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ICT AND THE ACQUISITION OF EFFECTIVE LEARNING SKILLS FOR HISTORY STUDENTS IN NIGERIAN TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS .

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Abstract

The achievement of history students in Nigerian tertiary institutions has not attained the desired level of being adjudged the best. The desire of every student is excellent performance in every examination especially history with its perceived abstract nature. This objective of scoring very high grades in the discipline has not been achieved by many history students in tertiary institutions in Nigeria because the students have not acquired very effective learning skills involving Information Communication Technology (ICT) to identify and adopt a particular learning skill that is peculiar to them. This has contributed in no small measure towards their under achievement. This article considered the need for history students to acquire learning skills that are ICT oriented for a better academic output.

Introduction

This topic is topical because the products of secondary education who studied history as a discipline will eventually find themselves in tertiary institutions where the acquisition of some basic study skills will shape their academic future and the class of degree they will graduate with. Those who choose to ignore the acquisition of such skills in the course of their study will turn out to be their own albatross and usually, affect their final result negatively in the long run. For students at the secondary school level, being imbued with effective study skill is very pertinent especially when preparing for exams or an upcoming test or for further academic exploits. Effective study skill is not only imperative for exam or test alone but also for the overall performance of students in all their subjects and equally better performance in NECO or SSCE exams and beyond. However, in an attempt to make some meaning out of the topic, the term study skills shall be conceptualized, a discussion on the types of study skills, relevance of ICT for the acquisition of study skills for effective learning and recommendations made.

Study Skills: A Conceptualization.

Everybody who studies at all does so during his life time hence this underscores the need for the acquisition of not just any learning skill but rather, an effective one. Study skills could be viewed as abilities, strategies, techniques and approaches which aid learning through the identification of important information, elaboration of such important information for the purpose of meaningful learning. Ormrod (2008) refers to study skills as an intentional use of one or more cognitive processes to accomplish a particular task. The idea of meaningful learning here connotes the processes which involve making connections between new information and the things that we already know and processes which clearly facilitate learning as we study. To Fall (2009), study skills simply means classroom behaviors which assist students achieve educational objectives.

The dire need for the acquisition of study skills by secondary school students serves two major purposes. One is to ensure that

the students understand the main ideas of what they read and of course, the details which support these main ideas while the second is for students to remember what they read for future use such as exams and lifelong purposes.

Types of Study Skills

There is no doubt that no two people study in the same manner as what works for one person is not likely to work for another. Nevertheless, there are some generally acceptable techniques that have been producing good result over the years and which researchers like Igo, Brunning and McCrudden (2005) have tested and discovered to have affected academic achievement positively. These include: the SQ3R, organization, time management, prioritization, concentration and motivation. An expatiation of these shall now be attempted.

The SQ3R Technique

The acronym SQ3R simply stands for survey, question, read, recite and review. This technique has proved to be a reliable way of sharpening study skills and also a good slogan to remember for effective learning. The steps in the SQ3R are:

- a. Survey:** This implies that students are expected to skim, glance or preview a book, passage, chapter or an article they want to read by looking at the headings, sub-headings, summary paragraphs, pictures, maps, introductions, etc before commencement of proper reading. The essence here is to provide students with a general idea of what to expect in the document. Where this is done before reading, it affords students good reason to either continue or discontinue reading the material in view of the relevance or irrelevance of the material to their own learning purposes. It also prevents students from aimless reading by assisting them focus their attention on the specifics.
- b. Question:** In learning, the important things to understand are usually answers to questions. Thus, students should lay emphasis on the what, why, how, when, who and where of the content being studied. Oyetunde (2000) averred that it is very important that students write down the questions hence answers to

these questions may provide a good summary or an outline to what they have read. When students ask themselves questions and they read to find answers to these questions, it increases their level of concentration and helps them to remember more of what has been read.

c. Read: Reading does not mean viewing or focusing eyes on a text book. It requires much more than that. When one reads, it should be done actively and consciously too in order to increase your retention memory. Read purposefully to answer the questions you earlier on asked yourself or those of the instructor or the author while you keep a conscious look out on phrases in italics, bold print or capital letters because they could be cardinal issues the author wants you to always remember.

d. Recite: During this stage, one stops reading intermittently in order to recall what has been read. At this stage too, try to recall concepts presented in bold prints, italics etc and the interpretations of graphs, charts, pictures, maps or illustrations generally in your own words, thoughts and actions by trying to connect ideas you have read. By the time this is done periodically, the possibility of remembering what has been read will be very high and helps to determine the extent to which you have understood what you read.

e. Review: A review is a survey of some kind or rereading of what you have read or covered. During review, you are expected to go over notes you have taken in order to help clarify any ambiguity for better understanding of the subject content. Kizlik (2012) advised that students should not wait for a long time before reviewing what they want to review but, rather, it should be as soon as they finish studying something. Before exams or text, they need to review their notes again so as to refresh their memory because this has helped many students answer questions that they would ordinarily have forgotten and made very good results.

ii. **Organization**

Students who succeed in school are those who are organized in the way and manner they conduct themselves and how they strategize their academic activities. Quite a number of students are in most instances confronted with academic

challenges not because they are not brilliant but because they are really not organized.

For proper organization, history students need to create a check list of their daily or weekly academic endeavors so that some assignments, for example, are not forgotten. Parents too need to ensure that they keep track of their children's homework and how they organize their notebooks.

iii. **Time Management**

Some students find it very difficult to schedule enough and valuable time to do their assignments or read for either test or exams. At other times, even where students have up to a week or more to do their homework or read for test, they may not create enough time until the eve of the submission of the assignment or test. Where this happens, the student may not have time to read and understand the content of the subject adequately which may affect his performance negatively.

This challenge could be overcome where the student keeps track of his assignments either on daily, weekly or monthly basis as the case may be, create much time to spend on homework or reading to enable him share his time adequately and if the evenings or prep times are not enough, try and schedule other opportunities like schoolwork time, early mornings before quiet time, study halls or library during free periods.

iv. **Prioritization**

There are situations where students are not able to meet up with the date for the submission of assignments not necessarily because they don't know how to do the assignment but because they simply don't know where to begin and which activity to handle first. Prioritization of activities is a skill that students require for a successful academic endeavor and throughout life. Therefore, it is never too early to start developing this skill.

Students could develop prioritization skills by learning to write down all the activities they need to do, even those that are non-school related; label each task i.e. A, B, C in order of need and importance; ensure that the order in which the activities are arranged is adhered to strictly.

v. **Concentration**

One way history students could learn well is to try as much as possible to avoid distractions either from friends, the social network like face book, television and the like. Limited interruptions help in ensuring very high level of concentration to prioritized goal or target.

Concentration could be achieved where students turn off access to email and games when reading or doing homework; declare the phone and radio off limit during homework; staying away from friends who do not have anything to do with either the homework or the academic enterprise for the moment and creating enough space for the assignment for comfort e.g. technical drawing, fine arts and good lighting system.

vi. **Motivation**

A student who is motivated will always be in high spirit to learn and will thus, be at his best. Many students want to do well in their academic activities but still fail sometimes due to lack of motivation either from parents or the school authority or even teachers.

Therefore, students could be motivated for maximum performance by allowed to choose subjects for their career progression by themselves with adequate guidance and not through coercion; teachers and parents regularly asking the students about their area of academic expertise and always celebrate student's successes by encouraging them and congratulating them.

Relevance of ICT for the Acquisition of Study Skills for Effective Learning in History

The use of ICT facilitates the acquisition of thinking skills by history students in the area of online discussion among the students in varied ways. One of such is the opportunity provided by the online discussion to imbue history students with enough time to reminiscence on their ideas comprehensively and critically without going through the pressure of face to face encounter with either the teacher or fellow student, (McLoughlin & Mynard, 2009). In support

of this view, Yang, Newby and Bill (2005:163) assert that the online discussion opportunity accords students the chance for "thoughtful analysis, composition, negotiation, and reflection as their discussion of an issue evolves".

Study skills are very pertinent due to the crucial role they play in the academic enterprise especially for secondary school students. Some of these include the fact that;

- i. Enhances academic performance on the part of history students by making them able to approach their studies with greater focus
- ii. It helps students do well in life after school as they are now enable to apply their organizational skills to advance their daily activities
- iii. It reduces a lot of test anxiety and increase confidence, competence and self esteem. This is because students are better equipped with knowledge in view of the organized learning they have gone through

It should be noted that the smart students are not those with higher IQs but those who have mastered the art of studying efficiently for greater productivity. Once students are able to learn these skills and realize their importance towards achieving their educational targets, they will be on their way to achieving the successful students they have always dreamed to be.

Recommendations

- i. The school authority should endeavor to provide a conducive and motivating learning environment such as light, good classrooms, etc in order to facilitate the acquisition of effective learning skills.
- ii. Students on the other hand need to develop in themselves spirit of self-determination to make them remain focused towards the acquisition of learning skills.
- iii. Teachers also need to create a critical inquiry environment for history students by asking questions that can raise their level of learning.

- v. Government should make deliberate efforts at providing ICT (internet) facilities for students of history so as to increase accessibility rate to enhance their thinking skills.

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