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Developing reading culture for students at the University of Labor and Social Affairs

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Abstract

A strong emphasis on reading is crucial for the academic success of university students. By immersing themselves in a culture of reading, students can gain access to a wealth of knowledge passed down through generations. This not only enhances their research abilities, but also allows them to apply these skills to their respective fields of study.

Cultivating a habit of reading is essential for building resilience and should be actively encouraged. The forthcoming article will examine the existing challenges and propose strategies to foster a robust reading culture among students at the University of Labor and Social Affairs.

Keywords: Reading Culture, Reading Culture of Students, Students of University of Labor and Social Affairs

1. Introduction

Reading has always been an essential tool in both research and the intellectual growth of humanity. It not only imparts knowledge but also broadens one's perspective, prompting individuals to contemplate various aspects of life with each turn of the page.

Journalist Ha Son Tung^[1] believes that "Reading is a symbol of cultured and civilized people. A society lacking in civilization can be identified as uncivilized, while an individual who lacks interest in reading is deprived of a substantial portion of their cultural knowledge. Nevertheless, in the present era of technological advancements, it is evident that students have gained numerous advantages in accessing information through the Internet, which serves as a valuable tool to support their learning.

There exist various perspectives: University students attend not solely to pursue a profession, but also to discover their true selves. To achieve self-discovery, youths require wisdom and authenticity beyond classroom teachings and educational courses. They must delve into a broader and deeper understanding, seeking insights not just online but also from literature rooted in human experience.

Reading culture plays a crucial role in enabling students to gain knowledge, scientific conceptual frameworks, and professional skills. It also aids in the development of future professional qualities and supports the enhancement of learning and scientific research. Moreover, cultivating a reading culture enhances students' capacity to think independently, autonomously, and creatively. Consequently, it is imperative for university students, especially those studying at the University of Labor and Social Affairs, to equip themselves with this essential skill.

In order to enhance the significance of reading culture in the educational journey, students must possess a comprehensive understanding and implement it effectively to enhance their learning experience. The author sheds light on the existing state of reading culture among students at the University of Labor and Social Affairs, pinpointing certain deficiencies and proposing recommendations to cultivate a stronger reading culture among the students in the present environment.

2. Theoretical basis of Reading Culture

2.1 What is a reading culture?

There are numerous interpretations of reading culture today. As stated by Mr. Nguyen Huu Viem^[2], reading culture can be understood in two ways: broadly and narrowly. Broadly speaking, it encompasses the reading behavior, values, and standards of individuals, social communities, as well as managers and government agencies. Therefore, in a broader context, the concept of reading culture encompasses three distinct elements, specifically three diverse groups or circles that intersect. However, in a

narrower perspective, it refers to the individual's reading behavior, values, and standards. These aspects also comprise three fundamental components: reading habits, reading preferences, and reading skills. These components can be visualized as three layers, three distinct circles that intersect with one another.

First of all, it is necessary to create and develop a lifelong reading habit for each person. Building the habit of reading must be started in early childhood, which in many countries is done at a pre-school age, by parents. Throughout school life and after birth is the process of learning and practicing reading skills.

Reading culture has formed stronger from primary to secondary school and especially for students, this factor needs to be replicated and developed, because Reading culture is about self-learning, teachers come to students to inspire content and the person who continues that knowledge is through reading culture research books every day.

2.2 Constituents, functions and roles of reading culture

2.2.1 Constituents of reading culture

In the present era of technological advancements, it is evident that students have numerous advantages in accessing information with the aid of a valuable tool, namely the Internet. It appears that any problem requiring research can be conveniently addressed. However, this convenience has led to a gradual decline in the traditional reading habit, particularly among the younger generation. This poses a significant concern that necessitates our contemplation and focus on enhancing the efficacy of reading culture, especially among students.

Building a reading culture is to stir and stimulate the desire to read, which is important in the economic and social development of the country. It depends not only on the reader, it also depends on the behavior of the authorities, on people working in the fields of culture, art, science, on entrepreneurs working in this field, they all have to step in. As for the right to read is a fundamental right of the people, they must gain that right to learn, to read in order to develop themselves, to enrich themselves and their families, that is, for the country. Its manifestations include the following elements: The need to read. The human desire for comprehension is the driving force behind the necessity to read. It is an essential requirement for individuals seeking to thrive and progress within society, particularly in the present era of information and knowledge-based economy. Reading skills. Proficiency refers to an individual's capability, technical expertise, and practical application of their abilities. Skills hold significant importance in one's journey towards success. In every situation, we rely on our skills to efficiently tackle tasks. It can be confidently stated that skills are a crucial element in obtaining and utilizing knowledge effectively in our daily lives. The ability to read proficiently plays a vital role in evaluating the effectiveness of reading activities. Reading skills encompass the capacity to comprehend, interpret, and assimilate the information presented in written materials. They enable individuals to transform the knowledge and experiences documented into their own knowledge and experiences. Moreover, these skills empower readers to apply their acquired knowledge and experiences to various endeavors, thereby enhancing both their material and spiritual well-being. The development of reading skills is contingent upon numerous

factors, including an individual's knowledge, experience, and competence. Reading skills are developed through extensive practice and training. Reading hobby. Leisure pursuits, commonly referred to as hobbies, are activities that individuals engage in regularly or habitually to experience pleasure and excitement during their free time; hobbies also reflect one's interest and attitude towards a particular object. Reading preferences vary greatly among individuals. Some enjoy poetry, while others prefer stories or novels. Everyone has unique hobbies to unwind after a long day of work or study. Attitudes towards reading materials. Documents are products of culture. It is important to approach reading materials with cultural sensitivity. Culturally appropriate behavior involves respecting and preserving documents, as well as knowing how to utilize them effectively. These factors contribute to the diversity and richness of reading culture within different societies and time periods.

3. Research Methodology

The meta-analysis approach: the author amalgamates relevant documents from various sources such as books, newspapers, journals, dissertations, scientific theses, proceedings, seminars, conferences, etc. Additionally, the author analyzes the data collected to derive research findings.

+ Questionnaire survey: The reading culture of students at the University of Labor and Social Affairs is explored through a series of questions posed by the author. A total of 180 questionnaires were distributed among students from all four years of study across the university. Out of these, 165 questionnaires were collected. It is important to note that the selection of students was done entirely at random.

+ Observe: The author actively engages in observing students in the reading rooms of the University Library and also takes part in various club activities and thematic discussions held at different times.

4. Research results

4.1 The present state of the reading culture among students at the University of Labor and Social Affairs.

Prior to discussing the present state of the reading culture among students at the University of Labor and Social Affairs, the author examines the reading culture in Vietnam in the contemporary context. It is essential to acknowledge that the reading culture has garnered significant attention from society in recent years. Indeed, over the past few years, Ho Chi Minh City has consistently prioritized and nurtured the cultural and spiritual endeavors of its residents, fostering the growth and dissemination of a reading culture. The Vietnam Book and Reading Culture Day, scheduled from April 15 to May 1, 2023, aims to underscore the significance of books and reading habits within the community. This event seeks to enrich the cultural and spiritual fabric of society, while also upholding moral principles and the nation's scholarly traditions. With the message "Books: Awareness - Innovation - Creativity", "Books for me, for you", "Every citizen is an ambassador of reading culture"; The Hanoi Reading Culture Ambassador Contest is being held in the capital city of Hanoi to commemorate the 70th anniversary of the Capital's Liberation Day. This contest serves as an engaging and beneficial platform for teenagers and students in Hanoi, fostering a love for reading among the younger generation. Additionally, it aims to showcase and promote Hanoi's rich cultural heritage, which spans

thousands of years, during the process of integration and development. The contest also provides an opportunity for participants to exchange and share their reading experiences, contributing to the development of a reading culture. Moreover, it encourages and supports the reading movement in schools and communities, instilling reading habits and enhancing reading skills among students. Ultimately, it inspires them to strive for learning and actively contribute to building the "Constitutional – Civilized – Modern" Capital.

Reading culture is an essential component of society or students' lives, serving as the foundational knowledge needed to navigate life effectively.

The University of Labor and Social Affairs students exhibit a blend of traditional reading practices and audiovisual learning. With the transition from yearly training to credit-based system, classroom hours have decreased while self-study time has increased. Consequently, student learning activities have undergone significant changes. When examining the reading habits of students through the lens of cultural management, we delve into not just the administration of reading culture (such as managing documents, library resources, materials available, students' needs, skills, and methods of organizing reading events) but also explore the students' traits within the reading culture by analyzing teaching and learning approaches.

The University of Labor and Social Affairs Library is situated on the 15th and 16th floors of the 17-story school building, covering an area of over 1000 square meters. Each room is furnished with tables, chairs, bookshelves, lighting, and air conditioning. The main reading area spans nearly 400 square meters, accommodating around 300 readers simultaneously. Operating hours are from 8am to 5pm, extending until 6pm during peak exam periods. The library remains accessible throughout the day for students to study.

The reading room currently houses a book store that offers a wide range of resources, consisting of over 20 thousand titles. These resources include textbooks, reference materials, as well as books on Literature, art, psychology, and more. Being located within the reading room, this book

store provides convenient access to materials for students. Moreover, professional librarians are available to offer assistance, making it an ideal learning environment. Students can enjoy a conducive reading space for independent study and research.

The library currently offers a wide range of resources that are valuable for both academic training and scientific research within the school.

** Traditional materials (books, newspapers and magazines)*

+ The library boasts a collection of more than 140 varieties of newspapers and magazines, with over 50 specialized publications catering to the school's educational needs.

+ There are over 15,000 titles amounting to 150,000 copies, which include textbooks, lecture materials produced by the school, monographs, and reference materials.

+ The library houses more than 3,000 copies of theses, dissertations, graduation papers, and research topics at various academic levels, as well as newspapers and journals.

** Electronic documents:*

+ The Library has constructed various databases since 2004, including the Book database, Newspaper-magazine database, and thesis-thesis database, containing over 10,000 records to facilitate readers in their search process.

+ Additionally, the school offers more than 150 CD-Roms on various training topics.

However, since mid-2023 until the present, students have been compelled to engage in online learning due to the school's adjustment. Consequently, the number of students visiting the library has significantly decreased as they no longer travel to Hanoi for their studies. This has posed a challenge in terms of accessing new resources and fostering a reading culture. In order to assess the reading habits of students at the University of Labor and Social Affairs, the author conducted a survey among 180 students from various majors. Among them, 105 were students in their 3rd, 4th, while the remaining 75 were students in their 1st and 2nd years.

The findings of the inquiry revealed:

+ Utilization of students' time beyond regular class hours.

Table 1: Apart from classroom hours, what are the activities you typically engage in?

S. No	Activities	Percentage (%)	
		3rd, 4th - year students	First, second-year students
1	Reading newspapers	65	70
2	Engage in Internet usage	75.5	85
3	Social activities	24.5	30
4	Watch TV, listen to music	63.73	68
5	shopping	41.17	45
6	Sport and fitness	18.63	25
7	Arts and culture	18	10
8	Other activities*	30.39	35

Source: From student survey

Table 1 illustrates that, apart from classroom instruction, the highest percentage of students at the University of Labor and Social Affairs engaged in Internet usage were those in year 1 and 2 at 85% and year 3 and 4 at 75.5%. Subsequently, the percentage of students who dedicated their time to reading books and newspapers were those in year 1 and 2 at 65% and year 3 and 4 at 85%. This percentage was comparable to those who spent their time

watching TV and listening to music, with students in year 1 and 2 at 68% and year 3 and 4 at 65%. It is evident that students at the University of Labor and Social Affairs have shown a strong inclination towards audiovisual culture over reading culture, despite the fact that audiovisual culture tends to prioritize entertainment and information over education and knowledge enrichment.

Table 2: What types of documents do you usually read?

S. No	Priority reading document type	Percentage (%)	
		3rd, 4th - year students	First, second-year students
1	Specialized books, newspapers, magazines	63	45
2	Entertainment Books, newspapers, magazines	67	75.2
3	Other documents* (history, economics, science and technology...)	14.70	20

Source: From student survey

According to Table 2, the preferred reading materials among library students are books, newspapers, and entertainment magazines. It is worth noting that 75% of students in year 1 and 2 and 67% of students in year 3 and 4 choose these materials the most. Specialized literature, newspapers, and magazines also contribute significantly to the overall reading habits. However, there is a variation in the reading rate of this material among students in different academic years. Students in years 3 and 4 show a higher preference

(63%) for such content, whereas students in year 1 and 2 have a relatively lower preference (45%). This particular audience enjoys reading, finding newspapers and magazines more entertaining. Hence, it is evident that students at the University of Labor and Social Affairs primarily engage with entertainment materials and documents pertaining to their field of study. However, they exhibit a strong inclination towards acquiring knowledge in history, economics, science, and technology.

Table 3: How much time per day do you spend reading material?

S. No	Reading duration	Percentage (%)	
		3rd, 4th - year students	First, second-year students
1	No time	15	10
2	From 1 to 2 hours	22	30
3	Form 2 to 3 hours	35	38
4	From 3 to 4 hours	28	25
5	From 4 to 5 hours	0.5	0.65

Source: From student survey

According to Table 3, it is evident that the majority of students at the University of Labor and Social Affairs dedicate 1 to 3 hours per day to reading books. However, there are a few students who are unable to find time for reading. Additionally, the percentage of students who spend 4 hours or more on reading is less than 1%. Consequently,

the amount of time students allocated for research and reading books appears to be insufficient when compared to the time spent on other activities.

+ Teachers in fostering a culture of reading among students.

Table 4: Which documents teachers assign to readers

S. No	Documents teachers assign to readers	Percentage (%)	
		3rd, 4th - year students	First, second-year students
1	Syllabus	90	95
2	Specialized journals	18	15
3	Bibliography	75	80
4	Non-subject-related materials		10

Source: From student survey

Table 4 illustrates that the reading materials given to students by teachers primarily pertain to subjects and textbooks, with non-subject-related materials making up less than 10%.

From the initial days of new students, the library has conducted an early training session to foster and enrich the reading culture among students. During this session, librarians have interacted with students to acquaint them with the library and highlight its significant role within the university. Furthermore, the Students' Union Executive Committee has taken a crucial step in promoting a robust reading culture by establishing the Book and Action Club through Decision No. 04-QD/HSV. This initiative holds immense importance in encouraging students to engage in reading activities across the university.

In recent times, there has been a concerning rise in the phenomenon of lazy reading, reading aversion, and the decline of reading habits among the general population. This trend is particularly noticeable among young people and students who are increasingly drawn towards the internet

and audiovisual resources. The fast-paced and convenient lifestyle enabled by technology has overshadowed the traditional role of books as a source of knowledge to be delved into. Nowadays, the readily available responses from search engines like Google have led to a decreased emphasis on thorough and extensive study, unlike the earlier generations. Nevertheless, apart from instances of actively engaging in library learning, there is a scenario where the majority of students solely focus on studying and reading when exams are imminent, essentially learning to pass exams. Students tend to peruse documents, books, and newspapers only when prompted by their instructors to write essays, complete substantial assignments, or deliver presentations on a particular subject, or solely for examination purposes, that is, only when under pressure or obligation, students exhibit a sense of immediate reading. This method of learning discourages learners from taking the initiative in developing active study, research, and reading habits, instead reading based on necessity or personal interests.

There is a significant portion of current students, including those from the University of Labor and Social Affairs, who are influenced by audiovisual culture through platforms like YouTube, Netflix, Tiktok, etc. This influence often leads them to shy away from reading, or if they do read, they tend to skim through the material, read superficially, or approach reading in a hedonistic manner rather than engaging deeply with the content. This lack of depth in reading habits makes students passive readers, especially when it comes to specialized subject materials. A clear indication of this limited reading culture among students is the fact that most students only engage with reading when prompted by their instructors to complete assignments, essays, presentations, or as exams draw near. This passivity in reading habits has resulted in students becoming less proactive in their learning, focusing more on reading for entertainment rather than prioritizing education and knowledge acquisition.

5. Recommendations

Some solutions to enhance the reading culture among students at the University of Labor and Social Affairs.

To ensure the sustainable development of students' reading activities, various strategies can be implemented to enhance the reading culture within the school:

Firstly, the library contains numerous valuable books across different genres, particularly focusing on skills, music, painting, literature, and art. This wide selection aims to offer students a more profound insight into culture and society. It is vital to develop an appealing architectural space with an attractive landscape to motivate readers. At present, the library's reading room is still a closed warehouse, necessitating students to go through the steps of searching and borrowing materials to access the desired books. Investing in open reading rooms is crucial and essential in the current university environment, where the reading culture is gradually fading among students.

Secondly, implement various engaging book-related activities in interactive formats to prevent monotony, drawing in a significant student turnout. Annually, at the start of each academic year, particularly with the arrival of new students, the University should collaborate with the Library Center to conduct a workshop upon visiting the library, emphasizing the significance and impact of reading in academic settings.

Thirdly, at present, the Book Club has been established and approved for operation. However, this initiative has not experienced significant growth and lacks effective promotion among students across the school. It requires additional investment from the University and the School Board's attention in order to foster further development. Moreover, the Book Club serves as a solid foundation for cultivating a culture of avid reading among students throughout the entire school.

Establish and cultivate reading clubs within educational institutions to foster hubs of knowledge, consequently disseminating among the student body.

Fourthly, the lecturers are the ones who motivate students to engage in reading.

Lecturers must continuously innovate and enhance the quality of higher education training by implementing student-centered teaching methods. They should tailor the curriculum to meet the specific needs of each group of students and foster active communication between lecturers and students. This will enable lecturers to better understand

the preferences and requirements of students in Vienna, thereby facilitating a more effective approach to cultivating a reading culture among students. Lecturers have the ability to provide guidance and recommendations to students regarding specialized literature pertaining to their respective subjects. This is particularly important for subjects that are highly academic and specialized, such as pharmaceutical chemistry, molecular pharmacology, and pharmaceutical manufacturing engineering. Additionally, lecturers can also suggest useful materials that aid in skill development and future work, as well as encourage the use of modern technology to foster a habit of reading among students. For instance, they can motivate students to access e-books instead of traditional books. By doing so, lecturers assist students in identifying and navigating through the necessary materials, teaching them how to choose, comprehend, and apply the content they have read in practical scenarios.

Fifthly, Students play a crucial role in the development of a reading culture within a university. It is essential for each student to actively engage in practicing their reading skills in order to meet the learning requirements. Merely relying on the lecturer is not sufficient. Moreover, students should take initiative in self-study, self-reading, and self-research. They should also strive to enhance their reading skills by employing effective strategies such as taking notes, summarizing the content, writing commentaries, and engaging in discussions with peers and lecturers. Furthermore, students should apply the knowledge gained through reading to solve real-world problems.

6. Conclusions

During the era of the information technology boom, the prevalence of websites has significantly impacted the lifestyle of young individuals, particularly students. It is imperative to foster a culture of reading as no audiovisual medium can fully substitute the benefits of reading. Reading culture consistently plays a pivotal role in disseminating and acquiring knowledge in a profound manner that audiovisual culture cannot replicate.

The author's article aims to contribute to the development of the reading culture among students at the University of Labor and Social Affairs, encouraging them to actively engage in reading while attending university lectures. This is crucial as the university serves as a foundation for their comprehensive growth and prepares them for their future endeavors.

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