

The Role of School Libraries in The Provision of Qualitative Education in Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

Libraries have ever the years contributed immensely to the provision of qualitative education in Nigeria. It is recognized as focal points of reference in all our educational institutions. In fact, no school will ever exist without a library. Library is always there to support what is taught in the classroom. Without it, teaching, learning, research and certification becomes impossible. It is therefore, the aim of this article to critically examine the role and the development of school in Nigeria libraries. Most school libraries in Nigeria are suffering largely due to poor funding and staffing. This negative trend affects the school curriculum and students in terms of standard library services. In view of this, this article highlights the importance of school library to both students and teachers and how the school library can be properly caring for obtains effectiveness. School libraries are those libraries found in nursery, primary, and secondary schools they solely established the curriculum of schools and assist teachers with relevant information for their daily teaching and research.

Keyword: *School library, Quantitative education*

1. INTRODUCTION

School libraries, whether at the primary or secondary school level, play a vital role in supporting teaching, learning, and the overall educational development of students. They provide access to information resources that enhance academic achievement, critical thinking, literacy development, and lifelong learning skills. The effectiveness of a school library significantly influences curriculum implementation and the quality of education delivered in schools. Consequently, the proper establishment, maintenance, and management of school libraries are indispensable for achieving educational objectives in Nigeria (Akwang, 2024; Abimbola, 2025).

The concept of the school library has evolved over time. Fayose (1995) defined the school library as a resource centre containing collections of books, periodicals, magazines, newspapers, films, filmstrips, videotapes, recordings, slides, computers, study kits, and other information resources for teachers and students to support learning, recreation, and personal development. Although this definition remains relevant, contemporary school libraries have expanded beyond print collections to include digital resources, electronic databases, multimedia facilities, internet connectivity, and information and communication technology (ICT) tools that facilitate teaching and learning in the twenty-first century (Akwang, 2024).

The rapid advancement of information and communication technologies has transformed school libraries from traditional book repositories into School Media Resource Centres that integrate both print and digital information resources. In many developed countries, school libraries now provide access to electronic books, online databases, educational software, digital learning platforms, and multimedia resources that promote collaborative, inquiry-based, and

technology-enhanced learning. This transformation has significantly improved access to information and enriched classroom instruction. Although Nigerian school libraries continue to face challenges such as inadequate funding, shortage of qualified personnel, and limited ICT infrastructure, efforts are being made to modernize school library services to support quality education (Abimbola, 2025; Ekeh, 2024).

The school library or media resource centre provides students and teachers with diverse learning resources that extend beyond the classroom. It encourages independent learning, creativity, critical thinking, problem-solving, and information literacy. By providing equitable access to quality learning materials, school libraries contribute to students' academic performance and prepare them for lifelong learning in an increasingly digital society (Ekeh, 2024).

Aguolu (2002) described the school library as an integral part of primary and secondary schools established to provide instructional materials that enrich the curriculum, supplement classroom teaching, and offer students unlimited opportunities for independent learning. Similarly, Harrod and Leonard (1980) defined the school library as an organized collection of books and other learning materials maintained for the use of teachers and students under the supervision of a librarian, teacher-librarian, or other designated personnel. While these definitions emphasize the traditional functions of school libraries, contemporary perspectives recognize school libraries as dynamic learning environments that support digital literacy, collaborative learning, innovation, and educational inclusion (Akwang, 2024).

From these definitions and contemporary perspectives, it can be concluded that the school library is an indispensable component of the educational system. It provides learners with

opportunities to access, evaluate, organize, and utilize information from diverse sources to meet their academic, personal, and social needs. Functional school libraries promote reading culture, improve literacy skills, enhance curriculum delivery, and support students' intellectual and personal development. Consequently, the establishment of well-equipped school libraries is as essential as the establishment of schools themselves, particularly in Nigeria's pursuit of quality education and the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 4 (Quality Education) (Abimbola, 2025; Ekeh, 2024; Akinrinade & Ogunlade, 2024).

2. ROLE OF THE SCHOOL'S LIBRARY

The school library or school resources media centre is not only integral and supportive of the school curriculum, it performs the following important roles.

1. The school library is the first place that a child gets exposed to information in the universe. It helps the child to develop mentally, personally, intellectually and socially.
2. Due to the financial incapability of many students to purchase books available on the market, the school library helps them to have an advantage in the use of library resources. It also makes provision for gifted and reluctant readers, mentally, physically and emotionally impaired students etc.
3. It helps students to think critically and creatively about what they hear and view.
4. School library helps in teaching serve as instructional partner or consultant in supporting and expanding existing curriculum, way of working with other teachers in the classroom, to teach using books, computers and other resources.

5. Schools that are proceeded to have media resources centres in place of the libraries with just books, are helping to lead the way for technology, as students of such schools have the opportunity to engage meaningfully with a variety of information with the support of trained staff who also help to integrate these resources in classroom and throughout the curriculum.
6. It inspires literacy in the sense that it gives learners of all ages the opportunity to read, stress and explore information that they want, getting them prepared for future crucial role as adults in the society.
7. It helps develop reading habits in children other than utilitarian and examination purposes.
8. Provides required information for teachers on new materials for effective delivery of instruction.
9. Prepares students for learning after they have left school and developing appropriate reading techniques to enhance reading skills appropriate for their study in the future.
10. Provide a conducive atmosphere which stimulates reading skills and research.
11. Students with very good libraries learn more and score better grades in standardized tests like WAEC compared to their peers in schools without libraries.

3. THE SITUATION OF SCHOOL LIBRARIES IN NIGERIA

Despite the recognized importance of school libraries in promoting teaching, learning, and literacy, the state of school libraries in Nigeria remains a major concern. Many primary and secondary schools either lack functional

libraries or operate libraries with inadequate facilities, outdated collections, insufficient funding, and a shortage of qualified teacher-librarians. Earlier findings by Ayeni and Oyabanji (1997) revealed that many secondary school libraries were either non-functional or non-existent, with even fewer primary schools having library facilities. Recent studies indicate that although some progress has been made through government interventions and private initiatives, many Nigerian schools still struggle to provide well-equipped libraries capable of supporting effective teaching and learning in the twenty-first century (Akwang, 2024; Akinrinade & Ogunlade, 2024).

The Federal Government of Nigeria has consistently acknowledged the importance of school libraries as an essential component of the educational system. The National Policy on Education (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2013) emphasizes the provision of functional libraries at all levels of education, while the Universal Basic Education (UBE) programme also recognizes school libraries as critical educational infrastructure for improving learning outcomes. However, the implementation of these policies has been inconsistent due to inadequate funding, poor policy enforcement, weak maintenance culture, and limited investment in library development. Consequently, many schools continue to operate without standard libraries or modern learning resources, depriving students of opportunities for independent learning, information literacy, and academic excellence (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2013; Akwang, 2024).

Furthermore, the rapid advancement of information and communication technology (ICT) has widened the gap between Nigerian school libraries and those in many developed countries. While school libraries in advanced educational systems have evolved into digital

School Media Resource Centres equipped with electronic resources, internet connectivity, and multimedia technologies, many Nigerian school libraries still depend largely on outdated print collections or have no library services at all. This situation limits students' access to current information and digital learning opportunities necessary for quality education. Scholars have therefore recommended increased government funding, effective policy implementation, ICT integration, adequate staffing, and stronger partnerships with stakeholders to revitalize school libraries and enhance their contribution to achieving quality education and Sustainable Development Goal 4 in Nigeria (Ekeh, 2024; Abimbola, 2025; Akinrinade & Ogunlade, 2024).

4. HOW TO CARE FOR THE SCHOOL LIBRARY TO OBTAIN EFFECTIVENESS

School is a very essential instrument in the life of the pupils. If we must provide qualitative functional education and achieve scientific and technological advancement structure that is required among our children for future development, we must make sure the library is well maintained and cared for in the following ways:

1. The Government must first recognize the importance of school library, making sure that the initial plan of each school includes a library. It's not just enough to provide a library, such libraries should be well funded. Allocations should be made not only for maintenance, but to give every school library a face lift to meet the 21st century teaching and learning process as advocated by the use of computer assisted instruction (CAI).
2. School authorities themselves must understand that the school library is not a kind of luxury but necessity. Only very good

libraries can help achieve excellent academic programmes, so funds allocated to school libraries should be used for purpose for which it was allocated and not diverted.

3. School library should be equipped with books that are not outdated and do not contribute to moral bankruptcy of the users.
4. Library business should be left totally in the hands of professionals. It should not be politicized as is the case in many government circles.
5. Only qualified librarians should be employed to work in school libraries instead of clerks, nonprofessional, full time teachers or students who have not gotten any kind of library training to maintain it.

The greater work of maintenance and care of school library lies with the school librarian, teacher librarian or media specialist. This person, apart from acquiring, organizing and maintaining the library collections, uses his professional skills to educate and provide information necessary for the school to furnish its teaching and learning. With his training, he is able to combine his knowledge of the curriculum, teaching strategies, learning styles, resource management, information technology system and personnel management to bring out the desired results of the school library.

The school librarian must make sure that the library is attractive, inviting, interesting and sometimes amusing to students. The interest of most pupils or students is best captured if the library be it (learning resources centre or media resources centre) looks beautiful in terms of decorations with flowers and pictures on the outside and inside and exposed to them as recreational and social centre where they can read what they want, listen and view audio-visual resources for enjoyment.

Absolute quietness and neatness is also required for the library to be attractive and conducive for reading.

The librarian is entrusted with the responsibility of having to select relevant materials suitable for the information needs of the school in accordance with the school curriculum.

It is the duty of the teacher – librarian to organize these materials properly for easy location and access by way of shelving. Shelving should be wall mounted free-standing type, and it should not be too high so that the students can reach it. Shelves in form of boxes should also be provided for picture books.

The library should have a well sign poster so that users can have easy access to resources without delay.

There should be a high-quality card so that users will know what the library has, where cards cannot be obtained there should be sheaf catalogue which is more economic to produce.

The librarian must make sure that space in the library is flexible, responding to the changing needs of the school community. This can be achieved through proper timing and timetable for users. It should be done in such a way that everyone can have access to books and other library resources like computers, video etc.

Sitting arrangements should be convenient and comfortable. The library needs tables and chairs or stools. Tables should not be too tall or too short while chairs should be the simple and comfortable type.

There should be a circulation area where students and teachers can borrow and return items. The library should make provision for white board or fixed notice boards for passing information to users.

Provision for safety of library materials should be provided; such security measures should include security men to check those leaving and coming to the library. There should be fire extinguishers at strategic points in the library in case of fire outbreak.

The library must be well ventilated where it is a media resource centre, air conditioners are needed for the maintenance of equipment like computers, projectors, films stripes, slides etc dust humidity should be avoided. Fumigation must also be done constantly to kill insects and rodents that could be harmful to books and the equipment like computers etc. Weeding is very important, obsolete and mutilated books must be removed and replaced with current books.

The school librarian has the duty to train and supervise supportive staff for the library. Those could be teachers; volunteers could be parents of students. This is necessary to keep the library functional when the teacher librarian is not around.

The teacher – librarian, must work hand in hand with the school principal and other staff to achieve successful educational programmes.

In a situation where a school cannot afford to employ the services of a full-time professional teacher librarian, it should employ on part-time basis. The school authority should ensure that these part-time employees are in touch with the trained support the staff of library to facilitate the smooth operation of the library.

5. CONCLUSION

It is not enough to provide a well-equipped school library and professional staff, technicians and well-trained support staff to help take care of and maintain the library. It is necessary for all the equipment and staff that are responsive to education and technological change

and contribute to students' learning and for general improvement.

The only way to do this is through monitoring and evaluation which will be done by the teacher librarian. The result of evaluation should be used to make changes and improvements where necessary.

- If after all this, it is discovered, the library.
- Improves students' learning and literacy standards.
- Gives opportunity to teachers to integrate information skills into learning activities.
- Enrich and improve students' reading experience and develop their skills as independent learners.
- Receives adequate funding from Government and supports the school curriculum.
- Attracts students to read other than for examination purposes, then the library is said to be effective.

6. RECOMMENDATION

1. Funding – the school's library must be well funded by governments to purchase relevant materials for use of both teachers and pupils
2. A professional librarian must be employed to serve as a teacher-librarian to guide the pupils on the use of library.
3. A library guided orientation must be carried out in order to attract readership promotion in the library.
4. Must develop a curriculum for pupils in order to promote and develop teaching skills and lifelong learning habits through reading, listening and viewing variety of learning resources.

5. Must provide up-to-date information to keep staff and students abreast with the new developments.
6. Locally sourced materials provided to encourage pupils read more materials to their own advantage.

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