

A GUIDE

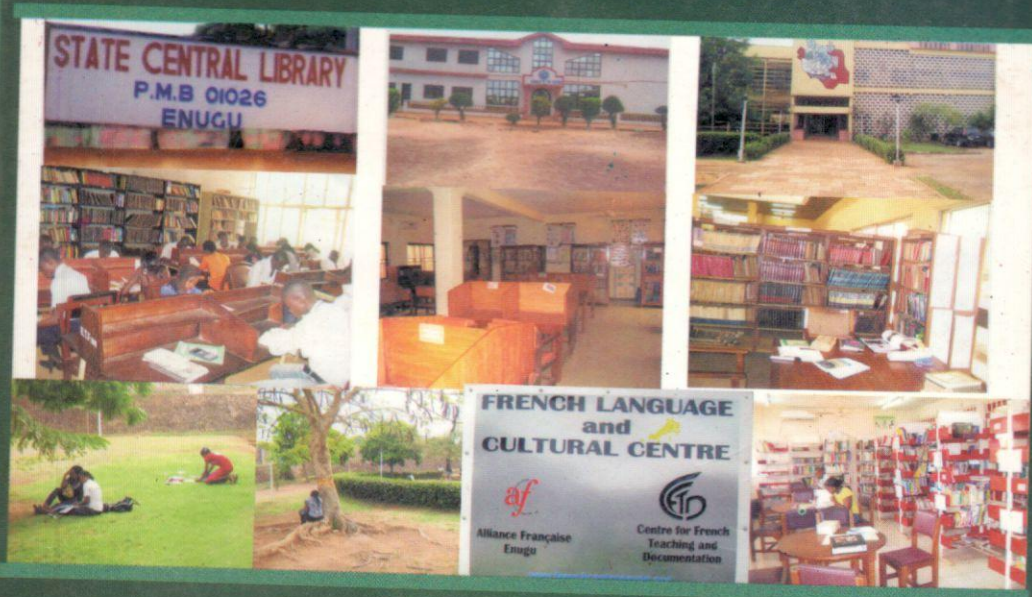
To The

STUDY OF COMEDY

Felly Ene

A GUIDE TO THE STUDY OF COMEDY
Felly Ene

A HANDBOOK ON THE REVIVAL OF READING CULTURE IN NIGERIA



PAT U. OKOYE & FELLY N. ENE

ABOUT THE AUTHORS



Pat U. Okoye B.A. (Hons.) English (UNN),
Post Graduate Dip. Ed. English (UNN)
M.Ed Curriculum & Methodology (UNN),
Ph.D Ed Administration & Planning (UNN).

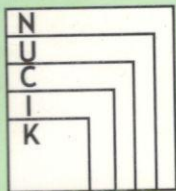
Dr. Okoye is an English Language expert and a veteran school teacher. The Author is a gender researcher and writer, a Human Rights activist, with Women's Rights and Rights of the Child as pet areas.

Dr. Pat Okoye is a playwright, a poet, a novelist as well as a rural women mobiliser and developer. She is the founder of Women in Development-Network (WID-N) and a frontline member of many Women's NGO's.



Felly N. Ene BA (Hons) Education/English (UNN)
M.Ed Guidance and Counselling (UNN)
M.Ed. & Ph.D in Language Education English (UNN)

Dr. Ene is a veteran teacher, former school principal, a university don and astute educationist. She has worked with young people of various ages and has gathered several years of experience. Dr felly, as she is fondly called, has in her kitty several journal publications and articles. She has been writing for radio and television. She loves reading and writing.



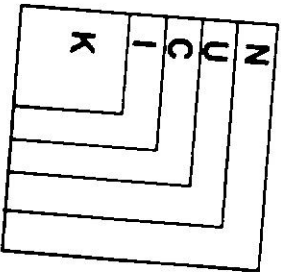
NUCIK PUBLISHERS ENUGU
ISBN: 978-978-907-725-0

**A HANDBOOK ON THE
REVIVAL OF READING CULTURE IN NIGERIA**

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DR. PAT U. OKOYE & DR. FELLY N. ENE

First Published 2011
NUCIK Publishers
71 Owerri Road, Asata
Enugu, Nigeria.



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ENUGU**

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ISBN 978-978-907-725-0

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Foreword

Nigeria is in a state of turmoil in the education sector; even from the kindergarten stage to the highest level, that is, the tertiary institutions. The lament is on "poor infrastructure," "wrong focus", that is, turning out 'unemployable' graduates because of academic content that has no practical relevance to the development of the economy.

One aspect of the problem that has become most worrisome, in my view is often lamented, that 'Nigerians do not read', one should add, 'any more', because Nigeria has turned out an impressive record of scholars of international repute in many fields of learning, particularly in literature.

The problem then is that 'Nigerians do not read anymore'.

Two authors, Dr. Pat U. Okoye and Dr. Felly N. Ene, have given themselves the assignment to look into this problem. They are eminently qualified to undertake the assignment: both are scholars in the field of education, both are administrators, planners, guidance and counseling, English and language education. They have many years of exposure, teaching and

research, with focus on Nigerian culture and development. Yet they are humble, but worried!

Rather than the usual practice of just 'bemoaning' and 'arm chair' criticizing, they set out to provide *A Handbook on the Revival of Reading Culture in Nigeria*.

This is done in six chapters, beginning with the Concept of Reading (Chapter 1), ending with 'Case Studies' (Chapter 6). The 'Conclusion' ends with a touch of sarcasm and biting humour in a quote from Jim Rohn, a foremost American Philosopher.

Poor Nigerian readers, please read the six chapters, just as I have done, before rushing to the conclusion in search of the quote! Then you can enjoy it. Do not forget the 'References' (pp.77), noting the advice, "Strategies for Reviving Reading Culture' (Chapter 5).

The Handbook is concise, easily readable, to encourage all of us to read, general readership, high and low, parents and children.

Obi Mordi
Enugu
May 31, 2001

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INTRODUCTION

Poor reading culture among Nigerians is a painful reality. Nowadays, our children hardly read. The tragic truth is that this lack of interest in reading is not peculiar to the youth. Generally, Nigerian adults themselves do not read. This nation-wide state of affairs has become a matter of great concern for national development.

Although we do not have any nation-wide research statistics on documented percentage of readership among Nigeria's citizenry, that is, to give the actual figures or numbers of youngsters and adults who have a reading culture, popular opinion, drawn from a good cross-section of Nigerians, supports our conservative hunch, as language specialists and veteran school teachers, that poor reading culture is a huge problem facing our country today.

Reading is one of the four language skills, viz: Reading, Listening, Speaking and Writing. Of all four, it can be argued that reading is a sine qua non for life-long self-development, quality life and meaningful living. The importance of reading in our ever-changing world cannot be over-emphasized. By and large, the modern dream of effective globalization can only be achieved through reading. This is because reading emancipates, empowers, and enhances

communication among people. Reading frees the faculties, widens our horizon and fires the imagination. Reading is the bridge between centuries past and the present. Reading is the priceless link between the present and the future. Dynasties past, present and yet to come are accessible to human knowledge via reading. The entire world of matter becomes comprehensible through reading. The global village is traversed by everybody, white, black, red and yellow through reading. Reading relaxes, refreshes, re-energises and releases our minds. There is no end to the list of importance, the significance and benefits of reading to the individual.

Consequently, there is a dire need to revive the culture of reading in our country. There is no gainsaying that the current trend of poor reading habit is subtly taking a great toll on the nation's development. We must put a stop to the tragic results of the apparent lack of interest, or decline in reading culture among Nigerians, young and old alike. Some cynics sneer about the idea of revival for they claim, Nigerians have never had a reading culture! Diffident and negative as this attitude is, the fact remains that illiterate Nigerians of the 1940s and 1950s, until soon after the Nigerian civil war, had a love for reading. People read for information, knowledge and for leisure. There was a culture of reading, whether it was in school libraries or in state libraries. People read

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at home, in their workplaces or relaxation/amusement parks. Students were in the habit of reading novels as well as their class textbooks and examination setbooks. Complete works of Shakespeare and the companion, *Lamb's Tale* or simplified editions of the great works of literature, were familiar features of school life. It is pertinent to add immediately that this was the characteristic feature of students, be they arts or science inclined.

Gone are the days when Nigerians of different ages made it a habit to read. Where are those yester years when Nigerians who had attained a reasonable level of literacy enjoyed reading as a hobby? All printed matter constituted reading materials. Books, fiction, non-fiction, science, biographies, history, geography, detective stories, adventure stories, *Reader's Digest*, newspapers, magazines, newsletters, puzzles, cartoons, bulletins, pamphlets, poems, manuals, plays, etcetera, constituted reading materials. Bill boards, adverts, notice boards, road signs and even warnings were all reading materials for those Nigerians who had cultivated the habit of reading. Reading of the written word stimulates the imagination. Where has the hunger for reading gone? Students used to enjoy the feel and smell of a fresh book! With zeal and great delight students scrambled for new books to read.

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What went wrong? The golden thread has been broken! The passion for reading no longer flows in the veins of our people. This handbook has analysed a host of causes responsible for this mass decadence in our reading culture. A whole lot of causes, social, economic, political and environmental are at the root of the decline of Nigeria's reading culture. Poverty and materialism have so gripped the Nigerian society that most of our cardinal or core values and norms have been thrown to the winds. Quick money is the in thing. Shortcuts are sought in every facet of existence. There is very little or no aspiration towards intellectualism, scholarship and erudition. Ours is a certificate/examination oriented educational system. This is why handouts, paraphrased or exam made-easy editions and mere keypoints or questions and answers pamphlets are preferred over and above original copies of literary works. Illiteracy, economic constraints and non-availability of quality and appropriate reading materials, lack of reading role models, poor reading foundation, exclusion of reading from examinations and the non-inclusion of reading in the curriculum at the teacher preparatory level are some more causes of Nigeria's poor reading culture.

The electronic media: the television, video games, the computer, the cell phone, cyber cafes are notorious distractors as far as sustaining a

reading culture is concerned. The unceasing race about money acquisition among Nigerians, which is manifested in the ignominious crimes of, among other things, child abuse and neglect, has continued to pose a formidable obstacle to the development of interest in reading.

Bleak though the situation is at the moment, all hopes are not yet lost. This handbook contains concrete solutions for salvaging Nigerians from the problems of a poor reading culture. Mapped out strategies for the elimination of this societal problem are enunciated herein. Furthermore, it is made abundantly clear that because of the all encompassing magnitude of the problem, the solution requires a multi-pronged approach. Put differently, all hands must be on deck for the amelioration of this social malady. Parents, teachers, the governments, rural, urban and pri-urban communities, writers, publishers, urban philanthropists, researchers, associations, churches, religious organizations, non-governmental organizations, students at all levels, educational institutions, cultural institutions, the home, libraries, bookshops, the media, the press, and indeed every literate Nigerian all have a vital role to play.

In addition, this handbook advocates a public-private sector partnership (PPP) for the Revival of Reading Culture (RRC) in our country. The

clarion call or wake up call slogan is JOIN PPP for RRC! It is never too early and never too late to start the reading culture. Everybody, youngsters and oldsters, read! Catch them young is our Great Mr. President, His Excellency, Dr. Goodluck Ebele Azikiwe Jonathan's attitude to the revival of reading culture in the Nigerian society. Undoubtedly, the obvious disappearance of a reading culture among school children, at all levels, is at the bottom of the myriad of problems besetting Nigeria's education system.

We must put a stop to the damage done to our children and the future of this country by mercenary authors. By this we mean those soldiers of fortune, who paraphrase other writers' books, provide exam-made-easy pamphlets, or questions and answers and sell handouts for quick-money from lazy students. This group of people simply perpetrate intellectual poverty among Nigerians. They contribute nothing to the educational growth of the citizenry. Rather, they dull the faculties for creative and critical thinking and kill the impetus for reading desirable in every learner.

Suffice it to state in the words of Margaret Mckenna, President of Lesley University, Germany, that "if we give up on children reading we have given up on education". Nigerians must Read or Rust.

Chapter 1

The Concept of Reading

Language is the major distinguishing attribute of human beings in relation to the whole world. Man being a social being, the issue of communication is central to man's existence and survival. Language, in all its ramifications, verbal, body, sign language etc is communication. It is the key to interpersonal relationships. The four basic language skills, viz: reading, speaking, listening and writing are related to one another by two parameters. These are:

- (a) The mode of communication, that is, oral or written,
- (b) The direction of communication, that is, receiving or producing the message.

Note the following diagrammatic representation of the above relationships.

	Written	Oral
Receptive	Reading	Listening
Productive	Writing	Speaking

As shown above reading is a receptive skill since it unlocks what has been coded in books