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A Survey on the Present State of School Libraries in Benin City

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Introduction

For an educational programme to succeed, adequate attention must be paid to the development of its library services. Ogunrombi (2005) cited Idowu (1988) and stressed that a developing country like Nigeria, even though faced with the problems of basic social necessities such as food, shelter, among others cannot afford to abandon library services in its educational programme.

School libraries must be assisted by proper funding to acquire relevant and varied materials for this purpose. Books and non-book materials must be provided. They must be well organized, and the right caliber of staff must be put in place to disseminate information directly or give assistance to those seeking information on their own. The educational aims of school libraries include:

- (1) To stimulate and enhance the reading habit, promoting lifelong learning
- (2) To develop in children the ability to read for information
- (3) To help pupils to increase and improve their knowledge of reading, speaking, and writing
- (4) To train children to care for books and make good and intelligent use of the library
- (5) To enhance children's reading and communication skills
- (6) To provide children with information, both current and retrospective
- (7) To provide recreation (Udofia, 1997 cited by Ogunrombi, 2005)

In the same vein, the school library prepares both the teacher and pupil to achieve sound and quality education by all or any of the following:

- (a) The improvement of teaching by enabling the teaching staff to make reference to current books in the preparation of their lessons

- (b) Providing information for teachers and pupils on current affairs.
- (c) Providing supplementary reading for teachers, enriching class work.
- (d) Serving as the laboratory where all books on all disciplines encourage self-reliance, good use of leisure time, and arouses interest in reading (Ekweozoh, 1989 cited by Ogunrombi, 2005)

School Library World (2009) summarized the effectiveness of a school library as follows: it is accessible to the total school community, it is cost effective because one book is used by many, it provides flexible scheduling and timely access to the collection by all students, a broad range of materials, add new resources throughout the school year to keep collection dynamic, create a sense of ownership that is shared by the entire school community.

The research findings revealed that there is a positive relationship between school libraries and student achievement; it further stated that whether such achievement is measured in terms of reaching scores, literacy, or learning more generally. A school library that is adequately staffed, resourced, and funded can lead to higher student achievement regardless of the socioeconomic or educational levels of the community.

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this survey research is to discover the state of school libraries in Benin city, and to ascertain whether these libraries meet their aims and objectives of a school library and then make recommendations.

Methodology

Data for this study were collected using survey method. This study covered secondary schools in Benin City; some secondary schools were selected in the different local government area in Benin City. Data were analyzed using percentages

Findings and Discussion

Ten questionnaires were administered to the officers in charge of the libraries in the selected schools in Benin City. Eight questionnaires were returned. This represents 80% of the total questionnaires administered. The findings and implications of this study are discussed in the following sections.

Table 1. Distribution of respondents

| Name of school | Frequency | Percentages |
|--------------------------------|-----------|-------------|
| Baptist High School | 1 | 12.5 |
| Edo College Boys Model | 1 | 12.5 |
| Federal Govt. Girls College | 1 | 12.5 |
| Federal Staff Sec. Sch, Ugbowo | 1 | 12.5 |
| Idia College | 1 | 12.5 |
| | | |

| | | |
|---|---|------|
| Igbiniedion Educational Centre | 1 | 12.5 |
| Word of Faith Group of Schools | 1 | 12.5 |
| University Preparatory Secondary school | 1 | 12.5 |
| Total | 8 | 100 |

Each school was administered a copy of the questionnaire, which was filled by librarian/officer in charge of the school library.

Table 2. Ownership of the school

| Ownership | Frequency | Percentage |
|-----------------|-----------|------------|
| Mission Schools | 2 | 25 |
| Public school | 3 | 37.5 |
| Private school | 3 | 37.5 |
| Total | 8 | 100 |

The ownership of these schools is spread across three categories: mission schools, private schools and public schools. Two mission schools were used for this study ,three private schools and three public schools.

Table 3. Staff strength of the library

| Name of school | Library staff strength | Percentage |
|------------------------------------|------------------------|------------|
| Baptist High School | 2 | 10 |
| Edo College Boys Model | 5 | 25 |
| Federal Govt. Girls College Ugbowo | 2 | 10 |
| Federal Govt.staff sec. sch Ugbowo | 2 | 10 |
| Idia College | 1 | 5 |
| Igbenedion Edu Centre | 3 | 15 |
| Word of Faith Group of School | 3 | 15 |
| University Preparatory sec. sch | 2 | 10 |
| Total | 20 | 100 |

Table 3 reveals the library staff strength. Edo College had five staff in the Library

which represent 25%, Igbenidion Educational Centre and Word of Faith Group of Schools had three library staff each and this represents 15% each. Baptist High School, Federal Govt. Girls College, Federal Staff Secondary School and University Preparatory Secondary School had two library staff each, Idia college had one staff member

Table 4: Library stock

| Name of School | Library stock |
|---------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Baptist High School | 286 vol. of book, Journal none |
| Edo College | No response |
| Fed. Govt Girls College | 16,954 vol of books |
| Federal Staff School | 500 vol of books 40 tils of journal |
| Idia College | 2,500 vol of books , no journals |
| Igbeedion Edu. Cnetre | 12.113 vol of books , no journals |
| Work of Faith group of schools | 8, 665 vol of books no journals |
| University preparatory sec. sch | Not specified |

From table 4 reveals the stock of the school libraries, it is very clear from this table that these schools had few or no materials, even where they exist in the case of some government schools and some private schools under this study, the materials are old outdated and dusty, this was reveal to the researchers during physical visit to these schools.

Table 5. Qualification of the teacher librarian/officer in charge of the library

| Name of school | Qualification of the officer in charge of the Library |
|---------------------------------|---|
| Baptist High School | Library Certificate course |
| Edo College | Degree in library science |
| Fed. Govt. Girls College | Degree in Business Adminsitration |
| Federal staff School | LBSC Economics |
| Idia College | Library Certificate course |
| Igbinedion Edu Centre | Library Appreciation course |
| Word of Faith Group of Sch | Degree in Library science |
| University Preparatory sec. sch | BSc Environmental Science |

The response from the questionnaire reveals that none of the schools under study have annual budget for library development. This is contra to minimum standards for a school library.

Table 6: Does the school have library period for students?

| Name of school | Yes | No |
|----------------------------------|-----|----|
| Baptist High School | | |
| Edo College | | |
| Federal Govt. Girls College | | |
| Federal Staff School | | |
| Idia College | | |
| Igbenedion Edu. Centre | | |
| Word of Faith Group of Sch | | |
| University Preparatory sec. sch. | | |

From the table above, three schools out of eight stated that they have library period for their students.

Discussion of Findings

Selbar, et al. (2009) cited Ojoade (1993) and summarized the present state of school libraries in Nigeria. They emphasized in their findings of school Libraries in Nigeria and expressed that "Libraries do exist in secondary schools, but many almost in name because all the element required for them to operate are not put in place..."

In the same vein, Elaturoti (1983) survey the state of secondary schools libraries in Oyo, Ondo, and Ogun states of Nigeria he reported that the state of school libraries in these states were very poor, he stated that there are very few or no staff to manage the school libraries in these states. This study also confirm the finding of Aniebo (2006), who discovered that school libraries in Imo State lack adequate accommodation, materials, and funds, as well as trained staff to manage the libraries in Imo state. These is similar to what is on ground in Benin City where unqualified staff manage the school libraries.

From the analysis in table 3, which revealed the various libraries' staff strength, it can be deduced that all the libraries under investigation are understaffed, which corresponds with the findings of Selbar, et al. (2009). Human resources in libraries contribute to the standards of that particular library. It is the human resources that will make use of other resources (financial and materials) to achieve the aims and objectives of the library.

The issue of library stock is also paramount. This research revealed that all the schools visited are under stocked with library materials. A majority of the schools visited in Benin City have outdated books which are very dusty, where they existed. This confirms with the findings of Aniebo (2006) that revealed that school

libraries in Imo state are outdated and lack reference materials. All the schools investigated in this study lack audiovisual materials in their libraries. A similar case was reported by Selbar, et al. (2009) who reported that secondary school libraries in Jos metropolis are not equipped with the necessary materials and staff to render services to users.

Table 5 displays information about the qualifications of school librarians. It is very unfortunate that most of our school libraries in Benin City are staffed by unqualified staff and non-librarians, which falls short of minimum standard of a school library. It is surprising to see that staff with BSc Economics, BSC Environmental Science, BSc Business Administration are in charge of our school libraries in Benin City.

A majority of the schools investigated do not have a library period for the students, and as a result students can never be taught how to make use of the library.

Recommendations

- The school libraries in Benin City should be provided with adequate, current and up-to-date materials both books and audiovisual materials in order to meet the needs of the users
- There is need for the government and various school owners to employ professional librarians to head the school libraries in Benin City so that these librarians can render professional services to library users.
- There should be annual budget for library development to meet the minimum standard for a school library
- School management should include a library period so that students can be taught to make use of the library.
- The Nigerian Librarian Association (Edo State Branch) should liaise with the Ministry of Education on the issue of minimum standards for school libraries.
- There is need for the school Libraries in Benin City to have interlibrary co-operation and resource sharing so that they can meet the needs of their users.

Conclusion

School libraries in Benin City need urgent attention. They should be provided with the necessary facilities so that students can have access to what a functional school library offers and the students can compete with others in a larger society.

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