



Reading Habits of Selected Elementary School Teachers in Botswana

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated the reading habits of 50 elementary school teachers in Botswana to determine their reading habits. Data were collected using questionnaires, interviews and observations. Results show that the majority of the participants consider themselves as dormant readers who read the Bible, newspapers and magazines. Conversely, few of the participants indicated that they read library books, professional journals and engage in online reading. The participants pointed out the lack of academic materials in the schools and homes. They also complained of the cost of buying books and the lack of time to engage in leisure reading due to heavy teaching work schedules. All of the participants recognised the importance of the skill of reading albeit they were not avid readers. An important recommendation emanating from this study was that teacher training colleges should introduce taught programs in reading education for elementary school teachers to scaffold learners' motivation and overall school success.

KEYWORDS: Teachers reading habits, Botswana, Teachers' training colleges

INTRODUCTION

Reading is a relevant skill that we all need to engage intensively and extensively. such, reading is important for teachers. There is a direct link between academic reading and extensive reading (Adeyemi, 2012; Anderson, 1996; Pressley, Mohan, Raphael & Fingeret, 2007). It has been found that people who read extensively perform extremely well in their academic work. Since avid readers read whatever they lay their hands on, it then becomes easy for them to read and study their lecture notes, prescribed academic texts, hence good results at the end. Through reading books for pleasure, magazines, and newspapers, readers develop or build their vocabulary which in turn helps them

improve their writing skills. The vocabulary acquired helps them to express and explain their points clearly in good English, through the use of appropriate jargon. Reading assists them to understand the meaning of words as they stand-alone or when used in a context, making it easy for our comprehension. Teachers should practice what they preach (Ketsitlile & Galegane, 2010). Reading is an essential part of any student; it is a life-long learning skill. It is one of the skills that students acquire when learning a language, some of the other skills are speaking, writing and listening. "Reading is the foundation which other academic skills are built" (Adebayo, 2009:1). It is through reading that students, teachers and others expand or widen their vocabulary. Teachers should be seen as role models by their students, and they should love reading so that they can pass same to their students. According to Commeyras & Mazile (2011), teachers should "practice what they preach" this means that if they say teachers love reading, it should be seen and they should share stories of what they read with their pupils to arouse the pupil's curiosity and interest in reading. For teachers to promote and encourage extensive reading in their classes, they should always give their students reading lists of books to read and ask them to write summaries of what was read. Such exercise would help cultivate the love of reading in their students. The site for the present study is Palapye, located in the Central region of Botswana.

Background to the study

Palapye is in the Central District of Botswana. It is growing at a very fast rate and has twelve (12) primary schools, six (6) junior secondary schools and one (1) senior school. Botswana International University of Science and Technology, (BIUST), located in the same community, was established through an Act of Parliament of in Botswana in 2005. The Act aims to accelerate the transformation of Botswana into a knowledge-based economy through the production of highly skilled personnel who can compete internationally, enhance research and development in the major science and technology fields, and provide entrepreneurship support in critical areas of the local, national, continental and global economy. Both researchers are academic staff of BIUST; they teach Academic Literacy and Professional Communication courses to Science and Engineering students.

The present study was motivated by Commeyras & Mazile (2011) study. According to the latter, their study revealed that teachers in the lower and upper classes in a small village in Botswana value and

treasure reading. Importantly, these values can be transferred to students. The misconception that Botswana teachers do not have a culture of reading is not true. The reading habits of Botswana teachers are different from those of the other parts of the western world. The teachers in Commeyras & Mazile's study found among eighty-six (86) primary school teachers that they preferred reading newspapers to all other text genres of interest was that most of the teachers responded in a survey that they would like to participate in a book club for teachers.

It makes sense that all classrooms should be managed by teachers who are not only dedicated to the children they teach but are also devoted to the subjects they teach (Hill, Beers, & Kylene, 1993). Such devotion means there will be on-going learning through self-study and continuing education, not forgetting a love for reading. "At the very least, teachers would stay literate in their fields by reading current journals and books on their topics." (Hill, Beers, & Kylene, 1993, p. 3). There is a general misconception that people of African origin do not read (Commeyras & Mazile 2011) and rely on oral traditions than print reading. Reading the printed word in Botswana and other oral societies was introduced by Christian missionaries (Landau, 1995). There is a belief that reading became something Africans did for "utilitarian, functional and achievement purposes" (Macheng, 1982, p. 34).

The Botswana Government has always encouraged a reading culture among its citizens as evidenced in the 1994 Revised National Policy on Education. One of the objectives of the 1994 policy document was to "promote a culture of reading among Botswana" (Republic of Botswana, 1994, p. 27). Also, the 200 Pula note shows a mother teaching her young ones how to read.

Research Questions

The questions that this study is mainly focusing on are:

1. Do primary school teachers read?
2. What do they read?
3. When do teachers read?

Theoretical Framework

The Interpretive Framework informed this study. The Interpretive framework can be traced back to Edmund Husserl's philosophy of **Phenomenology**. The key construct in Husserl's framework of Phenomenology is the study of things as they appear in our experience (the way we experience things from first person point of view). According to Chilisa & Preece (2005), interpretivism views knowledge

as subjective and socially constructed.

Another tenet of interpretive/ phenomenology framework is the notion of 'beliefs' or 'habits.' Is it common, cultural or a habit for teachers to read? Hence, we found phenomenology to be relevant. In phenomenology the voice of the participant is necessary. From a phenomenological stance, the truth lies in the human experience (Ketsitlile and Galegane, 2010). Hence, semi-structured interviews were employed as one of the tools of collecting data in the present study.

Review of the literature

The phrase that says “if you want to hide something from an African put it between a book” (Anonymous) is very common in Botswana as it is believed that Batswana do not have a culture of reading (Commeyras & Mazile, 2011). Based on this notion, our study sought to understand the reading habits of select primary school teachers in Palapye. The reading activity is said to be a habit which one does from time to time. Chettri (2013) established that reading habits could be identified by asking three questions, which are: (i) how often, how much and what is being read. These questions can be turned into factors that can be measured, which are the frequency of reading, the number of reading materials read, and the time spent on reading.

Other scholars such as (Adeyemi, 2012; Anderson, 1996; Pressley, Mohan, Raphael & Fingeret, 2007) and Chettri & Rout (2013), pointed out that reading habits can also be linked to age, gender, professional growth, educational background and students' academic performance. The habit of reading can be cultivated by teachers to their students at a very young age, and it takes quite a long time to achieve, so teachers should practise what they preach (Ketsitlile & Galegane, 2010). It is noteworthy that by so doing teachers would be opening a gateway to knowledge acquisition in their students, as the students will develop critical thinking skills, personalities, mental capacity and above all gain creativeness, Chettri & Rout (2013). They further argue that reading is important for opening up one's social, economic and civic life.

Individuals when exposed to reading tend always to choose their reading interest in the form of the genre of literature they like based on subject content. Some would, for example, like novels, or another genre such as books for pleasure/leisure, reality magazines,

biographies, nature's religious texts or farming texts. If individuals are then observed to be reading these information resources on a repeated basis during their spare time, then they can be referred to as reading habits. According to Sangkaeo, reading habits refer to “the behaviour which expresses the liking of reading of individuals types of reading and tastes of reading. It is a pattern with which an individual organises his or her reading” (1999:2)

Reading habits vary from country to country or nation to nation, which is why in this study the researchers want to check if teachers in the two mentioned Palapye schools read. One would then ask if teachers in Palapye who are supposed to be promoting reading in schools are doing it so as to pass the culture to their students or not. Do they value books and reading, if they do, reading as a habit would be passed to their students.

Definition of reading

It is important to define what mean by reading before we go deep into discussing the reading habits of teachers so that readers of this paper may understand the arguments brought forward. The American National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) 1997 defines reading as:

- “Reading is an active and complex process that involves: (a) understanding written text, (b) developing and interpreting meaning, and (c) using meaning as appropriate to type of text, purpose, and situation.” (NAEP, 1997:2)

The American National Reading Panel (NRP) defines it as:

- “Reading is the process of constructing meaning from written texts. It is a complex skill requiring the coordination of a number of interrelated sources of information

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- Reading is the process of constructing meaning through the dynamic interaction among: (1) the reader's existing knowledge; (2) the information suggested by the text being read; and (3) the context of the reading situation” (NRP,2000:2).

As explained above reading is a process, it does not happen in one day and that is why teachers are encouraged to cultivate it on their students. We would like to establish if teaches are exemplary or role models to their students in engaging in this skill of reading. It is also a basic skill

that each child need when they start schooling.

Importance of a Reading Habit

As already mentioned above reading is a basic skill that each child should learn at an early age. Teachers play a pivotal role in encouraging students and making them love reading or love books. Chettri & Rout (2013) indicated that teachers should focus their attention on developing children's reading from early childhood. Various authors such as (list authors) are all in agreement that extensive reading whether done by children or adults, be it for pleasure or for academic purposes it helps to broaden one's knowledge and experiences. This was also emphasised by Chettri & Rout (2013) when saying that a good reading habit is very important in making a person have a healthy intellectual growth and also making any reader be able to achieve practical efficiency.

Through reading, people think critically which helps them to confirm their own ideas, and give them an opportunity to understand issues instead of condemning them. Reading for pleasure develops a life-long learning passion and strengthening one's language skills, reading speed, vocabulary, general knowledge, verbal ability and making the person fluent (Chettri & Rout, 2013).

Factors influencing Reading Habits

In this research, we sought to understand the reading habits of teachers and establish the reading resources they like. This information will help them take appropriate steps to promote reading to their young learners. This skill needs to be instilled at an early age. The information found after the results of the research will also help the researchers to organise workshops or intervene to help teachers direct all their efforts towards the development of teaching reading strategies and even apply them. A study done by (Ketsitlile & Galegane, 2010, Commeyras & Mazile (2011) about found out that teachers are reading magazines, newspapers, and listening to the radio or music instead of reading for pleasure or reading educational materials. Literature review suggests that technology is also bringing in new changes about the habits of reading by teachers.

Research Design

The qualitative research design was chosen for this study. The study provided an in-depth understanding of human behaviour 'what and when 'of decision making. Qualitative research enables the researcher

to gather detailed and precise information about the phenomenon. Research is carried out in natural settings using interviews, observation and questionnaires (Chilisa & Preece, 2005; Cresswell, J, 2007; Bogdan, 2007).

The study was further narrowed to a case. Yin defines the case study research method "as an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context... and in which multiple sources of evidence are used." (1984:23). Bogdan & Taylor (1975), Chilisa & Preece (2005) and Cresswell (2007), further state that it allows the exploration and understanding of complex issues. It can be considered a robust research method particularly when a holistic, in-depth investigation is required.

Sample selection and Procedure

Sampling is an important activity in research; it refers to the planned ways of selecting subjects (Baker, 1999:134). It is critical in reducing biases and in helping the researchers find the representativeness of whatever they are studying (Baker, 1999). Sampling is typically done to solve the problem of having a enormous population for the study. It helps researchers to focus their population size and select a representative sample that is unbiased (Babbie & Mouton, 2005). The findings of the sample population can be used to generalise the whole population. In our research, we used random sampling.

The research was carried out in two primary schools identified here as Primary school A and Primary school B. We decided on those two schools based on their proximity to BIUST. They are in the same location with the university, situated in Boseja and Khurumela wards. The latter has been adopted by the university, so we found it fit to start with it as it has to benefit from the adoption. The Botswana government under the Ministry of Education & Skills development has introduced a policy in which organisations, companies, institutions that are not academically oriented partner with schools to help them in whatever way they can in the running the school, to improve the academic output of the school. These third parties mainly help the schools financially since the government is not able to attend to all the needs of all the schools in the country hence the term adoption. For, example the company could sponsor the school to carry out the prize giving ceremony to award best performing students to motivate them, sometimes donating photocopying machines that help in photocopying tests and examination papers of the students. This concept similar to when an adult person adopts a child they become the parent of the child

by attending to all the needs of the child. Teachers in the chosen schools were given a questionnaire to complete during their own spare time in order for us the researchers to find out about their reading habits. We decided to use purpose sampling. A total of 25 teachers in each school were given questionnaires = (50). We gave out 25 questionnaires a for each school so that the questionnaires could be given to all teachers across all the classes from standard 1 to 7 so that we could get rich data which would show us if teachers regardless of the standard they teach to establish if they reader as a habit or not. The total number of participants in the study was 50 and the response rate was out of the 50 questionnaires given out. Age range is 20 - 41. Teachers were selected from each school based on the level they were teaching, lower, middle or upper. They were also interviewed. This sample is not representative of all primary schools in Palapye but it will give us an idea of how much teachers read.

Data Collection Methods

According to Aina (2010) data collection methods refer to those instruments that are used to collect data. They are different instruments that can be used, namely, interviews, questionnaires, observation and documentary sources (Aina, 2010). The above-mentioned instruments help the researchers to collect data which is reliable and that can be analysed after the collection has been finished. In our research, we found out that since we used the phenomenological theoretical frame work which is interested in the habits or beliefs of individuals we found it suitable to use or appropriate to use questionnaires. This enables the voice of the teachers to be heard through their answers from the questionnaires. The truth would be found the way they expressed their reading experience on questionnaires. That is why questionnaires were used, accompanied by observations.

- Phenomenological approach used for giving research subjects' questionnaires.
- Semi-structured interviews were also carried out
- Observations are to be done.

Limitations of the study

- Observations were initially planned to be carried out for triangulation. This was not possible due to time constraints
- Member check on observations, derived from questionnaires and interviews were done.
- Hence, validity was compromised.

Data Analysis

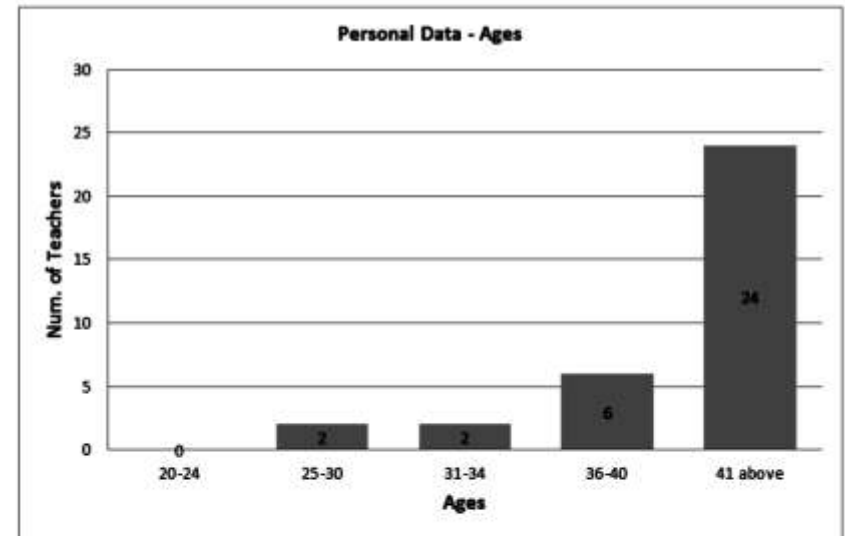
This is the process in which after the data has been collected it has to be organised, interpreted and presented in a manner which will be easy to understand by the general public, and use of research jargon and register.

In our research we decided to analyse our data by the use of themes, which dictated that the questionnaire to be in designed in four folds:

- Biographic
- Hobbies
- Reading materials
- Reading habits

Out of 50 questionnaires that were given out 34 were returned thus 68% response rate, 16 not returned - 32%.

Results and Discussion

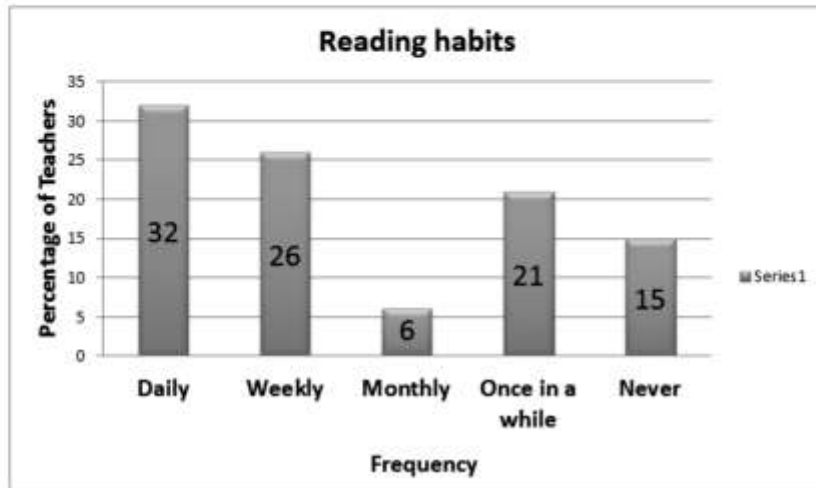


Gender Table

MALE	FEMALE	TOTAL
6	28	34

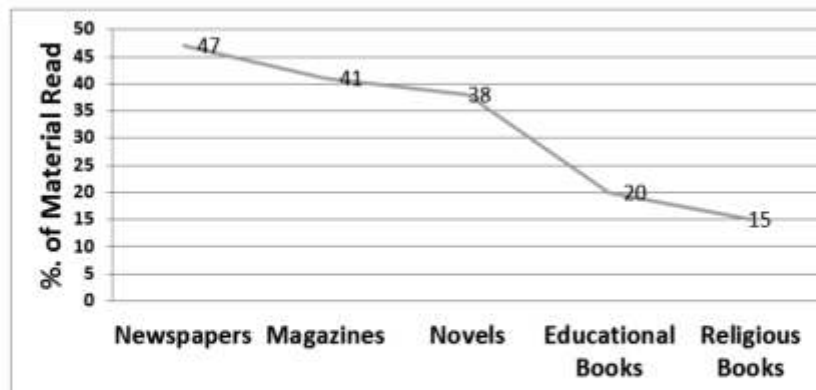
Various Hobbies

- Sports
- Watching TV
- Listening to the radio /Music



From the above frequency table it shows that more teachers read daily as opposed to those who read once in a while or once in a month.

Reading materials



Interviews

In the interviews we had 6 questions

- Semi-structured interviews were transcribed
- Coding was done to get the themes and sub-themes
- In line with phenomenology we paid particular attention to the voice of the participants.

Below are the interview questions and their responses:

Question 1: "As a teacher what are your hobbies?"

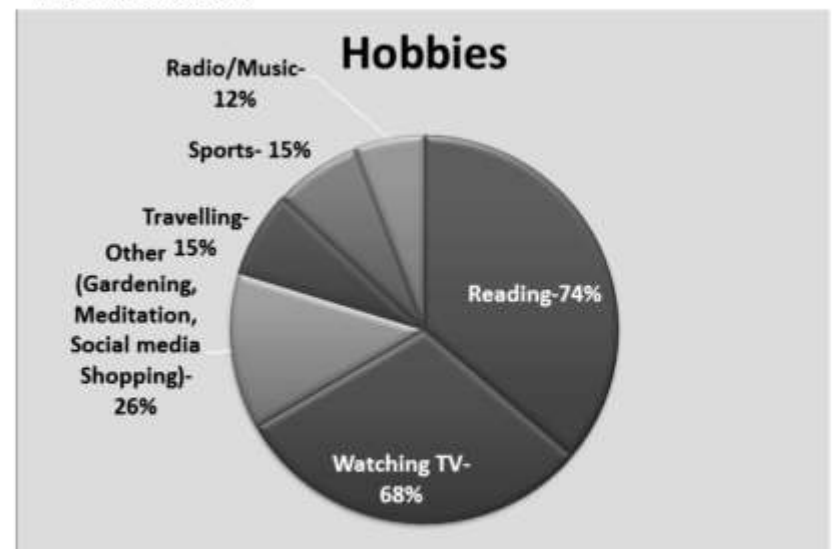
- Reading
- Watching TV
- Shopping
- Sports

Question 2: "What did you read this week, last month and this term?"

- "Newspaper"
- "Magazine"
- "Novel"

Question 3: "If you engage in reading, what type of reading materials do you like?"

- "Newspapers"
- "Magazines"
- "Non-fiction books"



The pie chart above indicates that from the population that we sampled 74% of teachers do read.

Lessons from this study

Contrary to what is said in the literature, that Africans do not like reading, we would like to concur with Commeyras & Mazile (2011) who concluded that teachers in primary schools in Botswana do some reading, though it differs from those of the people in the western world. Based on the two studies, there is a shift from Botswana solely relying on rich oral traditions and there is reliance on print culture as it is proved in the present study. It is common for teachers to engage in reading newspapers and magazines than novels and academic books. Teachers also read for spiritual purposes. For example, they read the Bible and other inspirational works.

The stakeholders (Botswana government, National libraries, Botswana Library Association -BLA) should collaborate to establish libraries in primary schools as a way of scaffolding both teachers and students reading habits. Book clubs and reading rooms need to be set up in every school to encourage leisure reading. Finally, family literacy programmes are a must in communities.

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