Availability and Use of Information Literacy Facilities among Primary School Pupils in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria

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Abstract

The study was on availability and usage of information literacy facilities among primary school pupils in Akwa-Ibom State. It was carried out in 32 public primary schools, and used simple random sampling technique to select 704 subjects. Serious state of neglect and grossly inadequate information facilities were prevalent in almost every public school studied. Recommendations were made for urgent remedial and sustaining approach to improve the present poor circumstances.

Introduction and Literature Review

The hunters and the herdsmen of the pro-industrial times, and the day captains of industry and commerce, found information to be important. According to Martin (1988), information has become a talisman, a symbol of political potency and economic prosperity, and an indispensable tool for the solution of any problem whatsoever.

As a geopolitical phenomenon, information carries implications for relations between nations, for the future of institutions, for value systems and for ways of life. Economically, information has already become a factor of such central importance that is confidently forecast that the developed nations will be "information economics" by the end of the present century. McCrank (1991) opined that, information is all around us everywhere, and information literacy is a vital saving tool in the information society or societies irrespective of their level of development.

Information literacy is conceptualized to mean all the relevant core procedures, formats, or steps enhancing the mastery of, the seeking for or finding out, and the utilization of information to relieve seeker/user from any frustration whatsoever to solve particular need or problem one may encounter in life (September, 1993). Thus, considering the important role of information in our life, the need to train our children for the acquisition of information literacy from their childhood, need not be overstressed. Information literacy acquisition patterns must be given its well deserved recognition, properly incorporated in the primary school curriculum, studies, nurtured and sustained from the very beginning of childhood's educational process. This is a sure way of climbing all future rungs of educational ladder and meeting professional career as well as recreational needs throughout one's life (Usherwood, 1989; Berhammer and Karlsson, 1988). Children are the most valuable resource of mankind, and the only basis through which future and all succeeding generations grow from. No wonder then the United Nation (UN) General Assembly (1960) resolved that every child should be given proper and well-articulated education, to equip each child to develop his/her mental ability, individual judgement and a sense of moral and social responsibilities and to become useful member of the society to which he/she belongs.

Ogunsheye (1978) rightly observes that the ideas of the school library syllabuses project can only be attained within the context of adequate provision of materials in primary school libraries to engender love and interest in reading among children. Besides providing space and facilities for housing books and materials, a school library must be designed for effective service to its users, that is, pupils and their teachers with emphasis on how to inculcate in children literate consciousness. According to Ogunsheye (1978), facilities in this context include materials for use and specialized library services aimed at enhancing and inculcating children/user information literate consciousness. It embodies the physical plant, pupils orientation, lighting, interior settings, shelves, tables and chairs, catalogue cabinet/file cabinets. Other items include lending desks, bulleting boards, periodicals stand, audio-visual equipment and display equipment through which place the school library can render its unique educational and informational roles/services to the pupils. Without such provision which the much needed learning environment could not be possible, how much more enhancing children information literacy acquisition mastery in our primary schools.

Adequate procurement of relevant children books and non-book resources must be provided to answer the children many questions likely to arise from the day-to-day happening in the classroom thereby, thus providing avenue to stimulate and sustain their information literacy acquisition consciousness.

School Library

The term "School Library" in the field of Librarianship denotes those libraries in the elementary and secondary schools, whereas libraries of institutions of higher education are termed 'academic libraries' (New Standard Encyclopedia, 1986). The unique role of libraries in society is enormous. It include educational, informational, recreational. In democratic countries, free access to and utilization of information of all kinds is essential to provide a means for citizens to be well informed on public issues and beyond.

Primary School

Primary school education in Nigeria according to the revised National Policy on Education (2004) is defined as "education given in an institution for children aged normally 6 – 11 years old. Its main objectives are:

1. Include permanent literacy and numeracy, and the ability to communicate effectively,
2. Lay a sound basis for scientific and reflective thinking,
3. Citizenship education as a basis for effective participation in and contribution to the life of the society,
4. Character and moral training and the development of sound attitude and morals in the child.

Other objectives include:

5. Develop in the child the ability to adapt to his changing environment
6. Give the child opportunities for developing manipulative skills that will enable him to function effectively in the society within the limits of his capability, and ultimately,
7. Providing basic tools for further educational advancement, including preparation for trades and craft of the locality.

In pursuance of the set-objectives, government was to make provision for adequate conducive educational services which the school libraries were among. The school libraries were to be actually incorporated into the primary school educational system, that is, in practical and well concrete terms in the primary schools because of its great and indispensable positive contributions to actualize the set educational goals of primary school system, to make it functional, effective, and beneficial to our children.

The concept of 'need' according Advanced Learners Dictionary of Current English (2001) means, "circumstances in which something is lacking, or necessary, or requiring some course of necessary action, that should be taken for its treatment, "want" or "require". In the context of this study, children's information needs embody those necessary requirements that will make them acquire information literate consciousness. This is because such consciousness will help children to acquire information skills and survive in the world where information is generated every second in all field of knowledge.

Across the world, there has been increasing concern for the needs of easy accessibility to, and utilization of information, which should be made a "right" to every living child (NATIS, 1978). This is need because knowledge of information and information utilization has been acknowledged as a normal part of every body's day-to-day life need, and tool for decision-making mechanism or solution to life problem (NATIS, 1978).

In order to acquire the mastery of information utilization, children need to know the formats or procedures of searching for information or call it user education. This fact justifies the rationale to teach children in primary school, the use of information. It would be recalled here that to inculcate permanent literacy, and the ability to communicate effectively as one of the objectives of the Nigerian primary education as enshrined in the National Policy on Education (1981) may not be attained, if the effective use of books, or library resources have not been taught from the start of primary schools. All hands must therefore be on deck to ensure that our school system provide necessary information needs to pupils.

This assumption must guide us to know how to go about the provision of the school library, and who is a child? Schickedonz defined a child as a product of genetic heritage and experience. Individual children develop their own master of reaching to events. They have their own paces of living, learning and evolve their own concepts of who they are, and, what they can do. Inescapably, the experiences a child has in the

class will have their effect on children. Different children, however, will approach new experience in different ways. Teaching methods should allow children to be themselves.

How Children Develop Learning

Each child proceeds through levels of development in physical cognitive and effective domains. For example, Smart (1972) remarks that: Children walk before skipping and use two word sentences before talking fluently.

Deesee (1970) held similar views but however, asserted that – the child develops trust before autonomy in line with the view of Erickson (1963).

This principle holds true of all subsequent learning. This means that as we create appropriate learning environment for our children to learn, whatever thing we want them to learn, they can readily do so! By implication too, we can impair their chances of learning effectively. The determination to learn new skills can therefore greatly be facilitated, and nowhere more apparent than in a child's learning to walk and talk, but those who study child's behaviour can aptly point to evidence of a child's eagerness to learn in many other areas.

Objectives of the Study

This study seeks to investigate the availability and usage of information literacy facilities among primary schools pupils in Akwa Ibom State. It intends to specifically:

i) Access facilities available and in use in primary schools to inculcate information literacy in children.

ii) To determine level of use of the available information literacy facilities by primary schools.

iii) To examine pupil's information literacy needs that would promote effective learning.

iv) To determine the accessibility of the information literacy facilities to the pupils.

Methodology

The population for the study consists of all the primary six pupils. This was informed by the fact that they have acquainted themselves with the available facilities put in place in their schools to enhance effective learning or acquisition of information literacy. Secondly, the primary six pupils as the chosen target groups were considered to have spent a maximum number of their years, and must have acquired reasonable degree of experience and exposure to available information literacy facilities in their schools.

Sample Size and Sampling Technique

There are 31 local government areas in Akwa Ibom State, and 16 of these (15%) were selected by sampling. Each of the 16 local government areas provided two

2) schools by balloting from which samples were drawn. There were 3680 primary six pupils from which a sample size of 640 pupils representing (17.4%) was randomly selected. The main basis for this selection was on their 2nd Terminal Examination Result conducted by the school in which pupils scoring 60% and above on the average was considered ideal for the study.

Research Question One:

What is the level of availability of information literacy facilities to primary schools pupils in Akwa Ibom State?

Table 1: Availability and non-availability of information literacy facilities in school (N = 704)

Items	Available		Non-available	
	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Frequency	Percentage(%)
Provision of standard school library	14	2.09	690	98
Enough books in all school subjects.	150	21.3	54	78.8
Reading room with adequate chairs/ tables of variety design more appeal ing to pupils.	14	2	690	98
Lending desks provided for staff	5	0.70	699	99.3
New books displayed for pupils/learners	50	7.1	654	92.9
Toilet, facilities and other conveniences	420	59.7	684	40.3
Audio-visuals/TV sets/projectors unit provided	52	7.4	652	92.6
Dictionary catalogue	4	0.57	700	99.4
Picture wordless books	4	0.57	700	99.4
Dictionary/encyclopedia	205	29	499	71
Lighting and ventilation	4	0.57	700	99.4
Book shelves/file cabinets	560	7.97	144	50.5
16mm projectors	100	1.3	664	98.6
Globe, maps, diagrams, and wall-chart	14	2	690	98
Meeting/conference rooms	14	2	690	98

From table 1 it can be seen that 2% of the sample indicated that they have a library in their schools while 98% indicated non-availability. However, a visit to some schools indicated that what some pupils called a library is actually the Head teacher's office with a table and a bench where children can sit on to read few books given to them. Also 21% indicated that they have textbooks in all subjects, while 2% showed that they have reading room with facilities. Similarly 7.4% of the sample indicated that they have television/radio sets in their school as against 92.6% indicating

non-availability. The low percentages of facilities in our primary schools as indicated above suggest very poor information literacy acquisition among pupils in our primary schools.

Research Question Two:

What is the degree of usage of information literacy facilities among pupils in primary schools in Akwa Ibom State?

Table 2: Usage of information literacy facilities by primary school pupils in Akwa Ibom State

Items	Available		Non-available	
	Frequency	Percentage(%)	Frequency	Percentage(%)
I like to go to our school library	72	10.2	632	89.8
I can encyclopedia	147	20.9	557	79.1
I can find out any new words	200	28.4	660	71.6
I like reading newspaper in library	86	12.2	618	87.8
I enjoy reading novels in library	80	11.36	624	88.64
I learn many things from picture chart and maps	180	25.6	542	74.4
I always practice mathematics in the school library	156	22.2	548	77.8
Our teacher always take us around the nature's corner.	305	52.3	339	47.7
I like to do my assignment in the library.	176	25	528	75
In our school we study sometimes from radio set	64	9.1	640	90.9
Some lessons in our school are shown on television.	4	0.6	700	99.4
Our teacher always advise me to use the school library for my study	10	10.3	694	89.5
I enjoy some lessons through projectors	6	0.9	698	99.1
We have difference textbooks in every subject taught in our school.	8	1.1	696	98.9
Enough books in all subjects can be found in the library,	4	21.3	650	78.7

From Table 2, 10.2% of the sample indicated that they have been going to the library, while 89.8% indicated they have never gone to the library. This is closely related to the availability of library facilities which tend to attract the pupils. The high percentage frequency of the pupils indicated that they have never gone to library shows that pupils cannot use information literacy facilities because of lack of availability of

such facilities. Also 20.9% and 28.4% of the sample indicated that they can use encyclopedia and dictionary, while 79.1% and 71.6% indicated that they cannot use encyclopedia and dictionary respectively. On the other hand, 87.8% of the samples indicated that they do not like reading newspapers in library, while 12.2% only indicated reading newspapers in the library.

Similarly 52.3% of the sample indicated that their teachers always taken them to the Nature's Corner, while 47.7% indicated the same to impart abstract information, concepts and love to the pupils. However, 25% of the sample indicated that, their teachers normally refer them to the library, while 75% indicated that they have never been referred to the school library. This clearly suggests that the pupils are not encouraged to search for information utilization on their own. The low percentages indicated by the pupils for negative responses are indications that they are not given opportunities to make use of information literacy facilities. However, even though negligible facilities exist in few schools these are locked up by Head teachers in cupboards, cabinets or drawers to the ignorant of pupils usage.

Research Question Three:

What are the pupils' information needs that would promote information literacy?

Table 3: Pupil's Information Literacy Needs

Items	Available		Non-available	
	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Good school library.	672	95.41	32	4.54
Textbooks in all schools subjects.	668	95.1	36	5.11
Newspaper/journals.	634	90.1	70	9.9
Children encyclopedia	634	90.1	70	9.9
Wordless picture books.	657	93.3	47	6.7
Instructional charts/tables	601	85.4	103	14.6
Globes/maps/diagrams	532	75.5	172	24.4
Realia, specimen, objects.	517	73.3	187	26.5
Dictionary catalogue	598	83.4	106	15.05
Novels, non-fiction and fiction.	528	74.9	176	24.99
Television (TV) sets, radio cassette	542	77	162	23
Lightening and ventilation.	410	58.2	294	41.47
Books shelves and display rack.	556	78.9	148	21
16mm projector for lesson teaching.	303	42.9	401	56.94
I always borrow 2 books or more a week.	10	10.3	694	89.5

From table 3, pupils were asked to select items they consider would meet their most information needs. These are necessary facilities that could help pupils to develop and acquire information literacy and response showed that more than 95% of the respondents

indicated that the provision of good school library was most important information need, against 4.5% who indicated that good school library was non-availability important. Similarly, the next item on the checklist closely related high, was the provision of textbooks in all subjects, which scored 95% of the respondents, against the 5.11% who indicated otherwise.

Equally, the provision of Newspapers, journals and children encyclopedia obtained 90.1% each and wordless picture books with 93.3% respectively against 9.9% and 6.7% which indicated otherwise. The scoring of the checklist by the respondents suggested information literacy needs/items in terms of their importance. The list as indicated by the respondents suggest or reveal the necessary information literacy needs which are supposed to be put in place in public (government) primary schools to enhance inculcation of information literacy acquisition among primary school pupils in Akwa-Ibom State.

Research Question Four:
Do pupils have easy access to information literacy needs?

Table 4: Accesibility to information literacy needs

Items	Available		Non-available	
	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Our school library is always open to every pupil	8	1.2	696	98.8
I always borrow books from our school library	14	1.9	690	97.9
Books are displayed openly for the pupils	6	0.8	698	99
Our teacher always take us to the school library.	7	0.9	697	99
I learn how to make good use of books and library	12	1.7	692	98.2
Library periods are included in our school timetable.	2		702	99.6
I learn how to use dictionary catalogue.	1	0.01	701	99.5
Our school library has many seats and desks.	16	0.22	688	97.6
There is no library in our school.	15	0.21	689	99
I can find out any information from the school library.	28	4	676	96.0
Our school always organize library week every term.	3	0.04	701	99.5
I am a member of the School Reading Club (SRC).	Nil	0.0	704	99.97
I have my library ticket.	Nil	0.0	704	99.97
I always borrow books to read during my holidays	8	0.11	696	98.8
Conference hall/meetings room.	598	83.4	106	15.5

From Table 4, 1.2% of the sample indicated that their library is always open to every pupil as against 98.8% that indicated the contrary. This clearly reveals that most primary school pupils do not know nor have access to the library. The second item indicated

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that 97.9% of the pupils do not borrow or any reading materials from the library, while 1.9% did. Also 0.98% of the sample indicated that teachers do take them to the library. This state means that pupils are not oriented to the use books and library as indicated by item 5 in the questionnaire. Further to this is that library periods are not included in the school timetable (99.6%), hence pupils are not exposed to the art of using the library of dictionary catalogue as indicated by 99.5% of the sample.

Generally, the high percentage of negative responses from the respondents on their usage of information literacy need is conclusively and traceable to lack of accessibility to information literacy facilities.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Based upon the results of this study were the following recommendations drawn:

1. In order to inculcate children information literacy acquisition, government should urgently in concrete and practical terms incorporate school library services into the primary educational system in Akwa-Ibom State in particular, and the country in general. However, where it is not possible to establish a standard library, a reading room could be provided in the interim.

2. Government should empower the State Ministry of Education and the Primary School Education Board to set in motion process of aggressive training of school Librarians, Teacher-Librarians and those interested in Librarianship to raise the necessary manpower that will man our primary school libraries. This can be done through in-service and generous awards of scholarship to deserving applicants.

3. Government should responsibly provide adequate books in all school subjects' areas, as well as all necessary library learning, resources throughout every primary school in the state.

4. The use of books/school library should henceforth be made one of the periods on the timetable in the school system, duly embodied in school syllabus and seen to have been practiced.

5. To ensure its continuity and improvement, an independent board made up of seasoned librarians, educationists and administrators set-up to oversee the running/ functions of the schools of the school libraries. They should formulate policies, ensure enforceability and review where necessary from time to time.

6. Provision should be reserved for future expansion. If these recommendations are strictly applied our children will certainly be given the opportunities of acquiring information literacy consciousness from the primary school. This will enable them to climb other rungs of their educational ladder confidently.

7. The head teachers should not lock up materials; rather it should be given easy accessibility to the pupils' usage.

8. Book exhibition/book week should be observed timely in all primary schools. This will create awareness, sharpen interest and love for books generally.

9.   Reader's club/library week should also be encouraged in the primary school. This will keep the pupils busy and alert.

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