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A Cursory Look at Primary School Libraries and Utilization in Ado-Ekiti Local Government Area of Ekiti-State, Nigeria

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Abstract

The study is a survey of primary school libraries and usage in Ado- Ekiti Local Government Area of Ekiti State, Nigeria. Ten primary schools were selected for the study. They represented three categories of primary schools in the State as follows: Government owned Public Schools State Universal Basic Education Board (SUBEB) Model school and fee paying private schools. The study identified some problems which include inadequate funding and dearth of trained personnel. It concluded by giving suggestions and recommendations towards the enhancement of library services for proper utilization.

Introduction

In this paper, the term ‘primary education’ refers to the type of education a child receives in primary school. This is of immense importance to any progressive nation of the world. The duration of this type of education varies from country to country. It however ranges from 4-8 years depending on the country’s system of education.

The primary school is seen as the place in which the child gains fundamental knowledge, skills, the rights, feelings and actions which are considered

necessary for all citizens regardless of social status, vocation of sex. At this stage, children develop physiological and psychologically to be less dependent on their parents, and are more able to take care of themselves. Their brains now allow for higher degree of learning and other forms of intellectual work. While their muscles and other systems can be well coordinated to perform those actions that are essential for life, effective interaction with their environment, engage in play and games for their well being, they also acquire enough skills for the organized school learning, immediate needs and interest. At their transitional period to the secondary level between the ages of eleven and thirteen, physical and mental development is more prominent. These will adequately equip them for the higher tasks ahead in the next stage (Orukotan and Oladipo 1994).

A library on the other hand can be defined as media resource, information and cultural centre. It constitutes social institutions which exist for the collection, preservation and transmission of human intellectual experience and culture (Aje 1997), opined that libraries specifically aim at:

1. Promoting the education process in the society
2. Accelerating the translation of knowledge into social action.
3. Enabling the individual to obtain inspirational and recreational activity through reading and therefore the opportunity of interacting with the society's wealth of accumulated knowledge.
4. Preserving the cultural heritage and effecting the transfer of knowledge from one generation to the next.

Libraries are central to the academic and personal development of individuals. Schools libraries remain the pivot on which other services relies for effective performance. They form an integral part of the education system; Daniel (2004) sees an education institution without a library as a motorcar without an engine or a body without a soul. Supporting Daniel's (2004) submission, Oguntuase (2004) posits that the school library is an essential part of the school. Oguntimehin and Adeyemi (2004) also identify school libraries as one of the six supportive services necessary for realizing the objective of basic education. It is therefore the responsibility of all to provide it at all levels of our educational endeavour and of course maintain and sustain the required standard.

School libraries are learning resource centre attached to individual schools to support teaching and learning. Dike (2004) submits that school libraries are the nerve centre of the educational programme of the school which supports the curriculum. In the same vein, Attama (2004) writes that school libraries are indispensable organs that provide all the resources for the child's proper educational growth. They are indeed central to the development of individual student.

Review of Related Literature

The impact of Library services in the promotion of primary school education can best be understood if one considers the opinion of the Federal Ministry of Education (1985) which looked at the term "Library" and concluded that the words; teacher, teaching and pupils have a place in the concept of library. According to this assertion, a library is a centre of information, a store or mine of recorded materials. It is also an education agency. Librarianship is applied to a person who controls, directs, informs, assists, collects and preserves (the use of) recorded materials.

The above assertion by the Federal Ministry of Education (1985) further maintains that teaching is generally concerned with preparation and transmission of information bits called subjects. A library assists teaching by storing instructional materials for use in teaching/learning.

The library should therefore be equipped with different media of information. Its environment should be conducive to learning, inducing learning, mental set and attitude.

School libraries are attached to pre-tertiary and pre-secondary schools. Media centre, learning resource centre are other terms that have been variously used in the field of librarianship to refer to libraries in schools. Fayose (1995) defines school library as a collection of books, recordings of all types of slides, computer, study kits, realia and other information bearing resources housed for use by teacher and students for learning, recreational activities and personal development. The modern day school library is an integral part of the teaching and learning process. Elaturoti (1990) described the school library as a vital instrument in the educational process. Dike (2001) supports Elaturoti's submission when he avers that the library is a teaching and learning environment, which provides resources and learning opportunities for the realization of the objectives of its parent organ. Kumar (1991) agrees with the submission and even submits that the performance of students could be improved considerably if they use the library regularly.

Onanuga and Okeh (1996) posited that the school library is seen as the centre of the school learning programme and the foundation stone of any modern educational structure. An adequate school library should contain books on all subjects of interest to the children and teachers and should be maintained by a professionally trained school librarian who should be assisted by a library assistant and some pupils. They went further to say that the school library serves as an information centre where all forms of books and learning resources available within their immediate community for information are stored and organized for teachers to update their knowledge and to prepare their lessons.

The importance of libraries cannot be over emphasized. Esenwa (1989) submits that school libraries have an important role to play, both in the context of the educational system and in preparing the future generation of library users. Within the system, they provide the environment where students can discover and develop their abilities and talents and where teachers can improve their skills and locate a wide range of learning resource. Odusanya and Amusa (2002) discussing the importance of libraries to education posit that libraries and education are two vital institutions which cannot be separated in an all round development of a child. The absence of adequate and efficient library services will subsequently have negative effects on the products of the educational process. This assertion is reinforced by Nwafors (1977) submission that the absence of libraries in our school inevitably means that people who pass through such schools cannot be expected to be library conscious, and this situation has had conspicuous adverse effects on our educational system. He concludes that our libraries rather than prepare people for life only prepare them for examinations.

The Federal Ministry of Education (1985) listed some materials which the researcher considers important if the school library should positively contribute to the promotion of primary education

They are as follow:

Book Resources

The library book resources consist of reference books, fictions and textbooks, pictures, maps, journals, magazine, periodical. The pupils get information from them. They are mines of information and aids to learning.

Non Book Materials

Non book materials are instructional materials other than books which are included in school libraries to help a very young child, who is not a natural reader and also for the important purpose of making the library a centre of information of all kinds.

There are different types of non-book materials. Audio visual materials constitute the major type. Audio visual materials include: pictures, post cards, slides, film strips, motion pictures, charts, maps, phonograph records, kits, video tapes, cassettes, projectors, radio, television etc. Audio visual materials sometime called media resources are powerful and effective means of educational communication especially to children in primary school. They learn easily by hearing and seeing.

Periodicals

Periodicals and newspaper also bear useful impacts on primary school education system. They play important parts in the child's education as an introduction to good books, because good magazines encourage children to read books to pursue hobbies, and to take interest in current affairs.

Statement of the Problem

It has been discovered in recent years that library services constitute a veritable catalyst to primary school education. Educationists and policy makers are aware of this impact yet very little attention is paid to libraries in primary schools.

Ekiti State is noted as the fountain of knowledge, but the deplorable condition of primary school libraries is in contrast with this. There has been little empirical study to support primary school libraries and utilization which is a further testimony that little consideration is given to library development in our primary school system.

Study Objectives

In the light of the impact of primary school libraries and utilization and the lukewarm attitude of policy makers to the development of library services, the researcher found out that there has been inadequate empirical evidence, therefore, the following study would be made.

- (a) To identify what impact library services have made in the primary school education
- (b) To examine the availability and use of primary school libraries.

Methodology

A survey method was used to gather information on libraries and utilization in 10 selected primary schools in Ado-Ekiti Local Government Area of Ekiti State. The schools were selected to reflect the various categories of schools to be found in any developed Local Government area in Nigeria today, viz:-

- a) The government owned public schools which are non-fee paying and which cater for the general public.
- b) The government owned public non-fee paying State Universal Basic Education Board (SUBEB) Model school which is special in outlook with teachers based on specialization.
- c) Private fee paying schools which select a group of children from the educated elites of the society.

Data was collected from the schools by means of questionnaires and interviews. The researchers carried out the interview in an informal atmosphere. Interview time varied from thirty minutes to one hour for each respondent.

The questions asked were as follows:-

1. Does your school have library of its own?
2. Do you think the library is relevant to your school?
3. Is the library being consulted by staff and pupils?
4. How often do you visit your library and for what purpose?
5. Do you have a professional Librarian?
6. If yes what is the designation?
7. What are the problems militating against primary school libraries and the utilization?
8. Is your library having books and non book materials?

A total of 200 copies of questionnaires were distributed to the respondents randomly selected in the schools under study. The questionnaire being very important to this study, the researchers found it necessary to see if there were weaknesses in the context of the questionnaire, hence a pre-testing was

carried out. This is for the researchers to determine the clarity, appropriateness and applicability of questions.

In carrying out this pre-testing, the researchers administered 20 copies of the questionnaire to primary school teachers and ten pupils randomly selected in Ilesa West Local Government of Osun State. One of the teachers suggested that there is need to re-visit and reintroduce library hour and reading corners in our primary school system.

The results for this study are presented in tables i-vi.

Table I shows the types of schools in the sample i.e. Government owned public schools, State Universal Basic Education Board (SUBEB) Model schools, and private fee paying schools.

Table II shows availability of libraries in schools. It reveals the number of schools with libraries and number without libraries. Private fee paying schools topped the list of schools with libraries having 80%.

Table III shows the purpose for which teachers use the library. To borrow teaching materials topped the list with 40% while for relaxation come last with 4%.

Table IV shows the purpose for which pupils use the library. To read story books topped the list with 60% while to write personal note came last with 4%.

Table V shows the nature of collections located in the libraries. Fiction books topped the list in private fee paying schools with 4,000 volumes while maps came last in Government owned public schools with just 4 volumes.

Table VI shows the challenges of primary school libraries. Inadequate funding topped the list of ranking by respondents while inadequate opening hours was ranked last.

Discussion

This study shows that though respondents agree that libraries play very important roles in primary school education, very little attention is paid to their establishment by government of the day.

The irony of the situation is that the private schools enjoy library services more than the public schools. Most of the pupils interviewed in private schools are children of the elites of the society, while there is an apparent or total neglect of public schools where children of the less privileged attend.

There is a serious implication in this observation unless government addresses the issue of library services in our primary schools.

Conclusion and Recommendation

It is pertinent to note that because of the vital role that libraries play in the promotion of primary schools education in Nigeria, the researchers suggest that libraries should be incorporated in all primary schools in Nigeria with books, and non-book materials most especially audio visual materials. Professional librarians should be employed. It is disheartening to note that none of the school libraries surveyed has professional persons to look after the library. A professional person is essential to a good library programme. The professional librarian is the innovator, coordinator and catalyst of many programmes.

Funding of school libraries should be done by the Federal Government and should be in a separate vote. The outdated books can therefore be replaced with new ones. Journals should also be bought from the separate vote.

Government should stop the lukewarm attitude to education in order to promote library service in primary schools in Nigeria for proper utilization. Government should in the light of this organize various courses, workshops and conference to “sell” the noble ideas of the impact of library services in the promotion of primary school education in Nigeria to all concerned with education-teacher, pupils and administrators.

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Table I: Types of Schools in the Sample

School Type	No of Schools	No of Pupil Respondents	No of teacher Respondents
Government owned public schools	5	70	30
State Universal Basic Education Board (SUBEB) Model School	1	15	05
Private fee paying schools	4	60	20
Total	10	145	55

Total No of respondents: 200.

Table II: Availability of libraries in schools

School Type	No of school with libraries	Percentage	No of schools without libraries	Libraries percentage
Government owned public schools	3	60%	2	40%
State Universal Basic Education Board (SUBEB) Model school	0	0%	1	100%
Private fee paying schools	4	80%	0	-
Total	7		3	

Table III: Purpose for which Teachers use the Library

Purpose	Percentage
To borrow teaching materials	40%
To study	10%
To check quick references	15%
To read personal books	6%
To write lesson notes	25%
For relaxation	4%
Total	100%

Table IV: Purpose for which Pupils use the Library

Purpose	Percentage
To borrow textbooks	5%
To study class work	21%
To read story books	60%
To write personal note	4%
For relaxation	10%
Total	100%

Table V: Nature of Collections Located in the Libraries.

Materials by type	Government owned public school	Government demonstration school	Private fee paying school
Fiction Books	3,000	-	4,000
Non-fiction book	650	-	700
Newspapers	-	-	-
Journals	-	-	-
Charts	15	-	18
Maps	4	-	5
Globes	-	-	-
Slides	-	-	-
Films trips	-	-	-

Table VI: Challenges of primary School Libraries

Problems	Rank
Inadequate funding	1 ST
Inadequate personnel	2 ND
Inadequate space/furniture	3 RD
inadequate stock organization	4 TH
Inadequate resources	5 TH
Inadequate opening hours	6 TH