

Influence of school libraries on academic achievement of students in selected secondary schools in Ilesa, Osun State, Nigeria

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Abstract

The indispensability of school libraries on teaching and learning in secondary schools and consequently the academic performance of the students cannot be over-emphasized. This paper investigates the influence of libraries on teaching and learning in secondary schools. To address the issue adequately, the study is limited to Ilesa in Osun State. Questionnaire was used to collect data for this study. Three hundred (300) SS 2 secondary school students were selected from 10 secondary schools in the two local government areas in the city. The data collected were analyzed using simple frequency and percentage. Findings show that though there are buildings designated as school libraries, many of them are not well equipped and adequately staffed to serve the information needs of the students. Other findings show that the school libraries have very low utilization of ICT facilities; this indicates that they are yet to embrace the digital revolution that is driving service delivery in institutionalized organizations all over the world. However, the paper recommends establishment of libraries and continuous upgrade of ICT facilities as well as recruitment of qualified and experienced Librarians in secondary schools to ensure robust service delivery for sustainable development and growth of secondary school education in the country.

Key words: School libraries, electronic resources, information and communication technology, curriculum.

Introduction

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The school library is the cornerstone of the school community which is integral to teaching and learning. Researches over the years have indicated that good school library programmes are linked to higher academic achievement in students (Tung & Chang, 2009). Erikson and Markuson (2007) stated that, the library is a place where students learn to use technology as a tool to explore the world of knowledge. By providing teachers and students with a full range of print and electronic resources to support learning, the school library enhances students' achievement. A well-stocked and well-staffed school library has a positive impact on students' achievement regardless of the socio-economic or educational level of the community. School libraries provide teachers and students with a current collection of multi-perspective and multi-format resources aligned with the local curriculum and international academic standards. This collection forms the core of the schools' information infrastructure and serves as a gateway to the world beyond the classroom (Lance, Rodney & Hamilton-Pennell, 2006).

The study examines the positive effect of access to books and information and communication technology (ICT) resources on reading achievement. It also emphasises the importance of staffing the school libraries with certified librarians who play important roles in teaching critical thinking skills, leading the way for technology use, and inspiring literacy. Library collections need to be diverse in terms of subject matter in order to cater for the needs of learners and to attract existing and new users. In the case of books, this would mean fiction and non-fiction of different levels, to cater for every able learner as well as those who struggle to read. Books should also be made available in formats attractive to learners, especially non-readers and reluctant readers and these should include: graphic novels; comic books; and e-books among others. Non-book materials in the collection would include computers, audio-visual items such as audio books, DVDs, music, online resources, digital resources, games in electronic formats (Paton-Ash and Wilmot, 2015). Schools with a well-equipped library, staffed with full-time certified librarians and appropriate support staff contribute significantly to gains in students' learning. High quality school libraries not only help students to read more, but also help them learn how to use and process information better and to perform better in tests and examinations.

Levels of library funding, staffing levels, collection, size, and range, and the instructional role of the librarians, all have a direct impact on students' achievement (Bates, 2000). The fundamental purpose of school libraries is to provide access to books and that access is the primary factor that leads to raising students' test scores in all aspects of literacy. Libraries play a vital role in all stages of education especially in junior secondary and senior secondary education. Libraries in schools are the natural supporting centres for individual's intellectual development and are particularly important today in view of the shift in emphasis towards individualized and holistic learning (Clark, 2010).

Libraries are learning hubs, each with a full range of print and electronic resources that support students' achievement. Today's school libraries must be gathering places for people of all ages and all interests to explore and debate ideas. School libraries have the most significant impact on learning outcomes when they are supervised by a school librarian, who works collaboratively with teachers, to help all students develop a love of reading, become skilled users of ideas and information, and explore the world of print and electronic media resources (School Libraries Work, 2016). The prevailing scenario of libraries in senior secondary schools in Nigeria is not encouraging. A lot needs to be done in order to provide our schools with well-organized libraries with qualified professionals to develop the interest of students in objective

reading. Currently, the situation is such that a few books locked in a classroom are given the status of a library in absence of any standards and guidelines. This paper critically investigates and presents findings about the existing status of senior secondary school libraries in Ilesa, Osun State.

Objectives of the study

The study is intended to achieve the following objectives:

- Examine the available resources in the school libraries;
- Find out if students utilize the available resources in the school libraries;
- Emphasize the importance of objective reading to students' academic achievement; and
- Identify the roles of library personnel in the libraries.

Research questions

- What are the available resources in the school libraries?
- Do secondary school students utilize the available resources in the school libraries?
- How important is objective reading to the secondary school students' academic performance?
- What are the roles of library personnel in the school libraries?

Literature review

Okiy (2013) stated that, the Federal Government of Nigeria knows the importance of libraries to educational development hence, as far back as 1981, stressed the need for school libraries in the Nigerian educational system in the National Policy of Education and reiterated this further in the revised National Policy of Education (1998) as follows:

As libraries are one of the most important educational services, proprietors of schools shall provide functional libraries in all their educational institutions in accordance with the established standards. They shall also provide for training librarians and library assistants for this service. The function of the library therefore is to implement, enrich, and vitalize the educational programmes, as it strives to attain excellence in content, process and product.

Being a carrier of knowledge, the library is a vital partner in knowledge management and shares with all other instructional agents their responsibility for systematically designing, carrying out and evaluating the total process of learning and teaching. The development of education may be said to be synonymous with the development of library and library services within any given community. Libraries are very relevant to the development of our educational system (Everhart, 2013) and the school library supports all students in learning and practicing skills for evaluating and using information regardless of form, format or medium, including sensitivity to the modes of communication within the community. It provides access to local, regional, national and global resources and opportunities that expose learners to diverse ideas, experiences and opinions, organizing activities that encourage cultural and social awareness and sensitivity, working with students, teachers, administrators and parents to achieve the mission of the school.

All these functions are fulfilled by school library by developing policies and services, selecting and acquiring resources, providing an intellectual access to appropriate sources of information, providing instructional facilities and employing trained staff. School library helps to update

knowledge and improve the standard of teaching and learning ability. School library programmes are structured to develop students' self-confidence, empower them to transfer the life skills they learn to various situations (Valenza, 2010).

School libraries are perceived to play a central role in education as a social construct. That is, a social network through which students and teachers engage in reading, promoting, quiet games, social skilling, researching, working on computers, group playing a pivotal role in socialisation of the whole school community. It could be for the solo readers, group research or rowdy and stimulating discussion and debate which, for the students, help shape the attitudes, abilities and interests of people as they move from being ego-centric little critters to hopefully beings capable of thinking and caring outside their own square. School libraries are also a part of an evolutionary process of change and development, as the information landscape changes. School Library Works (2016) stated that, the purpose of the school library includes provision of a flexible space with a wide and inclusive range of resources to support learning and teaching throughout the school. This should include development of a culture that promotes wider reading, motivated readers and learners for life and provision of a place for collaborative learning, creativity, and for developing independent research and information literacy skills. Owoeye and Yara (2011) stated that, the chief purpose of a school library is to make available to the pupils at their convenience, all books, periodicals and other reproduced materials which are of interest and value, which are not provided as basic or supplementary textbooks. They further noted that, the library occupies a central and primary place in any school system as it supports all functions of the school. School library information resources are seen as all inputs which are utilized in the library in order to provide good learning environment for students and teachers so as to be able to achieve educational goals.

School library resources should include books, periodicals, magazines, and newspapers, films, computers, filmstrip, videotapes, recording of all types, good materials for secondary education on arts and sciences, reference books such as dictionaries, encyclopaedia, and directories of local and state governments, yearbooks, handbooks and subject bibliographies, CD ROMs among others. Oniovosa (2004) asserted that, in a survey around the world on the reading ability of the children, one of the factors that positively influence children's reading achievement is the availability and accessibility of books and other non-books resources in their immediate environment, at home, in the classroom and in the library. School library collections inform, educate, entertain and enrich students at all levels. Students learn faster and their literacy skills grow rapidly when they are able to explore information that is meaningful to them (SLW, 2008).

Reading is the art of interpreting printed and written words, a basic tool of education and one of the most important skills in everyday life. Reading is both interactive and transactional and it involves the use of verbal symbols in the construction of messages, ideal and concepts for the purpose of negotiating meaning. The reader tries to get out of the text, the information, message or meaning which the writer has put down. It is the product of two basic components i.e., word recognition and language comprehension. Bradshaw (2015) asserted that, learning activities including reading is associated with better cognitive ability. Palani (2012) is of the opinion that, effective reading is an important avenue of effective learning and reading is interrelated with the total educational process hence, educational success requires successful reading habit. He believes reading is the identification of the symbols and the association of appropriate meaning with them. Comprehension skills help the learner to understand the meaning of words in isolation and in context. The problem most students have that contributes to their poor performance in tests and examinations is lack of proper reading. Vocabulary

acquisition and fluent writing will result in success in examination. Reading improves analytical thinking skills, and enhances overall critical thinking skills in students which are essential in helping students to learn how to think clearly.

The important roles of trained personnel in the running of an effective, result oriented school library cannot be overemphasized. Considering the unprecedented quantity of information learners are exposed to, Luhtala (2012) opined that, librarians' role is more important than ever. School librarians help all students to gain access to, evaluate, ethically use, create, share, and synthesize information. Studies consistently show that higher test scores result when school librarians are involved with instruction and the correlation is positive especially regarding disadvantaged students who often do not have access to resources and computers in their homes. By providing students equal guidance and access to print and digital resources, school librarians help to close gaps between privileged and at risk students (Chan, 2008). Thus librarians serve an important role in school systems particularly in guiding students to develop skills that will help them to access information (Brzozowski, 2015).

Methodology

A descriptive research design was adopted for this study. Data were collected in order to determine the influence of school libraries on the academic performance of secondary school students in Ilesa City. Three hundred (300) copies of questionnaire were administered in some schools that form the studied population for inferential purposes. The questionnaire has four sections A-D. Section A was designed to elicit information on demographic variables such as name, age, class and school while Section B was designed to get information on the available learning resources in the school libraries. Section C was designed to gather information on utilization of school library resources while Section D was designed to elicit information on the importance of reading students' achievement.

The population for the study consists of all the 4,425 secondary school two (SS 2) students in Ilesa City, Osun State. The sample size consists of 10 schools; 5 from each local government area comprising 3 public secondary schools and 2 private secondary schools. The study was limited to SS 2 students. Multi stage sampling technique was used to select the sample size for the research. The first stage was the selection of all the secondary schools in Ilesa West and Ilesa East Local Government Councils. The second stage was the use of simple random sampling to select five secondary schools comprising 3 public and 2 private secondary schools from each of the Local Government Councils making a total of 10 schools. The third stage was the selection of 30 students in each school making a total of 300 students in all through the simple random sampling technique.

The research instrument (questionnaire) was devised as a recording tool and administered on the respondents in the eight (8) schools to collect data about the variables under investigation. The questionnaire gathered the required facts adequately with utmost confidentiality. The questionnaire solicited information on the availability of school libraries, library materials, and their impact on reading by students and the data were analysed using descriptive statistics

Data Analysis

This section deals with the analysis of data and discussion of the findings obtained on the survey conducted. A total of 300 copies of the questionnaire were administered among the

randomly selected secondary school students. The response rate of the students was 100%. Data was analysed using descriptive design of simple percentage.

Table 1: Demographic and class distribution of students

Gender	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Male	148	49.33
Female	152	50.67
Total	300	100.0

Source: Field work, 2016

Table 1 shows that 152 (50.367%) respondents are females while 148 (49.33%) are males.

Table 2: Information resources available in the school libraries

S/N	Information Resources	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1.	Encyclopedia	50	16.7
2.	Dictionaries	200	66.7
3.	Textbooks	240	80.0
4.	Novels	150	50.0
5.	Magazines	125	41.6
6.	Journals	50	16.7
7.	Biographies	40	13.3
8.	Other items	50	16.7

Table 2 presents the information resources available in the school libraries. Fifty (50) students (16.7%) affirm the availability of encyclopaedia in their school libraries. Nearly all the libraries have dictionaries with 66.7% acceptance. 240 (80%) of the respondents indicated the availability of textbooks in their school libraries, while 150 (50%) respondents affirmed that, novels were available in their school libraries. 125 (41.6%) indicated the availability of magazines, while 50 students (16.7%) and 40 students indicated they have journals and biographies in their libraries respectfully.

These results confirmed the researchers’ observation during the field work. These result are in contrast to the opinion of Halsey (2008) that the school library must be well equipped to afford the students with the lifelong learning skills and develop their imagination, enabling them to live as responsible citizens. This table is in line with the first objective which seeks to examine the available resources in the school libraries

Table 3: ICT resources available in the school libraries

S/N	Items	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1.	Projectors	30	10
2.	PCs/Laptop	120	40
3.	Servers	30	10
4.	Broadband (Internet access)	30	10
5.	Online databases	-	0
6.	Scanners	60	20
7.	CD/DVD	-	0
8.	Routers/Switches	30	10
9.	Television	60	20
10.	Photocopier	90	36
11.	Printers	-	0

Table 3 shows ICT resources available in the school libraries. Only 30 (10) % students indicate they have projectors which they use during presentations, seminars, workshops, etc. Majority of the schools do not have servers, internet access, online databases, routers, television, etc. This shows that the level of ICT utilization in the secondary school libraries is very low. None of the has fax machine. The result shows that most of the secondary schools have no modern resources necessary to enhance teaching and learning in secondary schools. It should be noted however, that the few students that indicated the availability of some ICT resources are in the private schools This negates the opinion of Lance et al (2006) that, it is important that secondary school students should have available to them current and appealing information in all formats. This should include books, magazines, newspaper, internet, video, television and radio. The table depicts the first objective which seeks to examine the available resources in the school libraries and answer the first research question on the available resources in the school libraries.

Table 4: Utilization of school libraries

S/N	Questions	Yes	%	No	%
1.	Do you have a library in your school?	240	80.0	60	20.0
2.	Do you have a library period on your time table?	90	30.0	210	70.0
3.	Do you get needed information from the school library?	80	26.6	220	73.3
4.	Are you satisfied with the available resources in your school library?	70	23.3	230	76.7

Table 4 indicates that even though all the 240 (80%) of the students have libraries in their schools, only 90 students out of those that have school libraries have library period on their time table while the remaining 150 students do not have library hour. Library hours are important in the achievement of the purpose of establishing school library as well as the mental development of the students. During these periods, school library personnel have the opportunity to impact the students with necessary information. Students can also interact with the library personnel and get their favourite materials. From the finding, absence of library hours is common, particularly in the public secondary schools. This finding supports the work of Education Resource Service (ERS, 2005) which describes library hour as an important aspect of good practice in school libraries. Despite the fact that most of the students involved

in the study have school libraries, only 80 (26.6%) get needed materials from the school libraries and only 70 (23.3%) are satisfied with the available resources in the libraries. The table seeks to pursue the second objective which seeks to find out if the secondary school students utilize the available resources in the school libraries and answer the second research questions on the utilization of library resources, it will be observed from the table that many of the students do not maximally utilize the available resources in the school libraries.

Table 5: Role of reading to students’ performance

S/N	Questions	Yes	%	No	%
1.	Do you visit the library to read assigned textbooks?	90	20	240	80.0
2.	Do you find material you love to read in the school library?	80	60	120	40.0
3.	Do you believe your achievement can be better if you read your assigned books?	240	80	60	20.0
4.	Is your school library conducive for reading?	115	38.3	185	61.7
5.	Do you spend enough time reading in the school library while preparing for examination?	88	29.3	212	70.7

Table 5 presents the response of students to the importance of reading to their academic achievement. 60 students representing 20% visit the school libraries to read assigned textbooks while the remaining 240 (80%) students do not visit the library to read assigned books. 80 (60%) of the respondents find the materials they love to read in the school libraries while 120 (40%) students do not find the materials they love in the school libraries. 240 (60%) students believe their academic achievement can be better if they read assigned books. 115 (38.3%) students reported that their school libraries are conducive for reading while 185 (61.7%) stated that, their libraries are not conducive for reading.

During the period of preparing for examinations, 88 (29.3%) spend time to read in the library while 212 (70.7%) students do not read in the school libraries. The finding supports the assertion of Palani (2012) that, effective reading is an important avenue of effective learning and reading is interrelated with the total educational process hence, educational success requires successful reading habit. Reading has an important role to play in aiding academic achievement of secondary school students and for students to achieve better in their academic, they should visit the school libraries often to read while preparing for examinations. This tables addresses the third objectives which seeks to find the importance of objective reading to academic achievement of the students and answers the third research question that objective reading is important to secondary school students’ academic achievement.

Table 6: Availability of school librarians in the schools.

Questions	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Do you have a professional librarian in your school	Yes	90
	No	210
Total	300	100

Do you receive library instruction from your school librarian?	Yes	30	10
	No	270	90
	Total	300	100

Table 6 describes the availability of school librarians in the schools studied. 90 students (30%) have professional librarians in their schools while 210 students (70%) do not have professional librarians in their schools. 30 students out the 90 students who have professional librarians receive library instructions from their school librarians, the remaining 60 students do not receive any instruction from the school librarians. Previous researches on school libraries had established the important roles of school librarians, but these key staff are hardly available in most the school libraries. This finding confirms the work of Williams, Wavell and Morrison (2013), which stressed that the availability of qualified library personnel can raise test scores, enabling the accomplishment of learning outcomes, and providing the personal qualities that encourage a vibrant but safe learning environment. School libraries may be available and well-equipped but little can be achieved in the absence of trained personnel. This depicts the fourth objective that examines the roles of library personnel and answers the fourth research question that school librarians have important roles to play in the secondary schools.

Findings

The findings of this study reveal that the resources in the school libraries of the selected schools are not adequate. The commonest resources in the school libraries are textbooks, while reference sources such as biographies, encyclopedia are scarcely available in the school libraries. It was also discovered that, the available resources are not being adequately utilized by the students and that, reading has an important role to play in aiding academic achievement of secondary school students. Even though school librarians have important roles to play in assisting the secondary school students to maximize the use of the school library resources, some of the schools involved in this study do not have professional school librarians to manage the school libraries.

Conclusion

From the analysis of the study, it can be concluded that, there is need to equip the school libraries with relevant and adequate resources because there are a few relevant information materials in the school libraries; dictionaries, textbooks, and encyclopedia top the list. Other relevant materials like journals, magazines, biographies, yearbook, abstracts etc. are either too few or conspicuously absent. ICT facilities, particularly Internet access is scantily available in the school libraries. It shows that majority of the schools are yet to embrace the digital revolution that is rapidly driving service delivery all over the world. There is need to encourage the students to make use of the available resources in the libraries. The teachers can help by giving the students assignment and projects that will take them to the libraries.

Students should be made to appreciate the importance of reading to their academic achievement. No doubt students can read at home but the place of reading in the libraries cannot be over-emphasised. Students have a lot to gain when they read in well-equipped libraries, as they will have access to a wide range of reading materials that may not be available at home. School librarians have important roles to play in making the school libraries to fulfil their purposes.

Recommendations

- i. School libraries should be well-equipped with enough reading materials and Information and Communication (ICT) resources, as this will increase the interest of students in school libraries.
- ii. Students should be encouraged to utilize the available resources in the school libraries. Time should be allocated on the schools' time table to allow the students to visit the school libraries.
- iii. Students should be made to know the importance of reading to students. They should be encouraged to read their assigned books in the school libraries.
- iv. School librarians should be employed to manage the school libraries. They should be trained and re-trained so as to help the students get the best from the school libraries.

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