
Enhancing Quality Learning: The Impact of School Library Services to Students in Nigeria

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In this study, we examined the state of school libraries in Nigerian secondary schools and attempted to find out why there are no libraries in some of the schools. In a survey of 356 Federal University, Otuoke in Bayelsa State students, respondents were asked two questions: 1) the state of school libraries in the secondary school they graduated from; and for those reporting no school library, 2) perceived reasons why there is no school library. The results revealed that all most half of the respondents had no school library in their secondary schools. Reasons for this absence included the Nigerian government's nonchalant attitude towards village schools, lack of adequate space for libraries in school premises, lack of funding, and school managements' forceful selling of books to primary and secondary students. For students who had school libraries, the results suggested that students did not patronize those libraries because of improper orientation to the library value and obsolete collection. Students who used school libraries in their secondary schools disclosed that use of the library enhanced their reading habits and enabled them to make career choices and locate library materials easily. The findings will inform education authorities and school administrators on the need to establish school libraries in secondary schools.

Introduction

School libraries occupy a significant position in discussions on learning and many international studies have asserted the positive role school libraries have exerted on education, linking them directly to the improvement of students' academic performance, also in secondary education. With regards to the purposes of school libraries, CILIP/DFES/SLA/ASCEL, (2003, p.) identified seven roles they perform to include:

- Leading the teaching and learning of information literacy across the curriculum;
- Collaborating with teachers to embed information literacy across the curriculum;
- Providing training for teachers and students;
- Offering a suitable environment for research;
- Affording access to a wide range of resources;
- Facilitating opportunities to browse and discover; and
- Stimulating independent learning.

In Nigeria, many secondary schools both public and private are established without consideration for including school libraries. Education authorities who know the importance of school libraries fail to include libraries in the process of planning to establish secondary schools. This situation seems a global phenomenon. According to Shenton (2014), "In Britain, we live in an era libraries are being downgraded or even discarded completely, and instances in which new schools are opening without any physical library are all too frequent" (p. 141). Barrett and Douglas (2004) recognised that people develop as a result of the school library services and the work of the school

librarian can be powerful and persuasive. Similarly, Broady-Preston and Lobo (2011) argued that the role and function of school libraries is closely tied to and contingent on the educational mission and institution of the school.

Studies on the impact of school libraries in different parts of the world (Lonsdale, 2003; Lance, et al., 2005; Achterman, 2008) revealed that:

- Sufficiently financed school libraries staffed with qualified school librarians influence student's academic performance, regardless of their socio-economic status or educational background;
- Students' examination performance is higher when school libraries' usage increases;
- Furthermore, the frequency with which students borrow books from school libraries is indicative of students bond with studying. In schools with libraries and trained library personnel, students tend to read more, not exclusively for their school work, but also for general information and for the sake of entertainment in its own right;
- The quality of the school library book collection and the presence of a powerful computer network connecting classrooms with library resources have a significant relationship with student success. Furthermore, the incorporation of information literacy into the curriculum may improve the knowledge and skills of students;
- Teacher/school librarian partnership has a strong positive impact on learning;
- An study environment with the appropriate is the best predictor for comprehension, vocabulary building, spelling, and writing style of the students;
- Librarians strengthen students' sense of self-esteem, self-confidence, independence and responsibility in students and lead them to better performance. Therefore, school library usages reinforces students' school performance, even in this indirect way; and
- School librarians have a bigger positive impact on primary and junior high level students.

When students reach university level, they are expected to use the library more. Being fresh from secondary schools, it is expected that they have a little knowledge about using the library. Although, some come into the university with little knowledge on how to use the library, it has been discovered that many of them still do not know how to adequately use the library resources available to them. The study by Agboola and Bamigboye (2011) concluded that there was an under-use of library resources either print or electronic format by the first year students compared to students at higher levels. They also observed that there was also an increase in library use as students get to higher levels. Fresh university students who just gained admission into the university are required to undergo a lot of studying in order to meet the requirements of their curriculum. To help them acquire this, universities ensure the provision of information materials and a conducive studying environment through the university library. Studying is the interpretation of reading materials that helps students to assimilate thoughts and knowledge for educational purposes. Students with good study habits have learning tendencies that allow them to work privately where school libraries are available.

According to Subair (2015), "Students with poor study habits should be encouraged into library use from a young age in order for them to develop appropriate and effective study habits that will go a long way with them to university level" (p. 2). Many students who come into the university continue to display study habits formed earlier in life probably during secondary school days. The study habits developed by some student may also affect their use of the university library. In situations where students do not have effective study habits or fail to make adequate use or non-use of the school library in the secondary school they may find it difficult to use the university library. This may affect students negatively in their academic performance. According to Ogunsola and Okusaga (2006), "Lack of basic library facilities such as current books and ICT equipment has discouraged some students from using the library for study" (p. 227).

It is in the light of the foregoing that this study seeks to investigate the availability and impact of school libraries to fresh students admitted into Nigerian universities. The objective of the study is in twofold: to present the state of available school libraries in secondary schools and to report the reasons why libraries are not established in some secondary schools in Nigeria. To achieve this objective, students of the library-use course were made to respond to the following questions:

1. Are there school libraries in the secondary schools in Nigeria?
2. What are some of the reasons for not having school libraries?

Literature Review

School libraries and students reading habits

The library, more than any other place, provides ideal environment and vital information resources for students to develop and sustain good study habits necessary for excellent performance in academic works. Thus, it is imperative for the students to cultivate good study habits that will equip them for excellent performance in their academic work through the use of a school library. Being successful in school requires one to have a high level of study skills. Students should be able to first learn the skills, keep practicing them and then develop effective study habits in order for them to be successful in their academic work. Maryland Association of Community Colleges (2002) in their article on developing effective study habits mentioned that a good study habit consists of different skills such as time management, self-discipline, concentration, memorization, organization, group discussions, effort as well as the desire to succeed. According to Alex (2011), "... to study is to buy out the time and dedicate self to the application and task of study, and to become engrossed in a process of learning, practice, enlightenment and education of one's self" (p. 2). Secondary school education is supposed to be the bedrock and foundation toward higher knowledge in tertiary institutions. The National policy on Education in Nigeria stipulated that secondary school education is an instrument for national development that fosters the worth and development of the individual for further education and development, general development of the society and equality of educational opportunities to all Nigerian children, irrespective of any real or marginal disability (National Policy on Education, 2004).

Adesoji (2001) posited that libraries have been associated with the concept of life-long reading and learning. He further stated that, school libraries are desirable in order to inculcate into the students very early in life the habit of reading for various purposes such as education, pleasure, information, and culture.

Students' library use and academic performance

Students' failure to use the school library and its resources to expand their study habits negatively affect their academic performance. Several studies have shown that there is strong connection between the students' use of school library and their academic performance. Students that use the school library often perform better in test and examination than students who fail to use the school library. The study by Lance (2000) revealed that students in middle school with libraries had higher achievement test scores 18% higher than their counterparts without a library. For instance, Wikipedia (2010) reported that researchers have demonstrated that school libraries have positive impact on student's achievement. It reported that more than 60 studies have been conducted in 19 U.S. states and one Canadian province. The major findings of these studies as reported in the Wikipedia the free encyclopaedia (2010) are that students with access to well-supported school library media programme with a qualified school library media specialist scored higher on reading assessments regardless of their socio-economic status. Also, it observed that a study conducted in

Ohio revealed that 99.4% of students surveyed believed that their school librarians and school media programmes helped them succeed in school.

Gettinger and Sebert (2002) asserted that effective study skills are necessary for a college student to excel academically. They further stated that students must develop these skills in order to retain information learned in the present for their future benefit. Many students suffer low grade in schools because of bad study habits. School library is very important in shaping students' habit as regard reading for leisure, to pass examinations and to obtain information on different aspects of life (George, 2011). Library users make use of library for different purposes. While some users visit the library to read their notes and personal books, others use library to do assignments. Yet, others visit library to prepare for examination, recreation and relaxation. Ogunbote and Odunewu (2008) stated that the performance of students could be improved considerably, if they use the library regularly. Students should therefore maximize the use of school libraries to their advantage since school libraries provide favourable environment where the students can discover and develop their abilities and talents as well as improve their reading and study skills.

School library according to Busayo (2011) is an integral part of educational system that cannot be ignored without jeopardizing the quality of education in schools. The school library is an important part of elementary, middle and high school programmes without which students would not thrive academically and invariably find it most difficult to conduct academic research before they reach college level. A conducive learning environment is associated with the use of library as a study space. A library containing quality, relevant, current materials and information resources as well as a professional librarian has been seen to have a positive effect on students. Lance (2000) reviewed literature and discovered that students who used a library with up-to-date resources performed at a high level than students in school with minimal or no library resources.

Method

The researchers' sample included the 356 students just admitted into Federal University, Otuoke in Bayelsa State (Nigeria). Including this group of participants allowed the researchers to gather information regarding secondary school libraries without having to travel to schools throughout the country.

Being a federal university, Federal University Otuoke admits students from all over Nigeria, therefore, all the six geo-political zones in Nigeria were represented in the sample. On the survey, students were asked to list their secondary schools, including the town and the local government. Nigeria's big cities such as Lagos, Abuja, Kano, Port Harcourt, Warri, Minna, Owerri, Enugu, and Ibadan were all represented.

The survey questions were in two parts: Questions in Part A referred to the availability of school library in the secondary school from which they graduated. For participants who answered that yes, they did have a school library, the survey continued with the four sub-questions:

1. Does the secondary school you graduated from have school library?
 - a. How frequent do you visit the library?
 - b. What are your reasons of using the library?
 - c. What skills or knowledge did you gain from using the library?
 - d. Is the library staffed by a professional or library prefect?

If answer to question 1 were no, that the participant did not have a school library, then the participant moved on to Part B with this question:

2. Give reasons why you think there was no school library in your secondary school.

The results of quantitative answers were sorted by topic and clustered by similarity for analysis.

Findings

Part A. Results

Number of secondary schools with school libraries

Participants were asked to mention whether the secondary school they graduated from has school library or not. Out of the 356 respondents, almost half of the respondents (N=151) indicated that they had no school library in their secondary schools. Secondary schools in Nigeria are established without plan or provision for school libraries. In confirmation of this, one respondent wrote: *As of the time I was a student in Community Secondary School, Ayamasa, Bayelsa State, I never heard the word "library"*.

Use of school libraries by students

Respondents who had school libraries were asked how often they use the school library. Out of the 205 secondary schools with libraries, only 10 (4.9%) respondents mentioned using the library once a day, followed by 18 (8.8%) using the library once a week. For those students with secondary schools with libraries, the frequency of use is still very poor. This might be as a result of lack of orientation to the students on library use or absence of library hours in the school timetable (Adesoji, 2001).

Purpose of visiting the school library

Students were asked to give reasons of using the school library. Out of the 205 responses, the majority (90, or 43.9%) of the respondents mentioned that they visit the library "to read class note and prepare for exams." This reason was closely followed by those who mentioned "to look for materials to write assignment," as illustrated in Figure 1.

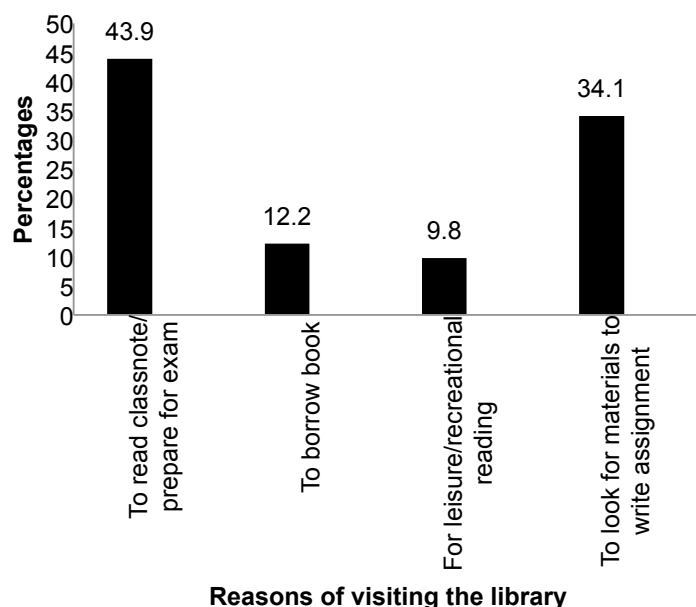


Figure 1. Results of Survey Part A (N=205)

Skills gained from using the school library

Students were asked the skills/knowledge they gained from using the school library. Responses to this question were sorted according to similar topics and arranged in ascending order. The majority (188, or 91%) of the students see that using the school library has increased their reading habit, and they have also gained knowledge on how to locate books from the shelf. Almost half (99, or 48%) of the respondents mentioned that using the library has improved their spelling/vocabulary building. Table 1 depicts all of the participants' perceptions of skills they gained using the school library.

Table 1. Skills students reported gaining from using the school library (N=205)

Skill	N (%)
Increased reading habit	188 (91.7)
Enabled me make my career choice by reading different books in the library	187 (91.2)
Learned how to locate a book from the library shelf	155 (75.6)
Improved my spelling and vocabulary	99 (48.3)
Learned how to browse the Internet in the e-library	56 (27.3)
Increased research skills	49 (23.9)

Availability of professional librarians in school libraries

Out of the 205 respondents who reported attending secondary schools with school libraries, more than half (136, 66%) of the participants indicated that their school was staffed by a professional librarian and assisted by library prefects who systematically organized the resources of the school libraries for easy access and use. According to the students, the librarian directed the students' activity, taught them how to search for books, and informed them to observe the rules of a library.

Part B. Results

Students (N=151) who responded that they had no school library in their secondary school completed part B of the survey. These respondents were asked to suggest some possible reasons for not having school libraries in the school. The responses were grouped by topic. Among the reasons were, "*No space in the school compound*" (n=122, or 80.8%), followed by lack of funds (n=115 or 76%), as Table 2 details.

Table 2: Perceived reasons for not having school libraries (N=151)

Reason	N (%)
No space in the school compound.	122 (80.8)
Lack of fund.	115 (76.2)
School administrators force students to buy books sold in the school.	94 (62.3)
Lack of interest on the part of school management/teacher.	86 (57)
Government nonchalant attitude.	78 (51.7)
The school located in a village.	65 (43)

Discussion

Secondary schools with school libraries

School library development in Nigeria is still in its infancy especially considering the rampant establishment of public and private secondary schools in nearly all villages and towns without libraries. Federal Minister of Education once wrote “Despite their inestimable importance, school libraries in Nigeria are still clearly in their embryonic stage of development, displaying inadequacies in funding, staffing, collection, furniture equipment and services provided” (Fafunwa, 2003, p. 23).

In this present study, when new college students were asked of the availability of school libraries in secondary schools in Nigeria, almost half of the respondents mentioned their schools had not included a library, despite the large amount of published research that suggests that school libraries can make a difference to students’ understanding and achievement and provides support for teaching and learning as an important part of the school community. Emphasizing the importance of school libraries, the National Policy on Education (2004) in Nigeria stated that: “Libraries are one of the most important educational services. Every State Ministry of Education needs to provide funds for the establishment of libraries in all our educational institutions and to train librarians and library assistants for this service” (p. 221). As laudable as that directive may be, not many state ministries make sure that there are school libraries attached to every secondary school in Nigeria. The inclusion of library period will make students use the school library frequently when it is time for library period. Jato, Oguniyi, and Olubiyo (2014) recommended that there should be library study hour in the school timetable to enable the students to have a specific time to use the school library regularly. They further stated that the inclusion of library study hour on the school timetable would afford the student the opportunity to study more than 30 minutes in the library on regular basis.

If students in secondary schools are to effectively utilize the school library, then school leaders must address the barrier of teachers’ negative attitudes toward attitude toward the librarian and library resources. Many teachers in the school system today still see their lesson notes as the all-and-end in the teaching-learning situation. If teachers believe in resource-based learning, then they must begin to see library staff and library resources as partners in the teaching learning process. If students see their teachers go into the school library frequently, then they themselves will take it seriously and use the library frequently. Students should not know what a library is and how it can help them. If students form the habit of using the school library during secondary schools, then students can confidently later use the university library.

One other reason why many students did not use school libraries frequently in Nigeria was because they were stocked with irrelevant and out-dated books. For students to be attracted to the library, the school librarian, in collaboration with the teaching staff, needs to select the best current resources to support the school curriculum.

Use of school library

Besides reading class notes and looking for materials to complete assignments, students should be given orientation on how the library can be of help to them in many ways. For example, through the use of the school library by having access to different books, students can make their career choice. They can also read different philosophical books and literature books that can build their critical thinking ability. A good school library and its staff will develop in students good reading skills and encourage long-term learning habits through listening, reading and viewing a wide variety of learning resources. These learning habits form the key to continuous success in school and to personal enrichment of leisure time through life.

If students at secondary school level are properly guided on how to use a library, they will be equipped to later use the university library. The school library is an important part of elementary, middle and high school programmes without which students would not thrive academically and find it most difficult to conduct research when they reach university level. Student's use and process information better with the help of a school librarian. School librarians guide students through their reading and research process as well as helping them to choose books that fit their interests. Busayo (2011) stated that a school library according is an integral part of educational system that cannot be ignored without jeopardizing the quality of education in schools.

Skills gained from using the school library

The majority of the students reported that using the school library has increased their reading habit. Study habits are one of the fundamental skills students need to acquire to succeed in life. Developing effective study habits is vital to student's future, not just academically but in everyday life. This finding affirms Shenton (2014) who reported that the using school library would help learners obtain "new or different vocabulary" (p. 143). Studying has become a very fundamental aspect of progress and development of students of all ages, especially those aspiring to higher education. This may be because it shapes and develops human intellectual capabilities. When students reach university level, they are expected to use the library more. Being fresh from secondary schools, it is expected that they have little knowledge about using the library. In order for library skills to be effectively taught, scheduled library periods should be provided on the school's timetable throughout the six years secondary school period.

Libraries with a school librarian

The present study revealed that more than half of the secondary schools with libraries had professional librarian. As Lance (2000) and others have reported, a school librarian should be someone who is trained to work with students and to understand their learning needs. They should be fully aware of the community and home reading cultures of students in their school.

Reasons for Not Having School Libraries

Lack of space for building school library

The majority of respondents who had not had a school library reported that was because there was no space in the school compound. One respondent wrote, *"During the time the school was built, there was no proper planning for provision of a library. They only build classrooms, staff quarters, and staff rooms."* Another respondent mentioned, *"There was no space in the school environment to build a school library, as the place was congested and tight. The land was small."* In Nigeria, school business has become so lucrative that private investors now use every available space to build classrooms for primary and secondary schools without considering providing space for a school library. Due to widespread corruption, schools (especially private schools) are often built without proper approval from education authorities; school proprietors often bribe the education authorities and get their schools approved without inspection to ensure that the building meets National Policy on Education guidelines. Another respondent wrote: *"Poor administration on the part of the owner of the school [i.e. the proprietor]: Because the reason he opened the school was to make money he didn't care if the school was in good shape or not (if the school need a library or not)."* The ideal school library building should be located in quarters specifically designed for it. It should be a separate building of its own located centrally within the school compound but removed from noisy areas such as the principal's office or staff room. Some of the participants in this study mentioned that they did not

visit the library frequently due to the fact that the library was located in a noisy place that is, close to staff room or between classrooms.

Lack of funds

The second most frequently mentioned reason for not having school library was financial constraint. One respondent wrote, *"Some schools are established and funded by communities in this part of Bayelsa state, therefore, no sufficient fund[s] to build library."* Most primary and secondary schools in villages are established and funded by the community but later taken over by the government. This tension between a lack of local funds and widespread corruption may be why school administrators cannot provide facilities such as school libraries and laboratories until the government takes over such schools.

Selling of books in primary and secondary schools

More than half of the respondents also mentioned that they are being forced to buy books from the school that is why there are no school libraries. In their view, if school libraries are established, students will not buy the books sold in the school. This is happening especially in private schools. Some principals in public schools also do that by selling books that are provided by the government to the students. The worst of all is by making them compulsory for students to buy. Another respondent wrote: One reason why there was no school library in my secondary school was because the books that were recommended for us, they wanted us to buy all from the school bookshop and they knew quite well if the school had a library, students would not bother themselves to buy all the books from the school. Education authorities in Nigeria need to visit schools to confirm what the students are complaining about. Books that are provided by the government ought to be given to the students free or establish a library and have them stocked in the library for students to use.

Lack of interest on the part of school management/teachers

Many of the respondents also mentioned lack of interest on the part of school management and teachers concerning libraries. Principals and other teachers have not come to take school libraries seriously. Many have mentioned that the library is not necessary to their teaching, because they themselves have not had the opportunity of using good libraries. One respondent wrote, *"Most administrators of schools do not value the role of school libraries in the educational process because they are not interested on library thus, they pay less attention to establishing school libraries or maintaining existing ones."* Providing school libraries therefore means ensuring that students maximally use information resources, the information and expertise they need to develop children's reading habit and literacy, and offering access to knowledge. The study by Clark (2010) confirmed that school libraries have a vital role to play in the reading patterns of those students who have higher literacy levels.

Government nonchalant attitude

The majority of the respondents also mentioned local government's nonchalant attitude towards providing fund for the establishment of school libraries. Consequently, students graduate from the secondary schools without idea of using libraries, not knowing what a catalogue is, how to locate books in the library, the type of books in the library.

Schools located in villages

Almost half of the participants who responded that they had not had a school library gave the reason that "the school [was] located in a village." Many secondary schools located in remote villages lack the necessary facilities such as libraries, laboratories, and sporting fields. Despite the

laudable directives in the National Policy on Education in Nigeria on the necessary guidelines for establishing schools, the government could not establish school libraries in all secondary schools, perhaps due to corruption and lack of interest. Private school owners, who also know the benefits of including school libraries in their schools, have avoided providing space for or build libraries in the school.

Conclusion

In this paper, we presented the way students who just graduated from secondary school and got admitted into the university use school libraries, as it is the foundation for knowing how to use the university library. Availability of school libraries in Nigeria is not encouraging as almost half of the respondents lacked school libraries in their secondary schools. The findings also revealed that the students do not frequently use their school libraries due to lack of orientation, library stocked with out-dated books, no library hours in school timetable, and library sited in noisy area. To read class note/prepare for exams and to look for materials to write assignment were the top reasons why the students visit their school library. The students mentioned that using their school library has increased their reading habit, enable them to make career choice, how to locate books from the shelf and improved their spelling/vocabulary building. Finally, Lack of space, lack of fund, selling of books in primary and secondary schools to student forcefully by school management are some reasons given for the absence of libraries. For example, instead of establishing a library and equipping it with the relevant books, principals and proprietors of private schools purchases the relevant books and sell to the students as compulsory books for them to make gain. Other reasons for the situation include lack of interest on the part of school management/teachers, government nonchalant attitude, and schools located in villages. School libraries are an underutilised resource, often perceived by principals to be low priority in Nigeria. What should be a vital ingredient of our school system is marginalised and neglected in our secondary school system.

Final Recommendations

Base on the findings from this study, we recommend:

- Library skills that are relevant to the effective identification and location of library resources should be taught to secondary school students. These topics to be covered should include library orientation, the library catalogue and its uses, classification and shelf arrangement. When students enter the secondary school in the first year they need to be formally introduced into the library, its working and resources. Another relevant library skill to be taught in the secondary school relate to the effective use of books. These include how to identify a book, parts of a book and their uses as well as different kinds of books and their purposes. If students at the secondary level are properly taught these library skills, as they get to the university level, the work will become easier for the students and librarians teaching the first year students the use of the library or information literacy courses. The current school libraries minimum standards by the Federal Ministry of Education are timely. They should be enforced and backed up by the Nigerian Library Association and the School Library Association of Nigeria.
- As awareness of the potential of school libraries is a significant issue. Advocacy to school principals, proprietors, education authorities through leadership networks and groups to make them aware of the role of the school library and to promote knowledge of successful models of good practice and the way in which the specific contribution of the school library can help the school reach its target.

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