

**EFFORTS/ACTIVITIES AT SCHOOLS' LEVEL BY  
PRINCIPALS, HEADMASTERS, PTA TO SUPPORT PROVISION  
OF LIBRARY SERVICES IN SCHOOL: THE CASE OF ABUJA  
FEDERAL CAPITAL TERRITORY**

**By**

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**Abstract:**

*The library is an integral part of any education system and it is the responsibility of all to provide it at all levels of our educational endeavour and of course maintaining and sustaining it at the required standard. The Nigerian School Library Association over the years has championed the course of the school library in Nigeria, and its effort has proved very fruitful. At 25 years of its existence, the provision of school library service is still to a very large extent the responsibility of the Government. This paper looks at the efforts which the government has made in the past and reiterates that other approaches must be brought in to support the government in its quest to develop school libraries in Nigeria. The paper therefore looks at what the PTA, the Headmasters, Principals Pupils, Librarians and other stakeholders in education can do to develop the school library in the years ahead.*

**Introduction**

The importance of library in any institution of learning cannot be overemphasized. The library always remain the power house of education institution, so an education institution without it is like a motor car without an engine and a body without a soul. However, in Nigeria we have been witnesses to primary and secondary school run without libraries. The provision of school libraries over the years has been years the sole responsibility of the proprietors of the school, which in most cases in Nigeria is the Federal, the State and the Local Governments. The National Policy on Education (1998) states *inter-alia*

*"As libraries are one of the most important educational services, Proprietors of schools shall provide functional libraries in all their educational institutions in accordance with establish standards. They shall also provide for training of librarians and library assistants for their services".*

If the school library services in Nigeria must move forward and attain international standard in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, all hands must be on deck in the provision and maintenance and sustenance of school library in the years ahead.

### **School Library In The Last 25 Years**

The history of the development of school libraries dates back to the first West African Library Association Conference WALA in 1954, F. Adetowun Ogunshye's chapter on Reminiscences on school Library development in "Nigeria School Librarianship: Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow" traced the development of school libraries from WALA meeting of 1954 to the present. The Nigerian School Library Association has played a great role in championing the course of school librarianship especially in the area of drafting of resolution which over the years have influenced government policies in the provision of school library services. The Federal Ministry of Education and Youth Development in 1992 came up with minimum standards for school libraries in Nigeria, as a result of the argument that it was because of lack of standard that there was low development in Nigeria. The minimum standard for school libraries was formulated based on the following fact: Student without access to supplementary reading materials as provided for in a library will be seriously handicapped. His academic success will be based largely on his ability to memorize his lecture notes. On the other hand the student with access to a good school library can learn and be judged on his own skill in clarifying problem collecting information relative to its solution and formulating conclusion. This student no doubt will have acquired the foundation for independent, purposeful, and life-long learning. The cornerstone of the present policy as stated in the minimum standard includes:

1. To support teaching and learning;
2. To enrich the school curriculum;
3. To promote and develop reading skills and encourage long-term learning habit through reading, listening to and viewing a variety of learning materials. Learning habit form the key to continuous success in school as well as personal enrichment of the student pupils;
4. Stimulate research and independent study by providing a wide variety of reading materials so that it cannot only supply

information in printed form but also picture, films, tapes, Information Technology, electronic mail, Internet etc. This makes learning more exciting;

5. Provide opportunities for further reading and use of materials other than prescribed classroom textbooks;
6. Provide recreational materials and encourage students/ pupils to read for pleasure;
7. Encourage student/pupils to develop their power of analytical appraisal by exposing them to varied collection of printed and other multi-media in the library;
8. provide students/pupils with vocational information and career guidance leading to the choice of suitable career; and
9. Provide up to date information to keep staff and student abreast of new development;

Ten years after the minimum standard was published, how far has the school library fared?

Much of the development on school library still with Federal Government, and its agencies, SPEB, UBE, and the Ministry of Education.

### **The Principal/Headmaster**

The principal is the administrative head of the school and has the responsibility of giving the best to the students. The proprietors of the school which in this case is the Federal Government is expecting that the children entrusted to the Principals do well in their studies. They are expected to pass the Common Entrance Examination, WASCE, NECO and other examinations, so the Principal is expected to do all within his reach to make sure that facilities in his care (school library) meet the minimum standard as stated earlier. The Principal is therefore expected to mobilize both the parents, students and even well wishers to contribute to the development of the school library.

Apart from the token the students are expected to pay as library levy every year, he should solicit reading materials either in cash or kind to equip the school library.

In the Federal Capital Territory students pay a token per term as library levy. This is used to purchase books and few library equipment. Apart from levies, O.M. Momoh suggested in a paper titled "Strategies to create effective reading environment for Nigeria", that the school library can be well equipped if for

instance in a class of forty students, each student can purchase two books per term, that will be 80 books per class which will yield 240 books in a school year. If we have five arms in a stream and six streams JSS1 to SSS 3, you will have a total of 7200 books in one year. This will also mean that each student in every class will have the opportunity of reading 240 different books in one year. The school authorities can then provide other supplementary readers in form of magazines and local newspapers, prizes should be given to the best readers.

### **Associations**

The Reading Association of Nigeria comes to mind first. This body is willing to participate in library development in our schools. The Association should be linked up with at the national and state levels.

The Young Readers' Club - The Nigeria Educational Research and Development Council NERDC, in collaboration with the School Librarians and the Reading Association of Nigeria in an effort to supplement the school library, through its Young Readers' Club initiative have teamed up to encourage and effectively supervise the Principal. The effort would certainly enhance the growth of the school library. In Abuja the Young Readers' Clubs have been successfully launched in five public secondary schools.

### **Individuals/Churches/Mosques**

Since the development of the school library is the responsibility of all, these sources if mobilized would participate effectively in developing the school library. Individuals can donate or sell his private collection to schools.

The Education Resource Centre in Abuja recently purchased a private collection from an expatriate, which was found to be very useful to the Education Resource Centre Library, which is a feeder to the school libraries. Churches have a lot of materials in Christian Religious Knowledge (CRK) and the Mosque have a lot on Islamic Religious Knowledge (IRK). These sources could be harnessed to support the school library. One cannot conclude this paper without emphasizing the need for private initiatives, a typical example in this regard is the Olumamu Nursery & Primary school example; where the Proprietress has a library with a full time librarian, and computers with Internet connections. Here, library hours are integrated into the school

timetable to allow every child to have internet access for e-mail, surfing and crazing virtually.

Similarly , in this regard Turkish International Secondary School also have full Internet connectivity for students also in FCT.

In conclusion, sources which can be harnessed to enunch the school library cannot be exhausted if only the the Management concerned is willing and forthcoming. The School-Librarian through the School Library Committee must be active and willing to work hard. Nothing good comes by way of laziness. All hands must be on deck to develop the school library of the new millennium. Our focus must also be shifted from building a school library of printed materials to the students who have read the largest number of books in one year and can discuss intelligently the content of the books. If public secondary school consider this too ambitious, it can be modified and the private schools can adopt this system for they have affluent children who are usually conversant with books before they start attending school. The public school can also do something no matter how little, student can donate books to the library through Readers' Club formed at the school level. FCT is an example where Young Readers' Clubs are functioning very well.

The PTA has always been known to be partner in progress, if properly coordinated. South Africa offers an example in a paper titled "Strategies for creating reading environment for Nigeria" by Gboyega Banjo. School library is inspired by and sustained by private initiative. The READ Education Trust of South Africa is private funded education trust founded in response to community concern regarding lack of reading , writing, learning, information and communication skills that can make them become independent and life-long learners. Its programme include training of student, teacher and community workers to improve language competence and facilitates independent study through the use of books and other materials and providing resources such as libraries, book packages and other media resources. READ research indicates that in a school where teachers are trained and committed to using book in all aspects of teaching and learning and where adequate resources are provided, pupils demonstrate substantial gains (two years) in reading and writing ability. READ has by its success in fund raising and country wide programmes demonstrated the potential for dedicated and well organized private initiative in book and readership promotion campaigns.

In Federal Capital Territory, the PTA has been involved in fund-raising for the school library. Books are donated by PTA. The School Library Committee have been useful in mobilizing the PTA. The School Committee Library together with the PTA have been linked up with Education Resource Centre (ERC) to discuss on how school libraries can improve the provision of materials.

This is the age of Information Technology. The computer, the audio visual aid should be part of the school library. Information technology is rapidly taking over the printed materials, the school library cannot be left behind in this era of computer age. The private school libraries, both primary and secondary here in Abuja are connecting to internet in their libraries. Students and public now research on-line reference materials such as dictionaries and encyclopaedias and other information materials. One of our public secondary schools is also trying to computerize its library through the Maths Improvement Project Programme. All these are initiatives that could transform the school libraries of the new millennium to an information centre if embraced by all concerned.

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