

## **Revitalizing Reading as a Tool for Promoting Mathematics and English Language Learning**

**Dr. M. A. YUSHA'U**

Department of Science and Vocational Education,  
Faculty of Education and Extension Services,  
Usmanu Danfodiyo University, Sokoto  
E-Mail: [muhammadawwalyushau@yahoo.com](mailto:muhammadawwalyushau@yahoo.com)

**Dr. M. IBRAHIM**

Department of Curriculum Studies and Educational Technology,  
Faculty of Education and Extension Services,  
Usmanu Danfodiyo University, Sokoto  
E-Mail: [jbrowsi@yahoo.com](mailto:jbrowsi@yahoo.com)

**DIKKO, A. U.**

Usmanu Danfodiyo University Primary School, Sokoto  
E-Mail: [dinulhaqq34@gmail.com](mailto:dinulhaqq34@gmail.com) or [dikko4nig@yahoo.ca](mailto:dikko4nig@yahoo.ca)

---

### **Abstract**

*The current economic crises the national is passing through required not only diversification of the economy; but also revitalization of all aspect of national life. Reading is an indisputable success factor in the learning of both Mathematics and English language respectively. Therefore, this paper major thrust is the revitalization of reading in order to promote the learning of English language and Mathematics in our schools. The paper identified strategies to revitalizing reading such as creating a child friendly environment, provision of appropriate reading materials in the schools, regular training of teachers on reading instruction among others.*

---

### **Introduction**

Nigeria, a giant state of Africa is currently going through a myriad of economic crises. This could be summed up to mean, Nigeria is facing rising inflation, high interest rates, unemployment, weak infrastructure, oil price shock, and a stagnant economy. The government has geared its efforts towards the diversification of the nation's economy. This necessitates the need to revitalize every aspect of the nation's life. This becomes necessary in order to arrest the situation and bring the economy out of recession. Education as identified by the nation's policy on education remains an instrument for national development and social change (National Policy on Education, 2013). Education is the most vital tool for

development of every nation, whether developed or developing. In order to get Nigeria out its current economic crises, efforts need to be geared towards not only diversification of the economy but also towards realizing the nation's goals of education, which are:

The inculcation of national consciousness and national unity;

The inculcation of the right type of values and attitudes of the individual and the Nigerian society.

The training of the mind in the understanding of the world around, and

The acquisition of appropriate skills and social abilities and competence as equipment for the individual to live and contribute to the development of the society (NPE, 2013).

A situation where most people fail to imbibe the habit of reading either due to inability to read or unwillingness to devote time to reading poses a great problem for the future of the individual in particular and the society at large. Oribabor (2014) affirmed that a society that does not have reading culture is not a developing society. Such society will remain stagnant not developing in the field of technological know – how. Osundare in Igwe, (2011) emphatically summed it up that a country's level of development is a function of its level of mental and cultural evolution as well as the state of its educational advancement, which is embedded on building a high level of literacy in all facets of the population. This paper will explore the following, which includes reading culture in Nigeria, Reading, Mathematics and English language, as well as strategies for the improvement and development of reading towards promoting Mathematics and English language learning.

## **Reading**

According to the Encyclopedia Britannica; Reading is a complex cognitive process of decoding symbols in order to construct or derive meaning. Reading, as seen by Ogbonna (2014) refers to the ability to recognize and understand characters or speak words that may be printed or written on paper and other formats of recording human knowledge. It is the capacity to derive meaning from words. Reading is essential to full participation in modern society. It adds quality to life, provides access to culture and cultural heritage, empowers and emancipates citizen as well as brings people together (Igwe, 2011). Reading is an essential life skill. Douglas (2000) asserted that success in school and contribution to the general society depends much on ones competence in reading. To keep oneself abreast in our fast changing and competitive world, one must read vastly. Students, employers, employees and even retirees must read to remain up to date and relevant in our ever and fast changing world. The ability to read well is

absolutely critical to success in life. According to Tracy (2008), reading is the only form of entertainment that is also an essential life skill. Reading is a skill that must be nurtured from a child's earliest years.

Reading is a vital element in all facet of human life. All major world religions hold reading in a high esteem. Islam particularly made seeking of knowledge mandatory for every Muslim irrespective of sex, gender, age and time. The holy Qur'an while narrating the incident that occurred at the point of creation of man, where angels seemed puzzled on the status given to man emphasize the high place of knowledge (i.e. literacy, reading). "*And He taught Adam the names of all things; then He placed them before the angels, and said: 'Tell Me the names of these if ye are right'.*" (Q. 2: 31). Allah granted Adam knowledge (ability to read) of the names of things and thereafter asked the Angels to mention the names of those things. Furthermore, the first communication between Allah and his Last Prophet Muhammad (Peace be unto him) was instruction to read. "*Read! In the name of thy Lord and Cherisher, Who created*" (Q. 96: 1). Many verses of the holy Qur'an continually obliged man to ponder, think, reflect, traverse the earth, navigate through the sea, and shuttle into the sky to explore the vast wonders of the universe (Q. 88: 17-19). Similarly, on the suggestion of one of the great pioneer and first Caliph of Islam – Sayyidina Abubakr As-Siddiq; the Prophet (Peace be unto him) had chosen the teaching of the ability to read and write as ransom for some prisoners of war.

### **Reading culture in Nigeria**

Reading culture refers to the process of building up positive reading attitude among students and children over a period of time. Reading culture in essence therefore is the kind of culture that imbibes reading and studying as the basis of growth and development. It is the type that sees continuous and dedicated reading of information resources by pupils, children, students and adults for knowledge acquisition, which will be applied practically for development. Reading sharpens the mind, broaden ones understanding and outlook towards people and life itself. It provides a safe ground for life experiences thereby saving one the trouble of having to pass through the same situation. Readers are said to be leaders. This is statement is not unconnected to fact that readers develop a better mind, broad understanding and better outlook towards life.

Nigerian students have been noted for their poor reading habit. According to Igwe (2011) this is attributed to so many multi-facet factors which include, change in value system, economic hardship, high cost of books, and high cost of publishing, television, internet and lately social networks. Of these entire causes, social network appeared to be the most devastating. It has taken much of concentration

---

of students to their studies. Bello (2011) also confirmed that the habit of reading books is continually degrading due to the vast impact of the internet. People spend a lot more time chatting than reading. Fosudo (2010) asserted that much of self-esteem problems in later life could be traced to poor reading skills. It also can make a child develop a poor attitude toward school generally. Poverty, corruption, noise culture, lack of reading language, undue importance attached to wealth and dearth of library have been identified as some of the factors that led to poor reading culture of most Nigerians (Aina, Ogungbeni, Adigun, & Ogundipe, 2011).

### **Reading, Mathematics and English Language Learning**

Reading, apart from being one of the four language skills, of which mastery becomes imperative if competence is to be attained in the target language. Reading is no doubt a means to attaining the desired proficiency in the use of English language in Nigeria. It enhances children and students' good spoken English. Reading, increases knowledge, provides real life language experiences for English language learners. It also educates and entertains. Reading creates a give a second language learners a close to native speakers' experiences of the target language.

Reading is essential in Mathematics learning as it is to English language learning. The more students read and practice mathematical concepts, the better they grasp the ideas. Reading in mathematics entails effort to decode abstract ideas and concepts about numbers, abstract concepts and shapes to decipher meaning. Thus, the poorer the reading habit of a child or student, the worse his/her performance in mathematics learning. Students with good reading habit usually outperformed those with poor reading culture as suggested by growing body of evidences linking good reading habit with overall development of individual as a person and the society at large. Reading is therefore, an essential tool for promoting mathematics and English language learning among children and students.

### **Strategies for Revitalization of Reading**

It is pertinent at this point to suggest strategies that can be adopted in revitalizing reading as a tool for promoting mathematics and English language learning. Cultivating a good reading culture will no doubt assist in finding solutions to Nigeria's economic crises. These strategies are:

Phonics involves teaching and reading by associating character or groups of characters with sounds.

Associating reading with pleasure is a viable tool in promoting reading among children. Children love fun, even adults love fun. When reading becomes a thing of

pleasure, it motivates children and students to read independently. A conducive environment for reading which is devoid of noise and distraction will help in building good reading habit. Reading together in the classroom, and at home also promotes reading culture among children and students alike.

**Professional Development of Teachers:** Teacher quality and teaching quality are two sides of the same coin. Sustainable professional learning is essential for teachers to teach reading effectively. Any effort towards revitalization of reading that fails to take into account the professional development of teachers will no doubt yield little or no result. Professional learning throughout a teacher's career has been identified as a vital element to building capacity in literacy teaching (Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005). Teachers teaching reading must know their students, understand their diverse backgrounds and learning needs. The knowledge of how students best learn to read, how to assess reading ability and growth, how to use assessment information to apply appropriate intervention strategies determines to a large extent the success of teaching reading. There are many opportunities for teachers' professional development such as quality induction programmes, collaborative teaching in schools, mentoring, work in professional learning teams and professional learning.

Parental involvement will no doubt enhance the school effort to build in children and students good reading habit from the onset. Parents should take an active role in discussing, monitoring and supporting their children learning. The benefits of parents' active participation have been enumerated to include; children demonstrating more positive attitudes and behaviours, attending schools more regularly, achieving better examination results and an increasing likelihood of continuing their education. Through this involvement parents gain more confidence in the school and the teachers; which in turn greatly enhance the children's educational opportunities. Masters (2005) highlighted high levels of parent and community involvement as one the six characteristics of highly effective schools.

## **Conclusion**

Literacy is a basic tool for national development. National Policy on Education categorically adopts education (i.e. literacy, reading) as an instrument for national development and social change. In spite of this lofty policy statement, Nigeria cannot be regarded as reading nation. The end products released into the labour market by our educational institutions gives credence to this fact. A reading nation is an informed nation. Put information into print and it becomes hidden from most Nigerians. In order to salvage the nation from its current economic woes, it is

pertinent to cultivate good reading culture and promote reading among children and students.

### **Recommendations**

In order to promote the learning of both mathematics and English language, revitalization of reading becomes imperative. The paper recommends the following:

Quality teaching of reading must be ensured at all levels as effect of poor teaching on students' outcomes is debilitating and cumulative.

Early intervention measures should be taken for pupils identified with reading difficulties. This is necessary in order to salvage the situation before it put the children off reading.

Professional development of teachers should be an ongoing process. This is necessary to keep teachers abreast advancement in reading instruction.

Improve funding by government to provide adequate library facilities in schools and communities.

Adequate legislation that will enhance education, libraries and publishing companies in the country.

### **References**

- Aina, A. J.; Ogungbeni, J. I.; Adigun, J. A. & Ogundipe, T. C. (2011). Poor Reading Habits Among Nigerians: The Role of Libraries. *Library Philosophy and Practice*, ISSN 1522-0222
- Bello, A. S. (2011). Reading Culture and Readership Promotion Among Youths in Present Day Nigeria. *Journal of Communication and Culture: International Perspective*, **2** (3).
- Fosudo, S. (2010). "Reading as path to success" A Lecture delivered at the College Library Day, Adeniran Ogunsanya College of Education, Otto/Ijanikin, Lagos on February 24th.
- Federal Republic of Nigeria (2013). National Policy on Education, (6th edition). Lagos: NERDC Press.
- Igwe, K. N. (2011). Reading Culture and Nigeria's Quest for Sustainable Development. *Library Philosophy and Practice*, ISSN 1522-0222

Masters, G. N. (2005). *Beyond Political Rhetoric: The research on what makes a school good*. Online opinion – Australia's e-journal of political debate, available at <http://www.onlineopinion.com.au/print.asp?article=2100>.

Oribabor, O. A. (2014). A Critical Appraisal of the Impact of Reading Culture on Secondary School Students' Learning of Oral English in Ilesa West Local Government Area of Osun State. *Journal of Educational and Social Research MCSER Publishing. Rome ISSN 2240- 0524*, 4 (6).