Quality Assurance Practices among School Librarians for Effective Information Literacy Delivery in Selected Private Secondary School Libraries in Nsukka, Nigeria

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Abstract

The study investigated the quality assurance practices among school librarians for effective information literacy delivery in selected private secondary school libraries in Nsukka. Survey research design of qualitative type was adopted for the study while an interview schedule was formulated to guide the study. The population of the study was made up of 10 school/teacher librarians selected across 10 private secondary schools. The data was analyzed using the responses of the various respondents in a descriptive method. The findings show that there is no existence of Quality Assurance policy guiding the school libraries surveyed. Information literacy skills education were not offered or organized in some of the school libraries. Challenges like lack of funds, poor infrastructure, lack of internet access and ignorance were established and strategies to enhance the application of quality assurance practices in information literacy education includes organizing a workshop or seminar to educate the school librarians on the importance of information literacy skills. Finally, the major recommendation is for school libraries in private secondary schools, Nsukka to have a quality assurance policy guiding the school library and introduce information literacy skills that would help the students and library users in the school libraries surveyed.

Introduction

The library is the heart of any educational institution that enables it to fulfil its educational objectives. The library as an institution which holds prints and/or other forms of media and services for use has enormous role in information literacy development of learners, especially school libraries. The school library is the place in which students are exposed to the library for the first time. International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA, 1999) saw a school library as a school's physical and digital learning space where reading, inquiry, research, thinking, imagination, and creativity are central to

students' information-to-knowledge journey and to their personal, social, and cultural growth. The school library is established to provide the literacy skills, reading needs of pre-primary, primary and secondary students of the school. The reading materials of the students vary according to their level as this helps in better assimilation and teaching.

The pre-primary school library consist of library resources that help in building up the children's vocabulary they include materials that contain exciting contents which are attractive to the children, educative and beneficial to them. They include: Picture book (animate and inanimate), Toys (They help build up the child's communication skill, social skill, whereby building up an interpersonal relationship amongst their peers, others and also know how to express feelings/emotions). Building blocks (helps to build up the critical thinking skill of the child), Drawing books, colour book, writing book and television or a computer (for viewing documentaries or programs that are educative to the children). The primary and secondary school resources may be of the same like as they have grown and have better understanding and knowledge. They include, textbooks, Magazines, Newspapers, Computers and Maps. The school library is expected to thoroughly provide library materials necessary for the students and school and to help in improving the literacy, reading skills and learning habits of the students (Nyam & Guraji, 2009).

The role of school library in literacy development of school children is to teach literacy skills, promote independent learning, and lifelong learning. According to the American Library Association (2006), 'information literacy is a set of abilities requiring individuals to recognise when information is needed and have the ability to locate, evaluate, and use effectively the needed information'. Information literacy is an essential graduate attribute, and libraries are the source for the provision of knowledge and information. The school library achieves information literacy through book talk, organising competitions, organizing library week and book exhibition, creative writing activities. Teaching information Literacy skills helps the children to become independent learners and to help the school create a reading culture. Information literacy could be delivered through workshops, seminars conducted by the school or library for the students. Skill development is an essential factor towards the socio-economic development of the country.

Information literacy skills which are sometimes referred to as media literacy or digital literacy skills, refer to your ability to identify, assess, organise, utilise and communicate information in any format. Some of the examples of information literacy skills as identified by Onyebuchi and Ngwuchukwu (2013); Dike, Ngwuchukwu and Onyebuchi (2011); Onyebuchi, 2010; and Amucheazi and Dike, 2002 include literacy skills, library use skills and critical thinking skills. Further, these skills as they observed, include listening skills, visual skills, planning skills,

reading skills, note taking skills, location and access skills, organisation skills, writing skills, recording skills, oral communication skills, evaluation skills, observation skills, questioning skills, among others. These skills are needed to facilitate lifelong learning among pupils and students; and only when they are effectively delivered that individual could participate effectively in the society.

Children and their teachers need library resources and the expertise of a librarian to succeed. Library staff is the most important resource of the school library. Nnadozie (2007), opined that the planning of library services, organisation of routine activities rest on the shoulders of the staff. A school librarian is a person who is professionally trained in librarianship and in charge of the school library. Elaturoti (2001) described the school librarian as the professionally and qualified staff member responsible for planning and managing the school library. The school librarian is responsible for the acquisition, organisation, storage, retrieval, preservation and dissemination of these information materials. A school librarian fulfils five important roles: instructional partner role, teacher role, information specialist role, program administrator role and as an excellent resource for assisting teachers and students in identifying books and other reading materials (Neuman, 2002). They help to ensure quality education in schools where they are found.

Quality assurance in education aims at preventing quality problems and ensures that the products of the system conform to the expected standards. Robinson (1994) defines quality assurance as the set of activities that an organisation undertakes to ensure a product or satisfy given requirements for quality. Quality assurance is very important in literacy delivery since it is a determinant of service effectiveness which according to Harvey (2004) is the extent to which an activity fulfils its intended purpose or function. The attempt to improve the quality of education will succeed only if it goes hand in hand with steps to promote equality and social justice. Osinalu and Amusa (2010) therefore stated that in a bid to assure quality in the libraries, there is need to adhere to the standards prescribed aim to formulate and inaugurate Quality Assurance Policy (QAP) and institute the procedure of Working Quality Assurance (PWQA). Quality assurance practices are seen as laid down plans and procedures geared towards ensuring that the right type of library materials, personnel, services and programmes are available in the right proportion and beneficial to the students and staff.

Despite the need for information literacy development among secondary school students, it is worrisome that many students still graduate from schools with poor reading habit and various skills of information literacy. This observed issue could be due to a gap in its delivery, therefore. Thus the urgent need to study the quality assurance practices of school school libraries geared towards effective information literacy delivery in private secondary school in Nsukka. Schools in

Nsukka are poorly equipped with bare classrooms and few resources for learning (Dike, Ngwuchukwu and Onyebuchi, 2011; Onyebuchi and Obim, 2018); teachers also have poor conditions of service.

Objectives of the Study

Generally, the study aimed assessed the quality assurance practices among school librarians for effective information literacy delivery in selected private secondary schools in Nsukka. Specifically, the objectives of this research were to:

1. ascertain the existence of quality assurance policy for effective information literacy delivery in school libraries in private secondary schools.
2. find out the categories of staff in the school library for effective information literacy delivery in secondary schools
3. examine the quality assurance practice(s) of school librarians for effective information literacy delivery in secondary schools.
4. ascertain the extent to which quality assurance are practiced for effective information literacy delivery in secondary schools.
5. identify the challenges encountered in the school library that hinder the effective information literacy delivery in secondary schools.
6. Find out the strategies and solutions proffered in assuring effective information literacy delivery in secondary schools

Research Methodology

The study adopted survey research design of qualitative type. ~~survey research design~~. The reason is because of the need to collect in-depth information on practices of librarians in schools toward information literacy delivery; and taking quality assurance practices into consideration. Ten (10) private school librarians were selected around the University of Nigeria Nsukka community. Interview schedule was used to collect data in which the teacher/school librarians were engaged in either face to face interviews or phone discussions based on their approved convenient method. The data collected was analyzed using narratives. The responses of the various librarians were coded using 'R' which stands for respondent and '1-10' to represent each of the respondents. The interview schedule was drafted from the research questions.

Presentation and Interpretation of Results

The responses gathered from the research questions are presented below. The presentation and analysis are done in order of the 6 (six) research questions which guided the study.

Quality Assurance Practices of the School Library

Findings from the interview show that none of the school libraries are involved in Quality Assurance Practices. One of the respondents (R 10) had this to say

> *"I have no idea that the school library has a policy or law guiding the activities in the school library.*

Another respondent had this to say

> *"The school library in my school are not guided by any law or registered with any library association such as NSLA. Only the school has a quality assurance policy which is governed by the principal" (R 3)*

Orientation of secondary school students of the library use is important as they are the main users of the school library. one of the respondents recounts how this is achieved,

> *"the orientation of the students comes during the first year of the students year in school, after their necessary registration in the school, the students are taken on a tour round the school premises, shown around the facilities in the school, thereafter they are brought into the library where I will now orientate them on the importance of the library services offered in the library and also the pros and cons of the library'(R 3)".*

> *"One of the infrastructures of great importance in a library is the reading desk, the desk is beneficial because it gives comfort to the library users. The school provides reading desks for the school library but most of the library desk are not too strong to serve the students any longer and they are not in large number to contain at least a large number of students during the exam period when they use the school library well (R1, 3)"*

Provision for reading desk is guaranteed as a respondent stated that the

> *"reading desk are not fully or really provided by the government but the old school association of students, so it takes a long time to change the desks or provide a new one when they wear off (R4.)"*

The funding of an organization is important because it brings smooth arrangement or management of the organization.

> *'The school library is one of the structures of the school that is not maintained properly, funding of the school basically comes from the school and the government (most times)' (R 3, 6, 10)".*

Another respondent recounts the

> *"library is funded by the school majorly, the old school Association and the government most times. (R5)".*

For the library to be comfortable for users there should be an availability of enough space and a ventilated environment. Thus, according to a respondent,

> *"the school library doesn't have enough space especially during the exam period when the school library becomes crowded and the shelves are of a limited amount which doesn't contain all the library books (3)".*

Category of Staff Employed in the School Library

According to Elaturoti (2001) described the school librarian as the professionally and qualified staff responsible for planning and managing the school library, in response to the author, one of the respondent has this to say

> *"I have been a librarian for close to 10 years or more have no degree in library science, it's just an experience I learnt from my predecessor who was a librarian by profession stayed under*

> *her tutelage and learnt the basic rudiment in library science" (R10)".*

Another respondent says this:

> *"I am not a librarian by profession, was just offered the job as a teacher librarian, all I know about the library are just the core areas which are includes: attending to the library users, borrowing out of books etc." (R4)"*

In appointment of staff, it's necessary to select and choose them wisely as the behaviour of the staff could affect the students, positively or negatively.

> *"In appointment of the staff, it could be by merit or just appointed by the principal, like me as an example .i am a teacher librarian. What do I know about librarianship or maintaining a library?"(R4)"*

Regular screening or supervision of the library staff is of great importance as it helps to see the growth or achievement of the library staff. One of the respondents explained that

> *"Thorough supervision is only when the school is expecting a government visitor who comes to inspect the structure or facility of the school which includes the school library"(R7).*

Information Literacy Skills Delivered in the School Library

Information literacy provides students with skills to recognize when they need information, how to locate, critically evaluate, and use information effectively (skyline college). In line to this a respondent reveals

> *"The school library doesn't offer any information literacy skill; information literacy skills are only organized by the school library (R5)".*

Another respondent has also this to say:

> *"The school library once offered the information literacy skills but it was a long time ago, right now students don't have interest in reading books or even in writing (R7)"*.

In the area of poor funding of the school, a respondent recounts

> *"the school library once organized it but due to lack of funds and lack of interest by the students it was closed down but we hope to start again. (R10)"*.

Another importance of the library is that it could be accessed at any working hours of the day (R 10) says that

> *"the students access the school library using the library card while the teachers access the school library without any identification"*.

Another respondent says:

> *"The students come with the library card while the teachers don't have permit card, the opening hours of my school library is by 8am to close by 4pm daily(R 5)"*

Ways in which Quality Assurance Policy help in Information Literacy Skill Delivery in the School Library

One of the respondent had this to say;

> *"Since we don't have a working quality assurance policy and practice information literacy in the library, none is been practices in the library."*(R3).

Another respondent recounts that

> *"Since the school library don't partner with any school, there's no contribution in the delivery of information literacy skill among the school students" (R1).*

Challenges of School Librarians in achieving Quality Assurance Practices for Information Literacy Delivery in Schools

In the orientation of library users this respondent says

> *"No challenges for now as the students are very cooperative and attentive during the orientation" (R4).*

Another respondent says:

> *"There is no challenge so far, only that I suggest that there should be an orientation of the library staff too not only the library users (R1)"*

Strategies for Attaining Quality Assurance Practices

The strategies are aired by the different respondents. One respondent (R1) says this:

> *"that the school library should be supervised once in a while and taken care of by the school management".*

Another respondent says

> *"Most school librarians are not aware that the school library could inculcate information literacy skill in students through several programs or activities" (R6)".*

Another respondent (R7)"

> *"suggested on the orientation of library staffs, organizing workshops or seminar that would enlighten the library staffs and also library users on the importance of information literacy skill, stocking new books or novels that could interest the students and spur up their literacy skills, this will help the library staff in organizing a programme on information literacy skill".*

Further, R10 desires that

> *"the school library be computerized with ICT equipment's that would help the library users in new ICT skills as it's a new generation and technology is on the increase".*

Discussion of Findings

The study reveals that the school libraries in the selected private secondary schools lack the quality assurance practices in the school library. Quality assurance is very important in information literacy delivery because it is a determinant of service effectiveness which according to Harvey (2004) is the extent to which an activity fulfills its intended purpose or function. From the findings of the study, the library personnel in the school libraries are mainly non-professional and teacher librarians, with no experience in librarianship. This is in agreement with Nnadozie (2007) who stated that the planning of library services, organization of routine activities rest on the shoulders of the staff as against librarians who are better experienced for the services.

The findings also revealed that information literacy skill are not offered by the school library. This could be due to what (Merga, 2019) stated that school librarians may struggle to attend to this aspect of their role due to their work overload and complexity and lack of skills. In this study it was noted that the success of information literacy programmes in the surveyed schools is challenged as a result of inadequate teaching facilities such as poor reading space, poor management of the school, inadequate funds to furnish the library and organize seminars and workshops for both the staff and students. It was suggested therefore that librarians in these selected private schools need to work closely together with the teachers to incorporate information literacy in the curriculum to form the basis for lifelong learning as emphasized by IFLA (2015). School librarians play an

important role in fostering reading for pleasure and information literacy development; and indeed, supporting development of students' abilities and attitudes related to reading for pleasure are core aspects of the school libraries.

Conclusion

From the findings have implications for school management, government, library staff and teachers in general. The school libraries in these selected private secondary schools are not abiding by the laws guiding the school library and if this continues, building and fostering various abilities in individuals may be difficult to achieve. From the study, most of the staff in the school libraries are mainly non-professionals and teacher librarians, with no experience of librarianship and this may hinder the aim of establishing school libraries. School managements should insist on employing trained qualified libraries to man the affairs of the library in order to organize programmes and activities geared towards information literacy delivery. This therefore brings the need for incorporation of quality assurance practices in secondary school students. It is the researchers' opinion that if all work together to incorporate quality assurance practices in private secondary schools in Nsukka, the quality of education and the growth of information literacy skills will in turn be restored.

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