

School Library Services as a Catalyst for the Better Basic Education in Nigeria

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Abstract - This paper reviews existing literature on how school library services could lead to better basic educational system in Nigeria. Extent literature reviewed that there is poor state of library services to pre-primary, primary and post primary education institutions in Nigeria, providing learning resources is the primary and fundamental role of the school library. Education cannot be achieved without resources that will enhance learning activities. The study concluded that library resources and services are grossly inadequate in many primary and post primary schools in Nigeria and several factors have been attributed to this anomaly in our education system. However the study therefore recommends that the school library authorities should improve in creating more awareness on library services and programmes; the library management in collaboration with the school authorities should provide more fund to run the library effectively; the school management authorities should provide a befitting and well equipped building for the library.

Keywords: School; Library Services; Basic; Education; Nigeria

I. INTRODUCTION

It is a known fact that no nation can thrive without adequate provision of sound and qualitative education to its citizenry. Education, therefore, is considered the bedrock of every developed society, it is largely viewed as a lifelong learning process spanning the years from infancy to adulthood (Usoro & Usanga 2007). Education does not only liberate the mind; it equally empowers an individual to make meaningful contributions to his society.

Suffice to say the importance of education in sustainable national development, hence the United Nations' consideration of education among its sustainable development goals. The United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG) which bothers on education aims at ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education and promotes lifelong learning for all. By implication, the SDG 4 and its sub-goals were developed to provide an opportunity for every individual to benefit quality education and lifelong learning.

Consequently, each nation has a policy on education which provides direction on the type and quality of education each citizen should acquire, and the bedrock of every education is the pre-primary and primary. Nigeria National Policy of Education stated the five aims and objectives of education

to include: a free and democratic society; a just egalitarian society; a united, strong and self-reliant nation; a great and dynamic economy; and a land full of bright opportunities for all citizens. Educational objectives can duly be achieved in stages as a child develops. This stage of development is crucial for the development of future citizens. Just as a child cannot stand up and walk from birth, so one cannot develop without primary education. It is the foundation upon which the rest of our educational system is built (Usoro & Usanga, 2007).

The pre-primary and primary education stages are crucial to the development of future adult citizens and workers. (Usoro & Usanga,2007). To emphasize the value of basic education, the Federal Government of Nigeria on September 30, 1999 launched the Universal Basic Education (UBE) programmeme, which is aimed at promoting literacy in Nigeria. The blueprint for UBE, however, defines it as the foundation for sustainable lifelong learning that provides reading, writing, and numeracy skills. It makes provision for a wide variety of formal and informal activities and programmemes designed to enable learners to acquire functional literacy. More so, it is meant to prepare the children for the future, with the ability to think rationally, solve problems creatively, manage and retrieve information, in addition to communicating effectively. It is also designed to in still lifelong learning as a habit since lifelong learning is the organizing principle for education.

Education is centered on children development and it requires necessary tools and skills to attain its desires goals and objectives. The library serves as source of information resources to enhance learning activities in all academic environments. School libraries are very essential infrastructure of any educational institution, for they support teaching, learning and development needs of both teachers and learners. They also facilitate the improvement of reading, writing, and numeracy skills, and the development of independent inquiry and lifelong learning among teachers and learners.

It is in line with this that the International Federation of Library Association (IFLA) Guidelines on School library (2015) explained that school libraries exist throughout the world as learning environments that provide space (physical

and digital), access to resources, and access to activities and services to encourage and support student, teacher, and community learning. The growth of school libraries parallels the growth in education that seeks to equip students with knowledge to operate within and contribute to the betterment of society. While the range of school library facilities and operations varies throughout the world, school libraries everywhere are focused on supporting and advancing students' learning. A school library provides a range of learning opportunities for individuals, small groups, and large groups with a focus on intellectual content, information literacy, and cultural and social development. The learner-oriented focus of a school library supports, extends, and individualizes a school's curriculum. In the same vein, the 2004 Federal Ministry of Education School Library Standards further supports that the library is an integral part of the school, therefore, it must be run according to the standard. According to National Policy of Education (2004), it stated the followings as characteristics of library in the universal education in Nigeria which include:

1. Teaching students the necessary skills required in the use of library.
2. Complementing classroom instruction by exposing the students to a wider selection of books and other resources.
3. Inculcating in students the habits of reading for pleasure and
4. Providing users of the library with information on current issues, etc.

The above clearly described the school library as a development space for both teachers and learners, where the most gainful and suitable learning, collaboration and interpersonal development and experience take place. Whilst also serving as a resource powerhouse for both teachers and learners to achieve desired teaching-learning outcomes and lifelong learning. A major concern that inspired this study is the dismal state of library services to pre-primary, primary and post primary education institutions in Nigeria and more importantly, how school library services have become rather inadequate to address the changing needs of basic education globally. Studies by Akande & Bamise (2017), Moruf (2015), Fakomogbon et.al (2012), Nnadozie (2006) all reported the undesirable state of school library resources, services and programmes in different parts of Nigeria.

School library is a school's physical and digital learning space where reading, inquiry, research, thinking, imagination, and creativity are central to students' information-to-knowledge journey and to their personal, social, and cultural growth. School libraries are given various names such as: school media centre, centre for documentation and information, library resource centre, library learning commons (IFLA, 2005) The above definition of school library further demystifies it as not necessarily a physical space but a platform which could

combine both physical and virtual spaces to provide a balanced collection of rich knowledge, information, resources, skills, and experience that contribute to the development of library users, which in this context are pupils, teachers, head teachers. In the same vein a school library could as well be referred to as a school media resource centre, school library media centre, library resource centre, library learning commons and centre for information.

School libraries are libraries available in pre-primary, primary, and post-primary schools established for the purpose of serving the teaching and learning needs of the pupils, students and their teachers. They provide printed and non-printed resources to facilitate learning (Ternenge & Agipu, 2019). There are various functions of school libraries which include ability to: provide the total learning package required by the students and their teachers; provide a range of learning opportunities for both large and small groups as well as individuals with a focus on intellectual content, information literacy and the learner (Ternenge & Agipu, 2019).

Dike (2000) further corroborates that school library as a learning laboratory per excellence where learners find the world of knowledge, interact directly with resources, acquire information, and develop research skill for lifelong learning. Ternenge & Agipu (2019) also supported that the school library enables the students to look into new ways of learning and with its resources can play a role that aims at new ambitions education result which would be impossible if learning were restricted to the use of direct teaching and textbooks alone without the use of other school library resources.

School library is a learning and development centre that provide access to organized collection of informational, educational, recreational and cultural resources both physical, digital and human resources to meet the learning, development and cultural needs of pupils, students, teachers and other stakeholders within the school community. School libraries form the foundation for a child's independent use of information. This foundation is envisaged to support the child's independent use and analysis of information from childhood through to adulthood much even when formal education would have terminated. The role of the school library is therefore fundamental in the stimulation of learning skills, creative and reflective thinking, and more importantly, independent self-learning.

This fundamental role of the school library in formal learning can be more fully captured when we realize that "the library is not aside from or a buttress to the curriculum but its skills is the very foundations of the curriculum" (Owate & Okpa (2013)

School libraries are invaluable education resources for primary and secondary schools. The National Policy on Education acknowledges this, so also does the Universal Basic Education (UBE) Implementation Guidelines.

Education for All (EFA) implementation frameworks, the International Counterpart of Universal Basic Education (UBE) also recognizes this role of school libraries. Despite these policy guidelines and concern from well-meaning Educationists and Librarians, school libraries have not been given the same attention government has been giving other aspects of the education delivery system.

Features of School libraries according to IFLA (2015), Its analysis the followings as characteristics of school library to include:

1. qualified school librarian with formal education in school librarianship and classroom teaching that enables the professional expertise required for the complex roles of instruction, reading and literacy development, school library management, collaboration with teaching staff, and engagement with the educational community.
2. It must provide targeted high-quality diverse collections (print, multimedia, digital) that support the school's formal and informal curriculum, including individual projects and personal development.
3. To provide explicit policy and plan for ongoing growth and development.

II. FUNCTION OF SCHOOL LIBRARY

The school library is an indispensable infrastructure of any given education institution, especially primary and post primary schools. It is the first point of early learners' expression of creativity and independent learning. The school library is established to serve reading, learning and development interests of pupils, students, teachers and parents among other many purposes in a school setting. Hence, the American Association of School Librarians (AASL) (2013) states the following as the purposes of a school library:

1. To preparing students for informed living in an information-rich society
2. provides learning opportunities that enable students to become efficient, effective, and creative users of information
3. To encourage students to examine the authority of authors and the bias of sponsors; to assess the importance of currency of information to the topic at hand; to determine the scope and relevance of information to meet their needs; and to create and share new ideas, resources, products, and information.
4. The school library with the use of technology and online resources, connects to the community and branches throughout the entire school. Whilst also providing the mechanism for students to access the resources they need consistently, whether in the library, in the classroom, or in the student's home.
5. Provides each individual member of the learning community a venue for exploring questions that arise

out of personalized learning, individual curiosity, and personal interest.

6. To provide leadership and instruction to both students and staff on how to use information technologies constructively, ethically, and safely.
7. To offer services required to accessing and evaluating information and collections of quality physical and virtual resources. In addition, encourage broad and deep exploration of ideas and responsible use of information technologies.
8. Provide opportunities for learners to read for enjoyment. School librarians' skills in the selection and evaluation of resources are critical in providing students, staff, and families with open, non-restricted access to a high-quality collection of reading materials that reflect personal interests and academic needs in multiple formats.
9. The School library takes a leadership role in organizing and promoting literacy projects and events that encourage students to become lifelong learners and readers.
10. The school library is the start point for the freedom to speak and hear what others have to say. Students have the right to choose what they will read, view, or hear and are expected to develop the ability to think clearly, critically, and creatively about their choices, rather than allowing others to do this for them.

IFLA School Library Guidelines (2015) further stressed that the most critical condition for an effective school library programme is access to a qualified school library professional. A school library without a pedagogical programme (i.e., planned comprehensive offering of teaching and learning activities) will not be able to have the kind of impact on teaching and learning that the research demonstrates is possible with a qualified school library professional.

Moreover, a school library should be managed within a clearly structured policy framework that recognizes the library as a centre of reading, inquiry, and collaborative productions. The library policy should be devised bearing in mind the overarching policies and needs of the school and should reflect its ethos, mission, aims, and objectives, as well as its reality. Administrative support for the role of a school library through the library policy is essential to realize the full benefit of a school library programme.

III. SCHOOL LIBRARY COLLECTION

The term school library resources or materials can also be referred to as school library collection, since they are not limited to books stacked on the shelves, a School library collection is a rich blend of information resource materials either in prints or non- prints perfectly organized and made available and accessible for the purpose of meeting the educational, recreational, informational and developmental needs of school library users. There is arguably no school library without adequate library resources, available and

accessible in different media and formats to meet the dynamic needs of very inquisitive school library users. Popoola & Haliso, (2009) stated that information resources in libraries range from the following:

1. Prints Media (study books, story books, newspapers, magazines, reference materials, notes, posters, charts etc);
2. Educational Media- these are library resources that intended to support teaching and learning in the classroom. They come in different formats and stimulate learner's interest. They include educational toys, colorful books etc.
3. Audio-visual resources: these are school library materials that combine the feature of sounds and sights to convey information. They are usually intended to stimulate learners' interest and promote enjoyment for children in the school library resource centre. They include all kinds of audio-visuals such as DVD, CD, video recordings, nursery rhymes, fictional stories, fables recorded with sounds and sights.
4. Digital Resources: digital resources refer to
5. Real Objects
6. Human Resources
7. Library Equipment
8. Reference Materials

IV. IMPORTANCE OF LEARNING RESOURCES AND SERVICES IN SCHOOL LIBRARIES

Providing learning resources is the primary and fundamental role of the school library. Education cannot be achieved without resources that will enhance learning activities; therefore, the library is established in the learning environment to provide information resources for learners. To meet the needs of the learning community the school library provides a range of services.

These services may be delivered within or from a school library facility. The provision of services using information and communication technology (ICT) also presents opportunities to extend the reach of the library to all areas of the school and to the home. A strong network information technology infrastructure provides access to collections, community resources, and curated digital collections, as well as the tools for undertaking research-based inquiry and the construction, presentation, and sharing of knowledge. School library services include:

1. Professional development for the teaching faculty (e.g., reading and literacy, technology, inquiry, and research processes).
2. Vibrant literature/reading programme for academic achievement and personal enjoyment and enrichment.
3. Inquiry-based learning and information literacy development; and collaboration with other libraries (public, government, community resources)
4. Mobile library services to underserved communities and schools.

School libraries provide significant value to the educational community. The value added extends beyond the materials in a school library collection to the services provided through a vibrant school library programme and a qualified school librarian (IFLA 2015).

The school library remains a very important infrastructure of any primary and secondary school; it is the bastion of information and knowledge that help to shape the programmes and curriculum of the school (Diyaolu and Ologunde, 2019). School library enhances support for effective curriculum development which provides both resources and personnel to ensure that the learners can be effective in the use of ideas and information through text and multimedia programmes.

Amucheazi (2001) argued that today's school is excellent because the direct support of the school library is fundamental to the basic design and optimum implementation of educational programmes of excellence. The essence of the school library resource centre is basically to support and enrich the formal curriculum of the school, to act as a broadening influence by providing students with the means of studying theories and ideas put forward by others than their teachers or textbooks and to facilitate research. Usoro and Usanga (2007) expounded that libraries are as important for children as education itself. Library services imply both availability and accessibility of library facilities and services to the user and the willingness and ability of readers to use the facilities and services. Information is power and access to information is indispensable to individual advancement as well as corporate educational development.

It is believed that children need the library for effective learning for lifelong education, in congruence with the National Policy on education (1993), which states that, "the aim of basic education is to equip individual with such knowledge, skill, and attitude that will enable them to:

1. live meaningful and fulfilling lives
2. Contribute to the development of the society
3. derive maximum social economic and cultural benefits from the society and
4. Discharge their civil obligation.

Elaborating on the role of the school library in an environment of learning, Usoro and Usanga (2007) maintains that today's library is like a big playground waiting to be explored and the librarian is the best playmate: one who makes the playground more worthwhile. The foregoing lends credence to the opinion of Hebert (1997) that children's literacy develops and emerges as they explore and participate in a literacy-rich environment.

At the center of such an environment are books and other resources with contents that are familiar and appealing to children.

V. STATE OF SCHOOL LIBRARIES IN NIGERIA

The pitiable state of school libraries in Nigeria have rather become an over flogged issue in the past decades, several authors have taken turns to express and report the unfortunate state of school libraries, their services, infrastructure and underdevelopment across our primary and post primary institutions in Nigeria. Studies by Boelens, H. (2012) Lawal-Solarin (2016); Uzuegbu and Ibiyemi (2013); Ajegbomogun and Salaam (2011); Arua and Chinaka (2011); and Adetoro (2005); reported the inadequacy of school library resources, both prints and digital, dearth of qualified library professionals, inadequate innovative library services, and worst still, absence of basic library facilities such as reading tables, chairs, computers, media resources like TV, speakers, DVD etc., inadequate funding, and lack of continuous professional training and development for library professionals and para-professionals.

Furthermore, Moruf (2015) also lamented the inadequate provision for school library development in Akinyele Local Government of Oyo State. In the same vein, Obajemu (2003) stated that school libraries were yet to achieve any meaningful growth in the educational system of Lagos State. The school libraries were completely undeveloped, under-staffed, under-used and improperly organized. Also, the facilities were inadequate, and the collections were obsolete. In a study of school library services in selected primary schools under the Universal Basic Education Board (UBEC) in Oyo State, findings indicated that library facilities and resources were inadequate and little attention was given to the provision of this by the government and the school authorities. Qualified library personnel were lacking which resulted in low quality service. Lack of fund and lack of awareness of library services by the users were also part of the problems facing the libraries, unconcerned attitude of people towards the library among other factors are major challenges facing school library services.

A closer look at the body of literature combed so far presents a rather sordid picture of school library services to Nigeria's future generation. This further casts serious aspersions on the commitment and genuine interest of the government and key education stakeholders in revamping our education sector. A rich and well-equipped school library is expected to breed academic excellence, sound character and intellectual development of the future generation. Where there are available school libraries, it was reported that they were grossly understaffed and do not have very engaging and rather provocative content that can stimulate the reading, and personal development interest of both teachers and students.

The scenario presented above therefore necessitates very drastic approach and urgent steps should be taken to ensure that useful and well-planned library services cascade down to the much deserving pupils, students and teachers in our pre-primary, primary and post-primary schools across the federation.

VI. CONCLUSION

School libraries are no doubt critical to developing and realizing Nigeria's education goal, more importantly enhance the Universal basic education agenda of the Federal Government of Nigeria as advanced by the Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC). Extant literature showed that library resources and services are grossly inadequate in many primary and post primary schools in Nigeria and several factors have been attributed to this anomaly in our education system. Notable of which are inadequate funding, lack of political will to implement important education policies aimed at driving access to and improving school library services, inadequate manpower, poor staffing practices, poor ICT infrastructure, poor library facilities, and lack of awareness of the importance of school libraries.

VII. RECOMMENDATIONS

This study therefore recommends the following:

1. The school library authorities should improve in creating more awareness on library services and programmes that will promote learning activities for the pupils and student academic improvement.
2. The library management in collaboration with the school authorities should provide more fund to run the library effectively, by providing various facilities and equipments such as (conducive environment, good chairs and tables, current and relevant information resources, digital resources, among others) that will motivate users into visiting the library
3. The school management authorities should provide a befitting and well equip building for the library as this will promote learning activities in the schools
4. The state library board as well as the school library association and the Nigeria Library Association should as a matter of urgency create a policy guideline for creating beautiful school library spaces. Such library spaces should be creatively organized to entertain a range of user-centre programmes aimed at enhancing literacy, numeracy, and lifelong learning development.

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