
READING CULTURE: A PANACEA FOR EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

By

Ngozi Patience Dominic

*Federal College of Education (Technical),
Asaba, Delta State*

Abstract

Despite the increasing benefits of good reading culture, Oyemike (2012) observed, that reading culture among Nigerian youth is tragically deficient when compared to the western world. In this era of high technological development, it is disheartening to note that reading culture is a missing link as youths consume their time on watching movies, interacting with friends on social media instead of cultivating the culture of reading. This lack of interest in reading, is negatively affecting the country socially, economically, and politically. This paper wishes to examine the conceptual definition of reading culture, its relevance to individuals, the role of library in developing good reading routine. Also it looks at the importance of reading culture on Nigerian nation as well as educational development. Should this poor reading habit be left unchecked, it will result in continuous academic degradation among students. It therefore, underscores the importance of setting up functional libraries strategically in all parts of the country and organizing great attitudinal change campaign on good reading culture in Nigeria.

A good reading habit opens an opportunity for greater achievements. Reading is one of the fundamental building blocks for learning and developing a literate society that can compete with the global world (Sisulu, 2004). As a country, Nigeria still has a long way to go in terms of educational transformation which is only possible through a good reading culture. This debased interest in reading among Nigerian students has become a case of worry among scholars. According to Nssien (2008) reading culture has been suffering and adversely, affecting the educational development of the nation Nigeria. Reading habit is however the single most important determinant of a student's success in education and in the modern complex society.

Reading culture is the process of building up positive reading attitude among students and children over a period of time. When an individual habitually and regularly reads books and other information materials that are not necessarily required for him to advance in his profession or career, he is said to have a reading culture (Gbadamosi, 2007). Oyemike (2012), observed that students exhibit reading culture only, during examination periods while only, very few make attempts at reading for knowledge and pleasure. Rather than cultivating reading culture, most students have turned their reading time to the period for watching movies, playing of internet games, social media

interactions with friends etc. Palani (2012), this is a devastating situation that is capable of damaging educational development as well as national excellence. Chika (2009), states that the declining interest, of students to the reading culture poses a serious futuristic problem for the country.

In the absence of a good reading culture, there will indeed be an increasing rate of failure in both, internal and external examinations by students, increasing students' drop-out rate, poverty, production of unqualified man power, increasing rate of illiteracy, frustration and loss of self-esteem. Absence of good reading habit skills brings lack of confidence in children resulting in poor attitude towards school work and as well as esteem problems later in life, Fosudo (2010). Nigerian graduate confirms the fears over the lack of interest by students to embark on reading project as a way of life. Observations revealed that, the average graduate with a degree or certificate does not merit the qualification they have achieved. Emphatically, the average Nigerian graduate lacks technical skills, lacks a good command of English, and is half backed or poorly trained, such that gaining employment becomes a challenge.

The new world translation of the Bible in Joshua.1:8, states that the book of the Law should not depart from your mouth, and you must read it in an undertone day and night, in order to observe carefully all that is written in it; for then your way will be successful and then you will act wisely. This however, stresses the immeasurable benefit of developing a good reading culture. Therefore, this paper tends to examine the areas where reading culture can support the development of education and suggest ways by which reading culture among students can be encouraged in Nigeria.

Reading and Reading Culture

Basic literacy according to Etim (2008) is an individual's ability to read, write, and speak in English. Reading is the Corner stone of learning, Gbadamose (2007). The culture of reading is the regular activity of reading. Reading is the complex act of dealing with communication in written form, visual or in pictorial illustration. When a pupil reads, they get the message in words, sentences, paragraphs and longer selection presented in written form and pictures. Further the message might be in descriptive material or imaginative material. In reading, the Child's task is to understand the information given and to translate and apply the information (Adima,1990). Widdowson cited in Hanna (2011) suggests that reading is the realization of general interpretative process which underlies all communicative activities that operate at different levels of mental activity.

According to him, the first level begins with the immediate comprehension of information while the second is the dissemination of this information into patterns of conceptual significance. He went further to state that reading is not just a question of reaction but interaction between the writer and the reader which is mediated through the

Reading Culture: A Panacea ...

text. The extraction of text depends crucially on two things, that is; the reader's knowledge and his purpose which depend on the writer's effectiveness, in giving the reader the necessary idea to activate his knowledge and the absorbing of new knowledge from the text. Sandars (2007) defines reading culture as a learned practice of seeking knowledge, information or entertainment through the written word. The practice could be acquired by reading books, Journals, Magazines, and Newspapers etc. Having a reading culture is necessary for citizens if the future of the country is to be guaranteed. Krashen cited in Adeniji and Omale (2010) opines that reading is a crucial form of communication through which we get most of the information required in learning and teaching situations and in everyday life.

Becoming a skilled and adaptable reader enhances the chances of success at school. The art of instilling reading habits and interest in learners is purely the responsibility of their teachers. Agada (2008), sees reading as the art of inculcating reading habits and interest in others, through a favourable reading environment and copious reading activities. This implies that the responsibility of inculcating reading habit and interest on students lies strictly on the teacher. Her opinion emphasizes the importance of a good reading culture among students, in order to achieve academic excellence.

Benefits of the Culture of Reading

Reading is an invaluable tool that is capable of empowering humans to take appropriate steps that are necessary to develop and live well. Reading is relevant to human existence, without reading man will never be able to harness information necessary for wellbeing; it is indeed the first button of academic garment. Reading is an indispensable part of a student's life that should not be overlooked. Chika (2009) outlines the virtues of reading to include the provision of individual's welfare, social progress, international understanding, the provision of knowledge and the right attitude that frees one from idleness or boredom. Pointing out that reading is not only for educational achievements but also helps the chances of success at school and throughout life time. Academic achievement as observed is tied to good reading culture. A poor reader makes no provision for academic achievement which leads eventually to frustration and later to failure at school. Agade (2008) states that reading is an indispensable tool for learning in the various hierarchies of modern educational set up which he said facilitates the learning process and effectively promotes intellectual development in the learners. Sandars (2007) stresses that reading is essential to full participation in modern society because, it adds quality to life and provides, access to culture and cultural heritage.

Good reading routine broadens a child's understanding of life, and affords the child the opportunity to explore the talent while learning about himself and his society. According to Sandars (2007), reading enables creativity to blossom in the child. Also

the English Philosopher Francis Bacon cited in Steve (2013) who posits that while speaking makes a ready man and writing, an exact man, reading makes a full man. Therefore, there is satisfaction in engaging in a good reading culture. Other benefits according to Brad (2007) includes, mental stimulation, it keeps the brain active and engaged, builds self-esteem and determination, it spreads wisdom and knowledge, provides mental and physical relaxation, it acts as a communication tool, reading keeps you up-to-date, when one slips himself into reading, he transports himself to another realm thereby suspending your anxiety. Reading provides us with the possibility of opening yourself up to a magical world, which helps us to become perfect.

Reading Culture and its Effects on Student's Academic Performance

Sisulu (2004) opines that reading heightens the chances of success at school throughout a lifetime and enhances a high level of literacy needed to excel in examination and provides skills needed to cope with challenges of the 21st century. That is, it lays a strong foundation that can help a student's academics throughout their lives' pursuits. A good reading culture is a conducive and intentional habit of study which has obtained a form of consistency on the part of a student's life towards comprehending academic subjects and performing excellently at examinations. Reading is a consistent and dedicated art of sourcing and studying of information by students for the acquisition of knowledge. Both reading and academic achievements are interrelated and dependent on each other. Children who cannot read find school exasperating and learning new concepts difficult. A student that reads and studies independently enhances him/herself with enough knowledge and confidence to face their examination without falling back to examination malpractice.

If a child does not read well, his/her ability to access wider curriculum is obstructed and this narrows the child's learning potentials. Students often come from different environment and localities with different levels of academic achievement therefore; they differ in the pattern of reading habit. While some students have good reading culture, others tend to exhibit poor reading culture. Academic achievement means how much knowledge the individual has acquired from a good reading culture. It is the reading culture that helps the learner in receiving meaningful and desirable knowledge. Good reading culture acts as a great weapon for students to excel in life Bashir & Matto (2012). According to Palani (2012) reading culture is an essential and important aspect for creating a literate society in this world. Reading helps to sharpen and broaden student's knowledge and thus, uplift them academically and otherwise.

The Difficulties of Establishing a Good Reading Culture in Nigeria

It is obvious that unless a solution is proffered towards the dwindling reading culture among Nigerians, the country will continue to struggle with under development. This poor reading habit has been attributed to certain factors which include: the present lack of funding of the educational institutions, distraction from the television, social

Reading Culture: A Panacea ...

media, inadequate provision of libraries, inadequate power supply and Poverty leading to low standard of living by parents who engage their children in hawking items and permissive attitudes towards examination malpractice are some of the difficulties in establishing good reading culture.

The high cost of living and low standard of living makes it difficult for parents and students to afford learning aids like, text books, novel, magazines, hand-outs, Newspaper etc. Others include the lack of adequate number of bookshops and the use of hand-outs instead of textbooks for students' learning (Sandars, 2007).

The Library as a Major Means of Promoting Reading Culture

Oyeronke (2009) believes that one of the major avenues for acquiring information is through reading, which is the foundation upon which other academic skills are built. Gbadamose (2007), opines that success in reading requires books, implying that, effective reading requires the use of Library book resources which has the inherent advantage of promoting good reading culture. Ogwu (2006) highlights the various ways by which libraries can be used as a means for entrenching reading culture in Nigeria. One of those points is that libraries have varieties of learning resources such as books, computers, the virtual library facilities etc. He also, went on to say that library offers an atmosphere which makes it conducive for reading.

The library provides reading accommodation for large number of users which is cheaper to access library information than what the home or the office can offer the reader. Buttressing, the fact that libraries offers a more conducive atmosphere which is necessary for developing a reading habit, it provides information that is easily discovered very quickly because of the systematic methods of categorizing and organization of information. Finally, the library offers the readers the services of professionals and experts to meet their information needs.

Reading and Educational Development

Reading is a worldwide phenomenon that has the capacity to promote development and inculcate discipline in the individual. It plays a significant role in a modern society like Nigeria. It brings about progress, growth, thus, significant change becomes evident. Reading sharpens the mind and makes one reason rationally and objectively in life. Okeke (2004), cited by Odiba (2007) posits that most persons view development as change. Reading refers to growth plus change. Stating that Okeke's definition of development gives a complete process in which not a single aspect of human life such as education, health, agriculture, industry and aspiration can be overlooked. Odiba (2005) also opines that development suggests "a genuine break with tradition or perceptible disruption of the static equilibrium".

Osagie (1985) states that development is a more inclusive concept with its social, political and economic facts and emphasizing that development is a quantitative and qualitative positive transformation of the lives of the people. Education in the largest sense is any act or experience that has a formative effect on the mind, character and the physical ability of an individual. Technically, education is the process by which society or a nation conveys acquired knowledge, skill and the values from one generation to another. As part of teacher's responsibility, they practically direct all educational programs in the institution of the students and might draw on many subjects including reading, writing, mathematics, science and history otherwise known as schooling.

Still on development, Adesina (1981) said development includes the establishment of greater number of schools, high number of school enrolment at all levels of education, the provision of learning facilities such as functional libraries, laboratories, workshops, computer units and games facilities, fine tuning education curriculum that is necessary for gaining employment, academic research activities, industrial, agricultural and scientific breakthrough for the progress and prosperity of the nation Nigeria. Development, he said includes an education that will enhance the sustenance of high moral and spiritual values, capacity building, adequate motivation and teacher's welfare, adequate funding of education, and providing a self-reliant and creative type of education that will enhance individual realization of potentials and aspiration in life. Development means improvement of people's lifestyle through improved qualitative and functional education, incomes, skill development and fulfilled employment. People should be able to read and write as educated labour force is a source of productivity for national development.

Reading Culture and its Relationship with Educational Development

According to Ruqqayatu RufaiAhmed (2012) former Minister for Education, in a Workshop organized in Edo state, with the theme: A Reading Nation is a Developed Nation, stating that, Reading is a veritable tool for national development that should not be overlooked. If any nation must experience development, the educational sector of that nation must be developed and educational development is possible only when the citizen of that nation cultivates the culture of reading. Educational development paves the way for National development. Reading facilitates and broadens the learning activity and produces effective learning results in academics, moral and skills development. Issa, Aliyu, Akangbe, Adedeji(2012), states that engaging in reading continuously, considerably influences ones studying skills and subsequently academic performance.

When a student reads and studies regularly he has better chances of high academic performance because he best understands the questions and can better express himself in writing than those who do not have a good reading routine. Igwe (2011)

Reading Culture: A Panacea ...

notes that becoming a skilled reader, enhances the chances of success at school. Students are able to make good academic achievements only when they are studious. The word student came from the word “studious” which according to the Oxford Advance Dictionary, is said to be spending a lot of time studying or reading in a way that is well planned. Reading is an integral aspect of a good academic performance. This is to say that if a student must wear the garment of education they must be studious, they must engage in continuous reading. There is no educational development without the art of good reading culture.

Strategies for Promoting Reading Culture in Nigeria

In order for students to develop a strong foundation for reading there is urgent need for all Nigerians to put their hands on deck in adopting a sustainable method for improving reading culture. According to Igwe (2011), those strategies include:

- Adequate funding of the educational sector by all the levels of government will make a positive impact on libraries, which is the main tool, for developing reading culture.
- Establishment of National Commission for Libraries (NCL): This commission when established will take responsibility for the growth, development, coordination and services of various zones and regional branches of the National Library of Nigeria in different states of the federation.
- Establishment of State Commission for Libraries (SCL) throughout the 36 states of the federation: The commission will be responsible for the growth, development, coordination and services of other libraries in all the local government branches in the local government areas of the state.
- Integration of Information Literacy Education in the curriculum of secondary schools and in the tertiary Institutions as an independent general studies course with units/credits allotted to it.
- Creation of library periods in School Timetable: Library utilization periods of two hours weekly in the school time table.
- State Government should establish state-of-the-art publishing firm: The state publishing firm should encourage scholarship and creativity by charging lesser in publishing of materials. Specific copies of these published books should be distributed to public schools libraries in the respective states Establishment of family libraries:
- Philanthropists and other well-meaning individuals should come up with the establishment of non-governmental organizations for promoting reading culture by providing mobile library services, increasing reading awareness in the public schools; donate books to schools and public libraries in order to encourage reading habits.
- Media houses like radio, television and newspaper publishing firm: Radio and television houses can be part of this campaign by putting up jingles where-as newspaper houses can place adverts that will arouse the desire of reading.

Conclusions

Having looked at the unending benefit of reading, it is wise to conclude that those who lack the culture hardly discover the secret of life success. The continuous decline in reading among Nigerian youths is an important subject of concern to parents, educators, government, and other stake holders. The reluctant reading behaviour displayed by both old and young adults especially students reflects the state of intellectual decay and backwardness in Nigerian educational system. This lack of drive, passion, desire, urge is capable of hampering academic performance as well as the development of a growing country like Nigeria. It is therefore, necessary that Nigerian youths count the cost of poor reading culture and work hard to cultivate good reading culture as it will go a long way to build and stabilize our great country Nigeria.

Recommendations

To help revive and mitigate the present poor reading culture, in Nigeria, the following recommendation is necessary:

- The establishment and provision of functional libraries in strategic parts of the country, both in schools, public areas etc., through education budget increment and allocating huge sum to library formation, available library resources, in order to attain desired learning objective on readers.
- Establishing libraries should be a mandatory requirement to be met by private school owners in order to encourage them into establishing libraries for students of all level and ages. This implies that school owners should have adequate capital to set up a functional library to encourage their pupil into reading.
- The government and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and the publishing companies should embark on attitudinal change campaign using various media, in favour of good reading culture, and highlight on the negative effects of poor reading culture on their academics and the country Nigeria.
- Schools should ensure that their evaluation method be focused on utilizing the libraries and information acquired for students assignments, debates, projects etc. for reading.
- Governments at all levels should partner with the private sector to reward school children and individuals that demonstrate evidence of commitment to the reading culture. This can be achieved by organizing award nights and library week's where prizes could be obtained by those deserving individuals and groups.
- Parents should encourage their children to develop a good reading culture from infancy.

References

- Adeniji A. A. & Omale Anne .(2010)*Teaching Reading Comprehension in selected primary school in Oyo State Nigeria*. Philosophy and practice.
- Adesina, S. (1981).*Introduction to educational planning: A book of selected readings*. Ile-Ife Nigeria: University of Ife Press Ltd.
- Adima, E. (1990). *Effectiveness of practical Technique on Reading for the mentally retarded: Implications for Counselling*. Nigerian Journal of Counselling and Development.
- Agada, J. M.(2008). *The role of literature in enhancing reading cultures among Nigerians*. A paper presented at the national conference of the school of Languages. Literature and information communication technology (ICT) A panacea to ethical Revolution and national development.
- Brad I. (2007). The 26 Major Advantages to Reading More Books and Why 3 in 4 People Are Being Shut Out of Success. <http://www.persistenceunlimited.com/2007/12/the-26-major-advantages-to-reading-more-books-and-why-3-in-4-people-are-being-shut-out-of-success>.
- Bashir, I.& Mattoo, N. H.(2012).*A Study on Study Habits and Academic Performance Among Adolescents (14-19) years* International Journal of Social Science Tomorrow.
- Chika, J. O.(2009).*An Assessment of Reading Culture among Students in Nigeria Tertiary Institutions: A challenge to educational managers*. Faculty of Education, University of Benin. Edo State, Nigeria. Geographic code 6 NIGR Accessed Dec.22.
- Etim, F.E. (2007).*Information Literacy in an Information Age*In Etim, F.E. & Nssien, F.U. (eds.) *Information Literacy for Library Search*. Uyo: Abaam Publishing, Pp 72-89.
- Fosudo, S. (2010). *Reading as part to success* A Lecture delivered at the College Library Day, Adeniran Ogunsanya College of Education, Otto/Ijanikin, Lagos on February 24th. Henry, P. (2004) "Children reading habits and their use of media: exhaustive suggestions on encouraging reading habits among children".

- GbadamoseTunde. (2007). *Library reading culture and students' academic performance in secondary school*. Oyo State Middle Belt journal of Library and information science.
- Gbadamosi, T. (2007). *Library Reading Culture and students' academic performance in secondary schools* in Oyo state Middle belt Journal of Library and Information Science.
- Hanna Yusuf.(2011). *Towards Improvement in The Teaching of Reading Comprehension in Primary Schools: The Need To Activate Pupils Relevance Schema*. Fine land. Theory and Practice in Language studies. The State of the Art. Journal of the institute of education ABU Zaria.11, 2.
- Igwe, K.N. (2011). Reading culture and Nigeria's quest for sustainable development. Library Philosophy and Practice (on-line journal). Available online at: [http://www.webpage .uidaho.edu/mboline](http://www.webpage.uidaho.edu/mboline).
- Issa, A. O., Aliyu, M. B., Akangbe, R. B. & Adedeji, A. F.(2012). Reading Interest and Habits of the Federal Polytechnic Students. *International Journal of Learning & Development*.
- Nssien F. U. (2007). Reading Habit and Skill in F.E. Etim & F.U. Essien.ed. *Information library for library search*
- Odiba, I. A.(2005). *Planning the Nigeria education system for the challenge of Globalization*. Paper presented at the First Annual Conference of the Faculty of Arts and Humanities.Kogi State University Anyigba.
- Odiba, I. A.(2005). *Planning the Nigeria education system for the challenge of Globalization*. Paper Presented At The First Annual Conference Of The Faculty Of Arts And Humanities Kogi State University. Anyigba.
- Ogwu, M. F.(2006). *User Education in College Libraries*. Ankpa: Cuca Communications
- Okeke, B. C. (2004). *Teaching in Nigeria: The bureaucracy and professionalism* Enugu: Mercury international publishing Nigeria.
- Osagie, S.O.(1985). *The concept of material culture and contemporary issues* published by the publication committee, Department of sociology Olabisi Onabanjo University Ago-Iwoye.
- Oyeronke A. (2009). *Reading habits of secondary school teachers: A study of selected secondary school in Ado-Odo Local Government Area*.

Reading Culture: A Panacea ...

- Oyemike V. O. (2012). *The challenges of promoting Reading Culture in Nigerian children through Story Hour, Books talks and Exhibit: A case study of selected secondary schools in Owerri, Nigeria*
- Palani, K. K. (2012). *Promising Reading Habits and Creating Literate Social*. International Reference Research Journal Vol.III Issue 2(1) pp 91.
- RuqqayatuRufai Ahmed (2012). Workshop Edo State: *Reading Nation is a developed Nation*
- Sandars, M. (2007). *Creating an optimum reading culture in the Low Countries: The Role of Stitching Lezen: The National Platform for the Promotion of Reading in the Netherlands*. Amsterdam, Netherland.
- Sisulu, E. (2004). *The culture of reading and the book chain: How do we achieve quanturn leapt* keynote Address at the symposium on cost of culture of reading in Pretoria. Retrieved January 2011 from www.nlsa.ac.za.
- Steve, D.(2013). *Reading, Discussing, Writing*. Department of Psychology, University of Glasgow.