# READERSHIP AS A TOOL IN FOSTERING E DUCATIONAL DE VELOPMENT IN NIGERIA

BY

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#### Abstract

Reading is very vital to progress and development of human life. It's important in the edicational development of children, adelscents and youths are immeasurable. Not only do good reading skills benefit students academically, the y are also needed for lifelong learning. Reading enhances vocabulary, increases attention span and promotes stronger analytical thinking. But in the past years the emergence of technology and the rise in social media has made reading culture decline drastically. Nigerian youths spend hours watching television surfing the net, chat friends, play games and facebooking at the detriment of reading. Readership is said to be low in schools, colleges and universities as a result of products of technology. This study aimed at revealing why youths readership culture has declined to include, proliferation of electronic media, for example social media like facebook, whatsApp etcetera, watching television, poor state of libraries, high cost of books, among others. The paper also highlighted probable solutions to revive readership culture for edicational development such as establishment and equipping library and information centers, provision of fund for establishment, equipping and maintenance of the library, formation of book readers' club, provision and access to books, exhibtion and visitation to other libraries among others

## Keywords: Reading culture, reading habit, educational development

#### Introduction

Reading is a worldwide phenomenon that has the capacity to promote development as well as instill discipline on the individual. It has been said that readers are leaders and so the importance of reading in educational setting cannot be over-

emphasized. For every individual to develop a culture for reading, individual should aim at developing good reading habit since its benefits are tremendous to human existence and a necessity for one to pull through in life. Reading is highly important in Nigerian cducational policy and without it there cannot be good and positive technology. Ossai-Onnah, Anyanwu and Obichere (2012) sees reading as the survival of any society therefore, it is a function and extent to which that society is involved in reading. Society may not develop in science-oriented culture, not only in science oriented disciplines but generally without good reading culture. A society that does not have reading culture or habit is not a developing society. Such society will remain stagnant especially in the field of technological knowhow. Reading not only has the awesome power when it comes to stimulating the development of an individual, its importance to the entirety of human life in this era of information explosion cannot be underestimated. It is therefore, saddening to note nowadays that in Nigeria reading culture is deficient. This is because orientation of youth today has been shifted from reading to other non-important things. People believe education and reading is a long term project which does not succumb to immediate dividend but, if at all, a distant future. Youth of nowadays want quick money with the influx of smart phones into the country, with these phones, individuals' especially young adults have access to a variety of social networking sites on the internet. Study has shown that the average Nigerian reads less than one book per year, in fact only one percent (1%) of successful men and women in Nigeria read one-fiction per month (Henry, 2004).

## Reading and Reading Culture

Reading has been seen as a multi-dimensional activity that is geared towards achieving multifaceted purposes. It could be intensive and extensive reading, reading for leisure and reading for examination (Schaltz and Stephen, 2009). There are several reasons why people read. It could be for pleasure, to comprehend a text and answer comprehension check questions, to do grammar activities, to solve language problems, to improve language ability, to achieve information, to know the instruction of using a particular tool, to be familiar with a particular country and to decode message(s).

Kosak (2011) defines reading as a skill which enables readers to get a message, recognizing the written words, getting the meaning, used to teach pronunciation, grasping information from texts. It is regarded as complex activity that involves both perception and thought. Fabunmi and Folorunsho (2010) also define reading as a term used to refer to an interaction by which meaning encoded in visual stimuli by an author to make meaning in the minds of the reader. It involves the

recognition of printed or written symbols which serves as stimuli for the recall of meaning. However, in the words of Olanlokun (1999) cited in Oji and Habibu (2011), reading is a complex activity which links the eyes with the mind to come up with the interpretation and seen as the ability to understand words contained in a document and make use of the knowledge for personal growth and development. Owusu-Acheaw (2014) opines that reading is more concern with reasoning, meaningful interpretation of words, phrases and sentences, requires all types of thinking, such as critical, analytical, creative, imaginative, evaluative, judgmental and problem solving.

Sisulu (2004) regards reading as a fundamental block associated with learning and the development of a literate society. It is an invaluable tool that is capable of empowering humans to take appropriate steps that are necessary to develop and live well in the society. Ogbonna & Eze (2015) citing Albishak (2004) define reading as the skill of getting information mainly from books, to read means to understand or in temet written information. Reading is making meaning from print materials. It involves weaving together word recognition and comprehension in a fluent manner. Reading culture, according to Gbadamosi (2007) in Ossai-Onah and Eze (2012), is the process of building up positive reading attitude among children and students over a period of time. Reading culture is seen as an attitude that is developed over a period of time. Sangkaeo (1999), cited in Tella and Akande (2007), asserts that reading culture can be likened to behavior which expresses the likeness of reading, individual types of reading and tastes of reading. Reading culture in essence is the use of reading as a regular activity. It is the cultivation of an attitude and possession of skills that make reading a pleasurable, regular and constant ability. In a nutshell, it is the act that imbibes reading and development.

The benefit of reading to an individual and society is immeasurable. Onukaogu (2002) points out that reading is fulcrum or cornerstone of literacy. The more an individual reads, the more background knowledge he or she acquires about other ways of life, behavior and thought. Individual's ability to read is the centre of the child's educational process. Through reading, the individual is able to build things, enjoy stories, discover what other people's believes are and develop ideas or believes of their own. Reading provides the key to all forms of information necessary for our day-to-day survival and growth (Owusu-Acheaw & Larson, 2014). Reading is a basic tool for education. It is essential to academic success and to intellectual growth. Aina, Okusaga Taiwo and Ogundipe (2011) highlight advantages of reading to include, an active mental process that is, it makes individual use his/her brain through reading, thinking and becoming smarter, it is a fundamental skill builder, that is, you can clarify difficult concepts and provide

information that goes deeper than just classroom discussions, improves vocabulary where you expose to new words, gives you glimpse into other cultures and places where you can expand your horizons by letting you see what other cities, countries, and other cultures seem like and what they have to offer. Ukoha (2015) maintains that the development of reading habit early leads to a lifelong love for books. Reading encourages a thirst for knowledge. Reading makes one to learn more when you develop good reading habit and develop interest in what you read. It provides adolescents and indeed everyone with other people's views of life and broadens one's horizon. Reading is necessary for a child's learning, growth and development in Nigeria. For individuals who aspire to become a great leader of tomorrow reading is very pertinent as an adage says "leaders are readers". Okebukola (2004) affirms that, reading makes human have the tools to transmit knowledge to each succeeding generation. It allows individuals to listen to the wisdom and people of the ages. Without reading words of wisdom cannot be known, let alone passing them to incoming generations. Individuals and young generation should strive to become competent in reading because through it they become responsible citizen in the society. Reading to Douglas (2000) is the foundation of much enjoyment in life and is closely related to vocational efficiency. Efficiency is only guaranteed through reading because there may be new discoveries of technical knowhow individuals need to rely on written or digital words to convey information or data.

Rubin (2002) maintains that children with poor reading habits have a higher chance of anti-social behavior like school violence, bullying, hacking computers and even examination malpractices. All these have correlation with poor reading habits. It should be noted however, that not only students with deficiency in reading display those delinquencies but with poor reading habits it is possible for students to display such behavioral patterns with good reading culture individuals develop a steady, constructive mind and be able to discharge responsibilities as a citizen of a democratic society. Oke (1996) highlights reasons why people read to include, self-improvement, pleasure and relaxation, and a feeling of pride and prestige. With poor reading culture it is not possible to develop one's potential to the fullest. Reading is essential for survival and growth of individual. But with time, people are not ready to read nowadays instead they get involve in some other things like politics, internet surfing etcetera.

The term education itself was said to have originated from two Latin words: Educere – meaning 'to draw out' or 'to lead out' and Educare – meaning 'to nourish', 'to bring up' or 'to raise' (Osokoya, 1987). Obanya (1981) defines education as the process being what the "teacher transmitter" and "student-

receiver" do while the product is what the receiver is capable of doing as a consequence of what he has received or experienced during the process of education. Education is seen as a process through which man acquires some basic experiences from early age till death remain the only basis through any human society grows, develops and as well sustains such development. No society, the world over could grow and advance in development without earnestly embracing or vigorously pursuing education in its time sense. It has become a yardstick through which man determined the development of certain society. It is the only measure to determine the level of advancement of a society as well as its sustainability. Poor reading culture can make a child to develop poor attitude to school, and it can create self-esteem problems later in life which may retard educational development. What then are responsible for young or Nigrian youth dying reading culture/habit?

## Challenges to Reading Culture

A number of factors are responsible for the dying reading culture/habit of youth in Nigeria. The major challenge associated with reading culture can be explained by early reading problems. Lerner (2000) reports that children who get off to a poor start in reading rarely catch up, poor first grade readers are likely to continue to be poor readers. Studies by Bewaji (2000) and Ogwuegbu (2000) maintain that many secondary school students perform below expectation because they lacked some reading skills required for effective study in the particular subject. This is as a result of not having interest in reading because of their negative attitude, lack of motivation by teachers, lack of reading materials, inadequate attention to reading, absence of reading on the time-table of schools and the influence of home videos, computer games and peer pressures.

Another problem identified by Bewaji (2000) and Akinbote, Kolawole and Kolawole (2007) are inadequate provision of reading materials. It was revealed that reading skills in English were not being taught well at the primary school level in Oyo State. They also found out that most primary school pupils had no materials to read, teachers are not working hard to promote reading while parents could not give adequate support to their children due to their level of poverty. These problems not only limited to provision of materials but to other factors as well.

Information Communication and Technology media in some homes have pushed away young adults from reading. Many students resorted to playing video games, surfing and chatting on the Internet, watching televisions, listening to music or talking on the phone and making use of social media like facebook, twitter, whatsApp etcetera. Acquisition of mobile phoneby stude ts in Nigeria has helped

to distract them from developing good reading culture (Ukoha, 2015). They are seen taking 'selfie' and chatting on various social sites even in the classroom while receiving lectures. Ikpaahindi (2008) observes that information and communication technology especially Internet technology has an adverse on the reading culture of Nigerians. This is because it discourages lazy students from engaging in serious reading. Many students prefer to spend most of their time using the internet, browsing, playing games, chatting with friends.

Non-availability of human and materials resources for the teaching of reading as a school subject, and the general literacy level of the society. In Nigeria there is no provision for reading as taught subject in the curriculum. No reading time in the time-table in the elementary and secondary schools, no facilities to train reading specialists and trained teacher librarians (Ukoha, 2015).

Poorly equipped libraries are an impediment to reading culture. Libraries are nonexistent in many primary and secondary schools. In tertiary institutions where there are libraries, they are ill equipped. Many of their collections are outdated and this to a great extent inhibits the development of good reading habit. Kolawole (2009) concludes that in secondary school in Oyo state nothing has changed concerning reading. This is because the state of facilities such as libraries, books, journals and furniture that are helpful for developing a good reading skill and culture are inadequate and something must be done in order to foster educational development in Nigeria. To corroborate this, a former public library in Oyo town was demolished by the former Governor of Oyo State, Late Governor Isiaka Ajimobi to build a radio station. The library has neither been replaced with another one. This could affect reading culture among individuals that want to make the use of the library and even discourage them in making use of library because library is not valued by government. Awareness to importance of good reading habit is low. There are no or few medium/media to educate students and the whole public on the need and importance of reading culture.

Unemployment is also seen as a challenge to reading culture. Many Nigerian youths cannot secure job after university education. This makes them dabble into politics, yahoo-yahoo and other forms of social vices instead of reading for survival. They prefer to look for information that can earn them money online instead of reading for educational development.

Problem associated with printed resources and electronic resources is another major challenge. Printed resources take more space; you need bag to carry them because they are not portable. But with electronic resources, little space is required; it is easy to handle, easy to use and portable. For instance, a student will

prefer to use his or her phone for browsing e-books instead of carrying a voluminous book from one place to another.

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The cost of the book is another challenge coupled with corruption. Cost of purchasing textbooks, serials and reference books are skyrocketing every day because of inflation. People cannot afford to purchase some books instead they prefer to do photocopy or not having the book at all thereby infringing on copyright law. The poor state of the economy with high exchange rate has made production of materials like books increase in cost. Corruption has a profound effect in Nigeria from government institutions to private organizations in schools. Many higher institution students prefer to include in immoral acts rather than face their studies diligently. Some female students like to trade their body for grades that is, sex for marks, some use money to buy examination grades and some lecturers also sell texbooks and handut at exorbitant rate (Aina, A. J., Ogungbeni, J. I., Adigun, J. A. & Ogundipe, T. C. 2011). Student cheats in examination hall because they cannot read. Reading to these people mentioned above is waste of time.

## Factors Enhancing Readership in Fostering Educational Development

In order to sustain and turn the country to a reading nation and her people to imbibe the culture of reading in fostering educational development, the following under listed factors should be consider d.

One of the factors that are capable of enhancing quality reading habits among Nigerian youth is the establishment and equipping library and information centers since library and education are inseparable. Government should establish more libraries in the urban and rural areas and the existing ones should be well equipped. This will not only improve students' reading habits but also ensure quality reading among them. Libraries when well stoked would attract people to its usage. These libraries should be provided with professional librarians to render services to the users. Religious bodies, private individuals, old stuchts/alumni should also join hands in establishing libraries in their communities and former institutions and equip them with necessary materials. Kolawole (2009) reiterates that a good and conducive library has a tendency to attract students to books and book related materials. Conducive atmosphere should be provided for the users.

Provision of Fund: If education must develop, libraries must not be separated from education; indeed litrary is established in order to support parent institutions. Government should give education high priority and earmark funds for establishing, equipping and maintenance of libraries. Availability of fund will

make it possible to acquire adequate, current, and relevant resources into the library. Printed and non-printed materials should be available in the library for clienteles. Money allocated to the library should be monitored so that it will be used for its purpose.

Formation of book readers' club is another strategy to eradicate poor reading habit. Readers club could be a veritable tool for ensuring quality reading for educational development. Teachers, teacher-librarians, professional librarians should help in formation of book readers' club and its promotion should be done twice or once in a year for sensitization.

Library as change agent: A person who doesn't read is no better off than a person who can't read. Librarians should encourage reading by giving award to the most user of the year among the students, teachers/lecturers. This will serve as incentives to others to wanting to use the library. Librarians should respect and assist users in retrieving resources from the shelves. Librarianship is seen as helping profession and as Raganathan cited by Kumar, Kumar and Ravi have put it in the five laws of library science "Save the time of the users".

Provision and Access to Books: Different collection of enjoyable and information – rich books is a major contribution of the library toward reading promotion. As final product of writing is reading. If books are not provided, what would users read? Availability and accessibility of instructional and pleasurable books stimulate development of reading and attainment of permanent literacy (Aina, et al 2011). Higher institutions of learning should also provide resources to support disciplines offered in their institutions.

Pleasure Reading: In primary and secondary schools, students should be encouraged and motivated to read and thus form good reading habit through storytelling, reading together, as well as provision of conducive reading environment devoid of unwarranted noise and distractions. Story telling should be encouraged by librarians because it encourages pupils' attention and focus, develop their listening skills and helps them to contribute in reading. Pupils can also be encouraged to read together this will inspire many of them to continue reading on their own. Reading and hearing according to Aina, A. J., Okusaga, T. O., Taiwo, A. & Ogundipe, T. C. (2011) will facilitates comprehension, good pronunciation, develops reading and critical thinking skills, shared reading puts confidence in some timid children and encourages them develop a voluntary reading habit.

Exhibitions and Visitation: Students in primary and secondary schools should be taken on excursions to other schools that have libraries. They should be taken to book exhibitions as well, this will help them to know how best they can make use of the library, and they will also be familiar with different resources housed in the library. The librarian of that particular school would edicate them on the significance of library and how they can become better citizen through reading. Exhibitions should be encouraged yearly in tertiary institutions. This will acquaint the users of many resources both old and newly acquired resources.

Mobile Library Services: Promotion of reading culture should not be confined to students in the classroom or the physical library alone (Aina, et al (2011) rather it should be extended to out of school children. This can best be done by public library. Aina, et al (2011) reported that in the 70s, Nigerian populace in the rural areas, farmers' nomadic fishermen, and cattle rearers used to enjoy this service. Regrettably, since the 1980s, this important library service has become moribund. Therefore, this type of service should be resuscitated in order to attain the objective of the universal basic education as well as carry out the goals contained in the National Policy on Education.

#### Conclusion

Nigerian students at all levels of education should be able to compete with any students of the world and meet the international standard in today's globalized world. In order to do this, they must cultivate good reading habit. A reading nation is an informed nation. The poor reading habits of Nigerian youths a fect their performances at school and with poor reading habits they may engage in anti-social behaviors.

It has been ascertained that readership in this era is low and that there are no more reading society but chatting society. Young Nigerians should be educated why they must have good reading culture in order to become better citizen tomorrow.

#### Recommendations

To ameliorate the various issues militating against reading skills and culture, the following recommendations are proffered. They are:

1. Librarians should be at the forefront championing innovative techniques and advocacy for reading promotion.

- 2. Parent should try to monitor their children to minimize the time their wards watch television, video, internet browsing and increase reading time.
- 3. Reading habit should begin at an early stage and should be imbibed throughout one's lifetime.
- 4. Government should include reading in the curriculum this will give room for reading time on the time table.
- 5. Reading and most user of the year should be awarded in tertiary institutions. This will encourage students to use part of their time in the library and not only to taking 'selfie' and chatting friends.
- 6. Government should allocate sufficient fund to support library in purchasing resources and convenient equipment that would attract users to the library.

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