilities and reading comprehension. These factors are affective personality variables as stated by Lawal (1991). The findings also indicated that there are psychomotoric and pathological factors affecting students' reading abilities such as inability to recall easily what one has read, (80%) inability to get the full gist and intermittent stoppage (81%) while reading to get the meaning because majority of them responded in the negative form.

The results reveal that students do not make effective use of either school or public libraries (70%). Two reasons may explain why these students do not. The poverty level of the parents and the quest for material things may not allow the parents have sufficient time to encourage and monitor their children's reading and visit to libraries. These factors may have been responsible for the non-availability of recommended reading texts for students (64%) and the non-involvement of parents in the reading activities of students (60%). This confirms the findings of Oduolowu and Lawani (2005) that most parents do not recognize the importance of parental involvement in home language activities. They emphasized that parents should encourage their children by showing interest in their progress in school, taking part in

home reading, listening to them and discussing books with them. Parents' involvement in children reading activities should be encouraged to make learning to read and reading to learn enjoyable experiences for them.

On the part of teachers, students complained of their instructional practices. Teachers do not give learners' reading assignments on regular basis (82%) and do not engage learners in pair or group reading activities (70%). These confirm the findings of Ofodu (2003) and Isiugo-Abanihe (2002) about the lack of reading groups in schools.

Conclusion

From the results of the study, it is safe to conclude that the variables affecting students' reading abilities are both within and without – that is, learners are personally and environmentally influenced to read. Hence, the onus is on learners, parents, teachers, the government and school authorities to provide and encourage learners at all levels to read, comprehend and increase their reading interests and proficiencies.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, it was recommended that students should be exposed to reading earlier in life so that all the skills, interests and abilities that they need should have been developed. Early vocabulary development and good use of punctuation marks should be taught and encouraged early since these influence learners' reading abilities.

Moreover, parents should see reading as a family affair and therefore make time out to read to, listen to and assist their children in their language improvement activities. Parents who engage their children in child labour and therefore deprive these children of reading after school hours should be identified and asked to desist from such. Sufficient reading materials are prerequisite for sound reading abilities, parents should therefore provide adequate materials in the home for their children. They should also deliberately ask their children to visit school and public libraries.

Teachers on their part should always engage their learners in reading activities, especially pair and group reading so as to encourage interactive reading among learners of different ability levels.

The government at all levels should provide adequate reading materials in schools as well as public reading centres in order to promote reading.

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