

DEARTH OF SCHOOL LIBRARY COLLECTION: INHIBITION TO READING PROMOTION PROGRAMME IN NIGERIAN SCHOOLS

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Abstract

This study investigated the dearth of collection and reading promotion programmes in school library media centres (SLMC) in Nigerian schools. The survey research design method was adopted for the study while questionnaire was used as the major instrument of data collection. One hundred and thirty seven (137) copies of questionnaire were administered on school librarians/school library media specialists/teacher-librarians, heads of library, and proprietors/proprietress of schools that were among the participants that attended the 25th and 26th Annual Conferences of the Nigerian School Library Association at Abeokuta, 2010 and Ado Ekiti, 2011 respectively. However, only ninety two (92) copies of the questionnaire were found to have useful responses that were used for the study. The findings of the study revealed a dearth of learning resources such as periodical literature and audiovisual resources to be used in promoting and developing favourable reading culture among pupils in Nigerian schools. Also, the study revealed a dearth of reading promotion programmes such as story hour and book talks in SLMC in Nigerian schools. The study highlights the need for the provision of adequate funding for schools and SLMCs in Nigeria to enable schools stock their SLMCs with adequate and relevant collection and also to enable them carry out programmes that will help in developing the reading culture of Nigerian children.

Keywords: *School library collection, Reading programme, Reading culture, Reading preference*

Introduction

Promotion of reading is an important role of the school library media centres. A school library media centre provides access to reading materials which readers need to develop practice their skills. According Dike (1998) reading a variety of enjoyable and informative materials enables children to gain the practice they need to improve their skills, therefore making reading more enjoyable and inclining them to further reading. Through the school library media centre collection, children are introduced to the broad uses of reading for information, pleasure, and personal growth over a lifetime. Lance

(2010) in his Colorado study found that the size of the library in terms of its staff and its collection is a direct predictor of reading scores.

To learn to read and write - basic literacy - is a short term goal, but to become a lifelong reader involves voluntary reading. To engage in voluntary reading activities, a learner must be able to read without difficulty. Voluntary reading, that is reading because you want to, is the foundation of a reading habit. Reading flourishes when a sense of joy is experienced when reading and when the reader gets satisfaction from reading. The International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA) study found that one goal of reading instruction which is given high priority in most countries is the development of voluntary reading habits in children (Elley 1992).

The school library has a direct relationship with the education system and can reinforce basic literacy instruction by supporting curriculum and instructional goals, consulting on individualised reading guidance programmes, providing library group activities, instructing learners in library skills, helping teachers appraise learner skills, conducting workshops and discussions to help parents support learner's reading and learning, and collaborating with the public library on reading programmes (Eyre, 2005).

School libraries form an important part of the learner's literacy environment and support from them could be a sure way of developing a willingness to use their resources. Many learners may not have access to books and other reading materials at home, or access to a public library. Krashen (2004) investigated a series of studies and found that in all the studies, a positive relationship was found between a measure of the number of books in the school library and reading achievement.

The classroom teacher and the school librarian have roles to play his or her unique part in helping learners improve their reading abilities and turn to reading in order to satisfy their individual needs through reading - recreational and informational, to complete school assignments and also discover the joy of reading. One of the first goals in literacy development should be the nurturing of positive attitudes toward reading. Reading stories to children is highly effective in getting learners engaged in reading because story reading strongly attracts children to books (Machet 2000). Machet and Pretorius (2003) reiterate that learners should be given opportunity to read voluntarily through provision of conducive atmosphere as well as continued provision and access to varied collection of enjoyable and information-rich resources.

Generally, the school library media centre is uniquely designed to support classroom activity through provision of supplemental and casual reading materials for learners (Machet and Pretorius (2003). In order to do that, a basic infrastructure, including a collection of learning resources, a place for them to be used and a school librarian to manage them, is needed. The size of the school library is important and to be effective, a large collection of books should be available. Hart (2002) reiterates that for a school library programme to meet the needs of learners, the school must have the personnel, information sources, funds, and equipment that are necessary for its successful

performance. The school library can fulfill its role in promoting reading habits among pupils when it is actively collaborating with teachers on adequate collection.

The role of the school library media centres in promoting reading is especially crucial in developing scientific, reflective thinking and creativity. Libraries can help children and youths develop critical and independent thinking through their exposure to a wide variety of instructional resources and learning opportunities (Machett, 2000). Apart from the development of creative and critical thought, the role of the library in the promotion of reading culture can be seen in the readers' development of values, attitudes, and appreciation. Availability and accessibility of instructional and pleasurable books stimulate development of reading and attainment of permanent literacy. It has been found out that school libraries are the principal source of books for supplementary instructional resources and voluntary reading. It must, however, be pointed out that many schools do not have libraries at all. Where they exist, the stock in these libraries is grossly insufficient to play the expected role (Krashen, 2004).

Children and students can be motivated to read and thus form good reading habit through storytelling, reading together (shared reading), formation of reading/book clubs as well as provision of conducive reading environment devoid of unwarranted noise and distractions (Hart, 2002). A wide range of learning resources exists through which pupils and teacher can obtain information and gain knowledge. The importance of school library collection in reading cannot be undermined. A large variety and plentiful supply of resources are required in the school library to encourage independent study so that young people from an early age can appreciate books and reading, learn how to think and evaluate ideas so that their convictions and views are formed as a result of active mental efforts, (Fayose, 1998). The school library media centre is not complete without a "complete collection" that takes care of every aspect of pupils' development. A complete collection takes care of the information, education, and recreation needs of the pupils.

The provision of a varied collection of pleasurable and informative resources is a major contribution of school library media centre to reading promotion (Okusaga, 2008) just as the availability of books has been demonstrated to be a powerful stimulus to reading development. Emenyonu in Dike (1998) also emphasized that access to books may be the most important determinant of reading habits while Adeniji (2006) reported that access to school library collection results in more reading and that children get much of their reading from libraries. Studies have shown that adequate school library collection is a principal source of books for voluntary reading. (Elaturoti, 2001; and Adeniji, 2006). On the other hand, Rubin (2002) acknowledged that many school libraries have insufficient stock to play this role.

In Nigeria, reading promotion has been an enduring theme in school librarianship. The role of school libraries in promoting reading is especially crucial in Nigeria where most children first have access to books for reading in school as they have limited access to them at home and in the community. A major challenge constraining reading promotion in Nigerian schools as identified by Adeniji (2006) is the inability of school library media specialists to find books to stock as well as poor funding by authorities concerned. In

corroboration of this assertion, is Dike (1998) who reiterated that the books needed for libraries, and those which would encourage reading, are hard to find.

The need to have the right collection by school library media centres should be the top priority of school library media centres. Such collection must be the one that will interest the library users. Hence, there is the need for the school library media specialists to know the users, know the books they need and ways of bringing children and books together. Studies on reading habits and interests (Krashen, 2004; Eyre, 2005) confirmed that many school libraries lack literature that appeal to adolescent readers.

Libraries do exist in many schools but in many it is just in name, because all the elements required of them to operate are not put in place. An effective school library media centre is one which provides for its users-teachers and students services and facilities for executing their curricular and co-curricular activities including reading culture (Okusaga, 2008). Such services and facilities include the provision of recorded knowledge relevant to their academic and recreational needs and available in various formats. These are in book form, as well as non-book form like maps, audio and video cassette, tapes, slides, films, microforms and in more recent times, computer software. The teacher and school library media specialist must cooperate to acquire a relevant and adequate collection of library materials and work together for active use of library. This study, therefore, intends to investigate the availability or otherwise of learning resources and facilities for the development of favourable reading culture among Nigerian pupils.

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study are to:

1. find out the types of resources available in school library media centres in Nigerian schools
2. find out the category of periodical literature available in school library media centres in Nigerian schools
3. find out the category of audiovisual hardware available in school library media centres in Nigerian schools
4. find out type of reading programme available in school library media centres in Nigerian schools

Research questions

1. What types of library resources are available in school library media centres (SLMC) in Nigerian schools?
2. What categories of periodical literature are available in SLMC in Nigerian schools?
3. What categories of audiovisual resources are available in SLMC in Nigerian schools?
4. What types of reading promotion programme are available in SLMC in Nigerian schools?

Research Methodology

The survey research design method was adopted for the study. A total of 132 copies of questionnaire designed for the study were administered on the participants that attended the 25th Annual Conference of the Nigerian School Library Association held at Abeokuta, Ogun state. The participants at the Conference included school librarians/school library media specialists, teacher-librarians, heads of libraries, education officers etc from federal government colleges, military schools, private schools, public schools, federal and state ministries of education, NNPC staff schools, and Police schools among others.

Data Analysis and Discussion of findings

Out of the total of 137 copies of questionnaire administered on the participants at the conference, only 92 copies were returned with useful responses which give a response rate of 67.1 percent. The descriptive method of analysis was adopted for the analysis.

Research question 1: What types of library resources are available in the SLMC in Nigerian Schools?

Table 1: Resources available in SLMC in Nigerian schools

Library resources	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Book	92	100.0
Non-print (AV)	44	47.8
Digital resource	20	21.7
Magazines	46	50.0
Newspapers	48	52.2
Realia	16	17.4
Photographs	30	32.6
Maps & Charts	42	45.7

Table 1 presents information on the available resources in the SLMC surveyed and it revealed books indicated by 92 or 100 percent, Newspapers indicated by 48 or 52.2 percent, and Magazines indicated by 46 or 50.0 percent of the respondents as topping the list of available resources in school library media collection. This implies that books, newspapers, and magazines are the commonly available resources in school library media centres in Nigerian schools.

Research question 2: What types of periodical literature are available in SLMC in Nigerian schools?

Table 2: Titles of Journals/Magazines/Periodical literature available in SLMC in Nigerian schools

Titles of Journal/Magazine	Frequency	Percentage
Newswatch magazine	50	54.3
Tell magazine	22	23.9
The News magazine	43	46.7
Financial Times magazine	4	4.3
UBE & FME Publication	19	20.7

Table 2 presents information on the types of periodical literature available in SLMC in Nigerian schools and it revealed Newswatch magazine indicated by 50 or 54.3 percent and The News magazine indicated by 43 or 46.7 percent of the respondents as the commonly available periodical literature in SLMC in Nigerian schools. This is a pointer to the dearth of journal/magazines/ periodical literature that appeal to the needs of the students. The commonly available magazines or periodical literature such as Newswatch, *Tell*, and *The News* carry more of political news meant for Adult consumption..

Research question 3: What Categories of Audio Visual Resources are Available in SLMC in Nigerian schools?

Table 3: Audiovisual Resources Available in SLMC in Nigerian Schools

Audiovisual resources	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Projectors	20	21.7
Slide projectors	12	13.0
Audio tape player/recorder	30	32.6
Power point projector	32	34.8
Video camera	24	26.1
Other	4	4.3

On the available audiovisual resources in SLMC in Nigerian schools, table 5 revealed that only few of the respondents affirmed the availability of the audiovisual resources (hardware) in their SLMC. This is also a pointer to the dearth of audiovisual resources in SLMC in Nigerian schools. The implication of this is that textual information recorded on tapes, CDs and in digital format cannot be accessed as reading resources.

Research question 4: What types of reading promotion programmes are available in SLMC in Nigerian schools?

Table 4: Reading Promotion Programme Available in SLMC in Nigerian Schools

SLMC Programme	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Lending/borrowing	66	71.7
Reading within the library	68	73.9
Orientation for new students & teacher	52	56.5
Exhibition	4	4.3
Teaching library use skills	26	31.5
Story hour	18	19.6
Book talk	20	21.7
Inter library loan	12	13.0
Projecting media to users	8	8.7
Other	4	4.3

Table 4 presents information on the reading promotion programme available in SLMC in Nigerian schools and it revealed reading within the library indicated by 68 respondents (73.9 percent), lending/borrowing indicated by 66 respondents (71.7 percent) and

orientation for new students and teacher indicated by 52 respondents (56.5) percent as topping the list of reading promotion programmes available in SLMC in Nigerian schools. Only few of the respondents indicated the availability of other reading promotion programmes such as teaching library use skills, story hour, and book talk. This implies that most SLMC do not hold story hour or give book talks as part of reading promotion strategies in their SLMC.

Discussion of findings

The study investigated the learning resources and reading promotion programmes available in SLMC in Nigerian schools for developing effective reading culture in Nigerian schools. The study revealed the dearth of learning resources, fiction and non-fiction books, periodicals, and audiovisual resources in SLMC in Nigerian schools. The dearth of these resources definitely inhibits reading skills development in Nigerian schools. This corroborates Dike (2001) view that emphasised that many school libraries may have insufficient books to support voluntary reading among Nigerian children.

The findings from the study revealed the lack of reading promotion programme such as story hour and book talk in many SLMC in Nigerian schools. This has also contributed to the lack of interest in reading that is prevailing among pupils in Nigerian schools. Hart (2002) reiterates that children and students can be motivated to read and thus form good reading habit through storytelling, reading together (shared reading), formation of reading/book clubs as well as provision of conducive reading environment devoid of unwarranted noise and distractions.

Conclusion and Recommendation

This study investigated the types of learning resources, facilities, and reading promotion programmes available in school library media centres in Nigerian schools. The study concluded that there is a dearth of learning resources and reading promotion programmes in the schools for the use of the school pupils. This dearth of resources was considered to be a great inhibitor to reading programmes in Nigerian schools. For reading promotion programme to be successful, there is need for resources to support the programme such as books, audiovisual resources, and periodical literature. These were found to be lacking in most SLMC in Nigerian schools.

The following recommendations are made based on the findings in the study:

1. The management of schools should make fund available for stocking the SLMC with relevant resources that can aid the development of reading culture among the pupils.
2. There is need for the SLMC to organise reading promotion programmes such as story- hour, book talks, exhibitions, literacy competitions among others to aid the development of reading culture among pupils in Nigerian schools.
3. Qualified school library media specialists should be employed to plan and implement readership promotion programmes in the schools.

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