FACTORS AFFECTING EFFECTIVE UTILIZATION OF SCHOOL LIBRARIES IN MINNA, NIGER STATE: A CASE STUDY OF BOSSO SECONDARY SCHOOL AND ZARUMAI MODEL SCHOOL, MINNA

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ABSTRACT

Libraries generally are established to promote the teaching, learning and research activities in academic institutions. Students are expected to utilize the school libraries in order to supplement the classroom teachings. The low use of school libraries could result to poor performance of the students in their academic pursuits. The paper, therefore, investigated the factors affecting the effective utilization of school libraries using Bosso Secondary School and Zarumai Model School Minna, Niger State. The survey research method was used for the study and the population was 130 secondary school students and the teacher librarians working in the libraries of the two institutions selected for the study. Descriptive statistics such as frequency and percentage tabulation were used in analyzing the data. Results revealed that inadequate funding, lack of qualified librarians, ICT facilities such as Internet services and lack of current information resources are the major factors affecting effective utilization of school libraries in Minna. To enhance the use of school libraries, some suggestions such as provision of adequate funding, Internet services and employment of qualified librarians to mention but a few were recommended.

Key words: Factors, Affecting, Utilization, School Libraries, Secondary Schools, Minna.

Introduction

The word library to a layman is where you go for reading but generally library is a place (room) where an organized collection of books and other printed materials such as manuscripts, films and other sources of information are preserved and disseminated to users. Library collections are audio or visual materials, including maps, prints, documents, microfilm, microfiche, CDs, cassettes, video games, e-books and many other types of electronic resources.

A library is organized for and maintained by a public body, an institution, a corporation, or private individual(s). Public and institutional collections and services may be intended for use by people who choose not to use them or cannot afford to purchase the resources because no individual can reasonably be expected to possess certain information resources. In addition to providing information resources libraries also provide the services of librarians who are experts at finding and organizing information and at interpreting information needs (Casson, 2002).

Libraries often provide quiet areas for studying and they also provide space to encourage group study and discussions. Libraries often provide facilities that enhance users' access to electronic resources and the Internet services in the libraries. Modern libraries are increasingly being redefined as places to get unrestricted access to information in many formats and from many sources. They are extending services beyond the physical walls of a library by providing information resources accessible through electronic medias and by providing the assistance of librarians in navigating and analyzing very large amount of information with a variety of digital tools.

Apart from the above highlights the following are some other functions provided by the libraries:

(a) learning support: libraries have traditionally encouraged older children, young people and students to use their facilities and resources for the improvement of their education.

(b) quality assessment: libraries input on assessment visitation of all university programmes for instance, the involvement of academic library in recent accreditation programmes.

(c) information technology supports planning: provision of library materials; ensuring access to information database, establishing adequate number of computer work places.

(d) information technology skill provision and enhancement: user education; enhancement of learning process, integrating information resources and technology in to the curriculum.

research support: research training, research assessment exercises; identifying research collections; accessibility of research collection (Biddiscombe, 2000)

However, there are different types of libraries where information users can always visit to satisfy their information needs. These libraries include: academic libraries, university libraries, public libraries, school libraries, national libraries and special libraries.

School libraries (or school library media center) are libraries within schools where students, staff, and often, parent of public (state) have access to a variety of resources. The goal of the school library/media center according to Morris (2004) is to ensure that all members of the school community have equitable access "to books and reading, to information, and to Information Technology". A school library/media center "uses all types of media... are automated, and utilize the Internet (as well as books.) for information gathering" (Morris, 2004). School libraries are distinct from public libraries because they serve as "Learner-oriented laboratories which support, extend, and individualize the school curriculum... School libraries serve as the center and coordinating agency for all materials used in the school" (Morris, 2004).

For teaching and learning in the non-tertiary institutions to be effective, there is the dire need to supplement classroom activities with necessary information resources in all formats – print and non-print. This necessitates the establishment of school library media centres where comprehensive information resources at the level of the pupils are selected, acquired, processed in a useful order and provided to the targeted audience. This is because the indispensability of seeking and usage in teaching and learning process has made school library media centre the fourth of the three established constituents of education after the teacher, the taught and learning process (Onasote and Iyaro, 2010).

In the same vein Elaturoti (2010) indicated that school library is an integral part of the school system and cannot develop to play its expected role in effective curriculum delivery in schools when proprietors of schools do not accord it the necessary recognition. Emeahara (2011) highlights that the school library media centre is more preferably referred to as the school library and that it is the organ of a school which provides required information resources and services for teaching and learning programme of the school. The author described the school library media centre as that which serves the information needs of its students and curriculum needs of its teachers and staff.

Furthermore, Todd, kuhlthau, and Oelma (2004) have demonstrated that school libraries have positive impact on student's achievements. More than 60 studies have been conducted in 19 U.S States and one Canadian province. The major findings of these studies is that students with access to a well-supported school library media program with a qualified school library media specialist, scored higher on reading assessments regardless of their socio-economic status. In addition, a study conducted in Ohio by Todd et al (2004) revealed that 99.4% of the students surveyed believed that their school librarian and school library media programs helped them succeed in school. A report which has similar conclusion was compiled by Lonsdale (2003) in Australia.

The importance of School library in child development cannot be over-emphasised. Every child and adolescents need books and library in their life development. This is why adequate and equipped school libraries should exist in the primary and secondary schools in order to promote teaching and learning activities that exist in the schools. This is one of the things School Librarians should concern themselves with if they are to successfully manage a flourishing and efficient library.

Literature review

The school library is a medium of education; in fact it plays a similar role in the school curriculum as the science laboratory does even though each has its specific functions. The school library however, has an unlimited coverage in the field of knowledge. In fact it is a multi-purpose establishment and a driving force in the realization of the school educational aims and objectives. School library has been variously termed as a media centre, media resources centre, learning resources centre, whatever, nomenclature is used in describing it; the school library is an agency or unit within primary and secondary schools with the responsibility for the selection, organization, preservation and making available learning materials to the teachers and pupils of the school.

Literature has indicated that Federal and State Governments pay little or no attention to the development of school libraries. However, the National Policy on Education (1981) has given much recognition to the role of school libraries for the educational development of the country. All schools in the federation should have a school library where suitable textbooks and library related materials are to be preserved and provided to the school pupils.

In the 1980's many States of the Federation established library boards, which gave the library services autonomy, but most of the laws establishing the library boards made the boards to take only supervisory role of school libraries. The Nigerian Library Association (NLA) (2003) on its part recognizes the importance of school libraries and organizes seminars to create awareness on the importance of school libraries and these are really making significant impact as well as creating awareness on the importance of school libraries.

Today, school libraries no doubt provide information and ideas that are fundamental to functioning successfully in today's information and knowledge based society. They equip students with life-long learning skills and develop the imagination that enables them to live as responsible citizens. It offers learning services, books and resources that help all members of the school community to become critical thinkers and effective users of information in all formats and media. It is therefore, essential for every school library to be improving and achieving its aims and objectives for literacy, education, social and culture development.

Literature has it that, the learning centre (or instructional media centre) is based on the concept that library is a place where learning occurs, rather than one in which learning materials are stored. Its function is to promote learning by making both materials and services available to the students. A school library should always be able to catalogue and classify all learning and teaching materials available within the school, and maintain a subject index of outside sources appropriate to the current needs of the school curriculum in general.

Bonny (2000) identified the inadequacies of school libraries ranging from professional, through grossly inadequate funding to conspicuous lack of any centre for direction and guidance of school library activities. Federo (2002) further supported the problems of school libraries given by Bonny and attributed it to un-used books and came to the conclusion that: "It's due to so much of the non point oriented nature of our admitted oral society or the unsuitability of such reading materials, but lack of suitable qualified staff to organize them for affective use. The quality of school facilities (seating materials, shelves etc) is important to the library, because it helps the school library in service provision. The library should be an integral and living part of the school and should have on its staff a teacher who has some training in librarianship. One of the reasons why primary and post primary schools are regarded as poor is the absence of good libraries and where there are libraries; they are poorly organized and under funded. The importance of library as an essential agency of education and educational growth cannot be over emphasized.

However, the problems school libraries face could be described in this order: secondary school is beset with incompetent teachers, shortage of classrooms, laboratories, workshops and libraries, lack of conducive environment for students, lack of motivation for teachers, just as principals and head of schools lack managerial skills.

Similarly, Idris (2001) stressed that, it is observed that there is no any definite policy on school library services by the Government. That is, no any uniform standard for the school library services which are approved by the government, to use throughout the country. He also said the only guide on these issues is the National Policy on Education, which is not enough to tackle the issue of school library services provision. Technological changes and innovation are moving into almost all fields of education, because one could argue that there is no field of human endeavor which technology has not met, library is not an exception. Library functions and operations are changing from manual to an automatic system using modern technologies such as CD ROM, computer, Internet etc. School libraries in Nigerian primary and post primary schools cannot afford these systems, due to inappropriate and inadequate funding by the Government.

In addition to all these nation wide problems of school library development. Rappaport (1991), in his report to the Federal Government summarized his impression thus, "more often than not, the schools have little in the way of a school library and what they do have often a collection of books kept locked up in the principal's office. The said inevitable conclusion one could draw from this overview is that, the status of library provision in our post primary institutions is anything but adequate, yet the National Policy on Education has not only accepted the school library as a good thing but also to propose measures aimed at furthering the development of school libraries which it considers as one of the basic infrastructural facilities for consolidating the qualitative gains already recorded in education in the third plan period.

However, studies on the use of school libraries by pupils and secondary school students have revealed that the use of library is low. Also, the researchers visited some of the school libraries in Niger State, Nigeria, and observed that the libraries are not adequately utilized by the students. It is expected that most schools in Nigeria should adhere to the National Policy on Education (1981), which states that, "All schools in the federation should have libraries, where suitable text books and other materials are to be provided for students. To this end adequate funding has to be provided to school libraries". The school activities are therefore, coordinated by the State Ministry of Education, thus leaving all matters on school libraries in the hands of the principals and head masters. This unfortunately has created a number of factors affecting effective utilization of school library resources. School libraries in Minna, Niger State, is not an exception to this.

This study, therefore, intends to find out the factors affecting effective use of school library resources in Zarumai Model School and Bosso Secondary Schools of Bosso Local Government Area of Niger State.

The study aimed to achieve the following objectives:
  (1). find out the kind of resources available in the school libraries in Niger State.
  (2). investigate the adequacy of the resources in the school libraries in Niger State.
  (3). find out the factors affecting effective utilization of school library resources in Niger State.
  (4). identify ways of enhancing better utilization of school libraries by the students.

Methodology

The descriptive survey research was used to collect data in the study. Two government schools were purposively selected from Niger State for the study. Zarumai Model School which is one of the schools has a combination of both primary and secondary schools. Each of the schools has the population of at least 1000 students. The population was restricted to one hundred and twenty- eight (128) students and two (2) teacher librarians, giving a total of one hundred and thirty (130) population used for the study. The random sampling technique was used for data collection. The instrument employed for data collection is the questionnaire. The questionnaire was randomly distributed to students during their lesson periods while the teacher librarians were distributed theirs during working hours in their offices. Interview and observation were also used to collect data for the study. The teacher librarians in the two schools were interviewed to obtain information for the study and direct observation was undertaken to physically assess some information resources in the libraries.

Data analysis and discussion

In order to determine the factors affecting effective utilization of school libraries studied, respondents were asked to identify with some statements that could reveal the factors affecting the utilization of their school libraries. To adequately present the findings of the study the percentages of option such as agreed and disagreed were used in presenting the results in the study. The finding is presented in Tables 1-7.

Table 1: Awareness of the existence of library in your school

Library Awareness	Frequency	Percentages %
Yes	130	100%
No	-	-
Total	**130**	**100%**

Table 1 shows that 100% of the respondents are aware of the existence of library in their schools. None of the respondents answered negatively.

Table 2: Whether they visit their school libraries

Responses	Frequency	Percentages %
Yes	42	32.3%
No	88	67.7%
Total	**130**	**100%**

Table 2 shows that 32.3% of the respondents visit their school libraries while 67.7% do not.

Table 3: Frequency of library visit

Contacts/Visits	Frequency	Percentages %
Every day	6	4.6%
Once a week	9	6.9%
Once in two weeks	13	10.0%
1-3 times in a month	23	17.7%
Twice in a term	79	60.8%
Others (please specify)	-	-
Total	**130**	**100%**

Table 3 shows that 4.6% of the respondents use the library every day, 6.9% use it once a week, 10.0% use it once in two weeks, 17.7% use it 1-3 times in a month while 60.8% use it twice in a term.

Table 4: Availability of library resources in the Secondary Schools

Resources available	Yes		No		Total (percentages)	
Reading tables	6	(4.6%)	124	(95.4%)	130	(100%)
Reading chairs	4	(3.1%)	126	(96.9%)	130	(100%)
Book shelves	2	(1.5%)	128	(98.5%)	130	(100%)
Catalogue cabinet	2	(1.5%)	128	(98.5%)	130	(100%)
Fiction books (novels)	0	(0%)	0	(0%)	0	(0%)
Non- f iction books (text books)	0	(0%)	0	(0%)	0	(0%)
Reference books	0	(0%)	0	(0%)	0	(0%)
Periodicals (news papers)	0	(0%)	0	(0%)	0	(0%)
Atlases	0	(0%)	0	(0%)	0	(0%)
Maps	0	(0%)	0	(0%)	0	(0%)
Globs	0	(0%)	0	(0%)	0	(0%)
Charts	0	(0%)	0	(0%)	0	(0%)
Pictures (photographs)	0	(0%)	0	(0%)	0	(0%)
Regalia (skeleton)	0	(0%)	0	(0%)	0	(0%)
Radio/cassette tapes	0	(0%)	0	(0%)	0	(0%)
Films-film strips	0	(0%)	0	(0%)	0	(0%)
Slides/CD ROMs	0	(0%)	0	(0%)	0	(0%)
Television	0	(0%)	0	(0%)	0	(0%)
computers	0	(0%)	0	(0%)	0	(0%)
Others (please specify)	-		-		-	

From Table 4 4. 6% of the respondents indicated that reading tables are available in the school library, while 95.4% of them disagreed. Also, 3.1% of them reported that reading chairs are available in the school library, while 96.9% of them disagreed. Some 1.5% of the respondents disclosed that the school library has book shelves, while 98.5% of them revealed that there are no book shelves. Similarly, 1.5% of the respondents indicated that there is catalogue cabinet, while 98.5% of them disagreed.

Table 5: Adequacy of library resources

Statements	frequency	Percentages %
Adequacy	30	23.1%
inadequacy	100	76.9%
Total	130	100%

Table 5 reveals that 23.1% of the respondents indicated that the resources in the school libraries are adequate, while 76.9% of them said the resources are inadequate.

Table 6: Factors affecting utilization of school libraries

Factors	Frequency	Percentages %
Lack of qualified librarians	30	23.1%
Lack of accommodation	10	7.7%
Inadequate funding	18	13.8%
Lack of enough library furniture	6	4.6%
Lack of enough library equipment and stock	15	11.5%
The stock are old and outdated	20	15.4%
Lack of awareness on how to use library	3	10.0%
Lack of conducive environment	8	6.2%
Lack of Internet services	10	7.7
Others (please specify)	-	-
Total	**130**	**100%**

Table 6 indicates that 23.1% of the respondents revealed that lack of qualified librarians is the major factor affecting utilization of school libraries by the students, 7.7% of them stated lack of accommodation, 13.8% of them reported inadequate funding, 4.6% indicated lack of enough library furniture, 11.5% said lack of enough library equipment and stock, 15.4% of the respondents indicated that the stock are old and outdated, 10.0% of them stated that lack of awareness of how to use the library affects their utilization of the library, 6.2% of the respondents revealed lack of conducive environment, while 7.7% of them indicated lack of Internet services.

Table 7: Suggestions on how to enhance effective use of school libraries

Response	Frequency	Percentages %
The principals of schools and friends of braries should build and employ qualified School Librarian in secondary schools.	41	31.5%
Internet services should be provided for users in school libraries.	30	23.1%
State Library Board and State Basic Education Board should provide up -to- date library facilities and stock to attract library users.	26	20.0%
Adequate funding should be provided by the government to develop school libraries.	33	25.4%
Total	**130**	**100%**

Table 7 shows that 31.5% of the respondents disclosed that to enhance the utilization of school libraries the principals of secondary schools should build and employ qualified school librarians in order to attract users, 23.1% of the respondents reported that Internet services should be provided for users in the school libraries, 20.0% of them stated that the State Library Board should provide up-to-date facilities and library stock in school libraries, while 25.4% of them suggested that adequate funding should be provided by the government to develop school libraries.

From the findings the picture that has emerged is that the utilization of school libraries in

Niger State, with particular reference to Bosso Secondary School and Zarumai Model School, Minna is low and inadequate. Though Table 1 revealed that the students are aware of the existence of the school libraries in their schools but they do not visit the library frequently as Table 3 reveals. Majority of the students, about 60.8% of them as revealed in Table 3 visit their school libraries twice a term. This is not surprising since Table 4 revealed that most of the necessary library materials are not available in the school libraries. Reading tables and chairs as well as book shelves are few in the school libraries while information resources such as reference books, textbooks and periodicals, Internet services etc are not available in the school libraries. This disclosed that library resources in the school libraries are inadequate as indicated in Table 5.

The study equally revealed in Table 6 that some factors are responsible for inadequate use of school libraries. These factors ranges from lack of qualified library staff to lack of Internet services. Probably this unfortunate situation observed in school libraries could be caused by the dwindling economy affecting every sector of the society including the school libraries. The rate of declining budgets and a higher subscription cost facing academic institutions is making it seemingly impossible for libraries to meet the rising information needs of secondary school students. In the same vein, Dalhatu and Adamu (1999) revealed that in most Nigerian university libraries inadequate funding is the major problem facing libraries and the bedrock of any other development. This situation is also observed in most school libraries in Nigeria.

There is inadequate budgetary allocation to libraries by the institutional authorities for running the libraries. No wonder, the information obtained from the interview with the teacher librarians in the schools studied indicated that most secondary school libraries are neglected and under- funded and this affect the acquisition of library resources especially these days that these libraries are expected to provide print and electronic resources not only to satisfy the information needs of the users but also to impart into the youths/adolescents the basic idea of how to use computer and other Information and Communication Technology (ICT) facilities at secondary school levels before they go for their university education.

Furthermore, there is no doubt that this poor financial condition in secondary schools actually made the respondents to disclose in Table 6 that inadequate funding, lack of current and enough library equipment and stock are some of the major factors that affect utilization of school libraries. Bearing in mind that the youths in secondary schools need current and adequate information resources to grow and become good citizens of the country, the school libraries should provide ready access to information resources or collections that meet the needs of the students with focus on their curriculum. The value of every library's collections is measured by their usability as well as quality and size. Unfortunately, it was observed that the sizes of collections the two secondary schools studied are inadequate and this affects the educational standard of the students. This is contrary to Kuh and Gonyea's (2003) view that, the size of a collection is used as an indicator of academic quality.

Conclusion and recommendations

There is no doubt that school libraries are necessary for adequate development of a child. Intellectual development of a child depends so much on the educational achievement of the child. This is why all hands should be on deck in order to develop and establish functional school libraries in the secondary schools in Nigeria. The poor library development and low library use by the secondary school students in Niger State is really worrisome and therefore should be addressed. This effort would help to improve the library visiting hours of the students as well as help the students to effectively use the library resources for their educational pursuits.

On the basis of the specific findings of this study, the following recommendations are made:

1. The principals of the secondary schools studied should endeavour to provide adequate accommodation to serve as the school libraries as well as employ qualified librarians to manage the affairs of the library.
2. Niger State Government should provide adequate funding to equip the secondary school libraries.
3. The School management should install Internet services and other ICT facilities in the school libraries in order to attract users to the libraries. This would also improve the educational standard of the students.
4. State Library Board and State Basic Education Board should provide up-to-date library facilities and library stock to educate library users.

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