

Review

Post graduate students' study habits in two Nigerian Tertiary Institutions

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Accepted December 03, 2012

In recent time, the poor performance of students', especially post graduate students of higher institutions has become a source of worry. Students study habits and access to internet facilities, definitely should enhance students' performance in higher institutions, but the reverse is the case. In most cases, the allotment of time to studying and the methodology employed are fundamental recipes to academic performance. The study is an examination of Post Graduate Students' study habits in two Nigerian tertiary institutions, viz; University of Port Harcourt (UNIPORT) and Rivers State University of Science and Technology (RSUST). The study examined study habits on the basis of Time/period of study, duration, place of study, materials used for study, and their main motivators. A total of five hundred and twenty-nine questionnaires were used for the study (Two hundred and fifty-eight questionnaires for UNIPORT, and two hundred and seventy-one for RSUST). A qualitative approach, simple percentage was used in analyzing the data. Findings show that the study habits of Post graduate students' of both institutions are however synonymous. It also reveals that access to, and usage of internet facilities by Post Graduate Students' of both institutions is relatively low. Further findings reveal that there is no gender disparity in the study habits of the Post Graduate Students'. It is recommended here that University libraries in Nigeria should be upgraded and standardized to meet international standards so that students can feel comfortable using it. Again, Nigerian Universities should take ICT seriously, so as to expand ICT- based knowledge and access in Africa.

Keywords: Study habits, Post Graduate, Tertiary institutions, Academic Performance,

INTRODUCTION

The University is a citadel for learning, a place for the acquisition of knowledge and the translation of such knowledge to reality after graduation in the macro milieu. The possession of such knowledge comes with assiduousness in learning and studying in school, especially in the university environment. After the

completion of a first degree, many young men and women usually develop interest for further studies. Hence, they find their way back into the university to further their education. Post graduate education simply refers to studying and learning for degrees for which a first degree is generally a necessary requirement. It is basically a distinct programme from that of the first degree programme. Indeed, it is actually for a shorter duration, in the case of a Masters Degree programme. Generally, a post graduate programme varies both in

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organization and structure vis-à-vis first degree programmes.

Post graduate studies is usually in two dimensions; either by taught or by research. The taught aspect involves learning and teaching in a class/lecture room situation, whereas by research does not involve neither teaching nor learning in a class/lecture room situation. The expectation of the society is that students who have completed post graduate education have a full grasp of knowledge and can however recall their experiences via learning to solve real life situation. In most cases the reverse is the case, as most students' however find it difficult to solve real life situation problems. Definitely, the reason is not far-fetched but as a result of poor studying capabilities. According to (NCES, 1997), analysis of data from the NAEP 1994 U.S history and Geography assessments found a real but limited relationship between good study habits and academic performance. Effective study habits can yield success at any given time, but this would depend on an individual's time, interests and energy. Felipe (2008) posited that learning through effective study habits can be rewarding, but consists of a consistent allocation of sufficient time. Learning is the acquisition and development of memories, behaviours, including skills, knowledge, understanding, values and wisdom. Learning ranges from simple forms to more complex activities such as play. The processes of learning could be a difficult task, especially in class or lecture rooms. This is why students' are expected to have their own studying habits.

Obviously, information processing differs between individuals. For some students studying and learning comes purely naturally, while others are motivated (Kizik, 1996). Since post graduate education is quite different from that of the first degree, especially with regards to duration; it however means that the post graduate students have their study habits.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The study generally examines Post Graduate Students' study habits in two Nigerian Universities. It also, examines whether or if students of both institutions vary in their study habits. Lastly, the study examines gender differences between and among post graduate students' study habits. This study is actually a follow up study of Igun and Adogbeji's (2007) work on "Study Habits of Post Graduate Students' in Selected Nigerian Universities",

published in Library, Philosophy and Practice. They examined study habits on the basis of duration, place of study, materials used for study, and their main motivators. This study will follow suit, analyzing study habits on the same basis.

Literature review

As a post graduate student, the assumption is that the student will need to read even more than the specified core materials. Leipzig (2010) says reading is a multi-faceted process involving word recognition, comprehension, fluency and motivation. In order words, it is the act of making meaning from print. Reading is an essential element in academic pursuit. It promotes understanding, increases concentration and improves retention. To be able to read and learn properly therefore requires a strategy herein referred to as study habits.

The Educational Research Information Centre (2009) views study habits as approaches applied to learning. Such habits are however critical to having successes in school. In another way study habits are actually the ways an individual student has formed during his or her school years. Thus, there are two kinds of study habits, viz; good study habits and bad study habits. Good study habits involves been essentially organized, keeping good notes, reading textbooks, listening in class, etc and so on. On the other hand bad study habits involve a contradiction of the good study habits.

Bolanle and Olufemi (2010) concluded in their study that homework and assignment, and written works are significant study habits. Ikiriko (2011) posits that counseling can be used to alter students' attitudes to study in order to improve academic performance. Ojoko and Koko (1994) noted that significant difference exist between those with demonstrable study habits and those who do not in academic performance. In the early 1960's, Kranyik and Shankman (1963) maintain that instructors in the field of education and psychology used research, theory and experience with their own students in writing manuals. This way the students were able to organize themselves and improve in their writing abilities. Igun and Adogbeji (2007) views the library as the best practical place where students especially post graduate students' can cultivate their reading habits. This is so because according to them, the library is a most serene environment.

It is the age of globalization, spurred by information

Table 1. Gender/programme of study distribution of respondents

PROGRAMME	UNIPOINT				RSUST			
	MALE	FEMALE	TOTAL	%	MALE	FEMALE	TOTAL	%
PhD	18	8	26	10.1	15	6	21	7.8
MSc	124	48	172	66.7	144	37	181	66.8
PGD	38	22	60	23.2	51	18	69	25.4
TOTAL	180	78	258	100	210	61	271	100

and communication technologies (ICT's). Hence, ability to study with access to global information via e-library has become quite easy. Liu (2005) says such improvement in ICT has made reading quite easy and interesting for students. Nwezeh (2010) observed that, "the use of information and communication technologies no doubt is gaining momentum in Nigerian universities". Thus, Post graduate students of the Nigerian Universities are adapting to the new system of sourcing reading materials online. Igun and Adogbeji (2007) are of the view that adapting study habits to ICT is of immense importance to a post graduate student. The challenge according to Adeyinka, et al (2009) is, students' are usually unable to access internet facilities in the campus and this is quite unsatisfactory as they often go outside the university environment to have proper access. Aminu (1987) accused Nigerian universities of poor strategic planning in its physical development. Igun (2005) is of the view that Nigerian Universities should vigorously pursue and install a functional ICT-based environment so as to enhance ICT skills acquisition in the academic environment.

METHODOLOGY

The research design is a survey type, carried out in two Nigerian Universities. These are the University of Port Harcourt (UNIPOINT) and Rivers State University of Science and Technology (RSUST), all located in Port Harcourt, Rivers State, Nigeria. The study focused particularly on the Post Graduate Students' of both institutions. A well structured questionnaire was used for collection of data a total of six hundred (600) questionnaires were distributed to both institutions, making it three (300) hundred apiece. The retrieved questionnaires showed that a total of 258(86%) were returned from the University of Port Harcourt, while

271(90.3%) were returned from RSUST. In all, a total of 529(88.2%) questionnaires were used for the study. A qualitative method, tables and simple percentages was used in analyzing the data gathered via the questionnaire. The study was conducted from February to June, 2012.

Data analysis of post graduate students' study habits

The above table 1 shows the composition of our sample populations. 180(70%) of the population are males in University of Port Harcourt, while 210(77.5%) are males in RSUST. Majority of the post grad students, 66.7% in UNIPOINT and 66.8% in RSUST are in the MSc programme. In both institutions, female population is infinitesimal in various PG programmes.

Post graduate students of the University of Port Harcourt, as indicated below study more both at weekends and weekdays. Though some, (23.6%) relish weekends for their study. Same goes for the post grad students of RSUST, weekends and weekdays (36.2%). table 2

Above table 3 shows that 53.8% of UNIPOINT PG students and 42.1% of RSUST study for three to four hours. On the other hand, 11.6% and 19.9% respectively study for more than five hours.

The best way of assimilating knowledge for PG students of both institutions is summarization, summarization/memorization and self-test. 22.5% and 11.1% of students of both institutions appreciate putting themselves to test, as the best way to assimilate. table 4

PG students of UNIPOINT are choice oriented in their reading plan, while those of RSUST make use of the time table with choice of subject to read. table 5

PG students of both institutions read in their rooms (whether hostel or private accommodation). 17.1% and 10.7% of students in both institutions respectively make

Table 2: Time/period of study

TIME/PERIOD OF STUDY	UNIPOINT		RSUST	
	NO	%	NO	%
Only on weekends	61	23.6	78	28.8
Only on weekdays	40	15.5	34	12.6
Only free periods	28	10.9	15	5.5
Weekend and weekdays	69	26.7	98	36.2
Weekend, weekdays and any free period	43	16.7	40	14.8
No response	17	6.6	6	2.2
Total	258	100	271	100

Table 3: Duration of study

Hours of study per day	UNIPOINT		RSUST	
	NO	%	NO	%
Not more than one hour	43	16.7	34	12.6
Not more than two hours	36	14.0	65	23.9
Three to four hours	139	53.8	114	42.1
Five hours and above	30	11.6	54	19.9
No response	10	3.9	4	1.5
Total	258	100	271	100

Table 4: Ways of Assimilating Knowledge

Ways of Assimilating knowledge	UNIPOINT		RSUST	
	NO	%	NO	%
Summarization	88	34.1	91	33.6
Self – test	58	22.5	30	11.1
Memorization	40	15.5	41	15.1
Summarization and self-test	12	4.7	10	3.7
Self-test and memorization	9	3.6	15	5.5
Summarization and memorization	15	5.8	70	25.8
Summarization, memorization and self-test	18	6.9	8	3.0
No response	18	6.9	6	2.2
Total	258	100	271	100

Table 5: Study/Reading plan

Study/Reading plan	UNIPORT		RSUST	
	NO	%	NO	%
Use of reading timetable	48	18.6	86	31.7
Reading the subject of choice	98	38.0	54	20.0
Reading the subjects that appeal to me at the time of studying	69	26.7	38	14.0
Use of reading timetable and reading subject of choice	36	14.0	91	33.6
No response	7	2.7	2	0.7
Total	258	100	271	100

Table 6: Place of study

Place of study	UNIPORT		RSUST	
	NO	%	NO	%
Library	44	17.1	29	10.7
Class/lecture room	9	3.5	15	5.5
Hostel/my room	96	37.2	101	37.3
Quiet place	21	8.1	20	7.4
Hostel/my room and quiet place	36	14.0	60	22.1
Library and hostel/my room	14	5.4	19	7.0
Library and quiet place	10	3.9	10	3.7
Library and hostel/my room	12	4.6	11	4.1
In the Library, classroom, hostel/my room and Quiet place	16	6.2	2	0.7
No response	-	-	4	1.5
Total	258	100	271	100

Table 7: Materials used for study

Type of materials	UNIPORT		RSUST	
	NO	%	NO	%
Textbook only	39	15.1	24	8.9
Textbooks, lecture handout/notes	148	57.4	161	59.4
Internet materials	65	25.2	72	26.6
Any other relevant materials	6	2.3	14	5.1
Total	258	100	271	100

Table 8: Motivation for study

Motivators	UNIPORT		RSUST	
	NO	%	NO	%
Pass examination	42	16.3	60	22.1
Interview	16	6.2	7	2.6
Personal Knowledge and skills	168	65.1	76	28.1
Pass examination and for self-development	32	12.4	128	47.2
Total	258	100	271	100

Table 9: male/female time/period of study

TIME/PERIOD OF STUDY	TIME/PERIOD OF STUDY		
	MALE	FEMALE	%
Only on weekends	120	19	26.3
Only on weekdays	53	21	14.0
Only free periods	34	9	8.1
Weekend and weekdays	103	64	31.6
Weekend, weekdays and any free period	59	24	15.7
No response	21	2	4.3
TOTAL	390	139	100

use of the library. Table 6

Textbooks, lecture handout or notes are the elemental reading materials the students of both institutions make use of. Internet materials are equally important to the students. Table 7

Knowledge acquisition and skills (65.1%) is the motivating factor for PG students of UNIPORT, while to pass exams and for self-development is the drive for PG students of RSUST. Others 16.3% and 22.1%, respectively study to pass their examinations. Table 8

Gender differences in study habits

In this section, our goal is to examine differences between male and female Post Graduate Students' study habits. To do this, respondents from both institutions were collapsed into one, and their responses compared.

Total female respondents = 78+61 =139.

Total male respondents = 180+210 =390

Total respondents =529.

As indicated below table 9 shows that a greater percentage (31.6%) of both male and female students',

study more during the weekends and the weekdays. The rest, 26.3% study only during the weekend, with more of the males in this category relishing the weekends only. In table 10, more females (64), and more males (103) totaling 47.8% study for 3 and four hours. A relatively lower percent, 15.9% go beyond three and four hours. Table 11 shows that more males (96) and fewer females (38) make use of the time table for reading plan. Though females (48) make use of the time table, they are choice oriented in what to read. As indicated in table 12, both male and female (37.2%) PG Students' study in their hostel/room. Table 13 indicates that male and female PG students' have Textbooks, lecture handout/notes as their reading materials.

CONCLUSION

Study habits are primarily essential for any post graduate student. It is a sine qua non for successful academic performance, and a balanced academic posture. The study has shown that the study habits of post graduate students' of both institutions of learning are however

Table 10. differences on duration of study

DURATION OF STUDY			
	MALE	FEMALE	%
NOT MORE THAN 1HR	77	-	14.6
NOT MORE THAN 2HRS	90	11	19.1
THREE OR FOUR HOURS	143	110	47.8
FIVE HOURS AND ABOVE	66	18	15.9
NO RESPONSE	14	-	2.6
TOTAL	390	139	100

Table 11. male/female reading plan

STUDY/READING PLAN			
	MALE	FEMALE	%
Use of reading timetable	96	38	25.3
Reading the subject of choice	131	21	28.7
Reading the subjects that appeal to me at the time of studying	75	32	20.2
Use of reading timetable and reading subject of choice	79	48	24.1
No response	9	-	1.7
TOTAL	390	139	100

Table 12: place of study compared

PLACE OF STUDY			
	MALE	FEMALE	%
Library	65	8	13.8
Class/lecture room	22	2	4.5
Hostel/my room	134	63	37.2
Quiet place	25	16	7.8
Hostel/my room and quiet place	75	21	18.2
Library and hostel/my room	21	12	6.2
Library and quiet place	20	-	3.7
Library and hostel/my room	16	7	4.4
In the Library, classroom, hostel/my room and Quiet place	8	10	3.4
No response	4	-	0.8
TOTAL	390	139	100

Table 13: male and female materials for study

MATERIALS USED FOR STUDY			
	MALE	FEMALE	%
Textbook only	42	21	11.9
Textbooks,lecture handout/notes	200	109	58.4
Internet materials	128	9	25.9
Any other relevant materials	20	-	3.8
Total	390	139	100

synonymous, the variations are commonly insignificant.

The differences between males and females in terms of their study habits, as shown here is not an uncommon disparity, but to a large extent almost similar. Internet usage is a quintessential aspect of studying, with it, Students can access files and materials of all sorts to enable and widen their scope of studying. The only obstacle to this basically, is the fact that in these institutions and of course generally in the country, information and communication technology (ICT) lacks strength. The University environments as a matter of fact are working hard to have such facilities, yet the result is not outstanding. The study has also shown that the usage of internet facilities by Post graduate students' is bedeviled by incessant power seizure which interrupts server workability, thus encumbering successful browsing activities which is however inimical to the students'.

At this point it is necessary to mention that libraries are very important to any university, so as to spur enthusiasm for reading amongst the students' population. Basically, Post Graduate Students' are not prone to the usage of the library as is obvious in this study. This is as a result of the incessant power failure that culminates in the hotness of the library, as well as the presence of stale academic materials in the library. To this end, it is necessary to revamp the libraries in tertiary institutions in Nigeria, and inundate it with recent books, and other academic materials. Proper cataloguing and state-of-the-art facilities should equally be in place. We further recommend that e-facilities should be improved greatly in the University environment to boost ICT knowledge-base in Africa. Especially, Post Graduate hostels should be configured with internet facilities; universities should network with e-journals and communicate passwords and username for electronic resources to the students so as

to make for easy access of internet materials. The findings of this study are in no way contrary to that of Igun and Adogbeji (2007), even with larger samples. It follows that the findings can be extrapolated to Post Graduate Students' in Nigeria. We recommend that further studies should be more quantitative, and examine gender differences in studying habits separately.

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