

Reading Culture, Intellectual Development and the Knowledge Sector: A Case Study of Selected Students of Mountain Top University

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Abstract

The main purpose of consistent and wide reading is to enhance intellectual capacity for sustainable growth and development of any society and for this to be achieved there is need for students to be groomed and drilled in the culture of reading in order to advance and promote the societal growth. The need for enhancing students' reading culture is to improve and upgrade them intellectually. The study investigates how reading culture among University students can be strategized and sustained for the good of society: the case study is based on the performance of selected students of Mountain Top University. The paper goes further to highlight the roles of ICT utility and stakeholders in enhancing reading culture among students. The data collected were analysed using the descriptive statistics. Results revealed that quite a number of factors are responsible for nonchalant attitude of students to reading, like: Social media, ill-equipped libraries, economy situation of the country, non-availability of resources, etc. It was recommended that more regulated and effective class activities should be incorporated into the curriculum of University students to improve their level of understanding and schools should equip their libraries with adequate and current textbooks for the students' usage. The study concludes that adequate use of instructional materials can also increase and enhance the performance of students.

Keywords: Reading, Culture, Intellectual, Curriculum, Sustainable

Introduction

Reading is one of the critical key factors that determines the quality of manpower base and for the growth and development of any society. Advanced economic development, social growth, political advancement and other societal growth indicators are grounded in societies where more attention is given to reading culture. Reading being a mental process involves the interpretation of signs perceived through sense organs. It is also the

process of communication through which formal learning takes place and therefore society becomes more developed. Reading is a total integrative process that starts with the reader and includes the affective, perceptual, and cognitive domains. Okebukola (2004) affirms that, through reading, humans have the tools to transmit knowledge to each succeeding generation and it allows one to listen to the wisdom and people of the ages. This is emphasized by many different religions and traditions. Reading can also be defined as an active mental activity that generates information or meaning from material that is written or printed. It is an active process because the reader must be mentally active, alert, and receptive to receive, analyze, decode and read meaning into the visual signs. Reading involves the human senses: the eyes, the mind and the brain.

Reading is important because it empowers and liberates the mind and indeed, the citizenry of any society. It is essential because books are the key to the world: both the real world and the imaginative world. Therefore, it should be encouraged in the society. Research has shown that those who read for examinations lapse into illiteracy in the end. Rosenberg (2002) adds that without the opportunity to read widely, what is taught in the classroom is not reinforced and the quality and performance of the benefit of education are endangered. Without wide reading, students cannot develop skills of locating, selecting, organizing, manipulating, analyzing, evaluating and processing information. Reading is an essential language skill that must not be toiled with in educational setting. It is a skill that must be nurtured from a child's earliest years. Once the child knows how to read, they still need support to reach their full potential as readers.

Reading Culture Defined

According to the World Book Encyclopedia (1993), culture is a term used by social scientists for a people's whole way of life. In everyday conversation, the word culture may refer to activities in such fields as art, literature, and music. To the social scientists, a people's culture consists of all the ideas, objects and ways of doing things created by the group. Culture also includes arts, beliefs, customs, inventions, language, technology and traditions. Ozo-Eson (2012) classifies culture into two-the material culture and the non-material culture. The material culture consists of arte-facts, clearly visible and can be touched, while non-material culture are more abstract creations, like norms, values, language and the like that play crucial role on the lives of the individual.

Culture is also defined as shared beliefs, values as well as attitudes that characterize a group of people or a nation. Consequently, individuals in a particular nation tend to portray certain attitude towards reading. Consequently, reading culture can be defined as a culture where reading is regarded as highly valued and appreciated in society. It is a culture where individuals read extensively and it becomes part of their regular habit. Reading is not only regarded as something you practice at school or for studying but it is also something practiced at home during leisure as a means of pleasure. In addition, reading culture entails a society with people who are able to read newspapers, stories, and poems etc for entertainment and pleasure(Lungwangwa, 2007).

It is a learned practice of seeking knowledge or information through the written word. Reading is one of the fundamental skills needed to function effectively in today's society. Thus, the importance of developing a reading culture in any nation cannot be over-emphasized. This brings the discussion to benefits of reading culture in the society.

Benefits of Reading Culture in the Society

Reading enables people to acquire knowledge, information, skills, values and attitudes necessary for personal, family, community and national awareness and development. It is difficult for any nation to achieve economic development with high levels of illiteracy among its citizens. An entrenched reading culture allows individuals to critically analyse and understand issues in the nation. Thus, a good reading culture unlocks the key to economic prosperity since knowledge is power. Reading also enables people to learn how to survive, develop their full capacities, live and work in dignity, participate fully in development, build an informed citizenry, make a person more resourceful, improve the quality of life, make informed decisions, develop critical, innovative and independent thinking, and to continue learning (Ruterana, 2012).

Reading culture widens learners' vocabulary and also helps them acquire lifelong skills suitable for participation and survival in present day changing environment. Moreover, a person's bargaining power or capacity is enhanced through reading (Lungwangwa, 2007).

Impediments of Reading Culture

Reading culture in Nigeria is impeded by a lot of factors such as:

Poverty: Majority of African societies live under hazardous conditions and the per capita income of an average citizen in Nigeria, “the giant of Africa” with its abundant natural resources, is two dollars. This invariably affects the reading habits of Nigerians because majority of the people are too poor to send their children to school; they lack money to buy books and pay school fees.

Corruption: Corruption has a profound effect in Nigeria and has hitherto negatively affected reading culture among Nigerians. Corruption is ubiquitous in Nigeria ranging from government institutions to private organizations. For instance, many students prefer to indulge in immoral acts rather than concentrating on their studies. In most of our higher institutions, trading sex for grades, sales of ungraded textbooks to students at high fees, using money to buy examination grades, and cheating in examinations abound and those who engage in these infamous acts will consider reading a waste of time. A case that happened at University of Lagos, reported in the Guardian Newspaper in June 2019 readily came to mind of a reporter wearing a secret camera, named, Kiki Mordi, who visited Igbeneghu, the lecturer concerned, posing as a 17-year-old admission seeker. The clip showed the lecturer making sexual overtures to the reporter. Noisy environment: A learning environment requires a quiet and serene place. Majority of schools are situated in densely populated areas, where distractions prevent the smooth flow of learning.

Lack of reading foundation: In many homes, there is faulty foundation of reading because the language of reading is introduced late and the first point of contact of some children with this language is in school. As children grow older, reading becomes a herculean task. In ThisDay Newspaper, Enumah(2019) writes that a Professor of Surgery at the University of Abuja, Sir Hycint Nwadiaro, has condemned the waning reading culture in the country. He emphasized that a country can hardly experience true development when its citizens hardly read. He noted that, nowadays, people engage more with technology and they fail to realize that what they goggle is not in-depth as what they read in the textbook.

Scarcity of Libraries: Libraries play an important role in the promotion of reading culture. State, local government and proprietors of school have not complied with library provisions in the National Policy on Education (NPE). Also, public libraries are not being established where they are needed. The

existing public libraries are inadequately stocked with reading materials that can affect the lives of citizens.

Strategies of Developing Reading Culture

Teachers need to be trained to teach pupils how to read. Teaching methods could be seen as one way of changing the students' perception of reading. This aspect is important since it is believed that a reading culture could not flourish if reading is seen as something that pupils are compelled to do but do not enjoy doing. The teachers should use more suitable teaching methods as a means of promoting a reading culture, such as, visual method, activity method and mental method.

In addition, book fairs, exhibitions and excursions will expose pupils and teachers to a variety of information and current materials. Another strategy to develop reading culture is to introduce books to the children at their early stages in life. When a strong foundation is laid both in the school and at home by the parents, the nation will surely metamorphose to a reading society.

Factors Contributing to the Decline of Reading Culture in Nigeria

The decline of the reading culture in Nigerian is caused by many factors. According to Gbadamosi (2007:45), this includes: Change in Nigeria's value system. The quest for material wealth has eroded the interest in the search for knowledge. Economic hardship that is prevalent in many homes results in most parents managing to pay their wards' school fees alone and forgetting about buying books for them. Cost of publishing books is very exorbitant. Advent of home videos, film houses and other electronic gadgets is another paramount factor that has contributed to the decline of reading culture.

Another factor contributing to the decline of reading culture is the distraction from technological innovation in the world today, such as the easy availability of the entertainment media, games and gambling, the inadequate funding of educational institutions including libraries, laboratories, workshops and computer units. Poor economy and low standard of living, the quest for money by parents who use their children to hawk consumer items, the acceptance of examination malpractices, and the increasing cost of publishing make it difficult for school pupils to have access to books, magazines, journals and newspapers. Furthermore, the public library system is grossly under-utilized, majority of the populace are unaware of the public library services and their potential contributions. There is also inadequate

number of qualified school librarians managing school libraries. In Nigeria, there is also dearth in the number of well equipped school libraries both at the primary, secondary and tertiary levels (Iloeje, 2014).

The Role of ICT and Stakeholders in Enhancing Reading Culture for Better Societal Development

Reading is the bedrock of national transformation and development. Hence, reading culture can be enhanced through the involvement of different stakeholders in the knowledge sector and the use of ICT can also contribute to enhancing reading culture in the following ways:

ICT can be a feasible linguistic tool for enhancing reading culture in Nigeria if it is well utilized by schools and institutions, the government, parents, guardians and teachers. This can be done by engaging the students through the giving of exercises and assignments on internet and other learning activities through ICT which will go a long way in promoting the reading culture. ICT should be used to promote reading in schools by allowing learners to access a wide range of electronic information resources and databases including stories and novels, talking books, audio-visuals, etc.

There should also be an inclusion of reading, library skills and information literacy in the school curricular; Provision of more public libraries in all nooks and crannies of the country where reading can take place; Government should also support the indigenous publishers and authors. Parents on their own part should be active readers and should establish libraries at home where early reading culture can begin and encourage the reading habit of their children. Philanthropists and other public-spirited individuals should come up with the establishment of non-governmental organizations for promoting reading culture.

Libraries can also contribute their role in enhancing reading culture by providing access to reading materials through which school children and youths gain and improve their skills. Libraries can be of help by introducing innovated facilities for the use of reading for information, pleasure, passing examinations, and personal growth through lifelong learning. Media houses like radio, television and newspaper publishing firms are also stakeholders in enhancing reading culture. This can be done if radio and television houses contribute their quota by airing reading habit jingles. Newspaper houses can advertise things that will stimulate reading.

Research Questions

The following research questions were raised for the study:

1. What are the problems confronting students in reading effectively?
2. Do students possess necessary materials to enhance reading culture?
3. Do social media have any effect on the reading culture of students?
4. What is the attitude of students towards reading culture?

Methodology

The study employs a descriptive research design and the target population for the study comprises all students from the Mountain Top University, Ogun State. The simple random sampling method was used to select the sample for the study. Two departments were selected from the two colleges in the school: Department of Accounting and Computer Science. A total of two hundred (200) students were selected from the two departments from all levels. A self-designed questionnaire was used to elicit responses from the respondents. The questionnaire contains two sections: A and B. Section A contains demographic information of the respondents while section B contains ten (10) well-structured items to elicit information on how students' reading culture can be enhanced. The questionnaire adopted Agree/ Disagree format.

Results and discussion

Research question 1

What are the problems confronting students in reading effectively?

Table 1 indicates that 60% of the students agreed that there are no qualified teachers to handle reading effectively in schools. Only 40% of the respondents agreed that there are qualified teachers. This implies that the reading culture of the students can be improved if qualified teachers are employed to instill the right and appropriate knowledge into the students. The table also reveals that there is an inadequate availability of instructional materials for learning; 75.5% of 151 respondents agreed to the statements while 24.5% of 49 respondents disagreed. This means reading culture of the students is grossly affected by the non-availability of instructional materials. The statement in number three states that the economic situation of the country has incapacitated teachers to equip themselves with teaching aids/materials of which 40% agreed to the statement while 60% do not agree to the statement meaning the teachers can equip themselves by improvising the teaching aids and by so doing the economic situation of the country would not really affect them.

S/N	STATEMENT	AGREE	%	DISAGREE	%
1.	There are no qualified teachers to handle reading effectively	120	60%	80	40%
2.	There is inadequate availability of instructional materials for learning	151	75.5%	49	24.5%
3.	The economy situation of the country has incapacitated teachers to equip themselves with teaching aids/materials	80	40%	120	60%

Research Question 2

Do students possess necessary materials to enhance reading culture?

Table 2 shows that 130(65%) agreed that parents cannot afford recommended materials for their students as a result of the nation's economy while 35% of 70 respondents disagreed. This implies that the nation's economy is one of the factors affecting students' reading culture by hampering/incapacitating parents from providing the needed learning materials for the students. The table also reveals that 27.5% of 55 respondents agreed that students have the necessary materials that will enhance their reading culture while 72.5% of 145 respondents disagreed that students do not have the necessary materials to enhance reading culture. The table also reveals that 115 respondents (57.5%) agreed that there is no availability of resources in schools that will enhance students' reading culture while 85% disagreed to the statement. This

implies that the non-availability of resources is another factor that affects the reading culture of students.

S/N	STATEMENT	AGREE	%	DISAGREE	%
7.	Students are distracted by social media which is affecting their reading culture	121	60.5%	62	31%
8.	Students love chatting and watching movies than reading	177	88.5%	23	11.5%
9.	Students are always bored with reading than chatting and browsing through social media.	110	55%	90	45%
10.	School libraries do not possess enough reading materials for the students	133	66.5%	67	33.5%

Research Question 3

Do social media have any effect on the reading culture of students?

Table 3 in item 7 indicates that 60.5% of respondents agreed to the statements that students are distracted by social media which affects their reading culture while 31% disagreed that students are not distracted. This means that social media may be a tool of distraction to the students which will affect their reading culture later. The table also reveals that 177(88.5%) respondents agreed that students' reading culture are affected by their love for chatting and watching of movies while 11.5% disagreed with the statement. This means that students may be distracted by chatting and watching of movies which in turn will affect their reading culture. The table also revealed that 110 respondents agreed to the statement that students get bored easily with reading than being on social media while 45% of 90 respondents disagreed with the statement. The table in item 10 revealed that 133 respondents agreed that school libraries do not possess enough reading materials for the students while 67 respondents of 33.5% disagreed to the statement. This means that ill-equipped library may be one of the factors that affect the students' reading culture.

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Conclusion

The development and stimulation of reading culture in students will improve the nation's human resources that will result in sustainable development. In order to achieve a total national consciousness of the value and benefits of reading, all stakeholders in the knowledge sector such as writers, publishers, booksellers, the media, teachers, librarians, civil societies, the corporate sector, religious bodies, community based organizations, non-governmental organizations, governments at all levels etc must support and participate actively in ensuring the entrenchment of effective reading culture in the society. This should be of help to people and students especially to have a rethink and be more conscious of using information and communication technologies (ICT) in enhancing their reading culture.

Recommendations

1. Schools should equip their libraries with sufficient, adequate and current textbooks for the students' usage.
2. Government should alleviate the poverty situation in the country in order to enable parents and teachers to purchase adequate materials and teaching aids needed by the students.
3. Students should be given orientation on the need to inculcate reading habit for progress in their learning.
4. Regulated and effective class activities should be incorporated into

the curriculum of University students to motivate and encourage them to read and at the same time improve their level of understanding.

5. In addition, book fairs, exhibitions and excursions should be organized by schools in order to expose students and teachers to a variety of information and current materials.

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