

Awareness and use of Effective Study Techniques (EST) among Secondary School Students in Rivers State of Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

The study investigated the awareness and use of effective study techniques (EST) among post-basic students in Rivers State of Nigeria. It covered the influence of gender (male and female), location (rural and urban), and type (public and private). Three hypotheses were raised to guide the study. A total of 400 post-basic students were randomly selected from 10 secondary schools. The research design was of the survey type and the stratified random sampling technique was used for the selection of the students. A research instrument "Students' Awareness and use of effective study techniques questionnaire" (SAUESTQ) constructed in the Likert fashion was adopted and used to elicit responses from the respondents. It was validated by experts in test and measurement. A reliability coefficient value of 0.72 was obtained through the test and re-test method. Data collected were analyzed using the independent samples t-test on the three hypotheses at the 0.05 level of significance. The results revealed that students had very low awareness of effective study techniques. There was no significant difference in awareness in all the three hypotheses and hence were accepted. Recommendations were made for improvement.

Keywords: Education, Study techniques, Likert, Schools

INTRODUCTION

The development of any nation is primarily predicted to a very large extent on the quality of the products of the educational system operating in that society. Realizing the expectant roles such products are to play in the affairs of that society, governments, organized bodies and well-meaning individuals have placed so many premiums to their development via the instrumentality of education by establishing schools from preprimary to tertiary levels.

This is because capital is a result and product of the development process rather than its source. The true source and driving force for development is the human capital; others are values, attitudes, knowledge, skills, organization and motivation of the people. The present knowledge gap between the developed and developing economies points to the vast underdevelopment and underutilization of

that most precious of all resources, a resource which Nigeria possesses in great abundance (Bregman and Obanya 2003). To fast track the development of Nigeria's human resource base, which is the main spring of our prosperous future, is to impart greater knowledge and provide easy access to dependable and reliable quality information. Education is not only a means of acquiring knowledge, power or wealth, or an exist route to improved living, but more importantly that of generating values, liberating the mind, impacting positively to society and the beginning of a lifetime of contribution to humanity.

Quality education empowers its beneficiaries towards national reconstruction, reconciliation, socio economic development and restoration of human dignity resulting in transformation of the society. Such education produces the able man, man of truth and leader of men. It opens new horizon and vistas for the individuals, releases new aspirations and develops new values, commitments, strengthens competencies, generates in an individual a critical outlook on social and political realities and sharpens the ability for self-examination, self monitoring and self criticism. When an educational input is properly planned, it can lead to an increase in the gross domestic product (GDP), enhance cultural richness, build greater receptivity to technology, and improve the quality and effectiveness of government and other human engagements (Opataye, 2010).

Secondary education serves as the link in the chain between primary and tertiary levels through which manpower is selected and developed. It aims at preparing young ones for useful living and for higher education. Among the objectives of secondary education is to lead to a well prepared individual capable of living successfully in diverse society caught with the intricacies of modern living.

Generally, secondary education in Nigeria is divided into junior and senior secondary cycles, each focused on different age groups and having vastly different teaching objectives. Junior or upper basic education provides schooling for the age group (11-14) years while senior or post basic is for age between (15-18) years.

In line with Education for All (EFA), the education system in Nigeria is restructured to 9:3:4, making the 9 years a mandatory free and compulsory Universal Basic Education (UBE) for every child and this is subdivided into 3 years, lower basic, (Basic 1-3), 3 years middle basic (Basic 1-3), 3 years middle basic (Basic 4-6), and 3 years upper basic (junior secondary) (Basic 7-9). A child is expected to proceed to 3 years post basic (senior secondary (SS 1-3), or technical education) after which he could access tertiary education for a minimum of 4 years for a degree programme (NERDC 2008).

Post basic students preparation against the academic challenges of school would go a long way in meeting education goals. The quality student is one who has whole heartedly accepted the vision of secondary education and who is ready to internalize the underlying principles of new learning, whose learning style is governed by control and orderliness. His one who can experiment in the face of new challenges, whose approach to studies is sufficiently broad to emphasize understanding and solving problems of learning in favour of not merely distilling codified knowledge but who can participate in the task of continuously improving oneself on the attainment of secondary education. For the system to have this type of learners, adequate preparation is necessary to intimate them on the use of effective study techniques (habits).

Some of the challenges readily observed in schools include dearth of quality and committed teachers, poor motivation and low intrinsic value on the part of students for education, consistent poor performance in public examination malpractice

among others. This study examined the awareness and use of effective study techniques (Habits) by post basic students of Rivers State of Nigeria.

The Concept of Study Techniques (Habits)

Azikiwe (1998) describes study habit (techniques) as the adopted way and manner a student plans his private reading after classroom learning so as to attain mastery of the subject. Denga (1983) says, study habits are the extra learning ability which an individual student acquires for the success of his academic life. It is a propeller of better academic performance.

Nneji (1998) explains that the ability of a student to study carefully after normal classroom studies, builds in him good study skills for better academic performance. This suggests that study habit can either be good or poor, hence Vipene (2005) opines that good study habits are assets to the learner because they (habits) assist students to attain mastery in areas of excellent performance while the reverse constitution constraints to leaning and achievement leaning to academic failure.

Bakare (1977) states that many students fail and performs poorly in academic works not because they do not know how to adopt the most effective methods of learning; but they need to learn the effective study habits. As no one is perfect, a good student can often raise his grade higher by cultivating better study habits. Slain (2000) explain that study habit help to develop in the student necessary skill amid at improvement in reading, comprehension and examination performance. Adequate acquisition of good study habit builds in the student confidence before, during and after an examination. Onyejiaku (1987) and Akinade (1989) cited in Iwundu (1995) state that a student makes a schedule of his time and sticks to it. He tries as much as possible to limit his campus activities outside scholarship. Also, he should try to take short rest during study and ensure his mind does not wander when studying with full concentration. Good study habit helps a learner to acquire better skills for effective academic performance.

An effective study technique (habit) could therefore be seen as a goal-oriented or result-determined and systematically patterned way a student willingly and consistently adopts in his private studies with a view to attaining success in his academic activities. It could also be regarded as a success-driven device consciously and consistently adopted by a student in his private study engagement in order to achieve excellence in his period of academic tutelage. From the foregoing therefore, he cannot achieve this without the awareness and use of various effective study techniques (Habits).

Awareness (knowledge) has always been an essential and distinguishing feature of every human society, since human beings are unique among all animal species in their extended capacity to formulate, systematize preserve and consciously transmit organized bodies of knowledge from one individual, community, generation and location to another into a concise and logical manner (Opatye 2010). UNESCO/BREDA (1998) opines that the term knowledge society has gained prevalence in recent years due to the revolutionary strides in technology and the rapid evolution of new systems for gathering, transmission and application of information. The convergence of technologies: television, computers, networking, satellite communication and the internet, constitute the technological basis for the knowledge evolution.

Their rapid proliferation over the past decades has made possible movement of information around the world at lightning speed. The dramatic acceleration in the development, accumulation, dissemination and exchange in the blurring and transcendence of traditional boundaries between fields of knowledge and in the

emergence of new knowledge-base industries are defining characteristic of the knowledge revolution, (Opateye, 2010). He asserts that the knowledge revolution marks a fundamental shift in human development toward the unlimited, indeed infinite creative potentials of human processes. This shift is really not as unusual as we may have thought since all resources are products of the human mind. An item becomes a resource only when the human mind recognizes a valuable use of it. Development has always been based on the creative and imaginative capacity of the human mind. In this context, the knowledge society therefore is not really something that suddenly emerged out of nowhere. The awareness of post basic students to study techniques (habits) is an essential ingredient to fully prepare them for academic challenges at school.

The conventional school system has adopted the preparatory class otherwise known as type of study, an inheritance from the British educational system into out school curriculum as an extension of students engagement in academic activities where students after their usual routine class activities go back to the classrooms on their own every afternoon and evening to study. Some students and teachers alike depend solely on this method of study which is not usually productive and effective without knowing that other techniques exist. A few of them are herein highlighted.

Agina-Obu (1996 and 2010) posits that setting positive attitude and goal from the onset of admission into secondary school, effective use of time, how to organize ones studies in terms of choosing where, what, when and how to study are effective means of academic success. He states further that students have to be regular and punctual to class, identify colleagues who are brighter than them in subject areas and be friendly with them, develop private study time tables and stick to it; have discussion group, have past subject question papers and revise, but never force oneself by taking stimulants. Other study techniques are Okoye and Akinboyes creative study method, Robinsons PQRST among others.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

(a) Data

This study adopted the survey research design as it allows for respondents to speak for themselves. Although usually criticized for the relevance on self report instrument, it is a useful fact-finding tool for education (Kerlinger and Lee, 2000). The population of the study comprised all post basic school students in 10 out of the 23 from the local government areas of Rivers State of Nigeria. A stratified random selection procedure was used to select 400 post basic students to supply the required information. Stratified random sampling techniques were used so as to reflect all the variables under study (gender: female or male; school location: rural or urban; School type: private or public). The 400 students were chosen because they were randomly selected. Respondents were drawn from ten (10) secondary schools randomly chosen out of twenty secondary schools in the Local Government areas. The instrument used to elicit responses was a self-designed questionnaire by the researchers titled Students Awareness and Use of Effective Study Techniques Questionnaire (SAUESTQ).

The SAUESTQ consists of two (2) sections. Section A was on biographical data of the students (gender), school type; (public or private) and school location; (rural or urban). Section B was based on 10 items measuring study Techniques awareness. The items were responded to a 5-point Likert Scale of Strongly Agree (SA) = 5, Agree (A) = 4, Undecided (UD) =3, Disagree (DA) =2 and Strongly Disagree (SDA) = 1 for positively scored items while those for negatively scored are

on the reverse. The face or content validity of the instrument was established by giving it to some experts in test and measurement to scrutinize. Their comments and observations were utilized for restructuring some items of the instrument. The reliability of the instrument was determined through the test-retest method. A sample of 50 students was drawn from 5 schools outside the schools for the study and given copies of the questionnaire. A post test was administered after an interval of 2 weeks. The initial test and resulting scores of the pilot sample were correlated and a reliable coefficient value of 0.72 was obtained. The mean scores of the students were compared based on the idea of Orisaseyi (1977), to find out whether the respondent agreed, disagreed or were undecided on a particular statement. Thus, agreement = 4 & 5 undecided = 3, and disagreement = 1 & 2. The mean of 4 and 5 is 4.5; 3 and 4 = 3.5 ; and, 2 and 3 = 2.5. Thus, the range of agree = 3.5-4.4. Undecided = 2.5-3.4, disagree = 1.5 -2.4 and strongly disagree = 1.0-1.4., further arrangement of this gave agree = 3.5.-5.0, undecided = 2.5-3.4, disagree = 1.0-2.4. There were 10 items on the awareness of study techniques. Multiplying this with the range gave Agree = 35-50, undecided = 25-34, disagree = 10-24 were undecided and those who scored 10-24 had negative awareness to study techniques.

(b) Analytical Problems

Nigeria's Post Basic Education (NPBE) has 3 years of senior secondary education. This level is important to national development because it builds on the educational gains of basic education with a view of preparing students for tertiary education among others. In Nigeria, for some decades now, there has never been any public examination whether conducted by the West African Examination Council (WAEC), National Examinations Councils (NECO) or the Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board (JAMB) without a prevalence of examination malpractices or abysmal poor performance in such examinations. This obviously can adversely affect the manpower and socio-economic development of the Nigerian society. Agina-Obu (1995) opines that some of the challenges of students are low teacher – student ratio, inadequate preparation of students, frequent and prolonged strikes by teachers, indiscipline among students and schools lack of interest in WAEC publications.

In view therefore of the deplorable condition of post basic schools in the state in terms of inadequate teachers commitment to duty, unacceptable worrisome poor performance of students in public examinations, coupled with the ever-increasing wave of examination malpractice in schools, it is doubtful if post basic students of Rivers State of Nigeria are aware and use some effective study techniques (habits) that will help them to face the challenges of academics. Besides the routine of students to attend preparatory (Prep) classes in the afternoon and evening, are students aware of other ways they can improve on their studies?

The study therefore focused on assessing the awareness of post basic students of effective study techniques (habits) and their use. The following research questions guides the study:

- 1) To what extent are post basic students of Rivers State of Nigeria aware of effective study techniques (habits);
- 2) Are there significant differences in awareness of effective study techniques (habits) between: (a) Public and private school students? (b) Rural and urban school students?

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1: Students Awareness Table

Awareness Score	Description	No. of Students	%
0-24	Unaware	308	77%
25-34	Undecided	76	19%
35-50	Aware	16	4%
Total		400	100%

In a sample of 400 students drawn from 10 secondary schools only (16) representing 4% were awareness of the existence of effective study techniques (habits) in their schools while (76) representing 19% were undecided and 308 representing 77% were unaware and therefore not used any effective study technique.

Coalescing the (308) 77% unaware and (76) 19% undecided students gives (384) 96% which shows a very high degree of ignorance exhibited by students. Analysis shows that the (16) 4% who were aware of and use effective study techniques were from private urban schools.

Table 2: Use and non use of effective study techniques

Category	Number	Percentage
Use of Effective study techniques	5	31.25%
Non-use of Effective study technique	11	68.75
Total	16	100

Among the 16 post basic students who were aware of effective study techniques only (5) 31% have made use of some effective study techniques while (11) 69% of them have not.

Table 3: Influence of gender on student’s awareness of study techniques

Gender	N	X	Sd	Df	t-cal	t-crit	Result
Male	200	53.0	73	398	1.21	1.96	*not significant
Female	200	55.3	7.4				

Table 3 shows that the calculated t-value of 1.21 was lower than the critical t-value of 1.96 required for significance at the .05 level with 398 df, hence the alternative hypothesis was accepted and the alternative rejected. This implies that was no significant role gender played in boy’s awareness of effective study techniques.

Table 4: Influence of school location on student’s awareness of study techniques.

Location	N	X	Sd	Df	t-cal	t-crit	Result
Rural	200	53.7	78	398	1.02	1.96	*not significant
Female	200	55.3	6.8				

Table 4 shows mean awareness of rural and urban post basic students as 53.7 and 54.9 respectively with t-value of 1.02. This value is less than the critical value of 1.96. Therefore the hypothesis is accepted for there is no significant difference between rural and urban post-basic student's awareness of effective study techniques.

Table 5: Influence of school type on student's awareness and use of study techniques

School type	N	X	Sd	Df	t-cal	t-crit	Result
Public	230	48.3	14.9	398	0.06	1.96	*not significant
Private	170	48.4	14.0				

Table 5 shows mean awareness of public and private post basic school students of 48.3 and 48.4 respectively with the value of .06 which is less than the critical t-value of 1.96 and hence the hypothesis is accepted implying there is no significant difference in the awareness of effective study techniques (EST) between private and public post basic school students.

The results of this study showed that post basic school students are generally not aware that there exists effective study techniques (EST) that will enable them improve in their studies and by extension enhance their performances in their academic activities so as to minimize exam malpractice.

Even the 16 students out of the 400 who claimed to be aware, only 5 of them claimed to be using it. This means only 1.25% of the population under study actually used EST to guide their studies and were found in privately-owned schools. This indeed is worrisome because, if students have poor knowledge of an important tool as EST, how can they be encouraged to use same for good performance?

This finding therefore goes contrary to that of Bakare where he stated that many students fail or perform poorly in their academic works not because they did not know or do not use the most effective method of studying but need to learn effective study habits. The group used in this study has clearly claimed ignorant of such methods and so may not be able to learn how to use them. It is one thing to know the existence of a particular item; it is another thing to learn how to use it. Without knowledge of it, there can be no way one can learn how to use it. Awareness of what to learn determines how to use it.

Again, the few that claimed awareness were from private schools in the urban areas. This may probably be as a result of the effective supervisory nature of the private schools. Unlike their counterparts in the public schools, teachers in the private schools appear to be more committed to their duties than those in the public schools who exhibit lasses fair attitude to their work due to poor supervision even when they are better remunerated than the former.

Little wonder that students are usually agitated whenever it is time to assess them on what they are supposed to have studied. For when one is not adequately prepared to face any examination, the tendency therefore is to see whatever one can apply to assist him achieve success in the examination, because examination in Nigeria is regarded as a "do or die" affair.

Since the three null hypotheses tested at 0.05 alpha level with a degree of freedom (df) of 398 with the calculated t-value less than 1.96, all the hypotheses were accepted, implying neither gender nor locations or type of school played any significant role in the children's awareness of EST.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study revealed that students had very low awareness of effective study techniques. There was no significant difference in awareness in all the three hypotheses and hence were accepted. Since the major reason for teaching and learning is to develop the learner to perform effectively in whatever task he faces, this study recommends the following strategies to actualize the task.

- (a) Teachers should regularly update their knowledge on ways to assist students improve on their studies.
- (b) Teachers should regularly read educational journals and other text materials besides their subject areas.
- (c) Provision should be made for teachers by state ministry of education to attend seminars and workshops regularly.
- (d) Supervision of schools should be made more effective to encourage teachers to ensure effective and commitment to duty.
- (e) Guidance and counselling units be established in schools to encourage develop habits of study.
- (f) Teachers should be abreast with more innovative methods of study and introduce such at the orientation week of newly admitted students.
- (g) Governments and organized education improvement mined bodies should assist schools by providing libraries stuffed with current journals and texts for both students and teachers to use.
- (h) In this age of emphasis on computer literacy, computer facilities should be provided in schools to enhance further learning and modern innovation study techniques.
- (i) Parents and guardians should also be educated through the PTA to understand that apart from the popular there are other effective study techniques that can improve their children/wards performance in school. This will help reduce pressure sometimes mounted out of anxiety by them on their children/wards and teachers when examination approaches.

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