

UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, WINNEBA

**INVESTIGATING THE FACTORS LEADING TO THE POOR READING
SKILLS OF FORM ONE STUDENTS IN ST BASILIDE'S TECHNICAL
VOCATIONAL SCHOOL**

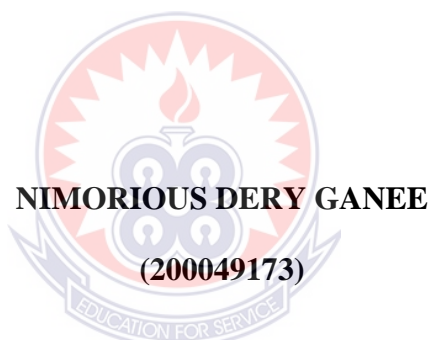


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VOCATIONAL SCHOOL**



**A dissertation in the Department of Applied Linguistics,
Faculty of Foreign Languages Education, submitted to
the School of Graduate Studies in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the award of the degree of
Master of Education
(Teaching English as a Second Language)
in the University of Education, Winneba**

APRIL, 2022

DECLARATION

STUDENT'S DECLARATION

I, Nimorious Dery Ganee, declare that this dissertation, with the exception of quotations and references contained in published works which have all been identified and duly acknowledged, is entirely my own original work, and it has not been submitted, either in part or whole, for another degree elsewhere.

SIGNATURE:.....

DATE:.....



SUPERVISOR'S DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the preparation and presentation of this work was supervised in accordance with the guidelines for supervision of dissertation as laid down by the University of Education.

SUPERVISOR'S NAME: DR. CHARLOTTE FOFO LOMOTEY

SIGNATURE.....

DATE.....

DEDICATION

I dedicate this project to my dear elder sister who nurtured me and supported me spiritually and materially to come out with this dissertation.



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

To God Almighty be the glory. I thank Him so much for giving me the knowledge, strength and the ability to carry out this project successfully. I wish to extend my heartfelt gratitude to Dr. Fofo Lomotey my supervisor for taking time off her busy schedule to read through the pages of this thesis. Her directives contributed immensely to the completion of this work.

Special thanks also go to my lecturers for their devoted attention, good tuition and encouragement. Finally, my thanks go to the Brothers FIC, a catholic religious society, for the adequate care and financial support. Also, I am so grateful to the principal, staff and students of St Basilide's Vocational Technical School for the love and support they gave me.

I will also not forget my course mates of English class for their moral support and encouragement.



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ABSTRACT

The study was to investigate the factors leading to the poor reading skills of form one students in St Basilide's Vocational Technical School. A population of three hundred (300) form one students was considered for the study. A sample of thirty (30) students was chosen for the study from the population. The students were both males and females to ensure gender equity. Interview and observation methods were used to collect data. The selected thirty students forming a representative sample of form one were interviewed. The research focused on reading practices common in senior high schools in Ghana, the challenges affecting the reading culture in schools and the strategies that should be adopted to improve the reading of students in form one. The objective of the study is to identify the reasons behind students' poor reading habits and particularly to improve the reading skills of St Basilide's Vocational Technical school form one students and also to develop the use of oral activities to improve English reading. The research findings depicted the situation of poor reading skills of SHS one students, and were enhanced by illustrations in the form of tables and graphs where necessary. Finally, the research recommended that Ministry of Education should introduce educative and interesting non-textbook materials (NTBRMS), readers' clubs, encourage storytelling, make reading materials locally, timetable reading and library lessons, encourage early reading lessons, talking offices and compounds.



CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

This chapter is made up of the Background to the Study, Statement of the Problem, Research Questions, Objectives of the Study, Significance of the Study, Delimitations, Limitations and Organization of the of the Study.

1.2 Background to the Study

Reading is an important skill to help people learn from human knowledge and experience. Through reading, knowledge has greatly contributed to the growth of mankind. Reading is the fastest and simplest way to raise people's educational level (Hung & Tzeng, 2001). Hung and Tzeng (2001), compared reading to opening the door of understanding to human's past, where it can serve as a looking glass for our present. Reading also stimulates the development of brain cells, reinforces language skills, enhances organizational abilities, improves one's temperament and composure, and provides strength to endure frustration. In short, to Hung and Tzeng (2001), Reading is the best and only way of enabling humans to absorb new experience, and replace old views.

Goodman (1976), defines reading as the process by which a person receives and interprets a message from printed materials. A process of how information is processed from the text into meanings, starting with the information from the text, and ending with what the reader gains. Smith (2003) also revealed that reading is a language process, not merely the sum of various decoding and comprehension of sub skills but the process of reconstructing the author's ideas and information.

Reading was traditionally viewed as a passive process in which the readers simply decode the written symbols without bringing their own knowledge to interact with the text (Clarke and Silberstein, 1977). Alderson (2000), called these readers passive decoders of sequential graphic-phonemic-syntactic-semantic systems. But after the emergence of the psycholinguistic model of reading (Goodman, 1976), research on reading showed that reading is actually an active process, in which the reader creates meaning from the printed words. As Goodman (1976), described, reading is a psycholinguistic guessing game, in which the reader actively interacts with the text to construct meaning.

Goodman (1973), and Smith (2003), both elaborated the “psycholinguistic method” of reading and argued that it had provided new insights into the reading process as well as the process of learning to read. To sum up, reading is the act of constructing meaning while transacting with text. Just as we use information stored in background knowledge to understand and interact with the world around us, so do we use this knowledge to make sense of print.

Goodman (1976), said in his study that to help students derive meanings from a text, a teacher has to understand the process of reading. When people are able to read, they are in a better position to educate them in a developing nation like Ghana. It is important that as basic reading skills are taught, an attempt is made to motivate the students in order to encourage them to continue to have interest in reading even after they have left school. Most teachers seem to agree that the use of visuals can enhance language teaching. As they help teachers to bring the real world into the classroom, they make learning more meaningful and more exciting (Brinton, 2000).

According to Bamford (2003), it must be taken in to account that visual literacy is the key to obtain information, construct knowledge and build successful educational outcomes. He asserts that this is due to the increase of the number of images namely the use of posters, sentence or word pictures, etc. in the world (Harif and Hashim, 2009). It is important to point that students bring to the classroom their own background, that nowadays is associated with images provided by mass media, videogames etc. Santas (2009), reflects on how teachers ask students to think without any of this help. Obviously, this makes it difficult for students to relate what they are studying to real life.

Moreover, some teachers assume that their reading abilities and that of their students are the same and therefore introduce the students to other subjects that require a lot of reading which practically make those subjects uninteresting among them. It is therefore no wonder that most students look at reading as a difficult task.

This project is therefore undertaken with the aim of contributing to an effective way by which students can acquire the basic reading skills and be provided with adequate motivation as well.

1.3 Statement of the Problem

The Government of Ghana has from time to time attempted to address reading as an important aspect of the education system. This is evidenced by the various efforts government has engaged in through the Ministry of Education and Sports to encourage reading in schools, development of local languages, providing schools with instructional materials and introducing the free school feeding program (Graphic online, 2013).

Nonetheless, a study carried out by the WAEC (2014) reveals that out of 361,150 pupils who completed their basic education in 2014, only 13 per cent were adequately literate in English. This arose from the fact that these pupils were reading less and concentrated on reading prescribed textbooks to pass examinations, a situation that has created poor reading habits, poor language coordination and expression, poor academic performance and that has hampered the students' creativity in various aspects of life. The absence of a strategy to guide reading habits among pupils limits the development of a reading culture in basic schools. It is important to analyze the current state of reading among students in order to develop strategies that will help them develop a reading culture.

Moreover, majority of teachers in the senior high schools these days do not use the reading period of their class time table for what they are meant for. This bad habit of not utilizing the reading period has come a long way to contribute to poor reading standards of students. Students are not taught how to read and comprehend what they read. It therefore comes as no surprise when students perform poorly in reading.

St Basilide's Vocational Technical School form one students were found to be backward in reading during a reading aloud lesson. This is a pointer enough for one to conclude that there is a problem in teaching and learning of reading. Therefore, this problem needs to be overcome by teachers in order to help students read effectively.

1.4 Research Questions

The study will attempt to provide answers to the following questions:

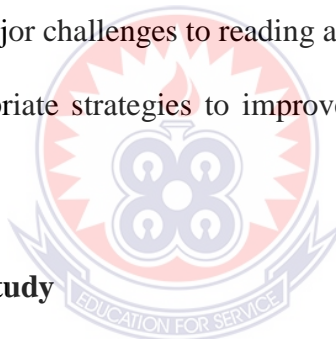
1. What kinds of reading materials are used in St Basilide's Vocational Technical School?

2. What challenges do form one students face that limit their mental and academic development through reading?
3. How can the reading skills of form one students be improved using, visual aids like posters, word and sentence cards?

1.5 Objectives of the Study

The purpose of the study is to improve the reading skills of St Basilide's Vocational Technical School form one students and also to develop the use of oral activities to improve the English reading. The specific objectives were;

1. to create a strong reading culture among form one students of St Basilide's Vocational Technical School.
2. to examine the major challenges to reading among the form one students.
3. to identify appropriate strategies to improve the reading culture of the form students.



1.6 Significance of the Study

The study will help education policy-makers in Ghana in streamlining curricula that make reading a necessity by implementing a strong reading policy to guide schools on how to make their students more interested in reading and why it is important to read. Hence, the study will provide ideas on how policy-makers and teachers can encourage students to make reading a habit in order to develop a good reading culture.

The study will also produce a guide on how reading practices from schools with different curricula, like international schools, could be implemented in schools to help create a strong reading culture among students following the Ghana education curricula.

Moreover, it will provide a wealth of knowledge on how teachers can guide students to read, policy-makers, and schools in order to improve the reading culture in basic schools in Ghana. It is hoped that this will create more awareness among the students and teachers about the importance of reading in order for them to be more knowledgeable and acquire the love for reading.

Furthermore, the study will be a source of literature to be reviewed by those intending to do further research on the problem being studied. It will be consulted by other people carrying out research about reading in order to acquire facts about the reading practices in Senior High schools in Ghana.

Lastly, it will help all those who promote quality education in basic schools especially Government education planners and all stakeholders interested in the reading ability of the pupils in basic schools.

1.7 Delimitations of the Study

The researchers carried the study only at St Basilide's Vocational Technical School. The study could have been done in all schools in Ghana especially schools in Upper West Region but due to time constraint, it was impossible to carry out such an extensive research. Thus, only St Basilide's Vocational Technical School was selected for the study.

Moreover, not each and every student at St Basilide's Vocational Technical School was selected for the study. A small sample size of thirty students was fairly selected for the study as representatives for the whole school.

1.8 Limitations

There are some weaknesses of greater values to the study. First of all, the sample size used was relatively small and may limit the extent to which the results can be generalized.

Moreover, the research was carried out as an action research which is basically meant to be a test since it is designed to obtain information concerning the current status of the phenomenon. Unfortunately, fear, embarrassment and possibly the tendency for respondents to please researchers with just any answers so as not to prolong the conversation was a possibility.

Lastly, it was difficult to get the necessary resources such as TLMs and money to carry out such an extensive study. All these factors can have an influence on the validity and authenticity of the final study results and findings.

1.9 Organization of the Study

Beside chapter one which has already been discussed, the rest of the study has been grouped into four chapters: chapter two, chapter three, chapter four and chapter five. Chapter two focuses on the review of related literature. Chapter three is a section on the methodology and deals with research design, population, sample and sampling procedure and data analysis. Chapter four also deals with findings of the results and discussions. Chapter five as the last chapter deals with summary, conclusion and recommendations of the study.

2.10 Research Gap

Several research studies had been undertaken to analyze the reading culture situation in Ghana. In addition, specific interventions had been tried to enhance reading among

students in schools. However, in most developing countries, including Ghana, the majority of students did not have any interest in reading. The literature reviewed also indicated that the form one students' performance in class as well as their expression as they engaged in conversation was poor since they preferred co-curricular activities, social media to reading. However, it was not clear how schools can integrate various reading practices to overcome the poor reading culture among students. It was also not clear how teachers could create a strong reading culture among students by the reading of Non – Textbook Materials: NTBM besides the usual reading of textbooks for examination. It was therefore important to provide strategies for the development of a reading culture among students in form one as they begin their second cycle education.



CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter is designed to review related literature by other researchers on the importance of reading skills development in schools. The questions of students' inability to read could play a role in the general education and the contribution that students give and has received much attention in literature. A large number of studies pertaining to the teaching and learning of reading skills have therefore been recorded by some educationist.

2.2 Conceptual Framework

Reading is an important skill to help people learn from human knowledge and experience. Through reading, knowledge has greatly contributed to the growth of mankind. Reading is the fastest and simplest way to raise people's educational level (Hung & Tzeng, 2001). Hung & Tzeng (2001), compared reading to opening the door of understanding to human's past, where it can serve as a looking glass for our present. Reading also stimulates the development of brain cells, reinforces language skills, enhances organizational abilities, improves one's temperament and composure, and provides strength to endure frustration. In short, to Hung & Tzeng (2001), Reading is the best and only way of enabling humans to absorb new experience, and replace old views.

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language process, not merely the sum of various decoding and comprehension of sub skills but the process of reconstructing the author's ideas and information.

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2.3 Theoretical Framework

Reading is a learning skill which aids all other learning activities. The more one reads the better one learns (Kerman, 1984). Therefore, for any individual to develop a reading culture they need to practice reading. Furthermore, he pointed out that children master reading at different paces. He suggested that teachers should try to be patient, especially with slow learners. To him, children need to be praised and encouraged. For instance, poor readers should never be rebuked as this frustrates them and destroys their efforts to master reading.

Indeed, Cox and Guthrie (2001), agreed that the amount of reading that students do for enjoyment and for school was found to be a major contributor to their reading achievement. For a reading culture to be possible, reading must be part of all aspects of life and not only certain parts such as school or work (Magara and Batambuze, 2005). Similar findings were also made by the Reading for Change study (2002), which showed that reading enjoyment is more important for children's educational success than their family's socio-economic status. Thus, the frequent admonition for children to "read, read and read" makes sense in that extensive reading promotes fluency, vocabulary and background knowledge (Pressley, 2000).

Ghana's indigenous cultural expressions are part of the oral tradition which can be used in school as a way of bridging the gap between the children's home and school environment (Mensah, 2000). Boateng (2005) also pointed out that the use of visual aids namely drawing, scribbling, dancing and plays can be part of the concept of family literacy and can be one way of creating a reading culture among children. Osakwe (2005) made a similar point when she argued that the use of visual aids, namely, posters, words and sentence cards with a blend of storytelling, which was part of a long- standing oral tradition and informal education in Ghana, should be incorporated into today's formal education system. Through storytelling and the use of visual aids literacy, reading could be taught in a meaningful context. Literacy could become a meaningful, interesting and motivating activity contrary to a drill-and skill-based teaching method. Therefore, the various views supported the belief that oral literacy and reading could be integrated to build a reading culture since in Ghana most pupils understood information better when they first listened rather than read.

2.4 Reading Strategies

In improving reading skills, the students have to practice reading a lot and use certain strategies. The student ability to comprehend the text depends on their ability to use strategy to understand what writers say. It means that strategy helps the students to comprehend the text they read. Nuttal (1982) classifies reading strategies into four types. They are skimming, scanning, extensive and intensive readings.

i. Skimming

Skimming is a useful skill to be applied in reading. Grellet (1999) stated that skimming means glancing rapidly over a text to get the gist of it. It means skimming is used to build students confidence and an understanding that it is possible to gain

meaning without reading every word in a text. Skimming assists the readers to understand the main idea of the text before reading it carefully. Students can do skimming in several ways such as reading the title or the other heading and look at the picture, reading the first and the last paragraph of the text.

ii. Scanning

Scanning means glancing rapidly through a text to search for a specific piece of information (Grellet, 1981). It means that scanning is the ability to read a text quickly in order to find specific information that is needed like a date, a figure, or a name and ignore over all unimportant information. For example, a student scan the list of names in a telephone directory to find a phone number. Scanning helps the reader find information quickly without reading the whole text.

iii. Extensive reading

In extensive reading, the readers usually face a longer text. In reading, the readers need a total understanding of writing. According to Brown (2001), extensive reading is carried out to achieve a general understanding of a text. Long and Richards (1987) identify extensive reading as occurring when the students read large amounts of high interest material, concentrating of meaning, reading for gist and skips unknown words. So, the aims of extensive reading are to build the readers' confidence and enjoyment.

iv. Intensive reading

Intensive reading is reading for detail. It usually has a shorter text. A reader usually wants to get some specific information. According to Macleod (2011), intensive reading exercises may include looking at main ideas versus details, understanding of what the text implies, making inferences, looking at the order of information and how

it affects the message, identifying words that connect one idea to another and identifying words that indicate change from one section to another

2.5. Challenges to Reading

Mensah (2000) emphasized that the lack of acquisition of positive reading skills and a positive reading culture during the formative years impacted negatively on the pupil's performance not only in the language taught, but also in other subjects. Hence lack of reading among pupils was as a result of the challenges discussed below.

According to Boateng (2005), Ghanaians lacked the motivation to buy books because they had to meet basic human needs such as food, health, shelter and clothing. As a result of low incomes, many would-be readers kept away from buying books because they did not have money to buy reading materials. This limited their ability to get exposed to a variety of information materials which could easily be accessed by buying them from bookshops if they could afford them.

Moreover, the education system in Ghana currently does not prioritize reading for pleasure or general knowledge acquisition that does not aim at passing examinations. For instance, both Mensah (2000), and Boateng (2005), asserted that the poor reading culture of students in form was a result of poor public policy and institutional management practice, lack of essential resources for literacy development, failure to recognize reading as an essential critical skill for learning, a lack of commitment to ensure that literacy was achieved, and a lack of reading policies in schools. According to them, resource allocation in Ghana concentrated on textbooks, without balancing the needs for non-textbook reading materials, and this was another predominant factor that impacted negatively on children's reading culture.

A major challenge that was identified by Boateng (2005), is the examination- oriented education system in Ghana. They stated that, even the literate stopped reading after they finished writing their exams. A reading culture cannot be said to be present in a situation like this, where reading is only part of the school context and not of all aspects of life which was the situation in many African countries and was further exacerbated by the fact that the home environment did not encourage reading (Dike,1995). When children returned home from school, they found that there was little time for reading because of things like domestic chores. Some homes did not even have books that were suitable for children to read. Reading had been connected with passing examinations and had been seen as a way of accomplishing academic success. This view did not inspire students to read during their leisure time since they associated reading with textbooks and attending school. Students associated reading as an activity that they are forced to do, so that they could be successful in the future. Evidently the education system's examination-oriented structure could be seen as one of the obstacles to creating a reading culture.

2.6 Empirical Framework

Apart from this feature of the education system, Boateng (2005) identified other obstacles to creating a reading culture such as the fact that there was limited access to books in most schools because teachers seemed protective of books for fear of mutilation. It was also observed that the books were normally kept in the head teacher's offices. This kind of gate keeping and limiting of access to books for the children in the schools did not promote a reading culture. Further still, in many countries of the developing world there was a serious lack of reading materials and hence a lack of reading culture. UNESCO stated that "The goal of Education for All also involved the development of literate societies in the developing world, and could

not be attained solely by providing quality learning materials to schools. If people were to stay literate, they had to have access to a wide variety of written materials and continue the habit of reading in their adult lives" (UNESCO, 1980).

Nnam, (2003), recommended that in order to promote the reading habit in schools, reading should be taught as a subject in its own right, regularly and systematically, and therefore a lot of time must be specially allocated on the timetable for it. Nnam (2003) emphasized that schools should put in place policies, routines and curricula that require pupils to visit the library at least once a week. Teachers should give pupils assignments that required library research to encourage them to read ahead and expand on what they had learnt in class. Through the use of planned reading sessions, students would be able to utilize the time they got to visit the libraries and get exposed to a wide variety of reading materials, which would encourage them to engage in reading. In addition, Earl (1997) emphasized that as a means to promote reading among students, reading logs should be introduced. The reading logs helped students to note their reading activities inside and outside of class. They included what was read; how long it was read or how many pages were read. The logs not only served as an adequate reminder to read but they also conveyed a strong and clear message about the importance of reading outside of class and provide a structure for tracking progress. Through such an activity pupils were likely to be encouraged to read more.

The development of good reading habits largely depended on the way students were introduced to reading. Usually teachers taught pupils to identify the different letters of the alphabet before introducing them to the reading of syllables and simple sentences using posters, words and sentence cards. For instance, Bakunda et al. (2003), asserted that in order to improve reading practice with the objective of developing learners'

reading skills, visual aids such as posters, poems, and storytelling, sentence and word cards should be used. These help learners to be able to decode words by understanding the sounds that letters represent by relating it to images they see around them.

Furthermore, Magara and Batambuze (2005) stated that teachers should use more suitable teaching methods as a means of promoting a reading culture. Teachers needed to be trained to teach students how to read. It has also been argued that traditional methods of teaching, which are based on a single textbook, were much less effective than a book-based approach. This meant that, instead of the traditional method of reading, the pupils should come in contact with many different kinds of books that are relevant to them (Elley, 2001). These teaching methods could be seen as one way of changing the students' perception of reading as schoolwork. This aspect was important since it is believed that a reading culture could not flourish if reading was seen as something that students were obliged to do but do not enjoy doing. When reading was viewed as enjoyment children could start using reading in other parts of their lives and hence reading could be a part of all aspects of their everyday life.

Moreover, studies revealed that if teacher rewarded students who had performed even moderately well in reading with small tokens like sweets or biscuits, it promotes reading culture among the pupils (Elley, 2001). Some of the ways in which teachers rewarded their students were through showing off the students' books to their fellow students, asking students to read in front of the class and putting stars in the pupils' exercise books. Such rewards encouraged pupils to indulge more in reading since they anticipated being rewarded.

In addition to using good methods to encourage good reading habits, the teacher's attitude and enthusiasm towards reading was proven to play a key role in encouraging the reading habits. Nnam (2003) noted that teachers must display a positive attitude towards reading, and even make a public show of their interest in reading, if they were to encourage students to read.

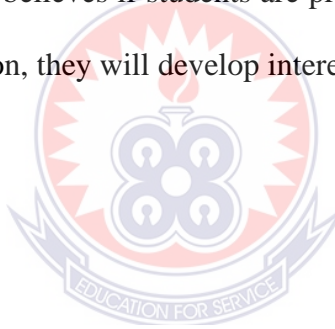
Lastly, a suitable environment was necessary for good reading to develop. Hence if students were provided with quiet places or rooms for reading where they could read without interruption both at school and at home they were likely to develop interest in reading once availed with reading materials (Elley, 2001). Even in societies where literacy prevailed and books were in abundance, many people who lacked a reading environment were not motivated to read (UNESCO, 1980).

In line with the above, one would agree that reading is greatly needed as an educational tool in learning. Reading is a key skill that opens doors to physical, emotional, intellectual and for moral self-improvement. Reading therefore needs to be encouraged in the life of every child to gain much from formal education which depends greatly on the quantity of the reading a child does. It would be of a great value for reading to be inculcated in children as habits to enable them grow with it. Thus, all these strategies contribute immensely to improving the reading skills of form one students in St Basilide's Vocational Technical School but the use of visual aids is the one that is heavily linked in solving the perceived problem.

2.7. Conclusion

- Boateng (2005), pointed out that the use of visual aids namely drawing, scribbling, dancing and plays can be part of the concept of family literacy and can be one way of creating a reading culture among children.

- Osakwe (2005), made a similar point when she argued that the use of visual aids, namely, posters, words and sentence cards with a blend of storytelling, which was part of a long- standing oral tradition and informal education in Ghana, should be incorporated into today's formal education system.
- On the contrary, Elley (2001), is of the view that in order to improve reading among students, there is the need for teachers to use rewards. Such reward can be in the form of showing the student books to his or her colleagues.
- UNESCO (1980), believes that even in societies where literacy prevailed and books were in abundance, many people who lacked a reading environment were not motivated to read.
- Elley (2001), also believes if students are provided with a serene environment without interruption, they will develop interest in reading both at school and at home.



CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.1. Introduction

This chapter presents a brief description of the methods used for the study. In order to ensure that relevant and reliable information was gathered for this research, the researchers had to employ a number of techniques. This aspect focuses on the Research Type, Population, Sample and Sampling Technique, Data Collection Instruments, Source of Data Collection, Data Collection Procedure, and Methods Data Analysis.

3.2. Research Design

This study focused on how best the students interest and performance could be improved in the field of reading. For this reason, an action research was adopted. An action research is basically designed to test the students to obtain information concerning the current status of their reading skills and development.

Action research has much strength. Basically, it will help the researchers to evaluate the effectiveness of students' reading and oral skills. It also helps the researchers to understand what actually goes on in the teaching and learning situation and whether or not it has a direct effect on the reading skills of the students.

Nonetheless, one of the weaknesses of action research is tiredness. For instance, with action research, there is the need to close link between those who do the research and those who give data for the research. The researchers have to unceasingly contact people for data and that makes it tiresome. Action Research exposes students with problems under investigation by bringing what they feel should have been kept secret. Information gathered from clients is sometimes inaccurate and unreliable as in most

cases; those under study feel shy to provide the correct information during interviews and that incorrect information make the work unreliable.

It is also very expensive to conduct Action Research. Action Researchers have to travel several kilometers to get the needed information and also to get their works vetted by their supervisors. At times, money to undertake those journeys is hard to come by. Last but not least, Action Research breeds laziness among researchers since some of them write on works that have already been produced in most cases.

3.3. Population

A sample of thirty (30) students was considered for the study. They were form one students of St Basilide's Vocational Technical School. The students were both males and females in order to ensure gender equity. The researcher opted to undertake this study in Nadowli - Kaleo District and specifically Kaleo since there are a number of schools in that locality. .

Furthermore, form one was chosen because reading plays an important role in the education of the students especially in second cycle institution. The students at this stage are to be encouraged to develop important skills and interest needed for reading.

The table below shows the breakdown of the population of students in form one who were chosen for the study.

Table 1: Breakdown of the sample of students in form one

Name of School	Gender		Total
	Boys	Girls	
St Basilide's Vocational Technical School	13	17	30

Source: Field Data (2022)

3.4 Sample and Sampling Technique

Thirty students out of sixty were the sample chosen for the study. The thirty students therefore formed the representative sample of the form one class.

In the study, the researcher used his own judgment about which respondents to choose and thus selected only those who best met the purpose of the study. According to Bailey (1994), a researcher uses his /her own judgment about which respondents to choose and picks only those who best meet the purpose of the study. Therefore, a systematic sampling was used in the selection of the thirty students.

The systematic sampling used was a version of probability sampling (Bailey 1994). Its own character is that, the unit in the population must be arranged serially, and then the selection would be arranged by finding a random number to begin with. The unit population in this study was form one students of St Basilide's Vocational Technical School.

The class register helped the researchers to arrange the names of the students serially. Using the systematic sampling technique, the researchers then cut pieces of paper and wrote down such numbers as 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9 and 10. These numbers were mixed up on a table to give each student an equal chance of selection.

The number three (3) was selected. With this number, the researcher selected any 3rd, 6th, 9th, 12th, etc. names till the sample size of thirty was reached. The reason for the use of the systematic sampling technique is to ensure that those selected will not feel that they are the low achievers in class.

3.5 Data Collection

Data Collection in this sense deals with the source from which the data was collected, the instruments used to collect the data as well as procedure for collecting the data.

3.5.1 Source of Data Collection

The students of St Basilide's Vocational Technical School were the source from which the data was collected since that was the place where the study was conducted.

3.5.2 Instrument for Data Collection

Thirty students were selected systematically from the class for the purpose of the interview to ensure that the population is evenly sampled. Students were then interviewed. Moster and Kalton (1997) described interview as conversation between the interviewer and the respondents. They explained that it helped the researcher to continue, eliciting certain information from the respondents. The researcher used in-depth interview in order to obtain detailed information for the study by interviewing the pupils with a view to finding out the practices they engaged in as they read. Thus, through the interviews, the students were given the opportunity to tell some of the major problems they faced when reading. Thirty minutes was used to complete the interview. The researcher used the interview method of data collection because it was reliable in obtaining verbal and non-verbal information from respondents.

The study also involved the use of closed and open-ended questions which were arranged systematically according to the research objectives that allowed logical flow of the conversation between the researcher and the interviewee.

3.5.3 Procedure for Data Collection

a. Pre-Intervention

Through a close observation by the researcher, it was observed that most of the students had reading difficulties when they were asked to read a passage from a textbook. These were in pronunciation and intonation that facilitate effective reading which the students lacked. Those who could read also found it difficult to put some words together to make meaningful sentences.

b. Intervention

With the above information that the researcher had about students at the pre-intervention stage of the study, it prompted him to come out with a systematic strategy which might assist the students to read without difficulties. The researcher designed posters, word and sentence cards, comprehensive lesson notes, using eidetic approach to improve upon the reading skills of the students.

c. Post-Intervention

In one of the reading lessons the researcher had with the students, library books, posters, word and sentence cards were used to assist the students to read with less difficulty. The researcher showed a number of word cards to students and pronounced to them whilst they listened.

When the students were familiar with the words, simple sentence cards were displayed to the students and were asked to read what was on them aloud. This was

undertaken to ensure fluency skills. The researcher then discussed posters with students. This was done to promote the development of predicting skills. The researcher then read the passage aloud for students to listen for about two times and also read it sentence by sentence. The students in return read the passage whilst the researcher used modeling and phonic method to correct their errors where necessary. This was done to develop their reading skills.

Moreover, the students were made to pick sentence and word cards and read what is on them aloud. As the researcher continued to have English lessons with the students through reading, it was realized that the students had now improved upon their reading as about more than half of the population could now read with less difficulties. This could be credited to the use of the poster word and sentence cards to help the students to pronounce word and read sentences.

3.6. Methods of Data Analysis

Tables will be used to group the information gathered and percentages will be used to analyze data. The researchers assured the informants of confidentiality. The information given to the researchers was used solely for the purposes of the research. The researcher avoided using any kind of enticement for the purpose of obtaining information. Throughout the period of the study, it was crucial that ethical issues were taken into consideration to ensure reliability and accuracy of data.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

4.1. Introduction

This chapter presents and discusses key findings of the study, which are presented in relation to the Objectives of the Study as stated in Chapter One, Section 1.5.

4.2. Population of Sampled Firm(s)

St Basilide's Vocational Technical School is located in the Upper West region of Ghana specifically, in the Nadowli – Kaleo District. The school was established in the year 1970 and has provided a great number of dignitaries. The school is noted to be one of the disciplined schools within the locality.

The teachers and students of the school contributed immensely by giving me much information concerning the study. The students are not able to read because of inadequate reading materials, lack of libraries, and lack of parental involvement and so on.

4.3. Data Presentation and Analysis

The interview and observation methods were used to collect data. The respondents comprised form one students. The selected thirty students forming a representative sample of the form one were interviewed. Major discussions included the reading practices common in senior high schools in Ghana, the challenges affecting the reading culture in schools and the strategies that should be adopted to improve the reading of students in form one. The findings were descriptive, and were enhanced by illustrations in the form of tables and graphs where necessary.

a) Characteristics of the Respondents

There are sixty students in form one but a total of thirty students representing 50% of the total respondents were interviewed for the study. However, 15 (21 per cent) respondents did not respond as a result of absenteeism or misinterpretation.

b) Gender of the Respondents

There were more female participants than male. The details are reflected in Table 2 below. This was attributed to the great amount of interest that females take in reading to enlighten themselves than males.

Table 2: Gender of the Respondents

Gender	No. of respondents	Response rate
Female	17	56.7%
Male	13	43.3%
Total	30	100%

Source: Field data (2022)

c) Assessing the Status of Literacy

The objective of this study was to assess the status of literacy by students in form one. In order to assess these practices, the study evaluated the frequency of reading, reading practices in schools, reading materials, and the factors that attract students to read books. Using the interview method, it was established that reading practices among students in the various schools under study hardly differed from school to school. The frequency of students' reading is explained below.

d) Frequency of Reading

Seventy per cent of the students interviewed admitted that they engaged in reading activities daily, i.e. every day of the week they got to read either a textbook or a storybook. Other students stated that they read during their free time, such as during the morning or lunch break or after classes. Some of these respondents stated that they read from habit while others said that they only read to pass their examinations, hence they read mainly textbooks. The other students admitted that they hardly read at all because they lacked interest in reading.

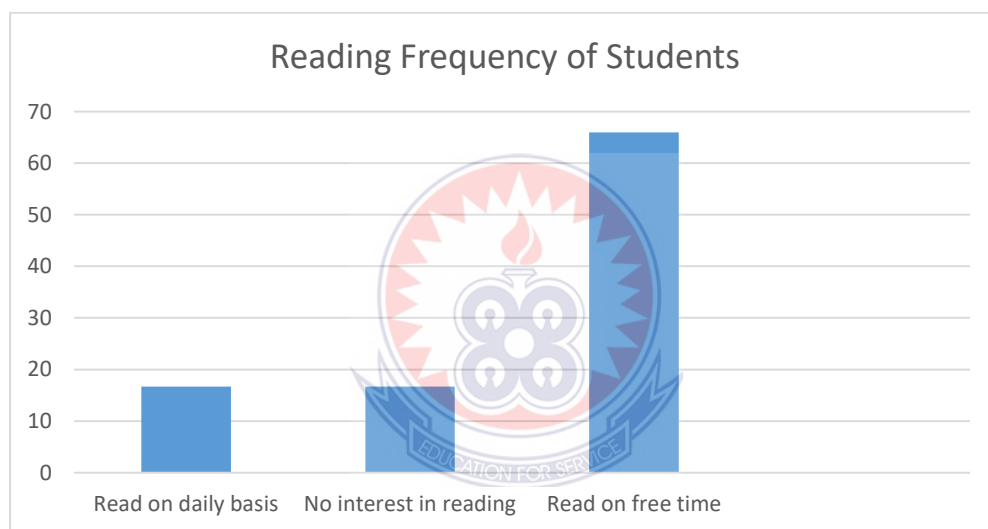


Figure 1: Reading Frequency of Students

Source: Field data (2022)

As indicated in Figure 1 above, out of the thirty students interviewed, fifteen (16.7 per cent) of the students stated that they read on a daily basis after they left class. They remarked that what they read included textbooks to help them gain better understanding of their lessons at school. On the other hand, sixty five (66 per cent) of the students interviewed stated that they read during their free time and that this was whenever they felt like reading. This implies that these students only read when they

had some free time on their school timetable.

Furthermore, five (16.7 per cent) of the students confessed that they were not interested in reading so they hardly read any books at all.

One of the respondents said: I never get time to read books like storybooks because I don't understand some of the words and I find the books boring, the only time I can force myself to read is when I am going to do exams because I want to pass them.

Another student of form one interviewed at the school said, "I don't like to read because most of the books are written in English and I can't read it easily because I don't understand the words."

The above findings indicate that language is an important aspect of promoting reading culture. The students' reading is hindered by their failure to interpret language in which text is written. The government's language policy is important because it has implications for all i.e. teachers and pupils, following the language in which information materials are written, language of instruction and examinations, and language in which teachers are trained.

In addition, the content, concepts and skills in subject areas such as Science and Social Studies have been rearranged in themes that are familiar to young children's experiences (National Curriculum Development Centre, 2006). The impact of the new thematic curriculum is of course impossible to gauge now, because it has not yet been fully implemented and it will take time before the result of this new approach is seen. This implies that if students are given an opportunity to read materials that are commensurate with their reading level in terms of simplicity of text and language, they will be able to read actively. This will lay the foundation for a strong reading

culture.

e) Reading Practices in St Basilide's Vocational Technical School

The results of the interview showed that teachers of St Basilide's Vocational Technical School did not engage their students in reading. Individual student behaviours, attitudes and beliefs are nested within the school and societal environments in which they exist (Lecompte and Schensul, 1999). Attitudes towards reading and the use of non-textbook reading materials (NTBRMS) are therefore assumed to be shaped not only by students' personal interests and reading habits but also by the larger social and cultural milieu in which the teaching of reading takes place, including homes and schools for instance.

A teacher of St Basilide's Vocational Technical School said: "All reading practices in which students engage tend to begin in their school or home environments with the help of their teachers, parents or siblings to encourage the students to read." The teacher further stated without support from people in their communities, students will fail to recognize the importance of reading.

Indeed, Gitachu (2007) asserted that adults who offer to read to young children often helped them to develop as independent readers by engaging them in conversations about what they had read. Therefore, teachers need to motivate the students to read in school as well as outside school in order to reduce the impact of a poor reading culture. This can be done by providing students with necessary reading materials. This implies that students cannot easily engage in reading without support from their teachers, parents, and friends, yet without this support they will not realize the benefits that accrue from engaging in reading.

Using the interview and observation methods, the researcher found that the reading practices prevalent among students and teachers in all the schools studied were similar. The researcher observed students who were reading silently, which entailed students reading as individuals either in class, in the library or in any place of their choice, in the school compound.

f) Early Morning Reading Sessions

The interview method revealed that each school had its own reading culture, which could mean that whenever students were not having a lesson they would have books to read and use morning time as reading time. However, this was done at individual school level. According to a form one teacher from the school: Students are fresh in the morning and are likely to concentrate as they read, which keeps them interested in information material they are reading, unlike in the later hours of the day when they are exhausted after attending various lessons; their level of concentration is low. Therefore, if reading is made compulsory at this time of day, students are likely to improve their reading habits. The teachers suggested that the students' minds are fresh at this time of day and they are therefore able to concentrate on whatever information they are reading.

g) Reading Materials

The researcher found through the interview and observation methods that most students in the selected school engaged in reading textbooks because their sole purpose was to excel in their examinations. Other students preferred reading non-textbook reading materials such as storybooks which were referred to readers as magazines, newspapers, teacher-made materials, student-made materials, charts and reading cards. This information is represented in Table 3.

Table 3: Reading Materials

Reading material	No. of respondents	Percentage
Storybooks	13	43.3%
Textbooks	2	6.6%
Newspapers	7	23.3%
Magazines	4	13.3%
Teacher- and pupil made materials	2	6.6%
Charts	2	6.6%
Total	30	100%

Source: Field data (2022)

Although the government is trying to support reading in various ways, it lacks reading materials that can arouse students' interest, hence there is the need to select reading materials with appropriate and interesting information to cultivate interest in reading among the students. The above findings imply that if students are provided with more non- text-book reading materials, such as storybooks, they will be encouraged to read more since story-books have interesting content like pictures and vocabulary which are likely to arouse interest in reading among the students as well as motivate them to engage in regular reading

h) Factors that motivate Students to Read Books

To assess factors that motivate students to read, students were interviewed to find out what attracted them to reading materials since most of them preferred NTBRMs as the best option to indulge and strengthen their reading habits. Twenty students said a picture (illustration) would play a fundamental role in motivating them to pick a book to read because it would make them curious about what the book was about, four

students said that an interesting title would make them want to read a book, whereas one student said he only gets interested in reading a book if it is recommended by a friend. Table 4 represents factors that motivate students to read books.

Table 4: Factors that motivate Students to Read Books

Factors that motivate pupils to read	No. of respondents	Percentage
Illustrations	20	66.6%
Title	4	13.3%
Books recommended by friends	1	3.3%
Total	30	100%

Source: Field data (2022)

The researcher learnt this through interviewing students involved by asking them to vote for what would attract them to a reading material. The researcher were able to count the number of students who voted, by show of hands, on what motivated them to read a particular book in order to come up with the findings. The relevance of the material depends on the context and the children. Indeed, the best judges of what material is stimulating and relevant to the children are the children themselves (Magara, 2005). The above findings imply that illustrations play a fundamental role in attracting pupils to read because they make the pupils curious about the books. This is in line with the saying that “a picture is worth a thousand words”.

i) Challenges Affecting Reading among Students in form one

Using the interview and observation methods, the researcher learnt that a number of factors played a major role in limiting students’ interest in reading activities, which would enable them to build a firm foundation for reading. Through the interview method, the researcher found that various factors played a role in discouraging

students from developing interest in reading. These included insufficient amounts of reading materials, inaccessibility to reading materials, lack of libraries, lack of parental involvement, inappropriate reading materials, teacher-related barriers, school-level practices, cultural relevance, and a national curriculum that does not sufficiently address reading. These factors are discussed below:

j) Insufficient amounts of Reading Materials

Findings from the interview revealed that reading materials in most of these schools were insufficient in quantity in almost all classes. Headmasters complained of inadequacy in variety and quantity of reading materials in schools, especially in the wake of increasing enrollment. They felt that this was one of the barriers to promoting a reading culture in schools.

The students' views were consistent with those of their teachers. Since schools generally did not allow students to borrow readers to take home, some students were not sure whether or not the available books were sufficient in number to borrow. In some schools the researcher found that the pupils were not aware that their schools had non-textbook reading materials because the teachers did not give them an opportunity to read in class. In these schools the standard response to the question of whether there were any reading materials in the school indicated that the students were not aware of their availability or lack thereof. This lack of awareness among students that their schools had reading materials suggested that their teachers never engaged them in using these reading materials.

A form one teacher of St Basilide's Vocational Technical School said that, because of the small amount of reading materials they had, they could not share them out among all the students because of the very large class sizes that outstripped supply of the

books. They therefore felt that it was better for them to keep the books locked up.

This implies that since students were not informed about the availability of reading materials in class, it became difficult for them to know what type of reading materials they could access, from whom and where, hence limiting their interest in reading. In schools where reading materials were available, borrowing of these materials by the pupils was restricted, hence hindering their ability to engage in reading.

k) Accessibility to Reading Materials

Teachers and students revealed that it was not easy to access reading materials within the school and that, this was as a result of certain school management practices, such as the locking up of books, imposing strict restrictions on their use, infrastructural constraints such as lack of space, absence of trained librarians, inadequate supply of reading materials and lack interest in borrowing books on the part of students.

Therefore, materials were not optimally used since students did not have access to books, which reduced their interest to read. This became evident when the researcher asked a form two student of St Basilide's Vocational Technical School to show them some of the NTBRMs that they used for reading in class. The student said they got books from the school general purpose store and that they were not kept in class for fear that students who borrowed them might lose them yet they were in limited supply. As a result of the restrictions imposed on students in accessing reading materials in schools as well as the books being locked up in offices, the students found it difficult to follow the protocol of borrowing books for various reasons. Such reasons included fear of losing the books and the number of books available for borrowing being limited, hence making them less motivated to engage in reading.

1) Lack of Libraries

The observation method revealed that some of the schools selected for this study lacked libraries or reading rooms where materials could be displayed for easy accessibility. The researcher found that at St Basilide's Vocational Technical School, books were kept in boxes in the headmaster's office and in the general-purpose store, which made it difficult for students and teachers to retrieve them for reading as well as now what reading materials they could borrow. Indeed, Magara and Batambuze (2005) noted that there was limited access to books in most of the schools because teachers seemed protective of books for fear of mutilation. However, even the schools where libraries were accessible, such as St Basilide's Vocational Technical School, the students revealed during the interview that the library teacher would not allow them to take the books out for fear that they would lose the books or mishandle them, yet the school library had limited space where they could sit and read. Furthermore, some pupils attributed their lack of interest in reading to lack of an environment conducive to reading. For example, the students admitted that they could not easily read because they got involved in campus chores and that there was usually noise at on campus so they could not concentrate on what they were reading. This implies that lack of facilities like libraries where students can get access to books and concentrate on reading influences students' reading habits.

For instance, without a library setting students do not get exposed to a variety of reading materials which are displayed and they tend to be less enthusiastic about reading. This implies that the students tend to become less curious about reading materials since they are not exposed to a variety from which they can make a choice since the only place where that kind of variety can be found is a school library.

m) Weak Support and Supervision from Parents

Some of the teachers interviewed in the various schools under study admitted that their students' reluctance to read was a result of lack of support from their parents. This is because most parents do not spare time to read with or read to their children nor do they encourage them to borrow books from school, for fear that they might lose them and that they would have to pay for the lost books. In addition to that, the teachers interviewed said that most parents could not afford to buy NTBRMs for their children because books are expensive.

The teachers added that parents were ignorant about the kind of readers they could buy for their children since the schools did not give them any advice on what was considered appropriate for the children to read. For instance, a student revealed during the interview that her parents were more interested in seeing that she excelled in her class work in order to pass examinations. Hence they bought for her textbooks rather than NTBRMs such as storybooks because they did not think that NTBRMs were important for her studies. In addition, they were busy people who did not have time to read with her and this made her reluctant to read other books; furthermore, her parents expected her to read textbooks all the time. This limited her interest in other reading materials since she did not get exposed to other kinds of reading materials as a day student.

n) Strategies for improving Reading skills in Students

Since various reading practices are used in the various schools selected for the study, the students should be reading actively. However, there are a number of challenges that discourage them from making reading a part of their lives. Using the interview method, the researchers learnt from various respondents how best they thought

schools; teachers and parents could develop strategies for engaging students in reading. Their opinions included: providing students with educative and interesting NTBRMs, establishing readers' clubs, storytelling, making reading materials locally, timetabled reading and library lessons, rewarding students and teachers; and talking offices, compounds and classrooms.

The interview revealed that by the formation of readers' clubs in schools will motivate students to read because they will be able to share their different experiences basing on the information materials they have read. One teacher from the school revealed that the experience they have had with readers' clubs such as Minds across Africa showed that a reader's understanding of a text is enhanced by interacting with other readers. As students participate in book clubs they will learn from each other and work together to construct meaning (McMahon,2004), hence all the schools should be encouraged to set up readers' clubs in order to promote reading among their students. This implies that the students will get exposed to a wide variety of information materials as well as ideas that they will share with various students from other schools in order to arouse in them the curiosity to read and to make reading a habit.

Studies indicate that there is need to plan for library lessons and the only means they can be carried out systematically is through timetabling. At St Basilide's Vocational Technical School, library lessons are part of the school's timetable for all classes. According to the librarian of the school, timetabling of library lessons would be a good practice if adhered to. However, as the researcher observed, the librarian rarely showed up for lessons and the library lesson was used to teach other subjects instead. This implies that if reading is approved as a lesson on the timetable, teachers will be

able to encourage students to read because they will be able to get them exposed to the reading materials available in the school and advise them on how best to make use of the reading materials availed by the school.

Most teachers and students in schools selected for the study were of the view that the early morning period between 7:30 am – 8:00 am should be used by students for personal reading since in the morning students' minds are fresh and their concentration good. However, this differs from school to school since each school has its own reading practices. This implies that if various schools timetable the morning period for reading they are likely to create solid reading habits among the pupils since they will get exposed to reading and with time make it a permanent habit.

In short, these are the reading practices that students engaged in such as group reading, individual reading, peer-to-peer reading and teacher-to-student reading. Story-telling and early morning reading sessions were factors that motivated pupils to read. The challenges met by both teachers and students in reading were also revealed, such as insufficient quantities of books, inaccessibility to the reading materials, lack of libraries, an examination-oriented national curriculum. Teachers and students provided strategies for developing a reading culture such as provision of educative and interesting NTBRMs, establishment of readers' clubs, encouraging storytelling among the students, making reading materials locally, timetabling reading and library lessons and rewarding students and teachers.

4.4. Building the culture of Reading in Students

i. Set aside time to read each day.

One of the most effective ways to build your skills is to practice. Developing your reading skills will ultimately take practice, and you can set aside 10 to 15 minutes each day to read. You can read news articles, fiction, magazine issues or any kind of text, as long as you are taking the time to practice your reading skills.

ii. Set reading goals.

You can set reading goals for yourself to help you develop a wider vocabulary, gain a deeper understanding of different texts and improve your ability to make connections between things you read and your own perspectives and ideas.

For example, you might set a goal to learn different vocabulary related to a central topic like business management, technology or another subject that interests you. Then, you can find meanings to unfamiliar words that help build your vocabulary as you read. As you build your vocabulary to higher-level words and phrases, you can increase the difficulty level of the texts you read.

iii. Preview the texts you read

Previewing and scanning over texts can be another step toward improving your reading skills. You can apply this strategy by previewing titles, captions, headlines and other text features to get an idea of what you are reading about. This can help you form central ideas about the text before you begin reading it.

iv. Determine the purpose

As you read through different texts, practice determining the purpose. Think about why various texts were written and what meanings or themes can be understood from a text. Additionally, you might identify the purpose that you are reading for, such as to find information, follow instructions in a manual or to enjoy a story. Knowing your purpose for reading a text can help you look for key ideas and details that support your purpose.

v. Apply key reading strategies

As you read different texts, you can apply several key strategies to help you increase your comprehension. For instance, when previewing a text, you might identify the text structure as informational, persuasive or instructional. You might also determine key elements of different texts like the central themes, problems and solutions or comparative ideas presented in what you read. Using strategies like identifying text features, determining the purpose and taking notes can all work to help you improve your reading skills.

vi. Take notes while you read

Another highly effective method for improving your reading skills is to take notes while you read. For instance, you might take notes while reading a fiction novel to gain a deeper understanding of the author's choice of language, or you might write down new vocabulary while reading a science journal. Effective note-taking can prompt you to ask questions about and make connections to what you read.

Similarly, creating visual representations like charts, tables or diagrams can clarify themes and ideas and can help you form inferences from your reading. Note-taking can be highly beneficial for comprehension exercises like summarizing, too.

vii. Apply what you read by summarizing.

Summarizing what you read can also improve your reading skills. Summarizing forces you to remember specific details and central topics about what you read in your own words and through your own unique perspective. You might try verbally summarizing what you read by sharing information with a friend or write a short summary to help you retain and comprehend what you read.

As you develop your reading skills, your communication and overall ability to interact with others and perform in your career can develop as well.

Since various reading practices are used in the various schools selected for the study, the students should be reading actively. However, there are a number of challenges that discourage them from making reading a part of their lives. Using the interview method, the researcher learnt from various respondents how best they thought schools; teachers and parents could develop strategies for engaging students in reading. Their opinions included: providing students with educative and interesting NTBRMs, establishing readers' clubs, storytelling, making reading materials locally, timetabled reading and library lessons, rewarding students and teachers; and talking offices, compounds and classrooms.

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should be encouraged to set up readers' clubs in order to promote reading among their students. This implies that the students will get exposed to a wide variety of information materials as well as ideas that they will share with various students from other schools in order to arouse in them the curiosity to read and to make reading a habit.

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Most teachers and students in schools selected for the study were of the view that the early morning period between 7:30 am – 8:00 am should be used by students for personal reading since in the morning students' minds are fresh and their concentration good. However, this differs from school to school since each school has its own reading practices. This implies that if various schools timetable have the morning period for reading, they are likely to create solid reading habits among the pupils since they will get exposed to reading and with time make it a permanent habit.

In short, these are the reading practices that students engaged in such as group reading, individual reading, peer-to-peer reading and teacher-to-student reading.

Story-telling and early morning reading sessions were factors that motivated pupils to read. The challenges met by both teachers and students in reading were also revealed, such as insufficient quantities of books, inaccessibility to the reading materials, lack of libraries, an examination-oriented national curriculum. Teachers and students provided strategies for developing a reading culture such as provision of educative and interesting NTBRMs, establishment of readers' clubs, encouraging storytelling among the students, making reading materials locally, timetabling reading and library lessons and rewarding students and teachers.

4.5 Discussion of Findings

First and foremost, the researcher believe that lack of library is probably a major challenge to reading. The researcher found that at St Basilide's Vocational Technical School, books were kept in boxes in the headmaster's office and in the general-purpose store, which made it difficult for students and teachers to retrieve them for reading. The researchers agree with Magara and Batambuze (2005), that there is limited access to books in most of the schools because teachers seemed protective of books for fear of mutilation since there are no libraries.

Secondly, the researcher agreed with Elley (2001), that in order to improve reading among students, a serene environment devoid of interruption is an ideal solution. Hence if students are provided with quiet places or rooms for reading where they could read without interruption both at school and at home they are likely to develop interest in reading once availed with reading materials

Furthermore, the researchers agreed with Nnam, (2003), that in order to promote the reading habit in schools, reading should be taught as a subject in its own right, regularly and systematically, and therefore a lot of time must be specially allocated on

the timetable for it.

Last but not least, the researcher believe that establishing readers' clubs, storytelling, making reading materials locally, timetabled reading and library lessons, rewarding students and teachers, seems to be some of the strategies that can be deployed in order to improve reading among students of St Basilide's Vocational Technical School.

Finally, the researcher came to a realization that, it appears the status of literacy among the students varies and this is a manifest from the interview conducted. Some students they have no interest in reading so they hardly read. One of the student also said he never gets time to read story books since he cannot comprehend the meaning of the words.



CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1. Introduction

This chapter gives a summary of the major findings, conclusions drawn from the findings and recommendations to address the strategies for developing reading skills among form one students in St Basilide's Vocational Technical School.

5.2. Summary

The study involved thirty students who are in form one, of whom 17 (56.7 per cent) of the respondents were female and 13 (43.3 per cent) were male. The study sought to analyze the reading practices among students in St Basilide's Vocational Technical School in order to develop strategies for the development of a reading culture in schools in Ghana. The objectives of the study were to establish reading practices in St Basilide's Vocational Technical School, to examine the major challenges to reading among the students, and to develop appropriate strategies to improve the reading culture of students in St Basilide's Vocational Technical School. The interview and observation methods were used to derive findings. Interviews were conducted among the students and observations were made in classes.

The study found that development of reading practices among the students was determined by time, availability of reading materials and the involvement of their teachers in motivating students to read. The most commonly used reading practices in most schools were silent reading, group reading, teacher-to-student reading, and peer-teaching. However, other reading practices were reading competitions, readers' clubs, debating societies, and interest corners in the classrooms where teachers and students wrote articles that were pinned up in class so that other students could read them.

Reading materials known as readers were made available to the students although most of the schools had textbooks which did not inspire the students to read. Students revealed that they preferred reading NTBRMs because they had interesting titles and pictures which motivated them to read. The study revealed that students were able to access these books through their class libraries, friends, teachers, siblings and donors. However, the respondents revealed that various factors hampered their ability to build a firm foundation for reading, and these included insufficient amounts of reading materials, inaccessibility to reading materials, lack of libraries, lack of parent involvement, inappropriate reading materials, teacher-related barriers, lack of cultural relevance, scarcity of time, and the examination-oriented national curriculum.

5.3. Conclusions

Basing on the evidence of the findings of the study, the following conclusions can be drawn. The major reading practices in St Basilide's Vocational Technical School include group reading, teacher-to-student approach, student-to-student approach and individual reading. Group reading and teacher-to-student reading is the most common in the school where the study was conducted. This implies that students are not familiar with individual reading thus weakening their reading ability as individuals.

Moreover, most of the reading materials in the school encompass textbooks which are mainly procured to support academic achievement of the students rather than NTBRMs which are more interesting and which can therefore encourage students to read constantly. There are limitations to reading materials availed to students in the form of restrictions on usage and the limited variety of NTBRMs from which students can choose. Therefore, reading materials are not supportive of promotion of reading among the students.

In addition, students do not have access to reading materials because they lack space or infrastructure (libraries) for storage of the materials, they lack professionals who could provide them with reading materials systematically (librarians), this implies that the library services and library staff affect how and when students read books. However, even, inappropriate reading materials discourage students from reading. Reading materials may be inappropriate because the language used is too advanced for the students' level of proficiency, because the content of the reading materials is not culturally relevant, or because the material is considered to be morally harmful. The way in which a particular information material is presented, in terms of the language and content, usually affects the way in which students will perceive that information material.

Further still, students do not read frequently due to the fact that there is no time allocated for reading activities on school timetables thus leading to lack of interest in reading. This implies that time is an essential requirement for a reading culture to flourish. Some of the strategies that can be introduced include introducing educative and interesting non textbook materials (NTBRMS), introducing readers clubs, encouraging storytelling, making reading materials locally, timetabling reading and library lessons, encouraging early reading lessons and talking offices and compounds. If efforts are put in place to implement such strategies, there will be a major improvement of the reading skills of students in Ghanaian schools.

5.4. Recommendations

The following recommendations are based on the study findings and are driven by the belief that significant gaps in the development of reading among form one students need to be addressed through a comprehensive and multi-faceted approach to the

literacy problem at different levels of the school system.

First and foremost, there is need to increase the quantities and variety of NTBRMs to improve upon students reading ability. Interesting stories can make reading enjoyable, and this is important for children as they learn to read as well as for the development of the reading culture. Hence there is need for the government to avail students with reading materials that are educative and interesting, especially those written by authors who relate their stories with the local setting in Ghana. This will enable pupils to identify themselves with the stories and thus develop interest in reading.

Secondly, schools should take the responsibility to develop explicitly stated objectives for developing a reading culture for all children, including children with visual or other impairments. To ensure that reading thrives in Ghana, concerted efforts would be required to improve the social and reading infrastructure to promote reading across the school curriculum and develop reading extension services (Magara and Batambuze, 2005).

Moreover, there is need to strengthen reading practices among students in order to help them develop their reading skills at school and at home. Schools should set up reading activities that involve all students. This can be done through teachers organizing debates, reading competitions, quizzes, setting up readers and writers clubs, and sharing of students' stories through storytelling. Once students realize that they do not have adequate knowledge as they share ideas with their peers through reading activities, they will wake up to the benefits of reading. They are more likely to become curious about the reading of various materials available to them both at school and at home and might decide to read them.

Again, the Ministry of Education and Sports needs to develop and implement a clear policy on how to introduce reading at the basic level with regard to what language to start with, when to switch or use two languages and what specific methods and books to be used by teachers during reading lessons.

Also, local authors should visit various schools to share their experiences with the students about how they came up with ideas for the stories that they wrote. In this way the students will be inspired to read and create their own stories which they can share with their peers in class. This will enable students to broaden and enrich their imagination through reading widely in order to get ideas for their stories. These stories can be published later or displayed in their classrooms for other students to read. Hence through such activities students' morale to read is boosted.

Last but not least, the use of story-writing as a strategy for promoting reading could be supported by measures such as establishment of classroom libraries in the form of cupboards to store students' stories. Farrant (1997), asserts that the classroom environment is important in the promotion of the reading culture. He suggests a book corner of supplementary readers with pre-readers which could be used to entice students to learn to read with their teachers. Hence, there is the need to develop mechanisms for public-private partnerships and information-sharing on the basis of best practices and interventions that feature in private and government-aided school

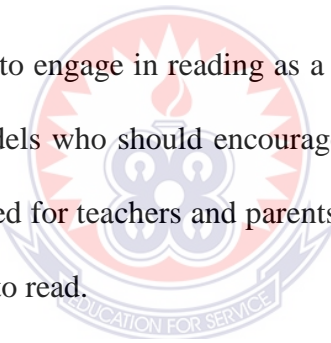
Finally, through displaying stories created by students, students reading to their peers and teachers giving students' gifts such as other reading materials as a reward, students are likely to become motivated to read and create more. This creates confidence in them and encourages them to read more regularly to come up with good results. Such rewards tend to encourage students to engage more in reading.

5.5. Suggestions for Further Study

The researcher suggested that, the Ghana Education Service (GES) has played a role of putting in place a national textbook policy. However, there is still need for the ministry to streamline means through which they can balance the supply of NTBRMs by providing a variety of reading materials which are relevant to students reading levels and can be used in schools to encourage reading amongst the students.

Also, computers should be installed in libraries with soft copy of books that are interesting and worth reading for the youth. Modern technology has made reading of traditional hard copy books in libraries unattractive. Controlled internet sites could be made available to students to arouse their interest in reading.

Furthermore, for students to engage in reading as a lifelong learners there is the need for them to have role models who should encourage them to read. Hence, for this to be fulfilled there is the need for teachers and parents to develop means through which they can support students to read.



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APPENDIX

STUDENT INTERVIEW GUIDE

The researcher is a student of University of Education, Winneba undertaking a study on a topic:

A study to investigate the poor reading skills among form one students of St Basilide's Vocational Technical School and also to develop the use of oral activities to improve the English reading. This is to kindly request you to spare some time and respond to this interview. I would like to ask a few questions regarding this topic. All your responses will be treated with utmost confidentiality.

Age _____ Class _____ Gender _____

OBJECTIVE 1: PRACTICES RELATED TO READING

1. Do you usually read during your leisure time?
2. What reading materials do you read?
3. What attracts you to read any information material?
4. How do you get the information materials you read?
5. What reading activities are you involved in as a student?
6. How often do you read and where do you read from?
7. Is there anyone who helps you as you read? If so how do they help as you read?

OBJECTIVE 2: IMPEDIMENTS TO READING

8. What problems do you face when reading?
9. What challenges prevent you from reading?
10. How does lack of a library/reading room limit your reading ability?
11. How does lack of reading materials affect your reading?

OBJECTIVE 3: APPROPRIATE STRATEGIES (for Teachers)

12. What kind of reading materials can be used to develop reading skills among students in your class?
13. What reading practices in your school are students actively engaged in to improve on their reading habits?
14. What type of reading materials do you think can attract students to read?
15. Do you think a library is important in promoting students' ability to read? If yes, what role does it play?
16. How have the following people encouraged you to develop a reading skill of the students?
 - a) Teachers
 - b) Parents
 - c) Siblings

