REPOSITIONING THE SCHOOL LIBRARY SERVICE FOR OPTIMAL PERFORMANCE: A SURVEY OF FIVE SELECTED SECONDARY SCHOOL LIBRARIES IN OWERRI MUNICIPALITY, IMO STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract: This survey examines the nature of School Library Service in Owerri Municipality, Imo State Nigeria. A combination of oral interview, personal observation and questionnaire were used to collect date while tables and simple percentages were used to analyze data. A total of 100 questionnaires were administered on senior secondary students of SS3 classes and teacher librarians of the five (5) selected secondary schools in Owerri Municipality. The school libraries were found to be rendering only reference without lending and indexing services. Only Emmanuel College, Owerri renders lending services to the patrons. Furthermore, the resources of the libraries were found to be grossly below the Minimum Standard for School Libraries. Amongst the recommendations to reposition the school libraries for optimal performance were: the state government should ensure that no new school should be approved without a school library building stocked with relevant print and non-print resources while school library resources should be provided in line with the Minimum Standard for School Libraries approved by Federal Ministry of Education.

Keywords: Owerri Municipality.

1. INTRODUCTION

The school library is central to the educational service of the nursery, primary and secondary schools; it is the hub around which teaching and learning revolves**.**

Dike & Amaechi (2014) observe that as organized collection of a wide spectrum of learning resources, the school library provides both the human and material resources deployed to encourage teaching and learning.

Okojie (2014) notes that the school library serves as effective and efficient information center for the school, promoting literacy, upholding democratic values and ensuring the fundamental human right of access to information. It is accessible to pupils, students, staff and community. School libraries are at the heart of education enterprise. This is why the National Policy on Education stresses the importance of the school library by directing that every school should have a functional library and trained staff for its effectiveness (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2004).

The school library functions to support the academic programme of the school by providing the relevant information resources and services for the educational growth and development of the pupils and students. A school library according to Ahmad (2011) can become a source and force for educational excellence only when it functions as an integral component of the total teaching and learning process. This is the reason Adesina (2003) stresses that the school library should be a compulsory aspect of school system. Notwithstanding the role, relevance and indispensability of the school library in the educational process, the school has not been given its proper position in education. A visit to school libraries in Nigerian secondary schools shows that the available facilities such as adequate collection, qualified personnel amongst others are lacking (Amechi& Dike, 2013).

It is against this background that this study is conducted with the overall objective of determining how best the school library services can be repositioned for optimal performance.

2. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

The school library is conceived as a library located in a nursery, primary or secondary school, stocked with books and other learning /teaching resources and managed by a professional. The school library is defined as a collection of relevant books and new books housed in each school reasonably and suitably organized by trained staff to supply materials for teachers, the teaching methods and resources (Aliyu, 2012).

The changing roles and functions of the school called for its redesignation as School Library Media Center or School Library Resource Center. The traditional school library media center has evolved to substitute the traditional school library and reflect their multimedia collections and functions (Dike &Amaechi, 2014). In line with this new concept, Elauroti (2007) states that the designation, school library media specialist has been universally adopted to replace the long used designation of school Librarian or teacher Librarian to reflect their new function in educational program of the school.

This is in agreement with the submission of Aliyu (2014) which affirms that the concept of the school library has changed due to changes in the recent roles of the library in schools as a by-product of a information explosion and information sources. He agrees that the new name is in line with global trend of information technology and school libraries in Nigeria have to match with school libraries standards internationally.

The importance of libraries in education is a non debatable issue. Fadero (1986) stresses that school libraries in particular enrich curriculum and remain the common laboratory of schools for those in quest for knowledge. The school library is a learning resource center responsible for making available a total learning package required by students, teachers and parents (Akitunde, 2010). School libraries work for all-round development of a child (Ezejiofor, Okereke & Orakpor, 2007). However, effective and quality service delivery according to Ogunbiyi & Jato (2010) depend on the quality of staff.

The school library media resources center according to Akitunde (2010) plays a major role in facilitating the teaching of the act of reading. The school library should be stocked with enough and relevant resources including audio-visual materials which make learning more concrete and real. Fayose (1995) agrees with this position and advocates that a large variety and ample supply of resources are required in school libraries to encourage independent study so that young people from an early age can appreciate books, reading, learn how to think, evaluate ideas so that their convictions and views are formed as a result of active mental efforts.

A library has been defined as a trinity of information resources made up of books and non-book materials, users and trained staff (Dike &Amaechi, 2015). Unfortunately most school libraries (where the exist at all) lack trained staff, library building and requisite information resources. Fadero (2001) laments that inadequate provision of libraries in schools is a general disease that is plaguing education in Nigeria. According to him, from North to South and from East to West of the country, schools are generally without libraries to support teaching, learning and the curriculum.

Aliyu (2014) joins in lamenting on the poor state of the nation's school libraries and notes that buildings designated for school library in the most schools are just old store buildings with cracked walls. Muogilim (n.d.) cited by Aliyu (2014) admonishes that the non-skilled employed to take charge of information delivery services, will woefully be handicapped to discharge the duties because only the teacher-librarian possesses the skill required to carry out the functions.

Ideally, in tandem with the global trend, qualified School Library Media specialists should be employed to manage our School Media Centers for effective service delivery.

Adequate funding is critical for the survival of any enterprise. Thus the school library must be adequately funded to perform its roles effectively. This has however not been the case in Nigeria. Azubogu & Dike (2014) submitted that without funding (which is the force) for the provision of resources, effective management of the school library would not be achieved. Just as Fadero (2001) advocates that a clear-cut policy on funding school libraries which should bring in a cooperative arrangement between the three tiers of government be put in place. He suggests a matching grant policy whereby the Federal Government would provide a naira for each naira spent on school libraries by each state. Percentage can also be used whereby the Federal Government would undertake payment or reimbursement of about 60% of the total expenditure of every state on its school library.

Objectives of the Study

Specifically, this study seeks to:

(i)   Find out whether the schools under study have functional school libraries.

(ii)   Establish whether the libraries are managed by qualified school librarians.

(iii)   Assess the stock of the libraries and their relevance to the students.

(iv)   Identify the type of services rendered by the libraries.

(v)   Determine the frequency of use of libraries by students and teachers.

(vi)   Examine user satisfaction with the services of the libraries.

(vii)   Determine the factors hindering effective services of the libraries.

(viii)   Proffer suggestions that will help to reposition the school libraries for optimal performance.

Research Questions

The study will answer the following questions:

(i)   Do the schools have functional libraries?

(ii)   Are the school libraries managed by qualified school librarians?

(iii)   What is the stock rendered by the libraries; are they relevant to the students?

(iv)   What are the services rendered by the libraries?

(v)   How often do you use the library?

(vi)   Are you satisfied with the services of the libraries?

(vii)   Suggest ways of improving the services of the libraries.

3.   RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study adopted the survey method in view of the fact that the population of study comprised some selected schools located in different parts of Owerri Metropolis. The relevance of this method of study is in tandem with Aina (2002) position that survey involves a systematic and comprehensive collection of information about opinions, attitudes and feelings of people, which is often accomplished through observation, interview or administering of questionnaire to relatively large and representative sample of the population of interest.

A total of 100 questionnaires were administered to Senior Secondary Students (SS3) and teachers of the 5 selected schools in Owerri Municipal. The SS3 Senior Secondary Classes were selected because they are capable of making critical and objective appraisal of their school libraries.

A combination of interview, observation checklist and administration of questionnaire were used to elicit responses. The teacher librarians were used as research assistants to retrieve all the 100 questionnaire making a 100% response rate of return.

Minimum, Standard for School Library Materials

The minimum standard for School Libraries published by Federal Ministry of Education (1992) stipulates that a school library should have the following collections:

Works of Reference

1. Library materials collection in this area should consist of:
   a. Sets of Encyclopedia: at least 2 sets (one science, one general).
   b. Language dictionaries to cover English, French, Arabic and Nigerian Languages (Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba).
   c. Books of quotations and dictionary of proverbs.
   d. Maps and atlases.
   e. Gazetteers
   f. Companion of comprehensive literary work
   g. Subject dictionaries in music, geography, biology, etc

2. Non-fiction: Book collection should cover all the subjects that are taught in the school as well as books of general interest and photography, scouting sports, etc.

3. Fictions (story books): Every school library should have both local and foreign fiction materials

4. Periodicals: Every school library should have no subscription at least 10 different tittles of periodicals (excluding Newspapers) in various disciplines.

4b. On daily subscriptions, 5 different Nigerian Newspapers:-
   - Local newspaper produced within the locality-1 title.
   - State Government sponsored newspaper-1 title
   - Federal Government sponsored newspaper-1title
   - Others not listed above- 2 title

5. Maps and Atlas: Each school library should have in library collection at least 3 different titles of atlases with representation from the local government area, the state and country. Where no separate issue have been published, the continent i.e. Africa or the world.

6. Books of Quotations: Every school library should have at least 2 different sets of standard books of quotation.

7. Non-Book Materials: Every school library should have in its collections the following:
   - Pictures especially of famous personalities, places and events of geographical and historical importance as well as birds, tress, flowers, etc.
   - Realia comprising of samples of local arts and craft, historical object and of natural history such as rocks and metals.
   - Newspaper clipping/cuttings

7b. Types of Audio-Visual Materials which include:
   - Records
   - Tapes and cartridges
   - Slides
   - Films, film-strips
   - Micro films
   - Transparences
   - Maps, charts and globes.

Basic Book collection-New schools may not be expected to meet up with the standard within the first two years of existence. Similarly, old schools, which at present have no formal libraries will equally require time for their libraries to meet up the required standards.

Enrolment (Secondary schools)	No. of Different titles
500-less	1,500
500-1000	3,000
1000-1500	4,000
1500-2000	5,000
2000-3000	6,000 - 10,000

Table 1: Distribution and Return of Questionnaire

School	Sample Size	Total Response	Response Rate %
E.C.O.	20	20	20%
H.C.O.	20	20	20%
G.C.O.	20	20	20%
G.S.S.O.	20	20	20%
G.S.S.I.O.	20	20	20%
Total	**100**	**100**	**100**

In table 1 above 100 questionnaire were distributed to the chosen population of 100 and were all returned. The response rate were: Emmanuel College, Owerri (E.C.O.) 20%, Holy Ghost College, Owerri (H.C.O.) 20%, Government College Owerri (G.C.O.) 20%, Girls' Secondary School Owerri (G.C.O.) 20% and Girls' Secondary School, Ikenegbu, Owerri (G.S.S.I.O.) 20%.

Table 2: Existence of School Librarians and their Qualifications

Secondary School	Existence of library	Teacher Librarian	Qualification
E.C.O.	Yes	Yes	NCE
H.C.O.	Yes	Yes	NCE
G.C.O.	Yes	Yes	BA
G.S.S.O.	Yes	Yes	NCE
G.S.S.I.O.	No	Yes	MSC

Table 2 shows that of all the five (5) secondary schools sampled, only Girls' Secondary School, Ikenegbu, Owerri has no library.

Furthermore, all the five (5) schools have teacher librarians. The teacher librarians in three (3) of the schools: Emmanuel college, Holy Ghost College, Owerri and Girls' Secondary School, Owerri have the National Certificate of Education (NCE) as their qualifications while the teacher librarians at Government College, Owerri and Girls' Secondary School, Ikenegbu, Owerri have Bachelor of Arts and Master degree in Science as their qualifications respectively. It is however curious and laughable that Girls' Secondary School Ikenegbu, Owerri which has no library has a librarian designate with a Master degree in science. One wonders the library being managed by the librarian! It is most unfortunate that the school has no library building or a room designated as a library but uses the principal's office to house its collections.

Table 3: Available Resources of the School Libraries

Available Resources	Emmanuel College Owerri	Holy Ghost CollegeOwerri	Govt. College Owerri	Girls' Sec. Sch. Owerri	Girls' Sec. School Ikenegbu Owerri
Books	150	111	118	115	102
Encyclopedias	3	2	3	10	-
Newspaper	-	3	5	3	-
Shelves	4	10	8	12	3
Chairs	21	104	32	49	4
Tables	18	62	20	15	-
Catalogue Cabinets	-	-	-	-	-
Electric fans	3	-	13	6	2

Table 3 graphically shows the resources of school libraries: Emmanuel College, Owerri has 150 volumes of books, 3 volumes of encyclopedias, no newspaper, 4 wooden shelves, 21 chairs, 18 tables, no catalogue cabinet and 3 electric fans. Holy Ghost College, Owerri has 111 volumes of books, 2 sets of encyclopedias, 3 set of newspapers, 10 wooden shelves, 104 chairs, 62 tables, neither a catalogue cabinet nor electric fan. Government College Owerri has 118 volumes of books, 3 sets of encyclopedias, 5 sets of newspapers, 8 shelves, 32 chairs, 20 tables, no catalogue cabinet and 13 electric fans. Girls' Secondary School, Owerri has 115 volumes of books, 10 sets of encyclopedias, 3 sets of newspapers, 12 wooden shelves, 49 chairs, 15 tables and 6 electric fans. For Girls' Secondary School, Ikenegbu Owerri, the school library resources are 102 volumes of books, no encyclopedias and newspapers, 3 shelves, 4 chairs, no tables and catalogue cabinet but two electric fans. Unfortunately, the summation of the stock of the libraries which is 596 volumes is a far cry from the standard of 10,000 volumes recommended for each school library by the Federal Ministry of Education (1992) Minimum standard for libraries.

Table 4: Services Rendered by the School Libraries

Available Services	Emmanuel College Owerri	Holy Ghost College Owerri	Govt. College Owerri	Girls' Sec. Sch. Owerri	Girls' Sec. Sch. Ikenegbu Owerri
Lending	Yes	No	No	No	No
Reference	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Indexing	No	No	No	No	No

Table 4 reveals that all libraries render reference services. Only Emmanuel College, Owerri (E.C.O.) renders both lending and reference services while none of the libraries offer indexing services. For Girl's Secondary School, Ikenegbu, Owerri which has no building or room designated as a library, students access books housed in the principal's office through their Teacher Librarian.

The school library should render lending, reference and indexing services. This would enable the students to borrow books for home reading. Effective reference and indexing services would also help the students not only to consult reference materials but also to access indexed newspapers, magazines and other resources for their assignments, projects and various academic works.

Table 5: Frequency of Use of the Libraries

Frequency	No. of Respondents	Percentage %
During library period	54	54%
During break time	16	6%
Once a week	7	7%
Never use it	3	3%
Students not allowed to use it	20	30%
Total	**100**	**100**

Table 5 reveals that 54% of the respondents used the school library only during library hours, 16% use it during break time, 7% use the library once per week, 3% do not use the library while 20% indicated that they were not allowed to use the library.

It is evident that majority of the students used the library during library periods given the 54% response rate. It is however, worrisome that 20% of the respondents are not allowed to use the library. The reason is that schools that have their collections housed in the principal's office (like G.S.S, Ikenegbu, Owerri) would not allow students access to avoid disturbing and distracting the principal. Another period when use is significantly made of the library is during break time when students would also have unhindered access to the library. It is also note worthy that some students use the library once per week while some do not use the library at all.

Table 6: User satisfaction of the library services

Response	Frequency	Percentage %
Yes	25	25%
No	75	75%
Total	100	100%

Table 6 reveals the level of the user satisfaction of the library services. Only 25% of the respondents indicated their satisfaction with the services of the libraries while 75% showed their dissatisfaction with the services. How could the students and staff be satisfied with the services of the libraries when there were gross inadequacy of the necessary library resources, when students are not allowed to borrow books for home reading; most importantly when the resources of the libraries fall short of the school library Minimum standard?

Table7. Factors Hindering Effective Services of the Libraries

Options	Frequency	Percentage%
Inadequate reading materials	100	100%
Inadequate seats and tables	80	80%
Lack of adequate accommodation	70	70%
No lending services	98	98%
Poor ventilation and lighting	88	88%
Lack of current books	96	96%

From table 7, it is observed that inadequate reading materials, 100%; lack of current books, 96%; no lending services, 98%; poor ventilation and lighting, 88%; inadequate seats and tables, 80% and lack of accommodation, 70%; truncated effective services of the school libraries. These need to be addressed.

Table 8: Ways of improving services if the library

Ways of Improving services	Frequency	Percentage
Provision of adequate reading materials	100	100%
Provision of adequate accommodation	100	100%
Provision of lending service	100	100%
Provision of proper ventilation and lighting	100	100%
Provision of current books	100	100%

Table 8: reveals that all the respondents were unanimous that the libraries could be improved and repositioned by acquiring, not just adequate reading materials but the very current ones, provision of seats and tables adequate accommodation (not just one room), provision of lending services, proper lighting and ventilation.

4.   CONCLUSION

From the findings of this investigation, the school libraries investigated fell short of the Minimum standard prescribed by the Federal Ministry of Education. This was reflected in their lack of adequate and current library resources, print and non-print. It is also worrisome that in a school, students are not allowed access to the library because the collections were housed in the principal's office. The reason is that the school has no accommodation for the library, yet they have some collections. It is also disheartening that the libraries do not render lending services thus disallowing the students from borrowing books for home reading. Furthermore, the school offered neither indexing nor abstracting services which could help the students to access materials for their assignments and mini projects.

5.   RECOMMENDATIONS

The researchers make the following suggestions intended to help in the repositioning of the school library services in Owerri Municipality and by extension, Imo State for optimal performance:

✓ Government should ensure that no new school shall be given approval without a detached school library while existing old schools should be provided with library buildings.

✓ School library resources must be provided in line with the provisions of the minimum standard for school libraries approved by the Federal Ministry of Education.

✓ Heads of schools should collaborate with Parents Teachers Association to provide more library materials for school libraries

✓ Newly admitted students should be required to donate a prescribed text or novel to the school library to increase school library collections.

✓ Only qualified librarians without teaching load should be eployed to manage the school libraries to ensure efficient management of the libraries.

✓ Library supervisors should regularly inspect the school libraries to ensure maintenance of standard.

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