

# PROMOTING READING CULTURE IN NIGERIAN CHILDREN

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## **Abstract**

*The study was to determine the promotion of reading culture among Nigerian children with special emphasis on primary schools in all the five (5) Federal parastatals in Minna metropolis. The study was to determine why, where, problems and strategies for promoting reading culture of primary school children. Survey research method was used with target population of 3,295 children, five headmasters/mistress, 164 teachers and three teacher-librarians making a total of 3,463 population. A sample size of 340 was randomly selected. Questionnaire was used and personally administered by the researchers. Response showed that 172(51%) copies were retrieved. Research findings showed that school children read so as to pass examination and to do assignment and that they read in classrooms and parlour of their respective houses. Major problems affecting formation of reading culture include, lack of library period in the school timetable and lack of library in homes. Teachers were of the view that regular assignment and book loan would promote reading culture. The study recommends that primary school children be given orientation on the role of reading in the overall development of mankind. Standard school libraries with well stocked reading materials should be provided in all primary schools within the metropolis. Parents should also be encouraged to establish a well stocked library in their homes to complement school libraries.*

*Keywords Reading culture promotion, Nigerian children*

## **Introduction**

Agwu & Kalu (2011) define reading as the “art of decoding written or printed text or seeking knowledge, information or entertainment through the written or printed word”. Reading, from this point of view is therefore a critical phenomenon which connects the eye and the mind to fine-tune the meaning of words and letters either in printed or non-print forms with a view of digesting and putting into practice what is read or understood.

Reading culture which is a habit formed as a result of constant reading is, in the context of this paper, the use of reading as a hobby or activity. Agwu and Kalu (2011) perceived reading culture or reading habit as one aspect of the wider culture by reading for pleasure becomes a natural part of daily experience. Reading culture or reading habits especially

on the part of children at primary and secondary school levels constitute important aspects and basis of qualitative education. In fact, it could be argued that, at these levels of education, acquisition of knowledge is at zero level if a child cannot read and interpret words, symbols. Above all, reading enables children to communicate effectively.

Various efforts have been made especially at schools level to ensure that children could read and imbibe reading culture through formal classroom teaching and provision of library services. It is observed that reading and reading culture is low among Nigerian Populace thus Bello (2008) asserted that out of 120,000, 000 people in Nigeria only 30percent can read and write in English showing the high problem of illiteracy in some of the Nigerian society. Poor or no existence of library facilities in schools and inadequate reading materials, for school pupils have also been noted. Ugboma (2009) reported the low state of book collections in public branch libraries in Anambra State. The children's books collection in the six public branch libraries totalled 11,321 volumes which is considered inadequate.

This paper critically examine (through empirical investigation) reasons, places, strategies and obstacles to reading culture in Nigeria using Federal Government parastatals Staff schools as a case study.

### **Statement of the Problem**

The importance of reading in national development cannot be under-estimated as it enhances communication. It has been discovered that reading culture is low among children as Bello (2008) posits that only 30percent of Nigerian populace are literate, Otti (2011) and Taiwo-Oguntuase (2011) observed mass failures in NECO, SSCE and JAMB examination, Ugboma (2009) reported children's collection in public branch libraries in Delta State as low in quantity. The study therefore investigate reasons and causes of poor reading culture and identify factors that can promote the reading culture of Nigerian children particularly in the federal parastatal schools in Minna metropolis.

### **Objectives of the Study**

The specific objectives of the study are to:

1. determine the reasons for reading among children;
2. investigate places for reading by Nigerian children;
3. find out the problems affecting reading among Nigerian children;
4. determine the strategies to imbibe reading culture among Nigerian children.

### **Research Questions**

The study was designed to provide answers to the following questions

1. Why do Nigerian children read?
2. Where do Nigerian children read?
3. What problems affect reading culture of Nigerian children?
4. What strategies can be adopted to promote reading culture among Nigerian children?

### Review of Related Literatures

Ugbomma (2009) reported the total book collections in the six public branch libraries in Delta State as 11,321 volumes. These volumes of books were received from the Book Aid International sharing programme. Aje and Fadeyi (2012) reported through data analysis that majority of teachers use library to prepare lesson notes. Respondents were of the view that failure in library development could be attributed to lack of fund. The study also revealed that giving assignments to students could be an important method that will encourage student to read. Olajide and Ariwodola (2009) reported that materials in the school library were not adequate. Non-inclusion of library hour in the school timetable was also reported as well as lack of standard school libraries. The study suggested that a standard library be constructed and equipped with relevant materials.

Aniebo, (2007) examined the problems associated with the application of standards for school libraries in Imo State. The study discovered that the school libraries are yet to meet full standards more especially in terms of book collection. The findings showed that highest volume of library collection is about 1,000. It was discovered that school libraries provide library lessons.

### Methodology

Target population of the study comprises Primary 1 to 6 children, teachers, headmasters/mistresses and teacher- librarians in all the federal parastatal staff schools in Minna. The staff primary schools are as follows:

### Population of the Study

	Federal Staff Primary Schools in Minna metropolis	Population of the study				Total
		Children's population	Headmasters / headmistress	Teachers	Teacher-librarians	
1.	FUT Minna	686	1	35	1	723
2.	RBDA Tudun Fulani Minna	1,313	1	27	-	1,341
3.	Federal Secretariat Minna	291	1	29	-	321
4.	NECO Minna	503	1	46	1	551
5.	FGC Minna	500	1	27	1	529
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>3,295</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>164</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3,465</b>

- FUT = Federal University of Technology
- RBDA = River Basin Development Authority
- NECO = National Examinations Council
- FGC = Federal Government College

Out of 3,465 population, 340 sample size was randomly selected. Thus, Krejcie and Morgan (1970) asserted that in a population of 3,500, a sample size of 340 can be used for the study. Questionnaire was the only data collection instrument used.

#### **Analysis and Interpretation of Results**

Out of 340 copies of the questionnaire administered, 172 copies were retrieved, representing 53percent. Four research questions guided the interpretation of results, Research questions 1,2, and 3 were for children while the 4th research question was for primary school staff. Data were analyzed by the means of descriptive statistics (frequency counts and percentages).

#### **Research Question 1: Why do Nigerian children read?**

Children were ask to indicate reasons for reading

**Table 1: Reasons for reading**

Reasons	Frequency	Percentage (%)
To pass examination	97	42
To do assignment	68	29
For relaxation/pleasure	11	5
Increase new knowledge	21	9
To speak well	14	7
Know about new happenings	20	8

The data revealed that 97(42%) children indicated that they read to pass examination, while 68(29%) respondents indicated their reason for reading as to do assignment. The lowest response was obtained in the area of reading for relaxation with 11(5%) respondents. This shows that few children consider reading as a means of relaxation.

#### **Research Question 2: Where do Nigerian children for reading?**

**Table 2: Places for reading**

Places for reading	Frequency	Percentage (%)
School library	63	24
Public library	31	12
Library in my house	10	4
Parlour in my house	76	29
Classroom	80	31

From table 2 it is shown that 80(31%) children use classroom as a place for reading. This can be attributed to lack of standard or absence of school library. There are also 76(29%) respondents that use "parlour in the house" as their reading place indicating absence of standard library in the school as well as library in the house: hence few respondents indicated to read in their house.

**Research Question 3: What problems prevent Nigerian children from reading?**

**Table 3: Problems affecting formation of reading culture in children.**

Problems	Frequency	Percentage (%)
No library in house	101	24
No library in school	51	11
No library period in school timetable	103	22
No story books	51	11
No new books in the school library	69	15
Teachers give simple assignment	15	3
Don't understand what I read	16	4
Teachers do not give assignment always.	12	2
School children are not allowed to use library	45	11

It seems that lack of library period in the timetable negatively affects reading culture as 103(22%) children attested to this problem. This can be attributed to the response on table 2 where majority of children use classroom as place for reading. Next to this was the absence of library in children's houses. Children will not imbibe the culture of reading if their houses have no library. However, 12(2%) children claimed that teachers do not give them assignment that will make them read always.

**Research Question 4: What strategies would enhance reading culture in Nigerian children?**

**Table 3: Strategies to enhance reading culture in children**

Strategies	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Standard school library	52	19
Library hours in the curriculum	21	7
Well equipped children section in public library.	14	5
Formation of reading Association	15	6
Reading competition	20	7.04
Book loan to children	51	17
Regular homework/assignment	52	19
Casting of news by children	11	4
Excursion to book fairs/exhibitions	10	3
Story telling	38	13

Headmasters, teacher-librarians and other teachers were of the view that standard school library and regular homework/assignment for children would go a long way in promoting reading habits in children. However, 51(17%) respondents suggested book loan to children. The least response was on the area of excursion to book fair/exhibition.

### **Discussion of Results**

It is clear from table 1 that majority of respondents (School children) advanced their reasons for reading to pass examination and to do assignment.

Most primary school children read in classroom and parlour of their respective houses as this can be attributed to lack of adequate and current materials in school libraries. This finding agrees with Ugboma (2009) who discovered 11, 321 volumes of children collection in the six public branch libraries in Delta State.

Table 3, respondents indicated that lack of library period in timetable and lack of library in the house retard the formation of reading habits, this agrees with Olajide & Ariwodola (2009) who discovered non-inclusion of library hour in the school timetable and lack of standard library as inhibitor to good reading culture.

Headmasters, teachers and teachers-librarians suggested standard school library, regular assignment and book loan to children as major strategies that would enhance reading culture among school children. This finding agrees with Aje & Fadeyi (2012) research finding that giving assignment to students be the a major factor that will encourage students to develop reading habits.

### **Summary of Research Findings**

1. School children read so as to pass examination and do assignment.
2. School children do read in classroom and in the parlour of their respective homes.
3. Problems affecting the formation of reading habits include: lack of library period in the school timetable and lack of library in the homes.
4. Primary school staff suggested standard school library, regular assignment and book loan to children to enhance the formation of reading habits among children.

### **Conclusion**

Based on the research findings, the conclusion is that:

1. Reading culture has not been fully imbibed among Nigerian of children in Federal Staff primary schools as their reading is still geared towards passing examination and completing class assignment.
2. There are neither standard school libraries nor well-equipped home libraries as children use classroom and parlour of their respective homes for reading.

3. There is no strict policy statement on the library period in the curriculum of primary schools.
4. Stakeholders' perception was that regular class assignment would encourage school library to give out book loan to children in school where there is standard library.

### Recommendations

Based on the findings, the study recommends that:

1. School children should be given orientation on the role of reading in the overall development of mankind.
2. Standard school libraries should be built in all primary schools while parents should also establish well-stocked libraries in their homes.
3. There should be strict policy statement on the use of library period in all primary schools.
4. Well-equipped school libraries should be established to provide all forms of library services to children.

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