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Reading Culture, Benefits, and the Role of libraries in the 21st century

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Abstract

This paper addresses reading culture, benefits and the role of libraries in the 21st century. The paper x-rays the World Book Day as a day for celebration of reading around the world. Reading exposes one to solutions to problems. The role of library cannot be over emphasized when it comes to promotion of reading culture as it offers diverse services to users of information. Some of the role of libraries in promoting reading culture include to promote literacy, offering depth and breadth of resources, secondary school students' participation in library week among others. It was concluded that people read for different reasons aside education, this among others include self-improvement, pleasure, and relaxation. People should Read a Book a Day and Share A Story for at least 10 minutes. However, reading culture should be included in library collections, readership campaigns, reading clubs and World Book Day Activities.

Keywords: Reading Culture, Libraries, Reading, 21st Century, World Book Day, Nigeria

Introduction

The World Book Day among other purposes is a day for the celebration of reading. World Book Day is a celebration, or a day set aside for the celebration of another illustrators, books and reading around the world. This year, 2019 theme is "Share A Story" and adults, parents and older siblings are encouraged to participate by reading and sharing stories of what they've read for others

to learn. Therefore, everyone is encouraged to **Take 10 minutes to read and share**. What this means is to read together with your child, with your friends, you alone and see the impact it will create in your life.

It also means you could ‘Share a Story’ **for 10 minutes** on World Book Day and beyond, using the *‘#ShareAStory’*. It is a campaign encouraging parents, caregivers, siblings and friends to read to one another. It highlights the importance of spending just 10 minutes a day reading and sharing stories. This can happen anywhere and anytime, be it at home, school, library, workplace etc.

To show how important reading is, this year, 2019, is the twentieth anniversary of World Book Day in the United Kingdom while the first ever World Book Day in the world took place on the 23rd April, 1995 that is about 24years today, being 23rd April, 2019.

The 21st century reading pattern is different from the 18th, 19th and 20th century pattern because the twenty-first century learning/ reading means that students master content while producing, synthesizing and evaluating information from a wide variety of subjects and sources with an understanding of and respect for diverse cultures (Hall, 2012).

Reading in the 21st century have several blueprints for ensuring our future in attaining educational standards. The more we read, the more we are exposed to issues and solutions to the common problems we face as a people. Reading is essential for those who seek to rise above the ordinary according to Jim Rohn (n.d). The libraries have always seen and fought towards a better reading culture in our society. They do this because they are knowledge managers, they preserve and organize information and believe so much on the strength of a reader in the development of a nation. This is the reason for the assertion by Seuss (n.d) as cited by Ajumobi (2017) that leaders

are readers. He further explained that there is no doubt about it that people who read more are more likely to be seen as leaders to their peers due to their expert knowledge. The exotic places around the globe are known through reading, he added.

Reading a book really is your magical portal to another universe. You are never too old, too wacky, too wild, to pick up a book and read. According to Ailakliu and Unegbu (2017) reading involves thinking process with attention focused on comprehension. Reading is not only for children or the extremely intelligent. Anyone who wants to read can read. Pay a visit to your library or book shops and find the right book for you! There are no excuses for not reading a book. Once you can read, the power is in your hands to do whatever you want with the knowledge. It is very clear that reading is not done by magic according to Ogugua, Emerole, Egwim, Anyawn and Haco-Obasi (2015), that the strategies for developing reading culture are to introduce children to reading very early in their lives, to read for contests and to establish libraries in their classrooms and training of the teachers who will teach the children how to read.

Purpose of the Study

1. The purpose of this study is to bring to limelight the importance of World Book Day yearly celebration on the society anchoring on its theme year in, year out.
2. To encourage the society on reading culture and its benefits.
3. To pinpoint on the role of libraries on reading in the 21st century.

The Concept of Reading

What is Reading?

Reading is the process of looking at a series of written symbols and getting meaning from them. Reading is a mental process in which someone looks into a written text and starts to absorb

the information from the written linguistic message. Reading entails the use of vision to understand several words in a sentence and make them meaningful. (<https://www.ukessays.com>).

Accordingly, Howley (2015) sees the act of reading as a creative process in which the reader constructs reading by interacting with the text. It is a process of interaction between the reader and text.

In the world of Ariffin (1992), defines reading as a highly personal activity that is mainly done silently alone. This implies that reading is something related to the activity of acquiring information and it is done either silently or aloud. The major avenue of learning is through reading according to Mariam (1991), reading means or implies that if we do not understand what we are reading, we cannot learn or remember it.

Just as is reading, the journey of a lifetime starts with the turning of a page, reading is the sole means by which we slip in voluntarily often helplessly into another skin, another voice, another soul (Joyce Carol Oates, 2004). To read is to exercise the brain and increases the chances to assimilate better.

Concept of Reading Culture

Reading culture according to Nyam (2015) is the use of reading as a regular activity, and thus the cultivation of an attitude and the possession of skills that make reading a pleasurable, regular and constant activity.

In Ailakhu and Unegbu (2017), reading culture is having the habit of reading in every life and not just for school purpose. They however, emphasized that over time reading ceases to become the uphill task of reading to pass examination, rather it takes on an intrinsic value, reading for the sake of reading until an inclination to further reading is developed. These great authors

concluded that the essence of reading culture is to encourage students to read as part of daily life and to establish the reading of books as a habit that would always be needed and enjoyed throughout one's life.

Styles of Reading

There are three different styles of reading. Accordingly, the Online Writing and Learning Link (OWLL) identified three (3) different styles of reading used for specific purpose. They include skimming, scanning and in-depth reading.

Skimming: you read the headlines, headings or first sentences of the page in each section or paragraph. 'Skip reading' is done here.

Scanning: all the contents are not dealt with. Scanning could be use specifically for the purpose of referencing like to find words in a dictionary, locate names in a *directory etc.*

In-depth reading: this is done after the text has been skimmed. Reading is done in detail to understand what the text is about. In-depth reading has four (4) different strategies, among which includes the 'RAP strategy' where the reader Reads, Ask and Put the answer into his/her own words, it helps the reader to develop the ability to recall and retell about information that are relevant to them and be able to apply it where necessary.

Reading can present some challenges to some students such as:

- ❖ Those who do not anticipate that reading can bring pleasure.
- ❖ Those that are visually impaired.
- ❖ Those who have hearing impairment.

The role of libraries in promoting reading culture in the 21st century

-The libraries are places of information: When most people think library, they think books. And while that is certainly true, these days books take different shapes, such as e-books and audio books.

-The library promotes literacy: In the 21st century, libraries are about much more than books, the library promotes literacy. They are committed to helping children and adults develop the skills they need to survive and thrive in a global information society: the ability to read and use computers. (www.i/ovelibraries.org).

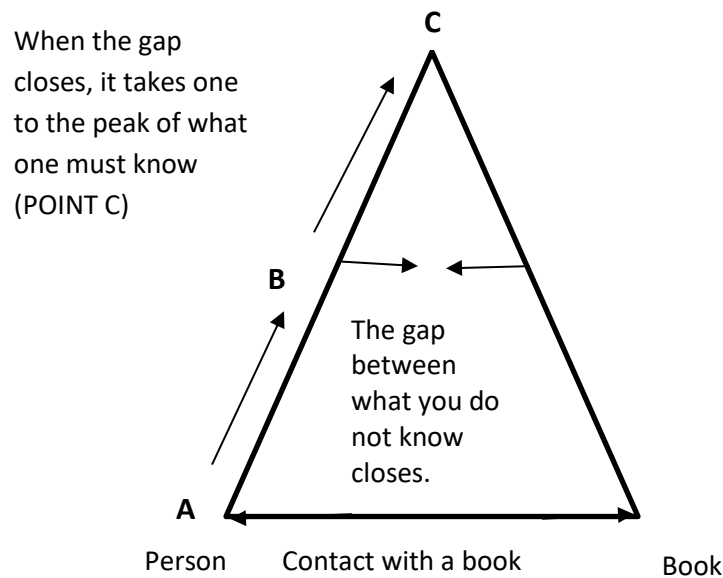
- Libraries offer us a depth and breadth of resources for us to read, learn, connect and play.

- Library week- this is a whole week set aside to intimate people about the essence of the library, its importance and what should be gained by using it. (Ailakhu and Unegbu (2017).

According to Aina, Okusaga, Taiwo and Ogundipe (2011), as far back as 1981, the National Library of Nigeria has been sponsoring the readership promotion campaign in the country. This is done as part of the strategies to ginger up the reading culture in Nigeria. To get to all the nooks and crannies of the country. Academic and public libraries also have organized several readership promotion campaigns during most of their yearly library weeks where primary and secondary school pupils and students were invited to participate. During their participation, books were given to them to read school by school and the winner goes back with book prizes. This is to encourage them to further read.

- Libraries provide enabling environment and materials that offer more extensive and varied information than classroom study alone (Aina et al. 2011).

WHEN YOU READ!



Benefits of Reading Culture: As Individuals

- **Increase in memory:** reading slows down the rate of memory deterioration. Those who read live longer, their brain function is heightened. With the help of reading, ones' memory is enhanced in the sense that it exercises the muscles of the brain and new memory is created as the brain strengthens and sharpens the memory. Ultimately, reading improves your brain, as the memory increases, it makes one smarter and more intelligent. However, the act of reading helps to heighten the brain function and increase/improve memory.
- **Discipline:** reading makes an individual to be disciplined by obeying certain rules and standards. It helps control one's thought, emotions and actions. It helps one to achieve their goal in life. Adding reading to one's daily schedule improves discipline.
- **Vocabulary:** is another benefit of reading as it improves speaking skills and makes you a better speaker. Reading improves your vocabulary. When you read continuously, it creates room for continuous learning. Learning is a life-long process. In fact, reading is fun!

- **Creativity and skills:** reading can make one think creatively; the reader will have good creative thinking skills which will lead to better performance in his/her academics. In fact, it enhances the critical skills of concentration and focus. It also helps to widen the brain's creative side and filters innovative thinking process into one's brain.
- **Knowledge:** Knowledge itself is power! (Francis Bacon). The more you read, the more informed you become. The more knowledge you gain, the more powerful you become. This can be handy at any time because knowledge gained can never be lost.

National Level

- It enhances educational growth and development of the nation. (Ten (10) benefits of reading: <https://www.cc-pl.org>)
- **Mental stimulation** – your brain requires exercise to keep it strong and healthy, just like muscles in your body. Reading has been found to enhance connectivity in the brain function is a sole effect of aging, but regular reading may help slow the process of Alzheimer's disease and dementia (**a progressive disease that destroys memory and important mental functions**).
- **Stress Relief** – the distraction into the literacy world allows you to distance yourself from the stress of everyday life, putting your mind and body at ease
- **More sleep** - sometimes it is hard to fall asleep when your mind is racing and busy worrying about a variety of things. Reading, even if for ten minutes, can help push whatever was keeping you awake out of your mind.
- **Education:** - education is not cheap. Classes, seminars and educational software are just a few of the ways that you can pay to learn things. However, reading books from the library is free!

- **Better memory:** reading requires you to use your memory muscle, helping the muscle long term.
- **Increase empathy** – reading requires us to sympathize with character’s emotions. Being emotionally transported by a book has shown to cause boosts in empathy
- **Improves concentration-** when reading you are concentrating on one thing by doing so, you are training your body to avoid distractions. This ability can help when performing other tasks that require concentration
- **Entertainment** – reading is much cheaper than going to the movies or many other forms of entertainment. **In fact, reading is free at the library!** We are constantly adding new books, so you never have to worry about running out of ones that you haven’t read. Books can transport you to different worlds without paying airfare.
- **Vocabulary expansion-** the more you read, the more word you are exposed to. Reading is contagious- exposing friends to your reading habits can be a great way to help encourage them to pick up a book. If you have children in elementary school, consider reading loud to them even if they can read on their own.

Conclusion

People read for many reasons apart from education. Other reasons why people read includes self – improvement, pleasure, and for relaxation (Aina et al. 2011). A reading nation in all ramifications is stable in their developmental strives. Therefore, reading is an art not to be taken for granted rather reading should be a day-to-day activity.

Reading culture remains the way through which people both old and young can achieve success through reading, which implies reading regularly for achievable goals. It is important to

put this culture of reading up through the library collections, readership promotion campaigns, reading clubs and World Book Day activities.

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