

ASSESSMENT OF INFORMATION SERVICES PROVISION OF STAFF SCHOOL LIBRARIES IN NIGER STATE

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Abstract

The study assessed the information services of staff school libraries in Niger State. The study adopted descriptive survey research design. The population of the study consists of the staff school libraries and librarians/teacher librarians in Niger State. Simple Random sampling technique was used to select six (6) out of twenty one (21) staff school libraries. Instruments for data collection were observation and questionnaire. The data collected were analyzed using frequency counts and percentages. The findings revealed that information services offered by staff school libraries covered in this study include circulation, recreational services, references and storytelling services. However, there is need to include other relevant services such as community services, computer services and adult literacy services to boost the standard of the staff school libraries in Niger State. The study also revealed that inadequate funding, lack of professional and low manpower were the major challenges facing the staff school libraries covered in this study. The study recommended that there should be provision of adequate budgetary allocation to school libraries to enhance effective information services provision.

Keywords: Information Services, School Libraries, Staff School.

Introduction

School library Media center is a library within a school where students, staff, and often, parents of a public or private school have access to a variety of resources. The goal of the school library Media center 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 uses all types of media that is automated, and utilizes the Internet as well as books for information gathering. School libraries are distinct from public libraries because they serve as learner-oriented laboratories which support, extend, and individualize the school's curriculum. According to Saka and Bitagi (2010) School library can be defined as a place designed for the provision of all kinds of learning resources. Petters and Ottong (2012) described School library as a learning laboratory

that provides opportunities for pupils to develop information skill. Augustine, Odenigbo, and Tongs (2014) defined School library as the part of the school where collection of books, periodicals, magazines, and newspapers, films, filmstrip, videotapes, recording of all kinds e.t.c. are preserved for use by the students.

School library supports the school curriculum by providing up-to-date information resources and services to keep staff and students abreast of new development. The library equally involves in promoting the development of reading skills and encouraging long term reading habits through listening to and viewing a variety of learning materials. Thus, the school library system is an integral part of the school and it must be run according to agreed standard. According to National Policy on Education and School Library Standard in Nigerian, (2004) the aims and objectives of establishing School Libraries in Nigeria are:

1. Teaching students the necessary skills required in the use of library.
2. Complementing classroom instruction by exposing the students to a wider selection of books and other resources.
3. Inculcating in students the habit of reading for pleasure and
4. Providing users of the library with information on current issues, etc.

Statement of the Problem

The major functions of any school library are to facilitate learning and provide services to the library users. Thus any educational programme cannot achieve its objectives fully if the library is left out in the implementation of the programme. Despite their inestimable importance, school libraries in Nigeria seem to be under developed in the areas of staffing and provision of information services to its clientele.

Preliminary investigation by the researchers revealed that secondary school libraries in Niger State are not equipped with the necessary materials and staff to render services to users. However, due to the nature of school libraries in Nigeria one wonders what could be the situation of school libraries that have not been surveyed which is school libraries in staff schools This is an astounding gap in the work of most of the school library researchers considering the international recognition accorded the library as the nerve centre of any educational programme.

It is against this backdrop that the researcher sought to investigate the situation of school libraries in staff schools of tertiary institutions in Niger State to see whether the situation will be different since they are properties of institutions of higher learning, which are looked upon as model for others.

Objectives of the Study

The general objective of this study is to assess the provision of information services of staff school libraries in Niger State

The specific objectives of the study are to:

1. ascertain the type of information services are provided in staff school libraries in Niger State
2. determine the challenges facing staff school libraries in Niger State

Research Questions

The study was guided by the following research questions:

1. What types of information services provided in staff school libraries in Niger State?
2. What are the challenges facing staff school libraries in Niger State?

Review of Literature

It is generally believed that the quality of services provided in a school library depends to a large extent on the quality and quantity of its collections and staff that provide the services. For effective service delivery, it is necessary to equip the libraries with adequate information resources comprising of print and non-print information resources for the users. Ideally, school libraries are expected to support their parent institutions in achieving their educational objectives. Thus, the main functions of the school libraries are acquisition, preservation and dissemination of information to users. The development of library services is generally correlated to the development of educational programmes in Niger State and Nigeria at large.

Elonye (2013) sees information services as services provided by the library which draws attention to information possessed in the library in expectation of demand. This is done by preparing and circulating new sheets, displaying current arrivals, use of notice boards, abstracts, and headlines of articles in current periodicals, etc. Library services are therefore always regarded as necessary for the educational needs of students, the research needs of scholars and the leisure reading needs of the literates. Thus, school libraries primarily build their collections to meet the information needs of the users. The patrons, according to Egesimba, et al (2011), Frye (2006) are therefore, equipped with intellectual and physical skills that they require to be innovative and self-reliant members of the society.

According to Aramide and Elaturoti (2013) libraries should provide the following information services in order to remain competitive and relevant in information profession. These are:

- i. Reference service
- ii. Cataloguing service
- iii. Inter-Library Loan service
- iv. Indexing and Abstracting services
- v. Bibliographic service
- vi. User Education (Orientation/Induction) services
- vii. Information service

Library services according to Bassey (2006) are regarded as social services which are bound to stimulate the reading habit of the society, including people in the academic environment. Library services present a picture of remarkable variety and play an important role in the educational, economic, cultural and recreational life of the entire population. There is no doubt that any library is in the business of providing services to its user's community. To be most functional, the services it provides should correspond with the needs of its users because the user is the very reason for the existence of the library and it ensures that the services so provided are exploited to the maximum.

The extent to which library resources and services satisfy the needs of users will determine how effective and efficient a particular library is. For a library to be worth its salt, the resources and services it renders must strive to meet and satisfy the needs of its users. However, user's perception, which is a way a user forms impression of and makes inferences about library resources, services and personnel in terms of how far they meet their expectations, should be used to measure library performance. This is because, according to Aina (2004) users are critical to the practice of librarianship and that all processes revolve round the users. Users are a focal point of all libraries or an information center since the primary objectives of library's existence is to satisfy its users i.e. provision of excellent services to its users. This is usually the mission statement of libraries.

The primary purpose of school libraries, according to Oyewusi and Oyeboade (2009) is to support teaching, learning and research in ways consistence with, and supportive of, the institution's mission and goals. In addition, library resources and services should be sufficient in quality, depth, diversity, and currency to support the institution curriculum.

Gbadamosi, (2011) in his study, Survey of Primary School Libraries to determine the Availability and Adequacy of Services for Universal Basic Education (UBE) in Oyo State observed that instructional and book resources that are rated highly adequate include children's encyclopedias, verbal and qualitative reasoning, Yoruba language and story books. These are rated foremost and considered highly adequate in terms of the total collection in relation to the number of pupils using them at a time. However, Ahmed and Nwalo (2013) recognized that adequacy of fund allocation has major influence on the provision of qualitative and quantitative information materials, staff and other facilities to enhance the sustainability of school libraries in Nigeria. It is quite unfortunate that schools hardly received adequate fund which can be extended to the school libraries. Misplaced and misapplication of necessary fund allocated to the libraries are the bane of school libraries in Nigeria as library staff can hardly access funds to attend workshops. Fund allocated to school libraries for development purposes are sometimes diverted to non-library purposes at the detriment of school libraries. (Ani&Edem, 2010).

Gwang (2011) in his paper, Provision of Information Services to Nigerians: Meeting the Challenges of 21st Century Poor State of Library and Information Services. There is virtual absence of library and information services in many Nigerian educational, businesses, political, social and economic institutions. A look at most of the secondary schools, primary schools, public libraries, and even some academic libraries and branches of the national library in the country are enough cause for concern to any proactive information professional.

Research Methodology

The study adopted descriptive survey research design. The population of the study consists of the staff school libraries and librarians/teacher librarians in Niger State. Simple Random sampling technique was used to select six (6) out of twenty one (21) staff school libraries. Instruments for data collection were observation and questionnaire. A total number of six (6) copies of questionnaire were distributed to the respondents, out of which all of them were duly completed and returned for analysis.

This represents 100% response rate. This high response rate was realized due to the fact that the sample is very small and the researcher gave the respondents adequate time to fill and return the questionnaire. The data collected were analyzed using frequency counts and percentages.

Data Presentation

Table 1: Qualification distribution of the Librarians

Qualification	Frequency	Percentage (%)
School Certificate	-	-
NCE	2	33.3
Diploma	2	33.3
Bachelor	2	33.3
Master's Degree	NIL	-
PhD	NIL	-
TOTAL	6	100

Table 1 showed the qualification distribution of the teacher-librarian in staff schools in Niger State. It revealed from the Table that 2(33.3%) of the respondents obtained NCE, Diploma and Bachelor degree respectively. None of the respondents obtained Masters Degree and PhD. This finding showed that not all the teacher librarians manning the school libraries in staff schools are qualified as they do not possess dual qualification of teaching and librarianship. This situation is not healthy for the development of reading culture and promotion of school libraries' utilization.

Table 2: Gender distribution of the respondents

Gender	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Male	4	66.7
Female	2	33.3
TOTAL	6	100

From Table 2, it is clear that a majority of the teacher-librarian in staff schools in Niger State were males constituting 4(66.7%) response scores, while 2(33.3%) of them were females. This finding indicates that those assigned with the responsibilities of managing staff school libraries were mainly males.

Table 3: Working experience distribution of the respondents

Working Experience	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Less than one year	Nil	-
1-10 years	2	33.3
11-20 years	4	66.7
21-30	-	-
31 and above	-	-
TOTAL	6	100

Table 3 shows the responses of the respondents on their years of experience in Staff School Libraries in Niger State. An observation of the Table indicated that 4(66.7%) of the respondents have 11-20years of working experience. Similarly, 2(33.3%) of them have 1-10 years working experience. None of the respondent have 21-30 years and above. The implication of this finding is that majority of the respondents have gained a lot of experiences except that they do not have relevant qualification as teacher-librarians.

Table 4: Information services available in staff school libraries studied

s/n	Category	Names of Schools						Total	%
		FUTM	FCEK	FPB	IBU L	COEM	NSPZ		
		F	F	F	F	F	F	T	%
	Information Services								
1.	Circulation Services	1	1	1	1	1	1	6	42.8
2.	Recreation Services	1	1	-	-	-	-	2	14.3
3.	Reference Services	1	1	1	1	-	-	4	28.3
4.	Community information services	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
5.	Story telling services	1	1	-	-	-	-	2	14.3
6.	Film show services	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
7.	Reading competition services	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
8.	Carrier information services	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
9.	Photocopying services	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
10.	Computer services	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
11.	Customer care services	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
12.	Adult literacy education	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
13.	Mobile library services	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
14.	Online Internet search	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	Total	4	4	2	2	1	1	14	100.0

FUTM= Federal University of Technology, Minna, **FCEK**= Federal College of Education, Kontagora, **FPB**= Federal Polytechnic, Bida, **IBUL**= Ibrahim Badamasi University, Lapai, **COEM**= College of Education, Minna, **NSPZ**= Niger State Polytechnic, Zungeru.

Table 4 revealed that circulation services, 6(42.8%) and reference service, 4(28.3%) were the major information services available with the highest frequency scores. This is followed by recreation services and storytelling services with 2(14.3%) responses scored by each. It was also shocking and very unusual to discover that community information services, film show services, reading competition services, computer services and online Internet search services were not available in the staff school libraries in Niger State.

Table 5: Challenges faced by staff school libraries in Niger State

S/N	Challenges	SA		A		D	
		F	%	F	%	F	%
1.	Inadequate funding	6	26.1	-	-	-	-
2.	Lack of professional Staff	6	26.1	-	-	-	-
3.	There is no library hour on the time table	-	-	3	27.2	3	37.5
4.	Lack of management support	-	-	4	36.4	2	25
5.	Mutilation of library materials	-	-	4	36.4	2	25
6.	Lack of relevant materials	6	26.1	-	-	-	-
7.	Erratic power supply	5	21.7	-	-	1	12.5
	Total	23	100.0	11	100.0	8	100.0

SA= Strongly Agreed, A=Agreed, D= Disagreed

Table 5 revealed that the highest number of the respondents 6(26.1%) strongly agreed that inadequate funding, lack of relevant resources and lack of professional staff were the commonest challenges faced by staff in school libraries in Niger State. This is followed by 5(21.7%) of the respondents who admitted that erratic power supply is a challenge faced by staff school libraries, while 4(36.4%)of the same respondents attested to the fact that mutilation of library materials and management support were among the challenges affecting the Staff School libraries studied. Lack of library hour on the time table is the least encountered problem from the list of the challenges having 3(37.5%)response scored. The implication of this finding is that the staff school libraries in Niger State are faced with many challenges that could inhibit them from supporting the teaching and learning activities in the school system.

Discussion of Findings

Table 4 revealed that circulation and reference services were the major information services available; however it is shocking and very unusual to discover that community information services, film show services, reading competition services, computer services and online Internet search services were not available in the staff school libraries in Niger State.

This situation is not healthy for the development of solid foundation at the primary

education level. The situation may be connected to lack of information resources especially the audio-visual and information communication technology resources in staff school libraries. This is corroborated with Gwang (2011) who opined that there is virtual absence of library and information services in many Nigerian educational, businesses, political, social and economic institutions due to inadequate funding. A look at most of the secondary schools, primary schools, public libraries, and even some academic libraries and branches of the national library in the country are enough cause for concern to any proactive information professionals.

Table 5 also revealed that majority of the respondents strongly agreed that inadequate funding, lack of relevant resources and lack of professional staff were the commonest challenges faced by staff in school libraries in Niger State. This finding affirmed the submission of Ahmed and Nwalo (2013) who recognized that adequate fund allocation has major influence on the provision of qualitative and quantitative information materials, staff and other facilities to enhance the sustainability of libraries in Nigeria.

Summary of Findings

1. The findings of the study revealed that circulation and reference services were the major information services available; however it is shocking and very unusual to discover that community information services, film show services, reading competition services, computer services and online Internet search services were not available in the staff school libraries in Niger State.
2. The findings also shows that majority of the respondents strongly agreed that inadequate funding, lack of relevant resources and lack of professional staff were the commonest challenges faced by staff in school libraries in Niger State.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study, it is apparent that the situation of school library resources and services in Niger State still leaves much to be desired. To a great extent, it is not in doubt that there exists a considerable need for improvements in this direction, if only for our educational aims and aspirations to be attained.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following are recommended:

1. Private organizations and NGOs should invest in school libraries. There should be provision of adequate budgetary allocation to school libraries to enhance effective library and information services. Functional ICT and Internet facilities should be put in place in all the staff school libraries. The school authority should make provision for purchasing of print and non-print media and other educational media for staff school libraries to meet the required standard of modern school library
2. There should be provision for additional library services to make the children have more interest in using the library e.g. educational film shows, storytelling, reading competition etc.
3. Professional librarians and other assisting staff should be employed for effective and efficient services and overall smooth running of the school library.

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