# AN ASSESSMENT OF SCHOOL LIBRARY RESOURCES AND SERVICES IN SELECTED SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN OWERRI MUNICIPALITY, NIGERIA.

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## Abstract

*The paper evaluates the availability of library resources and services in selected secondary schools. Data were collected from 300 respondents who participated in this study through completion of questionnaire and participation in interview sessions. The findings of this study show that available library resources and services in secondary schools does not meet the approved standards for school libraries. The study recommends, amongst others, the integration of school libraries in the overall-plan of secondary schools; employment of adequate and competent staff; and provision of current and relevant information materials, as some of the measures that would improve the relevance of libraries in secondary schools.*

## Introduction

Owerri Municipality hosts the seat of Imo State Government. In the emerging political arrangement in Nigeria, Imo State is in South-East geo-political zone. The municipality has a population of approximately 200,000 inhabitants occupying a land mass of about 24.88 square metres. Owerri Municipality is arguably the most developed and urbanized among the twenty-seven local government councils in Imo State. The status of Owerri as the state capital coupled with the availability of basic infrastructure and amenities account for influx of people from within and outside the state.

Many government-owned establishments are located in the municipality, among which are two state-owned tertiary institutions, viz. Imo State University and Alvan Ikoku College of Education. Educational consciousness is, therefore, very high

in the municipality. This has led to the establishment of many post-primary schools.

The achievement of the broad and specific goals of these secondary schools would be difficult without credible school libraries. Shaibu (1997) reminds us that: "It has been established through research in most parts of the developed world that a well-stocked, professionally-staffed school library would result in individualized learning and improved students' performance through the school curriculum". This statement amply underscores the importance attached to school libraries.

Six post-primary schools were selected for this study, namely, Federal Government Girls' College, Owerri; Owerri Girls' Secondary School; Ikenegbu Girls' Secondary School, Owerri; Government Secondary School, Owerri; Emmanuel College, Owerri; and Development Comprehensive Secondary School, Owerri.

It is hoped that the research findings would be a fair representation of the exact state of library resources, facilities and services in other secondary schools within the area under study.

**Literature Review**

A search through literature revealed an abundance of researches and publications in aspects of school librarianship in Nigeria and elsewhere. Shaibu (1997) submits that the Federal School Library Service, which became operational in 1964 was a UNESCO project that provided the initial impetus to school library development in Nigeria. Earlier, Fadero (1968) provided elaborate description of this pilot project observing that its influence cuts across most of Africa. Apeji (1990), among others, gave incisive account of the evolution and development of school library facilities, resources and services. Shaibu (2001) further provided insights into library use pattern of secondary schools in Borno State of Nigeria.

Evolutionary trends and changes in designation and nomenclature from school library to school media resource centre was reported by Nnadozie (2003). The changes in concept and nomenclature of school library have resulted in the

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addition of educational technologies, teaching aids and learning resources to the traditional holdings of the school library. The resources of the emergent school media resource centre have been adequately covered in a study by Fayose (1998). The personnel resources of the school library media centre could be seen in the works of Muogilim (1998), and Elaturoti (2001).

The *raison d'être* for school libraries could be easily gleaned from their functions and/or roles. The rationale for school libraries has been documented by scholars, including Gratz (1996) and Kolade (2001). Oleg (1995) examined the relationship between academic success and library use.

Like all human institutions, the school library is not without its constraint and limitations. The research undertaken by Shaibu (1997) contains succinct articulation of the impediments to efficient libraries in Nigerian schools.

Notwithstanding the appreciably high number of published reports in school librarianship, there is a glaring absence of studies and/or assessments on school libraries in Owerri Municipal Council of Imo State. The abridgement of this hiatus is, in part, the rationale for this study.

## Objectives of the Study
The objectives of this study are to:
1. Ascertain the availability of libraries in secondary schools;
2. Identify the resources in these school libraries;
3. Ascertain and identify the services of school libraries;
4. Assess the quality of the services of these school libraries;
5. Highlight the problems affecting school library services;
6. Suggest measures for the improvement of school library services and resources.

## Research Questions
The following research questions were addressed in the study?
a. Are there libraries in secondary schools in Owerri?
b. What are the available resources in these school libraries?

c.   What types of services are available in these school libraries under study?

d.   What is the quality of library services in these secondary schools?

e.   What problems militate against effective library services in these secondary schools?

f.   What strategies could be adopted to improve resources and services in the secondary schools under study?

**Methodology**

The study used the survey method. The population of study comprised all principals, vice-principals, teacher-librarians, teachers and students of the schools under study. A sample of 60 tutorial staff and 240 students participated in the study. Ten tutorial staff were drawn from each of the participating schools. Stratified random sampling was used in the selection of the 40 students from each of participating schools. The target was SS II and III students who have stayed for a considerable length of time to be able to appraise their school library and its services.

The questionnaire was pre-tested on two tutorial staff and ten students after which minor changes were effected. Close motoring of the distribution, completion and return of the research instrument ensured a 100% response rate.

Informal discussions were held with the principals, vice-principals and teacher-librarians of the schools in the course of this study. Some of the teachers also volunteered relevant information when approached. The researcher also observed and took mental note of the state of things in each of the school libraries under study. All these helped to cross-check information given in the completed questionnaire. Data were grouped under related research questions and analyzed with diagrams, tables and explanatory narratives.

**Data presentation and analysis**

The data collected from this study have been collated and analyzed. The findings are presented in Tables 1 to 8.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| FGGC | = | Federal Government Girls' College, Owerri |
| OGSS | = | Owerri Girls' Secondary School. |
| IGSS | = | Ikenegbu Girls' Secondary School |
| GSSO | = | Government Secondary School, Owerri |
| ECO | = | Emmanuel College, Owerri. |
| DCSS | = | Dev. Comprehensive Sec. School, Owerri. |

This interpretation is applicable in all the tables.

**Research Question A:** Are there libraries in secondary schools in Owerri?

**Table 1: Availability of libraries in secondary schools in Owerri**

| Response | FGGC | OGSS | IGSS | GSSO | ECO | DCSS | Grand Total (Frequency) | Grand Total (percentage) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Yes | 50 | 50 | 50 | 50 | 50 | 50 | 300 | 100% |
| No | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| Unaware | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| Total | 50 | 50 | 50 | 50 | 50 | 50 | 300 | 100% |

*Table 1* shows that all the secondary schools included in this study have libraries. However, the researcher observed that except at GSSO where the library building was specifically designed and built to serve library purposes, the rest of the school libraries operate in ad-hoc (makeshift) accommodations. This discovery prompted the researcher to investigate the adequacy or otherwise of the reading spaces at these school libraries. The findings are presented in *Table 2*.

**Table 2: Reading Accommodation.**

| Response | FGGC | OGSS | IGSS | GSSO | ECO | DCSS | Grand Total (Frequency) | Grand Total (percentage) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Adequate | 20 | 22 | 05 | 35 | 10 | 12 | 104 | 34.7% |
| Inadequate | 30 | 28 | 45 | 25 | 40 | 38 | 196 | 65.3% |
| Total | 50 | 50 | 50 | 50 | 50 | 50 | 300 | 100% |

*Table 2* shows that majority of the respondents (196 or 65.3%) were of the opinion that the reading spaces or accommodation available in the schools libraries are glaringly inadequate. This picture is in tandem with the observation of the researcher in the course of this study. With the exception of GSSO and FGGC where there are fairly large reading rooms, the other school libraries are too small to accommodate a reasonable number of users at a time.

**Research Question B:** What are the available resources in the secondary schools under study?

**Availability of professional librarians in school libraries**

Availability of personnel was considered very important to the success of any school library. During the interview sessions, the author observed that except at FGGC which has two staff with Library Science qualifications, none of the other schools has trained librarians. The following diagram illustrates the distribution of trained librarians at the school libraries under study.

Diagram A: Availability of professional librarians in school libraries
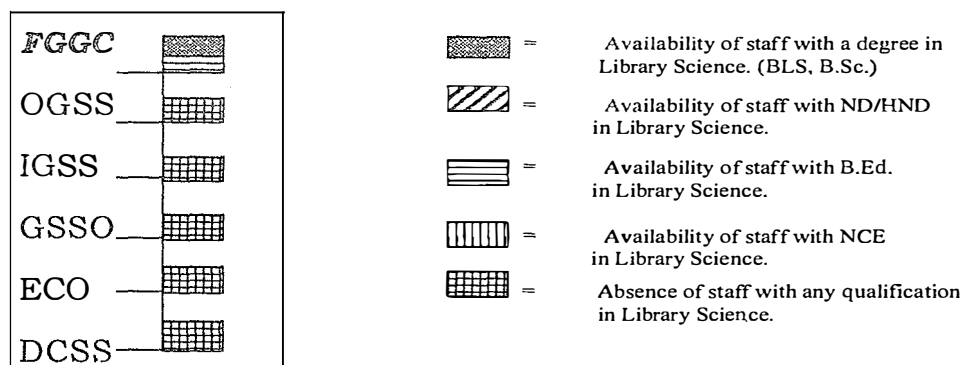


Diagram A shows that almost all the secondary schools involved in this study lack the services of professional librarians. This situation undoubtedly affects the quality of library services available in these schools.

## Availability of other categories of staff in school libraries

The availability of other categories of staff of school libraries were also investigated through interviews and interactions with tutorial staff of the secondary schools under study. The findings were quite revealing. FGGC has library assistants, a clerk, a typist, a cleaner and security staff; GSSO has a clerk and a security personnel. The other schools have no other category of library staff. None of the secondary school libraries studied has a Technician/Audio-visual specialist whose work is to operate and maintain the audio-visual equipment. None of the schools have a graphic artist to produce graphic and illustrative materials for instructions and preparation of materials for display. The deplorable staffing situation in secondary school libraries is presented in the diagram below.
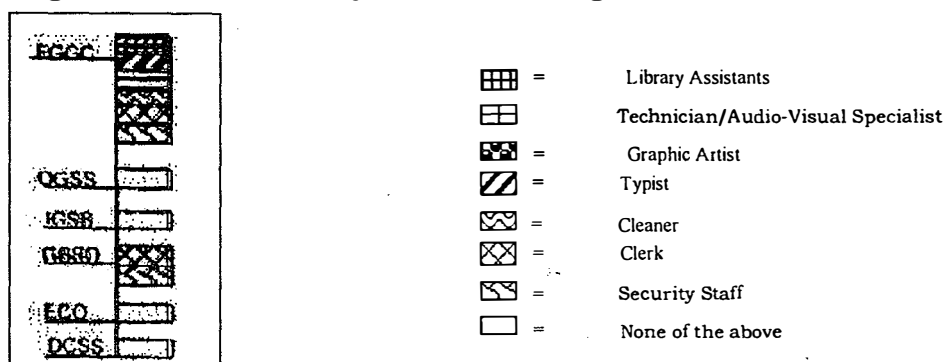
### Diagram B: Availability of other categories of staff.



| | | |
|---|---|---|
| ⊞ = | Library Assistants |
| ⊟ = | Technician/Audio-Visual Specialist |
| ▨ = | Graphic Artist |
| ▨ = | Typist |
| ▨ = | Cleaner |
| ⊠ = | Clerk |
| ▨ = | Security Staff |
| ▢ = | None of the above |

### Table 3: Information Materials.

| Types of Info Mats. | FGGC | OGSS | IGSS | GSSO | ECO | DCSS | Grand Total (Frequency) | Grand Total (percentage) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Print (Book) materials | 45 | 48 | 40 | 46 | 42 | 45 | 266 | 88.7% |
| Non-print (Non-Book) materials | 5 | 2 | 10 | 4 | 8 | 5 | 34 | 11.3% |
| Total | 50 | 50 | 50 | 50 | 50 | 50 | 300 | 100% |

Table 3 indicates that print media constitute a dominant (88.7%) proportion of information materials available in the school libraries. Non-print or non-book materials formed a mere

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11.3 percent of the information materials. The researcher noticed that a large quantity of information materials in the secondary schools were in the form of textbooks, journals, newsletters, newspapers and magazines. Only a few globes and instructional materials (produced by teachers) constitute non-book materials found in these school libraries.

**Table 4: Currency of Publications.**

| Period of Publication | FGGC | OGSS | IGSS | GSSO | ECO | DCSS | Grand Total (Frequency) | Grand Total (Percentage) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Pre-1960 | 15 | 15 | - | 20 | 20 | - | 70 | 23.3% |
| 1961-1970 | 10 | 15 | - | 10 | 15 | 10 | 60 | 20% |
| 1971-1990 | 10 | 10 | 30 | 10 | 10 | 25 | 95 | 31.7% |
| 1991-2005 | 15 | 10 | 20 | 10 | 5 | 15 | 75 | 25% |
| **Total** | **50** | **50** | **50** | **50** | **50** | **50** | **300** | **100%** |

*Table 4* shows that 75 percent of books and other printed materials in secondary school libraries were published more than fifteen years ago. It can therefore be safely concluded that majority of the publications in school libraries are not so current.

The researcher made the following surmises from interviews and interactions with tutorial staff of the schools in respect of currency of books and other printed materials in the libraries:

(1)    None of the libraries buys books either because of non-existent or insufficient library vote;

(2)    Most of these books were inherited at the inception of these schools;

(3)    A large percentage of the library collection of these school libraries were donated by either the Parents' Teachers Associations (PTA) or Alumnae/Alumni Association of the respective schools.

**Research Question C:** What types of services are available in secondary school libraries under study?

**Table 5: Services Available in School Libraries.**

| Services | FGGC | OGSS | IGSS | GSSO | ECO | DCSS | Grand Total (Frequency) | Grand Total (Percentage) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Provision of reading materials | 20 | 28 | 30 | 25 | 26 | 20 | 157 | 52.3% |
| Provision of conducive environment for study | 18 | 12 | - | 15 | 14 | 2 | 61 | 20.3% |
| Lending of books | 12 | 10 | 20 | 10 | 10 | 20 | 82 | 27.3% |
| Reprographic (photocopying) services | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | |
| Bindery services | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| Computer/ Internet services | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| **Total** | **50** | **50** | **50** | **50** | **50** | **50** | **300** | **100%** |

A glance at Table 5 shows that only three library services are available in the schools studied. These services are: Provision of reading materials (52.3%); lending of books (27.3%) and provision of conducive environment for study (20.3%). However, access to these services varies from school to school. For instance, the researcher was informed that teachers at OGSS, GSSO and ECO could only exercise borrowing rights. Because of insufficient library space, students of IGSS and DCSS were rarely allowed to read in the library. Since the students do not make regular use of the school libraries at IGSS and DCSS, their rating of "Provision of conducive environment for study" couldn't have been different. Table 5 also shows that reprographic services; bindery services and computer/internet services are not available in any of these school libraries.

**Research Question D:** What is the quality of library services in these secondary schools?

**Table 6: Quality of Library Services.**

| Response | FGGC | OGSS | IGSS | GSSC | ECC | DCSS | Grand Total (Frequency) | Grand Total (Percentage) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Very satisfactory | 20 | 10 | 10 | 25 | 12 | 8 | 85 | 28.3% |
| Manageable | 20 | 15 | 15 | 15 | 20 | 16 | 101 | 33.7% |
| Not Satisfactory | 10 | 25 | 25 | 10 | 18 | 26 | 114 | 38% |
| Total | 50 | 50 | 50 | 50 | 50 | 50 | 300 | 100% |

It could be inferred from Table 6 that library services available at the secondary schools are not very satisfactory. For majority of the respondents (114 or 38%), the library services are not satisfactory while 33.7 percent of the respondents are just managing the available library services while only 85 of the 300 respondents (28.3%) are satisfied with the services provided at the secondary school libraries. It would also be noted that only FGGC and GSSO rated their school library services as satisfactory.

**Research Question E:** What problems militate against effective library service in secondary schools?

Provisions were made for all respondents to list those factors which constitute the major impediments to the efficiency of library services at the secondary level of education. Responses are as shown in Table 7.

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## Table 7: Factors Militating Against School Libraries.

| Identified Constraints | FGGC | OGSS | IGSS | GSSO | ECO | DCSS | Grand Total (Frequency) | Grand Total (Percentage) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Inadequate staffing | 10 | 10 | 10 | 10 | 12 | 6 | 48 | 16% |
| Insufficient funding | 9 | 8 | 8 | 7 | 10 | 9 | 51 | 17% |
| Shortage of seating space | 10 | 12 | 12 | 13 | 15 | 20 | 92 | 30.7% |
| Lack of current books | 8 | 8 | 7 | 8 | 6 | 6 | 43 | 14.3% |
| Absence of A-V materials | 5 | 6 | 6 | 5 | 3 | 3 | 28 | 9.3% |
| Poor ventilation | 8 | 6 | 7 | 7 | 4 | 6 | 38 | 12.7% |
| **Total** | 50 | 50 | 50 | 50 | 50 | 50 | 300 | 100% |

Analysis of data presented in Table 7 shows that the most popular or pressing problem of school libraries is shortage of seating space (30.7%). It is interesting to note that respondents ranked "insufficient funding" second (17%) closely followed by "inadequate staffing" (16%). The preponderance of old and out-dated books in secondary school libraries was rated fourth (14.3%). "Poor ventilation" ranked fifth (12.7%) while "absence of audio-visual materials" (non-book materials) constituted the least problem (9.3%). The analysis in Table 7 matches earlier findings as presented in Tables 2,3 & 4 and diagrams A & B.

**Research Question F:** What strategies could be adopted to improve the resources and services of school libraries?

The respondents were allowed to suggest strategies for the improvement of library services in secondary schools. The options recommended were interesting and thought-provoking. The aggregate of these responses is presented in Table 8.

## Table 8: Improvement Strategies.

| Suggestions | FGGC | OGSS | IGSS | GSSO | ECO | DCSS | Grand Total (Frequency) | Grand Total (Percentage) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Provision of bigger library building with more shelves, chairs and tables | 10 | 13 | 15 | 10 | 12 | 13 | 73 | 24.3% |
| Provision of current info. materials | 10 | 10 | 10 | 12 | 10 | 7 | 59 | 19.7% |
| Adequate funding | 10 | 10 | 8 | 10 | 8 | 10 | 56 | 18.7% |
| Inclusion of library hour on school time table | 7 | 7 | 8 | 8 | 6 | 5 | 41 | 13.7% |
| Provision of lending services | 7 | 6 | 5 | 6 | 10 | 10 | 44 | 14.7% |
| Provision of A- V mats | 6 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 5 | 27 | 9% |
| Total | 50 | 50 | 50v | 50 | 50 | 50 | 300 | 100% adj. |

Table 8 shows that majority of the respondents (73 or 24.3%) suggested that provision of larger library buildings which can accommodate more chairs, tables and shelves would improve the quality of library services in secondary schools. The provision of more recent publications (books, journals, etc) was recommended by 59 respondents (19.7%) while adequate funding of school libraries was recommended by 18.7 percent of the respondents. Other suggestions made for improved library services in secondary schools include: provision of lending services (14.7%); inclusion of library hour in the school time table recommended by 13.7 percent of the respondents and lastly, provision of various non-book (audio-visual materials) in the school libraries which was recommended by 9 percent of the total respondents.

## Conclusion and Recommendations

The tables and diagrams used in the analysis of data and presentation of findings of this study have shown the inadequacy state of library resources and facilities in secondary schools. The available services are also few, inadequate and unsatisfactory. The following recommendations are based on the findings of this research:

Provision of standard libraries should be made compulsory at the secondary level of education. This means that library buildings should be a mandatory component of the master-plan of any secondary school. Regulatory agencies should ensure strict compliance by revoking the approval of defaulting schools. This step would ensure availability of befitting libraries in secondary schools.

All secondary school libraries must have a school librarian who should possess a minimum qualification of Bachelor of Education (B.Ed.) with Library Science option. In big secondary schools with large libraries, sizeable collections and adequate tutorial staff, the school librarian could be exempted from classroom teaching and other pedagogical responsibilities. This would encourage professionalism and improve services at the school libraries.

Allied to the above, efforts should be made to employ other categories of staff. The presence of library assistants, technicians, audio-visual specialists, graphic artists, typists, clerks and security staff would ensure smooth operation of secondary school libraries since the school librarians (teacher-librarians) would not be able to provide satisfactory services alone especially in large secondary schools.

Current publications that are relevant to the curriculum of secondary schools should be acquired and provided in school libraries. Efforts should also be intensified to include relevant audio-visual materials, computer/internet technologies, reprographic facilities, teaching aids and educational technologies in the information resources in secondary school libraries.

The above suggestions, no doubt, would require a substantial financial outlay. This means that funding of school

libraries should be improved upon. In addition to expected government grants, the school libraries should sensitize stakeholders like the Parents' Teachers' Association (PTA), the alumnae and even Non-Governmental Organizations on the need to provide adequate funds for secondary school libraries.

Management of secondary school libraries should allow registered users to borrow a predetermined number of information materials. The *caveat* is that sanctions for default in returning due books must be clearly spelt out. Workable strategies should also be designed for recovery of materials from erring beneficiaries.

Provision should be made for the inclusion of a "library hour" in the school timetable. This would have multiplier effect of bringing the existence of the school library to the consciousness of students; and increase the use of school library and its resources by students. The resourceful school librarian would use this *period* to impart library skills on users.

It is a truism that the school library requires tools like cataloging and classification schemes, cutter table, subject authority lists, etc. Facilities like shelves, chairs and tables are also needed. These should be provided in the right quality and quantity.

Lastly, the Federal and State Governments, through the Ministries of Education and other regulatory or supervisory agencies (like Universal Basic Education Commission, Secondary Education Management Boards, Post Primary School Management Boards, etc) should ensure strict implementation of the provisions of the Minimum Standards for School Libraries which was enacted in 1978 and revised in 1992.

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