

Full Length Research

Availability of School Libraries and their Standards in selected Secondary Schools in Owerri West Local Government Area of Imo State

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This study examined the uneven availability and development of school libraries in selected secondary schools in Imo State, Nigeria. The study aims at finding out whether the school libraries meet standards set by the American Library Association and the School Library Association. Descriptive survey research method was used and structured questionnaire was used for data collection. Simple statistics was used to analyse the data while 2.5 was adopted as the acceptable benchmark. The study revealed that the schools studied have libraries that are centrally located; books and the condition of the libraries are good. However, there was disagreement on staff development while none of the schools met the minimum standard set by the American Library Association and the School Library Association. Other areas not met by the school libraries include: pupils-book ratio, facilities such as electricity, ICT, funding, quality of books, journals, magazines and reference materials. Also lending and borrowing of books, seats and tables with seating capacity ranging from 15, 40 and 50 respectively for each school were seen as not meeting the minimum standard for school libraries.

Keywords: School Libraries, Standards, Librarians, Information, Learning Skills

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INTRODUCTION

An appropriate definition of a school library is essential before any meaningful research about school libraries can be carried out (Boelens, 2012). The International School Library Association states that school libraries are libraries found in pre-primary, primary, secondary schools and colleges geared toward ensuring the academic growth of these schools. They help in providing books and other instructional materials required by students and

teachers. These libraries are usually located within the school environment for easy access to both the students and teachers.

The major objective of setting up a school library is to inculcate reading habit early in the life of school children thereby promoting the love for reading. Establishment of school libraries is also meant to support school curriculum by expanding resources to enhance teaching

and learning. The school library sometimes offer advice on professional development and knowledge of appropriate learning and teaching materials including digital and non-digital media in both traditional and emerging forms. While (Dike, 2005) identifies school libraries as a recent phenomenon, Ogunsheye (1992) sees school library as a dynamic agency. In the opinion of (Fayose, 1995), school libraries as that part of the school where a collection of books, periodicals, magazines and newspapers, video tapes, study kits and other information materials are kept for use by the pupils.

The concept of administration of school libraries involves the co-ordination of human and material resources for the purpose of achieving stated aims and objectives of the institution. Administration could be seen as a process involving human beings jointly working towards achieving common goals. In order to ensure a functional, effective and efficient management and administration of school libraries, there is need for a thorough definition of the school library environment and determination of the nature and scope of school libraries. For school library administration to yield the desired results, there is need for the employment of adequate and well-trained professional librarians to manage the affairs of the school libraries. The effective and efficient management of school libraries will be achieved through proper management of school library personnel, finances, collection and access to information resources through promotion of information literacy on all platforms.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Library is the heart of any academic institution and without the library the institution will be unable to realize its objectives. This will generally manifest in poor academic performance and low standard of education. The poor reading habit among secondary school children is attributable to the non-existence of quality school libraries. There is also lack of commitment on the part of most school administrators or management staff to the development of school libraries in Nigeria. These and other problems have negatively affected the development of school libraries in most cases. Studies have been conducted on school library development in different parts of Imo State but none of these studies dealt with secondary school libraries in Owerri West Local Government Area.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

It is the objective of this paper to:

- (i) To find out how many schools have provision for school library

- (ii) To ascertain the level of development of secondary school libraries in Owerri West
- (iii) To find out the condition of secondary school libraries
- (iv) To find out the level of availability of library resources in these secondary schools
- (v) To investigate the level of adequacy of facilities existing in the selected school libraries using ALA and SLA Standards

LITERATURE REVIEW

Library as a store house and a collection of books is perhaps in contrast today with this earlier understanding. Today, a library is established to acquire process, organize, store, preserve, retrieve and disseminate information for reading, study and reference (Okoro, 1999). In Nigeria, in furtherance of the critical role of the library, the National Policy on Education (1982) states that libraries are important educational service and that every state education ministry should establish libraries and train librarians in all educational institutions in their states. This policy, therefore, implicitly recognizes the near inevitable position of school libraries in the educational development of a child. This issue of training for school librarians also was opined by (Boelens, 2012).

School library is established in primary, post-primary or in teacher training institutions in Nigeria to support learning activities. According to Norman (2004) school library is designed to serve the needs of both the students and the teacher to supplement or support teaching and learning. In his opinion, Nnadozie (2007) categorized school libraries resources to include: accommodation, collection (book and non-book materials), finance, staff, equipment and furniture. Fayose (1995) had earlier discussed in a paper what constitutes a good school library as "... necessary library resources that make for a functional school library." International Association of School Librarianship (IASL, 2012) observes that people who run school libraries are often teachers, parents, volunteers and sometimes the children themselves, who have received various levels of (or virtually none) training in library and information science.

Nevertheless, many authors have described as worrisome the state of some school libraries in Imo State (Okey, 2000), (Oduagu, 2006) and (Nnadozie, 2007). School library development vary from place to place there-by making a broad-based standard measure on international, regional and national levels a daunting exercise. Although a country by country studies show that school libraries have a positive correlation with students' academic success while equipping students with life-long learning skills and develops their imagination (Tiware, 2013). IFLA/UNESCO in their school library school

agenda provides that information is necessary for successful and improved knowledge. School libraries are designed to support students learning skills and to make them become responsible citizens and to achieve this depends on the provision of relevant and adequate information resources. To achieve this, some web-based resources like reader advisory services, core collection, collection development portals and library furniture vendors can be of immense help to the school librarian/media specialist. The role of school libraries in promoting children's love for reading is a major reason why adequate attention must be paid to the quality of school library services provided for our children.

Meanwhile, the disparity in the development of school libraries in developed and developing countries make comparison of standards a huge task. Makuwi (1990), Fayose (1995) remarked that schools not adhering to any set of standard as a problematic situation. Odusanya (1998) and Elaturoti (1983) saw poor funding, lack of professional staff and inadequate collection as the major impediments of school libraries. It was also observed that to assess, evaluate or to determine the success rates of school libraries has not been easy because many methods have been adopted or applied and no single method can be said to be the best or to be able to produce the best result (Anyanwu, 2006), (Eguavon, 2002) and (Ifidon, 1997). However, Iheaturu (2002) cautioned that for any evaluation to be circumspect, it must embrace scope, purpose and method. However, specific library school elements have been isolated using correlation and factor analysis to compare students' achievements. Also the American Association of School Libraries (2007) published some criteria or elements as standards for school libraries.

Meanwhile, review of relevant literature shows that in many countries a school librarian is usually a teacher in-charge of the school library in addition to full teaching work-load. The term "school librarian" or "teacher librarian" is used for qualified personnel but is also used to refer to anyone manning the school library, even a clerk. Library staff should be encouraged to take advantage of available training programmes whenever possible to enhance their qualifications so that they will eventually become trained (accredited) school librarians/teacher librarians (Boelens, 2012). There seem to be a great variety in the development of school libraries and their staff as described above, yet with a common purpose - a focus on the improvement of students' learning. The learning environment which school libraries operate will certainly differ. The School Library Association, however, argues that there is need to distinguish between defining a school library and setting standards or guidelines for basic requirements of school libraries.

Some of the critical functions/central roles which a school library would be expected to perform are

promoting learning, supporting school curriculum, expanding resources to support teaching and learning skills, offering professional advice on development and knowledge of appropriate teaching and learning materials in traditional and emerging forms (digital and non-digital). School libraries should teach students media and information literacy skills on all platforms while at the same time thoughtfully introducing and integrating available information and communication technologies. Also the school library supports inquiry and ensures that learners are effective and ethical users and producers of information (SLA, 2012).

School library provides expertise in pedagogy, media and information literacy skills. School libraries throughout the world are expected to be run or managed by school librarians/teacher librarians who have been educated or trained to carry out this work and have received applicable accreditation. Sometimes questions may arise whether lack of qualified personnel can deny it the status of a school library. School library resources include print and non-print materials critical for supporting educational curriculum for teaching and learning (Harzell, 2002).

Accommodation for the school library is also important and not only central school libraries but also classroom library corners and portable libraries that provide school library services in many parts of the world (AASL, 2007). An international school library toolkit would provide instruments and services for school libraries and should be appropriate for (full or partial) usage in many different learning situations. It should be possible to apply this toolkit to school libraries in developing and developed countries in a given region.

(Boelens, 2012) submits that the concept of the functions of school libraries vary from place to place even as they come in different shapes and sizes from one country to another. Some school library collections are highly inadequate as a result of inadequate funding leading to insufficient number of books for students in the school. Where books are available, they are often obsolete and sometimes books in indigenous languages are not available for the student to use for learning due to poor development of book trade in the country. In some cases schools do not have any provision for a room or special space set aside for use as the school library.

School Library Standards

Library standards are criterion used to measure and evaluate the degree of development and general condition of libraries. Library standards provide outline for specific library activities and defines an ideal state of a school library. These standards are professionally developed and usually indicate a direction which the library is expected to follow and at the same time provide management information to the school administrator.

Standards usually have international, national and regional scope and usually describe staff requirements, collection (print and non-print), equipment and budgetary specifications required for effective library services normally per hundred students (AALS, 2007). Ahanene (2011), Akanwa (2002) and Elaturoti (1990) have listed what they consider necessary print and non-print information resources required for an effective and efficient service for a school library.

There is a substantial body of large-scale studies that use correlation and factor analysis to isolate specific school library elements that contribute to student academic achievements represented by state test scores. One of such studies is that undertaken in the US State of Colorado in 1993 (Williams, Wavell, & Coles, 2002). Although these studies use state-wide data, the useable data or actual respondents vary considerably from thousands of schools in the sample (Achterman, 2008). One major pre-requisite for these large-scale studies is a census of the current state of school libraries in the target area and level of school library provision in order to conduct analysis between different library service elements. Sometimes, this has been done routinely at specified periods at a state level and the data is made available for subsequent analysis and decision-making while at other times, a preliminary survey is conducted as the first phase of a study. The test-score data are correlated with census data of school library inputs and output activities using published national or state standards for school libraries. Types of library elements examined in these studies include:

- Number of staff, number of staffing hours,
- Hours of operation, both during school and outside school hours,
- Library staff qualifications, whether licensed, endorsed, certified, graduate, etc.,
- Budget or spending, typically per capita or per 100 students,
- Collection size, number of fiction and non-fiction books, periodicals, DVDs and videos (AASL, 2007).

In order to isolate the extent of impact library services on test-scores, the study data were analyzed against other school, community or socio-economic factors such as number or percentage of students receiving free or reduced school lunches as an indicator of low income, parental education, ethnicity, English language learners, average teacher salary and teacher qualification. More recent studies examined certain aspects of library provision in detail or looked more closely at some of the socio-economic factors (Lance & Hofschire, 2012). Several other studies examined achievement gaps in more detail sometimes concentrating their analysis between high and low academic achieving schools and schools with high or low quality library services.

(Lance, Rodney, & Schwartz, 2010) and (Achterman, 2008) reported that the support of the principal or the school administrator is an important indicator of the quality of library services provided. A study in Pennsylvania also sought principals' perceptions of their school libraries and the impact on student learning and how the responses relate to test scores. The role of librarians in helping to educate teachers was reported in (Hughes & Bozorgian, 2013) where the impact of summer reading programmes was specifically high-lighted in the study. In addition to these large-scale studies, the review identified a number of studies using school or local tests on small population samples either in a single school or across a few schools. The value of these studies is in informing stakeholders that school libraries indeed have a positive correlation with academic achievements represented by higher test results. Meanwhile, it is important to point out here that most of these studies tend to be set in different countries such as Australia, Canada, Hong Kong, Indonesia, Northern Ireland, Netherlands, Nigeria, Norway and USA. Quality school library makes positive impact on students' learning and the nature of that learning impact on the various school library users and stakeholders can be measured (Todd & Heinstrom, 2006) and (Hay, 2006). Meanwhile in Kenya, a study discovered that school libraries are better developed there than in some other African countries where standards fall below ALA minimum standard for school libraries (Makuwi, 1990). This will not be a surprise to the reader when one remembers that different countries and contents of the world have continued to develop at varying degrees thereby making real school library development standard on a global level something that require a rethink.

RESEARCH DESIGN AND DATA COLLECTION

The survey research method was employed for this study. Three schools were selected from a total of nine government approved secondary schools in Owerri West and Ohaji Local Government Areas, Imo State and proportionate sampling technique was used to select a sample of 30 teachers out of 115 teachers. The school libraries were studied using the School Library Association (SLA) and the American Library Association (ALA) standards on:

- (i) Staffing
- (ii) Status of the library
- (iii) Space available
- (iv) Collection
- (v) Budget

The data collected was statistically analyzed and the four point Likert Scale was used with 2.5 as the benchmark.

Table 1. Availability of school libraries in Owerri West

Name of School	Variables	Location
(a) Army Day Secondary School	Yes	Central
-	Yes	Central
(c) Ohaji High School	Yes	Central

Table 2: Level of development of school libraries in Owerri West

Statements	SA	A	D	SD		Remarks
Meets ALA recommended minimum standard for schools	06 20%	08 26.7%	05 16.7%	11 36.7%	2.3	Disagree
Provision of standard facilities for staff and students	02 6.7%	09 30%	06 20%	13 43%	2	Disagree
Collection development	12 40%	10 33.3%	02 6.7%	08 26.7%	3.0	Agree
Funding	-	-	07 23.3%	23 76.7%	1.2	Disagree
ICT facilities	-	-	12 40%	28 60%	1.7	Disagree
Staff development	10 3.3%	04 13.3%	04 13.3%	16 53.3%	2.5	Disagree

Data Presentation

The data collected is presented in Table 1 for analysis and interpretation.

The responses above show that school libraries exist in the selected secondary schools under study. The libraries are centrally located and are accessible to the users as shown in Table 2.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

All the schools agreed that school library contributes to improved learning skills among students. The schools have qualified librarians with support staff and information resources for these libraries.

Teachers' responses as indicated in Table 2 show a downturn in the development of school libraries in Owerri West LGA of Imo State. Although there is an indication of improvement in the areas of acquisition of books and other reference materials, this cannot be said to be enough as these materials were not adequate in terms of number of copies so as to compare favourably with other libraries in terms of ALA standards and recommendations of a basic minimum collection of 20,000 items for 500 pupils. This situation is compounded by lack of funds for school library development as 100% of the respondents reported in adequate funding for their libraries.

Table 3 show different conditions of school libraries in

Owerri West LGA where many of the respondents reported that condition of books were perfect which is very clear with a mean score of 3.0. Another set of respondents were of the view that the condition of journals and periodicals were adequate. Tables and chairs as well as staffing situation in these libraries were also considered adequate. However, facilities such as proper electricity supply, fans and air conditioners were lacking in these schools.

Table 4 indicates that the school libraries were not stocked with a large number of books yet available ones were of good quality and relevant to the school curriculum as seen from the mean score of 2.9 which is more than the benchmark of 2.5. Also indicated is the quality of service and space provision for readers. Large number of journals and periodicals in the libraries are very old which invariably is as a result of poor funding prevalent in types of libraries and not just school libraries as was revealed in Table 3.

The recommended standard for school libraries by The American Library Association (ALA) is 20,000 volumes for a school of 500 pupils while The School Libraries Association (SLA) recommends that the library should stock a minimum of 10 items per pupil. The above statements can mathematically be represented as follows: $(20,000 \div 500 = 40)$. Therefore, for a school of 500 students its collection will accommodate 40 items per pupil. Going by the School Library Association recommended standard, a school with a population of

Table 3: Condition of school libraries in Owerri West

Statements	SA	A	D	SD		Remarks
Good library environment	11 36.7%	16 53.3%	01 3.3%	02 6.7%	2.8	Agree
The books are in good condition	09 30%	13 43.3%	08 26.7%	- -	3.0	Agree
There exist a good number of periodicals	14 46.7%	11 36.7%	03 10%	02 6.7%	3.2	Agree
Facilities such as electricity, fans and a/c	07 23.3%	04 13.3%	09 30%	10 33.3%	2.2	Disagree
Provision of seats and tables	12 40%	15 50%	- -	03 10%	2.8	Agree
Staff in the school libraries	10 33.3%	13 43.3%	04 13.3%	03 10%	2.8	Agree

Table 4: Quality of available school library resources

Statements	SA	A	D	SD		Remarks
Good quality books	07 23.3%	13 43.3%	10 33.3%	- -	2.9	Agree
Quality journals and magazines	- -	0.5 16.7%	17 56.7%	08 26.7%	1.9	Disagree
Quality of reference materials	14 46.7%	11 36.7%	04 13.3%	01 3.3%	2	Disagree
Enough reading space	04 13.3%	07 23.3%	04 13.3%	15 50%	2	Disagree
Lending and borrowing of books are allowed	- -	- -	03 10%	27 90%	1.1	Disagree

Table 5: Showing the standards of the school libraries under study

SLA/ALA Standards	Army Day Sec. Sch., Obinze.	FUTO Staff Sec., School, Ihiagwa.	Ohaji High School.
Staff	2	1	2
Collection	320 Vols. including computers & graphics	109 Vols.	1005 Vols.
Status	Teacher Librarian/Lang Specialist with (MLS)	Registered Librarian with (MLS) in Librarianship	Teacher librarian with (MLS)
Space	Seating Capacity :50 students	Seating Capacity:15 students	Seating capacity: 40 Students
Budget	Nil	Nil	Nil
Population	540	511	453
Ratio of Books to Students	2 students per book	3 students per book	1 student per two books

500 students should have a minimum of 5000 volumes in its collection, which translates to 10 items per pupil.

Therefore, the school libraries did not meet the recommended standard Table 5.

CONCLUSION

This study revealed that school libraries in the two local government areas investigated did not meet the required minimum standard set by ALA, SLA and AASL. There are indications that efforts are being made to improve in areas like staffing. Fund is not provided to bring the libraries up to the required standard.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are hereby made to further improve the standard of the school libraries:

Government should make funds available to school administrators to enable them acquire the needed materials

- i Efforts should be made to ensure that school library collection is relevant to the school curriculum
- ii Adequate facilities should be provided to improve school library services
- iii. ICT facilities should be provided.

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