



STUDY SKILLS AND UPPER BASIC EDUCATION STUDENTS' RETENTION OF BUSINESS STUDIES LESSONS IN CALABAR MUNICIPAL LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA, CROSS RIVER STATE, NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT: *This study investigated study skills and upper basic education students' retention of business studies lessons in the Calabar Municipal local government area of Cross River State, Nigeria. In order to achieve the objective of the study, two hypotheses were formulated to guide the study. A correlational research design was adopted for the study. The population of the study comprised 2,333 upper basic education students in public secondary schools in the study area. Proportionate sampling technique was employed in selecting a sample of 233 respondents. Of these numbers, 230 copies of the instrument were retrieved and used in the analysis. The instrument for data collection was the Study Skills and Upper Basic Education Students Retention of Business Studies Lessons Questionnaire (SSUBESRBSLQ) containing 39 items. The instrument was validated by two lecturers in the Business Education unit and one expert in the Measurement and Evaluation unit, all from the University of Cross River State, Calabar. Simple linear regression analysis was used in testing the hypotheses at the .05 alpha level. Findings revealed that reading skills and note-taking skills significantly influence upper basic education students' retention of business studies lessons in the Calabar Municipal local government area of Cross River State. Consequently, it was recommended, amongst others, that students should develop a keen interest in seeking to know what every piece of writing they come across entails, as this will improve their reading skills, boost their academic achievements and position them as star performers wherever they find themselves in life.*

KEYWORDS: Study skills, Upper basic education, Retention, Business studies, Lessons.



INTRODUCTION

It is the desire of most children of school age, particularly in enlightened societies, that they be exposed to post-primary education. This expectation also sits chiefly in the hearts of their parents as well as their guardians because of the sheer benefits that formal education avails her beneficiaries. Hitherto, the education children received immediately after primary school was known as junior secondary education (Federal Republic of Nigeria, FRN 2004). But with the launch of the Universal Basic Education (UBE) program in 1999 by the former President Olusegun Obasanjo-led Federal Government administration, junior secondary school ceased to be a part of the secondary school as it were. Rather, it constitutes an integral part of the UBE programme. This implies that the first nine years of schooling, comprising primary and junior secondary schools are now under the UBE programme, and offers free and compulsory education for all Nigerian children (FRN, 2014). The UBE Act (2004) formalises this by making it a legal mandate.

Upper Basic Education otherwise (or formally) referred to as Junior Secondary Education is the education which a child receives immediately after primary education. The objective of education at this level includes amongst others providing the child with diverse basic knowledge and skills for entrepreneurship and educational advancement (FRN, 2014). To the Nigerian Education and Research Development Council (NERDC, 2016), the objective of UBE includes amidst others; ensuring the acquisition of the appropriate level of literacy, numeracy, manipulation, communication, and life skills, as well as the ethical, moral, and civic values needed for laying a solid foundation for life-long learning. Definitively, NERDC (2016) espoused that basic education is assembled into lower basic (Primary1-3), middle basic (Primary 4-6), and upper basic (JSS1-3, which is the focus of the present study). In Nigeria, basic education is said to begin at the age of six and comprises six years of primary school and three years of junior secondary school (JSS).

According to the FRN (2014), the curriculum for the upper basic education stipulates that its learners shall be exposed to the contents of the following subjects: English language, Mathematics, Basic Science Technology, Religious and National Values, Pre-Vocational Studies, French Language, One Nigerian Language, Cultural and Creative Arts as well as Business Studies (which is the concern of this study). Business Studies is an introductory subject that explores the basic principles of business, finance, economics and management. It aims to provide students with foundational knowledge and skills for understanding how businesses operate, informed consumer decisions are made and potentially pursuing future careers in business-related fields such as accounting, business management, economics, marketing, banking and finance as well as business education (Edet, 2020). Hence, its key components at the upper basic education level include Office Practice, Commerce, Bookkeeping, Shorthand, and Computer Studies. These components are trusted to imbue learners with essential skills such as communication, record-keeping, trade, and the use of technology for business operations, relevance and self-reliance (Edet & Udida, 2023).

Regrettably, recent and keen observations, surveys and tearful complaints from parents, teachers, and head teachers reveals that business studies students of upper basic education level are seriously challenged retaining lessons taught to them. This is visibly manifested in most of them exhibiting the following traits: difficulty in recalling information, inconsistent academic performance, difficulty following instructions, struggles with completing classwork and homework and struggles with solving problems. Others portray maladaptive behavior, viz.,



lack of participation, difficulty focusing, lack of communication, disengagement from schoolwork, low self-confidence, negative attitudes towards education, and changes in mood or attitude such as increased irritability or withdrawal, which result in their inability to retain business studies lessons against what was obtained during the early years of the oil boom era, where people went to school without struggles (Edet, Onabe & Udida, 2017).

Lesson retention as a matter of concept means the ability of a learner to store and recall learned information from a lesson in his or her long-term memory. The Columbia Theological Seminary (2022) defines lesson retention as the percentage of accuracy in the recall of information by the learner over a given period of time. Although the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) does not have a formal or specific definition for lesson retention, the organization, however, refers to it generally as how well students retain information learned in a lesson over time. Simply put, lesson retention is about remembering what one learns in a lesson; it is about transferring the information studied into the long-term memory so that the learner can use it later. Thus, it is the opposite of quickly forgetting what one learns.

Of importance, lesson retention offers numerous benefits such as, but not limited to, improved learning efficiency, enhanced understanding, and increased long-term success. It also boosts learner confidence and motivation, contributing to a more positive and engaging learning experience. It equally ensures that the time and efforts invested in learning lead to lasting understanding and practical application. Moreover, effective lesson retention is essential for academic success and professional development, as it fosters one's ability to build upon prior knowledge. Besides helping in academic success, lesson retention also improves everyday decision-making and problem-solving abilities. On the flip side, lacking lesson retention ability can lead to several negative consequences, including but not limited to reduced academic performance, lower student motivation, and a diminished ability to apply learned knowledge in real-world situations. It can also affect career readiness, potentially limiting opportunities in the workplace (Ikutal, Otum & Edet, 2023). To mitigate the spread of these conundrums from impacting the lives of upper basic education students; therefore, study skills were selected for investigation.

Study skills are approaches applied to learning. They are arrays of skills that tackle the process of organizing and taking in new information, retaining knowledge, or dealing with assessments (Wikipedia, 2025). García-Madruga et al. (2014) describe study skills as the techniques and strategies used by a student that serve as the vehicle of learning. It includes their study routines applied as they study for exams, complete their assignments, undertake their research projects and perform other academic tasks. They are skills, habits, and attitudes common among learners that shape their formation. Many types of study skills are available, but this study examined the following: reading skills and note-taking skills.

Reading skills are the cognitive abilities that allow a person to understand and interpret written text. It can also be seen as those specific abilities that enable a reader to *read any written form as meaningful language* or to read anything written. Whether one is engaged in a novel, poring over a newspaper, or just looking at a sign, reading skills allow a reader to interpret and become engaged in the world around him or her. According to the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development cited in Wood et al. (2017), reading is the single most important skill necessary for a happy, productive and successful life. Generally, reading skills play a crucial role in students' academic achievement, as they form the foundation for acquiring knowledge



across various disciplines (Charity et al., 2004). Some of these crucial roles are contained in studies conducted that indicate that reading proficiency enhances cognitive abilities, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills, ultimately contributing to better academic performance (García-Madruga et al., 2014; Hughes et al., 2008).

Reading is not only crucial for literacy development, but it also impacts cognitive skills that contribute to a broader range of academic competencies. This is essential because as Atsuwe and Moses (2017) assert, students' awareness of their study skills and personality influences their interest in studying. And part of what constitutes reading skills according to them would include how the students manage their time, how they handle their attitudes, how they concentrate when they have important things to do, how they absorb pressure, how they set their goals, how they prepare for lectures and examinations, how they understand and process information, how they identify main ideas when they read and listen, how they manage their resources, how they prepare for the examination, and how they write answers in an examination. Consequently, a variety of factors, including cognitive development, socio-cultural influences, teacher support, and emotional intelligence, individually or collectively shapes the reading skills of students as well as their overall academic achievement (Mihret & Joshi, 2025). Remarkably, therefore, what constitutes the core of reading strategies or techniques includes skimming, scanning, intensive reading, and extensive reading, each with its unique approach suited for different occasions and purposes.

In a study undertaken by Mihret and Joshi (2025) on the relationship between students' reading skill and academic achievement: a comprehensive investigation. The research explored key factors influencing reading proficiency, including cognitive and linguistic aspects such as vocabulary knowledge and executive function. Findings revealed that strong reading proficiency is positively correlated with higher academic performance, emphasizing the need for targeted instructional strategies and policy interventions. On their parts, Howard-Gosse et al. (2023) investigated the reading challenges, strategies, and habits of university students with a history of reading difficulties and their relations to academic achievement. Given the increase in students with learning disabilities entering university, the study investigated a broader group, which is students with a history of reading difficulties (HRD)—who are known to be at risk of academic struggles. The study identified the self-reported reading challenges and strategies of university students with HRD and those with no history of reading difficulties (NRD) and examined group differences and relations with first-year grade point average (GPA). Students with HRD reported more difficulties with perceived reading comprehension, concentration, and reading speed than students with NRD. Findings revealed the challenges that students with HRD experience with reading in university and identified strategies, potentially adaptive or maladaptive, that they used to manage their academic reading load.

Interestingly, Iheakanwa et al. (2021) examined reading ability, study habits and students' academic performance in social studies in Delta State, Nigeria. The study was an ex post facto study. The results indicate that a significant relationship exists between reading ability and students' performance, study habits and student performance. It was therefore suggested that students' reading interest should be strengthened through the provision and equipping of the school libraries. It was also suggested that reading should be given adequate attention in the classroom and not left to students' choice or discretion. Haq et al. (2019) investigated the development of reading skill through activity-based learning at Grade-VI in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The study looked at the outcome of using activity-based learning methods on



the development of reading skills of Grade VI students. Findings suggest that teachers need to involve students in reading by conducting meaningful and demanding activities.

Note-taking skills, another type of study skill, are simply the skills involved in summarizing what one has understood in one's own words with a view of remembering it later. Note-taking is one of the most important writing activities in passing any information acquired through listening from temporary memory to permanent memory (Karadağ et al., 2022). Effective note-taking skills are crucial for serious-minded students who want to succeed academically. This is so because by actively interacting with the learning materials and using organized strategies, students can improve comprehension, retention, and overall academic performance. The use of note-taking habits as study skills while listening is an important component of the learning process, especially in upper basic education levels.

Essentially, applying the skills of note-taking saves students from forgetting speeches made or rereading an entire book. In the words of Hayati and Jalilifar (2009), the reason for this is simply anchored on the students' desire to get great notes for use when the need arises. Furthermore, students enjoy taking notes because doing so keeps them from having to look at their lecture materials entirely while preparing for their examinations. Thus, taking notes saves their overall reading time and reduces cognitive load. Worthy of note is the fact that note-taking is not about writing exactly what is heard or read, but writing what is understood in a personal way. Therefore, it is beneficial to reiterate that during the note-taking process, the mental activity of the note-taker is alive, and the written information, when read, produces higher success for the individual than for those who do not practice the same (Karadağ et al., 2022). Equally, too, note-taking can facilitate learning by causing the student to process, interpret, infer, condense, paraphrase, and provide a relatively permanent memory for later use in the course content (Karadağ et al., 2022).

In a study conducted by Karadağ et al. (2022) on secondary school students' habits of using note-taking strategies, it was revealed that when note-taking strategies were taught, students were successful in identifying keywords, expressing them in short sentences and connecting information. The study concluded that when teaching is not given, the students tend not to take notes or to take notes in a complicated manner. Based on these results, it was suggested that note-taking strategies training should be included in the textbooks, and each strategy should be applied after texts with appropriate content, and it should be stated which strategies should be applied before, during and after listening/reading.

Similarly, Kitjaroonchai et al. (2025) investigated university students' perceptions of note-taking and its impact on academic performance in Thailand as well as the factors influencing their note-taking decisions. Participants in the study were drawn from six distinct faculties, namely, the Faculty of Arts and Humanities, the Faculty of Business Administration, the Faculty of Education and Psychology, the Faculty of Nursing, the Faculty of Religious Studies, and the Faculty of Science. Results indicated a widespread belief in the effectiveness of note-taking among participants, suggesting a consensus on its positive role in academic achievement. Additionally, the open-ended responses revealed perceived benefits of note-taking for memory enhancement, improved comprehension, academic achievement, and content simplification. On the other hand, Haghverdi et al. (2010) examined note-taking strategies and academic achievement in Iran. The results showed that the respondents, including professors and students, had high positive attitudes towards the effect of note-taking strategy instruction on the students' learning.



From the foregoing discourse so far, it may not be strange at this point to assert that most students nowadays neither take notes during lectures nor do they do so when private-studying. Instead, they resort to collecting notes from their colleagues for copying or eye-beaming, especially when an examination is at hand. This practice, Kobayashi (2005) retorts, makes it difficult for them to understand the content of the notes they borrow from their friends since it was not scripted in their own language or by them. Further observations from both teachers and researchers reveal that many basic education students do not take notes at all because they are ill-equipped with the requisite note-taking skills. To this end, Aktuğ (2021) pointedly classed note-taking skills into the following: (1) *Active Listening and Engagement*, which comprises paying attention, identifying main ideas, asking for important information, summarizing and paraphrasing, and making connections. (2) *Note-taking methods*. This is made up of outlining, the Cornell method, and charting. Mind mapping and bullet journaling. (3) *Techniques and tips*. The key points under this include the use of abbreviations and symbols, the use of colors and visuals, leaving space, reviewing and revising, and comparing notes with a friend, and refraining from the fear of asking questions.

Pleasingly, there is no denying the fact that both reading and note taking skills are aged-long strategies that have helped people in all walks of life excel in their respective endeavours. What is perturbing to the researcher in this study is the mindless neglect of this twosome's proven prowess. Accordingly, since these arts have supported people in other aspects of life to reach their desired goals, if upper basic education students of the Calabar Municipal local government area of Cross River State offering business studies adopt them as study companions, will they serve as antidotes to their poor or complete lack of lesson retention quagmire? The chase to answer this question is the justification for which this study was undertaken.

Purpose of the study

The main purpose of this study was to investigate study skills and upper basic education students' retention of business studies lessons in the Calabar Municipal local government area of Cross River State, Nigeria. Specifically, the study sought to determine the influence of:

1. Reading skills on upper basic education students' retention of business studies lessons.
2. Note-taking skills on upper basic education students' retention of business studies lessons.

Hypotheses

This study was guided by the following hypotheses:

1. Reading skills do not significantly influence upper basic education students' retention of business studies lessons.
2. Note-taking skills do not significantly influence upper basic education students' retention of business studies lessons.



METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a correlational research design. Particularly, the study focused on investigating study skills and upper basic education students' retention of business studies lessons. Two hypotheses guided the study. The study area was the Calabar Municipal local government area of Cross River State, where 2,333 upper basic education students from 18 public secondary schools formed the population. Proportionate technique was the sampling technique adopted for the study, and ten percent (10%) of the population was selected as a sample for the study. This is presented in Table 1.

The researcher made an instrument titled "Study Skills and Upper Basic Education Students Retention of Business Studies Lessons Questionnaire (SSUBESRBSLQ)" that was used in collecting data. The instrument, which contained 39 items was face and content validated by three experts, two from the Business Education unit and one from the Measurement and Evaluation unit of the University of Cross River State, Calabar. To ascertain the internal consistency of the instrument, a reliability coefficient (r) of 0.84 was achieved for the instrument, using the Cronbach alpha reliability test. The r -value indicated that the instrument had the requisite stability to generate the needed data for the study. This was done after a pilot study was conducted. Of the 233 questionnaires administered, 230 copies, representing 98.71% were retrieved and used in the analysis. Simple linear regression statistical technique was used in testing the hypotheses at the .05 alpha level. The instrument was administered personally by the researcher with the help of three research Assistants and retrieved immediately. This was done after relevant information about the problem being researched was explained to the respondents. A coding key was designed to code all responses.

Table 1: Population and sample distribution of the study

S/N	Names of schools	Population	Sample
1	Army Day Secondary School, Ikot Ansa	145	14
2	Estate Secondary School, Ikot Ansa	159	15
3	West African People's Institute, Diamond Hill	209	20
4	Special Education Secondary School, Big Qua	50	5
5	Government College, Ikot Ansa	124	12
6	Migrant Education Secondary School, IBB Way	260	26
7	Government Secondary School, Nasarawa	88	9
8	N.Y.S.C. Model Secondary School, Ikot Ansa	186	19
9	Government Secondary School, Federal Housing	155	16
10	Government Secondary School, State Housing	205	21
11	Government Secondary School, Nyakashang	114	14
12	Government Secondary School, Akim	98	10
13	Government Secondary School, Ikot Effanga	104	10
14	Government Girls Secondary School, Big Qua	98	9
15	Government Secondary School, Barracks Road	110	11
16	Government Secondary School, Akai Efa	63	6
17	Government Secondary School, Ediba	72	7
18	Government Secondary School, Esuk Otu	93	9
	Total	2, 333	233

Source: State Universal Education Board, Calabar (2025)



RESULTS

Hypothesis one: Reading skills do not significantly influence upper basic education students' retention of business studies lessons.

The test for significance was done using simple linear regression at .05 alpha level. A summary of the result is presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Simple linear regression analysis of the influence of reading skills on upper basic education students' retention of business studies lessons in Calabar Municipal Local Government Area of Cross River State (N =230)

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. error of the estimate		
1	.289	.083	.079	.590		
Model	Sum of square	df	Mean square	F-value	P-value	
Regression	6.93	1	6.93	19.94	0.000	
Residual	76.15	228	.35			
Total	82.08	229	7.28			

*P < .05; df = 228

The result in Table 2 shows a positive relationship between reading skills and upper basic education students' retention of business studies lessons ($R = .289$). This means that as reading skills improve, upper basic education students' retention of business studies lessons increases. From the coefficient of determination, an R-squared of .083 was obtained, this indicates that about 8.3% of total variation in upper basic education students' retention of business studies lessons is accounted for by study skills. The table also shows that the p-value of .000 associated with the computed F- ratio of 19.94 is less than the .05 alpha level at 1 and 228 degrees of freedom. Consequently, the null hypothesis was rejected. This means that reading skills significantly influence upper basic education students' retention of business studies lessons in the Calabar Municipal local government area of Cross River State, Nigeria.

Hypothesis two: Note-taking skills do not significantly influence upper basic education students' retention of business studies lessons.

The test for significance was done using simple linear regression at the .05 alpha level. A summary of the result is presented in Table 3.

Table 3: Simple linear regression analysis of the influence of note-taking skills on upper basic education students' retention of business studies lessons in the Calabar Municipal Local Government Area of Cross River State (N = 230)

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. error of the estimate		
1	.281	.079	.074	.561		
Model	Sum of square	df	Mean square	F-value	P-value	
Regression	5.88	1	5.88	18.71	0.000	
Residual	68.89	228	.32			
Total	74.77	229	6.20			

*P < .05; df = 228



The result in Table 3 shows a positive relationship between note-taking skills and upper basic education students' retention of business studies lessons ($R = .281$). This means that as note-taking skills improve, upper basic education students' retention of business studies lessons increases. From the coefficient of determination, an R -square of .079 was obtained; this indicates that about 7.9% of total variation in upper basic education students' retention of business studies lessons is accounted for by note-taking skills. The table also shows that the p -value of .000 associated with the computed F -ratio of 18.71 is less than the .05 alpha level at 1 and 228 degrees of freedom. Consequently, the null hypothesis was rejected. This means that note-taking skills significantly influence upper basic education students' retention of business studies lessons in the Calabar Municipal local government area of Cross River State, Nigeria.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The result obtained in respect of hypothesis one indicates that there is a positive relationship between reading skills and upper basic education students' retention of business studies lessons. This result implies that upper basic education students rely heavily on reading skills for lesson retention. The result of this finding is in agreement with that of Mihret and Joshi (2025), who did a study on the relationship between students' reading skill and academic achievement: a comprehensive investigation. The study examined the relationship between students' reading skills and their overall academic achievement. The research explored key factors influencing reading proficiency, including cognitive and linguistic aspects such as vocabulary knowledge and executive function. Findings suggested that strong reading proficiency is positively correlated with higher academic performance, emphasizing the need for targeted instructional strategies and policy interventions. Similarly, the present finding corroborates that of Iheakanwa et al. (2021), who unitedly examined reading ability, study habits and students' academic performance in social studies in Delta State, Nigeria. The study, which was an *expo-facto* type, employed a stratified and multi-sampling technique and found the existence of a significant relationship between reading ability and students' performance, study habit and students' performance. It therefore suggested that reading should be given adequate attention in the classroom and not left to students' choice or discretion.

On the other hand, the result obtained in respect of hypothesis two indicates that there is a positive relationship between note-taking skills and upper basic education students' retention of business studies lessons. This result implies that upper basic education students rely heavily on note-taking skills for the retention of business studies lessons. The result of this finding aligns with that of Karadağ et al. (2022), who conducted a study on secondary school students' habits of using note-taking strategies in Turkey. The study adopted 5 different strategies given to 7th-grade students for 6 weeks. The study revealed that when note-taking strategies were taught, students were successful in identifying keywords, expressing them in short sentences, and connecting information. It was concluded that when education is not given, students tend not to take notes or to take notes on a single sentence. Based on these results, it was suggested that note-taking strategies training should be included in the textbooks, and each strategy should be applied after texts with appropriate content, and it should be stated which strategies should be applied before, during and after listening/reading. Also, the present finding vindicated Kitjaroonchai et al. (2025), who investigated university students' perceptions of note-taking and its impact on academic performance in Thailand as well as the factors influencing their note-taking decisions. The results of that study indicated a widespread belief



in the effectiveness of note-taking among participants, suggesting a consensus on its positive role in academic achievement. Additionally, the open-ended responses revealed perceived benefits of note-taking for memory enhancement, improved comprehension, academic achievement, and content simplification. This study highlighted the need for further exploration of the nuanced factors influencing student academic success.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of this study, it was concluded that reading and note-taking skills significantly influence upper basic education students' retention of business studies lessons. Therefore, all hands must be on deck to ensure that students intentionally bend backwards and apply these study skills for their own good. This should be pursued vigorously despite the sad reality that the attitudes of most students nowadays towards study have waned, with most of them perceiving education as a 'scam,' perhaps since the gains accruable therefrom are not immediate. Allied to the abhorrent crave and indulgence of these young people in internet fraud commonly referred to as 'yahoo business.' Therefore, if deliberate efforts are not geared towards restoring their consciousness to study with passion and zest, the next generation of adults may have serious issues to contend with.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations were made:

1. Students should develop a keen interest in seeking to know what every piece of writing they come across entails, as this will improve their reading skills, boost their academic achievements and position them as star performers wherever they find themselves in life.
2. Teachers should teach note-taking techniques to the students so that they can in turn grasp, develop and apply them while listening to any lesson or when they embark on self-study.

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