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## Roles of School Library in the Education of African Child in Nigeria

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# **Roles of School Library in the Education of African Child in Nigeria**

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## **Abstract**

*School libraries have been seen as parts of the most effective ways of renewing education because of their roles in transforming changes in children's reading abilities in which girls and boys everywhere are meant to learn how to read and write. As such, one of the significant purposes of the school library is to aid students develop love for reading, and to promote reading culture among its users. This implies the need to create the awareness of information resources, the need to read not only textbooks, but also to engage in creative, leisurely, and pleasurable reading. However, the paper discussed the challenges and proffered solutions to the challenges inhibiting the roles of school library in the education of Nigerian Child in Africa. The work concluded that the school media resource centre plays a major role in facilitating the teaching and learning of reading through the use of school library resources and irrespective of location, school media resource centre remains an integral part of the school system and a fundamental impetus to effective teaching. Therefore, government of Nigeria and other African countries and every school should endeavour to establish school media resource centre or expand the existing school library to accommodate multimedia resources for adequate learning of the African Child*

**Key Words: School Library, Education, African Child, Nigeria**

## **Introduction**

According to Usoro & Usanga (2007) as cited by Oyetola and Adio (2020), Nigeria can fulfill the slogan 'giant of Africa' and thus become a major force in Africa and indeed the world, when proper policies and structures are in place to inculcate the habit of reading into little Nigerians right from the scratch at their tender ages; as education drives the growth of a nation. The bedrock of education is the pre-primary and primary levels. This stage of development is crucial for the development of future adult citizens and workers. Just as a child cannot stand up and walk from birth, one cannot develop without primary education. It is the foundation upon which the rest of our educational system is built. And the primary educational system cannot survive without a library or media resource centre.

Correa (1997) in Akintunde (2010) described media resource centre as a dynamic store house of knowledge where teachers and pupils come in contact with the 'the world' where they acquire the basic knowledge which forms the basis for all further learning. There are usually collections and reading activities geared towards encouraging reading in primary and secondary schools (Akintunde 2010). IFLA, (2015), Osuchukwu & Edewor, (2016) as cited by Danladi and Yohanna (2018) expressed that a school library is desirable as it provides a variety of reading and multimedia resources, which support teaching and learning, fostering reading culture and lifelong learning. Thus, educators all over the world agree that once there is a school library, it will play an important and positive role in the school curriculum; thereby facilitating quality education in the school which means that the goal of school library is to develop information literate students who are responsible, and ethical participants in the society. Information literate students are self-directed learners who are aware of their information needs and actively engage in the world of ideas or environment where they are nurtured.

Falade (2006) in Akintunde (2010) concludes that the child is as good as the environment where he is nurtured. So, reading skills should be developed early through the use of school library and sustained at successive stages of life. Once children know how to read, they still need support to reach their full potential as readers. Most children with learning disabilities have problems with reading and related language skills. The decline in reading among children is an offshoot of technological advancements that have brought about overall changes in family, social, and economic conditions. Poor reading habits occur in children and young people because reading is not considered a relevant leisure activity early in life as it does not form part of children's social interaction.

However, there is an overriding desire amongst young people to spend more time with their friends than to remain at home reading or use the school library. Adults and children alike may enjoy television and films as a way of enjoying their leisure instead of reading. There is unprecedented rise in the price of books, while DVDs are becoming more affordable. Children with poor reading skills receive poor grades at school, get easily distracted and frustrated, have behavior problems, seem to dislike school, and often fail to develop to their full potential (Aina, Ogungbeni, Adigun and Ogundipe, 2011).

According to Antwi (1985) in Aina, Ogungbeni, Adigun and Ogundipe, (2011), studies showed a relationship between reading/early literacy and a child's emotional, mental health, and social behaviour. According to the researcher, a study done to show that reading was correlated with delinquency, independent of neighborhood, ethnicity, and family involvement, and was the same in both ethnic groups sampled and constant over the age range studied. The degree of seriousness of delinquent act was directly correlated to the degree of severity of reading problems. The study also showed that early in the primary grades, children who are struggling

with literacy begin to experience failure and related negative effects in interpersonal skills. These effects can include task-avoidance and acting out, lowered levels of personal regard, and seeking of personal validation in venues that are anti-social.

### **Nigerian Educational System**

Usono & Usanga (2007) in Oyetola and Adio (2020) expressed that the bedrock of education is the pre-primary and primary levels. This stage of development is crucial for building future adult citizens and workers.

Usono and Usanga (2007) as cited in Oyetola and Adio (2020) pointed out that, in underscoring the value of basic education, the Federal Government of Nigeria on September 30, 1999 launched the Universal Basic Education (UBE) programme, which is aimed at promoting literacy in Nigeria. The blueprint for UBE states that, as the foundation for sustainable Roles of the School Library in Education of Nigerian Child, lifelong learning that provides reading, writing, and numeracy skills should be inculcated. UBE makes provision for a wide variety of formal and informal activities and programmes designed to enable learners to acquire functional literacy. Moreover, it meant to prepare the children for the future, with the ability to think rationally and to solve problems creatively, to manage and retrieve information, in addition to communicating effectively. It is also designed to instill lifelong learning as a habit, since lifelong learning is the organizing principle for education. Thus the mission of education for children and youth is the development of skills for self-directed enquiry rather than the mere inculcation of subject matter.

Furthermore, way back in the late 1960s, the General Yakubu Gowon led government had an overriding passion to heal the wounds of the Nigerian civil war. The government came up

with the idea of building decent schools that could cultivate a group of unpolluted minds from across the nooks and crannies of Nigeria and ignore the vagaries of tribes and religion. This idea led to the establishment of Federal Government Colleges, also known as Unity Colleges. These schools are unifying institutions bringing together young Nigerians from diverse ethnic and religious divides with a view of instilling high quality education into the students in an environment of academic and excellent development devoid of religious, ethnic or social stratification (Danladi and Yohanna, 2018).

There are 104 unity schools in the country, inclusive of Federal Government College, (F.G.C), Jos. For instance, Federal Government College, Jos was established on 12<sup>th</sup> February 1973, on a temporary site along Bukuru Road which used to be the premises of the Nigerian Chambers of Mines, Jos. In October 1983, the college moved to its present permanent site, along Jos-Zaria road, about three kilometers from the main town. F.G.C Jos school library is as old as the school itself. It started with few collections of book, but has grown to house hundreds of collections. According to the library's accession register, the library has 858 books donated to it by STEB-B, and 1,003,216 library materials donated to it by Universal Basic Education (UBE). The library therefore, during this research has an approximate total collection of 1,004,074. These collections include mostly textbooks, and few novels, and periodicals. This indicates that Federal Government Colleges in Nigeria are well stocked with good library, however, State and Local Government Authorities School Libraries experience the reverse (Danladi and Yohanna 2018)

### **Roles of School Library in Educational System**

Cummins (2001) in Akintunde (2010) sees the school library as a learning resource centre responsible for making available a total package required by students, teachers and

parents. Adeniji, (2006) as stated in Danladi and Yohanna (2018) acknowledged that a school library is an important factor in the educational sector, enhancing academic excellence, as well as being the heart and soul of the educational system. Adefarati (2002) in Ajegbomogun and Salaam (2011) identifies the objectives of the school library as follows:

- to encourage the development of skill in reading
- to prompt reading habits to some level of literacy appreciation
- to sort for subject information and support the school curriculum
- to inculcate intellectual development

According to IFLA school libraries guidelines (2015) in Danladi and Yohanna (2018) the goal of all school libraries is to develop information literate students who are responsible and ethical participants in the society. The guideline further stresses that information literate students are competent, self-directed learners who are aware of their information needs and actively engage in the world of ideas. They display confidence in their ability to solve problems and know how to locate relevant and reliable information. They are able to manage technology tools to access information and to communicate what they have learnt; they are able to operate comfortably in situations where there are multiple answers or no answers. They hold high standard for their work and create quality products. Information literate students are flexible, able to adapt to change, and able to function both individually and in groups. These IFLA guidelines were made to inform decision makers to give support and guidance to the library community.

Eyre, (2005) in Elaturoti and Aramide (2012) asserted that school library has a direct relationship with the educational system and can reinforce basic literacy instruction by



supporting curriculum and instructional goals, consulting on individualized 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. Therefore, Segun (1995), Apeji (2000), Tokwe (2008) in Danladi and Yohanna (2018) noted that school libraries have been seen as parts of the most effective ways of renewing education because of their roles in transforming changes in children's reading abilities in which girls and boys everywhere are meant to learn how to read and write. As such, one of the significant purposes of the school library is to aid students develop love for reading, and to promote reading culture among its users. This implies the need to create the awareness of information resources, the need to read not only textbooks, but also to engage in creative, leisurely, and pleasurable reading.

In addition, Machet (2000), Machet and Pretorius (2003) as cited by Elaturoti and Aramide (2012) affirmed that classroom teachers and school librarians have roles to play 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. It reiterates 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. In order to do that, basic infrastructure, including a collection of learning resources, a place for them to be used and a school librarian to manage

them, is needed. Also, the size of the school library is important and to be effective, a large collection of books should be available (Elaturoti and Aramide 2012).

Fayose, (1998), Hart, (2002) in Elaturoti and Aramide (2012) opined that a wide range of learning resources exists through which pupils and teacher can obtain information and gain knowledge. A large variety and plentiful supply of resources are required in the school library to encourage independent study so that young people from 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 which active mental efforts can be achieved. 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.

Libraries provide access to reading materials through which school children and youths can gain and improve their skills. Libraries help introduce the use of reading for information, pleasure, passing examinations, and personal growth through lifelong learning. Libraries provide materials that offer more extensive and varied information than classroom study alone. Voluntary reading helps develop reading skills and mastery of language, extends students knowledge, and assists them in their academic work. Students and youths who read are likely to have background knowledge, familiarity with new topics or subjects, and thus, find learning easier and interesting.

The role of the libraries in promoting reading is especially crucial in developing scientific, reflective thinking and creativity. Librarians can help children and youths develop critical and independent thinking through their exposure to a wide variety of instructional

resources and learning opportunities. 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. These are difficult to teach in the classrooms. In the process of encouraging or inculcating the reading habit in children and youth, stakeholders (parents, teachers, schools, librarians and other library staff) should avoid nagging, bribing, judging, criticizing reading choices, and setting unreasonable goals.

Therefore, ways in which the school library can play its role in promoting education among students as enumerated by Oji & Habibu (2011) in Danladi and Yohanna (2018) include:

- **Through Book Exhibition and Book Talk:** This activity can be organized so that children and adolescents can talk about interesting books they have read. They could describe characters and bring out similarities in many characters. The teacher librarian could read to them or each child in turn. The librarian could pick a book and talk on it; stimulate interest in the book and ask children to read book and could come back for further literacy analysis of the book.
- **Organizing Story-Talk Hour:** This could be organized for evening of weekdays or Saturdays. Story telling is not new to some children who already have the opportunity at home. Story-telling is a universal activity as old as time itself. This activity is important for children's mental and emotional development. Traditional folktales and legends from different parts of the country could be used which would appeal to young people's sense of adventure and imagination which would stimulate love for reading African authors.
- **Creative Activities or Creative Writing:** This involves the creativity of the child. Teacher librarians should encourage students to create puppets, either with paper, clay. Puppets can be used to act in stories. After a reading aloud session, or a story telling session, students could be

asked to write a short story on what they were told or read to. This would provide wonderful stimulus for reading among children.

- **Clubs:** The teacher librarian could introduce the formation of clubs within the library set-up. The club could be centered on hobbies of children. The library's role here would be, to provide all reference and information materials for the chosen hobby. The club members will then build on the information with assistance of the librarian. In this way they get to know the role of the librarian in both their recreational and educational lives.

- **Drama:** Drama presentation can be light or heavily involved. During the story telling hours, children could act certain parts in the story. Drama could also be organized, where children take home and learn their parts properly. The drama could be presented during end of year activities or special occasions in the school. While providing entertainment, drama sharpens hidden talents of the child.

- **Mobile Reading Tents:** Once in a month, on Saturdays, or during the long vacation, tents could be pitched in a school playground with a lot of prior publicity and fun fare. Here under the supervision of a certified librarian, the library books are made available for reading, story-telling session, drama presentation based on theme from books which have been read, impromptu speeches, book talks, and books can be read in turn and prizes could be awarded to the winners.

- **Collection development:** In order to create a culture in which all students are encouraged to become avid or enthusiastic readers, there should be consultation with students to learn of their interests and to have to ensure that the range of reading materials available in the school library reflects these interests. This is in recognition of the fact that a wide range of reading materials

will encourage students to read. There could be a breach of protocols to include the students in the planning and delivery of reading materials for the school library collection.

Thus, Aina, Okusaga, Taiwo, & Ogunidipe, (2011) in Danladi and Yohanna (2018) opined that teacher librarians can encourage students to make use of the library. Librarians can liaise with teachers to encourage maximum use of the library and its resources by giving pupils assignments/projects that would necessitate their frequent visit to the library. Such assignments must be practical in nature. It may entail reading an entire novel and summarizing it, or using the library resources to solve an environmental problem.

### **Challenges and Proffered Solution to the Use of School Library in Educational System**

There are a lot of factors or challenges that bedeviled use of school library resources. These factors as enumerated by Ukoha (2015) in Danladi and Soko (2018) are:

1. **Technology:** The amount of technology available in most homes has amounted to distraction, which draw young adults away from informational and recreational reading. Many students return home from school and spend the rest of the day playing video games, surfing and chatting on the internet, watching televisions, listening to music or talking on the phone. Since the entry of (smart) phones into Nigeria, Nigerian students have concentrated more on phones than reading books. They are seen taking “selfie” photos, or beaming with smiles while chatting on social sites such as, Facebook, WhatsApp, or boisterously laughing most of the time as they discuss over the phone. Therefore, the acquisition of handsets by students has helped to distract secondary school students from developing good reading culture. Nonetheless, reading culture should be integrated into the school curriculum

2. **Non availability of human and material resources:** There is non availability of human and material resources for the teaching of reading as a school subject, and the general literacy level of the society. Like many other African countries, Nigeria still have a prevalence of good oral tradition. This can be seen in the habit of utter regard for data and facts for rumors, and disregard for record keeping. There is no provision for reading as taught subject in the Nigerian secondary school curriculum. There are no reading laboratories in any secondary school in Nigeria. There are no facilities to train reading specialists and trained teacher librarians are non-existent in most schools. Therefore, more information resources should be acquired and school librarians should be employed to manage the resources

3. **Non-existent and poorly equipped libraries:** School libraries are non-existent in the greater population of secondary schools in Nigeria. In schools where they are existent, they are poorly equipped. Many of their collections are outdated. This inhibits the development of good reading habit. It was also observed that African libraries are stocked with foreign literatures that are not only out of date but also irrelevant to the information needs and interests of the people. Collection development has become more difficult in recent times with escalating book and publishing cost. Also, as a result of gross under-funding by Nigerian government, current books, periodicals, magazines, fictions and non-fictions that can support teaching and student use in the school's library were not there. The school libraries are warehouse of old books, some of which were covered with dust that had gathered over time, with mismatched chairs and tables blending well with the ageing bookshelves. In the Northern part of Nigeria, development of school libraries have been described as "accidental", even though almost all the secondary schools had library building but books were not there.

#### **4. Lack of adequate students' awareness of the importance of a good reading culture:**

There are no mediums to educate students, and the general public on the need and importance of good reading culture. There should be campaign on the importance of the development of good reading culture for lifelong literacy and development

#### **5. Declining financial support**

Elaturoti (1983), Kantumoya (1992), Oloruntoba and Bolarinwa (2000), Adetoro (2004) in Ajegbomogun and Salaam (2011) expressed that about 90 per cent of the schools are substantially government funded. In recent times, government has not faithfully released due grants to the schools. The lack of financial resources retards positive change in school library collection. Thus, Fund must be made available not only for the procurement of information sources but also for the improvement of library services in order to meet the information needs of the students. On their own contribution, it was asserted that for proper functioning of a school library, every state ministry of education should provide funds for the establishment of libraries in all Nigerian schools.

#### **Inadequate infrastructure and equipment**

The most widely experienced disappointment in public school today is the dilapidated structure called library which cannot be compared with what obtain in the private schools in Nigeria. The buildings housing the library do not merit the standard specification in terms of library space per pupils while the furniture is grossly inadequate. This was further summarized by that state of school libraries in Nigeria; do exist in secondary schools, but many almost in name, because all the elements required for them to operate are not put in place. This observation is not peculiar to the terrain of libraries in Nigeria but also school libraries as part of libraries are

sometimes converted to classrooms or where staff meetings are held without any consideration to whether such will be conducive for learning.

Most school libraries in Nigeria lack tables, chairs, fans, shelves etc. The absence of these facilities continues to retard information advancement in Nigeria. Similarly, a study of comparative analysis of school libraries development and use in selected public and private school in Ogun State, Nigeria found that the schools use improvised accommodation for library but lacks qualified personnel while the library are occasionally and infrequently used. This is as a result of the fact that facilities, resources and equipments are not sufficient and most of them are dilapidated especially in public schools. Therefore, structures and resources should be raised.

### **Employment of unqualified personnel**

Staffing is also part of the problems hindering effective use of library and information centre in primary and secondary schools in Nigeria. The idea of using unqualified personnel as school/teachers/librarian has not helped matters as most of them will not be able to assist in the full exploitation of library resources as they were not educationally equipped to do so. Though this scenario is also attainable in some of the developed countries, for example a research was carried out in Canada 2003/04 in schools. A survey reported that there is significant and widespread reduction of full-time teacher-librarian staffing in most parts of Canada. The data reflects the decline in school library resources and reduction on numbers of teacher-librarians across the country. Although the research results showed that more than 93% of schools have library facilities, very few schools have full-time teacher-librarians. On average, a school has 75% a part-time teacher-librarian, meaning that many libraries are not professionally staffed. In a study of some secondary school libraries in the western part of Nigeria, it was found that the



situation is 'regrettably poor'. There were very few or no staff to manage existing school libraries. Thus, professional librarians should be employed to manage the libraries.

### **Low level of information technology development**

Lack of financial resources and high cost of computer accessories has reduced the trends in the adoption of automated library system in school libraries while such has limited access to a variety of information on stored data. Also, where it is available, students were restricted from using them. Hence, ICT should be integrated into school library services.

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

It could be summarized and concluded that the school media resource centre plays a major role in facilitating the teaching and learning of reading through the use of school library resources. It is also worthy of note that irrespective of location, school media resource centre remains an integral part of the school system and a fundamental impetus to effective teaching. Therefore, government of Nigeria and other African countries and every school should endeavour to establish school media resource centre or expand the existing school library to accommodate multimedia resources for adequate learning of the African Child (Akintunde 2010).

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