

TEACHERS' PERCEPTION OF SCHOOL LIBRARIES IN NSUKKA EDUCATIONAL: IMPLICATIONS FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Dr. M. N. NGWUCHUKWU (Esq)

Dr. G. U. ONYEBUCHI
grace.onyebuchi@unn.edu.ng

Mr. E. OKONKWO
*Department of Library and Information Science,
University of Nigeria, Nsukka*

Abstract

School libraries have been seen to play a pivotal role in sustainable development of any nation. This is because it brings about human capital development through their wealth of resources and programmes. However, this would not be achieved if the teachers do not understand and appreciate the role of libraries in their schools. As teachers are final implementers of the curriculum, they have a very important role to play in making sure that school libraries are used maximally to impact in students the necessary skills needed for human and sustainable development. In this study, a survey of teachers' perception of school libraries was conducted in Nsukka Educational zone. The objectives of the study were to ascertain similarities and differences in their options on the role of school libraries and how it could be a source for pupils academic, social and skill development. To realize this, the researchers used interview and survey research design. The accessible population comprised randomly selected teachers in public and private primary schools in Nsukka educational zone of Nigeria. The results of the study showed that most teachers acknowledged the pedagogical role of school libraries but the highest number of teachers that responded to this was teacher-librarians. The implication is that, school management should engage teachers in workshops geared towards using the library to enhance teaching and learning as well as advertise and recruit librarians to help facilitate library activities for sustainable national development in primary schools.

Keywords: School Libraries, School Library, Classroom Teachers, Nsukka Educational Zone, Sustainable Development

Introduction

The 20th century was a remarkable period in the development of school libraries in Nigeria. This was due to the fact that it ushered in modern education philosophy. This philosophy was a change in emphasis on teaching so that teachers are trained to use available resources to facilitate their teaching and research, making education resource-based. Presently, the role of the school library cannot be overemphasized in the realization of the sustainable development of any nation. As stated by IFLA (2014) and Onyebuchi and Ngwuchukwu (2013), it plays a significant role in information literacy and lifelong learning (of both teachers and students) giving the users the necessary skills and opportunities to participate effectively in the society. Again as a learning space, the school library with its numerous activities become a centre for improving learning and de eloping critical thinking for more active participation both

in academic and social activities. But, how can this happen when teachers do not even know the importance of school libraries in teaching?

Classroom teachers are charged with the responsibility of imparting the content of the school curriculum using more varied, dynamic and collaborative educational partnerships and resources from the school libraries and beyond (Baharuddin, 2014). Authors such as Tawete (1991) Clyde (1999) and Dike (1980) have long observed that libraries emerged and developed better when the need was recognized by people including teachers. It was also recorded that teachers' perceptions of the school library were identified as an important factor affecting the use of libraries, developing the information literacy and lifelong learning skills of students and ultimately attaining then sustainable development of the country. It is always a mistake to assume that teachers see the school libraries as the school/teacher librarians do. According to McCracken (2001), there has been a differing perception among librarians, principals, and teachers about the role of the school library and the work of librarian in any school; but more recently, school libraries have been emphasized to contribute to sustainable development & the SDGs (IFLA, 2014) and this can be realized when its role is being perceived as such.

Lack of realisation of the role of the school libraries may be a barrier to implementing change in academic activities and skills development of the students. An average teacher or policy-maker has very obscure notions of what the educational purpose of a school library is; a given example is the ambiguity of the term instructional materials as library resources just as educational sectors use the school libraries just as a dumping ground for instructional materials that are assigned to the schools. This is as a result of the wrong perception of the role the school library can play in building the students who are admitted in the school. It has been observed that the level of development of school libraries to a very good extent depends on the head teachers and other teachers. If the head teacher is aware of the role of libraries in educational institutions, the head teacher will make every effort at developing the school libraries without waiting for the government. They will liaise with the school management in welcoming every positive thought that will bring about using the school library to develop students' creative abilities, enhance teaching and learning as well as realizing the SDGs. This calls for the research on teachers' perception in the role of school libraries in Nsukka Local Government Educational Area.

Nsukka Local Government Educational Area is an area of interest being located in a university community. Despite its location, the school library development has been unsteady on the part of school. Efforts have been made to keep the school libraries going both from governmental and non-governmental organizations. However, it seems that subjects required to be treated each day has made it such that implementing the library period in the school curriculum becomes an uphill task. The onus lies on the classroom teachers to make maximum use of the school library resources with the assistance of the school librarians to impart skills of creativity in students. This can only be achieved if teachers begin to view the school libraries from the right perspective.

The study sought to find out the teachers' perception on the functions of school library for sustainable development; teachers' mode of awareness, teachers' perception on the importance of school library; purpose of using the school library by teachers; background training on use of school library; and frequency of use of the school library by teachers.

Literature Review

Sustainable Development Goals, Primary Education and School Libraries

The meeting of various countries of the world in 2015 (UNDP, 2019) was as a result of the need to work towards the realization the sustainable development by "ensuring an all-encompassing and impartial excellence in education in order to attain more enduring learning opportunity for all learners". Since 2000, massive efforts have been made to provide primary education to all children worldwide. Primary education according to Ahmad (2011) is the basic foundation on which the edifice of higher education is built. However, there is still need to achieve the goal of universal primary education and more. The purpose of education is to build individuals creatively and skillfully in order to function effectively in the society. With the educational contents being harnessed the system would produce individuals who are inspired, students with a desire for self-improvement and achievement of excellent, among others (FGN, 2014). School library is a vehicle for fostering in students these traits and skills.

The main aim of the school library is to facilitate educational activities. This can be realized through literacy programme and reading promotion available in the school. School libraries enhance inquiry-based learning as well as professional development for teachers creating opportunities for students to participate effectively in the society. As noted by the National Library of New Zealand (2013) they help in improving on the quality of the school curriculum promoting cultural diversity as well as developing in students, confident and life-long learning. The ensure that the resources are harnessed and inculcated into the school curriculum; thereby, building in stronger foundation in students and channeling their path toward career options of their choice and in effect, *"ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all"* (UNDP, 2015). *This may not be fully realized if teachers do not view the school libraries as a supporting agent for positive change by building various opportunities in students or as an important aid for facilitating the teaching of school content'*.

When teachers employ the varieties of resources available in the library in teaching and for their personal research, the school librarian would produce individual who are lifelong learners. Williams and Wavell (2001) have long noted that teachers have accumulated perceptions of the impact of the school library resource centers on learning especially when they view it as not having any specific or in-depth or actual learning impact. School libraries when viewed to provide significant value to the educational community, the value added extends beyond the materials in a school library collection to the services provided through a vibrant school library program and a qualified school librarian (Oberg, 2015). In other words, as direct facilitators in students' learning, teachers begin to exploit school library resources, in collaboration with the librarian available, to offer students opportunities for creativity and

innovation and in turn build individuals who would participate in decision making. For Nigeria educational philosophy will be achieved therefore, teachers should begin to have a clearer view of what the school library is all about. This will happen when they change their minds about libraries and use the library more often relating very well with the school librarian or the teacher librarian so that there will be resource based and life-long education (FRN, 2014). Only when this collaboration begins that the SDGs would be accomplished and then all students and all learners develop skills of lifelong learning.

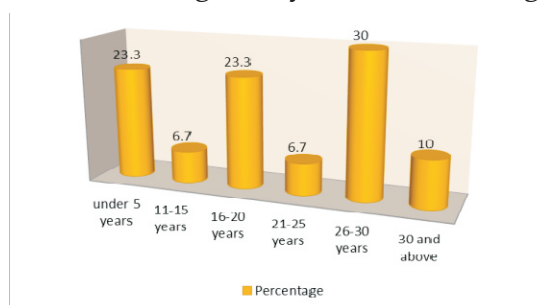
Methodology

The design of the study is descriptive to covers a larger population while the instrument used was questionnaire. The study comprised 200 teachers from 1077 teachers of public primary schools in Nsukka educational district. The researchers accidentally selected these set of people during the 2018 sandwich contact at the Faculty of Education, UNN. The reason for the choice of the sampling was to cover all the areas of educational zone, as teachers from different parts of Nsukka Educational zone register for the sandwich programme. Again, school library development is affected by different factors; so to tackle the problem, studies must be carried out in these factors so as to have a holistic view on the problems.

Interpretation of Results and Discussion of Findings

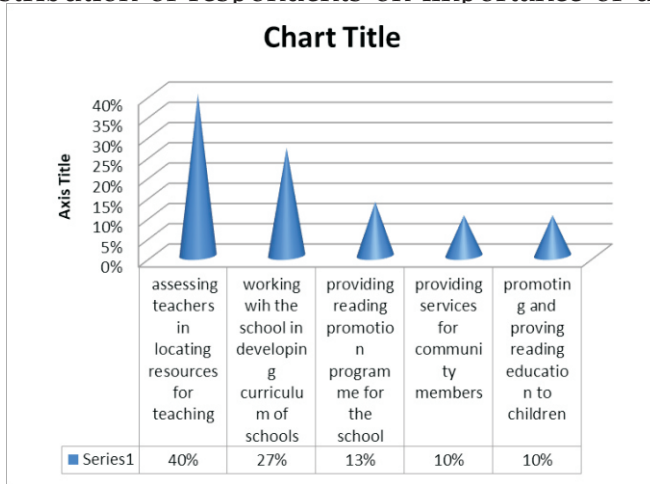
The results are presented according to the issues raised in the background of the study. These issues bother on teachers regard for libraries, their willingness to use the library, mode of awareness of the role of the school libraries, teachers' perception on the importance of school library; purpose of using the school library by teachers; background training on use of school library and challenges of using the school library all geared towards attaining sustainable development. The demographic information of teachers are presented as a guide to analysing the data collected

The first question was “how long have you been teaching?”



From the chart above, it can be seen that 23.3% of the respondents indicated under 5 years; 6.7% of the respondents indicated 11-15 years; 23.3% of the respondent indicated were within the age of 16-20 years; 6.7% of the respondent indicated 21-25 years, 30% of the respondent indicated 26-30 years while 10% of the respondents indicated 30 years and above. The table shows that the greater percentage of the sampled population falls within 26-30 years. Teachers in Nsukka Educational zone may have acquired more experience in teaching.

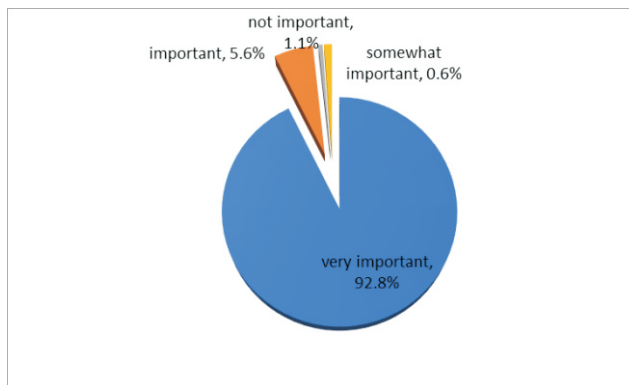
Percentage distribution of respondents on importance of using the school librarian



In the above question, on the importance of the school library, 40% of the respondents indicated assisting teachers in locating resources for teaching; 26.7% of the respondents indicated working with the school in developing curriculum of schools; 13.3% of the respondents indicated providing reading promotion programme for the school, while 10% of the respondents indicated providing services for community members and promoting and providing user education to children and teachers respectively. In summary, majority of the respondents rated their experience from school library as assisting teachers in locating resources for teaching.

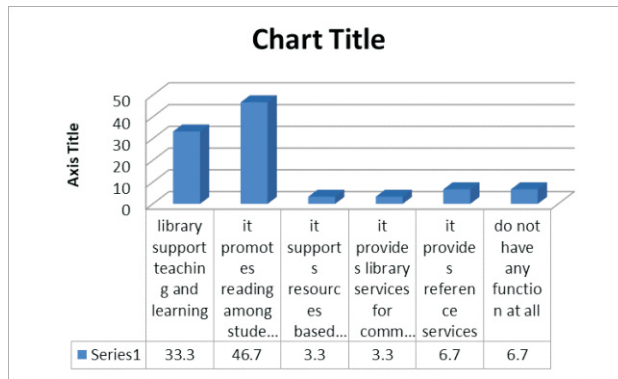
The second question was: “how have you regarded the level of importance of the school library in your teaching and research for sustainable development?”

The result of the question above shows that 92.8% of the respondents indicated “very important”; 5.6% of the respondents indicated “important”; 6%) of the respondents indicated “somewhat important”, and 1.1%) of the respondents indicated “not important”.



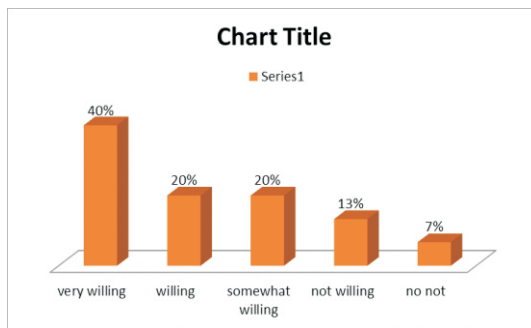
In summary, majority of the respondents believed that school library is very important in teaching. This is clarified in the chart above.

The next was on the question: “what function do you think the school library plays in sustainable development?”



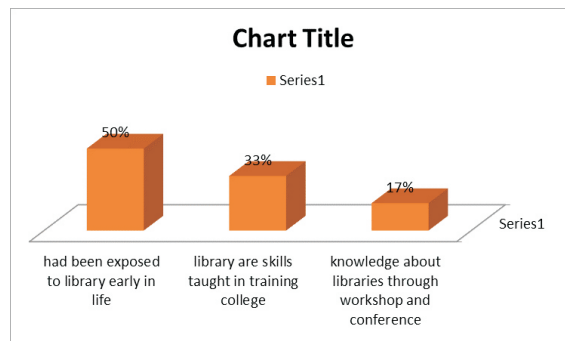
In the above question; 33.3% of the respondents indicated library support teaching and learning, 46.7% of the respondents indicated it promotes reading among students, , 3.3% of the respondents indicated it supports resources based learning and it provides library services for community members respectively , 6.7% of the respondents indicated it provides reference services and do not have any function at all. Overall, the highest number of teachers believed that school library promotes reading among students as well as library support teaching and learning.

Percentage distribution of Respondents on rating willingness to use of the library



The chart above was used to elicit result gotten from teachers' willingness to use the school library in teaching and research, 40% of the respondents indicated very willing; 20% of the respondents indicated willing; 20% of the respondents indicated somewhat willing; 13.3% of the respondents indicated not willing; while 6.7% of the respondents do not have any answer. In summary majority of the responded that they are very willing to use of the school library as see in the chart above.

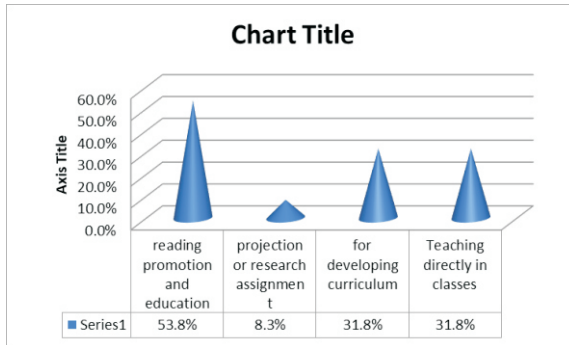
Percentage distribution of respondents on motivation to use the library



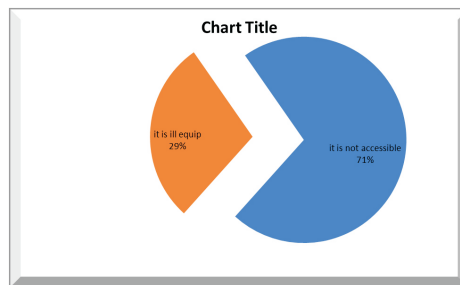
The chart indicates that 50% of the respondents have been exposed to reading early in life; 33% and 17% gathered knowledge about the school library through workshop and conference. In other words, workshops and conferences are not readily organized for teacher on the use of the school library

Percentage distribution of Respondents on reasons for personally using the library

Responding to the question, 53.8% of the respondents indicated reading promotion and education; 8.3% of the respondents indicated projection or research assignment, while 6.1% of the respondents indicated Teaching directly in classes. In summary majority of the respondents use library as reading promotion and education

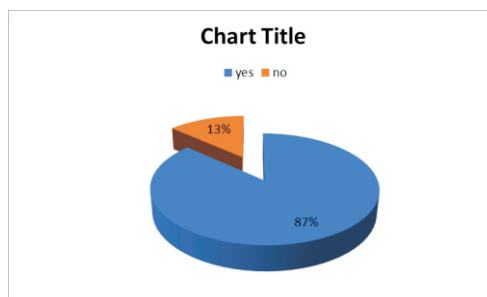


Percentage distribution of Respondents on reason for not using library



The result of the chart shows that 71.4% of the respondents indicated that the school library is not accessible, while 26.8% of the respondents indicated that it is ill equip. In summary, majority of the respondents do not use library because it not accessible

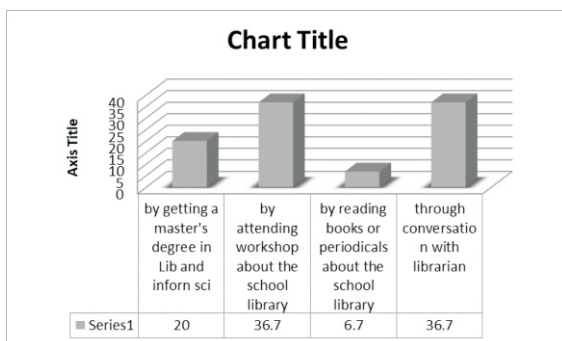
Do you think you want to learn about the school library and to use in the future?



In the above question, 86.7% of the respondents indicated the need to open up access to the school library, while 13.3% of the respondents indicated the need for the library to

recruit school librarians to organize programmes for the users. In summary majority of the respondents learn that school library has brighter future when access and use are guaranteed.

How teachers want to learn about the school library and use it



In the above question, 20% of the respondents indicated by getting a master's degree in Library and information science; 36.7% of the respondents indicated by attending workshop about the school library; 6.7% of the respondents indicated by reading books or periodicals about the school library, while 87(45.3%) of the respondents indicated through conversation with librarian.

Conclusion

The data presented on the table revealed that the perception of teachers on the role of school library is very positive, in the sense that majority of them have high regard for libraries. This finding could be as a result of high experience of the teachers in the years of service. It has been noted in the National Policy on Education that libraries are one of the institutions that support learning. In other words, it is the key for sustainable development.

From the results of the survey, it is believed that primary school teachers have good understanding about the school library as a greater majority of them readily agreed that they are aware of the school library. However, one of the major problems that were found was the problem of accessibility. From the conversation with the teachers, it was gathered that school libraries are relegated to the background. Most time when a school has a library, it is more preferable to close it that teachers not being surplus in the school. When they are open, library resources are not current. Teachers who have library background are not recruited to the library to facilitate the use of the school library. This, if it continues, may hamper the development of the school libraries and hence affect sustainable development. Trainings are to be organized for the teachers to make maximum use of the school library, incorporating the resources into the school content. Only when this happens that vision 2030 would be realized and teacher begin to enhance their teaching with school library resources

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