

TOWARDS A REWARDING STUDY ENGAGEMENT: A PRACTICAL APPROACH TO READING ACTIVITIES

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ABSTRACT

This paper contends that studying is a purposive intellectual engagement which has its own specialised skills. These skills must be mastered especially by students of tertiary institutions where reading constitutes the live –wire of academic success. The article pinpoints the critical aspects of this exercise which are otherwise overlooked by many students to their own pent. Beyond this, some negative reading mannerism are also pointed out with suggestions for ways of conquering these obstacles to efficient study engagements.

KEYWORDS: Rewarding Study Engagement, Study Engagement

INTRODUCTION

To study means to devote time to activities aimed at extracting information. It is central to all academic pursuit. A student therefore cannot afford to ignore it. Making studying a habit sets one on the path of academic success.

Studying, by nature, is not limited to being able to go through a printed text; it also involved the seeking of relevant details from any form of learning material and the ability to rightly interpret and store such pieces of information for future use in examinations, academic discussions and various forms of writing.

The aspects of studying which would be examined in some detail in the sections below include:

- Study conditions
- Study purposes
- Study strategies
- Study purpose
- Obstacles to efficient reading

STUDY CONDITIONS

There refer to the physical, social and psychological environments under which the student's independent learning efforts, especially reading, take place. They play significant roles in determining the success or otherwise of study activities.

The Home

That students carry out the bulk of their private reading at home is open to little debate. They must therefore seek

residence in an atmosphere which offers little or no distraction to their study. In this regard, the home must be located in a serene environment where quietness is ensured at most times of the day. In other words, city centres with heavy traffic flow, markets areas or centres of other forms of social activities should be avoided. As Banjo and Bisong (1985:2) suggest, "it is probably best to live near other students in a house rented by students". To be conducive to learning, the rooms in a house would need to be well ventilated, and equipped with comfortable reading and writing tables and chairs.

The School

Teaching normally takes place in the school, but the student can also carry out personal study there. The school library exists mainly for this purpose. Here, the student has access to reading material, which might not be available in his/her private collections. A lot of reading can be done in the usually quiet atmosphere offered by the library.

A part from the library, reading can also be done in the school in other quiet locations or unoccupied classrooms where maximum concentration is possible. This is very important in institutions where facilities are inadequate.

The Individual

This has to do with the student's personality. By this, we refer to the psychological condition and the general state of the student's mind. Adegbija(1987) sees the mind as "the ping-pong board of various kinds of information". Hence, the mind must be put in such a state that it would be ready to absorb pieces of information it comes across during the course of study. This means that the learner must be able to exert a lot of control over his/her mind (Adegbija. 1996:99) He/she can do this by making sure he/she shuts his/her mind against all problems bothering the mind therefore reading. The mind must be followed to engage the reading material in intellectual "dialogue" This in turn prevents the mind from straying off the text.

The Group

Study may also be carried out by a set of students. Mostly students form study bond during examination periods. This is wrong. The group should start operating right from the onset of every session. For effective study, the group should not be too large. We recommend a group of 5-6 students per study group. Within the group, topics could be shared, may be on weekly basis, with each member leading the group discussion on the topic he/she has been given.

Also, within the group, past questions could be discussed with everybody fully and freely participating. One importance of group study is that it fosters unity and creates opportunity for exchange of ideas, textbooks, journals, and other reading materials that might ordinarily not be available to individual students.

STUDY PURPOSES

People study for diverse reasons which include the under mentioned.

Leisure

In this regard, we study just for pleasure and entertainment. This therefore does not make much demand on the individual.

Examination

Reading for examination purpose usually demands a lot of serious concentration from the student. Here, the student needs to commit figures, data, formulas etc, to memory for recalling during examinations. To some extent, writing projects or materials for publication makes similar study demands on the students.

Personal Development

We study also to be informed about subjects, which do not belong to our area of specialization. For example, a science student reading about the French Revolution may be doing so merely to be enlightened on the issue.

STUDY STRATEGIES

The purpose of study will determine the method one adopts out of those mentioned below:

Skimming

Skimming means finding out “those items that form the substance of the test”. (Aliyu, 1996:43). It may also involve locating some names, dates data or some other specific pieces of information.

Skimming does not demand serious reading and is therefore fast in nature. It is particularly useful for recreational reading.

Scanning

This means glancing at (a material) quickly but not in a very thorough way. Scanning is useful for concentration on specific aspects of the text, especially when one is carrying out a research.

Achieving optimum Reading Speed

Each of the reading types discussed above has implication for what we call the reading speed. By this, we mean the rate at which one is able to go through a reading material with maximum comprehension. The formula for maintaining one’s reading speed is shown below:

- Convert the number of minute to seconds
- Divide the number of words by the number of seconds
- Multiply the word per second by sixty to get words per minute (WPM).

For example, if a student read 800 words in 3 minutes,

20seconds, his/her WPM is $\frac{800}{3} \times 60 = 4 \times 60$

$$200 = 240\text{WPM}$$

With this, the student will be able to constantly check on his/her reading speed and improve on it if need be. This is important because it is believed that, up to a certain point, the higher the speed of reading, the higher the rate of comprehension.

The SQ3R technique

The reader may also adopt the SQ3R technique, which seems to incorporate both skimming and scanning.

The SQ3R technique can be represented diagrammatically as follows:

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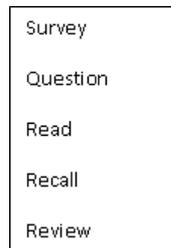


Figure 1

The different points in the diagram are explained below:

- **Survey:** this entails taking a general look at the title(s), sub-title(s) or divisions(s) of the passage. This gives us an overview of the text.
- **Question:** This involves formulating questions, which help in directing the reader's attention towards achieving effective comprehension of the text.
- **R¹ Read:** This is the reading proper. While doing this, the student tries to find answers to questions raised in (ii) above
- **R² Recall:** The student must be able to recall or bring to mind certain facts he/she has read in the passage at this level. To avoid reducing this to repetitive learning, he/she can learn to paraphrase the facts on the aspect already covered.
- **R³ review:** This is a kind of "on the spot" self evaluation the students must be able to look back and see how much comprehension has taken place. This is also called "revise" by some scholars.

Note Taking

Note taking involves written down short forms of crucial aspects of the text. It has been referred to as an important aid of memory" (Adegbija 1987 :189). A note must be well written such that it would be easy for the student to read when revising. Here, a student can devise his/her own abbreviations, symbols and formulas for taking notes. Examples and demonstration are not normally jotted down.

OBSTACLES TO EFFICIENT READING

Since reading is a vital part of studying, it is important to consider some common impediments to comprehension.

Head Movement

This is the habit of moving the head from one edge of the text to the other and it slows down reading. To shake off this habit, the student should make sure it is only the muscles of the eyes that move along the lines.

Eye Movement

This involves moving eyes from word to word rather than rhythmically from the middle of one phrase or thought unit to the middle of the next. This reduces reading speed and rate of comprehension.

Pointing at Words

It entails pointing the finger or a writing object at each word. It also slows the rate of reading down and impairs comprehension, since it leads to reading word by word instead of phrase by phrase.

Vocalization

This refers to the habit of reading out the words of a text. It is less efficient than doing mental, internal reading.

Sub-Vocalization

This is a situation where reading is accompanied with the movement of the lips without actually articulating the words aloud. This also encourages word by word and slower reading.

Regression

This is the habit of going back to words, phrases and clauses that have been covered. This happens as a result of lack of concentration and poor word recognition. It affects comprehension. When this problem arises, the best a student can do is to press on to the end of the text and later re-read those aspects that have been unclear (Bamisaye 1987: 159 for details).

CONCLUSIONS

From the foregoing, it is shown that studying is a very serious business for any student who wants to make a success of his/her academic pursuit, it is believed that, if the points enunciated above are carefully considered, the learning process will be greatly facilitated.

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