

Assessment of Teachers' Attitude towards the Teaching of Reading in Primary Schools in Kaduna Metropolis

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Abstract

Evaluation of teachers' attitudes towards the teaching of reading in primary schools in Kaduna metropolis. The study is aimed at evaluating teachers' attitude towards the teaching of reading in primary schools in Kaduna. Fifty (50) teachers in ten (10) randomly selected schools were used for the study. The study was guided by one research question. Data was collected using a questionnaire titled: Evaluation of teachers attitude towards the teaching of reading in primary schools in Kaduna metropolis (ETATRIPS) and Otto-Smith Attitudinal Inventory. Data was analyzed using frequencies and percentages. The findings revealed that majority of teachers (68%) have negative attitude towards the teaching of reading in primary schools in Kaduna. Most of them attributed this negative attitude to the fact that they lacked adequate preparation and training to teach reading in primary schools. The study recommended among others, that all teacher training institutions should endeavour to prepare and train teachers adequately and vigorously in reading instruction in order for them to teach reading effectively and efficiently in primary schools.

Background to the study

Reading is one of the fundamental language skills. It is also one of the most important skills which should be taught separately as a subject in primary schools. Unfortunately, this is not so. Reading is taught during English Language lessons. The teaching of reading in primary schools has not been effective owing to the large number of pupils that are unable to read after completing their primary education (Oyetunde, 2009). There is absolutely no day that one does not read something such as street signs, signboards, handbills, billboards, reports, emails, news papers, magazines, text messages etc. Reading is not only a fundamental part of existence but a fundamental part of education and also a fundamental skill in language development leading children to the skills & habits necessary for lifelong achievement and success.

Reading is critical for children's success in and outside school. Children are expected to read story books and textbooks. Homework and assignments given to them are on the assumption that they can obtain pieces of information from the printed materials. Outside school, they still need to read to cope with the challenges and information that abound. Unfortunately, many children cannot even read a word in English at primary six. As they progress to a level which is supposed to be the bedrock of subsequent levels of education, they continue to lag behind. Except for comprehension lessons in English classes, Reading instruction is not adequately emphasized in primary schools (Yusuf 2011, Oyetunde, 2009).

Deficiency in the reading ability of pupils has become a concern to specialists in reading (Obah, 1989, Oyetunde 2009, Yusuf 2014, Olaofe, 2013). The alarming rate at which such concerns are expressed have precipitated the need to continually carry out research in reading in primary and post primary schools. It is hoped that the findings of this research will be useful in helping teachers to teach reading comprehension effectively and efficiently. It is equally hoped that literacy would perhaps be enhanced if pupils' reading ability is improved through more effective and more efficient methods. Most of the studies so far conducted in Nigeria have concentrated on examining reading difficulty of pupils at the primary and secondary levels (Oyetunde, 2009 and Obah, 1990; Yusuf 2013). This researcher is of the opinion that there are non-text factors that can affect the teaching of reading as well.

Literature search reveals that non-text factors such as attitudinal dispositions of teachers have largely received little or no attention in Nigeria as far as this researcher is informed. The absence of such crucial information as the actual influence of teachers' attitude towards the teaching of reading constitutes a problem which has motivated the present study. Given the situation above, any effort to upgrade the quality of reading instruction could be considered as neither wasted nor misplaced. Such effort could be considered a step in the right direction since it could constitute an investment. It is against this background that this study is undertaken to assess teachers' attitude towards the teaching of reading in primary schools in Kaduna metropolis.

Review of Related Literature

Basically, attitude means how an individual feels about something either in positive or negative manner. However, a number of psychologists have different definitions of attitude. According to Traindis (1971) attitude is learned predisposition to react consistently in a given manner (either positively, negatively to certain persons, object or concept). Therefore, attitude means a manner of feeling with regards to a person or thing. According to Rokeach (1986) an attitude is moderately intense emotion prepares or predisposes an individual to respond in favorable or unfavorable manner when confronted with a particular object.

The definition above that attitude is a mental state used by individuals to guide the way in which they respond. Fishbein & Ajzen (1975) indicate that people's attitude determine their behaviour towards objects and people. Attitude can be positive, negative or neutral relative to people, places and things. Behaviour is the physical manifestation of one's attitude and letting people to know the attitude of their colleagues. An attitude is a mental state used by individuals to guide the way in which to respond. Attitude is important because it is one of the first things that makes people notice the behaviour of others and determines their happiness and how they view success in life by the way they handle things. Attitude has a say on how people handle circumstances that happen to them either good or bad and attitude shapes our lives and decides our behaviour.

Researchers such as Oyetunde (2009), Yusuf (2013), Olaofe (2013) have reported that several pupils are experiencing problems in reading and cannot comprehend their text. Teachers who recognize that pupils are experiencing reading problems and are concerned about this are likely to be the teachers who will be willing to learn strategies to assist their pupils (Vaughan, 1977). If teachers are not interested in learning how to help struggling readers in their classrooms, then there will be little value in equipping them with the strategies to do so. Implicit in this notion is the importance of attitude. The solution for struggling reader may very well start with teachers' attitude towards the issue (Vanghan, 1977). Shulman (1987) proposed that if attitudinal barriers are not dealt with initially, it is doubtful that any programme designed to help teachers to teach reading can succeed. Oyetunde (2009) is also of the opinion that explicit instruction in reading strategies works. In fact, it is the most effective means of boosting teachers' disposition towards the subject.

Understanding teachers' attitudes to reading instruction is the first step to improving pupils' reading skills and consequently, their ultimate success in school. Understanding and addressing teachers' attitudinal disposition may contribute to increased teachers' willingness to teach reading skills to pupils especially to struggling readers. Unfortunately, there are no reading specialists available in our primary schools and there is also a dearth of research studies in Nigeria that quantify primary school teachers' attitudes towards reading. (Yusuf, 2014, Oyetunde, 2009) Information regarding teachers' attitude could be beneficial to curriculum planners, teacher-training institutions, school administrators, educators, ministries of education and local Government Education Authority (LGEA) officials.

Objectives of the study

To find out teachers' attitude towards the teaching of Reading in primary schools in Kaduna metropolis.

Research Question

What are the attitudes of teachers towards the teaching of Reading in primary schools in Kaduna metropolis?

Instrumentation

Teachers' attitude towards teaching reading was measured using a questionnaire developed by the researcher and Otto-Smith attitudinal Inventory. The Otto-Smith inventory was modified and used to identify the strength and direction of attitudes towards teaching reading.

The inventory consisted of ten statements, seven of which were worded positively and seven negatively, to which teachers responded on a five-point likert scale that included strongly agree, agree, undecided, disagree, and strongly disagree. The total score a teacher could earn on the Otto-Smith inventory ranges from 10, which would indicate the most negative attitude toward teaching reading to 50, which would indicate the most positive attitude. Score of 25 and lower indicated a generally negative attitude toward teaching reading skills, and scores of 25 and above indicate a generally positive attitude. The higher the score, the more positive the attitude; the lower the score, the more negative the attitude. The questionnaire also elicited similar information using a five point likert scale. The instruments were validated through a pilot study. A reliability index of 0.71 was obtained. Frequency counts and percentages were used to analyse the data collected and also to answer the research question that was posed for the study.

Data Presentation and Analysis

In answering the research question for the study which says “what is the attitude of teachers towards teaching reading in primary schools in Kaduna metropolis” table 1 and 2 were used. Data were analysed to determine the total attitude score for each respondent who completed the survey. Since each item on the survey has a range of one to five points, the total attitude score ranged from 10 to 50, with a high score reflecting a more positive attitude than a low score. Score below 25 indicated negative attitudes toward teaching reading and scores above 25 indicated positive attitudes. Descriptive statistics using frequency counts, percentages, mean, standard deviation and the range for all respondents were used to analyse the data. Descriptive statistics are presented in table 1 and 2.

In the present study, the teachers surveyed were found to have generally negative attitudes toward teaching reading in primary schools. The scores ranged from a low of 1 to a high of 40. Table 1 illustrates the response to each of the ten statements that make up the Otto-Smith Inventory. Full statements for each can be found in Appendix A.

Table 1: Otto-Smith Inventory Results

Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Mean
1	30	12	3	3	2	4.03
2	2	4	1	40	3	2.63
3	2	3	5	28	12	3.87
4	5	5	4	34	3	3.5
5	15	5	8	12	10	2.54
6	3	5	7	24	11	3.53
7	10	12	8	15	5	3.12
8	17	10	13	8	2	3.66
9	23	9	5	10	3	3.85
10	9	11	2	25	3	4.04

Discussion of findings

The research findings signify that most teachers (68%) have negative attitude towards the teaching of reading in primary schools in Kaduna metropolis. The findings corroborate those of Oyetunde (2009) and Olaofe 2013 who had similar findings regarding the negative attitude of teachers towards the teaching of reading in primary schools. The findings of the research indicate that teacher’s needs 360 degrees turn around attitudinal change. Responses of most teachers revealed that they are not willing to diversity their teaching methods to make their reading lessons interesting. There is strong evidence that appropriate training can improve teachers’ attitude towards teaching reading. The findings further revealed that the training received by teachers was not appropriate for creating a high positive attitude towards the teaching of reading. Teachers have lukewarm and non-challant attitudes towards reading. They were also not willing to go the extra mile of improvising teaching aids to make reading lessons interesting.

Analysis of Data from the Questionnaire Responses to Statements on the Questionnaire

Table 2: Attitude of Teachers towards the Teaching of Reading in Primary Schools.

S/N	Statements	Positive SA	A	UD	D	Negative SD	Total
1.	Do not need special training in reading instruction from university, college of education or any relevant tertiary institution.	4	6	2	23	15	50
2.	I do not need special materials/teaching aids to teach in primary schools.	3	4	0	18	25	50
3.	In primary schools the teaching of reading should be the responsibility of reading teachers only.	2	8	0	12	28	50
4.	Reading is not a technical skill. Every primary school teacher (regardless of the course studied in any higher institution) should be able to teach reading.	6	9	0	22	13	50
5.	Teachers in the primary schools are probably more competent to teach reading skills than special reading teachers.	5	2	1	15	27	50
6.	Any primary school teacher who is assigned a class should teach his or her pupils how to read.	1	10	2	17	20	50
7.	With rare exceptions, pupils should know what there is to know about reading before they complete their primary education.	8	17	5	12	8	50
8.	Teaching reading should not be a necessary and compulsory skill in all classes in primary schools	7	2	2	19	20	50
9.	Every primary school teacher should be a teacher of reading.	4	3	2	20	21	50
10.	The teaching of reading can be exciting for teachers as teaching any other subject of interest.	2	5	3	18	22	50
Total		42	66	17	176	199	500
Percentage %		13.4	13.2	5.4	30	38	100

Teachers in this study believed that they need special university courses in methods of teaching reading (76% disagreed and strongly disagreed with the statement). 24% agreed/strongly agreed. 86% disagreed/strongly disagreed with the statement that they do not need special materials/teaching aids. There was also a strong affirmation from the respondents that they believed teaching reading is a technical process that primary school teachers generally know nothing about and that special reading teachers are more competent to teach reading skills than teachers of other subjects. Responses to statements 1-10 would indicate a negative attitude towards the teaching of reading in primary schools.

Conclusion

Based on the empirical data obtained from this study, one can conclude that the attitude of teachers towards the teaching of reading in primary schools in Kaduna metropolis is generally negative. This may partly be responsible for the reason why reading is given little or no attention in most primary schools in Kaduna. Infact, in most schools visited, reading is either not taught or poorly taught. This perhaps may be attributed to their lack of adequate training in reading instruction. If primary school teachers could be given adequate professional support by way of vigorous training in reading instruction, perhaps teachers would change their present negative attitude towards reading to a positive one. This researcher affirms that positive attitude to the teaching of reading is dependent on adequate and consistent professional support, such as regular training in reading instruction.

Recommendations

The following recommendations were made based on the findings of this study:

- Reading instruction should be taught as one of the core courses in all teacher-training colleges, polytechnics and other tertiary institutions. It should be a mandatory course for all students in such institutions, especially, would-be teachers regardless of their area of specialization or subject combinations.
- Universities, Colleges of Education, polytechnics and other relevant tertiary institutions should offer degree courses leading to the award of Bachelor's degree, Master and Doctoral degrees in Reading. This will lead to the production of reading specialists that could be posted to schools.

- Federal and state Government should ensure that reading specialists are distributed to schools upon graduation to provide continuous professional support and mentoring to other teachers in order to help them develop more positive attitude towards reading. Such reading specialists could also serve as coaches in primary schools to assist struggling readers.
- Teachers should be adequately and rigorously trained in reading instruction. In-service training, workshops, seminars and conferences in Reading Instruction should be organized for primary school teachers on a regular basis to keep them abreast of the current trends knowledge and technology in the field.
- There should be a 360 degrees turnaround attitudinal change by teachers towards the teaching of reading. For now, English Language teachers (since there are no Reading Specialist teachers) can be used as agents of change. They should work hand in hand with other teachers by encouraging them to change their negative attitude to a positive one. Schools should organize special awards for teachers especially for teachers whose pupils are performing well in reading.
- For the time being, only teachers with relevant qualifications such as English Language and English Literature should be allowed to teach reading in primary schools. Gradually when Colleges of Education, Universities and other tertiary institutions produce graduates in reading, then, such teachers can be replaced with reading specialists.
- Rotational teaching should be encouraged in primary schools. The practice of one teacher teaching all the subjects in a class should be discouraged and abolished in order not to continue to make primary school teachers “Jack of all trades but master of none”.

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Appendix A**Otto-Smith Attitudinal Inventory****Assessment of Teachers' Attitude towards the Teaching of reading in primary schools in Kaduna metropolis**

Please respond to each statement by ticking the appropriate column

Strongly Agree (SA) Agree (A) Undecided (UD) Disagree (D) Strongly Disagree (SD)

S/N	Statements	Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1.	I attend workshops and seminars on reading instruction regularly.					
2.	I find the teaching of reading very interesting and enjoyable.					
3.	I encourage my pupils to read extensively.					
4.	I am a member of Reading Association of Nigeria.					
5.	The Training (workshops, seminars, conferences) I have received throughout is adequate for me to teach reading in the primary school.					
6.	I am always enthusiastic about teaching reading to my pupils.					
7.	The reading component of the English Language Curriculum is very easy to interpret.					
8.	I involve my pupils in many reading activities.					
9.	I am willing to go the extra mile to improvise teaching aids to make my reading lessons interesting.					
10.	There are so many reading tasks embedded in the reading components of the English Language Curriculum.					