School Libraries and Educational Development in Nigeria: Issues and Prospects

Perpustakaan Sekolah untuk Perkembangan Pendidikan di Nigeria: Permasalahan dan Prospek

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Abstract

Background: *The National policy of education of Nigeria indicated the importance and need to have functional school libraries, but the situation over the years later is worrisome as many researchers have reported the non-existence of library in many schools and the deplorable state of the ones available. This is hampering the role expected to be played by school libraries in the development of education in Nigeria.* ***Purpose:*** *The research explores the various challenges confronting school libraries and proffer workable solutions.* ***Method:*** *This paper uses literature review as a methodology for conducting research. The literature reviewed exposed the current state of school libraries, the challenges, prospects and the services that can help promote educational developments in school libraries.* ***Result:*** *The findings revealed the challenges limiting school libraries to include inadequate funding, lack of trained personnel, non-compliance to the provisions in the National Educational Policy and the absence of dedicated library time. Possible solutions include library advocacy, ensuring the implementation of the National Educational Policy, enforcing the appointments of trained personnel, developing standard benchmark for establishing and management of school libraries and the introduction of dedicated library time.* ***Conclusion:*** *The paper recommended that LRCN and NLA should constantly advocate for quality service delivery in school libraries through ensuring strict compliance with the provisions in the National Policy of Education by forming accreditation committee to monitor all schools. It was also recommended that the Library and Information Science curriculum be reviewed to include innovative library services that can be adopted to improve reading habits in schools.*

Keywords: *School libraries; ducational Development; Reading Habits; National Development*

Abstrak

Latar Belakang: Kebijakan pendidikan nasional di Nigeria telah menekankan pentingnya kebutuhan perpustakaan sekolah. Namun situasi yang terjadi selama beberapa tahun ini cukup mengkhawatirkan karena banyak laporan menyebutkan tidak adanya perpustakaan di sekolah-sekolah dan jika ada kondisinya tidak layak. Hal ini menghambat peran yang seharusnya dijalankan oleh perpustakaan sekolah demi perkembangan pendidikan di Nigeria. **Tujuan:** Penelitian ini membahas berbagai permasalahan yang dihadapi oleh perpustakaan sekolah dan menawarkan berbagai solusi yang dapat diterapkan. **Metode:** Penelitian ini menggunakan kajian literatur sebagai metode penelitian. Kajian literatur tersebut menunjukkan kondisi terkini perpustakaan sekolah serta permasalahan, prospek, dan layanan yang dapat digunakan untuk mendukung perkembangan pendidikan di perpustakaan sekolah. **Hasil:** Temuan penelitian menunjukkan bahwa permasalahan yang dihadapi perpustakaan sekolah meliputi kurangnya dana, kurangnya tenaga terampil, ketidakpatuhan terhadap aturan Kebijakan Pendidikan Nasional dan kurangnya waktu kunjung perpustakaan yang khusus. Sementara itu, solusi yang memungkinkan meliputi advokasi perpustakaan, memastikan implementasi Kebijakan Pendidikan Nasional, merekrut tenaga terampil, mengembangkan standar pembentukan dan pengelolaan perpustakaan serta menyosialisasikan waktu kunjung perpustakaan yang khusus. **Kesimpulan:** Penelitian ini menyarankan LRCN dan NLA untuk menyuarakan pemberian pelayanan yang berkualitas di perpustakaan sekolah dengan mematuhi aturan Kebijakan Pendidikan Nasional serta dengan membentuk komite akreditasi guna memonitor semua sekolah. Saran selanjutnya adalah kurikulum Ilmu Perpustakaan dan Informasi harus ditinjau

ulang supaya mencakup layanan perpustakaan yang inovatif sehingga dapat dimanfaatkan untuk meningkatkan kebiasaan membaca di sekolah.

Kata kunci: Perpustakaan Sekolah; Perkembangan Pendidikan; Kebiasaan Membaca; Perkembangan Nasional

I. INTRODUCTION

Background. School libraries can be described as media resource centres established along with schools (Nursery, Primary and Secondary) to cater for the literacy and information needs of pupils, students, teachers, school administration, parents and other members of the community. The main goal of the school library is to help cultivate reading habits among students at an early stage. The purpose of school library is to help every member of the school community including students, staff, families and management gain new knowledge, skills, and dispositions for learning and personal development that they will use throughout their lives. The role of school libraries in promoting educational development cannot be over emphasized. Ogunrombi and Sanni (2005) accentuated some goals of school libraries to include the promoting lifelong learners, stimulating and enhancing reading habits, helping to develop children's ability to read for information; helping pupils increase and improve their knowledge of reading, speaking, and writing; training children to care for books and making good and responsible use of the library; enhancing children's communication and reading skills; and providing current and past information to children.

Libraries are pertinent in the educational development of a nation. It was established that various library services and programs such as introducing children to the habit of enjoying reading and supporting scholars and researchers to contribute their quota to development through sharing of knowledge (Agbo & Onyekweodiri, 2014). Students and teachers are also supported with books, relevant information and teaching aids in order to effectively prepare useful lesson notes and also pass knowledge to the students. Pollard (2008) posits that libraries can bridge economic, educational and social divides that is confronting communities. Similarly, Krolak (2005) stressed the importance of school libraries in promoting literacy by making materials available to users thereby optimizing human development through education.

The American Library Association (2011) while revealing school libraries contribution to the development of the whole child stated that the school library is portrayed as an agency for intellectual development, for social and cultural growth of students as they grow up in a complex and diverse information world. According to the evidence provided by the school librarians, the school library works to meet core content standards, to develop a wide range of information handling competencies and to provide students with the intellectual and technical scaffolds they need to learn and be ethical and productive users and consumers of information. The report specifically noted the contribution of school librarians in New Jersey in the development of a child through their services by engaging in a range of information literacy instruction initiatives. This instruction primarily centers on knowing about the school library, knowing about different sources and formats of information, with sound levels related to understanding the different strategies in doing effective research, learning how to use the resources, evaluating information for quality, and learning to use information ethically. Similarly, American Library Association (2012) disclosed that in Alaska, schools with more librarian staffing spend more time teaching information literacy, resulting in more student visits to library media centers and, in turn, higher reading scores.

Research Problem. Despite the enormous benefits accrued to the use of school libraries and other types of libraries in the development of education in Nigeria, there has been little

or no attention paid to school libraries because of several reasons that have been reported by various scholars. This is even dire in public primary and secondary schools in Nigeria. Esan and Akporhonor (2021) studied the availability and usage of school library resources as predictors of reading habits among secondary school students in Oredo local government area in Edo state and reported that the sampled school had limited library resources and most of the few resources available are obsolete. They also stated that most of the students never made use of the library resources and there was absence of trained librarians in all the sampled schools. The situation is worrisome bearing in mind that the Nigeria National Educational Policy as far back as 1977 perceived the significance of school libraries as educational and information resources that are important. The strategy guided all schools to operate useful and functional libraries. This was also reflected in the (2013) edition of the National Policy on Education where it was stated that government shall make provision for school libraries at the basic educational level. Why then are schools not operating functional libraries in 2022?

Previous Literature Review. According to Fola-Adio *et-al* (2009), a library requires certain elements before being considered a library. These elements include accommodation, organization, personnel, collection development system, users, rules and regulations. These elements especially personnel which include staff who are trained in the field of librarianship are not found in most of our school libraries, how then will the services provided in such school libraries lead to educational development in Nigeria?

Librarianship, library and information science or library science is a professional course, just like other professional courses like Medicine, Nursing, Law and Accounting which will not allow non-professionals render the services they are expected to provide. They are able to achieve this only because they have strict compliance to their professional body and guidelines. Nigerian Bar Association (NBA), Nursing and Midwifery Council of Nigeria (NMCN), The Institute of Chartered Accountants of Nigeria (ICAN), and Nigerian Medical Association (NMA) are very active in their participation to unravel fake professionals in their fields. The same cannot be said of librarianship especially for schools that have libraries. Most of these school libraries are manned by English or literature teachers who are not trained librarians.

State of the art. Although several researchers have studied and reported the state of school libraries in Nigeria, study on how school libraries affects educational development of children in Nigeria is uncommon. Therefore this study seeks to not only report the issues confronting libraries in Nigeria but also proffer possible solution.

Purpose. The purpose of this research is to reveal the current state of school libraries in Nigeria and also proffer possible solutions to keep the libraries on track to achieve the development of education in the country.

II. METHODS

This paper uses literature review as a methodology for conducting research. Literature was reviewed to reveal the deplorable state of school libraries, the challenges confronting school libraries, the prospects of school libraries and the services that can help promote educational developments in school libraries. Adeyemi and Issa (2020) recommended this narrative review to ensure the identification and summarization of previously published empirical findings in a particular research area or theme. In addition to the findings that emanated from the reviewed literature, the author brings forth his experience as a former School Librarian to entrench arguments on the findings of the study. Subsequently, the conclusion and recommendations were drawn based on the findings that emerge from the study.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Issues militating against school libraries in educational development in Nigeria. *Inadequate funding*: Esan and Akporhonor (2021) recommended that government, school owners and management should ensure that school libraries are well equipped with various library resources that will help stimulate students' interest in reading. They should also ensure that current library resources are made available to secondary school students through regular acquisition. Similarly, Irunegbo et al., (2013) explored how libraries and librarians can help in promotion of reading and literacy in Nigeria and found that poor funding is one of the challenges limiting libraries from promoting reading and literacy in Nigeria. School libraries just like every other libraries in Nigeria are poorly funded because most school management and government are not placing priority on libraries.

Lack of trained personnel: Irunegbo et al., (2013) disclosed that lack of professional staff has hampered the core function of library and invariably queers the needed reading campaign. Esan and Akpohonor (2021) also observed the absence of trained librarians in all the schools that was sampled in their study. Students are expected to develop the habit of reading at this stage and if they are not guided by librarians at this stage, it might hamper their educational development and love for reading. Unfortunately, this has become an age-long issue as Aniebo (2006), Elaturoti (1983), and Idiegbeyan-Ose and Okoedion (2012) have earlier decried the absence of trained professionals managing school libraries across Nigeria.

Non-compliance to the provisions in the National Educational Policy: Lawal-Solarin (2016) investigated school libraries using private school libraries at Ado-Odo LGA in Ogun state as case study and recommended that government should ensure implementation of National Educational policy. This concerns making sure all schools have a library in their respective institution. The provision for functional school libraries for all basic schools in Nigeria is clearly stated in the National Policy on Education since the inception of the policy. One will expect that by now all schools should have complied with this provision but unfortunately most schools are yet to comply with this provision. One will wonder if those schools are really approved by government and with what parameters were they screened and granted the approval to run a school by the government.

Dedicated library time: School libraries are expected to help users cultivate the habit of reading. This will only be possible if librarians are allowed to work directly with all students and not just left for chance or only those interested. Idiegbeyan-Ose and Okoedion (2012) recommended that school management should include library period in their time table just like other subjects. This will enable librarians assist them in cultivating good reading habit by exposing them to several tasking library services. Tralagba and Baro (2018) supported this claim by suggesting the addition of library hours to schools timetable so as to develop lifelong reading culture that will help them while in school and when they leave school. In the same vein, Lawal-Solarin (2016) also recommended that it is essential for all schools to have library period in their time table and teachers should also endeavour to give students assignments to carry out in the library.

Prospects of School Libraries in Educational Development in Nigeria. In spite of the issues militating against the development of school libraries in Nigeria, the benefits and opportunities obtainable from the optimum use of school libraries cannot be eroded. So then what can we do to ensure school libraries in Nigeria continue to maintain their relevance?

Library advocacy: Librarians in Nigeria are expected to constantly advocate for libraries through writing of letters, notice in the newspapers, lobbying with policy makers or lawmakers, road demonstrations, social media advocacy and granting radio and television interviews to promote and agitate for functional school libraries across the nation. Anyanwu, Obichere, and Ossai-Onah (2013) maintained that advocacy is a sustained effort by librarians and lobbying association to keep libraries and the work they do in the minds of

the people who make decisions that enhance effective use of library services. The Nigeria Library Association (NLA) and the Librarians Registration Council of Nigeria (LRCN) should constantly push and advocate so that the attention of school owners should be drawn to the relevance of school libraries in promoting educational development in Nigeria.

Implementation of the provisions in the National Policy on Education: The Nigeria Library Association should work towards ensuring total compliance with the provision of this policy regarding the establishment of functional libraries in all basic schools. The association should work with relevant government agencies to shut down any school that fails to comply. This is supported by Gbotosho and Komolafe (2019) through their recommendation that there should be a provision of school libraries in both public and privately owned schools which should be made to function effectively by providing learning materials in them. Similarly, for those that have libraries, they should no longer be put under lock and key but activated for proper usage for the benefit of all.

Ensuring the appointment of trained personnel: To enforce the legislated provisions in the National Policy on Education, the Nigeria Library Association (NLA) and the Librarians Registration Council of Nigeria (LRCN) are enjoined to ensure that trained librarians with at least a degree in library and information science are employed to manage all school libraries so as to ensure efficient service provision. This will allow the school libraries establish its relevance by delivering quality services that will help cultivate reading habits amongst student. The absence of trained personnel is corroborated by the findings of Owate and Okpa (2013) who revealed that the school libraries in their study on the availability and utilization of school library resources in some selected Secondary Schools (High School) in Rivers State were manned by non-professional librarians and these librarians do not offer good services since they are not trained.

Develop a Standard benchmark for School Libraries: The Nigeria Library Association (NLA) should first develop minimum benchmark for the establishment of school libraries which should be strictly followed by all schools. This benchmark could include all the resources a school library is expected to have. The Association at state levels should also act as a regulatory body that checks these libraries from time to time to ensure strict adherence to the minimum standard provided in the benchmark. This development will ensure that school libraries are adequately funded by school owners. This is in accordance to Moruf and Muhammed (2015) submission that school libraries should be equipped in accordance with acceptable standards. This signify the need for a standard to guide the establishment and management of school libraries.

Dedicated library period: Having library period enshrined in the timetable of all schools will provide ample time for the development of reading habit at an early stage. The students will not be left to only visit the library by chance but rather visit at stipulated hours where they will be exposed to the resources and services rendered in the library.

Promotion of Educational Development in Nigeria through School library services. Below are some ways through which educational development can be promoted through services rendered in school libraries.

Organization of book clubs: Asides from the regular services rendered by school libraries, librarians can also organize and promote book clubs in their various schools. This involves the gathering of interested students at regular intervals (weekly, bi-monthly or monthly) to discuss lessons learnt in a book that was previously chosen at the meeting of the club. The book club could also encourage sharing of books that are not available in the library between members. Sharing of books can be done electronically with the vast array of e-books available through OER. Book clubs helps to increase literacy amongst students, develop their reading habit thereby helping to promote the development of education in Nigeria.

Introduction of intellectual games: Another way of promoting educational development is by allowing students to compete in intellectual games that will task their brain and ensure

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they make use of library resources to achieve desired results. Examples of such games are monopoly, scrabble and chess. Teachings can also be embedded into games through the use of interactive boards.

User statistics: This was one approach I used while working in an international secondary school. The statistics of library users that borrow books was taken from time-to-time and the result was presented colorfully using pictograms and pie-charts. Those results were pasted on all notice boards around the schools where parents can clearly see during PTA meetings, Graduation ceremonies and visiting days. Parents who do not see their children name as users of the library query their wards and encourage them to use the library so their names can also be presented on notice boards.

Use of badges in primary schools: This was also introduced in a primary school that I have earlier worked with. The badge is tagged the BEAR badge which simply means "Be Excited About Reading". The junior class is made to read at least five books in a term to qualify to get the badge while those in higher classes are made to read ten books. These books were borrowed from the library where they are also issued a recording tag. After reading, students are made to explain what they have read to any library staff or teacher who will now certify that the child had read the book after asking questions. Students on completion of five or ten books depending on the category are called out on assembly ground and issued the BEAR badge. Student with the highest number of books read are given a price at the end of the term. It was observed that this singular act improves the reading habit of student in the school because they are always competing to have a badge on their uniform which was only worn by school prefects at that time.

Dedicated library period: It is very pertinent for schools to allot periods for library while preparing their time-table. This will ensure that students are exposed to the resources available in the library and get used to them. Reading habit will also be cultivated with the proper guide of the librarian.

Adoption of ICT and accessibility to internet: The advancement in technology and the emergence of the internet and World Wide Web has changed the manner of service delivery and the way information is been managed. Resources are now available in various formats and databases all over the internet. Libraries especially school libraries should not be left behind as they should also provide information in varied formats (printed, audio, visual, audio-visual). Students should also have restricted and monitored access to the internet in order to take advantage of the educational resources available online because of the constant exponential growth in information.

Instruction on information literacy: Librarians are to develop syllabus to teach students about information literacy, this could involve teaching about the various sources of information, information retrieval skill and so on. The library notice board could also be used to teach students about various authors by pasting a short profile about some of their favourite authors regularly. This could be tagged "Know your Authors",

Celebration of World Book Day: Schools should celebrate the annual World book day which is organized by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) with the aim of promoting reading, publishing and copyright. This annual events always come with a theme and there are usually various suggestions available online to celebrate it.

IV. CONCLUSION

School libraries are established primarily to help cultivate reading habits in children at an early stage. It is no news that the current state of school libraries in Nigeria is very porous owing to various factors among which are the inadequate funding and neglect of school libraries by school owners and government, non-compliance to the provision in the National

Policy on Education, management of the library by non-professionals and lack of purposeful advocacy on the part of librarians and related associations. The decaying school library system has affected the educational development of many young ones most of who are not trained to love the habit of reading. This is also evident when some of them get to higher institutions where they are expected to be independent learners but rather engage in crooked ways in order to pass their courses.

The decaying reading culture can also be associated to the menace of fake news and misinformation ravaging the society at the moment. Most people are quick to share news on various social media platforms without necessarily reading the contents themselves to determine the authenticity in what they are sharing. The proliferation of fake news can lead to unrest in some parts of the country. All these can be curb if we have functional school libraries that are managed by competent librarians who are trained to cultivate the habit and enjoyment of reading at an early stage.

The time to change the narrative is now as I recommend that the following decisions be taken by all stakeholders: Librarians in Nigeria and its allied association (Nigeria Library Association and Librarians Registration Council of Nigeria) should work with government to ensure strict compliance to the provision in the National Policy on Education by ensuring that all schools have functional school libraries; Librarians should constantly advocate for quality service delivery in school library by ensuring that they are managed by competent and qualified professional librarians; Nigeria Library Association and Librarians Registration Council of Nigeria should constitute an accreditation committee to ensure that all schools comply with the prescribed benchmark for the establishment and management of school libraries; The Library and Information Science curriculum should be reviewed to include innovative services that can be adopted in school libraries to achieve the goal of cultivating good reading habit at an early stage; All school libraries should adopt the use of ICT in delivering quality services that will lead to the educational development of the children.

V. ACKOWLEDGMENT

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