

CHAPTER I

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

- 1.0 INTRODUCTION
- 1.1 SIGNIFICANCE OF READING
 - (a) Academic Significance of Reading
 - (b) Significance of Reading in Individual Life
 - (c) Social Value of Reading
- 1.2 SIGNIFICANCE OF READING INTEREST
 - (a) Significance of Reading Interest in Academic Life
 - (b) Significance of Reading Interest in Personal Life
 - (c) Social Significance of Reading Interest
- 1.3 THE NEED AND VALUE OF READING INTEREST IN ADOLESCENTS' LIFE
- 1.4 FACTORS AFFECTING READING INTEREST OF THE ADOLESCENTS
- 1.5 THE STATUS OF READING AND READING INTEREST IN INDIAN EDUCATION
- 1.6 READING INTEREST AND THE SCHOOL
- 1.7 RATIONALE OF THE STUDY
- 1.8 SCHEME OF CHAPTERISATION

CHAPTER I

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

1.0 INTRODUCTION

It is indeed true as pointed out by Kirk, Kliebhan and Lerner (1978) that in today's world non-print medias have replaced the world of print in many ways. Today, people need not necessarily read for getting information, about what is going on in and around themselves. Some educators even have suggested that a bookless curriculum be established which will mean teaching through non-print medias like Radio, Films, T.V., Audio-cassettes, etc. But, however, high sounding these ideas may be, the world is not yet in a position to replace reading or printed media by non-print gadgets. Particularly for a developing country like India it is a far cry. Again, printed media have far more advantages as a source of knowledge than non-print media. The satisfaction that can be derived by reading something is far more greater both physically and mentally, than listening to it with the help of non-print gadgets. Therefore, the need and importance of reading in human life cannot be overlooked.

1.1 SIGNIFICANCE OF READING

(a) Academic Significance of Reading

Reading is one of the three R's with which a child

starts his education. In fact, the success and failure of his academic life depends to a large extent upon his reading ability. Many educationists and psychologists are of the opinion that reading disability is the root cause of underachievement in education in case of children with average or more than average intelligence. Therefore, reading may be regarded as a basic skill to be acquired by every learner; and hence every effort should be directed towards its proper development in children from early life.

Dechant and Smith (1977) while emphasizing the teaching of reading, pointed out that it is a key to success in school, to the development of school interests, to the enjoyment of leisure and to the personal and social adjustment of the child. It helps him to adjust to his age-mates; to become independent of his parents and teachers, to select and to prepare for an occupation and to achieve social prestige. Thus, reading is so interrelated with the total educational process, that academic mastery cannot be imagined on the part of the learners without their mastery on better reading and better comprehension of the reading materials.

(b) Significance of Reading in Individual Life

Failure in learning to read is a great handicap in the progress and upliftment of individual life. It is a skill which is very much essential in professional life

4 where retraining is a part and parcel of the occupation due to innovations. Today, a certain level of reading competency is very much essential for various types of jobs. For example, a study by Licht and others (1972) showed that "an army cook must have a reading level of 7.0, a repairman or army crewman 8.0 and a supply clerk 9.0".

The ability to read is an essential skill for all who live in a democratic society even for those who are slow and disabled learners. Reading enables an individual to participate effectively as a citizen in a democratic country. In this connection, reference can be made to the "Right to Read" (1972) - a report of forum 7, White House conference on children which has made the following comments about the impact of inability to read:

Inability to read fluently not only inhibits the effective operation of our political system, but, contributes substantially to our social and economic ills. For example, many of our delinquents and criminal offenders have a history of reading difficulties.....

Waples (1974) in his book "What Reading Does to People" pointed out five main outcomes drawn out of reading by men. They are: (a) Instrumental effect, (b) Prestige effect, (c) Reinforcement of an attitude, (d) Vicarious aesthetic experiences, and (e) Respite.

People read for instrumental effect when they have a problem to solve, to pass a test, to give a speech, etc.

5

Thus, through solving problems, by reading, instrumental effect can be achieved.

Individuals also read for prestige specially to improve their own self-image. Some adults read all books on the "best seller" list to enhance their egos.

Sometimes people choose to read to reinforce their opinions or feelings on particular ideas or beliefs.

People may also read for vicarious aesthetic experiences - e.g., by studying classical writers like Shakespeare, Byron, Kalidas, Valmiki, etc. one can grow in depth and breadth of mind; and also live in all age - past, present and future.

Reading can also give respite or temporary relief from mental tensions, sorrows, discomforts, etc. One must sometimes escape from reality and reading is one of the best avenues of escape. Because free reading acts as a therapy to relieve the mind from various tensions, discomforts, and miseries of life.

Reading as a means of communication to an individual, has many advantages over non-print media. Bond and Wagner (1963) mentioned six such distinct advantages. They are - (a) The reader can at any time stop and reflect upon what he read. (b) He can re-read whenever necessary. (c) It is possible to consult other experts on a particular problem. (d) An individual has ready access to reading

6 materials. (e) For many purposes, it is an efficient tool than other means of communication in selection, in consultation, etc. (f) The printed page constitutes a permanent record.

(c) Social Value of Reading

Value of reading in today's democracy quickly over-reaches the purely personal and merges into social values. In fact, the general attitude towards reading is largely pragmatic; seeing it as an avenue to financial and social status. For the welfare of the society, the members must be educated or capable of reading to some extent. Survey shows that it is the non-readers and poor readers that generally become delinquents, unemployed and misfits in the society. Therefore, for the progress of a democratic society reading is indispensable.

1.2 SIGNIFICANCE OF READING INTEREST

(a) Significance of Reading Interest in Academic Life

Lawrence (1976) was of the opinion that "it does little good to teach a child "how" to read if he or she does not "want" to read. Thus, voluntary reading or reading out of one's own interest is very important, and in fact more important than acquiring mere reading skills. Failure in reading is mostly due to not giving proper emphasis on development of reading interest in children in the initial

stages. Of all facets of reading development for which the teachers should assume responsibility, none is more important than helping children to broaden and deepen their interest in reading.

Harris and Sipay (1977) also pointed out that enormous amount of time, effort and money are expended on teaching children how to read. But, teaching-reading alone, without emphasizing developing interest in reading is useless and waste of money. Because that will only produce "a nation of illiterate literates" (Huck, 1971), meaning, who know how to read but do not do any voluntary reading. Therefore, a successful reading programme must not only develop pupils who can read, but also 'read' voluntarily for their personal development as well as the development of their people and society.

Another important contribution of reading interest is towards comprehension of subject matter which has very much academic value. Deighton (1971) in this connection remarked that motivation, purpose and interests are essential ingredients for successful comprehension, yet they are often overlooked as pre-requisites. The attitude and interest held by the reader towards the reading material governs his comprehension. The author observed that poor readers generally fail to comprehend reading materials that are not interesting to them or is presented in an unattractive format. Not only comprehension but reading itself is

affected by interest. Lack of interest in reading is one of the root causes of poor reading. Paul Witty (1957) conducted a study on one hundred boys and girls at North Western University Laboratory who were poor readers and found that of these, eightytwo showed lack of interest in reading.

(b) Significance of Reading
Interest in Personal Life

Reading interests have great significance in the upliftment of individual life. A voluntary interest in reading inspires one to read whatever he comes across and that, in turn, results in many good effects like - broadening of ideas and experiences, getting uptodate information of what is going on in and around him, knowing more about himself as well as others, etc.

Today, in the fast changing world, one who does not read widely and well, remains a prisoner within his small cell of personal experience and is unable to cope up with life. Voluntary or free reading on the other hand helps the individual by providing vicarious experiences; by extending his mental horizon; by enriching his emotional and moral life, etc.

(c) Social Significance of Reading Interest

Reading interests have great social value too. Russell (1961) remarked that the development of a permanent interest in reading seems to have a number of personal and social values. The health and working of a democracy is

dependent upon citizens equipped with some knowledge of the problems faced by the total group. Unless these problems are known to all and unless possible solutions are communicated through the printed word; without this unifying influence, the democracy may become an oligarchy; anarchy or even a fascist state. Therefore, for the survival of democracy itself, reading interest on the part of the citizens is very essential.

1.3 THE NEED AND VALUE OF READING INTERESTS IN ADOLESCENTS' LIFE

The acquisition of skill in reading can benefit a person only when he starts making spontaneous and voluntary reading. ^{the} By time a boy or a girl reaches the stage of adolescence, he or she acquires sufficient readability and it is the high time that the child should be motivated to do extra reading, since extra-reading or reading interest in materials other than text books has many values in their lives.

The objectives of high school age (adolescence) is to move students as rapidly as possible towards wide-reading with perception, with pleasure and with appreciation. During these crucial years, the teacher must find books about young people who had faced and solved significant problems. Reading must be for fun, but it must also yield a profit if it is to play a significant role in the years ahead. Reading habits and interest formed by children

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during this grade level, influence the society today and tomorrow - the good society will be a society of good readers.

Reading interest serves some specific benefits to adolescent boys and girls of secondary level. Very often the mind of pupils of this age is in turmoil due to many "storms and stress" of life. Interest in reading various books may help him to overcome these; Reading interest can also act as "biblio-therapy" to pacify revolting minds of adolescents by giving outlets to their emotions and surging ideas. This "biblio-therapy" is a scientific mental treatment to promote mental and emotional health with the help of reading materials, to fulfil needs, relieve pressure from the mind, or to help an individual in his development as person (Hugland, 1972).

Cole (1969) also emphasized that extra-reading has great psychological value for adolescents. Because:

(a) It can provide relief from tensions, opportunity for working out aggressive drives harmlessly; informations for resolutions of conflicts and character for easy identification. (b) Reading can also result in security and self-realization for an adolescents' inner life; better inter-personal relations with his family and peer, change in behaviour, new ideas, and increased appreciation of many life-activities.

Today, in the modern world, as a result of terrific development of science and technology there is an explosion of knowledge and hence the child is placed

in such a complex situation that he cannot adjust well with his life and surroundings without extra-knowledge (apart from text book knowledge). This necessitates greatly the need for doing extra-reading.

By looking to the need and importance of extra-reading in students of secondary level, it is necessary to motivate them by supplying materials of their interest. For this purpose, a first hand knowledge of students' interest in different kinds of reading materials; the reason for preferring some reading material and neglecting others is very essential for teachers, school librarians, parents as well as the children themselves. The study undertaken by the investigator may throw some light on these vital aspects.

It is also important here to see that students read good books and books of their real interest. On the other hand, there is dearth of juvenile literature in India, suiting the needs and interests of adolescent boys and girls. This is why children very often read cheap thrillers, sentimental love stories, watered down problem novels, etc. In many cases, children themselves are not aware of their real interest. To solve these and such problems it is essential to inquire into reading interest of secondary level students. It may also help producers as well publishers of juvenile literature in bringing out proper books for children to the book market.

Times have changed, but adults seem to be unaware

12 of the change in reading interests of children. Teachers, librarians as well as parents want that children should read "the classics" only, which in their opinion is the best for children. But, in the modern age, one should look into the interest of the children from their view point rather than that of the adults. Today's space-minded child may actually travel to the moon one day. He lives in a fast moving world where fantastic discoveries are a common affair. Therefore, it is high time that children's reading interests should be evaluated from their own expressed opinion rather than the opinion of the adult members of the society.

1.4 FACTORS AFFECTING READING INTERESTS OF THE ADOLESCENTS

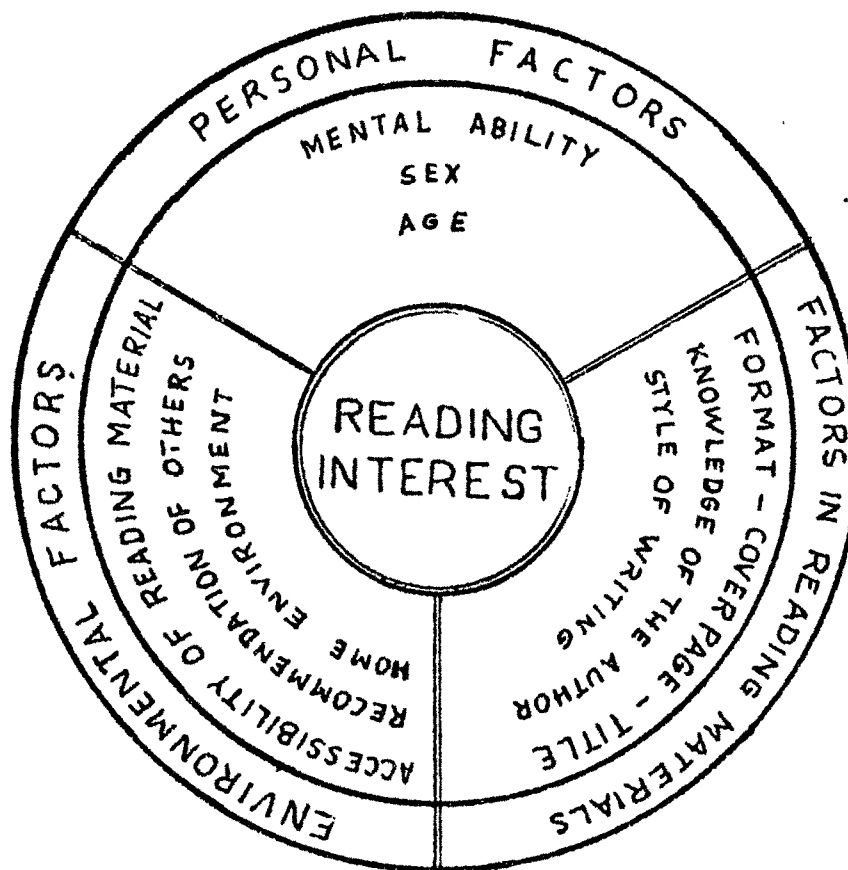
There are many factors that affect the reading interest of adolescent boys and girls. These factors may be summarized under three categories:

- (a) Factors inherent in the child.
- (b) Factors in the reading material.
- (c) Environmental factors.

(a) Factors Inherent in the Child

Age, sex and mental ability are the three important inherent qualities of the children that affect upon their reading interests to a great extent.

Researches showed that with age there is notable

FIG. 1.1FACTORS AFFECTING READING INTEREST

13

change in reading interest of children. Terman and Lima (1935) studied developmental changes in reading interests of children from five to fifteen years and observed that during ten to twelve years reading interest reaches its peak in children. But after twelve the amount of reading decreases. One specific development that take place in reading interest of children above twelve years is that the interest bend towards specialized and indepth study of particular type rather than reading all types of materials.

Sex is another very important factor that affects upon reading interest of children. Researches showed that boys and girls have similar interests, when young, but these differ as they mature. Terman and Lima (1935) found that at about eleven years, boys are more interested than girls in realistic stories and are becoming interested in science and mechanics while girls begin to read romantic adult fiction. Lazar (1937) also found sex difference in selection of stories. novels and other reading materials during adolescence stage.

Mental or Cognitive Ability affects the reading interest of adolescents to a great extent. Studies in this connection showed that children differ in their reading interest according to their intelligence level. A number of studies reported that dull children like books only a little more mature in theme than younger children of the

.4 same mental age, average and dull girls read more than their male counterparts. In the case of boys **there** was a close association between intelligence and number of books read. Terman and Lima (1935) reported that bright children read three or four times as more than average children and do not decline in reading activities after thirteen years as much as the average child does.

(b) Factors in the Reading Materials

There are many factors related to reading materials like the format, coverpage, titles, style of writing, knowledge of the author, etc. which affect reading interests of adolescent boys and girls. It is often observed that children leaf through a book to get some impression of its contents before they borrow or buy it. Rankin (1944) remarked that children between twelve and fourteen years of age are generally influenced by theme of the book, the format, sampling of text, recommendations of others, previous knowledge of the author and style of writing, etc.

Regarding the quality of the story that children likes most studies referred to concept such as surprise, action, human plot etc. Irvine (1952) summarised that children like a story with - (a) quick beginning, (b) a definite ending, (c) plenty of action in between, (d) at least one situation with which they are familiar, (e) a character that the ~~children~~^{child} identify with himself and

15

(f) an ethical, sympathetic and realistic treatment of the subject matter.

(c) Environmental Factors

Of the environmental factors that affect upon the reading interests of children, following are important:

(i) Accessibility of Reading Materials

Children generally read whatever is accessible to them. Their free reading is also influenced by school curriculum. In a summary of studies on reading interests Betzner and Lyman (1937) concluded - "Probably the most significant factor in the development of wholesome reading habits and tastes is the informal exposure of children to an abundance of good books and magazines in the home, school and public library". Children coming from high socio-economic condition group, therefore, generally read more due to availability of books than those from low income group.

(ii) Recommendations of Others

Very often it is the recommendations of friends or peer group, parents and teachers which affect upon reading interests of children by influencing upon selection of reading materials. Rankin (1944) in her study mentioned that nearly fortyone per cent of children from twelve to fourteen years relied on recommendations of others,

specially friends in selection of books.

The influence of home situation has been regarded by most writers as a major influence of reading habits and tastes. Children whose parents are highly educated and from good socio-economic status usually have more access to books, magazines, newspapers, etc. and usually read more. But, however, in case of specific interest children's and parents' interests do not always coincide.

Considering all these, the researcher in the present study hypothesized that factors like age, sex, S.E.S., academic achievements and intelligence of children have relationship with reading interest. The findings of such a research may help greatly not only the students but also the teachers, parents, librarians as well as the producers and publishers of juvenile literatures to locate the actual interest of students in different kinds of reading materials, the reasons for preferring a particular type of material etc. and to supply materials according to the needs and tastes of the children.

1.5 THE STATUS OF READING AND READING INTEREST IN INDIAN EDUCATION

Reading has been given its due status, in school curriculum in western countries. Innumerable studies have been done on all facets of reading including reading interest and consequently a lot has been planned in school

7

curriculum for effective teaching of reading and even remedial teaching in reading wherever necessary.

But 'reading' is a very neglected area in Indian education both from the view point of research and subsequent application of the results in education. Although it is a concern for the primary school teachers, as it is one of the three R's; very little has been done so far as to find out improved methods of teaching reading or remedial methods to teach children with reading difficulty.

Looking to the democratic set-up and large number of illiterates it is the high time that proper emphasis should be given on teaching and research in reading.

India being the largest democracy on the world, the fate of which depends upon the masses, it is indeed very essential that every citizen should acquire reading efficiency. Article fortyfive of the constitution stands for universal, free and compulsory education to each and every child upto the age of fourteen. But even after thirtyfive years of attaining independence, this aim has not been fulfilled, and the number of illiterate is on the increase.

To improve such a condition it is time that our policy framers in education give more stress on reading. Reading is not being related to language alone; is also essential for teaching and learning of other subjects like

science, history, geography, commerce and even mathematics. Therefore, reading should be given proper status in our educational process, by considering it as a separate subject in the curriculum, in both primary and secondary levels.

Emphasis on reading alone will not be sufficient if the reading interests of students are not taken care of. By the time, a child reaches the age of ten or so, he acquires sufficient reading ability, and it is high time that he should be motivated to do extra-reading according to his interest, otherwise the teaching of reading skill itself will be useless. The time, money, and labour spent on teaching reading will not give fruitful result if children are not given scope and encouragement to develop their interest for reading varied materials.

In a democratic and developing country like India where the future of the nation depends upon the quality of our children, the need of interest in reading is more. It is the good readers who make a good society and good society on which the proper functioning of a democracy depends. But, in India, the need and importance of reading interest has not yet been given proper emphasis in our educational process. NCERT (1965) put some emphasis on reading by publishing a journal on reading, but very little follow up work has been pursued so far.

1.6 READING INTEREST AND SCHOOL

The school is the most formal agency of education. Besides, giving formal education one of the sacred duty of the school is to conserve the culture and to transmit it to the next generation. As a social institution, a school fulfils the special needs of society by socializing the individuals. Socialization refers to the process by which a school gives knowledge to the child both curricular and extra-curricular and thereby makes him adjustable with other members of the society.

To carry out these duties in a befitting manner, the school must consider the need and importance of reading interest of students. To acquaint students with the culture of the country, text book knowledge alone is not at all sufficient. The students must be introduced to different types of reading materials other than their text books.

A child without the information or knowledge of what is going on in and around him will be restricted to his limited academic knowledge, and hence will be unable to scope with the changing needs of time and society. Thus, the school if it does not given emphasis on reading interest of students will fail in its duty towards socializing the child.

In a democratic country like India with so many problems in education to be tackled by the government, the



schools should willingly take up the responsibility of developing and encouraging reading interests in students. Because it is one of the duties of the educational institutions to train students for efficient citizenship and to foster in them those skills and attitudes which enable them to contribute something constructive for betterment of the society. School should play the role of the centre of communication not only between pupils and teachers but also between students-population and the society. A school programme, in order to achieve these goals should put emphasis both on curricular and non-curricular activities highlighting the reading interest of students which is one of the most important tools to achieve these and such objectives.

The importance of reading interest is clearly recognized in schools in western countries. Today, more time and effort has been spent on finding out interest of students in reading different kinds of materials and the impact of factors like age, sex, S.E.S., intelligence, etc. on development and nature of reading interests. But, it is regrettable that in Indian schools and colleges the impetus of reading interests of children on their personality development is neglected. The teachers do not pay heed to the fact that interest in extra-reading may even help in better academic achievement of their students. Thus, it is very important that our teachers, students and the society at large should be aware of the need and significance

1 of reading interest in the life of the growing children.

1.7 RATIONALE OF THE STUDY

Reading is one of the three R's with which a child starts his education. The success of academic life depends to a large extent upon the ability to read correctly as well on correct comprehensive ability.

Interest in reading on the other hand enhance both the ability of proper reading and comprehension. Surveys show that a child can read and comprehend even difficult materials if it is to his interest. Thus, interest in reading not only helps in academic life, it also helps in the progress and upliftment of other spheres of life.

An interest in reading varied materials makes a person conversant with what is going in and around himself and helpshim to adjust well with this fast changing and developing world.

The need and importance of reading interest is very great in the life of the growing children. In the changing world of today where there is explosion of knowledge due to tremendous growth of science and technology a boy or a girl, who does not read extra materials, other than the text books will be prisoner in his or her small cell of knowledge and shall be unable to adjust well with life. Hence, to develop and locate interest of

2

students for various materials and also to provide them with suitable books and other reading material is one of the sacred duties of the parents, teachers and other members of the society at large.

There are various factors that may affect upon reading interest of children. These factors may be related to cognitive abilities of the child as well as environmental factors. Hence, it is essential that while trying to discuss reading interest of children, these factors should be taken care of.

It has been observed that reading and reading interest of children were given due status in education and research in western countries. But coming to India the picture is a gloomy one. Uptil now in the field of research in education this is a neglected area. Very few studies have been done in this area compared to other areas of education. The Centre of Advanced Study in Education - the only one of its kind in India - so famous for its contribution towards research in education, has only two doctoral works on reading (by Parikh and Koper). Not a single work so far has been done in doctoral level on the area of reading interest.

By considering the need and importance of reading interest, the probable factors that may affect on it and realizing the lack of research in this highly pragmatic

3

and fertile area of education, the investigator thought it worthwhile to take up the present study, that is, "To Inquire into Reading Interests of Pupils of Standards VIII to X in Relation to Intelligence, S.E.S. and Academic Achievement."

1.8 SCHEME OF CHAPTERISATION

The scheme of chapterisation in the present study is presented below:

In the first chapter, significance of reading and reading interest, the need and value of reading interest in adolescents' life, factors affecting reading interest, the status of reading and reading interest in Indian education, role of reading interest and the school, rationale of the present study has been discussed in detail.

The second chapter contains a review of the researches done in the field of reading and reading interest and the variables undertaken in the present study in abroad as well as in India.

The third chapter presents the method and procedure adopted in the study, the statement of the problem, conceptual and operational definitions of the terms used in the study, objectives of the study, hypotheses, limitations of the study, selection of the sample,

4 Selection and description of the tools, administration and scoring of the tools and data collection and system of analysis of the data.

Chapter fourth deals in details with the analysis and interpretation of the data.

Chapter fifth gives the summary, major findings, suggestions for further research in the area and conclusion.

The bibliography is then incorporated.

In the appendices copies of the tools used in the study, scoring procedure and other related materials have been included.