

Roles of School Libraries in Sustainable Basic and Post Basic Education in Nigeria

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Abstract

Education remained a social process in capacity building and maintenance of societal values. It is pivotal for acquiring skills, knowledge, and character for survival in the changing world. According to the United Nations' Report 2003, more than one billion people entered the 21st century unable to read and write. Unfortunately, most of these illiterates are found in Sub-Saharan Africa, in which Nigeria has the greatest population. The illiteracy level of Nigeria today has contributed to the ethnic, religious, political, and economic crises. Therefore, the provision of quality education at the grassroots level remains a paramount solution to these problems. Equally, the establishment of standard school libraries will in no small measure help in the provision of required educational services and materials that could promote reading skills, inculcate norms and values of societies and support the school curriculum to achieve the desired objectives at the basic and post-basic level. In the same vein, school libraries will also enhance staff/teachers' productivity. In view of this, using documentary sources, the paper examines the roles of school libraries in basic and post-basic education in Nigeria. It revealed that without standard school libraries and qualified school librarians, the aforementioned roles of the school library could not be achieved, and the objectives of basic and post-basic education could not be realized. The paper also points out some of the challenges facing school libraries in Nigeria, including lack of standard school library building, lack of qualified librarians, inadequate ICT facilities, lack of library development policy, etc. It, therefore, recommended that competent staff, effective and well-trained librarians are the key to attain sustainable basic and post-basic education in Nigeria.

Keywords: Basic Education. Post Basic Education. School Libraries. Sustainable Education

Introduction

Education has been seen as a complicated social tactic of obtaining knowledge and experience, formally or informally. It is likewise defined because the systematic

technique of growing an individual bodily, spiritually, socially, mentally, emotionally, and morally sound for the nicely-being of the character and that of the society in which he belongs. The conceptual view of education comprises teaching, learning, and specific skills. It is also a way of imparting cultural values from generation to generation. Education remained a dynamic social process in capability building and upkeep of societal values and cultural heritage. However, illiteracy, with its implication to the national development, has become a growing concern over the years. National consciousness on issues associated with limited literacy has extended, and libraries and information centers are viewed as an important method in the direction of addressing the State of affairs. Dada (2016) expressed that the achievement of any institution or society rests squarely at the sufficiency of its library collections due to the fact the library is perceived as an educational organization for findings, discoveries, improvements, vocational competencies' repositories, scholarship, and researches.

The impact of school libraries in achieving sustainable basic and post-basic schooling cannot be over-emphasized by acquiring, packaging, organizing, and disseminating information and experience to the students. Mbagwu (2009) states that the school library is a vital resource in the educational development of the country. This means that the school library is important for the intellectual development of future adult citizens who will fit into the world around them properly. Therefore, school libraries have more roles to play in attaining sustainable basic and post-basic education as individuals should be given access to information (without discrimination) right from the early stages of their lives. Martin (2000) notes that recent research indicates that the reading scores for students in schools that focus on improving their library programs are on average of 8: 21 % higher than similar schools with no such development program. Usoro and Usanga (2007) identified that in some parts of Nigeria, most children (especially those from rural areas or economically disadvantaged backgrounds) first meet books and reading materials in school, and have limited access to them in the home and the community.

Sustainable education means a scientific method of finding lengthy-lasting solutions to educational problems with regard to social, political, environmental, and monetary problems. In contrast, education for sustainable development is the appropriate use of knowledge as a tool to transform our society for greater development (Rosalyn, 2014). According to Keith (2004), the mission of education can most effectively be executed via a nicely-prepared library, and users should be educated on the way to retrieve and use the available library resources to satisfy their information needs. Usoro and Usanga (2007) pointed out that the objectives of education to children and youths is to prepare the future of the students to acquire knowledge, understanding, growth, and development, and vocational skills for self-reliance and independent study rather than the mere inculcation of subject matter and this can only be achieved through a well-equipped library hence; there is need for users to be educated on how to access, retrieve

and use the available library resources to meet their information needs. Furthermore, children need the library for powerful mastering for lifelong schooling, that is in step with the National Policy on education (2004), which states that "simple education intends to equip the person with such expertise, skill, and mindset to permit them to: live meaningful and gratifying lives, make contributions to the improvement of the society, derive maximum social financial and cultural advantages from the society and discharge their civil obligation."

Aina (2004) defined school libraries as libraries that were established to serve pre-primary, primary and senior secondary schools to facilitate effective teaching and learning processes. The School library houses two different kinds of information resources (printed and non-printed resources). Printed forms of information resources include; books, reference materials, magazines, newspapers, fiction and non-fiction, pamphlets, brochures, handbills, among others. While, non-printed resources include television sets, slides, motion films, and graphic materials, etc. In agreement with Apeji (2011), who indicated that the school library is the heart of any institution that serves as an information center to the school. It also serves as reading, research, recreational, lending centers, and so on. Dike (2002) explained that libraries offer materials that encourage reading culture. He further emphasized that resources provided by the library can prepare children beyond technical literacy to a reading habit. The libraries are meant to provide materials and services in response to the school's curricula and general reading interest.

According to Ogwu (2010), School library is often identified with primary and secondary school levels of education. The school library is unique amongst all other libraries because its objectives are anchored on enriching the foundation of learning (pre-school, primary, and secondary schools). He further opined that the school library is set to inculcate reading and learning skills in primary and secondary school pupils at a tender age. The school library encourages its users to accept the responsibility for education and development fully. School libraries give individualized services, ensuring that every library user gets information that meets their particular need. It also serves as a laboratory for its users to practice using indexes, abstracts, bibliographies, and catalogs; school libraries are being assisted by proper funding to acquire relevant and varied materials for these purposes. The International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (2015) defined a school library as the physical and digital learning environment/space where reading, inquiry, research, innovation, thinking, imagination, and creativity are central to students' information-to-knowledge journey. This physical and digital space is known as hybrid libraries.

Basic and Post Basic Education

Education had been conceptualized as a dynamic and complex social process of acquiring knowledge and experience, either formal or informal. It is also described as the systematic process of developing an individual physically, spiritually, socially, mentally, emotionally, and morally sound the individual and the society in which he belongs. Basic education, as describes by Obayan (2000), is a level learning process needed to build firm roots for literacy and proficiency, to inculcate basic life skills, and more importantly, to consolidate the skills of learning how to learn. The International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED, 2011) states that basic education corresponds to the first nine years of formal schooling and comprises two levels. Level 1 is primary education (usually six years), and Level 2 refers to lower secondary (usually three years; grades 7-9). However, not all education systems define basic education the same way. For instance, several countries include pre-primary as part of the basic education cycle. According to Nigeria's national policy on education (2004), basic education covers nine years of formal (compulsory) schooling consisting of six years of elementary and three years of junior secondary education, while post-basic education includes three years of senior secondary education.

Post-basic education is used in this review to refer to secondary education and vocational skills training programs for people who have completed basic education or need to complement inadequate basic education. Furthermore, UNESCO's (2013) report on Education Transforms Lives suggested that for the State to achieve wider benefits of education, all children need to be given a chance to complete not only the primary school but also lower secondary school.

According to the National Policy on Education (2004), the general objectives of basic education is as follows:

- i. The inculcation of permanent literacy and innumeracy and the ability to communicate effectively;
- ii. The laying of a sound basis for scientific and reflective thinking;
- iii. Citizenship education as a basis for effective participation in and contribution to the life of the society;
- iv. Character and moral training and the development of sound attitudes;
- v. Developing in the child the ability to adapt to his changing environment; among others.

The Roles of School Libraries

School libraries have a major role to play in facilitating teaching and learning for proper education to pupils and students in schools and to achieve the basic and post-basic schools' objectives. Gretes (2013) emphasized that the real role of the school library is to make reading materials available and accessible to students to enhance their teaching activities and learning process. It consists of a collection of books and other materials that are maintained and managed for reading and research, organized to

provide easy access to users, with the help of well-trained staff to provide services that meet the needs of its users. The work of school librarians involves selection, acquisition, processing, storing, organizing, and disseminating of information materials for easy retrieval, reference services, reader advisory work, current awareness service, cataloging, and classification of library materials, among others. Aina (2004) highlight the roles of the school library as related to both primary and secondary school pupils as follows:

- i. To participate fully in the school program as it strives to meet the needs of pupils, teachers, parents, and other community members;
 - ii. To provide the library materials and services most appropriate and most meaningful in their growth and development of boys and girls as individuals;
 - iii. Stimulate and guide pupils in all ramifications of their reading so that they may find increasing enjoyment and satisfaction and may grow in critical judgment and appreciation;
 - iv. To provide an opportunity through library experience for boys and girls to develop beneficial interests, make satisfactory personal adjustments, and acquire desirable social attitudes.
 - v. To introduce pupils to public libraries as early as possible and cooperate with those libraries in their effort to encourage continuing education and cultural growth.
 - vi. To work with teachers in the selection and use of all types of library materials will contribute to the teaching program and support curriculum.
 - vii. Encourage the reading habits of the learner and give social training to pupils; and
 - viii. Develop in pupils the ability to learn from books without teachers; among others
- Furthermore, the educational aims of school libraries, according to Idiegbeyan-Ose and Okoedion (2012), include:
- i. To facilitate and enhance the reading habit
 - ii. To develop in children the ability to acquire needed information at a right time
 - iii. To assist pupils to increase and improve their knowledge of reading, speaking, and writing
 - iv. To train children to care for books make good and intelligent use of the library
 - v. To enhance children's reading and communication skills
 - vi. To provide children with information, both current and retrospective.

School Libraries and Basic Education in Nigeria: An Overview

Library and education are two inseparable concepts; they are essentially related to each other. None of them is an end in itself; rather, both of them together are a means to an ultimate end. Shukla, Singh, and Mishra (2013) opined that education is an eye-opener for a human being. It gives them a perfect, adequate knowledge, creates civic and rational sense, withdraws him from the subjection of bad habits, selfish passions, and

ignoble pursuits, and thus removes him from horrible darkness to articulate explanation. At the same time, the library is an instrument of self-education, a means of knowledge and factual information, a center of intellectual recreation, and an ideal of enlightenment that provides accumulated and preserved knowledge which consequently enriches one's mental vision and dignifies their habits, behavior, character, taste, attitude, conduct, and outlook on life. In terms of education, school libraries are the starting point for instilling the need to acquire information literacy and value for development. Students, right from primary to secondary school level, need to imbibe the culture of being confident information interpreters and creators as well as critical, creative, and collaborative thinkers if they are to meet the demands of 21st-century life and also contribute meaningfully to sustainable development as they grow in age and experience. The school library provides information and ideas fundamental to preparing children to function successfully in contemporary information and knowledge-based society when they grow. It also equips pupils with life-long learning skills and develops their imagination, enabling them to live as responsible citizens (IFLA, 2015).

A different number of policies and programs with regard to education were established by the Nigerian government to tackle the problem of education, particularly of the basic and post-basic levels. Among the major programs was the establishment of Universal Primary Education (UPE) in 1976. The Federal Ministry of Education (2000) recognizes libraries as "spatial enablers of teaching and learning" The Guidelines recommend that libraries be of the appropriate quantity, size, and quality to meet the minimum standards for promoting meaningful teaching/learning. The blueprint for UBE defines it as the foundation for sustainable lifelong learning that provides reading, writing, and numeracy skills. It provides a wide variety of formal and informal activities and programs designed to enable learners to acquire functional literacy. Moreover, it is meant to prepare the children for the future, with the ability to think rationally and to solve problems effectively.

However, despite these policies and programs, school libraries in Nigeria are yet to receive the desired attention. A survey conducted in Sokoto state by Jabo and Bande (2012) revealed that very few schools have permanent library buildings; most of the collections are outdated and disorganized, and the libraries grossly lack professional staff in Sokoto State. These affirm the finding of Ogunniyi (2011), who stated that school library materials in Ondo State were disorganized due to the absence of qualified librarians. Equally, Abubakar (2007), in his study, observed that library collections in most Nigerian school libraries were grossly inadequate to take care of the school curriculum due to inadequate funding and non-qualified library staff.

Challenges of school libraries in Nigeria

School libraries in Nigeria are faced with a lot of challenges; in most cases, where there is a school library, it is left in the hands of some unprofessional teachers, who might have undergone little or no training in librarianship, and such teachers are called teacher-librarians. While in most schools, libraries are left in the hands of some pupils as library prefects who have no idea about librarianship or library routines, books and other library collections are not well arranged in order to facilitate their easy accessibility and retrieval by library users. The following are the challenges faced by the school libraries in Nigeria:

- i. Lack of proper structure of library building in the school premises as indicated by Jabo and Bande (2012), who revealed that very few schools have permanent library building.
- ii. Lack of proper implementation of school library policy in Nigeria.
- iii. Inadequate funds allocated to the school libraries lack governmental support. This is supported by Adeyemi (2010) that under-funding has played an adverse effect on the quality of school libraries in Nigeria.
- iv. Lack of professional librarians in the school libraries; Teacher librarians should be experienced practitioners with passion and interest to coordinate school library activities successfully.
- v. Lack of information and communication technology facilities in the school libraries. According to Oyetola and Adio (2020), ICT technology has a strong advantage of being used to promote reading among youths. The youths in our society tend to find ICT technology highly fascinating and exciting.

Recommendations

To achieve basic and post-basic education without school libraries being involved would be very difficult, and therefore, the government has to look into and become more involved in the provision of school libraries in all schools and invest in such to be able to provide adequate library services and information materials in all formats for pupils, students, teachers, and other categories of patrons. In view of the above, some of the ways forward are as follows:

- i. Provision of standard school libraries structure with enough reading space; establishment of conducive environment in basic and post-basic school will enhance reading culture of the student and wipe away the student perception of the library as a store of books.
- ii. Proper implementation of school libraries to attain its objectives there must be set standards to serve as guidelines for management. Libraries are one of the most important educational services. Proprietors of schools shall provide functional libraries in basic and post-basic educations in accordance with the established standards.

- iii. Provision of adequate funding for school libraries by the school management and intervention of non-governmental organizations. This will enhance the acquisition of Infrastructure, purchasing of library materials, and provision of information and communication technology facilities in order to meet the demand of the 21st century for sustainable basic and post-basic education in Nigeria.
- iv. Employing professional librarians; will facilitate the activities of the libraries such as selection, acquisition, processing, storing, organizing, disseminating, and maintenance of information materials for easy retrieval, and proper evaluation of the resources will be carried out whenever it is needed.
- v. Provision of information and communication technology (ICT) facilities in the school libraries will facilitate teaching and learning. Creates awareness for the importance of the library and attracts more users, not only the student but also the community members, to patronize online library resources.

Conclusion

Library and education are two inseparable concepts; they are essentially related to each other. None of them is an end in itself; rather, both of them together are a means to an ultimate end. Libraries are the very foundation of the school curriculum because they provide information resources and provide the skill that stimulates learning to learn skills, which are basic to life-long literacy. The library is also an instrument of self-education, a means of knowledge and factual information, a center of intellectual recreation, and a beacon of enlightenment that provides accumulated and preserved knowledge which consequently enriches one's mental vision and dignifies their habits, behavior, character, attitude, conduct, and outlook in life. In terms of education, school libraries are the starting point for instilling the need to acquire information literacy and value for development. Students, right from primary to secondary school level, need to imbibe the culture of being confident, information interpreters and innovators as well as critical, creative, and collaborative thinkers if they are to meet the demands of the 21st century and to contribute meaningfully to sustainable development.

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