

**NEED FOR RE - INTRODUCTION OF READING CORNERS
IN PRIMARY SCHOOL LIBRARIES IN NIGERIA:
A CURSORY LOOK AT THE
NON - CONVENTIONAL SCHOOL LIBRARIES**

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Abstract

The paper looks at the practical and theoretical considerations for stakeholders for re - introduction of reading corners in primary school libraries in Nigeria. It laid emphasis on the use of non - conventional school libraries to introduce primary school pupils to library services. It identifies the problems facing school libraries, objectives and educational aims of the library and types of collections expected in a reading corner. It states the methods of collection and organization of library materials in a reading corner. It gives recommendations for the establishment of the non - conventional library. It concludes by emphasizing library education for primary school teachers and the need for stakeholders to assist in bringing about the success of this recommendation.

Introduction

Stakeholders in primary education are multifarious. They include the classroom teachers, headteachers, support staff, teacher trainers, policy maker and other government officials. It is noteworthy that the most important factors in the success of any educational innovation is the support of its stakeholders in the implementation of the educational programmes. All the categories of people mentioned earlier need to be educated by professional librarians on the need for the re - introduction of reading corner in primary school libraries in Nigeria.

To start, with, the teachers to whom the pupils are closest need to be basically tutored in school library programmes resources; this should extend from the classroom teachers to headteachers. Any amount of money spent on school libraries by government and policy makers would be a colossal waste if teachers do not know how to manage available resources in primary school libraries.

In most parts of the world including Nigeria, the library has become recognized as a crucial agent in the provision of educational facility. This has been manifested in some parts through statutory declarations. Wali (2008) traced the historical development of libraries in Nigeria to the mid - sixties. He said within that period Nigeria could boast of five small public library systems, eighteen learned and research libraries, and to crown it all, a National Library of Nigeria in 1964. With the creation of more states in the country starting from 1967, he said, more libraries became available to the general public, regrettable, he observed, this momentum is dead. It is however alarming that Nigerian libraries and information centres today can not support the rapid transformation of the Nigerian society in economics, education and democratization processes.

In another development, Daodu (2002) opined that in an attempt to make things better, the Federal Government of Nigeria in each edition of the National Policy on Education (1977, 1981 and 1989) made provisions for school libraries in our primary schools. Knowing fully well that the basic requirement for a better society starts from the primary school system, the designers of the National policy stated that each school is to be provided libraries with trained staff to run them. The Federal Government of Nigeria in the 90s took a World Bank loan to improve the quality of primary education. The provision of school libraries is one of the components of the programme for which loan was granted. The National Primary Education Commission (NPEC) made efforts to establish model libraries in ten selected primary schools in each state and the Federal Capital territory. Despite their efforts the libraries are

yet to be operational.

Libraries are needed in our primary schools as they are needed in secondary schools for a lot of reasons. Some of these reasons as Omoniwa (1995) summarized them are:

- (i) Libraries have been associated with the concept of life - long reading / learning;
- (ii) Libraries, especially school libraries are desirable in order to inculcate into the child very early in life the habit of reading for various purposes; education, pleasure, information, cultural etc.

We need libraries in primary school just as we need laboratories. The library should function properly to enable children to develop the skill of using books independently to seek information and to read for pleasure.

Elaturoti (2000) while presenting a paper on strategies of school practice in the new millennium, re - echoed the recommended core area of the school library services by IFLA. Among these are: (i) supporting and enhancing educational goals as outlined in the school mission and curriculum and (ii) developing and sustaining in children the habit and enjoyment of reading and learning, and the usage of library throughout their lives. Other important things mentioned are: integration of library hours on school time table and the qualifications of school librarians, for which he suggested a minimum of Diploma in Librarianship.

In another development, Elaturoti (1998) in accounting for the establishment of Nigerian School Library Association (NSLA) said that the establishment was done as a result of their belief that school library were the most effective way of building up a reading public that will effectively move the development of the country forward and enable it to function in the twenty first century world civilization of computers and data bases.

Despite the laudable pronouncements of library provisions from government, the situation in most public schools is very disheartening. The question that comes to mind is not far-fetched. Why has the government paid lip service to provision of libraries in our public libraries?

In a survey of the availability of libraries in some randomly selected primary schools in Epe Local Government Area of Lagos State, the followings were made:

| School Type | No. of Schools | No. of School With Library | No. of Schools Without Library |
|---------------------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Government owned public school | 5 | — | 5 |
| Government owned demonstration school | 1 | — | 1 |
| Private fee - paying schools | 4 | 4 | — |
| Total | 10 | 4 | 6 |

Out of ten (10) schools observed only four (4) schools representing 40% have libraries while six (6) representing 60% do not have libraries. It can be observed that the four schools with libraries were private fee - paying schools. No public school (government school) among the observed schools has a library.

Types of Collection

In studying the collection of the school that have libraries, it was discovered that there was high concentration of fiction books, non - fiction books, charts and maps thereby duplicating the role of parents and schools.

There was a total absence of reference materials, newspaper or periodicals which has reduced the peculiarity in the library serving as a dissemination centre of information.

Financial problem, lack of space, inadequate development and government lukewarm attitude to education among others were fingered as problems confronting library services in primary school in Nigeria.

The Problems Facing Primary Schools in Nigeria

Daodu (2000) listed the following points as problems facing primary schools:

- (i) There is lack of recognition of what role the library can play. This condition can be confirmed by the fact that in most primary schools, there is no room designated as library.
- (ii) There are no professionals who can give pupils proper guidance on the use of library. The professional (school librarian) has a unique part to play in this respect.
- (iii) Government makes pronouncements on provision of libraries in schools but hardly makes funds available. Lack of funds is one of the depressing conditions of poor state of provision of libraries in schools. Availability of funds would enable the school to have a variety of resources and services.

Re - introduction of Reading Corner in Primary School Libraries

It is hereby observed that reading corner should be re - introduced to the primary school system. Dike (1993) referring to the project of the International Federation of Library Association (IFLA), School Libraries Sections, gave one of the roles of the school library as “promoting voluntary reading for children and young people. Reading guidance and literacy support are one of the oldest roles of school libraries. Adebayo (1996) stated that decades past, the reading corners in primary schools performed the functions of school libraries since the word “library: denoting both collection of books and the place where they are kept was not too relevant in primary schools then. Books were more important than where to keep them. However, whether reading corners or school libraries, good teaching demands that pupils should consult many sources of information.

The skill of being able to select the important relevant points from a great bulk of materials and of fitting together

bits and pieces from a variety of sources to a wide range of materials is important. The students without access to supplementary reading materials in a school library will be handicapped. These were the submissions of Obi (1977). Elaturoti (1990) discussing the importance of libraries also said that the school library media centre, function as a vital instrument in the educational process when the facility is provided.

In order to increase the reading skills of pupils, Fayose (1995) opined that schools can use volunteer members among the pupils in preparing and influencing their peers and encouraging them in having interest in reading in the library.

Wool (2004) observed that in elementary schools, school library media specialist must allow as much as free voluntary reading time as possible. A case can be made for using the entire time, students are assigned to the media centre "to read and read and read". He further asserted that rather than attempting to teach from isolated library skill, the librarian can teach reading than allowing students to read.

Objectives and the Educational Aims of the Library

A good reading corner can make the following contributions to an educational system:

- (i) Promotes the development of reading skills and encourage long - term learning habits through reading.
- (ii) Helps in selecting materials for users.
- (iii) Provides pupils with vocational information leading to the choice of a suitable career.
- (iv) Helps in discovery and developing the special gifts and talents of students.
- (v) Trains pupils to study independently without teachers.
- (vi) Provides for up - to - date resources to keep staff and pupils abreast of new development.

With the above stated objectives, if provided in a primary school setting, the reading corner would go a long way in developing the pupils in the primary school system.

Lawal (2003) stated that the aims of education have been broadened to keep step with the age of science and technology. Reading and writing which were known as the basic tools of education which every child should acquire as the first essential, call for the importance of reading corners for pupils.

The types of collections expected to be found in a reading corner according to Daodu (2002) should include:

- (i) Reference materials such as encyclopedias, dictionaries, atlas etc.
- (ii) Non - fictions books on all the subjects in the school curriculum.
- (iii) Fiction / story books
- (iv) Journals and magazines.

These materials could be in these proportions:

| | |
|------------------------|-------------|
| Reference materials | 8% |
| Fiction | 60% |
| Non - fiction | 24% |
| Journals and magazines | 8% |
| Total | 100% |

A basic collection of 1,000 volumes is recommended for a primary school with about 500 pupils. This stock has to be increased at the rate of one book per pupils per annum (Elaturoti, 1990). This number can be shared in the reading corners in each class or assembled in the library if a central library is operated.

Methods of Collection

There are several ways open to libraries in developing their collections, but only three are very relevant to primary schools.

These are:-

- (i) by purchase
- (ii) by exchange
- (iii) by gifts and bequests.

- (i) Books can be acquired by purchase after recommendations per titles to be acquired had been met. Direct purchase could be made from bookshops and publishers. Bulk purchase of existing library can be made.
- (ii) Library collections can be built by exchange programme among interested libraries. However, this is not a viable means of building collections because many libraries do not have enough to exchange due to cash crunch.
- (iii) Gifts to library can be two fold. It can be in cash meant to purchase library books or book gifts to the library. Bequests are rare in Africa but at times, it does happen. Libraries can be bequeathed by private owners to bigger libraries such as to University Libraries in the past. Example is the Obafemi Awolowo Private Library donated to Ogun State University.

Organisation of Library Materials

The equipment, stationeries and the arrangement of materials in the reading corners will be discussed.

- (a) **Library furniture:** These according to Daodu (2002) referring to Elaturoti (1998) include the following items:
 - (i) Tables and chairs for reading
 - (ii) Catalogue cabinet
 - (iii) Circulation desk (if a central library is in place)
- (b) **Stationery items:**
 - (i) Catalogue cards
 - (ii) Book cards
 - (iii) Date due slips
 - (iv) Book pockets
 - (v) Accessions register
- (c) **Arrangement of library materials:** should follow the normal orthodox methods of cataloguing and classification. Using standard codes and schemes. Other processes are collating, stamping, accessioning, after which the materials could be displayed and later put on shelves for pupils to use.

In reading corners, the school librarian may choose to use an in - house classification designed by himself. Examples are:

- English classified as EN
- Economics classified as EC
- Biology classified as BL
- Mathematics classified as MA

Bookshelves will also be labeled accordingly as guides. Ledger system of borrowing could be adopted where names of borrowers are entered in a register. These are crossed out when the books are returned.

Recommendations for Establishing the Non - Conventional Library

The following recommendations are hereby advanced for the establishment of a non - conventional library in primary schools:

1. School librarian should expose primary school teachers to some appreciable measure of library professional activity so that he can be of assistance to the pupils. He will be able to produce a record of the holding of the collection in the reading corner and assist the pupils to have access to the materials. This will serve as an elementary introduction of library use.
2. There should be story hour which could be named library hour. During this period the teacher will tell stories to the pupils, he / she will encourage them to re - tell the story.
3. The teacher could ask the children to re - tell the story, which could be written on the chalkboard by the teacher while the pupils would copy. The children would be shared into groups that will write out their own stories with the help of the teacher. The teacher with the assistance of the school librarian could make these stories into books as children literature which could serve as “beginning

collection” of the reading corner.

4. The pupils would therefore be encouraged to borrow these books to read in class and in the reading corners.
5. Schools librarians should be employed to coordinate the programme of the reading corners and to organize and disseminate the materials to users.

Conclusion

Despite the recommendations of this paper for conventional libraries to introduce school pupils to the use of library, this should not be the ultimate. While re - introducing reading corner, it should also be a gateway to school library. In a nutshell, the reading corner should also be known as school library. The two terms could be used interchangeably. The essence of reading corner/school library should be a simplified format of organization of materials for easy retrieval and use.

The implication for those concerned is for them to adhere to the changing needs which require changing treatment. If the aim of educational ladder is helpful to the child to whom the future belongs to be human beings and better citizens, then it behoves on Nigeria to enhance reading capabilities of her children.

Ephasis should be laid on library use education for primary school teacher graduating from the College of Education with NCE qualification. The courses offered should equip the teacher with library use skills and management of school libraries.

Teacher trainers, policy makers or fomulators, policy implementers and other governmental deciders of educational matters should see the need to support the re-introduction of reading corner to primary school libraries as it would introduce school pupils to library services.

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