

**INFORMATION USE PATTERN OF SCHOOL TEACHERS IN RURAL AREAS
OF NIGERIA: A MIXED METHOD APPROACH.**

By

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Abstract.

This paper has investigated the information use of pattern of school teachers in rural areas of Nigeria. The objectives of the study were to identify the type of information sources and resources that school teachers used for their teaching and learning. Mixed research methodology was used; questionnaire, interview and observation were the only instrument used for the study. The population of the study comprises all the school teachers in public primary schools of Nigeria. The findings of the study showed that majority of the school teachers used different types of information sources and resources. School teachers in this study had used the information found for reference purposes. They photocopy the area of interest, jot down the main points, read the article directly and print a copy. The findings also showed that there was over dependence on headmaster/school authorities, library and information centres and printed source/resources category. Books were the most popular resources needed and consulted by the school teachers in this study. Barriers to information were identified and the following were the recommendations made. The management should create more awareness on the use of library and information resources to both the school teachers and students. That the management should also provide more current information resources which are relevant to the needs of school teachers in rural areas of Nigeria; That the management should strengthen the use of the existing materials and resources available in school libraries by educating the school teachers to other available information sources and resources that they were unaware with, and could be very important to them.

Keywords: information, school teachers, rural areas, Nigeria.

INTRODUCTION

In realization of the fact that primary education is very important, school teachers therefore, need to access information which becomes indispensable to their advancement as well as educational development. School teachers need libraries in order to access relevant information for effective teaching,

learning and their development. The existences of school libraries has therefore become indispensable and play a significant role in selecting, acquiring, maintaining and disseminating useful and relevant information to school teachers and students (Usoro and Usanga (2007). This statement was supported by Abubakar (2004) that "... As part of the educational support services,

the national policy on education made it a necessity for the establishment of libraries at all level of education, including the primary schools in the country”. This was also in consonance with the National Policy of Education of Nigeria National Policy on Education of Nigeria (1998) which stated that, “the aim and objectives of libraries in the primary schools is to supply informative and educative materials to the patron community”. Due to important nature of school teachers and role they play in the development of communities, they need a greater awareness of access point to variety of information resources which would enable them to execute their roles. School teachers require variety of information so as to perform their professional activities, i.e. teaching and learning being the basic. Holmes (1987) stated that, provision of information at the right time is vitally important if school teachers were to efficiently instruct their students. As such, effective teaching is essential for effective learning.

Mundt, Stockert, and Yellesetty (2006) explained that, teachers were expected to fill a variety of complex, time-sensitive roles that require them to find, evaluate and use a great deal of information. They create

curricula and individual lesson plans and activities. They were responsible for classroom management and discipline. They evaluate their students’ work and progress on a regular basis, and use the results of these evaluations to make decisions about student needs. Finally, they were expected to continuously improve their teaching skills and techniques. While they do all of these things, they must also communicate with students, parents, administrators, and other staff. Not surprisingly, given the number of roles they fill, school teachers have broad information needs (Mundt et al , 2006). School teachers need to keep up with new trends in teaching, and learn how to use new classroom resources often in ways that require them to adapt their teaching practices. Mundt et al (2006) also emphasised that, they need information that they can use to evaluate their students and make sure that each student is getting the resources that she or he needs. The present era is the era of information, knowledge and technological revolution. Many electronic resources are available in the library. The increase of information available in electronic formats and the Internet has affected the information use pattern of different group of people. Innumerable types of information, in a large

variety of containers and in many different locations, are all available in one place (Fidel, Davies, Douglass, Holder, Hopkins, Kushner, Miyagishima & Toney 1999). In the modern society, the types of information and the format which they are presented have become manifold and multifarious, offering people a vast selection (Patitungkho, and Deshpande, 2005). For these reasons, this study investigated how school teachers use information especially in this digital era that has come with various sources of information.

Methodology

Mixed method research was used for this study mixed method research is research in which the researcher uses both qualitative and quantitative research approaches within a stage of the study or across two of the stages of the research process These two methods in social science research have long been separate spheres with little overlap. Qualitative methods have traditionally been preferred by the disciplines of history and anthropology in particular, and sociology and political science to some degree. While other disciplines like economics has tended to rely almost exclusively on quantitative methods. However, recent innovations have highlighted on the complementarity of

qualitative and quantitative methods (Chung 1993 and Abbot, & Guijt, 1997). The population for this study comprised of all school teachers in public primary school in rural areas of Nigeria. Stratified random sampling and proportionate sampling were used to select the sample for the study. Nigeria was divided into six geopolitical zones, each zone serve as strata to which random and proportionate sampling technique with random selection was use to select the sample for the study. The instruments were administered directly to one thousand one hundred and sixty (1160) sampled school teachers from two hundred and forty (240) primary schools in sixty (60) local governments/ rural areas within 12 states that spread over six geo-political zones of Nigeria. Out of which only 724 (65.82 %) were returned and were usable.

Findings of the Study

Quantitative finding of the Study

From the information gathered on the demographic factors the age distribution of respondents under study ranged between 17-57 years old (Mean= 2.56 and SD = 0.86). Less than half (40.5%) of the school teachers aged between 27-36 years old, while 34.3% were between 37-46 years of age. Around 15.2% were 17-26 years old and 9.3% were

between 47-56 years old. Thus, the majority of respondents were of the age group range between 27-36 years. It could be said that more than half (55.7%) of the school teachers were of the age range between 17-36 years of age, indicating that most school teachers in rural areas of Nigeria are young people. With regards to the gender indicated that more than half (61.9%) were males and (38.1%) were females. As such, there were more males as primary school teachers than females.

The findings also show that the educational background of the respondents revealed that majority (76.1%) had tertiary education. Less than half (16.2%) had secondary education. The least type of education obtained by the respondents was religious education (1.2%) and primary education (6.6%). With regards to professional factors, respondents were asked to indicate their practices in service. More than half (66%) were practicing teaching. Less than half (19.2%) were practicing teaching and administration. The least practice by school teachers was health master (1.0%) and discipline master (1.3%). In terms of school teachers' position in service, less than half (32.3%) of the respondents indicated their position in service was either form master or ordinary school teacher

(32.2%). This clearly shows that the gap between form master and ordinary school teacher is not big. The finding also shows that 24.4% of the respondents were holding the position of headmaster/ sub master and 10.1% were senior masters.

Information use Pattern of School Teachers

Respondents were asked to indicate the types of information resources and sources they need to access and prefer to use for their teaching and learning activities. In addition they were also asked to indicate the extent to which these information sources are effective, relevant and adequate in meeting their information needs. In response to the ways of using the information, the results showed that the majority (78.2%) of the respondents had used the information found for reference purposes. Less than half of the respondents indicated that they photocopy the area of interest (39.6%), jot down the main points (38.8%), read the article directly (33.6%) and print a copy (31.4%). the least popular way of using information was buying journal, magazines and newspapers (24.9%). In terms of integrating the information found by the school teachers, more than half (52.5%) of the respondents indicated that they evaluated the information found first

before they use it. Less than half of the respondents stated that they integrate the information found into their personal file for future use (42.0%), searching the variety of subjects (38.3%), focus search on one material (35.5%) and focus search on one subject (35.1%). Only 229 (31.6%) said they allow others to evaluate the materials they found before integrating it into their practice.

Information Resources Used By the School Teachers

Respondents were asked to indicate the common type of information resources used. Findings showed that majority (87.2%) of the respondents used books for their teaching and learning. Less than half of the respondents used the other seven types of information resources such as (Audio visuals, Television, Radio, Internet, Government Documents and Journals). However, the least information resources used were databases (21.4%) and reports (25.3%). Similarly, majority (69.5%) of the respondents preferred books, followed by audiovisuals/television and radio (13.9%) as their information resources. Less than half of the respondents preferred the other seven information resources. However, the least preferred information resources were journals (2.3 %) and reports (2.5%). In addition, for

teaching and learning, respondents indicated preference for books and audiovisuals/television & radio the most, being available and easy to get (52.0%), followed by ease of understanding (17.5%). The least popular reason was that they were applicable and useful (14.3%).

Information sources used by School teachers

Respondents were asked to indicate the type of information resources used. The results of the study showed that majority of the respondents used headmaster /school authorities (62.4%) and printed information sources (60.1%). More than half of the respondents used their colleagues (50.7%) and library and information centres (50.4%) as their sources of information. Less than half of the respondents used media (44.9%) and students/family (31.8%) as their information sources. The least used information sources were internet/online databases (21.3 %) and electronic information resources (26.2%). The findings also shows that almost half (49.5%) of the respondents preferred printed information sources. Less than half of the respondents preferred the other six information sources. The least preferred information sources were electronic information resources (0.8%) and

internet/online databases (4.4%). Moreover, with regards to the teaching and learning, respondents indicated preference for printed information sources and headmaster /school authorities, being available and easy to get (56.7%), followed by ease of understanding (18.7%). The least popular reasons was that they were reliable and truthful (13.1%).

Information Format used by the School Teachers

Respondents were asked to indicate the type of information format they preferred. Majority (84.5%) of the respondents preferred using printed information format, while 15.5 % preferred electronic information format. In addition, the findings showed that for teaching and learning, respondents indicated preference for printed information format being available and easy to get (46.3%), followed by their ease of understanding (29.2%). However, the least reason for preferring printed information format was that they were reliable and truthful (11.6%).

Hours Spend Using the Information Sources and resources

With reference to the number of hours school teachers usually spent searching and using information sources/resources, the results reveals that they spent between less than 1 hour-11 hours in a week (M=2.48,

SD=1.14). This shows that less than half (37.9%) of the respondents spent 2-3 hours a week searching and using the information sources/resources, (25%) of the school teachers spent 4-6 hours a week, (19.7%) spent less than an hour a week. In addition, the least hours spent searching and using was 11 hours and above (7.7%) and 7-10 hours in a week (9.8%). The findings mirror that majority (57.7%) of the school teachers had spent three hours or less in a week searching and using the information sources/resources for teaching and learning activities. Respondents were also asked to indicate the number of hours they spent reading and reviewing information sources/resources. The findings revealed that school teachers spent between less than 1 hour-11 hours in a week (M=2.73, SD=1.18). Less than half (37.2%) of the respondents spent 2-3 hours a week reading and reviewing the information sources/resources. 174 (25.4%) of the school teachers spent 4-6 hours a week, (12.8%) spent less than an hour a week. In addition, the least hours spent searching and skimming was 11 hours and above (13.4%) and 7-10 hours in a week (11.2%). The findings mirror that half (50.0%) of the school teachers had spent three hours or less in a week reading

and reviewing the information sources/resources.

Qualitative findings of the Study

The qualitative interviews used for this study allowed the researcher to have room for in-depth exploration of quantitative survey results. The researcher used the quantitative survey as a starting point and as a method to determine the information use pattern and salient factors affecting school teachers' information use. The qualitative data collected for this study, on the other hand, were used to triangulate the research findings from quantitative data collected, thereby, providing more in depth insight into the actual and exact experiences during the information use process of school teachers in rural areas of Nigeria. Structured interviews were conducted by one–one method, i.e. each respondent was independent of one another, the interviews took less than forty minutes with sixty (60) school teachers each across the rural areas of Nigeria using purposive random selection. Of the sixty respondents, 24 (40%) were female and thirty six 36 (60%) were male, all were from different positions, twenty five (41.7%) of them had taught for twenty and above years, 18 (30%) also had taught for ten years and above. Only 7 (11.7%) of the respondents had taught for

only five and above. Finally, 10 (16.7%) out of the sample selected had taught for only one years and above. Moreover, about forty seven (78.33%) of the respondents indicated that their best practice was teaching, while eight (13.33%) also expressed that they are practicing teaching and administration as their job practice and only 5(8.33%) indicated that administration is their job practice. In addition, two (3.33%) of the respondents hold master's degrees in education, while five (8.33%) hold bachelor's degrees in education and the remaining respondents 51(85.01%) hold NCE certificates with only two (3.33%) holding grade II/SSCE.

The results of the Interview showed that respondents were asked to state the type of information sources and resources they use to satisfying their information needs. Majority of the respondents (78.33%) expressed that the preferred to use printed information sources, library and information centres, Colleagues/friends and use of audiovisuals/ media. While 9 (15%) of the respondents indicated that they prepared to use internet, and electronic information resources. However, only 4 (6.67%) preferred to use other sources such as databases, government documents and

reports. Translating the above statements to information resources text books are the main information sources and resources they preferred to use for their practice. Below is the direct quotation extracted from the respondents?

“we preferred to use books, journal articles, newspaper articles and media as the most important Information sources and resources we choose to identify, locate, and use for our teaching and learning, because they are available and easy to get, plus they are easier to access and understand.”

“When using information sources and resources in our practice especially curriculum development I preferred to use books, my colleague’s experiences and senior school teachers”

“The most important reason for choosing the printed information resources is because they are available and easy to get, also they are the most reliable as equally as truthful of the information sources for teaching and learning”.

From above, respondents mentioned that they used both printed and electronic information sources; however, preference was much more to printed information sources and resources than electronic sources as very few respondents indicated that they

use electronic sources and internet, even though there were notable responses among the practices and gender of the respondents. Overall, respondents indicated printed information resources are the most important sources of information for their teaching and learning, the reason for this as stressed by the respondents was because they are available and easy to get. The finding of this study corroborates with the findings of [10] and [5] for which they all found that printed resources are preferred over electronic resources. For this study, respondents who chose printed information resources they provided several reasons for instance:

“We preferred to use printed information, such as books, journal, magazines/newspapers etc. for our information use because they are the most common materials we found useful to us. Plus they are available and easy to get and some times they are the only materials we can use for the development of curriculum and class teaching”

“We preferred to use books because they are easy to understand by us and also to our pupils; they are also very effective for teaching”.

“Books become the most important source of information for lesson planning and

curriculum developments materials, and for improving our teaching methods, followed closely by colleagues and personal experiences”.

In addition to the information sources and resources enumerated above by school teachers, respondents however, identified a number of others information sources and resources that they use for their practices, though their response rate was very insignificant. These included prior teaching experience, observing other teachers, local government education assessments, library and information resources centres, audiovisual and media materials and government’s documents (state curriculum and education standards). This last one is particularly important because public school teachers are required to refer to state curriculum and educational standards for planning lessons and student evaluation.

In regards to the absence of library and information resources, respondents were asked where and how they access information to keep update with their teaching and learning practices. Majority of the respondents (88.33%) mentioned that this was the major issues most a times disturbing them and made them to become frustrated, especially in the areas that the library exists,

they feel lazy not to visit the library because even they go, the tendency for not getting the information resources is very high. On the other hand for those that have no library at all, their case seems to be simpler because they either use their old books, lesson plans, refer to their colleagues in the school or in the community. However, very few of the respondents indicated that they refer to the Internet.

“Even though, in our schools we have libraries, information resources are merely a story of the past, they are not properly organized, scanty and old, most a times the library has turn to be a children playing ground because of lack adequate and relevant collections. In this situation we either refer to our colleagues or go directly to the headmaster of the schools”.

“Our libraries are not school libraries per se, they could be referred to as reading rooms is proper because by calling them school libraries we are deceiving ourselves, we have no chairs and tables, no current and adequate books, the room allocated to be the library is dilapidating. As such we have no option than to go to the rural library or refer ourselves to friends and use our experiences.

“Our library is having some information resources, but we have to go beyond the

library because not all our needs we can find there. In order to get required materials that will help us in our teaching, most a time I refer to my colleagues and friends to get information resources because they are more reliable”.

They go directly to book shops and buy or we photocopy the relevant part or complete/ the whole book if we have money. We usually photocopy the book when we receive salary otherwise it will not be possible for us to obtain a copy, or therefore, we remain with the existing knowledge or information i.e. static without update”.

“I usually update our knowledge in the absence of library and information resources through brainstorming with colleagues by using our personal experiences”. “They refer ourselves back radio, television and the internet/ electronic resources even though not much information relevant to our needs can be sorted out from them, especially the internet because we have in adequate knowledge and skills to use the internet”.

Basically most respondents have explained what they do to remedy the situation when they don't have libraries and information resources in their schools, i.e. colleagues, friends, other libraries, audiovisual/media and internet/ electronic

resources. It is pertinent to note that, things are changing to better as observations by the researcher shows that government were making giant stride efforts to reverse the situation to viable one. As more funds were release to the state level through Educational Trust Fund (ETF) to rehabilitate, establish and supply current and more materials to the school libraries in rural areas of Nigeria.

Barriers to Information use by School Teachers in rural areas

There are challenges and barriers faced by school teachers in rural areas of Nigeria, in terms of their information use process. According to their views the following are the barriers they encountered. In regards to the problems faced by the respondents they were asked an about what problems they encounter when using the information for their teaching and learning activities. A greater majority (81.7%) cited lack of time to visit and use library as biggest barrier. Some of the respondents' views are presented below:

“Lack of adequate time is the biggest problem. I usually look for information during after school hours and week-ends. There is never enough time, because students need direction, assistance, guidance and care every minute of the school day”.

“School and student’s task couple with teaching and curriculum requirements and the in adequate information resource, lack of time are major barriers that hinders me from seeking and using information”.

“Lack of library and information resources is the major deterring factors to my information use, in addition using the Internet to seek for information is frustrating because of poor quality and overwhelming slow of the network. Lack of information search skills is another major barrier stopping us from seeking and using information”

“Lack of ability to proactively seek information and lack of support from the school and government are my major deterring factors limiting me from seeking and using information for teaching and learning. In addition lack of adequate income and finance are also other major factors that restrict my information seeking and use process”.

The respondents from this study, has significantly cited income and financial limitations as a key barrier to their information use and also even in the context of library and information centres these are the major factors affecting adequate supply or provision of information resources. Often adequate and current books on classroom

lesson plans available in the libraries and in most of the primary schools are almost absent in quantity and quality. Using the Internet is another major deterring factor particularly in the rural areas of Nigeria, access is fluctuating most a times majority of rural areas have no internet access plus is subscription-based, for which affordability is a big fundamental questions among the primary school teachers due to their low income.

In summary, school teachers had rather high percentage of information they needs and want to use for their specific teaching and learning activities. These needs and uses varied according to their demographic factors and other various activities plus availability of information sources and resources closer. Regarding the information use process, school teachers refer to the printed information and their colleagues to seek for information the most. With regards to the information uses, school teachers used books, magazines journals and in specific printed format of information resources than electronic. They used printed textbooks more for the dependent and the design of their curriculum, class room lesson plans and teaching and learning activities. The reasons of using the printed information

sources and resources were being available and easy to get and being trustful and reliable.

Discussions of the Findings

From the findings of the study it is pertinent to note that majority of the respondents from this study were practicing teachers and most of them held the position of ordinary teachers. It was observed that school teachers in Nigeria had the desire to remain in the profession, but only if there were more encouragement and commitment by the government. The findings of this study were in harmony with the study of [11], [12], Michael (2005) & [13] who found that teaching profession in Nigeria attracted low calibre personnel because of desertion and irregular resignations of qualified teachers. This is due to lack of motivation and encouragement by the governments. It was also found that if given the option, 64.4% of those in the teaching profession would opt out of teaching job [14]. [13] Stated that school teachers in Nigeria were running away from practicing teaching because of low status of the profession, lack of job satisfaction and motivation.

The findings of the study also showed that respondents claimed to have good knowledge of information sources and

resources available to them, particularly the printed sources and resources. It could be said that other information sources and resources tend not to be popular among school teachers in rural areas of Nigeria. The findings also showed that there was over dependence on headmaster/school authorities, library and information centres and printed source/resources category. Books were the most popular resources needed and consulted by the school teachers in this study. However, printed materials such as journals, magazines, newspapers, government documents, databases, internet and others recorded low frequency of usage. Contrary to the findings of this study, [15] found that professional magazines/newspapers were ranked highly as information sources and they were also ranked highly in terms of regular use by teachers, though their interviews indicated these were more preferred as sources of general information.

Hence, it could be said that the information use pattern of school teachers in rural areas of Nigeria was the same from what was obtained in the 1980's. The findings in this study had similarities with the study by [16] which revealed that teachers tend to rely on sources that were traditional and close at hand such as colleagues, libraries

and textbooks. The study by Dunn also revealed that teachers, college libraries, experts in the field and friends were ranked as most important sources sought by undergraduates to fulfil their information needs. In this study, as observed by the researcher, the poor usage of other sources and resources besides textbooks could be attributed to lack of awareness and familiarity with these information sources and resources which invariably could have contributed to their low usage.

It was observed that information materials available in the primary school in rural areas of Nigeria were among the most popular sources, resources and format used by school teachers. However, many of the school-based sources and resources those teachers referred to tend not to be explicitly adequate and up to date in meeting their needs. In addition, the extent and formality of the provision of school collections varied enormously, in some cases consisting only of sources that were routinely sent to the school while others were more proactive.

5. Conclusion and Recommendation

School teachers in this study had used the information found for reference purposes. They photocopy the area of interest, jot down the main points, read the article directly and

print a copy. They also buy journals, magazines and newspapers. They also integrate the information found by evaluating it first before they use for teaching and leaning and for future use. The improvement in the teaching and learning performance of the school teachers requires the availability, relevant and adequate materials that support their practices. School library therefore, should provide printed materials that are convenient to school teachers. The management should create more awareness on the use of library and information resources to both the school teachers and students. They should also provide more and current information resources which are relevant to the needs of school teachers in rural areas of Nigeria. The management should strengthen the use of the existing materials and resources available in school libraries by educating the school teachers to other available information sources and resources that they were unaware with and could be very important to them. Appropriate library education and training programmes such as information literacy, user education, seminars, workshops and conferences should be put in place and to be provided constantly to assist the school teachers further in accessing information they needed. They

should also help them to enhance their information searching skills which will lead them to identify and locate relevant information to satisfy their need. The school library management should frequently conduct user need assessments for the school teachers and the students in order to involve them in the collection development process so as to provide them with relevant materials that could satisfy their needs.

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