

## FROM SCHOOL LIBRARIES TO MULTIMEDIA RESOURCE CENTRES: THE ANAMBRA STATE EXPERIENCE.

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### **Abstract**

*School libraries have remained a necessary adjunct of academic excellence. The Nigerian education system has recorded a steady decline over the years and this could be closely linked to the state of the school libraries. However, the term school library has globally given way to a broader term - Multimedia Resource Centres. This study recounted the intervention of the government of Anambra State in the revamping of school libraries by the provision of computers and internet services. In the survey, cluster and proportionate sampling techniques were employed to select 30 schools in the six educational zones in Anambra State. It studied principals and the teacher-librarians in these schools. The instruments for data collection were questionnaire, interview and observation. Self-designed questionnaires were distributed to the respondents. Obtained data were collated and analysed using frequency counts and percentages. The result shows that in spite of the intervention of government, most of the schools are still operating as school libraries housing only printed materials. It was also revealed that in some schools, the computers and Internet facilities provided by the government were packed away in rooms and were not being made use of. Furthermore, there was a dearth of professionals to man the school libraries. The study therefore recommends that the State government should involve librarians in such interventions to ensure a smooth transition from school libraries to multimedia centres.*

**Keywords** – *Multimedia resource centre, School libraries, Information communication technologies*

## Introduction

The concept of school libraries as an integral part of the learning process has gained grounds in the developed world since the 1990's, but it is only just being recognised and accepted in the developing countries (Fayose, 1995). As a learning resource centre, the school library can be regarded as that facility administered as a unit in individual schools where teaching resources are made available to students and teachers of the school. By this name, school library was meant to be an agency for stimulating the actual creation and use of a resource collection (Ordi, 2000). According to Foskett (2007), the importance attached to audio visual media, particularly in schools, is indicated by the use of the name "resource centre" for what was formerly called school library. The shift has been reported in some countries since almost two decades ago, as reported by Mansor and Nor (2011) who asserted that the term School Resource Centre (SRC) emerged in Malaysian education since 1<sup>st</sup> May 1983 when the Ministry of Education directed all schools to use this term instead of school library. A URL [www.slideshare.net](http://www.slideshare.net) (2009), citing Loertscher (2000) gave this quote;

*"In the last ten years (1970s and 80s), a new concept, instructional development or resource-based teaching has emerged from the fields of educational psychology and instructional technology. Teachers and library media specialists' work together to systematically create sound instructional modules or units for learners using the full resources of the library media centre".*

Adewale and Iweha (2006) opined that in Nigeria, the concept of Library Media Resource Centre evolved in schools in place of the traditional school library to meet the requirement of the National Policy on Education and the modern philosophy of Education that stress the individualised instruction and the use of multimedia resources in teaching the curriculum.

Fayose (1995) termed it School Library Resource Centre and defined it as

*"That part of the school where a collection of books, periodicals, magazines, and newspapers, films and filmstrips, videotapes, recordings of all types, slides, computers, study kits, realia and other information bearing resources are housed for use by teachers and pupils for learning, recreational activities, personal interests and interpersonal relationships of children in a school".*

Madu (2000) extended the tentacles of a media resource centre having defined it

*"As a learning resource centre which could be in schools, educational institutions (including non-formal) or any establishment where there is a full range of prints and audio visual materials and equipments, and where services rendered by a media specialist are available to students and teachers and the community in which the centre is established".*

Citing Peterson (n.d), Penland (2003) pointed out that the learning centre is an amalgamation of four services: a library, audio visual services, nontraditional learning activities, and instructional development. He explained further that a resource centre or multimedia library makes available to students and teachers or, for that matter, any interested citizen, sources of information, whether in print, real life, or audiovisual form. Its chief purpose is to encourage and facilitate self instruction, whether supervised or entirely independent. The term can therefore be applied to a place where a collection of materials in various media, necessary equipment, and the services of a media specialist, are accessible to students and teachers. Prytherch (2000) explained that these range of collections serve as support facilities needed by students and teachers alike to provide a location and essential materials for their taught courses and programmed work.

Perhaps, in the bid to create a positive impact on student's achievement through higher levels of literacy and technological skills, the Anambra State government distributed ICT facilities and a grant of five hundred thousand naira (N500, 000.00) to government owned secondary schools. This study is therefore aimed at

- Identifying the schools that benefitted from the ICT facilities distribution.
- Determining the extent of evolution to MRC in the schools
- Finding out the available resources in the School libraries
- Ascertaining the extent of accessibility and use of the MRC by students and teachers
- Discovering the challenges faced in managing MRC

#### **Literature review**

The school library offers learning services, books and resources that enable all members of the school community to become critical thinkers and effective users of information in all formats and media. School libraries link to the wider library and information network (IFLA/UNESCO school library manifesto, 2006). In order to ensure that this proposal is made effective, Mansor and Nor (2011) reported that the IFLA/UNESCO school library guidelines recommended that the national curriculum and education development programmes at national level should consider media resource centres as vital means for fulfilling ambitious goals regarding the following:

- information literacy for all, gradually developed and adopted through the school system
- availability of information resources for students at all educational levels
- open dissemination of information and knowledge for all student groups to exercise democratic and human rights

The 21<sup>st</sup> century school library has evolved into modern multimedia resource centres to encourage state-of-the-art technology and a wide range of resources. The UNESCO/IFLA School Library Manifesto (2004) stated that school library provides information and ideas that are fundamental to functioning successfully in today's information and knowledge society. Technology has rapidly modified the nature and significance of information. Just as the rest of the world's political, social, economic and scientific realities have been shifted by swift advances in information and communication

technologies, so has school libraries. Where properly developed, the school library becomes the hub of networking and information access (OSLA, 2010). As noted by Fourie and Dowell (2002), improving basic literacy is a key function of the library media centre. They posited that school libraries share with academic libraries the responsibility for promoting information literacy. If this is true, then the school libraries ought to be making high tech advances in the new technologies like their counterparts in the academic libraries. Academic libraries have gone digital and virtual in the bid to serve their clientele adequately.

To make it more relevant, Woolls (2003) suggested that the school library as a media resource centre can be expanded to provide space for listening and viewing, as well as for housing and use of the additional print materials being purchased. Librarians also have to find places to store the new multimedia resources for easy access, to catalogue them, and to develop systems for check out and return. The specialist who knows materials in all modern formats and who understands how to use these materials across the technologies to make an impact on instruction is the logical partner to the teacher. Instead of one person at the head of the class carrying the entire burden of instruction, the library media specialist, as a second adult expert, shares in the coaching of learners as they build expertise in the various disciplines. Thus, the library media specialist is just as interested in student achievement as is the teacher ([www.slisweb.sjsu.edu](http://www.slisweb.sjsu.edu), 2009).

The media resource centre is an indispensable tool in school curriculum actualization but it is up to the school librarian to raise its visibility through creative and dynamic innovations. The librarian may work hands in glove with the media specialist to localize abstract resources and improve the local content available to the students. He should be versatile with computer programmes involving animations (e.g. power point) as they sustain the interest of the students and make learning more lively and interactive. The technological skill of the school librarian should be high to facilitate information retrieval from the Internet as the need for that arises. This is more important given the characteristics of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century learners (referred to as digital natives) who as noted by OSLA (2010) are growing up in a media-saturated environment; information and ideas are accessed and shared in extremely visual, multi-media formats without concern or deliberation. These "digital natives" embrace new technologies readily and transfer their skill with one technology to each new technology and as such expect to have access to electronic information quickly and easily. Apart from the technological skill of school librarians, other problems militate against effective adoption of media resource centre in Nigerian school libraries such as: declining financial support, inadequate infrastructure and equipment, employment of unqualified personnel, high cost of internet, inadequate funding, little or no facility, inadequate staffing and unstable power supply (Akintunde, 2006; Ajegebemogun & Salaam, 2012).

### **Methodology**

The descriptive survey research design method was adopted for this study. The population for this study comprises of all the teacher-librarians in the government owned schools in Anambra states. Cluster and proportionate sampling techniques were employed to select 30 schools out of the 109 government-owned schools in the six

educational zones in Anambra State comprising; Aguata, Awka, Nnewi, Ogidi, Onitsha and Otuocha educational zones. The teacher-librarians in these selected schools were studied using questionnaire, interview and observation as instruments for data collection.

### Data Analysis

The data analyses are presented as follows:

**Table 1: Bio Data**

S/N		Frequency	Percentage (%)
1.	<b>Gender</b>		
	Male	*	*
	Female	30	100
2.	<b>Educational Qualifications</b>		
	NCE/OND	*	*
		22	73.4
	B.Ed/BLIS/HND	8	26.6
	M.Ed/MLIS	*	*
	PhD		
	<b>Total</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>100.0</b>

The data on characteristics of the respondents being studied shows that they are all females with 73.3 percent of them obtaining first degree certificates while 26.6 percent of them obtained Masters Degree certificates. There is no respondent with NCE or Ph.D certificates.

Besides, information gathered showed that the respondents are subject specialists covering the school curricular. They also teach in various classes. The studies also revealed that all the schools being studied have school libraries and were beneficiaries of the ICT facilities distribution exercise and library development grant.

A related question on if ICT gadgets donated by the government are incorporated into the school library was asked. It was discovered that no computer is designated to the school library. The computer room is different from the venue of the school library. It is only in one school that computers are incorporated into the school library. Thus, the ICT gadgets are used in the resource centre by the students and staff.

**Extent of evolution to MRC through availability of electronic resources in the library**

**Table 2: Electronic Resources Available in the Library**

S/N	Items	No of schls available	Percentage (%)	No of schls not available	Percentage (%)
1.	Computer	30	100	*	*
2.	Video clips	*	*	*	*
3.	Electronic books	*	*	*	*
4.	Computer games	*	*	*	*
5.	Compact disks	1	3.3	29	96.7
6.	Projector	1	3.3	29	96.7
7.	Printer	30	100	*	*
8.	Scanner	1	3.3	29	96.7
9.	Photocopier	1	3.3	29	96.7
10.	Laminating machine	*	*	*	*
11.	Television	*	*	*	*
12.	DVD/VCD	*	*	*	*
13.	Internet facility	2	6.7	28	93.3

Information and observation check on the electronic resources displayed in the school library indicated that only two schools have computers available in their libraries. Only two schools had internet facilities but the state government was not the source. Only one School has projector, printer scanner and photocopier. Although the other schools have computers, generators, etc but they are either being used for computer lesson only or locked away in a separate room.

**Available Resources in the Library**

**Table 3: Print resources**

S/N	Items	No of schools available	Percentage	No of schools not available	Percentage
1.	Storybooks	30	100	*	*
2.	Reference books	30	100	*	*
3.	Text books	30	100	*	*
4.	Magazines/ Newspapers	18	60	12	40
5.	Talking books	*	*	30	100

Interview and observation checklist noted that all the schools have print resources in their libraries, displayed for use. These are storybooks, reference books, text books, magazines and newspapers.

**Table 4: Audio Visual Resources**

S/N	Items	No of schools available	Percentage (%)	No of schools not available	Percentage (%)
1.	Maps	20	66.7	10	33.3
2.	Globes	*	*	30	100
3.	Slides	*	*	30	100
4.	Films	*	*	30	100
5.	Charts	*	*	30	100
6.	Realia/ Models	*	*	30	100

The checklist on audio visual resources recorded the two libraries with computer systems in their libraries having maps. No other audio visual recorded in the checklist is seen. Other schools have only print resources without audio visual resources.

**Table 5: Computer Literacy of School Librarians**

S/N	Items	Frequency	Percentage
1.	Excellent	3	10
2.	Good	8	26.6
3.	Fairly	15	50
4.	Poorly	4	13.3
	Total	30	100

This Table shows the literacy status of the respondents. Three representing 10percent of the respondents handle the computer excellently, eight 26.6percent are good with computer, fifteen 50percent of them are fairly good and four 13.3percent are poor in computer skill.

#### **Services offered in the resource centres**

The respondents in the two schools that have resource centres were interview on services provided by the MRC (although only one had the resource centre incorporated into the school library). The services being provided include: circulation/lending, computer teaching/training, exhibition/special display, reference, information retrieval and Internet browsing services.

**Table 6: Challenges to Effective Transition to Multimedia Resource Centre**

S/N	Items	SA	A	SD	D	Mean	Decision
1.	Erratic power supply	17	6	4	3	3.2	Agreed
2.	Inadequate facilities	13	6	5	6	2.9	Agreed
3.	Unqualified personnel	10	8	8	4	2.8	Agreed
4.	Paying 'ip service to MRC development by the government	14	7	6	3	3.1	Agreed
5.	Poor maintenance	15	5	4	6	3.0	Agreed
6.	Inadequate funding	13	10	4	3	3.1	Agreed
7.	High cost of internet services provision	15	6	4	5	3.0	Agreed

Information on challenges to effective transition to multimedia resource centre indicated erratic power supply as the most strongly agreed answer, followed by poor maintenance high cost of internet services provision. Others are inadequate funding, unqualified personnel and inadequate facilities. These answers are weighted on scales and established as serious impediments.

#### **Discussion of findings**

The responses on the qualifications of the respondents indicate that they held first and second degrees in various disciplines and all handle classes. This can be likened to the statement of Aguolu (2002) who posited that work in a school library requires staff of various categories and levels of education. If effective staff could be sent to media resource centre then its utilization will be maximized.

The fact that only two schools out of the thirty schools studied have media resource centre shows that the schools in Anambra State are still fashioned along traditional school Library which houses only print resources. This is contrary to the Tensfly High School's Lalor Library Media Centre (2012) which informed that its school library is populated with the best resource and equipment, integrating all media in one centrally located complex: Shakespeare, television broadcast, photocopying, Mozart, conferencing, video editing, maps, novels, computer stations, displays, movies, meetings, art, an academic theatre, etc. Thus, school management should promote the collection development so as to provide the school community with appropriate resources meant for learning in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

The information on the computer literacy of the respondents is revealing. With a good number of respondents knowing the basics in computer, it contradicts the research of U.S Offices of Technology, Assessment (1995) and West (1995) which reported on limited teacher knowledge, preparation and use of technology in the curricula. This buttresses the importance of competence in ICT as the full use of resources available in the school will enhance students leaving.

The information on government grant on ICT and library development shows the importance government attaches to the school education. But since they are not



incorporated into the library nor their services rendered, these libraries might as well be living up to the statement of Elaturoti (1993) and Arua (2011) that school libraries are as good as wasted if the resources are not maximally utilized by those intended for. This is because lack of media resource centre and non-rendering of service will likely limit students experience with ICT as research has shown that many students enter Universities without ever using the libraries effectively in their primary and secondary schools (Abdulahi, 1998).

The high rate on the answers of the challenges to effective transition to multimedia resource centre shows indications of perceptible impediments. The issue of maintenance, erratic power supply and high cost of internet service provision are likely to dampen the shine of media resource centre unless adequate measures are taken to avoid already supplied resources for the use of the community.

### **Conclusion and recommendation**

Media resource centres in the 21<sup>st</sup> century can and should be hubs for increased students achievement and positive focused school reform. The Anambra State government has shown its interest and support by providing the necessary ICT gadgets and grants to refurbish school libraries to multimedia resource centres. Thus, school libraries have all it takes to design and establish state-of-the-art technology and a wide range of resources for the school community. Therefore, the presence of efficient teacher-librarians, media specialists and reading teachers will show commitment to these centres and facilitate learning.

The following recommendations are made based on the findings of the study.

- i. School library management should ensure incorporation of ICT gadgets donated by the state government into the school libraries so as to model the resource centres towards the school curricular and the needs of the school community.
- ii. The government should set up a monitoring committee to ensure that the ICT gadgets provided are properly utilized.

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Introduction  
The role of school library media specialists and the competencies they need in order to succeed have changed and would continue to expand in developed countries. For example, the recruitment and preparation of a new generation of school library media specialists has become acute as states and school districts face shortages likely to last for several years (Shannon, 2001). This is because many new school library media specialists will be needed due to increasing school enrollment, expansion of full-time positions, and retirement. However, developed countries like Nigeria are just beginning to appreciate the role of the school library media specialist because most schools do not have well equipped school library media centres.

As a result of the introduction and utilization of information communication technology (ICT) into school libraries, school libraries are also called "learning resource centres", "school library media centres", and the school librarian has also assumed different designations such as "learning resource centre manager", "school library media specialist". In this paper they are used interchangeably. Technology will continue to transform teaching and learning and impact information access and retrieval. According to IFLA/UNESCO School Library Manifesto (2000), the school library provides information and ideas that are fundamental to functioning successfully in today's information and knowledge-based society.

The school library equips students with life-long learning skills and develops the imagination that would enable them to live as responsible citizens. School libraries in Nigeria were originally teachers who had received some training in librarianship. Training is an integral part of vocational or career development and it is fast becoming a global and pervasive phenomenon in any establishment, the absence of which spells