

Perception of the Library by Secondary School Students in Enhancing Success in their Examinations: Myth or Reality?

Bosah L. Eghosa

*Library Department, College of Education,
Ekiadolor, Benin City, Nigeria*

Abstract *In the early 20th century to the 1970s in this country, library utilization formed an indispensable arm in the teaching/learning process especially at the secondary school level. Sound graduates were produced as a result. Could the same be said today of our graduates both at the secondary and tertiary levels of our school system? This research therefore was carried out to investigate whether the library has become a myth in the attainment of success at the school certificate level. One hypothesis was formulated to guide the study: "the performances of secondary school students in their examination are not significantly influenced by the use of library services" 200 outgoing and present out-going SS III students (100 each) were investigated. Hypothesis was tested by means of chi-square technique at the 0.5 level Hypothesis was accepted and it was recommended that the Nigerian Library Association should go beyond publications and conferences to meet with State Governors and Commissioner of education on how to set aside a considerable budget for the revamping of Library Education in Nigeria.*

Keywords: *Relevance, Success, Resources, School, Library.*

Introduction

One of the most fundamental areas responsible for the dwindling educational standards and fortunes in our educational system today especially at the secondary school level is the area of library education and library service utilization among our students.

In the early years of the 20th century up to the 1970s in this country, library utilization formed an indispensable arm in the teaching-learning process especially at the secondary school level which is a vital foundation level in the whole educational cadre.

Hence in those days sound, vibrant and well knowledgeable graduates were produced in Nigeria. In this era, students hardly know what the library is all about because it is virtually non-existent in most public and private schools. In any educational set-up apart from human resources, books and other reading materials are considered as major material resources that are utilized in the process of attaining educational goals. The literature on the deplorable state of library services and availability of materials is replete and there has been series of calls from library practitioners in Nigeria to governments and agencies to revitalize library services especially at the secondary school level.

It seems governments are paying lip service to this sector. The standard of our secondary school leavers continues to depreciate to the extent that about 70% of graduates of our secondary schools can hardly make a correct sentence. Surprisingly, many of them come out in flying colours that do not reflect standards attained. This might be probably largely accounted for by examination malpractices that tend to erode individual competition and quest for knowledge among secondary school students.

The issue for investigation is to find out from the secondary schools student themselves whether they feel it is still necessary for them to consult the library when pursuing their examinations?

The Purpose

The purpose was to investigate one of the supposed emerging myths in the teaching-learning process in Edo State of Nigeria secondary schools.

Hypothesis of Study

One hypothesis was formulated to guide this study:

"the performances of secondary school students in their examinations are not significantly influenced by the use of library services".

There is hope in the return of the significant status of the school library in enhancing the total academic standards of our secondary school students in the near future. The dwindling fortunes in this sector of our teaching-learning process became the focus very recently in Abuja when a book campaign rekindled hope of better Nigeria. During this campaign the Minister of the FCT (Federal Capital territory) Senator Bala Mohammed made the significant gesture of commissioning a library at the Government Secondary School (Technical) Arewa-Abuja.

This initiative seemed a clear manifestation of the Ministers' comment to really bringing the book back: "libraries are a great support to any reading effort".

Speaker after speaker testified to how libraries aided them in their early learning days and enjoined the school students to embrace the haven that libraries represented in their quest for academic excellence. (The Guardian: Friday May 20, 2011).

Omera and Mbashir (2002) reviewed the literature copiously highlighting the relevance of the school library in the educational system on one hand and the state of library services across states in Nigeria on the other. For example Onadiran and Ouadiran (1980) observed that both libraries and educationists regard the school library as the heart of the school and the apex on which the intellectual life of the school rests" Dike (1993) applauding the gradually evolving educational practice which tends to shift emphasis from the teacher to the learner "sees in the school library a rentable instrument for actualizing this much desired educational reform".

Relevant Contribution of School Library to Education

The library contributes to education in a number of ways. Some of these contribution include:

1. Encouraging reading
2. Expanding learning process
3. Developing learning skills
4. Developing critical thought
5. Developing appreciation, attitudes and values and
6. Assisting with develop mental task

These are lofty contributions to the teaching learning process but they have been quite un-attainable over the years because of the absence of library facilities in schools. Worst still examination malpractices have tended to take away whatever was left of the quest for the pursuit of individual knowledge.

At this stage it is pertinent to attempt a definition of a library. "The library could be described as a collection of books and other forms of records, housed, organized and interpreted to meet broad and varying needs of people, for information, knowledge, recreation and aesthetic enjoyment Obaitan (2004).

Basically all libraries are very similar in their function and activities. However, different libraries must adapt to the information needs of their institution, teachers, students, communities or even individual. The historical evolution of libraries and the dynamic nature of different human, activities account for the types of libraries that exist today. The one in focus here is the school library for primary and secondary schools also known as media centres.

The school library is mainly established for studying and teaching with no emphasis on research and documentation. The clients of the school library are pupils or students of that particular school, service

rendered includes lending and reference.

The major objective to be achieved in their formation includes:

1. Provision of background materials, which would supplement class teaching.
2. It should get the children acquainted with books so as to broaden their ideas and stimulate their appetite for knowledge. This is why the school library is also tagged "catch them young".
3. To prepare the pupil to work independently so that when they leave school, they can carry on with their education with less dependence on guidance.
4. The library should aid the students in making reasonable use of their leisure hours.

Values of Reading in the Secondary Schools

The motives for reading stem from the advantages that reading has in itself as a form of communication and those that come from reading as a means to an end in itself.

Reading according to Rouch (1974) is an efficient means of absorbing, comparing and contrasting knowledge. Nyan and Guraji (1999) noted that the establishment of school libraries is essential as the establishment of schools themselves. Reading habit will no doubt broaden one's horizon of knowledge.

Unoh (1995) notes that reading encourages cross-fertilization of ideas from various disciplines, furthermore, as long as competition among nation is based to a large extent on technological achievements, there will be a premium on knowledge that can best be attained through reading. Reading is essential to the existence of our complex system of our social arrangements. Reading according to Dallman (1960) is a humanizing process. It has many levels of satisfaction depending upon individual capability and predispositions.

The status of the library and reading in the 1250's and 70's cannot in anyway be compared with the present status today. These eras as have been pointed out saw the Nation Educational system as one of the most vibrant in the world. The library existed in every secondary school and even in primary schools. Though they were manned by not too qualified personnel yet they rendered the best services available.

The libraries were well stuffed with books and journals and students patronized them very effectively. In must secondary schools, library appeared on their school time table. It was compulsory for students to borrow at best one book every week. This attested to the high quality graduates of both primary and secondary schools in those days. The teacher training colleges were not left out. Teachers produced from the teacher training colleges were of high standard.

Today's library situation is quite different. Many librarians have decried dwindling fortunes of library services in our school system today. Obaitan and Ifidon (2004) are agreed that library services in our educational system have been seriously relegated if not basterdized. For example many libraries in our secondary schools have been converted to classrooms.

Most private schools do not have libraries in their schools. Where they exist, inadequate facilities and personnel are lacking. Students have not orientation in the area of searching for knowledge through library utilization Examination malpractices have replaced genuine quest for knowledge.

Governments have few libraries here and there but the physical set up is below standard. Taher (2005) took a critical look at the physical set up of school and public libraries in Nigeria in order to see how much of the library is usable and useful for the different kinds of users – elderly, children, handicapped etc. He says while planning a library, we should care for the user's needs and user behaviour, including physiological, social, cultural, aptitudes, safety, etc. Unfortunately we do not have provision for different types of users. For example, our catalog does not allow a person on wheel chair to reach it. The building is not planned for a handicapped to move in freely – yet the presumption is that all users have equal access-privileges. The furniture, equipment, design and space planning are not according to the needs of different users.

Status of School Libraries Across the States in the Last Millennium

The question is; what is the present states of library services across the states of Nigeria?

Sharr (1974) studied all types of libraries in the Northern Nigeria and identified book selection among others as one of the major problems of school libraries. Banjo's (1962) surveyed the then Western Regional Government (now Delta, Edo, Ogun, Oyo, Osun, Ekiti, Ondo and Lagos States) and noted that only lip service has been paid to the provision of school library services. He therefore recommended accordingly, that the library should be one integral and living part of the school.

Subsequently, studies by the Department of Library Studies (1965) and Bolodeoku (1979) although concentrating on the city of Ibadan confirmed the absence of any appreciable improvements of the situation after many years of Banjo's recommendation.

Obi (1964) in her studies of the scene in Eastern Nigeria observed that all of the 225 secondary schools in that region had libraries of sorts, most of which were largely unorganized and left to the part-time care of the teaching staff. Ukfong (1972) surveyed the situation in the city of Lagos. Bonny (1966) the UNESCO expert did another and had the same sad reports for Lagos as Ukfong. He identified their inadequacies as ranging from lack of professional staff; though grossly inadequate funding to conspicuously lack of any centre for direction and guidance.

Mougilim's (1984) study of school library services in Anambra State indicates inefficiency and inadequacy in its provision. In a survey carried out in some selected public and private secondary schools in Benin City Bosah (2010) found library materials in public schools scattered all about in a room on the bare floor with book shelves meant for the purpose empty. Many of the private schools first had a semblance of what looked like a library just to vindicate themselves before Government officials that they have libraries.

In his study of the reading habits of students in Boarding secondary schools in Kontagora town of Niger State Yusuf (2003) found that although the greater number of students sampled revealed that there were libraries in their public schools 86.8 or 87% of the respondents were all agreed that the libraries in question were all inadequately run both in number of books and the services. He concluded that for libraries to exist in the schools is one thing and for them to be effectively enhancing teaching and learning is another thing entirely.

He also found that only about 30% of the respondents made use of the library while a whole 70% did not. On the purpose of using the library, 37% of the respondents did so for private study while only 13% used the library for recreation and pleasure.

It is thus becoming clear that the utilization of the library in enhancing teaching and learning is fast deteriorating in our secondary schools.

Methodology

This study was designed to investigate secondary school students of Edo State with the sole purpose to finding out the relevance of the library in their academic work especially in relation to their successes in the school certificate examinations.

The study is a survey one and the variable is studied ex-post-facto.

Population and Sample

The population consists of 200 senior school certificate students made up of 100 immediate past ex-students and another 100 serving SS III students in some selected public and private schools. The ex-students were sampled at well established lecture centres in Benin City. These consisted of the aspiring U.T.M.E candidates for the 2011 UTME examinations.

Research Instrument

The research instrument consisted of a fifteen-item questionnaire on whether the students utilized library facilities while preparing for their SSCE examinations or not.

The respondents responded to a four-point scale ranging from strongly agree, agree, disagree and strongly disagree. The scale were assigned scores: for example: strongly agree = 4, agree = 3, disagree = 2 and strongly disagree = 1.

Items on the questionnaire were drawn from literature on the normal reasons for utilizing library resources in the eventual success of in examinations. The instrument thus was adjudged to have content validity. Respondents were served the instruments in their classes and immediately collected after their responses.

Analysis of Data

Data was analysed by means of chi-square technique to prove the only lone stated hypothesis which states: "the performances of secondary school students in their examinations are not significantly influenced by the use of library services".

Table I. Observed Frequencies

	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total
Influenced	30	35	23	12	100
not Influenced	36	46	12	6	100
	66	81	35	18	200

Table II. Expected Frequencies

	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Influenced	33	40.5	17.5	9
not Influenced	33	40.5	17.5	9

Table III. Computation of the Chi-square Value

O	E	O-E	(O-E) ²	(O-E) ² /E
30	33	-3	9	0.273
36	33	3	9	0.27
35	40.5	-5.5	30.25	0.747
46	40.5	5.5	30.25	0.747
23	17.5	5.5	30.25	0.728
12	17.5	-5.5	30.25	1.728
12	9	-3	9	1.0
6	9	-3	9	1.0
TOTAL				7.46

Results and Analysis

The X^2 value of 7.46 was less than the table value of 7.81 at the 0.5 level of significance.

Therefore the hypothesis is accepted and the conclusion is that "the performances of secondary school students in their examinations are not significantly influenced by the use of library services".

Discussion

The conclusion above aptly reflects the disposition of secondary school students to library resources in their educational endeavours. The incidence of examination mal-practices is one factor that tended to emasculate the relevance of library consultations among secondary school students especially when preparing for their examinations.

Secondly, both private and public schools relegated the library to the background in teaching and learning in recent times.

Private school proprietors do not see the need for expanding their finances in libraries especially when they can make their students pass their examinations through dubious methods.

Government owned public schools are not well funded. The population of students in a school is overbearing on school administrators. Infrastructures are overstretched and most governments are lackadaisical about funding the educational system. This is what killed library education in the country.

Recommendations

It is hereby recommended as follows:

1. The Nigerian Library Association should visit all Governors in the Federation to enlighten them on the overwhelming importance of library services especially at the secondary school level which is the middle level education provider for the country's man-power needs.

Such meetings should be preceded by a meeting with all States' Commissioners of Education. We must take the bull by the horn. Mere publications without the necessary physical and practical push will not avail anything but little. All that is needed now is a more radical approach by all bodies regulating education in this country.

2. Special budgets be set aside by all governments in the Federation for the building, and rebuilding of libraries in the states' secondary schools. The Library Association must supervise this and ensure that Governments comply. This they can do by setting up committees to monitor progress across the country.

3. All private secondary schools in the country should as a matter of urgency be made to set up libraries in their schools within a specified period which will be monitored by the Nigerian Library Association members operating in the various states of the country. There is the need therefore to set up monitoring committees by the Nigeria Library Association to actualize the establishments of libraries and the revamping of dead ones in our secondary schools as it is being done by the N.M.A, N.B.A, Nigeria Medical Laboratory Association, Pharmaceutical Council of Nigeria etc in regulating the conduct of practice of their professions by members.

References

- Bolodeoku, A. (1979) in Omera and Mbashir. "The relevance of school library in the provision of Education in Nigeria". *Journal of Library and Information Service*. Vol. 4 No. 1 and 2.
- Bonny, N. (1966) in Omera and Mbashir. "The relevance of school library in Nigeria". *Journal of Library and Information Service*. Vol. 4 No. 1 and 2.
- Bosah, L.E. (2008). "Dwindling fortunes of library Education in Nigeria: A case study of Edo and Delta States' Schools". *Journal of the Association of Nigerian Academics*. Vol. 3(1) 189-194.

- Dallman, Martha (1969). *The Teaching of Reading*, Rinehart Winston Publishers.
- Dike, D.B. (1993). *Library Resources in education* Enugu: Abia Publishers.
- Mohammed, B. (2011). *Guardian Newspaper* Friday May 20th 2011.
- Mongilim, E. (1984). "School library services at the cross roads. The case of Anambra State of Nigeria". *Nigerian Libraries*. 20.
- Nyam and Guraj (1999). *The Role of School Libraries in Encouraging Reading Habits in Students at Primary and Secondary School Levels*, Technical Education Today. Pg. 1 and 2.
- Obaitan, A.O. and Ifidon, E.I. (2004). "Reading in General Studies". Ambrose Alli University Press.
- Obaitan, A.O. (1988). *The Library in Readings in General Studies*. Ekpoma: Ambrose Ali University Publishing House. Pg. 76.
- Obaitan, A.O. (2004). *Use of Library" in Readings in general studies"*. Ambrose Alli University Publishing house.
- Obi, A. (1964). *Assessing the School Libraries: Issues and Problems*. University of Nigeria, Nsuka (Unpublished paper).
- Omera, J. and Mbashir, A. (2002). "The Relevance of school library in the provision of education in Nigeria". *Journal of Library and Information Service*. Vol. 4 No. 1 and 2.
- Onadiran G.T. (1977). "A study of school library Resources in selected secondary schools in Nigeria". Unpublished Ph.D lessertation Boston University School of Education.
- Rouch, D.N. (1974). *Development of Lifetime Reading Habits*. New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons.
- Sharr, M.O. (1994). *Library Trends and Issues*. MLS Lecture Notes. A.B.U. Zaria.
- Taher (2005). *User Education and the Library Issues and Problems*. Publications/ archivepdfs/4Taher.pdf.
- Ukfong, E. (1972). *A Survey of School Libraries. Trends and Issues*. University of Calabar. (MLS Project).
- Unoh (1995). *Using the School Libraries* (4); 72.
- Yusuf, M.A. (2003). "A study of reading habits of students in Boarding secondary schools in Kontagora Town Niger State". *Coclin Journal of Librarianship*. Vol. 3. No. 1 Sept. 2003.

