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SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN RURAL AREAS: IS THE LIBRARY SERVING HER PURPOSE?

Benjamin Kenechukwu NWOBU and Nweke Angela CHINWENDU

¹Federal College of Education (Technical) Akoka, Lagos

²Federal College of Fisheries and Marine Technology, Lagos

ABSTRACT

This study examines the state of school library in two rural communities in South-South of Nigeria (Ewossa and Agbarho communities in Edo and Delta State of Nigeria) and the level of services provided to ascertain if they are rendering the required services for the students they are established to serve. The sample size for the study is 350 Senior Secondary school students in the 5 secondary schools with libraries in the two rural communities. Findings revealed that a (students) in this study are aware of user registration service and user education service of their library while they are unaware of some important services provided by the library such as Lending Services, Reference Services, Selective Dissemination of Information, Internet and Electronic Services as they are not being offered to the students at all; school libraries profoundly assists students with books in preparation for their exams, do their assignments, improve on their vocabulary among others. Findings also revealed that the major challenge the students face when using the library are lack of adequate library resources (Textbooks, visual and audio visual materials), too many outdated books in their library, erratic power supply with and inadequate space among others. The following among others were suggested to ensure the availability of school libraries in rural communities and to improve on their roles and services: The Nigerian government should make setting up a school library an important criterion for the establishment of secondary schools in Nigeria; secondary schools in the rural parts of Nigeria should be fully stocked with relevant textbooks and other audio visual resources to aid the learning needs of the students; school libraries and librarians in the rural parts should improve in their services in the areas of lending service, reference service, selective dissemination of information, internet and electronic service because the students are not too familiar with these services in their school libraries.

KEYWORDS: Secondary Schools, Rural Areas, School Library, Students.

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INTRODUCTION

Educating the rural people has been the drive of governments in developing countries, as opined by double Gist (2013), the widespread of illiteracy among the rural people was seen as the major contributing factor to rural under-development and poverty. In Nigeria for example, it is stated in the National Policy on Education (1998), that the federal government has accepted education as an instrument for effecting National development; this was the main driving factor behind the establishment of schools in the rural areas in recent time. To be able to drive this mission of educating the rural people especially the younger ones successfully, libraries are expected to play a paramount role by providing up to date information resources for teaching and self-learning by the students. School libraries are libraries that exist in the primary and secondary school level aiding the teaching, studies and learning needs of their schools. Gag (2015) opined that Dr. S.R. Ranganathan, the Father of Library Science in India, stated that the school libraries should act as laboratories for students and the librarians should function as guides to help the students in learning and using the books for improvement of knowledge and scholarship. Amongst the different types of libraries, the school library is the most crucial as it forms the basis on which other knowledge is built upon and it is also the one faced with more challenges in the nation (Its ekor, 2012).

In the United States, the widespread of public recognition and support for school libraries did not develop until the nineteenth century when state legislatures (beginning in 1835 with New York) acknowledged the value of school library resources and began promoting their funding (Education Encyclopedia, 2016). In Nigeria, school libraries in most parts of the rural areas are yet to get the required attention and support required to meet the educational needs of the schools in their communities. A secondary school without a library is rated today as not a standard one; therefore libraries should be considered a major criterion for the establishment of secondary schools in Nigeria whether government owned or private. Adetoro (2005) noted that the development of school libraries in Nigeria has been fraught with problems. According to Private School Blog of Nigeria (2010), problem areas in the development of school libraries in Nigeria have been identified as lack of legislation, shortage of funds, poor infrastructure, unavailability of trained staff, lack of relevant material, and apathy on the part of school administrators and the government. This study will therefore explore the services of school libraries in the educational development of students in the rural areas pointing out the prospects and challenges of school libraries in two rural communities in Edo and Delta States of Nigeria (Ewossa and Agbarho community respectively) with a view of improving on the services of school libraries to secondary school students in Nigeria.

Statement of the Problem

Students in rural areas always performed poorly than their counterparts in urban parts of Nigeria. The study of Adepoju and Oluchukwu (2011) shows that there was improved performance in urban secondary schools in both English Language and Mathematics over that of the rural secondary schools and of course, the percentage of failure was very much pronounced in Mathematics in rural secondary schools from 2005 to 2007 and this mass failure still persists till date. This study will therefore explore the roles and services of school libraries in savaging this bane that has rocked the educational sectors in secondary schools in the rural parts of Nigeria.

Objectives of the Study

This study sought to establish ways of enhancing school libraries services to secondary school in rural areas of Nigeria. To attain this goal, the study stipulated the following objectives:

- To find out the availability of libraries in rural secondary schools of Nigeria.
- To identify the services of school libraries that secondary school students are aware of
- To find out how often secondary school students use their school libraries
- To ascertain the effect of school library on students educational performance
- To evaluate the challenges students encounter when using their school libraries.

These objectives highlighted above would guide the researchers in framing research questions that would be used for the study.

LITERATURE REVIEW

According to Lance (2001), over the past sixty years there have been around seventy-five studies on the impact of school library media programs on academic achievement, today the number of studies has increased tremendously. School libraries help prepare students to live and learn in a world of information. The mission of school libraries generally is to ensure that students and staff are able to use ideas and information effectively (California Department of Education, 2010). It is also worthy of notice that 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 with life-long learning skills and develops their imagination, enabling them to live as responsible citizens (UNESCO, 2000). 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. A lot of studies have been carried out on the roles of school libraries; Lonsdale (2003), Martin (1996), Udoh - Ilomechine (2008) but only a few concentrated on the rural areas.

Dent and Goodman (2015) carried out a study on rural library's role in Ugandan secondary students' reading habits. The results of this study indicated that both reading frequency and certain types of reading materials that were read for recreational purposes correlated with higher overall grade average. Reading frequency was positively correlated with student overall grade average for all students. Obi (1994) listed seven contributions a good school library can make to quality education. The points centered on the promotion of reading skills, contribution to academic achievement increasing students' chance of success in institutions of higher education and providing students with vocational information. Others include helping them to discover and develop special gifts and talents, training students to study independently and provision of up-to-date resources to meet the challenges of education. Mahajan (2010) opined that school library equips students with life-long learning skills and develops their imagination enabling them to live as responsible citizens". It plays this role by selecting, acquiring and providing access to appropriate sources of information. Some other services of school libraries highlighted by the researcher are; they offer to students books and other resources ranging from print to electronic media for completion of various school projects and assignments, the school librarian helps the students in finding the books/information on the topics of their interest. The librarians along with the teachers work together to achieve higher levels of literacy.

Elaturoti (1983) in a study of some secondary school libraries in the western part of Nigeria found the situation 'regrettably poor'. There were very few or no staff to manage existing school libraries. Similarly, Adetoro (2005) studied a comparative analysis of school libraries development and use in selected public and private school in ogun State, the researcher found out that the schools use improvised accommodation, lacks qualified personnel while the library are occasionally and infrequently used. This is as a result of the fact that facilities, resources and equipment's are not sufficient and most of them are dilapidated especially in public schools. However, Ajegbomogun & Salaam (2011) asserted that an interview with some of the head teachers shows that the issue of school library development in Nigeria is not in their plan at all and they could not be blamed for these lapses as the federal and state ministry of education has no budgetary allocation for such. The researchers went further to state that in the Northern part of Nigeria, development of school libraries have been described as "accidental", even though almost all the secondary schools had libraries but books were not there. One of the major challenges of school libraries in Nigeria is the lack of accurate and up-to-date library resources and data (Funmilayo, 2013).

Methodology

This study adopts a survey research design. The instrument used for data collection in this study was a structured interview and questionnaires by the researchers and two research assistants' one Each from the two rural areas who were trained on how to distribute the questionnaires across the schools in the two rural communities in Edo and Delta State (Ewossa and Agbarho communities respectively). Ewossa Community is a rural area under Igueben Local Government Area of Edo State, Nigeria, the community has only two (2) secondary schools while Agbarho community is a rural area under Ughelli North Local Government Area of Delta State, Nigeria, and the community has nine (9) secondary schools. The researchers decided to work with only the secondary schools with libraries in these two communities. Of the two secondary schools in Ewossa community, only one of them has a functioning library and of the nine secondary schools in Agbarho community, only four has a functioning library. From the survey carried out by the researchers, each of the secondary schools understudy have 200 and above Senior Secondary Schools students, therefore a total of 70 students was selected using purposive sampling techniques from each school making a total of 350 students which form the total sample size for this study. 350 questionnaires were distributed, duly completed and found usable; hence there was 100% response rate. The data collected for this study was analyzed using simple percentage and frequency count.

Research Findings and Discussion

Table 1: Distribution of respondent by rural area and secondary schools

S/N	Rural Community	Secondary Schools	No of Respondents
1	Ewossa Community	Ossa Secondary School (Private Owned)	70
2	Agbarho Community	Unity Model Secondary Schools (Government owned)	70
		Agbarho Grammar school (Government Owned)	70
		Holy child group of schools (Private Owned)	70
		Peace Child secondary school (Private Owned)	70

Total = 350

Table 1 shows the 5 secondary schools with libraries from the two rural areas understudy, in total 70 respondents were drawn from each secondary school in the rural areas with library making a total of 350 respondents for the study.

Table 2: Distribution of respondent by sex

Sex	Frequency	Percentage
Male	189	54%
Female	161	46%
Total	350	100%

From **table 2** above, 189 (54%) of the respondents are male while 161 (46%) of them are female. This means that there were more male secondary school students than female in the two rural communities used for the study.

Table 3: Distribution of Respondents by Class

Class	Frequency	Percentage
Senior Secondary School 1	90	26%
Senior Secondary School 2	118	34%
Senior Secondary School 3	142	40%
Total	350	100%

Table 3 above shows that 90 (26%) of the respondents are SSS 1 students, 118(34%) of them are SSS 2 students and 142 (40%) of them are SSS 3 students. This means that majority of the respondents are SSS 3 students who are preparing for certificate exams.

Table 4: Availability of libraries in the secondary schools in Ewossa and Agbarho Communities

Is library available in your School?

Communities	Secondary Schools	Availability of Library	
		Yes	No
Ewossa Community	Ossa Secondary School (Private Owned)	Yes	----- -
	Ewossa Secondary School (Government Owned)	-----	No
Agbarho Community	Unity Model Secondary Schools (Government owned)	Yes	----- --
	Ebiare Secondary School (Private Owned)	-----	No
	Holy child group of schools (Private Owned)	Yes	----- -- -
	Agbarho Grammar school (Government Owned)	Yes	----- -- --
	Ethel Secondary School (Private Owned)	-----	No
	Aunty Doris Secondary School (Private Owned)	-----	No
	Peace Child secondary school (Private Owned)	Yes	----- -- ---
	Ekwere Grammar School (Government Owned)	-----	No
	Oguname Secondary School (Private Owned)	-----	No

From **table 4** above, it is clear that out of the 11 secondary schools surveyed, only 5 of them have a functioning library while 6 of them do not have a library at all.

Table 5: Awareness of School Library services

Which of these services are you aware of in your School Library?

Services of School Libraries	Aware	%	Unaware	(%)
Registration of Users	322	92%	28	8%
User Education	229	65%	121	35%
Current Awareness Services	197	56%	153	44%
Reference Services	67	19%	283	81%
Lending services	43	12%	307	88%
Selective Dissemination of Information	12	3%	338	97%
Internet Services	--	--	350	100%
Electronic Library Services	--	--	350	100%

Table 5 shows that 92% of respondents are aware of user registration service while 8% of them indicated that they were unaware of it. For user education services, 65% of the respondents are aware of that service in their library while 35% of them were not. For current awareness services, 56% are aware while 44% of them were not. Reference service, only 19% of them are aware while 81% of them were not. For lending services, only 12% are aware while 88% were not. For selective dissemination of information, only 3% of the respondents are aware of this service while 97% were not. And none of the respondents are aware of internet services and electronic library services as their libraries are not offering those services for their students. This means that the secondary schools in these two rural communities only offer properly user registration service, User education services and Current Awareness Services, while other services of the library such as Lending Service, Reference Service, Selective Dissemination of Information, Internet and Electronic services are not being offered to the students in full capacity.

Table 6: Frequency of the Use of School Libraries

How often do you make use of your school library?

Usage Level	Frequency	Percentage
Regularly	245	70%
Occasionally	87	25%
Not at all	18	5%
Total	350	100%

From **table 6** above, 245 (70%) of the respondents use their school library regularly, 87 (25%) of them are using their school library occasionally while only 18 (5%) of the respondents indicated that they dint use their school library at all. This means that majority of the secondary school students in this two rural communities use their school library regularly.

Table 7: Effect of school library on student’s educational performance

How does the use of your school library affect your educational performance?

Effect of library use	Profoundly	%	Slightly	%
Help me to read relevant books in preparation for my exams	293	84%	57	16%
Help me to learn new vocabulary through novel and the use of library dictionaries	273	78%	77	22%
Help me to get books that assists in doing my assignments	284	81%	66	19%
Help me to get books for self-development and self-learning	245	70%	105	30%
Enable me to read books that can complement classroom teaching	189	54%	161	46%
Enable me to have access to books that helps to broaden my knowledge base on the subject in our curriculum	142	41%	208	59%
Helps me to read ahead of my teachers	119	34%	231	66%

Table 7 shows that 84% of the respondents admitted that the use of their school library has profoundly help them to read relevant books in preparation for their exams while 16% indicated that it slightly helped them, 81% agreed that it greatly helps them to get books that assists them in doing their assignments and home works while 19% of them are of the opinion that it slightly help them for that purpose, 78% says it helps them profoundly to learn new vocabulary through the use of library novels and dictionaries while 22% of them said they were slightly aided by the library to do such, 70% of the respondents admitted that the use of their school library has greatly helped them to get books for self-development and self-learning while 30% of them says it slightly helped them, 54% agreed that it profoundly enables them to read books that complement their classroom learning while 46% said it slightly helped them to do that, 41% admitted that the use of their school library has profoundly helps them to have access to books that helps to broaden their knowledge base on the subjects in their curriculum while 59% of them are of the opinion that it slightly helped them to do that. 34% agrees that the use of their school library has profoundly helped them to read ahead of their teachers while 66% of them said it slightly helped them to do that. This obviously

depicts that the use of the school library has profoundly affected the educational development of these students positively as they are able to have access to books that can help them to prepare for exams, do their assignments, and improve on their vocabulary among others. This findings agrees with the study of Dent and Goodman (2015) which shows that Reading frequency and regular use was positively correlated with student overall grade average for all students.

Table 8: Challenges students encounter when using their school libraries

What are the challenges you encounter when using your school library?

Challenges	Profoundly	%	Slightly	%
Lack of adequate library resources (Textbooks, Visual and Audio Visual Materials).	299	85%	51	15%
Too many outdated books	289	83%	61	17%
Erratic power supply	285	81%	65	19%
Inadequate space	257	73%	93	27%
Lack of adequate reading tables and chair	256	73%	94	27%
Unfriendly library staff	152	43%	198	57%
Shortage of library staff	89	25%	261	75%
Poor ventilation	37	11%	313	89%

From **table 8** above, 85% of the respondents agreed that lack of adequate library resources is a profound challenge to them in an attempt to use their school library while 15% of them see that factor as slight challenge, 83% of them admitted that too many outdated books is a profound challenge while 17% of them sees it as a slight challenge, 81% said erratic power supply is a profound challenge while 19% of them sees it as a slight challenge, 73% of them indicated that inadequate space is a profound challenge while 27% of them sees it as a slight challenge, 73% also sees lack of adequate reading tables and chairs as a profound challenge while 27% of them sees that as a slight challenge, 43% of them said unfriendly library staff is a profound challenge while 57% of them sees that as a slight challenge, 25% of the respondents sees shortage of library staff as a profound challenge while 75% of them see that factor as a slight challenge, and only 11% of the respondents indicated poor ventilation is a profound challenge while 89% of them sees that factor as a slight challenge. This means that the major profound challenges of the students in an attempt to use their school library is lack of adequate library resources followed by too many outdated book, erratic power supply and inadequate space, among others. This findings agrees with the study of Ajegbemogun and Salaam (2011) which shows that most secondary schools in the northern part of Nigeria had libraries but don't have books which is the factor affecting the use of libraries in the secondary schools in that region.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

This study was carried out to ascertain the services and issues of secondary schools in two rural areas of Edo and Delta State of Nigeria. The specific objectives of the study was to find out the availability of libraries in rural secondary schools of Nigeria, ascertain the awareness of school library services by secondary school, find out how often secondary school students use their school libraries, ascertain the effect of school library on students educational performance, evaluate the challenges students encounter when using their school libraries. Ewossa and Agbarho communities are in Edo and Delta state and have 11 secondary schools in total and out of the 11 secondary schools only 5 had libraries. Findings show that there were more male respondents than female in this study. Findings also reveal that a high percentage of respondents (students) in this study are aware of registration of users, user education and current awareness services while they were not very much aware of Reference services, Lending Services, Selective Dissemination of Information services and they were totally unaware of Internet Services and Electronic library services. The respondents indicated they use their school library regularly as their school libraries assist them with books in preparation for their exams. The major challenge the respondents said they face when using their library is lack of adequate library resources (Textbooks, visual and audio visual materials) followed by too many outdated books in their library, among others.

In view of the foregoing, the following recommendations were made:

- The Nigerian government should make setting up a school library an important criterion for the establishment of secondary schools in Nigeria. As seen in the study, 6 out of the 11 secondary school in the rural areas understudy do not have libraries at all, this is a factor contributing to the mass failure of students in certificate exams as there is no library where they can develop themselves academically or read for exams.
- Government owned or privately owned secondary schools in the rural parts of Nigeria should be fully stocked with relevant textbooks and other audio visual resources to aid the learning needs of the students.
- An alternative source of power should be provided for school libraries in the rural areas to compliment the power from government, the bulbs in the library ought to be on so that the students won't strain their eyes when reading.
- Adequate space should be reserved for school libraries, as space is required to house the shelves, school library resources, reading tables and chairs as well as the school librarians and patrons.
- School librarian should have an empathy heart treating the students with love so that they would be free to say their areas of information needs.
- When sitting school libraries, ventilation and free flow of air within the library should be considered properly because when the library is stuffy and too hot it won't be conducive for the users.
- School libraries in rural areas of Nigeria should have comfortable tables and chairs in their right quantity for the patrons.
- School libraries and librarians in the rural parts should improve in their services in the areas of lending service, reference service, selective dissemination of information, internet and electronic service because the students are not too familiar with these services in their school libraries.

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