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The Impact of Kenya National Library Services (KNLS), Kisumu Provincial Mobile Library Services On Education in Kisumu County,Kenya.

James Macharia Tutu
Maseno University, jmacharia71@gmail.com

THE IMPACT OF KNLS KISUMU PROVINCIAL MOBILE LIBRARY SERVICES ON EDUCATION IN KISUMU COUNTY

Abstract

The purpose of this study was to establish the impact of KNLS Kisumu provincial mobile library services on education in Kisumu County. Qualitative research approach was used to conduct the study. Interviews were used to collect data and data was analysed qualitatively. Ten schools were sampled for the study, six secondary schools and four primary schools. Personnel working with KNLS Kisumu provincial mobile library services and teachers in sampled schools were interviewed. The study established that the impact of KNLS Kisumu provincial mobile library services on education in Kisumu County was positive. The study recommends the diversification of the mobile library services by offering internet services.

Key words: mobile libraries, Kenya National Library Services, education

1. Introduction and Background Information

Mobile library is any kind of medium that takes books and other library items to people. This medium rages from vans, rivers and canals, trains, sacks, donkeys and camels. Mobile libraries are important in meeting the information and literacy needs of the populace, consequently improving their education and living standards. (Lucas 2002; Montet 2009).

Mobile library is not a new concept but has existed for a long time and in different forms in the world over. In Kenya mobile library was initiated as an integral library service of   Kenya National Library Service. Numerous studies have been done on mobile library services for example Doust (1999) who studied the provisional of mobile library service in Zimbabwe; Ude (1983) who reviewed the development of mobile library in Nigeria; Khanna (1994) who examined the relationship between public mobile library with public schools in India; and Ioannis and Carpenter (1995) who did an overview study of public libraries and mobile libraries in Greece. Atuti and Odongo in 1999 did a study on mobile library service in Kenya focusing on camel library services, and in 2002 Atuti carried out a general research on the mobile library service in Kenya.

The studies cited above mainly concentrated on describing the mobile library services in diverse countries. During literature review it was established that there are very few, if any studies focusing on the impact of mobile library service on education. It seems the main focus of offering mobile library services by the public libraries is to reach library users who stay far away from the public libraries, and seldom visit the library.

This study aimed at addressing the lack of literature on impact of mobile library services on education in Kenya. However, the study focused on Kisumu County, in western Kenya.

2 Statement of the problem

The mobile library plays an important role of taking library services to where the users are, especially those living miles away from the public libraries. The mobile library service targets mostly people living in remote and rural areas, and the urban poor where basic services are hard to find. Largely, people living in rural areas in Kenya are poor, and therefore, they cannot afford to buy books for their school going children and for general reading, consequently the education standards in these areas are low due to lack of reading materials.

2.1. Purpose of the study and objectives

This study purposed to establish the impact of Kenya national library service (KNLS) kisumu provincial mobile library services on education in Kisumu County.

The study was guided by the following objectives:

1. To establish the KNLS Kisumu mobile library service target group

2. To establish the objectives of the KNLS Kisumu mobile library service

3. To establish the services offered by the KNLS Kisumu mobile library service

3. Mobile library and its context

3.1. Mobile library models

Mobile library is known in various terms such as bookmobile, travelling library or library on wheels, however, in this study the term mobile library is preferred. Mobile library is defined as 'a vehicle designed, equipped and operated to extend and facilitate access to public library service to those people who do not have reasonably convenient access to a public library' (Kenneally and Payne cited from Library Council of Victoria 2000 : 63).

As defined above the concept mobile library is usually associated with a vehicle, nevertheless, this is not the case world over. The means used to provide mobile library services across the globe varies greatly. Monley and Pestell (1996: 78) clearly captures this phenomenon by noting that the term 'mobile libraries' encompasses a great many different means of service delivery, "from the book barges of Thailand and Sweden, to the book canoe on the Orinoco River in Venezuela, to the mules serving the isolated villages of Brazil, the helicopters of the Commonwealth of Independent States, and the bicycles of Nigeria".

Innovative and unique models for mobile library globally abound. Dedicated to taking library services to the disadvantaged, isolated communities in remote areas, rural areas, hospitals, correction centres, and urban poor living in the slums, public library services have embraced exceptional ways of delivering mobile library services. Example include: The donkey cart library in Zimbabwe; The Camel Caravan service of the National Library in Kenya; The Mobile Floating Library in Thailand; The Library Wagon in Mali; and Greece's "Blue Sack".(Lucas 2002).

Despite the mobile library models adopted, the underlying basis is taking library services to the populace, and the only differentiating feature is the mode used to convey the services. This plays a major role on the type of services that can be offered. For instance the use of camels caravans in Kenya, dictates the services and duration at which the services can be offered. The camel library service serves readers from Mondays to Thursdays, and camels are released on Fridays to Sundays to go and feed, recuperate and are vetted for any signs of disease and treatment (KNLS 2010). Such like models are limited in terms of services offered and coverage.

The advent of information technology heralded a decline in mobile library services. In United Kingdom for instance in 2003 there were 656 mobile libraries in operation down from 719 in 1990. However, this does not mean that mobile library is dead, for in some places it is thriving (Hickman 2010). To be in tune with changing trends and to remain relevant mobile libraries are adopting new models, that of combining mobile libraries with information technology. For instance in Nigeria Mobile Community Telecenter is a van that carries laptops as well as library books on specified weekdays to the rural villages where users can access IT training, reading materials and the Internet. (Lucas 2002).

Mobile library service is undergoing a revolution with adoption of new model that incorporates information technology and new designs for the vehicles. 'Many new features are being introduced into vehicle design, from various suspension systems, one of which allows the whole of the vehicle to sink down to ground level to permit easy access; to new body materials which provide better insulation, durability and streamlining; to major enhancements which increases the physical space of the library and provides much improved access to the library' (Monley & Pestell 1996:79).

Mobile library vehicles are being designed to provide for:

➢ workstations: secure housing for equipment, space, comfort and ease of access, and flexibility;

➢ Storage: adequate storage that is accessible, lockable, multiuse, functional and spacious;

➢ shelving: robust, flexible, adjustable, and aesthetically pleasing;

➢ exit/entry: integration of an entry point with disabled access; seating: location, ergonomic design, flexible and replaceable;

➢ seating, cooling and lighting: cost efficient, effective and unobtrusive;

➢ Stabilisation and levelling flexibility for sloping sites. (Kenneally &Payne 2000:66-67).

Mobile libraries are being transformed into information mobile services. Mobile libraries are no longer serving as a standalone library service point but as an integral part of the public library service and as an extension of the main library. The mobile libraries are being equipped with photocopying facilities, facsimile transmission, online circulation systems, database searching and access to CDRom multimedia packages and connected to the main library over the internet (Monley & Pestell 1996: 79; King & Shanks 2000:14).

3.2. Rationale for mobile library services

Mobile libraries according to Monley and Pestell (1996:78-79) do more than what a static Library does by delivering library services to where the people are. Mobile libraries are flexible as a result they provide library services to areas that may be difficult or uneconomical to put up a library. Mobile libraries reach out to people living in remote and rural areas, where visits to nearest library are infrequent.

Mobile libraries cater for communities with low population and nomadic communities who keep on moving. Innovative mobile libraries models provide library services to communities denied the opportunity of accessing the library services by poor communication and transport infrastructures. Mobile libraries bridge the gap caused by lack of funds to put up libraries. In addition, mobile libraries can be used as sounding- board to gauge the feasibility of constructing libraries depending on demand of services in areas covered. Mobile libraries act as the only source of information in remote areas. (Atuti 2002:2)

Mobile libraries play a major role in fighting illiteracy by providing the basic information literacy skill of reading, writing and numeracy. By providing reading materials to the disadvantaged members of the society mobile libraries support and boast formal education standards. Taking library services to communities in remote areas impresses upon the communities the importance of education, and this acts as an impetus for these communities to take their children to schools. Mobile libraries also help to curb social vices that may arise due to idleness by encouraging reading for leisure and general knowledge. Living in knowledge society demands continuous learning which is impossible for the disadvantaged members of the society, mobile libraries addresses this short coming by encouraging lifelong learning by, not only providing reading materials, but also internet services to such members of the community. (KNLS 2010)

3.3. Mobile library service in Kenya

Kenya National Library Service (KNLS) is the body responsible for the provision of public library services in Kenya. It has a network of 46 branches countrywide. Out of these, eight are provincial, seven are district and 31 are community-based libraries. In addition, there are five motorised mobile libraries and two non-motorised libraries (camel and donkey mobile libraries). Besides the motorised and animal mobile library services, KNLS also has book box service, a collaborative initiative with the community aimed at enabling school children access books. The structure of the KNLS was patterned according to administrative structure of the Kenyan government, which has been superseded by counties following the enactment of new constitution that seeks to abolish the former administrative structure. However, in this study both administrative structures will be referred to as situation demands. Thus KNLS established eight provincial public library branches in 1969-1980, namely kisumu in 1969; Embu 1970; Nyeri 1971; Kakamega 1972; and Headquaters (Nairobi) 1974. These provincial libraries had the onus of providing library services to the public, besides offering mobile library services. (KNLS 2010)

The goal of mobile library service in Kenya is to expand the library services to 'inconvenienced user communities in both rural and urban areas'. The objectives of the mobile library service in Kenya are:

- To promote literacy and reading recovery programs in rural areas

- To support sustainable independent and lifelong learning

- To supplement formal and informal education

- To promote awareness of the role of the library in society

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- To build on innovative ways to access information to disadvantaged groups of society

- To provide professional advice to institutions and promote best practices in managing small resource centres and/or school libraries. (Atuti 2002 :3)

Mobile library targets secondary students, farmers, health and social workers in rural areas, and other readers in various professions. KNLS runs three distinct mobile library services: vehicle mobile library service; motorbike/book box service; and donkey/ camel mobile library service. The vehicle mobile library service is the oldest and library vans are used to take library services to designated areas in stipulated intervals. The motorbike/ book box service is a collaborative effort between the branch libraries with schools. The schools contribute money to buy books from prescribed lists. The lists are different from each school and this allows the exchange of books among the participating schools. The branch library is responsible for the buying and managing the books. The books are transported to the schools by a motorbike, and loaned to the schools for a period of one month. Once the loan period is over the books are returned to the library for forwarding to the next school. The program has impacted positively to the education standards of the participating schools by improving the overall schools performance in national exams. (Atuti 2002: 3-4)

Camel Library Service (CLS) is an ambitious mobile library service conceived and launched by KNLS in 1996, to serve the nomadic pastoralists communities living in North Eastern Part of Kenya. Unlike in other provincial libraries KNLS was unable to offer motorized mobile libraries in North Eastern part of Kenya due to poor roads, temporary settlements and nomadic lifestyle of the community. Camels, which are the predominate mode of transport in the region offered a perfect alternative. KNLS started offering the CLS in Garrisa in 1996 and 1999 in Wajir, operating in a radius of about 15 kilometres from the static libraries, and targeting school children, adult learners, social workers involved in various community initiatives and retirees.

The objectives of CLS are:

a) to ensure accessible library and information services to the pastoral communities;

b) To participate and assist in the eradication of illiteracy*;*

c) To support formal education*;*

d) To support vulnerable groups access to books and encourage education;

e) To Encourage and provide information for leisure reading and general Knowledge, and to stimulate public interest in books and reading habits for lifelong learning.

The service has impacted positively to the education of the school children using the service by raising their performance in national examination. Moreover, the adaptation of Camels to offer mobile library service the KNLS has also replicated the Donkey mobile library in Zimbabwe. The Donkey library service is operational in Nyilima, Bondo district, serving the community and schools within a 20 kilometers radius from Nyilima community library. (KNLS 2010).

4. Methodology

Qualitative research approach was adopted for this study. The target population of the study were primary and secondary schools served by KNLS kisumu mobile library service. Convenience sampling, Non-probability sampling strategy, was used for sampling. Structured interviews were used for data collection. The data was analysed qualitatively and represented thematically.

Qualitative approach was adopted because the researcher wanted to collect rich data to help establish the relationship between the mobile library service and education standards in Kisumu County. Besides, the qualitative method compared to quantitative method is open, flexible and broader in its approach.

The population of the study comprised the clientele served by KNLS Kisumu mobile library service in Kisumu County. The clientele include primary and secondary schools, farmers and business people in remote and rural areas of Kisumu County. However, the researcher narrowed the population of study and targeted primary and secondary schools enrolled in the mobile library service program.

The target population of study comprised of secondary and primary schools in Kisumu County served by the KNLS Kisumu mobile library service. The total number of schools served by KNLS Kisumu mobile library service is 50 out of these there are 20 secondary schools and 30 primary schools. The total target population for the study was thus 50 schools

Non-probability sampling was used to draw the sample of the study. Non-probability sampling has be castigated as being inferior because it is not representative of the target population and therefore the results cannot be generalized to the whole population. Despite this weakness the researcher decide to use it because of one, the goal of the study was not to generalise the result to the whole population, two, few cases included in the sample, three, to gain a wider understanding of impact of mobile library service on education standards, four, the method is time saving and economical.

The non-probability sampling technique used was convenience sampling. The research selected those schools that were easily accessible. This had the advantage of being economical in terms of money and time.

From the target population of 50 schools a sample of 10 were drawn for the study. The sample size comprised six secondary schools and four primary schools. The secondary schools sampled were Ebuyalu, Ndiru, Barunion, Osir,Ongalo, and Tiengie.; while Primary schools included: Kibwaji, Kisiani, Akala,and Ramula.

5. Data collection and analysis

The main technique used for data collection was a structured interview. Interviews were conducted with personnel working with KNLS Kisumu mobile library service, and teachers in sampled secondary and secondary schools.

The interview method was used in order to collect more, rich and in-depth information; it offered the researcher more control by giving him the option of whom to interview; the researcher was able to explain the purpose of the research, and clarify questions to the interviewees, besides seeking clarification from the interviewees and making immediate follow up. The interview provided a high respond rate because they were no cases of missing returns, and non-response that are experienced in questionnaires.

Interview were conduct with KNLS mobile library service staff to establish when the mobile library service was started; the targeted users; type of services offered; objectives of the service; and its overall impact in the target user groups. The secondary and primary school teachers were interviewed to gain information on impact of the program on the education standards in their schools in terms of school performance in national examination, reading, writing and numeracy literacy.

The data collected was qualitative in nature; the analysis was thus done thematically. Broad themes were identified from data collected and analysed. The themes identified included the origin of the KNLS Kisumu mobile library service; users; services offered and how they are offered; impact of the service on education in light of performance in national examination, reading, writing and numeracy.

5. Findings

5.1. KNLS Kisumu mobile library service

KNLS kisumu library is one of 46 branches of KNLS libraries in Kenya. It was established in 1969 to serve the expanse Nyanza region. Mobile library service was one of its outreach services to people leaving in rural Nyanza. The service has been in operation since the establishment of the library. The objectives of the mobile library service include:

- To provide library services to populace living in rural Nyanza.
- To promote and market the KNLS Kisumu library services.
- To bridge the gap caused by lack of enough static branch libraries in remote areas.
- To raise the living and educational standards of the rural populace by providing them with relevant information resources.

5.2 Services and target group

KNLS Kisumu mobile library offers a variety of library services to its users. The services offered include current awareness, HIV awareness, civic education, and advisory services on career choices for students and information literacy.

The Kisumu mobile library service targets schools, primary and secondary schools, farmers, business communities and public servants working in the rural areas, and the general public. The mobile library service is offered by use of a van. The library has only one van which covers the selected remote areas in Kisumu County. The van makes weekly visits to the designated areas and schools. The services are offered to the public during market days. During the visits members of the public are allowed to read from the van and registered

members, who are both members of the public and school children, can borrow books for a period of one week.

The KNLS Kisumu mobile library provides a number of reading materials to the users. These materials include textbooks, reference books, fiction, magazines and journals, bulletins on AIDS, family planning, farming methods, fishing, soil erosion, and income generating projects.

5.3. Impact of KNLS Kisumu mobile library service.
The impact of KNLS Kisumu mobile library service has been positive. Farmers have been able to adapt new farming techniques which has improved their farming and improved their income. Information on entrepreneurship has seen many rural people starting small income generating activities. People living with AIDS have benefitted by getting information on how to live positively, while the infection rate has gone down following awareness on how to prevent infection and spread of the scourge. Education on importance of family planning has increased the adoption of family planning methods enabling the planning and spacing of number of children which has immensely improved the living standards of people.

The impact of KNLS Kisumu mobile library service in education has been enormous. The performance of schools involved in the program in national examination has been superb. Reading, writing and numeracy skills of the students has been enhanced immensely. The number of students, however, is high compared to the available resources.

6. Conclusion and recommendations
KNLS Kisumu mobile library service has had a positive impact on the education in Kisumu County. The service has improved the examination performance of participating schools. The reading, writing and numeracy skills of the students have been greatly enhanced through the information resources provided to the student for private study and general reading.

There is a need to increase the number of vans and information resources serving the Kisumu County owing to its high population. The KNLS Kisumu mobile library service should consider increasing the number of users by involving more schools in the program. The loan period should be increased from one week to two weeks to give users more time to use the books.

The KNLS Kisumu mobile library service should also consider diversifying its services by offering internet services to their users. The van could be powered by use of solar energy and equipped with lat tops that can be used by their users to search for relevant information in the internet.

The KNLS Kisumu mobile library service could also consider offering non-print information resources like CDROMS, to their users.

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