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Revitalizing the School Library System in Nigeria: The Way Forward

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Abstract

This is a conceptual paper that explores the expected roles of school libraries and the current state of school libraries in Nigeria. The overall objective of this paper is to examine the state of school libraries with a view to proffer recommendations on revitalizing the library system in Nigeria. The specific objectives are to explore the expectations from school libraries; situation surrounding school libraries as well as way forward to the enumerated challenges thereby suggesting promulgation and enforcement of school library legislation in Nigeria. The issues with school libraries surround functionality, funding, personnel, capacity building and service provision. As a way forward, the paper suggested a virile school library system in Nigeria with special emphasis on adequate funding, sensitization programme, recruitment of qualified personnel, capacity building, adherence to minimum standard, enforcement of school library legislation, among others. In conclusion, sustainable National Development cannot be attained in Nigeria with the dearth of school libraries, as part of recommendations is the need for all stakeholders to give priority to the needs of school libraries in Nigeria.

Keywords: Challenges, Expectations, Nigeria, Revitalization, School libraries.

Introduction

The concept of library can be seen as the organized collection of print and non-print materials kept for consultation by users. Various types of libraries exist globally and include; academic, national, special, public and school library; and in this information era there are addition to library types such as: digital, electronic and virtual libraries to meet up with the contemporaries and realities of the 21st century phenomenon in every facet of human life; hence all activities of human life is being governed by concept of information. According to Abubakar (2021), the general objectives of libraries are to: determine the information needs of users through the study of its immediate community; identify, select, acquire, organize, create awareness and provide information resources to users of library, among others. Their functions include but not limited to: acquisition, weeding, organization as well as preservation and dissemination of information resources, information and knowledge respectively (Abubakar, 2021).

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School library as one of the types of libraries is organized collection of books, print and non-print materials, audio-visual materials kept for the use by both pupils, students and subject teachers and being managed by media resources specialists often called: school library personnel often called school librarian, teacher-librarian, library officer, library assistant library prefect. It is any library that is established or attached to either nursery, primary or post-primary schools (teachers training colleges, junior/senior secondary schools and technical colleges. School library is often called media resource center. It house the collection of books(fiction and non –fiction, audio-visual materials), provide information resources and services as it covers subjects taught in schools as well as the extra-moral activities such as: drama, debate, quiz competition, formation of reading club. Users of school library consist of pupils, children, students' and subject teachers. It is in recognition of children education that the Federal Government of Nigeria in its National Policy of Education (2013) maintain its concern with Nigerian child access to quality education relevant to the needs of Nigerian economy and hence structured the Nigeria educational system into four main areas out of which three (3) are basically for children and thus state below:-

- (a) Early child care and development aged 0-4 years
- (b) Basic Education (pre-primary, primary education and junior secondary education)
- (c) Post-Basic secondary education

It is in support of the above three (3) enumerated areas for Nigerian children that Federal Government of Nigeria in its policy statement, National Policy on Education (2013) maintain that proprietors of schools are to establish libraries for children /teachers' access/consultation, while school library staff be trained to enhance service delivery and active readership. In order to provide quality education for the teaming population of Nigerian children, there is the need for the provision of functional school library services by adequately stock school libraries with current and relevant information resources (Saka, 2004).

While there are general objectives for all libraries, the school library has its specific objectives to include:-

- It supports all educational programs of the school.
- It cultivates reading habit in school children.
- It inculcates the habit of seeking help of additional resources other than textbooks,
- It develops self-learning skills of students.
- It nurtures good moral values and principles in the children.
- It cultivates a feeling of respect and love for nation and its culture in the students.
- It helps teachers to improve their teaching expertise
- It provides healthy material for recreational and entertainment purpose of students, teachers and staff members.
- It keeps the teachers and management informed with the latest updates I education sector.

Source: [www.liseduetwork.com/fuctions-of-school library/](http://www.liseduetwork.com/fuctions-of-school-library/)

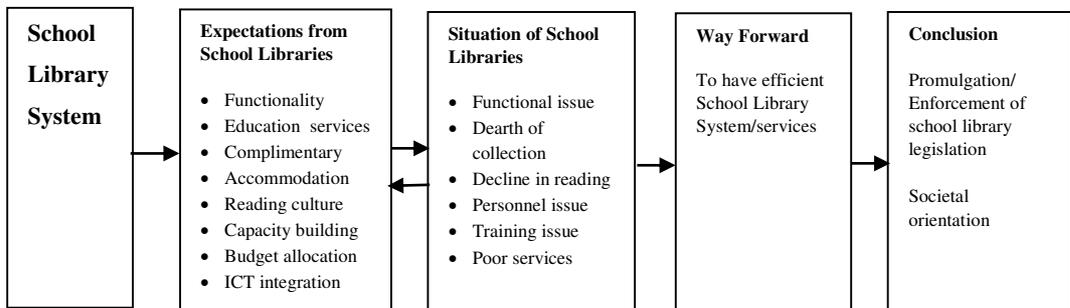
The summary of the functions of school library include but not limited to: procurement, provision and making available information resources in educational program and extracurricular activities, for all subjects taught in school, and for the inculcation of reading habit among children; to improve the teaching skills of teachers and to keep both students and teachers up-to-date in their field of study.(www.liseduetwork.com/functions-of-school library/)

Objectives and structure of this paper

This paper strive to explore issues affecting school library system and development in Nigeria with a view to determining the:

- i. Expectations from school libraries
- ii. Current situation in school libraries
- iii. Way forward with a view of mapping out strategies to overcome the challenges
- iv. Provide conclusion by briefly suggesting recommendations.

CONCEPTUAL MODEL: School Library System in Nigeria



Source: Author’s Developed Model, (2023)

The schema shows that Nigerian societies expects school libraries to perform their expected functions of selection, acquisition, organization and dissemination of information resources to pupils, students and teachers on request thereby complimenting classroom teaching and learning thus meeting users’ academic information needs. Contrary to the expectation, there are dearth in school library system which has inhibited school library and educational development which is affecting national development. Arising from this situation, the paper highlighted way forward being backup with conclusion suggesting a strong promulgation and enforcement of school library legislation and societal orientation on the need for efficient school library services in Nigeria

Methodology

Documentary sources mainly journals and conference proceedings in the field of librarianship and education were used to support the argument on the subject matter (school library system in

Nigeria). For every point raised, a corresponding source(s) was/were used to support the argument. This was succinctly carried out in line with the objectives and structure of this paper.

Expectations from School of Libraries

Nigerian societies have a variety of expectations from libraries which are not far from quality service delivery in terms of the selection and acquisition of relevant but current information resources as well as provision of general and specialized services which would go a long way in providing educational services thus complementing the teaching role of subject teachers in schools.

1. Functional libraries:-

It is expected that primary and post-primary school libraries should form the foundation for children to develop reading culture. As such, school libraries are expected to be functional in terms of accommodation, collection, staffing and services, while the children section of public libraries should be equipped with children literature (story books, textbooks pictures etc.) and other essentials that are within their age range. This is in line with documentary evidence that posits components of school library to include readers, staffs and information resources.

2. Educational services:

School libraries are expected to offer story telling/hours, organized quiz, debate, drama and formation of reading clubs. According to Abubakar and Batagarawa (2021), school libraries are expected to provide educational services and extra—mural curriculum such as story/telling, story hour, quiz and debate, drama, film show, organization of reading club, book talk and fun.

3. Complimentary role:

Classroom teaching and learning cannot cater for children educational needs there is the need to resort to library where they can consult textbooks and other information resources especially topics taught/ cover in particular subjects. In this case, relevant textbooks and other reading materials should not only be acquired but also made available for students and teachers consultation

4. Accommodation:

Accommodation is one of the requirements of school libraries and to some extent it is enshrined in the minimum standard for school libraries in Nigeria. There should be purposeful-built school library to accommodate essentials as well as space for reading, various sections and units. However, school library should not be seen as classroom, staffroom or store but rather as information centre where both pupils/ students and teachers visit to exploit information resources to meet their varied information, research, recreational and academic needs.

5. Reading Habit

It is expected that school children should form the habit of reading not only during examination but for pleasure so that it would be part of children life. At primary and Post-Primary school level, pupils and students are expected to cultivate the habit of reading, and by the time they enter

institutions of higher learning, it become part of their life. School libraries should be able to cater for users' information needs by acquiring variety of reading materials such as fictions, newspapers and other literary materials. Some extra-curricular activities such as quiz, debate, drama, reading in morning assembly should not only be organized but also materials be loaned to children for home use. Children section of the public libraries should also take this responsibility of acquiring, organizing and making available fictions and other literary materials for children's consultation by children during children hours and at home. However, one of the factors responsible for poor reading culture among children and youth today especially in Nigeria include non-availability of relevant books, emphasis on the use of ICT facilities, among others.

6. Capacity building for school library personnel:

One of the expectations of school libraries is the efficient service delivery by the personnel. For effective and efficient service delivery, there is the need for library personnel to be well-equipped with skills in the area of technical, administrative, computing and communication. These skills can only be acquired through capacity building or training programmes such as conferences and workshop attendance, mentoring, orientation program, collaboration and participatory management, among others. On the other hand, library schools should review their curriculum to reflect school media programme and specialists as well as parents so that they discharge duties on behalf of library personnel whenever absent (Oyediran-Tidings, 2012).

7. Budgetary allocations to school libraries

Ideally every school library is expected to have budgetary allocation from the parent, local government council, ministry or agency through school principal/head teacher. While those of private schools should come through the proprietor. The allocation can effectively and judiciously be used for the acquisition of library collection, staff training program and the other obligation with school library system). In this case the head of school library is expected to not only have idea budgeting concepts but also be in better position to design and prepare budget for school library. The budgeting systems include, program planning base, formula, incremental line-item. The head of school library should also device means of generating funds to school library such as PTA levy, endowment, over-due charges, photocopy and Internet services (Saka & Bitagi, 2010).

8. ICT integration in school library services.

As we are now in technological era, it is expected that both primary and Post-primary institutions to have or integrate ICT into library services so that service delivery can conveniently be offered i.e. children /students and teachers are expected to ICT facilities in school library. It is in line with fact that audiovisual collection are to be access and use through CD-ROMS and DVDs as well as E-resources (E-books) E-journals, E-bibliographies, E-abstracts, etc. are now integrated to reading materials in school libraries. (<http://cbse.nic.in/LIBRARY-1-99.pdf>). (<https://www.google.co.in/search?q=pictures/+of+school+libraries+in+indian>)

Situation of School Libraries in Nigeria

School libraries are directly under primary and post-primary schools, and department under Local Government Education Authority, Ministries/Departments/ Agencies (MDA). Libraries established at primary schools are directly under Local Government Education Authority (LGEA). In Nigeria, the situation of most school libraries is worrisome to the extent that some libraries cease existing, while those in existence failed to meet the established standards. Literature survey by Saka (2007) showed some impediments to school library development in Northern Nigeria in the areas of school library funding, accommodation, staffing, collection and their organization as well as user education programme, minimum standards and the state of computerization respectively while minimum standards are yet to be implemented in most Federal Government Colleges in North Central Nigeria (Mohammed & Saka, 2012). However, 15 years after this write-up, problems still persists not only in Northern part of Nigeria but the country as a whole. There is need for way forward, after critical examination of the present scenario. The situation of school libraries in Nigeria are enumerated below and overleaf as information is obtained through literature search, research report and personal visit/observation and discussion with colleagues.

Lack of functional school and public libraries

Majority of primary and post-primary schools lack functional libraries. What we have as school libraries are more of store with scarcity, outdated and irrelevant collection cover with cob-web and dusty in nature. In certain cases, when schools fall short of classroom accommodation, they convert the library to classrooms. They are usually managed by un-qualified staff most of who are subject teachers who lack any form of library training or experience. School libraries are under lock and open once in a week and not to talk of access and book loan. This may be one of the reasons that made most of teachers to read at home (Bala, Mazah & Yaharami, 2021). Although there is children section in public libraries, there is inadequate collection of fictions and non-fictions, while story hours are non-existence.

School library funding

Both primary and post-primary schools are parastatals, agencies, department under education. Talking about funding school libraries is related to funding education sector. As pointed out by Saka, Aliero and Ibrahim (2022), funding education sector is inadequate as it does not meet the UNESCO standard of 26%. School libraries in Nigeria does not enjoy separate or independent budgetary allocation or funding (if any). In fact lack of funds for school libraries have adverse effect on building or purposeful school libraries accommodation and collection. A visit by the writer of this paper recently discovered scanty collection in a room called library which was covered with dust and cob-web.

Collection:

There is neglect of libraries in some schools such that what you find as libraries in some schools is scanty collection of books with dust while cob-webs have over-shadowed the collection. The library is more or less like a store where books are kept in a corner and sometimes on cupboard

which do not guaranty access and consultation. A study conducted by Elaturoti and Aramide, (2012) on dearth of library collection in schools as an inhibitor to reading promotion, revealed outdated, irrelevant and inadequate learning resources as well as dearth to reading promotion among pupils in schools.

Reading Habit

One of the serious problems to Nigeria educational system and libraries particularly those established at primary and post-primary schools are the issue of habit formation in reading. What has accounted for this problem is the acute shortage of fiction, poor method of teaching, ill-equipped or absence of school libraries and above all the issue of computer/ICT. This unfortunate situation on the part of children and students was documented by Saka, Aliero and Ibrahim (2022) that children are found of memorizing local songs at the expense of reading, and that reading is for the purpose of examination (Saka, Bitagi and Garba, 2012; Saka and Alhasssan, 2019) and the majority of teachers read for preparing lesson note, while majority do not read due to absence of materials (Bala, Mazah & Yaharami, 2021).

Absence of Qualified personnel

Ordinarily school library is expected to be managed by the following category of the staff, namely: school librarian, library officer, library assistant, teacher-librarian and technologist (FME, 1992). Unfortunately, these categories of staff are lacking in most school libraries (if school libraries exist) and where functional libraries are lacking, subject teachers are employed or deployed. Apart from un-qualified library personnel, capacity building of the existing personnel is lacking as this is one of the factors responsible for inefficient service delivery in most school libraries in Nigeria.

Capacity building

There is the problem of mentoring of younger LIS professionals (mentee) by their supervisors (mentors) even when LIS students are on practical attachment, there used to be non-cooperative attitude on the part of supervisors, hence some of the trainees can turn out later to become heads of school libraries. It is in support of this statement that Yusuf, Mishelia and Badia (2022) reported that LIS students on library field experience scheme in a university library faced the problem of inadequate supervision and unfriendly attitude of supervisors more so that (Iroeze, Mabagwu, Opara and Edem, 2022) reported that none of the school library personnel in southern part of Nigeria received training in the aspect of special school library services (i.e library personnel in charge of visually-impaired schools).

Operations and Service Delivery:

In the area of service delivery, some school libraries are under lock and key and are open on special days. Sometimes the so - called library master and / or library prefect do stay in library as guard and deprive pupils/ students from getting access to the library and its collection. On the other way round, school libraries are open during library periods on selected days which are mostly slated

during short breaks around 12:10pm or in the afternoon. At these periods, pupils/ students are permitted to visit the library to either do assignment or read light literature at the mercy of themselves and not to be assisted by library master/ prefect. What accounted for this negative situation is the fact that the so-called library master lack idea about library and at the same time he/ she may be a subject teacher or a senior master.

The Way Forward

Having identified the challenges to school library system and development in Nigeria, it is imperative for government at all levels and tiers as management and proprietors of schools, stakeholders in librarianship and those directly connected to the school library system in Nigeria to ensure functional school library system so as to enhance positive development in education sector. The way forward are hereby suggested and enumerated so as to ensure efficient school library services to further enhance national development.

1. Functional libraries

Provision of functional library services at pre-primary, primary and post-primary school levels as well as children section in public libraries respectively. This entails that the libraries should not only be established but equipped with current and relevant information resources particularly literary but fictions. Libraries should be opened for use on schooldays, while the children section of public libraries should be opened even on weekends. Above all, academic, research, branches of national library should established or create and equip children section with relevant collection to compliment the role of school and public libraries. Trained library personnel be attached to children section in these libraries to manage and provide efficient services to children.

2. Adequate funding

Adequate funding is not only needed for school libraries services but a necessity and crucial for the overall development of children education in Nigeria. To this end, there should be not only separate allocation from the source (federal, state and LGA) but also comply with UNESCO standard of 26% of nation's budgetary allocation be ear-marked for educational sector. As such, whatever comes to ministry or development of education in the federal, state or local government, reasonable amount should be allocated to school libraries to carter for the procurement of information resources, library facilities; staff training etc.

3. Sensitization/reading promotion program

Although National Library of Nigeria has been making promotional effort in terms of sensitization through reading competition and rally, there should be a joint effort or collaboration between the apex library, its braches at state level, ministries and agency for mass literacy to promote reading culture among Nigeria Youth. There is decline in the reading habit among children and Nigeria youth. Various promotional programs used e.g reading competition, moving on the street with play cards; reading in morning assembly by school children, debate among schools, essay writing competition among children and students in primary and post-primary schools.

4. Recruitment of qualified personnel

For functional library services to be ensure, there is the need for recruitment of well-qualified, dedicated/committed personnel in the field of school librarianship. The following qualifications should be used i.e Master in Library science, Bachelor of Library science or at least Diploma in school librarianship with or without working experience. Where this is lacking, the library master should be sponsored to short courses, workshops or conferences to acquire some basic ideas about library.

5. Capacity building

Recruitment of staff and job performance by library personnel can only be enhanced and promoted if they are made to acquire relevant skills and knowledge, and this can only be possible through conferences, workshops, seminars and pursuance of formal professional education through study fellowships through sponsorship by the employer/ parent organization..

6. Improvement of LIS curriculum

The LIS curriculum should be improved by injecting a lot of materials considering the realities of the 21st century and contemporaries affecting school library services world-wide. However, with the establishment of specialize library school at university of Ibadan, known as “Department of Library and Media Resources” it then means that school library services in Nigeria has gotten ground to train future school librarians and other library personnel with the acquisition of diploma, degree and higher degree in school librarianship. All the library schools in Nigeria running various programs are requested to review, restructure and modify their curricular to accommodate: literacy and reading culture, children literature, education and training or capacity building of librarians, and Isah, Salman and Adekeye (2021) stress the need for integration of ICT into library and information science curriculum in Nigeria.

7. Minimum Standards for School Libraries in Nigeria

This document was produced in 1992 by a12-man committee thus the stakeholders in LIS field which cut across Universities, ministry of education, NERDC, library schools, Abadina Media Resources Center, University of Ibadan, Nigeria. This document spelt out of the essentials needed for functional school libraries in the country and as such the proprietors and the concern authorities are requested to adhere strictly to this document before, during and after the establishment of standard school library.

8. Promulgation and enforcement of school library legislation: -

Library legislation if promulgated should be enforced thereby committing government, proprietors and agencies of schools and stakeholders to establish equip and manage school libraries at primary and post-primary schools as well as children section of public libraries in Nigeria. It is in support of this assertion on public library legislation that Aliero (2021) posits that “legislation should

include the provision of rural reading rooms and reactivation or introduction of mobile library services”

Conclusion

School library is regarded as media resource center, being managed by media resource specialists. They are expected to perform complimentary role to class room teaching and learning. School libraries should be functional in service provision and should be supported by adequate funding, qualified staff, and educational services, extramural activities and strong legislation. All these essentials are likely not possible due to enumerated challenges, though these challenges can be overcome if the enumerated suggestions are taken into consideration and way-forward been mapped out. There should be strong promulgation and enforcement of school library legislation to commit government, proprietors of private schools, management of schools and stakeholders in pre-primary, primary and post primary schools in the area of school library development in Nigeria in terms of establishment, building a standard and purposeful school library and funding among others. Above all, there should be societal orientation on the need to have standard/functional school libraries; visit and use library resources and services by Nigerian societies and entire people.

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