

Perception of Planning and Designing of School Library Building by Library Personnel in Nigeria

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Abstract

The study investigated library personnel perception of planning and designing of school library building spaces in Nigeria. The convenience sampling technique was used to select 243 library personnel across Nigeria out of which only 237 responded with useful data. The data for the study was collected at the 34th and 35th Annual Conference of the Nigerian School Library Association held at Abuja and Minna respectively. Findings from the study revealed that library personnel in public schools in Nigeria have poor perception about the planning and designing of school library building spaces in Nigerian schools (Mean =2.27). There was also negative perception about the designing of school library building spaces (Mean =2.35). There was a positive perception of library personnel about purpose of school library spaces in Nigeria (Mean =2.66). However, the study revealed that library personnel have positive perception about the purposes of school library building spaces in Nigeria with emphasis on the fact that the essence of school library spaces was to motivate students to read and study. Government and proprietors of schools should give adequate attention to planning and designing of school library spaces to ensure qualitative library service delivery in Nigerian schools.

Keywords: *Library personnel, School library spaces planning and designing, Nigerian schools*

Introduction

School library is a place within the school community designed and planned to allow the students to undertake learning and self-instruction during their free time as well as use library facilities like books, online and offline collections to do their assignments, reports, researches and other activities. School library plays vital supportive and complementary role as a source of research and reading materials or a place of study to the students. IFLA (2016) defined 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. This physical and digital place is

known by several terms such as school media centre for documentation and information, library resource centre, library learning commons, but school library is the term most commonly used and applied to the facility and functions. Olajojo (2014) avers that school library as a space that houses organised intellectual collections of print and non-print materials through which information could be obtained and usually manned by professional personnel who made such information and materials available to students.

Moreover, the school library provides students with information that would promote their learning and day to day activities which ultimately relieve students from the problem of sieving through a large number of documents before getting their relevant documents. In other words, school libraries supplement the teaching and learning process in schools just as it caters for students who are eager to read as well as for backward children who read with difficulty and require visual aids and all kinds of incentives to study. Also, the school library serves its community by helping in selecting, acquiring and disseminating useful information and referral files to provide access to the services and resources by making available learning aids in appropriate formats to help students identify items in the collection relevant to their interest and needs.

IFLA (2016) identified the following features that distinguish a school library from others; a qualified school librarian with formal education in school librarianship and classroom teaching that enables the professional expertise required for the complex roles of instruction, reading and literacy development, school library management, collaboration with teaching staff, and engagement with the educational community. Furthermore, the school library provides targeted high-quality diverse collections (print, multimedia and digital) that support the school's formal and informal curriculum, including individual projects and personal development. It has an explicit policy and plans for ongoing growth and development. Therefore, school libraries, like other aspects of the educational system, go through phases of growth and development. However, these features of a school library are necessary for the fulfilment of the mission and purpose of a school library.

The modern school library is not just a collection of books and related resources nor is it a place where books are housed but a system with spaces designed to collect, process, preserve and facilitate the use of recorded knowledge and can be regarded as an educational and social instrument which forms a link that is essential for quality education in any nation or culture. The British Library Association emphasised that the essence of the school library is to support and enrich the formal school curriculum and to act as a broadening influence on children and their teachers (Fayose, 2003). This established the need for quality service delivery by the school library. The school library can only provide quality library and information services, through provision of comfortable and accessible accommodation

and spaces, qualified staff, and organised collection which must be widely accessible. These services are usually rendered to students, teaching staff and other members of the school community to realise the school's vision. The services of school librarians who are experts at finding, organising and interpreting information needs of users are key to service delivery by school libraries. Bakti and Sumaedi (2013) in their research reveal that quality service has a direct effect on users' satisfaction which, in turn, influences library users' loyalty. This means that when the services rendered in the school library matches with the expectation of its users, then the users would be satisfied. Every service rendered has its purpose and is rendered to meet specific aspect of the needs of the users.

As stated in IFLA School Library Guideline (2015), it is the responsibility of the librarian to plan the building and manage the school library spaces together with the school personnel and all other members of the school community. According to the guideline, the library management other school personnel who are professionals in their various fields should always come together to analyse, discuss and share information that is related to school library buildings, equipment and furnishing. It is also expected that these people come together to decide on the location of the library, decide on how to raise fund for the library building and how to get resources into the building based on the school curriculum.

The physical building of a library is a location for people to gather and study (Olaajo, 2014). Library users come to this place to access the knowledge that has gone before and the most recent additions that have been published or completed. However, contrary to the general belief of people, the school library is more than shelves of books, racks of journals, and professionals helping individuals find items. Kendall (2016) reiterated that the library building spaces is crucial to personal experience and pointed out that it is only within a well-planned building spaces that relationship necessary for searching and finding material can occur between librarian and users. For the successful completion of the school library building in secondary schools, there are various people that are important to work as a team to produce a functioning school library.

In the planning and designing of library building spaces, it is expected that provision should be made for quiet space – a place to reflect, read and study; collaboration space – a place to discuss, brainstorm, share and tell stories; presentation space – a place to present, share and celebrate; breakout space – a place to discover, create, practice and share; makerspace – a place to play, experience and design. All of these spaces should be catered for and planned when designing a library building. Moreover, the building must be a welcoming, vibrant and have culturally inclusive environment, flexible, a place for end-to-end learning, balanced access to print, digital and multimedia collections and a place of explorations and curiosity. All of

these spaces above could encourage users to develop a passion for reading and become critically capable readers. It could also allow the library staff, teachers and students to collaborate, to find, use, share and create information, provide seamless access to information resources, advice and support. However, the environmental conditions under which libraries operate are gradually changing in the 21st century. Issues have been raised as to whether school libraries are still relevant in this age and whether students and school personnel still consider the school library as the first point of call for information because there are so many other sources of information (Bannerman, 2009).

However, despite the importance of the school library building spaces, it seems that there are little or no well-structured library spaces in most secondary schools in Nigeria. This could be due to several challenges which confront the creation, development and improvement of school libraries in most Nigeria schools. Some of these challenges includes lack or insufficient funding from parent institutions, wrong attitude towards the establishment of the library, insufficient power supply and poor internet connectivity for library operations. Considering the above challenges facing the school library, it, therefore, becomes imperative to investigate the extent to which library personnel perceive library building spaces in Nigerian schools.

Research Questions

This study provided answers to the following questions:

1. What is the perception of library personnel about the planning of school library spaces in Nigeria?
2. What is the perception of library personnel about the design of school library spaces in Nigeria?
3. What is the perception of library personnel about purpose of school library spaces in Nigeria?

Literature Review

Many library buildings across the country appear not to be formally evaluated, and when they are, the evaluations are frequently less than comprehensive. A library building is an assemblage that is firmly attached to the ground and that provides total or nearly total shelter for human educational and leisurely activities (Merrit: 2010). The focal purpose of a school library building is to have a structure that will be safe, habitable and functional for service delivery to users in the school community. The School Library Association (2016) stated that the purpose of a school library building is to provide a flexible space with a wide and inclusive range of resources to support learning and teaching in the school. It further emphasised that such building should be able to promote reading as well as

provide facilities to develop life-long learners, provides a place for collaborative learning, creativity and for developing independent research as well as information literacy skills. The purpose of the school library building can be achieved if it is managed by trained staff, adequately funded and accessible to the whole school community during and outside the school day.

IFLA School Library Guidelines (2015), explained that school library building is 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 while Dike (2001), on the other hand, averred that dedicated place (building) should be provided for a school library in achieving effective quality service provision. Likewise, spaces for viewing and listening to certain media, large tables for maps, computer stations, carrels, chairs should also be provided for. These physical resources should be provided in the school library in order to bring about ease of service to both students and staff. IFLA guidelines further listed the functional space areas of needs to be provided for in the school library building to include, study and research area, space for the information desk, catalogues, online stations, study and research tables, reference materials and basic collections, informal reading area, space for books and periodicals that encourage literacy, life-long learning, and reading for pleasure. Other space areas to be provided for are instructional area with seats catering for small groups, large groups and whole classroom formal instruction, with appropriate instructional technology and display space. The guidelines recommended seating for 10% of the student population.

According to Adeoye and Popoola (2011), a capacity of at least fifty (50) bookshelves, magazines/journals stand, among others, should be made available for students in the school library. Therefore, adequate accommodation is a necessary pre-requisite for the provision of quality library services. Arua and Chinaka (2011) in their study reported that secondary school libraries in Umuahia North do not have adequate accommodation while Okorafor and Anyalebechi (2017) posited that most school libraries in Nigeria lack adequate accommodation and space areas for library operations and activities. The absence of these facilities continues to retard quality library service delivery by school libraries in Nigeria.

Moreover, Akande (2017) stated that accessibility to the library building spaces and utilisation of library information resources and services are determinant factors in the provision of quality services in different types of libraries. A school library building with its resources will only be useful if explored by the staff and students it is meant to serve. Okiy (2010) and Iyoro (2004) stressed that the availability of resources and space

encouraged the use of library services. Quality is one of the triple constraints or forces for every construction project besides the other two which are time and cost, hence, the standard reference to the specification of the object to be designed and the actual result related to the library building design quality will be known after several years occupying the building. The quality of the library building would be determined by the suitability of the building and the quality of compliance that shows that the building is in accordance with the specifications required by the design. In other words, the quality of the school library building can produce more efficient intermediation services and improve the work environment for all users. The researcher is of the opinion that the functionality of library building is emphasised in the arrangement, quality and inter-relationship of spaces, and how the building is designed to be useful.

Planning of school library building would require a thorough understanding of the needs of the users, objectives and functions of the library. However, the approach to planning has been somewhat casual in Nigerian schools because there is not enough literature pertaining to Nigerian library buildings, which could provide guidance to librarians in this situation. IFLA (2015) in their contributions to planning a library building explained that planning a school library requires the active involvement of the school librarian in consultation with administrators, faculty, and students to determine the relationship of the school library to the rest of the school community. It also stated the scope to consider within the planning process and that, it will be of advantage to involve the current and potential students, including their parents when necessary. Depending on the administration of the school, students can be asked about their preferences in several ways, either through surveys, focus groups, design or idea boards, and suggestion boxes in various areas of the school library or the school compound.

Feinberg and Keller (2010) recommended that staff should work with a building consultant to assist with the survey design or to conduct focus groups as well as the design professional to work on design boards. The management can also visit other school libraries and children's facilities, especially in other geographical locations to benefit from lessons learned and see other solutions for serving the students. Furthermore, factors that are important for planning a library building in Nigeria include, suitability of the location for library building; independence of the building and provision for future expansion; suitable provision for workplace and staff; proper natural lighting, ventilation and control of noise; planned interior and exterior arrangement. Also, library buildings should have functional design rather than monumental as well as proper amenities like water, toilet facilities, fire protection for security and safety reasons as well as doors for entrance and exit.

In planning, the environment must be inviting for all students and staff to use resources and participates in programmes. The school library building must be flexible and conducive to learning, hence, when planning the school library building, the school should provide a dedicated space for the school library building, provide adequate infrastructural space, teaching space, reading space, large group space, workspace and storage space. There should be provisions for varieties of materials in various formats, on multiple levels, supporting both instructional and recreational needs of users including the physically challenges students. Nelson and McConachi (2013) highlighted the basic design elements that must be put into consideration when designing a school library building which include, space for teaching, learning and production of knowledge, space for storing materials and space which support multiple ways of teaching and learning within the library. Bolan (2012) pointed out the need for signage that are visually appealing, scaled correctly and user-friendly must be used as important consideration in school library design.

Furthermore, Dervin and Nilan (1986) proposed that planning has influence on library services in that it increases the attendance of the library users while also helping in implementing and redesigning of library systems that is more flexible and interactive focusing on user's priorities. Proper planning of the library services helps the school library to have a better success and achieve a better position in their locality and also gives more chances of success to their goals. Better planning of the library services can influence the progress of the school library and that of the school itself. Most times, planning influenced the library services by bringing both the school library personnel and the users together (Bhasin 2018). The ultimate objective of designing a building is achieved by the production of drawings or plans, showing what are to be constructed, specifications stating what materials and equipment are to be incorporated in the building, and a construction contract between the school personnel and the contractor. There are various building components, such as walls, doors, roofs, windows, and doors which are interrelated and compatible with each other. However, designing libraries has become much more complex over the years with the introduction of shared services, self-service, merchandising and e-books, therefore, the scope for designing a library space is much broader and needs to take a strategic, collaborative approach. A well-designed library must reveal a complex order that is both embracing in its transparency and mysterious in its promise of yet to be discovered knowledge. To be effective, library building needs to be grand, beautiful and inspiring to enable quality service delivery.

Research Methodology

This study adopted a descriptive research design since the study sought to find out library personnel's perception of school library spaces in Nigeria.

The convenience sampling technique was used to select 243 library personnel across Nigeria out of which only 237 responded with useful and useable data. The data for the study was collected at the 34th and 35th Annual Conference of the Nigerian School Library Association held at Abuja and Minna respectively.

A questionnaire titled “Library Personnel’s Perception of Library Building (LPPLBQ)” was used to obtain the needed data for this study. The questionnaire was divided into 4 sections and consists of structured items. Section A was designed to collect demographic information such as gender, age, position held, educational qualifications and length of years of service while Section B was designed to assess the planning of school library building spaces. It consisted nine (9) structured items/questions. The questions/items were framed to assess the planning of school library building spaces as perceived by library personnel. The rating technique was based on the four-point likert type scale as follows: Strongly Agree (SA) = 4; Agree (A) = 3; Strongly Disagree (SD) = 2; and Disagree (D) = 1. Section C was designed to assess the design of school library building spaces and it consisted of eighteen (18) structured items which were framed to assess the design of school library building spaces as perceived by the library personnel measured on a 4 point likert scale of Strongly Agree (SA) = 4; Agree (A) = 3; Strongly Disagree (SD) = 2; and Disagree (D) = 1 while Section D was designed to assess purpose of school library building spaces as perceived by the library personnel 7 structured items measured on a 4 point likert scale format of Strongly Agree (SA) = 4; Agree (A) = 3; Strongly Disagree (SD) = 2; and Disagree (D) = 1.

The face and content validity of the questionnaire was done by giving it to experts to ensure that the instrument elicited the required responses. The reliability of the instrument was determined using Cronbach’s Alpha to find out if the scores are affected by sampling errors and the stability of the responses to the items. The instrument was administered to fifteen library personnel in the study area who were excluded from the final study and a reliability coefficient of 0.75 was obtained which was considered appropriate for usage. Data collected were analysed using descriptive techniques such as frequencies, mean, standard deviation.

Presentation and Interpretation of Results

A total of 243 copies of questionnaire were administered to the respondents out of which 237 were returned with useful and usable responses. This represents 97.5% response rate which is considered adequate for this study.

Table 1: Demographic information of Respondents

Gender	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Male	100	42.2
Female	137	57.8
Age		
20-30 years	7	3.0
31-40 years	45	19.0
41 years and above	185	78.1
Highest Educational Qualifications		
NCE/OND	3	1.3
HND/Bachelor's degree	212	89.5
Post graduate degrees	22	9.3
Length of service		
4-6 years	8	3.4
7-10 years	155	65.4
11-20 years	60	25.3
21 years and above	14	5.9
n = 237		

The result of the analysis revealed that 100 respondents representing 42.2% are males while 137 respondents representing 57.8% are females. In other words, there were more females than males among the respondents. Result on the age distribution of respondents showed that 7 (3.0%) of the respondents are within the age range of 20-30 years of age, 45 (19.0%) of the respondents are 31-40 years of age while the remaining 185 (78.1%) of the respondents are 41 years of age. This implies that majority of the respondents are within the age range of 41 years and above. Result on the qualifications of the respondents revealed that 3 (1.3%) of the respondents have NCE/OND, 212 (89.5%) have HND/Bachelor's degree while the remaining 22 (9.3%) of the respondents have Post graduate degrees.

On the length of service of the respondents, the result of the analysed data showed that 8 (3.4%) of the respondents have 4-6 years length of service, 155 (65.4%) have worked for 7-10 years, 60 (25.3%) of the respondents have worked for 11-20 years while the remaining 14 (5.9%) of the respondents have 21 years and above length of service.

Research question 1: What is the perception of library personnel about the planning of school library spaces in Nigeria?

Decision Rule: Criterion Mean = 2.50; Weighted Mean = 2.27

The results on the perception of library personnel about the planning of school library spaces revealed that the weighted mean ($\bar{x}=2.27$) is less than the criterion mean set as benchmark for positive perception, hence it can be deduced that the respondents have negative perception about the planning of school library building spaces. Therefore, library personnel surveyed have negative perception about the planning of school library building spaces which implies that they considered the library building spaces in Nigerian schools as not being adequately planned.

Research question 2: What is the perception of library personnel about the design of school library spaces in Nigeria?

Results on the perception of library personnel about the design of school library spaces in Nigeria showed a weighted mean ($\bar{x}=2.35$) which is less than the criterion mean of 2.50 set as benchmark for positive perception about the design of library building spaces. It can be deduced that the respondents have negative perception about the design of school library building spaces. Therefore, library personnel in Nigerian schools have negative perception about the design of school library building spaces which implies that they considered library building spaces in Nigerian schools as not properly designed.

Research question 3: What is the perception of library personnel about purpose of school library spaces in Nigeria?

Results on the perception of library personnel about purpose of school library spaces in Nigeria revealed a weighted mean ($\bar{x}=2.66$) which is greater than the criterion means of 2.50 set for positive perception of the purpose of school library spaces as affirmed by the respondents. Therefore, it could be deduced from the results that library personnel have positive perception about purposes of school library spaces in Nigeria. The positive perception of the purposes of school library spaces by the library personnel was established by the respondents affirmation that; the essence of school library spaces is to motivate students to read and study (Mean=2.91); the essence of school library building is to help in the development and improvement of the school (Mean=2.80), the essence of school library building is to develop skills in the use of books in the life of students and teachers (Mean=2.68), the essence of school library building is to support the teaching and learning programmes of the school (Mean=2.66) and that the essence of school library building is to create a positive change in the attitude towards learning (Mean=2.64). Hence, the school library spaces in

Nigerian schools can be said to fulfill the purpose for which it was established.

Discussion of Findings

This present study focused on the library personnel's perception of library building spaces in Nigerian schools. The finding from the first research question in the study revealed poor perception of the planning of school library building in Nigerian schools by library personnel. This finding agrees with the study of Douglas and Wilkinson (2011) who reported that most library building in secondary schools in Nigeria are poorly planned. Specifically, it can be inferred that school libraries building spaces were planned in such a way that there are little or no multifunctional premises, basic amenities like water and toilets and the surrounding noise of the building can cause harm and health issues to users.

The finding from the study further revealed library personnel poor perception of the design of school library building spaces in Nigerian schools. This finding corroborates result of the study of Fayemi (2013) who reported that in south west, Nigeria, most school libraries for pupils and students are poorly designed. Specifically, the library personnel perceive that libraries were designed in such a way that there is little or no sufficient parking space around the library or natural and artificial lightning in the library. There is also inadequate electricity supply, space per students and insufficient furniture (e.g. chairs and tables) and equipment (printer, computer) in the libraries. Also, the study revealed that the school libraries fulfil the purpose for which they were established.

Summary and Conclusion

This present study focused on the library personnel's perception of library building spaces in Nigerian schools. The results established poor perception of planning and design of school library building spaces but good perception of purposes of school library building spaces by library personnel in Nigerian schools.

Recommendations

Based on the findings from the study, the following recommendations are made:

1. Government and proprietors of schools should take into consideration proper planning of the school libraries buildings spaces to ensure that the school library building meet the required standard and guidelines set to ensure quality service delivery.

2. The design of the school libraries buildings should be improved upon to ensure adequate provision of standard spaces required of a standard school libraries.
3. Policy should also be developed by the government and school owners on the planning and designing of the school library buildings spaces.
4. The school librarian must continually build rapport with other school personnel so as to encourage them to put efforts into activities geared towards the planning and designing of school libraries building spaces in Nigerian schools.

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