

AKWA IBOM STATE LIBRARY AND INFORMATION SERVICES

• Antecedents • Perspectives • Prospects



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Chapter 4

School Libraries Development in Akwa Ibom State.

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Introduction

School is one of the most important institutions in any society. It is set up by the government or society with a number of objectives. Schools have crucial role to play in building the society and developing the citizens to partake in the building of the society or the nation. It is the school that offers the citizen the required education which is the bedrock for sustainable development. At the back of all educational, recreational, informational activities of the school is the school library. The school library provides information and ideas that are fundamental to functioning successfully in today's information and knowledge-based society. The school library equips students and pupils with life-long learning skills and develops the imagination, enabling them to live as responsible citizens.

According to Ogwu (2010), a school library is often identified with primary and secondary school levels of education. The school library is unique amongst all other libraries (public, university/research, special,) because its objectives are anchored on enriching the foundation of learning (pre-school, primary and secondary schools).

The foundation of any endeavour is expected to be solid and should form the basis of a higher and lasting structure. The school library should form the foundation of a child's independent use of information. This foundation is expected to consolidate the child's use and analysis of information at a higher level of learning and indeed throughout the child's life, when formal education would have terminated. The role of the school library, is therefore fundamental in the stimulation of learning skills, creative and reflective thinking, and more importantly, independent self-learning. It stimulates reading. Reading changes lives. It is strongly believed that reading illuminates the mind and the only way to read is to have access to books to read and the best place to have access to books remains the school library.

The Mission of the School Library

The school library offers learning services, books and resources that enable all members of the school community to become critical thinkers and effective users of information in all formats and media. School Libraries link to the wider library and information network in accord with the principles in the IFLA/UNESCO Public Library Manifesto. The library staff supports the use of books and other information sources, ranging from the fictional to the documentary, from print to electronic, both on-site and remote. The materials complement and enrich textbooks, teaching materials and methodologies. It has been demonstrated that, when librarians and teachers work together, students achieve higher levels of literacy, reading, learning, problem-solving and information and communication technology skills. School library services must be provided equally to all members of the school community, regardless of age, race, gender, religion, and nationality, and language, professional or social status. Specific services and materials must be provided for those who are unable to use mainstream library services and materials. Access to services and collections should be based on the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights and Freedoms, and should not be subject to any form of ideological, political or religious censorship, or to commercial pressures.

Funding, legislation and Networks

The school library is crucial to every long-term strategy for literacy, education, provision of information as well as economic, social and cultural development. As the responsibility of local, regional and national authorities, it must be supported by specific legislation and policies. School Libraries must have adequate and sustained funding for trained staff, materials, technologies and facilities. They must be free of charge. The school library is an essential partner in the local, regional and national library and information network. Where the school library shares facilities and/or resources with another type of library, such as a public library, the unique aims of the school library must be acknowledged and maintained.

Goals of the School Library

The school library is integral to the educational process. The following are essential to the development of literacy, information literacy, teaching, learning and culture and are core school library services:

- * supporting and enhancing educational goals as outlined in the school's mission and curriculum;
- * developing and sustaining in children the habit and enjoyment of reading and learning and the use of libraries throughout their lives;
- * offering opportunities for experiences in creating and using information for knowledge, understanding, imagination and enjoyment;
- * supporting all students in learning and practicing skills for evaluating and using information, regardless of form, format or medium, including sensitivity to the modes of communication within the community;
- * providing access to local, regional, national and global resources and opportunities that expose learners to diverse ideas, experiences and opinions;
- * organizing activities that encourage cultural and social awareness and sensitivity;
- * working with students, teachers, administrators and parents to achieve the mission of the school;
- * proclaiming the concept that intellectual freedom and access to information are essential to effective and responsible citizenship and participation in a democracy;
- * promoting reading and the resources and services of the school library to the whole school community and beyond.

The school library fulfills these functions by developing policies and services, selecting and acquiring resources, providing physical and intellectual access to appropriate sources of information, providing instructional facilities, and employing trained staff.

Staffing:

The school librarian is the professionally qualified staff member responsible for planning and managing the school library, supported by as adequate staffing as possible, working together with all members of the school community, and liaising with the public library and others. The role of school librarians will vary according to the budget and the curriculum and teaching methodology of the schools, within the national, legal and financial framework. Within specific contexts, there are general areas of knowledge that are vital if school librarians are to develop and operate effective school library services: resource, library, and information management and teaching. In an increasingly networked environment, school librarians must be competent in planning and teaching different information-handling skills to both teachers and students. Therefore they must continue their professional training and development. However, in Akwa Ibom state this is not the case as schools that have school libraries do not have competent staff. A survey of major public primary schools i

n Uyo the state capital indicates that there no libraries. Only private schools have made efforts to provide some kind of library services in small rooms. However, the school librarians in the schools that have libraries are not trained librarians.

Operations and Management

To ensure effective and accountable operations:

- * The policy on school library services must be formulated to define goals, priorities and services in relation to the school's curriculum;
- * The school library must be organized and maintained according to professional standards;
- * Services must be accessible to all members of the school community and operate within the context of the local community;
- * Co-operation with teachers, senior school management, administrators, parents, other librarians and information professionals, and community groups must be encouraged.

Above all occasional feedback from the pupils and students who are the users must be encouraged.

Implementing the Manifesto

Governments, through their ministries responsible for education, are urged to develop strategies, policies and plans which implement the principles of this Manifesto. Plans/should include the dissemination of the Manifesto to initial and continuing training programmes for librarians and teachers.

School library development in Nigeria

The development of school libraries varies from one country to another. In Jamaica, for instance, Henry (1982) reported that school libraries were at a developing stage exhaling inadequacies in funding, staffing, physical facilities and the services provided. In Tonga, South Pacific, Gannicott and Throsby (1992) reported that there was a critical shortage of reading materials in school libraries. In the Sudan, Abdelgadir (1984) found a wide gap between the ideal school library and library collections while Abduljalil (1985) reported that book availability provides a good measure for evaluating library service. Self (1990) too, argued that providing students with access to an expanded collection would increase their use of the library. In Kenya, however, Makuwi (1990) found that the development of school libraries was on a better footing than some other African countries. He however observed that the standard compares very poorly with what operates in school libraries in developed countries and is far below the recommended number of volumes by the American Library Association which suggests a minimum base collection of 20,000 items for a school of 500 or less providing 40 items per pupil. In Namibia, Totemeyer (1991) reported that 22.7% of all Namibian schools keep a book collection of some sort while 77.3% of the schools are without any library facilities. In Zambia, Kakoma (1991) found that the Zambian educational authorities were not addressing themselves to the need for school

libraries. Towards this end, Bawa (1993) remarked that many African countries do not seem to have any coherent policy on the provision of school libraries. He observed that in South Africa, the provision of school libraries was unequal for the different population groups, with some schools having the best of facilities and others having nothing that can vaguely be called a library. He reported that there are not enough qualified librarians to facilitate and integrate the resources into the curriculum effectively. In Ghana, Alemna (1983) observed that most schools have untrained teacher librarians who work as full-time teachers in their various fields and part-time librarians. Awua-Boateng (1985) supported these views and attributed the poor performance of students to the lack of library resources in many Ghanaian schools.

In Nigeria, Udoh (1986) observed that school libraries exhibit inadequacies in personnel, and funding. These facts were supported by Adesola (1991) who claimed that the under-funding resulted from the scarcity of foreign exchange. The under-funding was claimed other researchers (Fagbeja, 1993; Fakoya, 2002) to have adverse effects on the quality of libraries in the country. As such, learning tends to be at the memory level of intelligence (Obinna, 2004; Ifueko, 2005). In terms of space, Ayorinde (2005) argued that space matters a lot in school libraries. He referred to UNESCO prescription of 10,000 books and journals annually in a standard school library while a typical library must provide sitting facilities for at least a quarter of the population of the community in which the library is located. This standard has perhaps not been met in school libraries. As such, libraries in Nigeria have relied heavily on foreign book donations, which in many cases are irrelevant to the needs of students (Omolayole, 2001; Daniel, 2002). Outcome refers to the external effects of output, that is, the ability of people to be socially and economically productive (Lord, 1984). Thus, during each educational cycle, a student undergoes a series of examinations. The continuous evaluation of educational activities culminates in the final examination, which is held at the terminal grade of the cycle. Outcomes, therefore, refers to what comes out of the system, that is, the learning achieved in an institution. This includes knowledge, skills, behaviour and attitudes measured by tests or in some other ways. Thus, educational outcomes can be assumed as a function of pupil input and school input. Many studies have been conducted on students' learning outcomes (Ewell and Ries, 2000; Stevenson, 2005; Koetzner, 2006; Frye, 2006). Frye (2006) For instance, described students' learning outcomes as encompassing a wide range of students' attributes and abilities, both cognitive and affective, which are a measure of how their college experiences have supported their development as individuals. Cognitive outcomes include the acquisition of specific knowledge and skills, as in a major; what do students know that they didn't know before. Cohn (1975) classified outcomes into consumption and investment. He referred to the consumption aspect as that related to the benefits derived by students. He regarded the investment aspect as including a variety of

outputs related to the enhancement of an individual's productive skills and future well-being. Supporting this point, Simkins (1981) reported that output represents the immediate outcomes of the system's system. He argued that the main outcomes in education includes changes in knowledge, skills and attitudes of individuals as a result of their experiences. As a measure of students' learning outcomes, examination occupies a central place in the Nigerian educational system and it has been the sole criterion of quality. This fact was supported by DfES (2002) which reported that examination results in the UK have been derived from the annual survey of school leavers. In Nigeria, the importance of examinations as entrenched in the Federal Republic of Nigeria (2004) National Policy on Education was in the fact that all secondary schools should gear their programmes to meet the requirements of examinations being conducted for the senior school certificate. The pattern of grading candidates' scores in the examinations was such that the distinction grade is represented by A1 to B3. The credit grade is represented by C4 to C6. The ordinary pass grade is represented by D7 and E8 while the failure grade is represented by F9. (WAEC, 2002). Thus, Merrill (1983) related library resources to students' learning outcomes and found that the use of library resources were associated significantly with better learning outcomes. Crossley and Murby (1994) too, remarked that the inadequacy of relevant books in school libraries could contribute markedly to low levels of outcomes. This finding agreed with the findings made by Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals (2004) and the National Literacy Trust's (2004). The implication of these is that the school library plays a major role in the success of pupils and students in schools more than any other factor. School libraries were the first type of libraries to be established in Nigeria because their establishments were closely related to the establishment of schools by the missionaries who came with the purpose of spreading the gospel. To be able to get the people to read the bible and write it was necessary to establish schools that could teach the citizens to read and write. The establishment of schools led to the establishment of libraries which could provide printed materials for reading and information. The growth and development of school libraries in Akwa Ibom state has been worrisome mainly because there has not been adequate efforts on the part of government to properly streamline the establishment and running of school library services in the state. The early ones were those of Etinan Institute initially established as Qua Iboe Mission Boy's Institute in Okat in the present Onna local government area in 1891 and then later moved to Nditia in Ibeno local government area in 1896 and again moved to Ikot Edong in the present Abak local government area in 1903 before it came to its present location in Etinan in 1915. The Methodist Boy's High school, Oron also initially established as Oron Training Institute in 1905 and then Lutheran High school Obot Idim, Ibesikpo in 1949 came into existence. These schools were established as primary schools before they metamorphosed into secondary schools. However, what were available in these schools were temporary reading rooms which were converted and used as libraries.

The real attempt to create a library in its real sense was when a library building was erected in 1959 at the Lutheran High school Obot Idim. Since then other schools both public and private have established schools with functional libraries and library facilities. With the handover of schools back to their original owners, the church by the government, a great deal of activities in establishing libraries and making it to the expected standard has been witnessed.

School libraries have grown over the years and have contributed immensely towards developing literate society in Akwa Ibom state. But that growth has come from mainly the private schools that setting up a library are required as a prerequisite for establishing a library before approval can be given for the establishment of the school. In rural communities in Nigeria, school libraries are nonexistent, books are scarce and very few can afford textbooks. The children who don't have textbooks end up sharing with peers who have. Sometimes, four children share one textbook. Access to books other than textbooks is a challenge for both primary & secondary schools children in rural towns. The public schools, which the majority patronizes, are poorly equipped and manned by people who are barely literate themselves. This is the scenario in most public primary and secondary schools in Akwa Ibom state. Currently, there are six hundred and twenty eight (242 public and 386 private) secondary schools and seven (7) technical colleges in Akwa Ibom state (Akwa Ibom state ministry of Education: 2016). All private secondary schools have libraries while some public secondary schools especially those in the rural areas do not have libraries. Most of the schools visited store books in reading rooms which they regard as a library. In some cases books are stored in the principal's office while in other instances books were kept in the staff room. . However, available statistics from the state universal basic education board indicates that there are one thousand and eighty four (1084) public primary schools in the state. Most of these schools do not have a library. In fact in some there are no trace of any form of library activity. Books are not stored anywhere be it in the principal's office, staff room or any other designated place.

International Association of School Libraries

The International Association of School Libraries (IASL) is the main organizational, educational, and advocacy association devoted exclusively to the school library. The IASL position statement on school libraries focuses the challenge for both government and public support around the globe: "The establishment of good school libraries can demonstrate that public authorities are fulfilling their responsibilities to implement education that will enable children to become useful members of the global society and develop each child's individual potential. A good school library with a qualified school librarian is a major factor in developing quality education.

Identified factors militating against growth of school libraries in Akwa Ibom state.

The following factors have been identified as militating against the growth of school libraries in Akwa Ibom state. These are:

- Lack of adequate funding
- Attitude of school heads (head teachers and principal)
- Ignorance of Teachers on the importance of school library
- No policy on development of school libraries

Lack of Adequate Funding

Funding constitutes a major component in the establishment and running of a viable business, institution or organization. As noted by Fayose (1995) for any viable service to be operational, adequate finance must be provided. She further pointed out that inadequate finance has been the bane of school libraries in Nigeria. Akanwa (2007) quoted Ayeni and Oyebenyi (1997) as having carefully observed that unlike the classroom for which the government has had to allocate N3, 500.00 per classroom and N72.50 per child, as early as 1976; no kobo had ever been allocated to school libraries. This shows that the government has never taken the establishment and development of school libraries seriously. Clarke (1999) noted that in Nigeria, no adequate attention has been given to the provision of libraries in both primary and secondary schools, only a few secondary schools can boast of libraries, even when these exist, they are managed by unqualified staff instead of experienced and qualified teacher librarians. Anyaoku (1979) observes in a survey that; the schools have no special vote for their libraries. For the school library to grow, government must show interest in its funding like the academic libraries where the government made it clear that 10% of the University's recurrent vote be set aside for the library development even though this has not been practicable. Nnadozie's (2006) study on the evaluation of library resources revealed that ... policy-makers, fiscal planners, administrators and other technocrats in Nigeria are yet to appreciate the pivotal role of library and other information institutions to the nation's development quests. While lamenting on the problems besieging the development of school libraries in Nigeria, Okiy (2006) stated that there is no clear cut policy on funding school libraries and so they are generally few and ill equipped, lacking proper accommodation, qualified staff, relevant information resources such as books and other educational materials. Dina (2001) findings on school learning resources also pointed to this fact.

Attitude of Government Authorities and School Head Teachers

Attitude of government authorities that is those vested with the authority in government, head teachers (headmasters, headmistresses and principal) constitutes another major hindrance to the development of school libraries

in Akwa Ibom state. As noted by Ahmed (2003), lack of recognition by the institution and government authorities of the importance of library and information services in the diverse human activities in the society is the most serious deterrent of school library development in Nigeria. Udensi (2000) put the blame of poor development of school libraries. Udensi (2000) put the blame of poor development of school libraries in Nigerian on the government.

Ignorance of Teachers on the Importance of School Libraries

Another problem hindering the development of school libraries in Nigeria is that of ignorance of what a library stands for by the teachers who ought to provide the direction to their pupils and arouse the interest of the children. Dina (2001) noted that many teachers neither use the resources center nor inspire pupils to use it. This fact is corroborated by Roe (1965) and Usman A (2003), who said that according to him many teachers are handicapped by their ignorance of how library may be put to effective educational use. They have little or no experience of it during their own school days. Ngeri-Nwagha (1987) in a related study identified that there is a general apathy on the part of teachers and parents towards the libraries in the existence of well-equipped library in the state. This is a very serious problem in view of the complex nature of library work. Organization and dissemination of information are so technical in nature that it would only be badly done in the library circle without the inputs from professional librarian,

No policy on Development of School Libraries

There has not been any written policy on development of school libraries in Akwa Ibom state. Policies concerning standards in terms of building, collections and other facilities. Adeoti-Adeleke (1996) observed that government has not yet come out with a clear policy on the establishment and equipment of libraries in primary and secondary school levels. Akinniyi (2003) also noted that the government has not set aside a fixed percent amount for library development in schools nor is she giving them their annual subvention regularly from where a token can be given for library development.

The Way Forward

The way forward for the development of school libraries in Akwa Ibom state is to follow the private school model. In privately owned institutions efforts have been made to provide some form of facility for this purpose even if it is not to the required standard. Government and its agents must be able to provide the required leadership that can promote the establishment and running of school libraries in the state. It will be of great importance for government to allocate a given percentage say five percent of its budget to the establishment and development of school libraries in the state. Particular attention should be given to schools in the rural communities in the state, in terms of funding, monitoring and allocation of resources.

Conclusion

School library development in Akwa Ibom state has been motivated and anchored by the private schools both at the primary and secondary levels. Not much has happened in government owned public schools. In some cases especially in schools in the rural communities of the state, school library does not exist at all.

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