

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Study

Reading is perceived as an indispensable tool for academic success and also forms an integral part of any learning situation, and is as well the bedrock of education. Therefore, Access to information is crucial to individual advancement as well as corporate educational development. Information is indispensable, and, according to Yusuf (2007), bridges the gap between knowledge and ignorance. One of the major sources of acquiring information is reading. Reading is the base by which other academic skills are built. It offers a productive avenue to improving vocabulary, word power, and language skills. Tella and Akande (2007) assert that the ability to read is at the heart of self-education and lifelong learning and that it is an art capable of transforming life and society. Yani (2003) posited that reading habits of Nigerians are what has become a matter of concern in our educational and national development. He stated further that in a developing country like Nigeria, the concept of reading habits should not be relegated to the background. This is because through reading, human beings get better informed and understanding of the universe they live on. More so, reading makes a way for better understanding of one's own experience and can be an exciting voyage of self discovery. A child that forms the habit of reading is always performs better than his colleagues at school because he becomes he gains more knowledge than them and understands better than his colleagues what they are being taught in class.

It is saddening to note nowadays that in Nigeria reading culture is deficient. This is because the general orientation has placed priority on other less important things. For instance, majority of the youth believe that reading does not bring quick money. People believe that education and reading is a long term project which does not yield immediate dividend but, if at all, future money. Youths find it difficult to wait for a long term to make fortune; and because they want immediate money through Machiavellian means they venture into politics, business, internet fraud that brings money quickly. As a result of these, reading culture does not mean anything to many students nowadays anymore. An examination of reading shows its significance. Reading involves series of systems like eye to eye movement, tracing, moving along with hands while reading. A poor reading habit therefore does not only affect proficiency in the English language and other subjects, it possibly affects the coordination of some body parts.

There is a general feeling that many Nigerian students do not like reading. Many teachers often complain about the poor reading habit among their students which can have implication on the personal and intellectual development. Edomwandagbon (2005) held tenaciously to the view that if students who were preparing for both internal and external examination avail themselves of facilities in the various Libraries, read their notes and text books diligently, the incidence of cheating, impersonation and examination malpractice and cultism will be greatly reduced. In 2001, according to Omo-Ojugo (2005), the World Bank in conjunction with the Nigerian Institute for Social and Economic Research, Ibadan produced a grim report on the Nigerian graduate which has confirmed the fears of educators, parents, employers and the general public about the degeneration of the country's education. The report revealed that the average graduate who leaves a university or polytechnic with a degree or certificate is not worth the qualification, which he is supposed to have. The report concluded by saying that the average Nigerian graduate lacks technical skill, has a poor command of English, is poorly trained and largely unemployable. Harold (2001) opined that lack

of vibrant reading culture among Nigerians has been many a publisher's nightmare for a long time in the country. Poverty, illiteracy and high cost of books were fingered as being responsible for this. Obafemi (2006) opined that the poor reading culture among Nigerians was due to economy that was prostrate; reading was expensive and had become a leisure most people could ill afford. Also, the in-thing according to him was that people prefer to stay in their homes and watch home videos rather than pursuing education.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

The general feeling that poor reading habit among Nigerian students is getting out of control is very terrifying and infuriating. The high failure rate in examinations, the increase in student dropout rate, the production of half-baked graduates, etc, are all affecting the country socially, economically and politically. The Government effort in fighting illiteracy is being thwarted by the students who do not read neither their prescribed textbooks nor for pleasure. The much needed manpower which the tertiary institutions are supposed to produce fall beyond required standard because of the students' nonchalant attitude towards their studies with regard to reading. Many students, who would have contributed immensely if properly trained, drop out because of poor performance due to inadequate preparation for their examinations. This study is therefore dedicated to the clarification of the status of the reading culture among secondary school students in Nigeria and those factors militating against viable reading culture in the secondary schools.

1.3 Research Questions

The following are some of the questions which this study intends to answer:

- i) what are the factors affecting reading culture in secondary schools in Nigeria?
- ii) what is the general reading habit of secondary school students?
- iii) what are the effects of reading culture on academic performance among secondary school students in Nigeria?

1.4 Objectives of the Study

The main objective of this study is to give assessment of reading culture of secondary school. The specific objectives are:

- i) to inquire the factors affecting reading culture in secondary schools in Nigeria
- ii) to determine the general reading habit of secondary school students
- iii) to survey the effects of reading culture on academic performance among secondary school students in Nigeria

1.5 Research Hypothesis

The research hypotheses to be tested include:

- i) There will be no significant difference on the reading culture of students based on gender.
- ii) There will be no significant relationship between gender and reading culture of students
- iii) There will be a significant correlation between reading culture and academic performance of students

1.6 Significance of the Study

This study was designed to investigate whether students reading culture can affect their academic achievement in school. It was also intended to find out why students cannot develop positive reading culture.

1.7 Scope of the Study

This study will be limited to the assessment of students reading culture in the secondary schools. It

will therefore be restricted five junior secondary schools in Kajola Local Government Area of Oyo State. This will enable the researcher to thoroughly investigate the varieties in reading culture among students and this will lead to development of good reading habits among them.

1.8 Limitation of the study

The researcher was only faced with the problem of reading the questions to some students as not all of them were able to read and write very well.

1.9 Definitions of Terms

The following terms were used in the course of this study:

Assessment: the evaluation or estimation of the nature, quality, or ability of someone or something

Reading culture: refers to habitual and regular *reading* of books and information materials.

ASSESSMENT OF READING CULTURE OF SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN NIGERIA

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