

DEVELOPING THE READING CULTURE AS A MEANS OF HUMAN CAPITAL AND GLOBAL DEVELOPMENT

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A complex cognitive process of decoding symbols in order to construct or decode meaning

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Importance of Reading to Human Capital and Global Development

Reading culture is one of the valuable assets that we consider in boosting human generative powers of thinking for new innovations and development of personal talents and natural endowments. Vygotsky (1993 quoted by Ruterana 2012:18-19) defines culture as *the product of man's social life and his public activity*. Ruterana (2012:19) sees culture as *consisting of people's ways of being in the world, behaving, and acting, based on what they have observed in the society. It refers to the attitudes, manners or habits shared by a given group of people in order to achieve common goals*.

Behrman (2004, Magara and Batambuze (2005 quoted by Ruterana 2012:18) defines a culture of reading as *an integrated pattern of reading behaviours, practices, beliefs, perceptions and knowledge*. Also in their study on ways of creating a reading culture, they refer to a reading culture to mean *a culture where reading is part of the people's living and constitutes a habit that is shared by members of the society*. For this matter, a reading culture refers to the response that people accord to reading and writing in their everyday life. A reading culture development depends upon the response of people to their daily needs and purposes to boost their potentials in all the facets of life. We recognize this human potential as human capital that we shall examine briefly.

Theodore Hershberg (1996:1) sees human capital as *a concept or the education, skill levels, and problem-solving abilities that will enable an individual to be a productive worker in the global economy of the twenty-first century*. On the other hand, we see human capital as a generative capability of assets of knowledge through the continuous quest for understanding.

Enyekit et al (2011:64) see human capital as *a human capability and productivity engendered through knowledge and skills acquired from vocational and technical education, training and experience and facilitated by an environment*. According to them, the elements of human capital would include knowledge, skills, attitudes and motivation belonging to an enterprise or society and engaged in the development of that enterprise or society to fulfill its objectives. This is an important factor of the production that brings human intellect, skills and competencies in the production and provision of goods and services.

Human capital development is something that must exist or happen for National development to take place. In addition, human capital development teaches people how to utilize the power of diverse thinking styles (analytical and intuitive capabilities) so that they can achieve holistic best solutions.

Human capital development presupposes investments, activities and processes that produce vocational and technical education knowledge, skills, health or values that are embodied in people. It implies building an appropriate balance and critical mass of human resource base and providing an enabling environment for all individuals to be fully engaged and contribute to goals of an organization or a nation. Any effort to increase human knowledge, enhance skills, productivity and stimulate resourcefulness of individuals is an effort of human capital development (Erhurua, 2007 quoted by Enyekit et al 2011:64).

Before we examine some importance of reading, it will be of a necessity to examine briefly what development is. Lorenzo (2011:2) defines development as *an event constituting a new stage in a changing situation or the process of change per se*. In general, he sees *development as what is implicitly intended as something positive or desirable*.

According to Igwe (2011:3), development means *the improvement of people's lifestyle through improved, qualitative and functional education; incomes, skills development and fulfilled employment. Development also means that people should be able to read and write*. In Africa, there is a problem of illiteracy including Nigeria. The need for great investment in education is an important venture. It should be noted that an educated labour force is a source of productivity for national development. We need this kind of development in order to meet the needs of the present and future generations of young Nigerians without compromising their natural abilities.

Global development is often used in a holistic and multidisciplinary context of human development as *the development of greater quality of life for humans*. It encloses the areas of foreign aid, governance, healthcare, education, poverty reduction, gender equality, disaster preparedness, infrastructure, economics, human rights, environment, etc. To have a well-defined global development, there must be a well-structured human capital as an asset for enhancement of human capacity building techniques.

Reading culture in African nations is viewed by many scholars as one way of *boosting students' academic excellence and lifelong learning* (Rosenberg, 2003; Magara & Batambuze, 2005; Parry, 2005; Kachala, 2007; Kelechi, 2010; Commeyras & Mazile, quoted by Ruterana 2011:19-21). Reading culture is important in the sense that the future of all Nigerian citizens requires self-education and lifelong learning. We can also note that the sought for academic excellence cannot be achieved and sustained if there is no culture to keep on reading for continuous self-improvement.

Reading gives us access to full participation in various activities in our modern society. It adds quality to our lives through the access to culture and cultural heritage which thereby empowers and emancipates us as citizen as well as brings people together as a nation. Reading is seen as *one of the fundamental building blocks of learning* Sisulu (2004 quoted by Igwe 2011:1). Igwe stated further that *becoming a skilled and adaptable reader enhances the chances of success at school and beyond. Reading is not just for school, it is for life*. This is so because the quality of age long or lifelong discoveries of new things through the boost of intuitive knowledge and its adaptability on various issues of life is enshrined in the reading culture

Reading in all its variety is vital to being better informed. It helps us to have a better understanding of ourselves as well as others. It makes man to be a thoughtful and constructive contributor to a democratic and cohesive society. Leading world nations in Europe and America pride themselves on their promotion of reading and literacy society. They see a high level of literacy as a major source of their competitiveness and social maturity. The absence of a widespread culture of reading in the case of Nigeria acts as an effective barrier to our development and international competitiveness. The economic, social and political health of our nation today depends on building literate citizens that are able to read widely and apply it practically for development.

In addition, the development of Nigeria is based on the quality of its human resources. Osundare (2009 quoted by Igwe 2011:3.), states that *Education is to society what the eye is to the body as well as what the rain is to the land in a fit of drought. It is the supreme light-giver, the breezy down after a night of suffocating darkness. It is what clears a path through the jungle, the compass that takes us ashore from the rough and clueless waters*". The reading culture then serves as a gateway to education which we regard as surest solution to ignorance; this will often

go beyond classroom level. In general terms, we can also see reading as the main author of the spectacular difference through overall literacy between the advanced, developed parts of the world and their backward, underdeveloped counterparts like Nigeria and most of the African countries.

Therefore, our country needs to make the present generation more aware of the benefits and importance of reading and ensuring that they have the literacy skills required in the modern society.

Preference for Highly Skilled and Learned People in Multinationals

According to Christos and Sugden (2000:72), *Multinational corporations (MNC) or multinational enterprises (MNE) are organizations that own or control production or services facilities in one or more countries other than the home country.* When a corporation registers in more than one country or has operations in more than one country, it can then be called a multinational corporation. For example, the petrochemical corporations in Nigeria like SHELL, CHEVRON, AGIPP, ELF, etc.

From the points earlier raised, it will be observed that no one does anything better as being talented in a domain of specialization combined with higher levels of literacy through reading. Most of the government establishments look forward to employing the professional talents. Various multinational companies in the Modern Nigeria open their gates for people with higher levels of competence and proficiencies who will as well be competitive as in other international organizations outside Nigeria. These sets of people are expected to be value-adding and constructive in their thoughts and be active in contributing to various issues of live and in bureaucratic settings.

The quest for professionals has become evident in the appointment of personnel in the multinational establishments nowadays in Nigeria. Only competent heads who have cultivated a good personal reading habit can attract the job offers. Most international based establishments focus purely on research and discovery of new techniques which help update the competence of other mainstream establishments who are directly responsible for the execution of such projects or such production on a large scale. Note for example *International Institute of Tropical*

Agriculture (IITA), *Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council* (NERDC), *National Engineering Research and Development* (NERD) etc.

Finally, the aspect of human resources management is a prime issue that the employer of labour considers most. The academic trainings received by newly employed through their reading culture imbibed education will facilitate their quick mastery of terms and technical language which may serve as their tools of operation in their various job positions. This will prevent abnormal finances of in-service training programmes which command huge expenses.

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