

**A SURVEY OF THE READING HABIT OF EXCHANGE  
STUDENTS OF GOVERNMENT SECONDARY SCHOOL  
AND QUEEN ELIZABETH SCHOOL, ILORIN,  
KWARA STATE, NIGERIA**

**By**

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**Abstract**

*The focus of this paper is on "a survey of the reading habit of exchange students of Government Secondary School and Queen Elizabeth School, Ilorin Kwara State . The students were drawn from seventeen states in Northern Nigeria. Causes of the low reading habit were identified, highlighted and the effects on their academic performance discussed. Questionnaires were administered on 188 respondents. It was recommended that government should implement the provision in the National Policy on Education (1981) by establishing school libraries, and adequately equipping the existing ones. Teachers are to be given in-service training on the organization and management of school libraries. Also both Government and Non- Government organisations involved in readership promotion should collaborate with the National Library of Nigeria in executing the programme.*

**Introduction**

Reading is one of the basic pre-requisite to formal learning. It forms the foundation upon which formal education is built. It is rather unfortunate today that students shun reading either for achievement or for leisure. Ufomadu (2004) states that most of the citizenry do not read except if circumstances compelled them to do so. They read only when they must, that is, when; they are in school studying to pass examinations once they pass, they seem to say good bye to reading. The

resultant effect is the decline in the level of their performance in English language in schools. The most embarrassing aspect of it all now is that student are not even ready to pass their examinations yet they want to get to tertiary institutions by all means. This attitude to their studies according to Adeosun (2005) has led to the increase in examination malpractices. She further observed that low reading culture is one of the reasons why students fail. The table below has testified to the assertion that Nigerian secondary school students don't perform well in English Language.

**Table 1: Statistics of Performance of Nigeria Students in English Language May/June SSCE (1993-2001)**

Year	Total Population	Credit (A1-C6)	Pass (P7-P8)	Fail (F9)	Absent
1993	496,685	66,176 (13.3%)	145,545 (29.3%)	285,023 (57.4%)	4,833 (1.0%)
1994	524,294	74,157 (14.1%)	159,900 (30.5%)	290,237 (55.4%)	5,713 (1.0%)
1995	464,270	57,588 (12.4%)	128,450 (27.7%)	278,202 (59.9%)	27,701 (0.6%)
1996	516,196	58,533 (11.3%)	124,041 (24.0%)	333,614 (64.6%)	3,471 (0.6%)
1997	618,139	40,488 (6.5%)	165,533 (26.8%)	412,118 (66.7%)	4,294 (0.7%)
1998	636,777	53,990 (8.5%)	136,873 (21.5%)	417,593 (64.9%)	3,849 (0.6%)
1999	752,233	73,531 (9.7%)	171,098 (22.6%)	471,593 (64.9%)	3,827 (0.5%)
2000	784,129	84,932 (9.8%)	172,158 (21.4%)	523,117 (65.9%)	3922 (0.6%)
2001	1,025,027	267,251 (26.07%)	316,767 (30.9%)	441,009 (43.02%)	15,074 (1.45%)

**Source: WAEC, Yaba-Lagos**

The table above reveals that the percentage of students who passed English language at credit level fluctuated between 13.3% in 1993 and 26.07% in 2001. In 1994, only 14.1% made credit pass 12.4 in 1995, 12.3% in 1996. 6.5% in 1997, 8.5% in 1998, 9.7% in 1999 and 9.8% in year 2000. These results are frustrating hence there is an urgent need to address the problem.

**Review of Related Literature**

Recent studies of the reading habits and interest of Nigeria children were carried out by Fayose (1995); Ogunrombi and Adio (1995), Fagbemi (1997), Awosiyan (2005) and National University Commission (NUC), 2005. Fayose (1995) wrote on what Nigerian boys and girls like to read. In her findings she stated that books that can help children pursue their own individual interests are not in existent for Nigerian children. According to her this is one of the reasons why students do not read. Ogunrombi and Adio (1995) wrote on factors affecting the reading habits of secondary school students. In their finding they concluded that:

- The family background of students had effect on their reading habit;
- That there are no functional libraries;
- Equipment and resources for teaching reading skills are lacking;
- Lack of good reading skills also inhibits the formation of good reading habits among Nigeria students.

Fagbemi (1997) in her findings stated that the high poverty level of the country and the struggle to make ends meet did not encourage reading. The poverty level of Nigerians is so high that many can barely afford the children's school fees. Such parents cannot think of buying books for their wards. According to Awosiyan (2004) the dying reading culture asserted that a product of political and economic disorder coupled with the stress being experienced in the country might be some of the factors responsible for the dying reading culture

in the country. In the memo of the National University Commission (NUC, 2005) a lecture was delivered on the need for reading culture among Nigeria undergraduates. In the lecture it was observed that watching home videos and musical channels on cable TV are preferred to reading. The National implementation Committee on Readership promotion campaign for Nigeria was inaugurated by the Board of the National Library of Nigeria in November, 1980. There are five basic aims and objectives, which are:-

- to inculcate the reading habit other than for sheer utilitarian and examination purposes;
- to encourage reading;
- to ensure the provision of books and other reading materials in adequate number and variety relevant to our culture and situation, and at a price that all can afford.
- to identify problems which militate against the development of good reading habit; and
- to initiate and execute activities that would eliminate these obstacles

The British Council (2004) launched educational development scheme aimed at improving the reading habits among children aged between 4 and 12 years in Nigeria. The scheme tagged reading roller coaster is a national reading game that come up every summer since 1999 in major libraries throughout the United Kingdom.

Some other Non-Governmental Organizations like Book Worm- a Lagos based bookstore held a short story writing competition to arouse interest of Nigerian Youths in reading and writing.

The urgency of tackling this problem should begin with an examination of the causes of the poor reading habit of our secondary students.

It is glaring from the previous studies that the reading habit of our youth is yet to be cultivated instead they are shifting their attention to the Internet, home video and other information and communication technology.

## **Background Information**

According to Fafunwa (1974) in Nigeria before 1950, the power to set up, control and finance educational institution was largely in the hands of voluntary agencies and individual entrepreneurs. Government had few schools of its own, but the educational policies of successive governments were implemented through these private schools which received grants- in aid from the government.

After the country's independence in 1960, the position was slightly different as the government of the regions in Nigeria (North, West, Mid West and East) assumed greater responsibility for the establishment of schools. But after the civil war (1966-70) most state government took over the private schools and turned them into public schools.

Nigeria was divided into twelve states in May 1967; the defunct Northern Nigerian was spilt into six states. This was during the Civil war (1966-70) that witnessed most of political, economic and social upheavals. The civil war experiences led to the belief that 'unity' must be emphasized not only in the subsequent educational programmes, but also in most government measures.

The federal unity schools were proposed and heads of federal institutions including Principals and Vice chancellors were not appointed to service in their home states even military governors had to be posted to states outside their own, to emphasize the new "unity" and "oneness" that is critical to national development. The ideas of unity schools was that in these schools, young adolescents drawn from all parts of the country would grow up together, interact and develop a solid base for themselves in the formulation of national, social and cultural values. This will in-turn make us become one and remain one united country. When there is a system of education supported by public funds to help achieve these goals, then and then only can a national system of education emerge. Government of the newly created states then entered into some agreements such that these institutions would be available and accessible to all students from the state. Some

well- established government schools that had reputation for producing good results became “assets” to some new states. This was how the students exchange programme came into being in 1968 during the military era of General Yakubu Gowon. The programme started first among the northern state and later on bilateral arrangement spread to two eastern states: Cross Rivers and Akwa-Ibom. Two government school were chosen in each of the participating states for the programme one for boys, and the other for girls. A total of twenty-one states now participate in the programme. The states are Adamawa, Bauchi, Benue, Borno, Gombe, Jigawa, Kaduna, Kano, Kastina, Kebbi, Kogi, Kwara, Niger, Nasarawa, Plateau, Sokoto, Taraba, Yobe, and Zamfara states. The two South Eastern states that joined the programme were Cross-River and Akwa-Ibom on bilateral arrangement.

The student exchange programme information and guideline (1994) stated that each state is only permitted to sponsor ten new students; five boys and five girls each year. The boys were posted to boys school only while the girls were posted to girls school only.

### **Methodology**

The study was a descriptive survey design type.

### **Target Population**

The target population of the study was 188 respondents drawn from seventeen states in Northern Nigeria, excluding Kwara (the host states) respondent include: Adamawa (10), Bauchi (6), Benue (20), Borno (8), Gombe (14), Kaduna (18), Kano (12), Kastina (12 ), Kebbi (6), Kogi (4), Nasarawa (14), Niger (22), Plateau (16), Sokoto (2), Taraba (8), Yobe (12), and Zamfara (4). As at the time the research was conducted, Junior Secondary School III students and Senior Secondary School III students had graduated hence were not in the school. This study was carried out on J. S. S. I to II to S. S. I to II students only.

### **Instrument**

Instrument for data collection was structured questionnaire. The questionnaire elicited information about the personal data and the reading background of the respondents. J.S.S. I - II and S.S. I-II constituted the student sample population. One hundred students were randomly selected from these sets of students in the two schools studied. The questionnaires were personally administered to the students with the permission of the principals of the two schools. Despite the close monitoring and supervision, out of the 100 questionnaire administered on students of Government Secondary School, Ilorin 88 were found usable whereas all the 100 questionnaire administered on the students of Queen Elizabeth school were completed and returned. The total number of questionnaire used for the study was 188.

### **Data Analysis**

**Table 2: Sex Distribution**

<b>Sex</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>%</b>
Male	88	46.8
Female	100	53.2

Table 2 revealed that 53.2% of the respondent were females while 46.8 were males. This shows that all the girls that were given the questionnaire returned them and they were all found usable.

**Table 3: Age Distribution of respondents**

<b>Age</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>%</b>
10-15	56	29.8
16-20	132	70.2

Table 3 revealed that 29.8% of the respondents were between

the ages of 10-15 years while 70.2% of the respondents were between the ages of 16-20 years. This is an indication that majority of them were adolescents

**Table 4: Parent Literacy level**

<b>Literate</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>%</b>
Yes	130	69.15
No	88	30.85

Table 4 reveals that 69.15% of the respondents were from literate families while 30.85% of the respondents were not from literate families. The findings show that quite a larger majority of them were from educated homes.

**Table 5 Reading Background of Respondents Attendance of Nursery School**

<b>Nursery</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>%</b>
Yes	156	83
No	32	17

Table 5 reveals that 83% of the respondents started their education early enough at nursery school while just 17% did not attend nursery school. This results suggest that majority of the respondent were exposed to reading early enough.

**Table 6: Book Presentation by Parents to Their Wards**

<b>Book Gift</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>%</b>
Yes	15	8
No	173	92

Table 6 revealed that only 8% of the respondents were presented with books as birthday gifts while 92% of the pupils had never been presented with books as birthday gifts. The result suggests that parents did not value books as item worthy as gift for birthday.



**Table 7: Book Presentation to colleagues as birthday gift by respondents**

<b>Book Gift</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>%</b>
Yes	18	9.6
No	170	90.4

Table 7 revealed that only 9.6% ever presented books to their friends as birthday gifts while the majority (90.4%) had never presented books to their friends as birthday gifts. This result suggests that the respondents did not value books as birthday gifts.

**Table 8: Purchase of Leisure Books by Respondents**

<b>Leisure Book</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>%</b>
Yes	10	5.3
No	178	94.7

Table 8 revealed that only 5.3% of the respondents had ever bought leisure books with their money while 94.7% had never bought leisure books with their personal money. This results suggests that majority of them did not spend their money on buying leisure books.

**Table 9: Measuring Respondent's Reading for Leisure**

<b>Leisure reading</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>%</b>
Yes	8	4.3
No	180	95.7

Table 9 reveals that only 4.3% of the respondents read for leisure while 95.7% which forms the majority did not read for leisure hence they did not visit the library. The result suggests that a large majority of them had no time for leisure reading.

**Table 10: Time Allocation for Reading Leisure Books or Newspapers in the Library per Week.**

<b>Time</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>%</b>
1-2 hours	8	4.26
3-5 hours	-	-
6-10 hours	-	-
No time	180	95.74

Table 10 reveals that only 4.26% of the respondent spent between 1-2 hours in the library while 95.74 had no time at all to visit the library. This result suggests that majority of them had no time for leisure reading hence they did not visit the library.

**Table 11: Where Respondents Spend their Leisure Time.**

<b>Where</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>%</b>
Internet	82	43.62
Library	10	5.32
At home	96	51.06

Table 11 reveals that 43.62% of them spent their leisure on the Internet, 5.32% spent their leisure in the library while the majority of them prefer to stay at home playing other games or watching films. This results suggest that majority of the respondents prefer to stay at home watching films.

**Table 12: Reasons Why Respondents Don't Read for Leisure.**

<b>Reason</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>%</b>
No time	60	31.91
Not interested	100	53.19
No materials	28	14.90

Table 12 reveals that 31.91% of the respondents didn't read because they had no time, 53.19% didn't read because they were not interested while 14.90% did not read because there

were no materials to read. This result suggests that majority of them were not interested in reading.

### **Conclusion**

From the data collected, analyzed and discussed in this study, it was shown that majority of the respondents were adolescents. Despite the fact that 83% of them were exposed to reading early enough from the nursery schools, neither the parents nor the colleagues promoted leisure reading later in their academic life. They were not presented book gifts as birthday presents during their birthday celebrations. Some of the respondents claimed that leisure materials were not available while some even said that there is no time for leisure reading.

### **Recommendation**

- i. Emphasis should be intensified on provision of functional school libraries in our secondary school.
- ii. Emphasis should also be placed on provision of daily newspapers and weekly magazines in the school libraries. Readers club should be organized and students should be encouraged to join in order to encourage the students to be independent readers.
- iii. Reading competition should be organized in form of tournament for secondary school students at the local, state and federal levels. The National Library of Nigeria should coordinate the competition.
- iv. Government should subsidize leisure books to make it affordable for them.
- v. Where affordable, relevant educative tapes, films and video that are relevant to their course of study should be made available in the media centre.
- vi. The gaps among educational policy, planning and implementation would also need to be urgently bridged so that education can be more purposeful, meaningful and functional, and reading can be accorded its pride of place within the frame work.

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