

## **THE EFFECT OF SCHOOL LIBRARY PROVISION ON FIRST CYCLE SCHOOLS IN THE PUBLIC SYSTEM**

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### **ABSTRACT**

*The library is the hub of the school's work and it will perform its academic functions properly if it is adequately resourced. A good school library is therefore an essential and indispensable part of the entire school system. Unfortunately, school libraries in Ghana are the least developed and most neglected, especially at the basic education level.*

*This study looks at the effects of school library provision on first cycle schools in the public system. The case studies are the University Staff Village School, Legon and Anunmle Cluster of Schools, Achimota - both in the Ayawaso Sub-district of the Accra Metropolis. The population comprised pupils and teachers from these two schools. A sample size of 210 was chosen from a population of 960, and data was collected through the use of questionnaires, interviews, personal visits to the libraries and documentary sources.*

*Analysis of the data gathered revealed that when library facilities such as furniture, library staff, opening hours and book stock among others, are available and adequate, effective use is made of the library by pupils and teachers.*

*In conclusion, the study advocates for the establishment of libraries in all the public first cycle schools in the country.*

**KEYWORDS:** SCHOOL LIBRARIES, BASIC EDUCATION, FIRST CYCLE SCHOOLS, PUBLIC SYSTEM, GHANA.

### **Introduction**

In the past, the teacher and the textbook dominated the school curriculum so much that the pupil depended mainly on the teacher and his notes without making any effort to explore other areas of information. Although the Ghana educational system is undergoing some reforms to meet modern demands, the teacher still remains the source of inspiration to the pupil. The most suitable place to help the pupil cope with this new trend in education is the library. Hence, one way by which this can be achieved is through the provision of school libraries.

At all levels of education, libraries facilitate research in various fields of knowledge and help in promoting positive social attitudes, by providing relevant materials which support continuing lifelong learning (Review of Education Reforms in Ghana, 2002). Since modern education focuses great attention on the potential of the library as an instrument of learning, there is the need that school libraries are well organized and developed in order to serve as effective instruments of education. A good school programme, thus, requires the resources and services of a school library.

Libraries occupy an important position in the teaching and learning programmes of any educational system (Alemna, 1983) by providing reading materials for pupils and teachers. The school library is now much more important because of the policy on education which requires the pupil to do more independent work than the previous policy

that allowed the pupil to rely very much on the teacher (Alemna, 1990). Recommendations made to promote library activities in Ghana include among others, the need for library periods on the timetables of basic schools (Review of Education Reforms in Ghana, 2002).

The case for library provision in schools has been recognized in all countries where basic education is held dear (Alemna, 1990). The school library is therefore directed towards achieving definite educational goals, which include:

- a. encouraging the habit of reading among the pupils;
- b. developing and inculcating in the pupils the ability to study independently on their own; and
- c. providing recreational and social training (Alemna, 1990).

With the provision of a school library, learners can find materials to supplement and enrich what has been taught in class. The library also provides an independent means of education where users can work at their own pace to achieve the desired goals. It also provides an environment in which both teachers and learners develop and update their knowledge and skills through independent study (Review of Education Reforms in Ghana, 2002).

### **The problem**

Basic education in Ghana comprises six (6) years primary and three (3) years junior secondary school. Schools within this range are referred to as first cycle schools. Though

school libraries in Ghana started in the 1950s, it was realized that they have not gained much ground in the first cycle schools. A survey of most first cycle schools in Accra revealed the non-existence of libraries apart from a collection of a few books that are kept in cupboards in the offices of the Heads of School (Asante, 1992). The implication is that, majority of pupils in the first cycle schools do not have access to school libraries.

The current problem is that there are virtually no libraries in the first cycle schools. The absence of school libraries in most first cycle schools in the public system may be a contributing factor to the low academic performance of the pupils in these schools. The few libraries available are not up to the standards required of school libraries. They are manned by mostly untrained staff or Teacher / Librarians who are often loaded with so much classroom work that they have very little time for the library (Donkor, 1999). The end result is the poor services provided in our school libraries.

It is against this background that the study was undertaken to assess the place of libraries in first cycle schools in the public system in Ghana.

## **Methodology**

In order to achieve the objectives of the study, various methods of data collection were used. The instruments used included questionnaires, interviews, observation, and documentary sources.

The population comprised a cross section of pupils and teachers of the two schools selected for the study (University Staff Village School, Legon and Anunmle cluster of schools, Achimota - both in the Ayawaso Sub-district of the Accra metropolis). The

researcher decided on a sample size of 210 respondents - (180 pupils and 30 teachers) out of a population of 960 pupils and teachers. Of the 180 pupils, she chose 60 from University Staff Village School and 120 from Anunmle cluster of schools. Of the 30 teachers, 10 were taken from University Staff Village School and 20 from Anunmle cluster of schools. The study was carried out in September, 1999.

A total of two hundred and ten questionnaires were randomly distributed. There were pre-coded as well as open questions. These sought the background information on the respondents, how they used the library, and also their views about the library. All copies of the questionnaire were returned giving a response rate of 100%.

The heads and the library staff of the schools were also interviewed to get information on the state and use of the libraries. Other methods that were used to collect data were the observation method – personally visiting the libraries and physically examining some of the text-books to see how current they are, and their relevance to the users. Finally, documentary sources were consulted such as the accession register, the library routine notebooks, the continuous assessment records, duplicates of previously filled terminal report cards and B.E.C.E. (Basic Education Certificate Examination) results of the previous years.

### **Presentation of results**

In all, 210 questionnaires were distributed – 180 to pupils and 30 to teachers. All the questionnaires were returned.

### Use of the library and frequency of use

Pupils and teachers were asked whether they use the library and if yes how often they do so. The responses from Table 1 showed that one hundred and seventy one pupils (95.0%) use the library while seven pupils (3.9%) indicated that they do not use the library. Only two pupils did not respond to this question.

For the teachers, twenty-six of them representing 86.7% said “Yes” while three teachers (10.0%) said “No”. One teacher did not respond.

**Table 1: Use of library by pupils and teachers**

Variable		PUPILS		TEACHERS	
		Frequency	%	Frequency	%
<b>YES:</b>	A C S	113	95.0	18	86.7
	U S V S	58		8	
<b>NO:</b>	A C S	5	3.9	2	10.0
	U S V S	2		1	
		<b>178</b>	<b>98.9</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>96.7</b>
No response		<b>2</b>	<b>1.1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>3.3</b>
<i>TOTAL</i>		<b>180</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>100.0</b>

(Note -ACS stands for Anunmle Cluster of Schools; USVS stands for University Staff Village School).

As to how often the library is used, forty-four pupils representing 24.4% said they use it once a week, one hundred and twenty-four pupils (68.9%) said they use it twice a week,

six pupils (3.3%) said they use it more than twice a week, and six pupils (3.3%) did not respond. For the teachers, six of them (20.0%) said they use it once a week; eleven teachers (36.7%) use the library twice a week, while six teachers (20.0%) said they use it more than twice in a week. Seven of the teachers (23.3%) did not respond.

The responses given imply that majority of the respondents (86.7%) use the school library, and out of those who do so, the majority (52.8%) asserted that they used it twice a week.

From the above, we can deduce that there is a very high patronage of the school library among both teachers and pupils.

### **Purpose for which the library is used**

Both pupils and teachers use libraries for different purposes. Teachers were asked for what purposes they use the library. Multiple responses were given to this question, and these are illustrated in Table 2 below:

The teachers mainly use the school library to prepare lesson notes, for leisure reading or for reference.

**Table 2: Purpose for which teachers use library**

Category	Count	% of Response
To prepare lesson notes	23	32.9
For leisure reading	23	32.9
For reference	18	25.7
For professional development	5	7.1
Others	1	1.4
Total responses	70	100.0

Pupils were asked a similar question - what they usually do when they go to the library.

The responses given are shown in Table 3

**Table 3: Purpose for which pupils use the library**

Variable	<i>Frequency</i>	%
To read story books	150	83.3
To read text books	17	9.4
To read magazines	3	1.7
To read picture books	5	2.8
For References	3	1.7
Sub Total	<b>178</b>	<b>98.9</b>
<i>No Response</i>	<b>2</b>	<b>1.1</b>
<b>T O T A L</b>	<b>180</b>	<b>100.0</b>

An overwhelming number of students (83.3%) reported that they go to the library to read story books. They explained further that reading of story books helps them to improve upon their English Language. Some pupils also said they are encouraged to use the library because of homework and assignments given to them by their teachers.

### **Library periods on school time-table and what pupils do during this period**

Pupils and teachers were asked if they have library periods on the school timetable; and what the pupils are required to do during that period. It was revealed from the responses that the schools have library periods on the school timetable and that majority of the



pupils go to the library as a class to read story books, text books and other library materials.

It is a good practice that there are library periods on the school time table. These help pupils to appreciate the importance of libraries in education. They also enable the pupils to acquire the reading habits among others.

### **Adequate teaching and learning materials**

Pupils were asked if the library has the necessary books for their studies; and the teachers if they had adequate teaching materials in their subject areas. Responses given indicate that one hundred and forty four pupils representing 80.0% said they have the necessary books for their studies while only twenty nine pupils (16.1%) said they do not have the necessary books. Seven of the pupils (3.9%) did not respond. With the teachers, twenty of them (66.7%) consider library materials in their subject areas as adequate, while six (20.0%) felt they did not have enough materials in their subject areas. Four of them (13.3%) did not respond. The study therefore shows that majority of the teachers are of the opinion that library materials in their subject areas are adequate, while the pupils feel that the libraries have the necessary books for their studies.

### **Borrowing books from the library**

The views of pupils and teachers were sought on lending services in their school libraries. The researcher wanted to find out whether pupils and teachers were allowed to borrow books from the library for use at home. Out of the one hundred and eighty pupils, one

hundred and thirty two (73.3%) said, “Yes”, while thirty- nine (21.7%) said “No”. Nine of the pupils did not respond.

Of the thirty teachers, twenty-two of them (73.3%) said they are allowed to borrow books whilst seven teachers (23.3%) said “No” to this question. One teacher did not respond.

### **Pupils’ visit to other libraries**

Pupils were asked whether they visit other libraries. The researcher wanted to find out if the pupils have acquired the habit of visiting libraries. Responses given show that sixty-three pupils (35.0%) visit other libraries whilst one hundred and ten pupils (61.1%) do not visit other libraries. Seven of the pupils did not respond.

An interview with some of the respondents who replied in the affirmative revealed that some of the libraries visited are the British Council Library, the public library and community libraries.

The findings revealed that majority of pupils do not visit other libraries apart from their school libraries.

### **Use of school libraries**

The researcher sought to find out from teachers if they felt that the pupils make maximum use of the school library. The responses show that eighteen teachers (60.0%) were of the opinion that pupils make maximum use of the library.

Ten (33.3%) gave “No” as their response while two (6.7%) did not respond.

When asked to explain how the pupils make use of the library, four teachers (13.3%) said the library helped them to read on their own. The same number representing (13.3%) said pupils spend most of their time reading to enhance their vocabulary. Again, six of the teachers (20.0%) said pupils use the library frequently while four of them (13.3%) said pupils go to the library during break, and (13.3%) of those who responded said pupils make reference on lessons taught in class. Eight teachers (26.7%), however, did not respond to this question.

### **Effect of libraries on the pupils**

The views of teachers were sought as to whether they think the library has had any effect on the pupils. Twenty-five teachers (83.3%) said “Yes” while only one (3.3%) said “No”. Four of the teachers did not respond. When asked what kind of effect, two teachers (6.7%) said pupils can now read and answer questions, and eleven (36.7%) said those pupils who use the library are very good readers. Other responses include the fact that the library helps pupils to read a lot, and also improve upon their English language.

The results imply that majority of teachers were of the opinion that the library has had a great effect on the pupils.

### **Closure of library and its effect on teaching**

Teachers were asked whether their teaching would be affected if the library were closed down. To this question, eighteen teachers (60.0%) said “Yes”, eight (26.7%) said “No”; while four (13.3%) did not respond.

Teachers who said “No” explained that the library periods would then be used for learning other subjects. Others said pupils have learnt to study on their own, so that even when the library is closed down, their teaching would not be less effective, and pupils’ performance would not go down.

Teachers who said, “Yes” explained that some of the pupils used the library as a reading room, and for doing their research so its closure would affect their teaching. Others said that would mean pupils would not have access to books for their private reading or writing their personal notes.

### **Adequacy of library facilities**

Teachers’ views were sought as to whether the facilities of the library in terms of accommodation, furniture, staff, opening hours, stock, lending services, and others were adequate. Three teachers constituting 10.0% said, “Yes” to this question; whilst twenty-six (86.7%) said “No”. One teacher did not respond.

It was found that majority of the teachers felt the facilities of the library were inadequate. When teachers who answered “No” were asked to give reasons for the inadequacy, some people said the furniture was insufficient for the pupils. Other reasons given were that the stock should be increased; they needed more staff, and that the opening hours of the library from 9.00 a.m. to 4.00 p.m. should be extended.

Majority of the teachers were of the view that the facilities of the library were inadequate. Attempts should be made to upgrade the facilities in the library to facilitate effective teaching and learning.

### **Suggestions for improvement of the library**

When pupils and teachers were asked to make suggestions for the improvement of the library, many suggested that more books should be acquired for the library, especially story books and prescribed textbooks and also more chairs should be brought into the library, and the library staff should be increased.

### **Cross-tabulation of certain variables**

Apart from the univariate statistics, which describe only one variable at a time, and for which frequency distribution was done, the researcher also did some multivariate statistics. One variable was used to explain another; and the analysis done here was chi-square.

### **Ability of parents to read / Use of library**

The researcher sought to establish whether a relationship existed between ability of parents to read and write; and the pupils' use of the library. The response showed a chi-square value of 2.55 at 5% confidence level at one degree of freedom. The significance level of 0.11 is greater than 0.05 (the confidence level) implying that the relationship is significant. This means that parents being able to read and write affect pupils' visit to the library – (i.e. those whose parents read and write visit the library more than those whose parents do not read and write).

### **Influence of teacher on pupils to use the library / Patronage of library**

An attempt was also made to find the relationship between teachers' influence on their pupils in the use of the library, and pupils' use of the library. The response showed a chi-square value of 0.52 at 5% confidence level at two degrees of freedom. The significance is 0.77 implying that when teachers influence their pupils to use the library, the patronage of the library by pupils would be high. Thus, it can be stated that pupils' use of the library can be explained in terms of teachers influencing them to use the library.

### **Arrangement of materials in library / Frequency of visit to library**

The researcher also sought to find out if there is a relationship between arrangement of materials in the library and pupils' constant use of the library. The response indicates a chi-square value of 0.25 at 5% confidence level at two degrees of freedom. The significance level is 0.88; this is greater than the 0.05 confidence level, meaning it is significant.

The implication is that when books have been arranged in the library to make it easy for pupils to identify and locate their needs, they would frequently visit the library.

### **Observation**

Personal visits to the libraries revealed that both libraries are large and can accommodate between forty-five to fifty pupils at a time. They have wide windows and thus, well ventilated. There are enough fluorescent bulbs fixed to improve lighting system in the libraries.

The furniture consists of long study tables and single chairs, as well as benches. There are enough shelves to hold the stock of the libraries. The libraries are spacious because of the way the shelves are arranged. Other equipment include metal boxes in which new books yet to be displayed are kept for safe custody.

The researcher observed that Teachers / Library Assistants manned both libraries. The opening hours of the libraries were 9.00 a.m. to 4.00 p.m. during school hours.

The total book stock at the time of the study was 3,642 books (for University Staff Village School) and about 4,000 books (for Anunmle Cluster of Schools). The collection is made up basically of fiction and non-fiction.

## **Discussions**

From the study, it has been revealed that school libraries are used by pupils and teachers, but the extent to which the libraries are used depend on such factors as accommodation, adequate furniture, convenient opening hours, presence of qualified staff and adequate book stock.

Also, the analysis of the data collected in the study revealed that though the stock level is high, the relevant reading materials are not of good quality. This is because most of the collections are out-dated; and as a result, the libraries are unable to adequately meet the needs of the teachers and pupils. Many pupils also expressed the desire to have more story books and interesting titles for their recreational reading.

The study revealed that pupils use the library for several purposes such as studying, making notes, borrowing, and general reading. The juniors very often use story books while the seniors use textbooks and reference materials. The teachers on the other hand use the library to prepare their lesson notes, and to read for pleasure.

Generally, it can be stated that if the factors that combine to bring about good library services were adequate, pupils and teachers would put the library to effective use. Thus, if a school library has all the facilities that bring about its effective use, then the provision of school libraries would have a positive effect on both pupils and teachers. In other words, it can be said that the library contributes greatly to enhance teaching and learning when facilities are available and adequate to encourage the effective use of the library.

Most of the pupils have developed reading habits as a result of the provision of the school library. Responses from pupils on reading interests indicate that majority of the pupils like to read storybooks and textbooks.

The data supports the hypothesis that there are factors that hinder the effective use of the school library. These factors include inadequate furniture, staff, and finance. Thus, it is necessary that adequate measures are taken to make school libraries attain high standards that would make them function efficiently and attract good patronage.

### **Recommendations**

The following recommendations are made for the improvement of school libraries:



### **Accommodation and Furniture**

There is the need for Government to provide more furniture in the form of reading tables and chairs to cater for the increasing number of users the libraries are expected to accommodate. It is further recommended to the staff in charge of school libraries that the arrangement of chairs and tables in the library should be different from the arrangement in the classroom. Since some pupils associate the classroom with pain, a change in the arrangement of chairs and tables in the library would put such pupils at ease, and thereby attract higher patronage.

### **Library Staff and Opening Hours**

The Heads of School should ensure that the library is manned by trained Teacher-Librarians rather than untrained staff who in most cases may not be interested in the library. Also, the Teacher-Librarian should not be loaded with so much classroom work such that he will have very little time for the library.

It is also recommended to the Heads of School that the opening hours of the library should be extended to 5.30 p.m. to enable pupils have enough time for studies after normal class hours. Advocating for extension of the opening hours requires that the library staff is increased from one to two; so that one person serves the pupils in the morning shift, whilst the second person serves those in the afternoon shift.

An alternative recommendation to the Heads is that they appeal to the Parent-Teacher Association to provide incentives for the library staff to entice them to work extra hours

to keep the library open for longer periods. The library could also be opened on Saturdays for private studies by teachers and the pupils.

### **Book Stock**

It is recommended to staff in charge of libraries that the stock should be selected to meet the needs of the school. Thus, there is the need to purchase books that are relevant to the school curriculum for the library. There is also the need to increase the stock to cover newly introduced subjects such as Religious and Moral Education, and Music and Dance. The library would be of more use to the school if it provides materials relevant to the subjects taught in the school.

Also, the stock could be improved each year to ensure that only useful materials remain on the shelves. This can be done through weeding, whereby materials, which are out-of-date, are discarded or removed from the shelves, whilst retaining the relevant reading materials.

### **Library Committee**

It is further recommended to Heads of schools that a library committee made up of the Library Assistant, pupils and some teachers with the Headmistress as the Chairperson should be set up. Subject teachers should be encouraged to suggest relevant books in their subject fields. Pupils should also be allowed to suggest suitable and interesting titles of books to be purchased.

## **Finance**

It is suggested to the Ministry of Education, Science and Sports that pupils should be made to pay towards the maintenance of the school library. A library fund could also be set up; and assistance sought from the Parent-Teacher Association and international and local organizations.

The public should be educated on the importance of libraries, and this can be done through activities like organizing seminars, symposia, programmes such as Radio and Television interviews, writing of feature articles in the newspapers and exhibitions. When the public becomes aware of the importance of libraries, they would be willing to give financial assistance to help develop school libraries.

## **Encouraging the use of the School Library**

It is recommended that teachers should encourage pupils to use the school library extensively. This can be achieved through talks given by teachers on the experiences that can be gained by using the library. The Library Assistant should create the awareness of what is available in the library for pupils and teachers. There should also be book displays of new arrivals near the entrance of the library to attract pupils and teachers to the library.

In addition, book lists should be compiled from time to time and displayed in the library and the staff common room notice board. This list would make pupils and teachers become aware of new books they can have access to; and this could enhance patronage.

In furtherance to encouraging pupils to use the school library, parents and teachers should encourage pupils to use other public libraries as well.

### **Library Rules and Lending Services**

The library staff should ensure that the rules and regulations of the library are conspicuously displayed in the library so that users would know what they should do and should not do. When this is done, offenders would have no excuse for flouting the rules. Ignorance of the measures should not be entertained once appropriate measures have been taken to publicize the rules and regulations of the library.

It is also recommended that all schools make it possible for their pupils to borrow books for private studies at home, as this would go a long way to enhance their reading habits and academic performance.

### **Library Studies in Training Colleges**

Finally, it is recommended to Government that Library Studies be introduced in all Teacher Training Colleges so that every professional teacher would appreciate the importance of libraries. When all teachers acquire this knowledge, it would be imparted to the pupils they are expected to teach. The end result would be that all pupils would develop the habit of using the library.

Reader's clubs should be set up in all schools; and this would help to inculcate in the pupils the habit of reading and learning. It is also suggested that the school curriculum

should not be so loaded as to make pupils examination-minded. This would afford them the opportunity to read widely.

It is hoped that when the above recommendations are studied and implemented, it would result in everybody knowing the importance of libraries, and hence the need for effective use of the school library.

### **Conclusion**

The study has revealed that pupils of University Staff Village School, Legon; and Anunmle Cluster of Schools, Achimota are aware of the facilities of the libraries in their schools.

The research has also revealed that the pupils and the teachers effectively use the libraries. Most of the pupils have developed reading habits as a result of the provision of the school library, and this has enhanced the academic performance of the pupils. Most of the teachers use the facilities of the school library during lesson preparation and reading for leisure.

The research has shown that, generally, where there is a school library with adequate facilities, effective use is made of the library by pupils and teachers. Thus, the provision of school libraries in first cycle schools in the public system is very necessary; as this would have positive effects on the pupils and teachers. Every effort should therefore be made to provide school libraries for all first cycle schools in the public system throughout the country.

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