

SURVEY OF THE RESOURCES AND USE OF THE LIBRARIES OF THREE SELECTED SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN OWERRI METROPOLIS

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Abstract

This research work surveys the resources and use of the libraries of three selected Secondary Schools in Owerri metropolis with a view to ascertaining the availability, level of adequacy of the resources and use vis – a –vis the standards. The questionnaire, interview and personal observation methods were employed in data collection. The respondents were made up of 30 teachers and 270 students from the three schools. The findings revealed an ineffective use of the libraries due to gross inadequacy of the resources of the libraries and other problems hampering the effective use of the libraries and their resources. Recommendations were made for a way forward.

Keywords: School Libraries, Secondary Schools, Library Resources, Library Use, Owerri

Introduction

The important function of education is the transfer of instructive knowledge from one generation to the next. It is the key resource of any nation. Abundance of information without the processes of, organization and accessibility becomes a wasted development. It is on this premise that the Federal Ministry of Education, taking due cognizance of the importance of information, and the role of libraries in its management, made specific provision for libraries in its National Policy on Education as a functional part of every school system (The Nigerian National Policy on Education, 1987).

The Nigerian National Policy on Education (1987) takes a clear stand in its mandate, viz: “every State Ministry of Education needs to provide funds for the establishment of libraries in all our educational institutions and train librarians and Library Assistants for this service” It recognizes school libraries as playing very vital roles in the education of the child, and therefore an indispensable component of every school. Rosenfeld (2005) reports that Gerald Kennedy, the Canadian Minister, in recognition of the importance of school libraries announced a grant of \$17 million in March 2005 to improve school libraries’ collection in order to improve students’ academic achievement. He stated that school libraries have a powerful influence on stimulating interest in reading and strengthening research and critical thinking skills of students. Usoro and Usanga (2007) observed that the information resources must be made available and accessible to children who must be educated and encouraged to use the resources effectively. Primary school children must develop a reading habit that will encourage literacy and life-long education.

Among other things, the 2006 IFLA Manifesto stipulates that “the school library must be organized and maintained according to professional standards”. Unfortunately, what is obtainable as school libraries in very many schools in the country are considered a far cry from the ideal. In the words of Adetoro (2006), “School libraries are a distance from being “resource centers” and widespread school libraries are yet to become a norm or ideal all over

the nation. The impact of school libraries has not yet been felt on the educational scene in Nigeria". This, Shaibu (2001) and Obajemu (2002) attributed to inadequate resources, insufficient and improper staffing, inadequate curriculum among others. Based on the foregoing, the researchers therefore embarked on the survey of the availability and use of the school library resources of Federal Government Girls' College (FGGC) Owerri; Owerri Girls' Secondary School (OGSS) and Ikenegbu Girls' Secondary School, Owerri, (IGSSO) in order to determine the status of school libraries in Owerri.

Objectives of the Study

This survey is carried out in order to:

- xi. Ascertain the availability/non-availability of school libraries in the selected schools.
- xii. Identify the resources available in the libraries.
- xiii. Assess the adequacy/inadequacy of the resources available.
- xiv. Investigate the effectiveness of students' use of the libraries and their resources.
- xv. Identify the problems affecting effective service delivery in the libraries.
- xvi. Offer useful suggestions to improve the libraries' performance.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

Is there a library in your school?

What resources are available in your library?

Are the resources in your library adequate?

How effective do students use the resources of the library?

What are the problems encountered in the provision of effective services in the library? What suggestions can improve the libraries' performances?

Literature Review

School libraries are libraries in primary and secondary schools whose collections are mainly for the young. Joseph (2003) defines school library as "an organized collection of books and other learning materials placed in a school for the use of teachers and pupils who are the major patrons in the school libraries". Ogunseye (1993) sees it as "a learning resource centre of a school, responsible for making a total learning package required for students, teachers and parents". Apparently, the school library service is one of the crucial factors which facilitate the implementation of the new educational policy and objectives by promoting the efficiency and general effectiveness of learning and teaching. It provides an environment in which teachers can develop and update their knowledge and teaching skills. Learners can also find materials to supplement and enrich what has been taught in class. It also provides an independent means of education where users can work at their own pace to achieve their desired goals. Stressing its indispensability, Chima-James and Okoye (2006) purported that Secondary schools are established to prepare and train students for the challenges in the university education; therefore, a standard school library should be put in place for their effective preparation.

The goals, purpose and use of the library have been summarily put forward in the IFLA Manifesto (2006) and by Oguntimehin (2004) to include:

- xvii. Supporting and enhancing educational goals.
- xviii. Encouraging, developing and sustaining the reading habit in children.
- xix. Providing access to local, regional, national and global resources and opportunities.
- xx. Developing in students the ability to learn from books independently.

- xxi. Breaking down rigid divisions which the school time table often creates.
- xxii. Giving social training.
- xxiii. Supporting the teaching programme of the school
- xxiv. Providing resources to enhance academic growth and development.

Supporting the above purposes, Edoke (1992) also enumerated very many functions which the school library performs. These functions in all school library work are to help the pupil to use books and the library independently, to train him to discover facts, check and compare evidence and form judgments for himself. Skills thus acquired at this level may serve for life; their values in advanced work cannot be over emphasized. According to Adeniji (2006), “both library and the school are inseparable twins that one ceases to function effectively without the other”. School library therefore is an integral part of the school system which has to be necessarily catered for.

There are various problems besetting school libraries, such as:

Inadequate space and equipment

The most widely experienced disappointment in public schools today is the dilapidated structures used as libraries which cannot be compared with what obtains in the private schools in Nigeria. The buildings are as awry as the furniture are grossly inadequate. Ojoade (1993) and Adetoro (2005) stated that school libraries in Nigeria do exist in secondary schools, but many almost in name, because all the elements required for them to operate are not put in place. The absence of these facilities continue to hamper building of the much sought reading culture among school children in Nigeria.

Dearth of current reading materials

As a result of gross under-funding of school libraries by Nigerian government, current books, periodicals, magazines, fictions and non-fictions that must support teaching and learning in the school libraries are not provided. The high cost of books has not helped matters at all. Government policies are also negatively affecting the publishing industry in Nigeria as a result of traffic barriers and high taxes, coupled with high cost of indigenous publishing.

Employment of unqualified personnel

Staffing is also part of the problems hindering effective use of library and information centre in primary and secondary schools in Nigeria. Mbagwu, and Akanwa, (2012) in their opinion decried lack of training for library staff, irregular payment of salaries and poor conditions of salaries. Aguolu (2002) is of the view that the teacher- librarians should be duly qualified

Insufficient Funding

In recent times, government has not faithfully released due grants to the schools. Supporting this view, Mbagwu, and Akanwa (2012), posit that there is an apparent lack of interest in school libraries by the government. This lack of financial resources has only retarded positive change in the schools. In their own contribution, **Oloruntoba and Bolarinwa (2000)** observed that for proper functioning of a school library, every State ministry of education should provide funds for the establishment of libraries in all our schools.

Low level of information technology development

Lack of financial resources and high cost of computer accessories has reduced the trends in the adoption of automated library system in school libraries. Also, where it is available; students are restricted from using them. Dike (2005) in her paper also enumerated the following – accommodation, personnel, inadequate training for teacher – librarians, inadequate library periods, funding, and lack of library awareness as problems and issues that need to be addressed.

Research Method

The survey method was adopted in this research. The population consisted of the SS1 and SS2 students; including the Senior Secondary teachers of the schools under study. The respondents, made up of 270 students, 90 from each of the schools, and 30 teachers, 10 from each of the schools were randomly selected for the study. The survey involved the use of questionnaire, which was corroborated with oral interview, and personal observation. The interview and questionnaire covered information on the following areas: resources available, equacy/ inadequacy of collection and services rendered by the library, effectiveness of use of library by the students, problems militating against efficient service delivery and of course opinions on possible solutions to the problems. The on the spot administration and collection of the questionnaires ensured a 100% return rate.

Data Analysis and Discussion of Findings

The structured questionnaire was made up of 12 closed and 6 open-ended question items; but for precision, only those questions hinging directly on the research questions will be analyzed.

Research Question 1: Is there a library in your school?

TABLE I: Existence of a School Library

Response	FGGCO	OGSS	IGSSO	Total Resp.	Total Percentage
Yes	100	-	-	100	33%
No	-	100	100	200	67%
Total	100	100	100	300	100%

As is evident from the table, there is a 100% agreement to the existence of a purpose built library in FGGC. This is a factual truth as the interview with the librarian was conducted in the library. For the other two schools, it is evident that there are no purpose built libraries in the two schools. In fact, what serves as libraries in the two schools are extended part of their administrative blocks and are manned by teachers and or students who have no qualifications in the field of Library Science.

Research Question 2: What resources are available in your school library?

TABLE 11: Available Resources in the Library

Response	FGGCO	OGSS	IGSSO	Total Resp.	Total Percentage
FURNITURE					
Shelves Tables Chairs	100	100	100	300	100%
Racks Catalogue boxes Charging/Discharging trays.	-	-	-	-	-
Trawlers Steel cabinet Pamphlet boxes	-	-	-	-	-
EQUIPMENT					
Ceiling fans	78	66	-	144	48%
Air Conditioners	-	-	-	-	-
Audio-Visual aids	56	44	-	100	33%
Print materials					
General & Reference Books	90	88	76	254	85%
SERIALS					
Newspapers Magazines Pamphlets	54	46	28	128	43%

Table II shows a 100% response in affirmation to the availability of shelves, tables and chairs. Racks, cataloguing boxes, charging and discharging trays are not available in the libraries. There is also an indication of non-availability and use of trawlers, steel cabinet and pamphlet boxes. A total of 144(48%) respondents from FGGC, Owerri, and OGSS acceded to the availability and use of ceiling fans in their libraries, whereas no response came from IGSSO. None of the respondents in the three schools agreed to the availability of air conditioners in their libraries, while only 100(33%) respondents of which a greater number are from FGGCO attested to the availability of Audio-Visuals, excluding IGSSO. This gives an indication that the school authorities are not yet acknowledging the importance of Audio-Visuals in the support of teaching and learning. In the area of print materials, there is a high level, yet not a 100% agreement to the availability of fiction and non-fiction; whereas the availability of serial materials which include newspapers, magazines and pamphlets was accepted by 128(43%) respondents.

Research Question 3: Are the resources and services provided by your library adequate?

TABLE III: Level of Adequacy of Resources

Response	FGGCO	OGSS	IGSSO	Total Resp.	Total Percentage
Adequate	20	18	-	38	13%
Inadequate	46	44	80	170	57%
Fairly adequate	34	38	20	92	30%
Total	100	100	100	300	100%

It can be seen from the above table that the resources and services rendered in the libraries of these schools are subtly inadequate; hence the greater number of the respondents put together consider them inadequate or fairly adequate. Most disheartening is the fact that even the unity school among the three (FGGCO) also has the same problem of inadequacy of resources and services. A physical observation of the resources of these libraries gave a shock to the researchers. A critical look at the data above simply suggests a great need for improvement on the resources of the libraries for enhanced learning and service delivery.

Research Question 4: How effectively do you use your school library?

Table 1V: Effectiveness of Students' use of the Resources of the Library n = 300

Options	FGGCO	OGSS	IGSSO	Total Resp.	Total Percentage
Used during library periods	32	-	-	32	11%
Used at any available opportunity	22	3	-	25	8.3%
Used during exam periods	70	31	8	109	36.3%
Used during free periods / break time	20	12	-	32	11%
Never used the library		54	92	146	49%

The table above shows the appalling state of disuse of school libraries in the selected schools. It is evident that a greater number, 146 or 49% of the respondents never used the school libraries at all while only 36.3% or 109 respondents manage to use them during examination periods as a last resort. Other respondents represented by 8.3% and 11% response rate respectively use the libraries at any available opportunity or during free periods and break time. Only 32(11%) respondents from FGGCO attested to using the library during library periods. The interview revealed that only junior students of this school enjoy this privilege whereas in the other schools, library periods are not included in their time table. Students only visit the library during free periods if they care.

Further enquiry into the reasons for their responses revealed a high degree of disillusionment with the dearth of materials in the libraries. Others complained of inadequate space especially at OGSS, the situation is worse at IGSSO. Others still complained of obsolescence of materials. The researchers sought to know the problems militating against the efficient service delivery in

the libraries. A number of problems were enumerated by the respondents as shown in the table below.

Research Question: What are the problems affecting the provision of effective services in your school library?

Table 5: Problems affecting efficient service delivery n = 300

Options	FGGCO	OGSS	IGSSO	Total Resp.	Total Percentage
Inadequate time allocated to library use	41	10	5	56	19%
Insufficient funding	70	78	84	212	71%
Inadequate space and furniture	26	57	89	172	57%
Insufficient current materials	38	78	89	205	68%
Insufficient loan duration	62	14	12	88	29%
Inadequate/untrained staff	5	35	55	95	32%
Lack of AV materials	28	42	96	216	72%

The table above highlights a few of the inhibitions to efficient library service delivery experienced in the libraries. The data presented above show a bemoaning by 71% of the respondents of insufficient funding in the libraries of the schools studied especially in IGSS and OGSS. This is seconded by a heavy dearth of current materials as indicated by 68% respondents. Inadequate space and furniture also ranked high among the problems with 57%. Also, insufficient loan duration was considered another problem by 29%. Personal interviews revealed that out of the three schools, only FGGC has a systematized borrowing procedure of two weeks duration. The other schools hardly lend out books to students and when they do, it is to SS3 students on special arrangement. Other problems enumerated include inadequate library period by 19% and inadequate /untrained staff as indicated by 32% respondents respectively. Interview results also showed that in OGSS and IGSS, there is neither library period enshrined in the timetable nor trained librarians to oversee the affairs in their so called libraries. Finally, almost all the respondents decried lack of audio visual materials in their libraries. It is interesting therefore to note from the data above that the students are quite willing to make effective use of the library if things are put in place. The respondents gave a list of options on possible ways of providing solutions to the problems enumerated above. Their suggestions are as stated below.

Table V1: POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS TO THE PROBLEMS

n = 300

Options	FGGCO	OGSS	IGSSO	Total Resp.	Total Percentage
Increased library time/loan periods	42	18	10	70	23%
Improved funding	88	78	82	218	73%
Provision of more current materials	54	70	83	207	69.3%
Increased space and furniture	39	71	80	190	63%
Provision of teaching aids/Avs	13	38	36	87	29%
Hiring and training of available staff	12	60	72	144	48%

funding, which is the pivot on which every other solution rotates was most desired by 218(73%) respondents; seconded by the demand for more current materials as indicated by 207 (69%) respondents. The demand for increased space and furniture by 190(63%) respondents was third on the list. 70(23%) respondents suggested that more time should be allocated to library use and loan period increased. Further suggestions were made by 144(48%) on the recruitment of qualified librarians and the training of available staff/teacher librarians to man the libraries. Also, 87(29%) respondents suggested the provision of Teaching Aids/Audio Visuals to enhance teaching and learning.

Conclusion and Recommendations

School libraries have been seen as a vital aspect of the society's library network, hence this study. They not only provide but create information for the users – the students and teachers. They aim at supplementing, complementing and implementing the total educational programmes of schools. They develop good reading habits and skills in students. They also render instructions on the use of the materials and develop too, the social, intellectual and spiritual values in the students and the general appreciation of their cultural heritage.

Although the Federal Government Girls' College, Owerri is one of the privileged schools to have an established purpose built library, yet the state of school library development in Secondary Schools as revealed in this study is regrettably poor. Being starved of funds and qualified personnel to manage the libraries, the libraries have been quite unable to function effectively as integral part of the total education programme of the schools. Teaching and learning under this condition undoubtedly employ the traditional chalk method, the teacher being the sole source of knowledge. Individualized learning which provides for individual differences in learning abilities becomes definitely impracticable under this situation. There is therefore an urgent need to improve on the quality of school libraries in the secondary schools in Owerri and especially in the schools studied. This is imperative in order to take advantage of the modern instructional techniques in education which enhance better quality education for our youth.

The study strongly makes the following recommendations:

The Federal and State Governments should through the parent Ministries improve on the funding status of school libraries. This is because the key to any efficient library operation is finance. A specific amount of library grant should be included in the annual school budget. A percentage of this grant should be used for the acquisition of basic library resources such as – current books and periodicals, audio-visual materials and teaching aids. The librarian in charge should be allowed to control a substantial amount of money as imprest for logistics.

More trained librarians should be employed to run the libraries. They may have biases in other fields but must have an added qualification in Librarianship. They must be knowledgeable in the skills and crafts of the discipline and be able to provide the services expected of the library. Available staff should receive periodic trainings as a matter of necessity.

The use of the library should also be incorporated into the school timetable. Longer duration for the expiration of borrowed books should be instituted. These will enable them acquire the much emphasized reading habit and prepare them for independent study even in the future. On a general note, the Federal Government should try and implement some of its recommendations in the New National Policy on Education. Establishment of libraries in primary and post-primary schools should be made compulsory for the establishment and approval of schools. Federal and State Governments should also assist in the furnishing of

school libraries in order to give them a befitting status and pride of place in Nigeria's educational system.

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