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Enhancing Literacy Learning among Primary School Pupils in Nsukka Local Government Area of Enugu State: The Role of the Children's Centre Library, University of Nigeria, Nsukka.

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Abstract.

This study examines the role of the Children's Centre, University of Nigeria, Nsukka in enhancing literacy learning among primary school age pupils of Nsukka Local Government Area. The study is a case study that employed qualitative method. Four specific objectives guided the study. Five members of the Children's Centre were purposively selected to participate in the study. An unstructured questionnaire and oral face to face interview were used for data collation. The data collated were coded, sorted, interpreted and presented in narratives. Findings revealed that Children's Centre contributed in enhancing literacy development among primary school pupils in Nsukka Local Government Area, Enugu State, through school library development, workshops for head teachers and teacher librarians amongst others. The study concludes that the Children's Centre has contributed immensely in transforming the lives of Nsukka children and at the same time helped to design a world free of child poverty for their children's to come as being literate is a condition for gainful employment and better living condition.

Keywords: Children's Centre, literacy, Nsukka Local Government, library development, child poverty.

Literacy once defined simply as the act of reading and writing has currently assumed more dimensions. It now involves all skills required by an individual to become an effective citizen. Program for International School Assessment (PISA) cited in Freebody (2007) defined literacy as the ability to understand and employ printed information in daily activities, at home, work and the community to achieve one's goals, and develop one's knowledge and potential; and to

participate effectively in society. National Literacy Trust (2017) defined it as the ability to read, write, speak and listen in a way that enables individuals to make meaning out of the world around them. Literacy is important in the lives of individuals all over the world. Among the children, it enables them to progress in life both within and outside of school. Literacy enables a child to read school text books and other supplementary materials, read road signs, learn social values and other cultures. Literacy prepares children for adult life and ensures that the child has the capability of being gainfully employed in future. Studies have shown that children who are literate have better mental development than their age mates who are not (Clack and Teravainen-Goff, 2018). Among adults, literacy enables adults to support their children's literacy needs, read newspapers or magazines, join political debates and contribute positively to societal development. Literacy therefore lifts one off the life of dependency and makes one an effective citizen.

An effective citizen is one who is gainfully employed and contributes to societal development. An effective citizen has the capacity to take proper care of his family and relations in terms of provision of good food, drinking water, shelter, education and access to health care services. Literate individual and societies are therefore more likely to produce literate and healthier children than non-literate ones. Being literate is a prerequisite for gainful employment. Literacy therefore is a viable tool in fighting child poverty. Child poverty exists in situations where a child is lacking the basic things of life. The quest for literacy has forced governments to formulate policies aimed at ensuring that all their citizens are literate. Thus, there is the Literate Futures Project in Queensland, Australia and No Child Left Behind Project in USA. In Nigeria, there have been the Universal Free Primary Education of 1976 and the School Feeding Program 2008 and 2016.

Yet, not all children were able to acquire literacy. UNICEF (2015) noted that in Nigeria, 10.5 million children are out of school. These children will never acquire literacy as school attendance is one of the major ways of acquiring literacy in Nigeria. In European countries, Spain, Portugal and Malta have the greatest number of out of school children (Tudarel, Teodorescu and Oancea (2011). In America, Childs Trend Databank (2018) noted that school dropout has been in the decrease. Inability of school age children to acquire literacy has been attributed to many factors. In developed nations like Spain, Genlotts and Gronlund (2013) attributed the problem to too little time spent in schools and lack of teachers. In a developing country such as Nigeria, and especially among the rural populace, failure of children to acquire literacy skills has been attributed to lack of literacy learning materials and poor school attendance (Osadebe, 2015). Inability of Nigerian children to acquire literacy skills has forced many Nigerian civil society organizations to rise up in challenge of the situation. Among them is the Children's Centre, University of Nigeria, Nsukka.

The Children's Centre founded in 1978 is a project of the University Women Association, University of Nigeria, Nsukka. Originally, the focus of the Children's Centre activities was on the children of the university community, whose parents having been acquainted with ideas of

voluntarism and educational enrichment through libraries and varied recreational activities in oversea countries saw a gap (non-availability of libraries, recreational facilities and reading materials related to the local environment to help their children integrate properly into the society) in the education of their children in the University town of Nsukka Enugu State, Nigeria and tried to fill it. The idea was later enlarged to include children outside the University community who lack access to reading materials of any sort because of poverty and lack of awareness on the part of their parents on the importance of buying textbooks and pleasure reading materials for their children. The Centre went further to help some primary schools within the area to develop school libraries and offer training programmes for teacher librarians. Since its inception in 1978 till date, there has not been any effort to document the literacy promotion activities of the Children's Centre in Nsukka Local Government Area. This creates a gap in knowledge. It is this gap that this study sets out to bridge.

Objectives of the study.

The general objective of this study is to examine the role of the Children's Centre, University of Nigeria, Nsukka in enhancing literacy learning among primary school pupils in Nsukka Local Government Area, Enugu State. Specifically the study will:

1. Examine the factors that brought about Children's Centre literacy activities in Nsukka LGA.
2. Identity the strategies employed by the Children's Centre in enhancing literacy learning among children in Nsukka LGA.
3. Examine the materials used by the Centre in enhancing literacy learning among children.
4. Identify the problems encountered by the Centre in enhancing literacy learning among primary school pupil of Nsukka Local Government Area.

Literature review

Factors that force organizations to engage in Literacy learning activities

Organizations engage in literacy learning activities for a number of reasons. In Florida, USA, the Babara Bush Foundation for Family Literacy saw literacy as a way of creating equal opportunities for all children. The organization believes that parents are critical cornerstone for child literacy. The organization saw parental involvement in children's literacy learning as being more important than family background and economic status. To this end, the association aimed at passing literacy from parents to children, to families and to the world. The organization therefore encourages parents to read to their children (2017-2018 Report, Literacy for all).

Every child a reader is another USA based Non-governmental organization dedicated to instilling a lifelong love of reading in children. The aim is to make reading and enjoyment of children's books an essential part of America's educational and social aims and to enhance public perception of the importance of reading (Every child a reader, 2018).

Dolly Parton's Imagination Library is yet another organization that in involved in literacy learning in USA. It is founded in 1990. It is a book gifting program that mails free books to children from birth to age five in participating communities within the United States, United Kingdom,

Canada and Australia. The library was owned by the musical artist Dolly Parton. Dolly Parton was inspired to develop the library by her father's inability to read and write. The library was aimed to foster the love of reading among her county's (East Tennessee, USA) pre-school children and their families by providing them with the gift of specially selected book each month. (Dolly Parton's Imaginary Library, 2018).

There are other organizations like Book adventure, Bookshare, Children's Literacy Initiative and many more that are involved in enhancing literacy.

Strategies for enhancing literacy learning among primary school children

Various strategies can be employed to enhance literacy learning among children. These strategies include Read aloud, storytelling, engaging children in play, project work, interactions, explorations, reading, phonological activities, literacy scaffolding, and literature dramatization as well as involving children in book clubs (Bush, 2017). Wardle (2008) posits that literacy learning should be part of children's daily activities at school employing various strategies. Authors such as Dickson, Griffith, Golinkoff and Hursh-Pasek, 2012; and Gold & Gibson, 2018, observed that development of literacy skills starts very early in life. These authors posit that reading aloud to children early in life help to develop their language skills and enhance literacy development. 'Readout and Read' (2014) notes that reading aloud to children helps in acquiring wide range of vocabularies, builds motivation, curiosity and memory. Gold and Gibson (2018) added that reading aloud builds confidence and expert reading in children, connects the reading context with the universal concepts, as well as connects books to children's personal life experiences. Dickson, Griffith, Golinkoff and Hirsh-Pasek (2012) submits that language abilities surface early in children's life depending on how often parents read to their children and provision of conducive home environment (Waldfoegel, 2012). Thus, reading aloud to children and teaching children how to read combine to promote literacy skills among children. Dr. Seuss cited in Dickson et al (2012) opined that children learn more by reading.

Interacting with a child in the child's first language or mother tongue can be a wonderful strategy in teaching the child literacy. Wilson, (2006) noted that literacy is most easily developed through the child's first or home language in early childhood education, especially among second language learners. Wilson went on to suggest that where the teacher does not know the child's first language, other strategies could be employed. Among other strategies mentioned by Wilson is project work, which involves active play and demonstrations, creation of dramatic play environment, follow up activities (in small groups) such as watching video of a field site. Wilson explains that demonstration provides opportunities to learners to practice speaking and listening, as well as being introduced to new vocabularies with concrete examples. While dramatic play environment, in which the theme revolves around the context of the instruction, encourages role play and spoken language skills through peer interactions.

Story telling is important in literacy learning too. Just as reading books to children help to develop their oral language, storytelling is also a strategy used to develop and improve oral language, reading comprehension and writing. Miller and Pennycuff (2008) state that when storytelling is interwoven into classroom instructions, it helps to increase students' competencies in all areas of learning. Isabel, *et al* (2004) as cited in Miller and Pennycuff (2008) observe that some of the effective elements of storytelling are repetition, sounds, and gestures and imagination

which add to make the teller deeply and personally involved in the story. Also Wallace, (2000) in Miller and Pennycuff (2008) underscores the effect of storytelling in enhancing literacy by adding that storytelling facilitates meaningful communication. Massa (2018) contends that storytelling helps to build and refine literary and imaginative skills. Macdonald cited in Massa (2018) believes that among other benefits, storytelling improves the ability to listen, speak, imagine, compose phrases and creates stories.

Play and literature-dramatization are important related strategies employ by teachers during instruction to encourage listening and interaction among children. Mielonen and Paterson (2009) stated that play helps to enhance language development through social interaction, language skills, reading and writing competences. Tsao (2008) as cited in Mielonen and Paterson (2009) concurs by adding that communication with other children through play enhances children's knowledge, spoken language, learning and literary skills. Also, Cox (2012) adds that story dramatization assist language development and achievement in oral and written story recall, writing and reading for students.

Project work involving demonstrations, as well as explorations encourages children to express themselves. Neuman, Copple, and Bredekamp, (2000) as cited in Wardle (2008) explain that play allows children to internalize new ideas and skills, integrate them with other knowledge, and begin to use them in their daily lives. Play also provides an essential environment for literacy learning. Wardle (2008) also suggests that concepts and skills learnt should be repeatedly used and practiced every day by the learners through projects, interactions, and explorations until the concept or skill gets registered in their minds.

Other important strategies include scaffolding, phonological activities and book-clubs. According to Boyle and Perego, (1990) scaffolding makes use of sentence patterns, employing repetition. This helps to involve the child in a meaningful literary activity because it requires little or no second language proficiency. Neumann and Neumann (2010) noted that parental scaffolding is a strategy parents used to support children to develop emergent writing skills. It also helps to develop 'visual cues'. Phonological processing is the ability to think about the properties of words (Tomblin, 2010). Reading Resource.net (2009) and Tomblin, (2010) agree that phonological activities are the methods used by the teacher or parents to create awareness of some syllables in vocabularies and languages such as taking "baby" apart into two syllables, /ba/ and /be/. A few of the phonological activities include: Tapping Syllables- (this involves handclapping, drums, and use of tennis rackets); drawing of smiley faces on some syllables, etc; identifying of words that start or end alike through their sounds; etc. Sequencing and Blending- this activity uses rhyming songs to separate sounds and identify items' names through their sound. Furthermore, Research and experience have shown that book-clubs can promote reading, enjoyment of books, and literary practices among families, teachers and the wider communities. It helps to bridge possible discontinuity between home and school literacy practices (Dail, McGee, and Edwards, 2009)

In recent times, the emergence of Information Communication Technology (ICT) and its diverse resources had stimulated more innovations into ICT-driven multi-media learning strategies, using computers as learning resources. The "Integrated Write to Learn" (iWTR) method, developed by Genlott and Gronlund (2013), is a new instructional method based in

computer systems. The (iWTR) method is step by step method. Genlott and Gronlund argue that while the traditional method requires students to learn two developmental processes at the same time – first, learning how to read (a cognitive process) and second, learning how to write with a pencil (a motor process). The (iWTR) on the other hand, allows children in the 1st grade to use computers and other ICT tools to write texts which is discussed together with classmates and the teacher in class. This helps them to improve on any concept learnt. Handwriting is postponed to 2nd grade. In this method, the iWTR takes one process at a time, first cognitive development, then from grade two motor skills training starts, which makes the child to be more efficient. This effectively enhances the child's literacy learning.

Materials used in enhancing literacy learning

Learning materials are educational products that are employed to enhance students learning. Digest of education statistics (2017) express that learning materials employed in both teaching and independent student's use increase student achievement by supporting student learning. Various kinds of learning materials abound. They range from textbooks, workbooks, picture books, exercise books, to toys and more recently learning resources in computer systems.

Dickson, *et al* (2012) posits that book reading has the power to create interactional contexts that improve language development. More so, learning material such as worksheet provides opportunities to practice new skills gained in class; aids learning process by allowing the student to explore knowledge independently as well as providing opportunity for repetition (Digest of education statistics (2017)).

The emergence of ICT and its ubiquitous resources have both improved and expanded educational resources and its applications in learning and literacy development. Offra Korat in Biancarosa and Griffiths (2012) observes that presenting children's book as digital texts with dictionaries or activities can lead to improvements in phonological awareness, word-reading skills, and vocabulary knowledge for kindergarten and first grade readers. In fact, Biancarosa and Griffiths (2012) argue that today, technology can be a tool for alleviating many literacy challenges. For instance, Islam, Islam, Ahmed and Shamsudin (2017) developed an aspect of learning material known as 'interactive digital learning materials'. According to them, these are educational products that are on computer-based systems. These materials are not only responsive to students learning but also enhance their learning through interaction with the materials. The contents of the interactive digital learning materials include: texts, graphics, animation, video, audio, etc. Islam *et al* (2017) further explain that, as students interact with the contents of the subject, learning takes place.

With the shift towards multimedia technology, opportunities abound to also shift from traditional reading and memorization habit to learning by interacting with interesting contents. The authors also add that the interactive learning materials help to raise children's curiosity about computers, mobile phones, play station portable (PSP) game, etc; as well as help them to acquire learning skills through interaction with multimedia contents. The Internet and other communications are drivers of this technology.

ICT based resources are important in literacy learning. This has been emphasized by authors such as Jeffs, (2001); Zhang, Washington and Yin, (2014); Ahmed and Shamsudin, (2017); and Genlott and Gronlund, (2013). Zhang *et al* (2014), maintained that the use of computers among children helps to enhance their school work, develops digital literacy as well as in building "social capital" which could "foster economic development". The authors also add that the use of computers in schools is very useful in developing cognitive skills and self-esteem. It encourages children to develop a self-learning attitude. This is particularly important for children from low-income families, who naturally have low self-esteem because of their economic conditions. The acquisition of information literacy boosts the self-confidence and self-esteem of such children. Jeffs (2001) underscores the use of computers, with the application of assistive and emerging technologies (such as Internet, and Electronic Performance Support Systems) used in developing literacy skills for both normal students and learners with disabilities. The Digest of Education Statistics (2017) conveyed that learning materials, regardless of what kind, have some functions in student's learning.

Problems facing literacy development among school children

Various problems have been identified to hamper literacy development in early childhood. Waldfogel, (2012), Hamilton, Hayiou-Thomas, Hulme and Snowing (2016) among other authors have identified the following problems which include lack of conducive home literacy environment, parenting differences, spoken-language at home, socioeconomic status and the role of parents. The home literacy environment according to Hamilton, *et al* (2016) involves the interactions, resources, and attitudes that children experience at home. In recent times, it is defined as the three-way interactions between children, parents and texts that occur at home.

The language spoken in a child's home also influences the rate at which the child learns literacy. Waldfogel (2012) believes that the language spoken in a child's home and lack of parental proficiency in English tend to limit the child's exposure to English and affect the child's oral language development.

Availability of literature rich environment is another factor that aids literacy learning among children. Waldfogel (2012), Hamilton, *et al* (2016), among others are of the opinion that where parents fail to create conducive home environment with reading materials such as books and other resources, frequently read to their children as well as have constant verbal interactions with them to support their children's literacy development; it is most likely that children from such homes will face many problems in literacy learning. Thus, Waldle (2008) suggests that the most important element in developing reading, listening, writing, and speaking skills is an adult (whether parent or teacher) who stimulates a child's interest, scaffolds experiences, and responds to a child's earnest attempts to learn a skill.

There are some learning defects which affect children's literacy development and learning. Among them are poor listening and speaking skills, (referred to as language impairment), poor phonological processing ability, poor reading ability (reading disorder) and other behavioral problems such as Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)(Tomblin, 2010). Other

problems identified by Tomblin include shyness and anxiety which the author opined are common in children with reading disorder and learning impairment.

Furthermore, the socioeconomic status of parents has been observed as a serious problem affecting literacy development of children. This is because the economic status of parents determines the level of care they give to their children. Waldfogel (2012) states that low socioeconomic status of parents make their children less likely to have access to learning related resources. Peg Griffins in Waldfogel (2012) notes that pupils from poor families are at risk of poor reading outcomes because of lack of learning resources.

Apart from these, there are other factors that are nationally bound that can militate against literacy learning among children. In Australia, Webb and Williams (2017) identified poor health, negative socio-political factors, cultural and dialectical differences as some of the factors that militate against Australian Aborigine children literacy learning. In Nigeria, Ajayi (2008) had observed the following as contributing factors militating against literacy development among children. These include, teacher factor, teacher-pupil ratio syndrome, issues of minimum standard, use of mother tongue, problem of funding and poor supervision of early childhood education. Ajayi (2008) argues that the level of teachers (Teacher grade 2, NCE and even graduate teachers) being produced in Nigeria are not given adequate training to handle preschool children. Secondly, the teacher-pupil ratio of 1:2 stated by the National policy on Education (FGN, 2004) is not well thought of, given the numerous needs of preschoolers, who are extremely restless, active and full of energy as well as completely dependent on the adult for their development.

Also, standards set by Federal government to run preschools are not being maintained. In addition, these schools are not well supervised. Teaching children in their mother-tongue, which is believed world over (Ajayi, 2008), to facilitate second language learning, is still a big problem. This is because parents believe that they sent their children to school to learn English and not to speak their mother-tongue. Moreover, parents believe that the English language the children acquire from preschool boost their future success in school. Finally, finance and funding has always been the ultimate issue in every education program. Inadequate funding of schools, especially preschools has resulted to limited acquisition of reading materials, infrastructures, poor teacher-pupil ratio, maintenance of school buildings, etc. Without all these put in place, literacy learning and development will still face some limitations.

Literature review has tried to show existing literature on why non-governmental and private organizations engage in literacy learning, the strategies and resources they employ and some of the problems they encounter. Most of the studies were based in developed nations. There is very little literature available in developing countries especially Nigeria. It is this gap that this work wants to bridge.

Methods

This is a qualitative study that employed a case study design. The sole aim is to examine the role of the Children's Centre, University of Nigeria in enhancing literacy learning among children of primary school age in Nsukka Central Local Government Area. Wellington (2006)

defined a case study as a detailed examination of one setting or one single subject or one particular event.

The study is centered on the literacy activities of Children's Centre. Children's Centre is a project of the University Women Association of the University of Nigeria, Nsukka. It is managed by a committee of 28 people. Nsukka is in Enugu State, South East Nigeria. Dike, Ngwuchukwu and Onyebuchi (2011) observed that Nsukka is both a town and a local government area with a population of about 270,257 people.

Oral, face to face interview and unstructured questionnaire were used for data collection. Five people out of the 28 members of the Children's Centre committee were purposively selected to participate in the study. These people were among the founding members of the Children's Centre and played key roles in Children's Centre activities as is evidenced from Children's Centre documents. The participants were informed of the study through phone calls and emails. All were excited to be part of the study. Two of the participants were retired staff of the University of Nigeria and were currently residing in the United States of America. Three are still serving staff of the University.

Copies of the unstructured questionnaire which contain twelve items were sent by email to two of the participants living in the United States of America. Interview was held with three participants that are still in active service in the university. An interview guide prepared by the researchers guided the interview. The interview guide has twelve items and was based on the objectives of the study. The interview was tape recorded and later transcribed, coded and sorted. Data from copies of the unstructured questionnaire were coded and sorted too. The results were presented in narratives supported by direct quotes from interviews in italics. The data gathering spanned for two weeks.

Data presentation

Demography information of the participants.

The interviewee was all women. two were retirees while three are still in active service at the University of Nigeria, Nsukka. Their ranks within the university system are from senior lecturers to Professors.

Factors that influenced the Children's Centre to engage in literacy activities outside the campus

The acquisition of a permanent spacious physical structure and the development of cordial relationship with the department of Library and Information Science enabled the committee to have among its member's young women who have the energy to traverse Nsukka Local Government area sharing stores with children.

“When the Centre entered into a relationship with the department of Library and Information Science, the committee had access to young men and women who were looking for avenues to exert their youthful energies. These youths easily became tools for use during library visits and supervised children’s project works”.

The Centre acquired many literacy learning materials that the Committee members felt that the materials were being underutilized. There was the feeling that the materials could attend to many more children than those living in the campus.

“There are many materials in the Children’s Centre that can benefit more children. So there is no need in restricting the use to campus children alone. Those outside there are children too”.

The effect of Children’s Centre activities on Campus Children that benefitted from it (exemplary character, leadership position and academic success) propelled the committee to open its doors to children outside the university community for wider participation.

The situation at Nsukka town and rural communities around the University then forced the Centre to extend its services beyond the University community children. There was perceived lack of access to books and information materials which children need to gain fluency in reading and information search skills. Book sellers then stock mostly textbooks and there were no functional public or school library where children may gain access. So a major literacy activity is developing a library collection where children can gain access to a wide variety of reading materials first in Children’s Centre Library and then through book sharing and development of primary school libraries in nearby communities.

“In those days, books were scarce, many parents were illiterates, so books were not part of the home or parents were too poor to buy them. There was lack of access to voluntary reading and often even text books. Even among the few educated parents in Nsukka urban areas then, voluntary reading was not valued”

Strategies used by the Children’s Centre in extending literacy activities to the Nsukka wider community

The Children’s Centre employed varied strategies in extending literacy activities to primary school age children of Nsukka wider community. Among them are:

Story hour held at the Children’s Centre Library every Saturday by 9am.

On Saturdays, children would troop to the Children’s Centre for story hour. One or two women would always be available to tell the children stories. The stories can be read from a book or told off head. They can be stories from any part of the world, Europe, Asia or Africa. At times the children take turns to tell stories themselves.

Library visit: During library visits, school children are conveyed from their schools to the Children's Centre library ones every week to read books of their choice and to participate in story telling.

"You know making books available is not enough. You have to ensure that the books are read. Books and reading must be mediated".

Holiday programs: This is an annual event in the Children's Centre Library organized mostly during the long vacation. During the long vacation program, children are exposed to activities like Drama, Comic book writing, Arts etc;

The Children's Centre also celebrate literacy events like the World book day, International Literacy Day amongst others in which Children's Centre Committee members visit local primary schools in Nsukka to share stories and interact with the children. Such visits are accompanied by gifts of book donations to the school and snacks for the children.

Reading and Football Clubs. The club meets ones every month in the Children's' Centre Library. Participating children meet to discuss a selected book which all participants must have read.

"You know young boys find it difficult to read voluntarily. We used the reading football club to lure them to the library. There is a football coach that teaches them how to play football. Their football practice holds on the evening of book discussion days. After book discussion in the afternoon, the children would play football in the evening. The Children's Centre in order to maintain the children's enthusiasm in the club, sponsors two football competitions for the children every year during the children's day and on the first of October to mark the Nigerian Independence Anniversary. Participation in football is restricted purely to members of the reading/football club".

There is also School Library development: To encourage literacy learning among primary school children, the Children's Centre helped some primary school libraries in Nsukka to develop school libraries. Among the schools are Model Primary School 1-4, Township Primary School 1&2, Nsukka; Agu-Echara Primary School 1&2, Central Primary School Nru, Enugu Road Primary School, Nguru and Hill Top Primary School, Obimo.

"We made existence of a library space a condition for giving book donations to schools. Many head teachers quickly created spaces out of classrooms or through Parent Teachers Association (PTA) erected one room libraries. This qualified them to receive book donations from which many schools kicked started school libraries".

Apart from helping to develop school libraries, the Children's Centre from time to time organizes workshops for teachers, teacher librarians and head teachers. The aim of the workshops is to widen their knowledge of the importance of the library.

“When we organize workshop for head teachers, we talk to them on strategies for making the library more functional and for teacher librarians, it is on how to integrate library resources into teaching and for classroom teachers, the talk will centre on how to help children utilize the library more effectively including how to inculcate good reading habits”.

Again to encourage literacy learning through library use, the Children’s Centre introduced the school library competition. Through the competition, schools are encouraged to develop their libraries. During school library competitions, the libraries are rated based on the organization of the library including presence of a school librarian, accession and borrowers register, spine labels on books and evidence of project works done by the children in the library.

“In anticipation of the best school library competition, schools try to strengthen their library records and improve collections. Though every participating school eventually receives a gift, schools with the best libraries receive first and more; and then others’.

Resources used by the Children’s Centre in enhancing literacy learning among primary school children in Nsukka.

These can be categorized into two- human resources and non-human resources. Among the human resources are skilled women volunteers who contributed their skills and money in making the Children’s Centre Literacy efforts a success

There are people like Prof. V.W Dike who initiated the Children’s Centre project, Late Prof. Edit-Ihekweazu, whose children continues to maintain a collection of African novels in her memory up till today, Prof. Nkadi Onyegegbu, sponsors children on excursion and Dr (Mrs) Ngozi Osadebe who initiated the reading/football club to mention but a few. There are also past University of Nigeria Vice Chancellor’s wives that have particular interest in children’s Centre activities. People like Mrs. Ikoku and Mrs Ifenyinwa Nebo.

The association with the Department of Library and Information Science infused young energetic young people into the Children’s Centre project. With such cream of young enthusiastic young people, the Centre was able to stretch it tentacles beyond the original ideas.

“These young energetic people saw it as fun visiting schools sharing stories with children. Some even did their industrial attachments in the school libraries”.

There are also friends of the Library. Men of high caliber that contributed to the Children’s Centre success. People like Dr E.C Iwuanyanwu, donated the Children’s Centre building and continuously give out money for the maintenance of the building. Prince A.E Koripamo donated a bus and past University of Nigeria Vice-Chancellors that have particular interest in children’s Centre activities. People like Prof. O.C. Nebo.

Non –human resources used by the Children’s Centre in enhancing literacy activities in Nsukka.

The Children's Centre has a rich collection of literacy materials contained in the Children's Centre Library. . Much of these materials are donations from private individuals and organizations.

“At the inception of the Children's Centre Prince A.E Koripamogave us one hundred thousand naira to buy books, Vipul Mital donated 100 books, Mary Ellen Chijioke donated and so many others”. The Centre enjoy rich donations from organization like People United for Libraries in Africa (PULA), Indianapolis Public Library, Travers area District Library all in the USA; Ranfurly Library Service in England and the International Federation of Library Associations (IFLA) “Book for All” programme”.

The cordial relationship that existed between the Children's Centre and various University departments facilitated the Centre's use of departmental resources. For instance is the use of University Library Computer Laboratory and department of music, music laboratory for teaching children computer appreciation and music during Long Vacation Programs.

“The children's Centre has very good relationship with some university departments. It is this relationship that creates access to the children use of such departments' facilities’.

Problems encountered by the Children's Centre in enhancing literacy learning among primary school age pupil in Nsukka Local Government.

Funds are one of the greatest problems militating against children's centre activities. As a result of financial problems, the Centre cannot hire permanent staff, cannot carry out most of its planned activities. For instance is the construction of a multi-purpose asphalt court that has been on the drawing board since year 2000. Funds have hindered other projects the Centre would have loved to embark on. Among them are the walling of the Children's Centre compound and re-roofing of the building.

“We have no steady source of income. We depend on donations from well spirited individuals and the little sum that accrue from library fees and annual caroling”.

Harsh economic situation in the Nigerian nation is yet another problem encountered by the Centre. The harsh economic situation has nipped the spirit of voluntarism in the bud among Nigerian citizens. One of the interviewees narrated her experience when she approached an unemployed colleague's wife to volunteer for Children's Centre activities.

“Please do not ask me to volunteer she retorted, how do you expect me to do a volunteer's work? When I go to market to buy food for my family, do I tell the sellers I have no money because I am a volunteer or do I ask them to volunteer their goods. My sister, do not be angry with me. I cannot do a volunteer's work when my family is not well provided for”.

Again, the nature of head teachers' job in Nigeria kills the enthusiasm to develop school libraries. Head teachers job involves transfers from one school to another. This disrupts the development of school libraries as many head teachers are transferred at peak of their activities in library development while some never have the opportunity to nurture the library they have developed into maturity. Most times, head teachers are transferred from schools where they have managed to develop a school library to one where none is in existence. This creates a sense of frustration among the head teachers.

“When a head teacher who has developed a good school library in one school is transferred to a school where there is no library, the head teacher sees it as an unending exercise developing another library. And often, the incoming head teacher, not having interest in library development may close down the library or convert it to a classroom and turn the teacher librarian into a classroom teacher”.

Another major problem encountered by the Children's Centre in enhancing literacy learning among primary school age pupils of Nsukka Local Government area is the lack of any visible gain in working at the Children's Centre. This has forced many volunteers out of the Children's Centre project. One of the volunteers commented and I quote

“People work from year to year putting in their time and resources without any tangible benefit. At times, it looks like I am foolish. It is only giving, giving and no receiving”.

Discussion of findings

Many factors forced the Children's Centre to extend its literacy activities for children beyond the campus community. Among these factors is the literacy condition of children in Nsukka then and the exemplary lives of Campus children that have benefited from the activities. This finding is consistent with the factors that force Dolly Parton and Barbara Bush to engage in literacy activities in the USA. In the case of Dolly Parton, the conditions of her who cannot read force her to develop the Dolly Parton imaginary library. Dolly Paton did not mention the effects of her father's inability to read on him but it is likely that it must have affected her upbringing probably throwing her into child poverty. In the case of Barbara Bush foundation, it is the need to give every child equal opportunity of acquiring literacy and becoming somebody in the society. The three-Children's Centre, Dolly Parton Imaginary Library and Barbara Bush foundation know the power of literacy in transforming societies and determined to extend it to children.

The Children's Centre employed many strategies in enhancing literacy learning among community children in Nsukka. These strategies include story telling, schools visits, book donations, library development, workshops for head teachers and teacher librarians, celebration of literacy events and Long Vacation Programs which feature activities such as drama, dance, play etc. Among these strategies, story telling and long vacation program which feature activities like

drama, dance and play are well known and documented activities for literacy learning. Their importance in literacy learning has been documented by authors (Miller & Pennycuff (2008), Massa (2018), and Mielonen Paterson (2009) to mention but a few. Book donation or gift as a literacy enhancing measure is good but not enough to facilitate literacy learning. The children need to be encouraged to read especially in situations where the parents are not literate as the case in Nsukka. Books and reading need to be mediated.

The development of school libraries, workshop for head teachers and teacher librarian; reading & football club; and school library competitions are strategies for enhancing literacy learning that are peculiar to the Children's Centre. The Children's Centre's success in its literacy activities can be attributed to the availability of skilled high caliber women who have passion for the project. These women were able to pull together their resources to make the project succeed. This is unlike other literacy organization such as the Barbara Bush Foundation or Dolly Parton imaginary library that is championed by one person alone. It is likely that the manner in which these women carry on Children's Centre literacy activities attracted help for them in the form of men of high repute. Notable among them are Dr. E.C. Iwuanyanwu, Prince A. E Koripamo and Prof. O.C. Nebo.

The relationship that existed between the Children's Centre and some academic department in the University highlights the importance of collaborations in literacy activities. Collaborations make resources richly available where none would have existed.

Though the Children's Centre literacy activities in Nsukka looked like a huge success, they were done not without problems. There is the problem of funds which hindered the Centre from carrying out much of its planned activities development. There is also the problem of women who refused to volunteer for Children's Centre activities and the feeling among some of the members of Children's Centre Committee that there is no gain in volunteering for Children's Centre work.

The problem of funds is not limited to organizations like the Children's Centre alone. It can hamper other organizations activities and even hamper activities within families. Hamilton (2016) noted that the socio-economic status of parents affects children's literacy learning as some parents may lack the funds to pay their children's school fees or to buy pleasure reading materials.

Conclusion

This study examined the role of the Children's Centre, University of Nigeria Nsukka in enhancing literacy learning among primary school age pupil of Nsukka Local Government Area. The study noted that factors such as availability of physical space, varied literacy learning materials, skilled manpower and the literacy condition of children of Nsukka wider community forced the Centre to take its literacy activities beyond the campus community.

The study also identified story hours, library visits by schools, library development, celebration of literacy events and reading & football club as strategies employed by the Children's

Centre in enhancing literacy learning among Nsukka community. Problems encountered by the Children's Centre in enhancing literacy learning among primary school age children of Nsukka Community include funds, lack of the spirit of voluntarism among some women and the perceived feeling of lack of any tangible benefit volunteering for Children's Centre activities.

The study concludes that the Children's Centre has contributed immensely in transforming the lives of Nsukka children and at the same time helped to design a world free of child poverty for the upcoming children as being literate is a condition for gainful employment and better living condition.

Recommendations

The Children's Centre should liaise with the Local Government Authority to ensure that head teachers and teacher librarians when being considered for transfer, should be sent on transfer only to schools where there is a library. A head teacher who has developed a school library in his/her previous school should not be sent on transfer where there is no library. The same thing applies to trained teacher librarians. Trained teacher librarians should be transferred to only schools where there are school libraries. This is to avoid the feeling of frustrations that head teachers and teacher librarians have when they learnt that the school they are being sent to have no library and that they have to start from the scratch to develop one.

The Children's Centre should write to organizations that support Children's literacy activities to ask for grants to support their activities. This will free some funds used for supporting activities and make them available for walling and re-roofing of the children's centre compound.

People should be informed at the point of volunteering that there is no physical gain in volunteering for Children's Centre activities to curtail the feeling of frustrations that accompany such knowledge.

It is important that the relationship between the Centre and various University departments are maintained to guarantee the Centre's continued use of such departmental resources.

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