

Enhancing Reading Culture in Nigerian TVET Institutions: Institutionalizing Structured Library-Based Reading Sessions for Academic Improvement

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Abstract: This study investigates the effectiveness of structured, library-based weekly reading sessions as a mechanism for improving reading culture and academic performance among students in Nigerian Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) institutions. Using a mixed-methods longitudinal design, data were collected from 133 National Diploma students through self-reported survey responses, interviews, focus group discussions, and academic records. The intervention consisted of mandatory one-hour weekly reading sessions conducted in the institutional library over one academic session. Findings revealed that 85% of participants reported increased reading engagement, 72% improved motivation, and 65% enhanced comprehension. Academic performance improved significantly, with mean GPA increasing from 2.45 to 2.95, supported by paired sample t-test results ($p < .001$). Qualitative findings further revealed that structured environments, peer interaction, and accountability mechanisms contributed to sustained reading habits. The study concludes that structured reading sessions represent a viable and scalable institutional strategy for strengthening reading culture in TVET contexts. Policy implications include curriculum integration of reading programs, improved library infrastructure, and interventions to manage digital distractions.

Keywords: Reading Culture, TVET, Structured Reading, Academic Performance, Nigeria

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Introduction

Reading culture constitutes a fundamental foundation for academic excellence, intellectual development, and national productivity. In contemporary education systems, students' ability to engage deeply with written texts is closely associated with higher-order thinking skills, including critical analysis, problem-solving, and lifelong learning. Despite its importance, a growing concern has emerged regarding the declining reading culture among students in Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) institutions, particularly within Nigerian polytechnics. This trend reflects a broader shift in learning behavior, where sustained engagement with academic texts is increasingly being replaced by more fragmented and surface-level forms of information consumption.

One of the primary factors contributing to this decline is the practice-oriented nature of TVET curricula, which prioritize technical skill acquisition over theoretical and text-based engagement. While this orientation is essential for enhancing employability and hands-on competence, it may inadvertently reduce students' exposure to reading as a critical cognitive activity. Consequently, students may graduate with adequate technical expertise but exhibit limited analytical depth, interpretive ability, and academic literacy. This imbalance raises concerns about their capacity to adapt knowledge, engage in critical inquiry, and contribute to innovation in complex professional environments.

Empirical evidence indicates that poor reading habits are significantly associated with low academic performance, weak comprehension, and limited problem-solving ability (Anyira, 2023; Akabuiké & Asika, 2012). In addition, the rapid proliferation of digital technologies has further exacerbated the situation, as students increasingly devote time to social media and entertainment rather than academic reading (Liu, Hu, & Bi, 2022). This shift not only reduces the frequency of reading but also affects the depth of cognitive engagement with academic materials. However, global studies demonstrate that structured reading interventions can effectively address these challenges. Guided and scaffolded reading environments have been shown to enhance comprehension, retention, and student engagement by promoting deeper cognitive processing (Delgado et al., 2018; Salmerón et al., 2020).

Despite the growing body of literature on reading interventions, there remains a notable lack of empirical research focusing specifically on TVET contexts, particularly in developing countries such as Nigeria. Most existing studies have concentrated on general higher education or secondary school settings, thereby limiting the applicability of their findings to practice-oriented institutions. This gap highlights the need for context-specific investigations that explore how structured reading strategies can be effectively implemented within TVET environments, where the balance between practical skills and academic literacy is often uneven.

The decline in reading culture among Nigerian polytechnic students is increasingly evident in measurable academic outcomes, including low grade point averages (GPA), poor comprehension skills, and minimal engagement with scholarly materials. Many students prioritize digital entertainment over academic reading, resulting in reduced intellectual engagement and diminished learning effectiveness (Anyira, 2023). Within TVET institutions, the strong emphasis on practical training often leads to insufficient attention to reading development as a core academic competency. As a result, graduates may lack the analytical and critical thinking skills necessary for knowledge application and innovation.

Addressing this issue requires an approach that not only promotes reading as an individual activity but also integrates motivational and social dimensions of learning. This study is grounded in Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985), which emphasizes the role of autonomy, competence, and relatedness in shaping motivation, and Vygotsky's Social Development Theory (1978), which highlights the importance of social interaction and scaffolding in cognitive development. Within this framework, structured reading sessions are expected to enhance students' intrinsic motivation, foster collaborative learning, and support the development of deeper comprehension skills.

Accordingly, this study proposes a conceptual pathway in which structured reading sessions serve as the primary intervention influencing students' academic performance through key mediating factors. These sessions are expected to stimulate motivation and encourage social interaction, which in turn contribute to the development of a stronger reading culture characterized by habitual, self-directed, and meaningful engagement with texts. An improved

reading culture is anticipated to enhance comprehension, critical thinking, and knowledge acquisition, ultimately leading to better academic performance.

In response to the identified research gap, this study aims to examine the impact of structured, library-based reading sessions on students' reading culture and academic performance in a Nigerian polytechnic. By situating the investigation within a TVET context, the study seeks to provide empirical evidence on the effectiveness of structured reading interventions and contribute to the broader discourse on improving learning outcomes in practice-oriented educational systems.

Method

This study adopted a mixed-methods longitudinal research design to examine the impact of structured reading sessions on students' reading culture and academic performance over an academic session. The mixed-methods approach enabled the integration of quantitative measures of academic outcomes with qualitative insights into students' experiences, perceptions, and behavioral changes, while the longitudinal design allowed for the observation of sustained rather than short-term effects. The study was conducted in the Department of Art and Design at the Federal Polytechnic, Ilaro, Nigeria, a TVET institution with a hybrid curriculum combining practical and theoretical learning. A purposive sampling technique was used to select 133 National Diploma (ND I and ND II) students based on enrolment, willingness to participate, and availability for consistent attendance.

The intervention consisted of structured, one-hour weekly reading sessions held in the institutional library and embedded in the academic timetable. Students engaged with discipline-related materials and submitted written summaries after each session to ensure accountability. A facilitator supervised the sessions to enhance focus and compliance. Data were collected through multiple instruments, including structured questionnaires, semi-structured interviews (10–15 minutes), focus group discussions (6–8 participants), and academic GPA records. Ethical standards were upheld through informed consent, voluntary participation, and confidentiality.

Validity and reliability were ensured through data triangulation, member checking, pilot testing of instruments, and standardization of procedures. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and paired sample t-tests, while qualitative data were analyzed using thematic analysis following the framework proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006), which involves familiarization with data,

coding, theme development, and interpretation. Percentage change in GPA was calculated using the standard formula for pre–post comparison.

Result and Discussion

Impact of Structured Reading on Academic Performance and Engagement

The analysis of academic performance revealed substantial improvement following the structured reading intervention. The pre-test mean GPA of participants was 2.45 (SD = 0.41), which increased to 2.95 (SD = 0.38) post-intervention, representing a 20.4% improvement in academic performance. A paired sample t-test confirmed that this improvement was statistically significant ($t(132) = 6.72, p < .001$), suggesting that the intervention had a meaningful impact on students' learning outcomes. The reduction in standard deviation indicates a slight convergence of scores, suggesting that the intervention particularly benefited lower-performing students by providing structured guidance and reinforcement. These findings support prior research demonstrating that consistent, guided reading can significantly enhance comprehension, retention, and academic achievement (Bråten, Latini, & Haverkamp, 2021; Wigfield et al., 2008). By embedding reading into the academic timetable and providing facilitator oversight, students developed regular, self-regulated learning habits that contributed to measurable performance gains.

The demographic profile of the participants ensured a balanced representation across gender and academic level, enhancing the generalizability of the results within the TVET context.

Table 1. Demographic Distribution of Respondents (N = 133)

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	80	60.2
	Female	53	39.8
Level	ND I	70	52.6
	ND II	63	47.4

The sample included 80 male students (60.2%) and 53 female students (39.8%), with ND I students comprising 52.6% and ND II students 47.4%. This balanced distribution allowed the intervention to target both early and more advanced stages of academic progression. By ensuring broad participation, the

study minimized potential sampling bias and provided a reliable basis for assessing intervention outcomes.

Table 2 illustrates the observed improvements in academic performance:

Table 2. Comparison of GPA Before and After Intervention

Measure	Mean	SD
Pre-test GPA	2.45	0.41
Post-test GPA	2.95	0.38

The 0.50 increase in GPA demonstrates that students were able to internalize reading as a structured and habitual activity, enhancing comprehension and analytical skills. The intervention's structured approach—weekly one-hour sessions in a controlled library environment—ensured focused engagement and minimized distractions. These findings align with Self-Determination Theory, which posits that structured activities enhance motivation, competence, and autonomy, supporting improved performance.

The paired sample t-test results reinforce the significance of the findings:

Table 3. Paired Sample t-test for GPA Difference

Statistic	Value
t-value	6.72
Degrees of Freedom (df)	132
p-value	.000

This statistical evidence confirms that the observed improvements were unlikely due to chance, emphasizing the intervention's effectiveness. Notably, the structured reading sessions contributed to greater self-regulated learning, allowing students to monitor comprehension and manage their academic responsibilities more efficiently.

Changes in reading engagement were equally pronounced. Prior to the intervention, most students read less than two hours per week, whereas 85% reported increased reading time post-intervention, with many reading between two and four hours weekly.

Table 4. Changes in Reading Engagement

Reading Duration	Pre-Intervention (%)	Post-Intervention (%)
Less than 2 hours	68%	15%
2-4 hours	25%	60%
More than 4 hours	7%	25%

This shift reflects the successful establishment of habitual reading patterns. The combination of routine, accountability through summaries, and facilitator guidance promoted engagement, consistent with previous research showing that structured reading routines enhance both quantity and quality of reading (Delgado et al., 2018; Salmerón et al., 2020).

Overall, the results suggest that structured interventions can simultaneously improve academic performance and reading engagement. By institutionalizing reading as a scheduled academic activity, students transitioned from sporadic, exam-driven reading to continuous, self-directed learning. The positive changes in GPA and reading duration collectively demonstrate that guided reading sessions serve as a robust strategy to enhance learning outcomes in TVET settings.

Behavioral and Cognitive Changes: Motivation, Comprehension, and Reading Culture

Survey responses indicated that 72% of participants experienced increased motivation to read, 65% reported improved comprehension, and 70% reported enhanced academic confidence

Table 5. Perceived Outcomes of the Intervention

Variable	Percentage of Respondents
Increased Motivation	72%
Improved Comprehension	65%
Better Academic Confidence	70%

These findings suggest that the intervention enhanced not only the frequency of reading but also the quality of cognitive engagement. Increased motivation is likely attributable to students internalizing reading as an autonomous, self-directed activity, consistent with Self-Determination Theory. Enhanced comprehension reflects improved cognitive processing, critical thinking, and

active learning through structured reading exercises. Better academic confidence indicates the development of self-efficacy, essential for sustained academic engagement and performance.

Qualitative insights reinforced these patterns. Students reported forming regular reading habits, improved concentration, and enhanced collaboration during peer discussions. One participant noted, “Before the program, I only read when exams were near, but now I read regularly because it has become part of my weekly schedule.” Another emphasized peer interaction, stating, “Reading together with my classmates helped me understand difficult topics better because we could discuss them.”

These narratives highlight the social dimension of learning. Collaborative reading provided scaffolding aligned with Vygotsky’s Social Development Theory, where peer and facilitator support enhances comprehension within the Zone of Proximal Development. Students’ cognitive and motivational gains suggest that structured reading can instill a sustainable reading culture within TVET institutions.

The combination of quantitative and qualitative data demonstrates the intervention’s holistic impact. Students not only improved academically but also internalized new learning strategies, indicating enhanced self-regulation and metacognitive awareness. These outcomes are crucial in practice-oriented programs, where cognitive development is often secondary to technical training.

Habit formation was a recurring theme. Participants described increased discipline in allocating time for reading, demonstrating that structured interventions can shift students from extrinsic to intrinsic motivation. Motivation and comprehension improvements are mutually reinforcing: as students comprehend materials more effectively, they are more likely to engage consistently with reading. This cycle is central to cultivating a lasting reading culture.

Peer discussions also reinforced motivation. By engaging in group analysis and collaborative problem-solving, students experienced relatedness, supporting intrinsic motivation according to Self-Determination Theory. The combined effect of autonomy, competence, and social engagement promoted both behavioral and cognitive development.

Structured reading also enhanced academic identity. Students began to view themselves as active learners capable of understanding and applying complex concepts. This identity shift fosters persistence and long-term engagement with academic materials, contributing to both immediate GPA improvements and broader professional competence.

Implementation Challenges and Practical Implications

Despite overall success, 10% of students reported difficulties with time management, particularly in balancing reading sessions with other academic responsibilities. Five percent noted distractions from digital devices during sessions. While these challenges were relatively minor, they highlight areas for institutional support, such as scheduling flexibility and digital discipline strategies.

The controlled library environment mitigated most distractions and promoted sustained engagement. The requirement to submit session summaries reinforced accountability and active participation. Together, these mechanisms ensured that the reading sessions remained productive and impactful.

From a practical standpoint, structured reading interventions can be embedded in TVET curricula with minimal financial investment. Institutions can leverage existing library facilities, timetable adjustments, and facilitator supervision to implement sustainable reading programs. These interventions simultaneously promote academic performance and cognitive engagement, balancing technical skill development with theoretical learning.

The structured routine, controlled environment, and accountability mechanisms collectively transformed reading from a passive activity into an active, habitual learning process. This replicable model can serve as a guide for other TVET institutions aiming to improve academic outcomes without significant additional resources.

By fostering motivation, comprehension, and a sustained reading culture, structured reading sessions cultivate both cognitive and affective learning outcomes. Students develop discipline, critical thinking, and collaborative skills, all of which are essential for success in professional and academic contexts.

Overall, the findings demonstrate that even modest, well-designed interventions can produce measurable, meaningful improvements in academic performance and reading behavior. Structured reading programs represent a scalable, cost-effective solution for enhancing student learning in resource-limited educational contexts.

Conclusion

This study has demonstrated that structured, library-based reading sessions are an effective strategy for enhancing reading culture and academic performance in Nigerian Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) institutions. The intervention significantly increased students' reading engagement, motivation, comprehension, and overall academic outcomes, indicating that the integration of guided, routine-based reading into academic timetables can have measurable and meaningful effects on learning. By institutionalizing reading as a core component of the educational process, students transitioned from sporadic and exam-driven engagement to sustained, self-directed, and collaborative learning practices. These findings underscore the importance of repositioning reading within vocational education, where curricula traditionally prioritize practical skills, demonstrating that cognitive development and analytical capacity can be strengthened without compromising technical proficiency. Moreover, the study contributes empirically to the discourse on reading culture in TVET contexts, which has been underrepresented in the literature, and provides a scalable model that can be adapted to similar institutions to enhance both learning outcomes and student development.

Despite these contributions, several limitations should be acknowledged. First, the study was conducted in a single institution, which may restrict the generalizability of the findings to other TVET contexts or educational systems. Second, the reliance on self-reported measures of motivation and reading engagement introduces potential response bias, which may have influenced the reported behavioral changes. Third, the intervention spanned only a single academic session, limiting the ability to assess the long-term sustainability of the improvements in reading habits and academic performance. Finally, the absence of a control group constrains the ability to attribute observed outcomes exclusively to the intervention, suggesting that

external factors may have partially influenced results. Future research should adopt longitudinal, multi-institutional designs with experimental or quasi-experimental approaches to strengthen causal inferences, examine the durability of behavioral and academic changes, and explore the adaptability of structured reading interventions across diverse TVET settings.

Overall, this study provides robust evidence that structured reading interventions can play a critical role in fostering a culture of reading, promoting cognitive and analytical skills, and improving academic performance in vocational education, offering a practical and scalable approach for educators and policymakers aiming to bridge the gap between practical skill acquisition and intellectual development.

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Author Contributions Statement

OT, contributed to the conceptualization of the study, methodology design, data analysis, and drafting of the manuscript. LA, contributed to methodology validation, research supervision, and critical review and editing of the manuscript. All authors have read and approved the final version of the manuscript.

AI Usage Statement

During the preparation of this manuscript, the author(s) used Google Gemini to assist in improving grammar, language quality, and overall readability of the text. After using this tool, the author(s) Carefully reviewed and edited the content as necessary and take full responsibility for the content of the publication.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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