Chapter - 1

Introduction
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1.1 Concept

In the knowledge society of today, information has assumed the role of the most basic, most important and most valuable commodity. Information forms the very bedrock of our day-to-day life. Every member of the society, from the tiny toddler, to the main in dotage, has necessarily to have information. Reading, which is a long-term habit starting with the very early ages, is the prominent gateway to the knowledge room. It can be assumed as a practice that assists individuals to gain creativeness and develops their critical thinking capacities. In this sense, reading habit is an important tool for the development of personalities and mental capacities of individuals. In addition to personal and mental developments, reading is an access to social, economic and civic life (Clark and Rumbold, 2006). Moreover, all reading patterns in terms of emotional response enhance emotional satisfaction of individuals (Sarland, 1991).

Reading has been the passion of the greatest personalities of all times. Humans have been reading since ages and thus words of knowledge have been passed on through generations. The reading habit influences in the promotion of one’s personal development in particular and social progress in general. Regular and systematic reading sharpens the intellect, refines the emotions, elevates tastes and provides perspectives for one’s living; and thereby prepares a person for an effective participation in the social, religious, cultural and political life. Reading fires the imagination of the person. It adds new sight to eyes and new wisdom to mind. Reading loads the mind with new software (Satija, 2002). Sir Richard Steele has logically quoted, “Reading is to the mind what exercise is to body”.
The definition of reading has undergone through many changes. In the past, reading simply meant to extract visual information from any given codes or systems. However, thereafter, reading became much more complex and involved the understanding of a whole text composed of written signs. Smith & Robinson defined reading as “an active attempt on the part of reader to understand a writer’s message” (Smith and Robinson, 1980). According to Toit “Reading is as a process of thinking, recalling and relating concepts under the functioning of written words” (Toit, 2001). Devarajan defined reading as the art of interpreting printed and written words (Devarajan, 1989). Irvin describes the reading process as “The interaction of what is in the head with what is on the page within a particular context that causes students to comprehend what they read”. Thus, reading is the ability to recognize, and examine words or sentences and understand the information within. It is a cognitive process of understanding a written linguistic message and to examine and grasp the meaning of written or printed characters, words or sentences (Irvin, 1998).

Habit is a psychological aspect and is developed during a course of time as a part of personality of an individual. Rehman in his report on “reading for pleasure” mentioned that lack of appreciation and understanding of good books and the failure to drive pleasure from a habit of reading underlines the problem of educational growth (Rehman, 1959).

William S. Gray indicates that reading influences the extent and accuracy of information as well as attitude, moral belief, judgment, and action of the reader (Gray, 1984). The reading habit has one of the most powerful lasting influences in promotion of ones personal development in particular and social in general. Harman emphasized that status, age, group, sex and information needs of the library users influence reading
habit (Harman, 1972). Bryan relates the reading habits in relation to the library and mentions that the librarian’s task is to provide the right book for the right reader at the right time. A librarian must know his books; he must know his readers and he must know that effect will be produced by bringing the two together (Bryan, 1939).

Learning is a continuous process which one starts consciously or unconsciously right from the day of birth. Learning not only means acquiring knowledge about various phenomena but also understanding them. Reading is one of the most effective processes of conscious learning and enhancing one’s knowledge. On the other hand, reading habit is “The art of personal investigation and self study.” It should be followed by self-thinking and analysis (Gurpreet Singh, 2009).

1.2 Some useful definitions

According to Encyclopedia Americana “Reading involves looking at graphic symbols and formulating mentally the sounds and ideas they present”.

According to Oxford English Dictionary “The action of perusing written or printed matter, the practice of occupying one self in this way”.

New Standard Encyclopaedia “Reading as the process of recognizing and understanding the meaning of written symbols”.

1.2.1 Definitions of Habit

1. According to Oxford English Dictionary “Habit means doing something having a habit or custom of so doing”.

2. According to New Standard Encyclopedia, “Habit is a learned action or other form of behavior that is repeated often enough for it to become a largely automatic response to a particular stimulus on situation.” Habits
can be acquired by conscious repetition and desire to achieve proficiency in an activity”.

Reading simply means attainment of language, sharing of information, communicating and comprehending it the right way. Reading is an individual activity and has to be done on his own for better comprehension. Literacy, in the true sense, is the ability to read and absorb what is read, which forms the backbone of learning, and learning is the way of life. Such is the importance of reading in one's life. With the invasion of technology in our lives, reading today is more of electronic display, such as computers, television, mobile phones or eReaders*

1.3 Purpose of reading
Broadly speaking, there are four purposes for reading.

• To understand or know or comprehend new concepts. The purpose in this sense is to internalize the information and understand the essence of what is read. To find out what a book is mostly about is the broad purpose.

• To assess or evaluate a subject. In this sense, it knows the pros and cons of a subject or concept to interpret or infer cause and effect of a phenomenon.

• To apply the gathered information or to find a specific topic in a book or article. A student reads a textbook to pass an examination, a lawyer reads to argue his case, and a teacher reads to prepare his lecture. It is to learn some subject matter that is required for a scholastic purpose.

• To recreation or for pleasure. This includes light reading such as fictions, magazine articles etc. To be aimless is the aim in this type of reading. Most of recreational readings are for personal amusement or

knowledge. There are no professional or educational reasons (Savanur, 2011).

1.4 Benefits of Reading

With the popularity of computers and video games in recent times, habit of reading has taken a backseat. Most parents and children are so occupied in watching movies, television and addicted to computer games that they find little or no time for reading. However those who have developed reading as a hobby is aware of the countless advantages associated with it. Reading broadens the thinking horizon of a person, improves vocabulary and cultivates sensitivity towards people of different cultures.

Benefits associated with reading.

1. **Exercise our mind**

   Reading bends loosens and supple the mind. It helps in keeping the muscles of the brain in good shape.

2. **Gives satisfaction**

   Reading gives immense satisfaction to a person. Nothing can be more satisfying than to sit with your child and read him a story book, or to see him grow with the fairy tales.

3. **Expands the imagination**

   Reading expands the imagination of a person. One becomes more confident, self assured of his ability to understand and appreciate the various aspects of life. The mind is channelized to think about the different aspects and then questions and derives conclusions about them.

4. **Enhances the ability to focus**

   The mind of a reader is more concentrated and focused about various aspects of life. When the mind is focused, it has the capability to be more attentive in practical situations of life. As a result the body and
mind of such people remain calm; they look at the problem objectively
and are better decision makers.

5. **Improves knowledge**

Reading improves a person’s knowledge about various fields of
life. This knowledge base helps a person to make correct decisions in
different situations of life.

6. **Helps to achieve goals in life**

People who develop reading habit since childhood are better able to
decide their goals in life. Reading also helps them in achieving these
goals because once a person gets in love with books, it is easier for him to
just switch over from general reading to their course books.

7. **Teaches the art of living**

Reading biographies of legendary individuals help the reader to
learn the art of living.

8. **Helps to accept other cultures and religions.**

Just having information about other cultures might create
misconceptions about their traditions and mythologies. A thorough
reading gives clarity about the fundamentals of other religions. This helps
the person to accept them in a better and overwhelming manner*.

1.5 **Reading Techniques**

There are some prominent reading techniques which have been
discussed below:

1. **SQ4R**

SQ4R is a popular technique of reading and studying. It is a
technique evolved and approved by educational psychologists. SQ4R is
an abbreviation that stands for Survey, Question, Read, Recite, Relate,

and Review. These can be considered as steps of reading or studying. Let us examine each of these components or steps.

a) Survey: Before we start reading, it is necessary to survey the book and the chapter or an article that is to be studied. In case of book, go through the blurb, contents page, introduction, appendix etc. At a chapter or an article level, a survey means a quick glance at a title, headings and subheadings.

b) Question: During the process of surveying, a few questions emerge in our mind. These questions are triggered by the genuine curiosity. A question may stem from the title or a heading or anything that is seen while surveying.

c) Read: Now start reading. While we are reading, find the answers to the questions raised in the previous step. Understanding the questions and trying to find answer helps us in reading actively. Reading without questions may become a passive exercise. Questions keep us oriented and attentive.

d) Recite: Silently summarize what we have read, in our own words. Reciting may be done after each paragraph or each section or chapter, depending on our requirement and the complexity of the text. Prepare notes in our own words. Focus on the answers as we read, recite and prepare notes. Underline or highlight important points. Identify the key issues.

e) Relate: Relate the new information gathered to what is already known to you. Draw parallel to something closer to our observation or experience. Try to remember by association.

f) Review: After reading, take an overview of the chapter or the article, as it was done while surveying. Test our own memory by reciting. In this process the newly read content is internalized, and it becomes part of our knowledge. We may need to review frequently.
Review should include other related material such as glossaries, self-tests etc. Frequent reviewing will substantially reduce the time we need to preparing for exams, and the process will be less stressful.

2. Skimming

Skimming is a process of visually searching the text too quickly to identify the main ideas. It is letting our eyes catch keywords. This can give us a rough idea of the meaning of the material. Although it is a natural way of searching information, some persons find it difficult. Usually this skill may not be acquired by practice; it is considered a gift. Skimming is mostly employed by adults and not much by kids.

Skimming should be used only for general purpose reading. It works well to find dates, names, and places. It might be used to review graphs, tables and charts. It is useful when we have a lot to read. It is used for light reading.

3. Scanning

Scanning is a technique to be employed when we are looking up for a specific word in a document. Scanning is a process of moving our eyes quickly down the text, searching specific words, phrases or ideas. In such cases, we know what we are searching for. Therefore, we are concentrating only on finding a particular bit of information. Scanning is the technique used while searching a telephone book or dictionary or an index.

4. Purposive Reading

Purposive reading is a combinational of the above stated methods. The stated categories are not mutually exclusive. There are times when we need a blend of SQ4R, skimming, and scanning. Here a part of the document needs quick scanning, then understand the various issues involved and study a section of it in depth. Here the reader chooses a
method depending on his purpose at that moment. It is a sort of critical reading.

1.6 Types of reading materials
There are different types of reading materials which are as follows:
1) Newspapers
2) Journals
3) Magazines
4) Books
5) Encyclopedias
6) Patents
7) Manuals
8) Reports
9) Conference Proceedings
10) Electronic Documents

1.7 Reading habit in Internet Era
From stone inscription to writing on papyrus, vellum and parchment, palm leaves, birch bark and metals like copper plates, to the printed form, information has gone through several avatars, the latest being the electronic form through Information and Communication Technology (ICT). ICT encompasses, computers, digital communication, internet, and all sorts of information- text, image, moving images, audio- available on the net and its electronic exploitation.

Every profession, every walk of life is influenced by ICT. Banking, insurance, travel, tourism, medicine, science and technology- well, every business is in one way or the other benefited by ICT. Every business is information business.

ICT, to a very great extent, has solved the difficulties faced by librarians in storage and processing of information. It helps them in speedily providing pinpointed reference and information services. If all those in the library profession have not only to survive, but also prosper in this market-friendly, competitive, commercial era, they have to familiarize with ICT applications (Savanur, 2011).
REFERENCES


