

# Pakistan OBSERVER

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## **Slumping reading culture in Pakistan: Remedial measures**

By Abid Hussain



Reading has become an essential part of our life. People at large are running away from readings. We are responsible for this slumping reading culture. Reading is the third skill to learn any language. It is a lifelong process which never ends. People read for many reasons; one reason is to gain information and knowledge to solve day today's problems. Without readings, neither we get information nor do we seek knowledge. The best stage of reading is the childhood period. Here parents and teachers can boost their skills. Reading habits are nurtured from childhood to adulthood. It is assumed that a person who stops learning gets dull-mindedness. For learning any basic skills, readings will double their skills. Reading builds a nation literate; I believe that reading nations are leading nations. Reading has four main types; skimming, scanning, intensive and extensive. Skimming is also called gist reading which means grasping the main ideas from the text. The best example is reading magazines and newspapers. Scanning is the second type of reading which means taking a particular piece of information from the written text, e.g. getting the exact phone number from a telephone directory.

Intensive reading is more detailed reading requiring more readers' attention to grasp the texts in detail. The extensive reading is to read for pleasure. In this reading, the readers choose like-minded words and avoid, unlike words. Pakistan is one of the most populous countries. The majority is young and below thirty years. The country

is facing enormous challenges like political turmoil, poor governance, environmental degradation, low standard of education and corruption etc. Among them, the rumping reading culture has become a crucial issues. Our youth spends more time on social mediums like Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, WhatsApp etc. Some other elements that affect the reading cultures are Poverty, commercialization of education, lack of reading languages, Absconding role of the state towards higher education, noise pollution, counselling of reading habits at school, colleges and universities, poor attitude of the administration towards libraries and above all some invisible hands etc.

Some other problems affect the reading cultures in Pakistan: issues with decoding, poor comprehension of reading skills, mixed reading difficulties and speed in reading habits. How to improve the reading habits of our people, few major steps should be taken to become good a readers.

- (1) Making notes of what you read
- (2) Work on building reading skills at home
- (3) Provide platform to access reading resources like libraries etc
- (4) Access to right information and services
- (5) Creation of reading groups
- (6) Mentoring and reading counselling at academia
- (7) Encourage students who reads more
- (8) Exchanging books as gifts instead of edible items or fragrances
- (9) Creating effective strategy
- (10) Provision of library hours in curriculum
- (11) Visiting book shops and libraries
- (12) Interaction with good readers
- (13) Encourage street and mobile library cultures
- (14) Making effective campaign, publicity and marketing
- (15) Reading campaign
- (16) Subject assignment at schools, college and universities

- (17) Organizing Book walks at schools, colleges and universities levels
- (18) Organizing workshops and seminars on reading habits
- (19) Visiting book fairs
- (20) Increasing the number of libraries at district, provincial and national levels
- (21) Celebrating world book and copyright days
- (22) The last but not the least, self interest in reading.

An American television producer, novelist, screenwriter and short story writer rightly said that “a reader lives a thousand lives before he dies”. A faithful reader becomes an inspirer for others. Parents, teachers and stakeholders at several fronts are responsible for the declining reading culture. Let’s make this nation prosperous with a reading culture. Reading nations are visionary nations. It is said that today a reader, tomorrow a leader. Readers are true adventurers in their life. A person who reads more will visit more countries in his life. An American writer Mary Pope Osborne rightly said, “Reading is a passport to countless adventures”. A man who reads a book is dreaming with open eyes. What we face today is because of the declining reading culture. Daron Acemoglu, the author of why nations fail, has articulated that a few nations prosper. In contrast, others are plagued with poverty and greed due to a lack of knowledge and the cultural gap among people, one of which is the declining reading culture. To make a country more vital, you need Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capita, Gross National Income (GNI) per capita, life expectancy, birth rate and above all, education spending (% of GDP). Books are an excellent sources for unlocking absent minds; let’s open our minds with reading habits.

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