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AVAILABILITY AND USE OF PUBLIC SECONDARY SCHOOL LIBRARIES IN MINNA, NIGER STATE. NIGERIA.

By

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Abstract

The study examined the availability and use of school library facilities and information resources by public secondary schools students in Minna, Niger State. Questionnaire was used as an instrument for data collection and simple percentage distribution was used to analyze the data collected. The study showed that facilities such as tables (59.25%), book shelves (70.33%) were adequate but catalogue and computers had high percentage of inadequacy (75.99% and 70.23% respectively). The study also revealed that library resources which include dictionaries, handbooks, manuals (65.88%) and textbooks (51.74%) were use to read in preparation for examination (80.3%). The study recommended that school management should improve library facilities and resources, acquire more computers and employed trained librarian to manage the library and a mechanism to enforce the policy that requires each school should have a standard library.

Introduction

Decades ago, libraries were known as depositories of information resources. School libraries were not different either; Head teachers and school Principal offices were seen as depository centers with insufficient information resources that were either irrelevant or outdated. Libraries that are attached to pre-primary, primary and secondary schools are known as school libraries. Schools that provided accommodation for libraries were found to be under locks and keys most of the times. Today, school libraries are not just a collection of books but provide information in different formats and enabling

environment for teaching and learning opportunities. School library is a collection of diverse information resources that are organized for pupils, students and teachers' use. According to Owate and Iroha (2013), school library is a collection of different resources that are housed and organized by professional Librarians to support students and teachers in their educational program.

Waite in Benard (2014) sees school library as a collection of wide range of learning and teaching materials which are housed in a place and centrally organized by librarians and indexed to serve users. School libraries are primarily established to serve the

educational needs of the school community through the provision of relevant information. The collection in school library includes books, magazines, newspapers, dictionaries, maps, drawings, pictures, posters, talking books, toys etc. Other collections include different forms of electronic resources and instructional materials which are based on the school curricula. Goodin (2010) asserts that school library also provides curriculum based resources and gives opportunity to students to learn outside the assigned curriculum on their own. Cultural and recreational value materials are also acquired to stimulate pupils and students' interests in learning processes. Elliot (2010) sees School library as a learning environment beyond the classroom which sustains the learning experience away from the walls of the class to other learning environments. It develops the students' abilities to enquire and learn on their own. American Association of school librarians (2007), states that school library provides equitable access to both physical and intellectual resources and tools required for learning in a stimulating environment. Thus, students and teachers are required to use library resources ranging from paper based to electronic information resources. According

to IFLA (2015), school library is a physical and digital learning space where reading, enquiry, research, thinking, imagination and creativity are central to students' information to knowledge growth. The physical and digital learning space consist of library facilities, which includes instructional and learning materials, library services, computers, media technology and data network (Hay and Toda, 2010). Library whether physical or digital, provides access to relevant and adequate information to its users in a stimulating and friendly environment. Such environment is appealing, inviting, supporting learning and help students to construct and improve their understanding from a variety of sources (Holland, 2015). Thus, School library provides a common place with diverse collections that support teaching, learning and studying for attainment of educational goals. Ideally, school library should be well equipped with relevant collection that are well organized to provide quick access to information sources across all forms which includes print, multi-media, digital collection and instructional materials with trained personnel to manage the library services effectively. School library is an integral part of the educational institution. Gretes (2013)

argue that school libraries are hubs of learning in public schools as they provide access to reading materials. Unagba in Owate and Iroha (2013) posit that school library is a driving force for teaching and learning as it contribute to improved learning skills among users. Several research has shown that students who have access to school libraries with trained librarian believe the library helped them to learn and perform better in their academic programs (Gretes, 2013; Atanda, 2014). This is because the school libraries were well stock with information resources. Mutungi's study on status showed that some schools had as high as 15 books per student which exceed IFLA/UNESCO requirement of 10 books per student (Mutungi, 2012) resulting in academic excellence. According to California State Board of Education (2010), access to quality library resources and facilities enhance students' performance. Thus, students who attend schools with standard library facilities and are expose to library services, learn to inquire and search for answers and perform better when compared to students who are not exposed to the use of library facilities.

Literature Review

Despite the potentials and the benefits of school library, research has shown that most school have failed to maintain effective libraries. Nengomasha et al (2012) assessed the state of public school libraries in Namibia, the study revealed that, majority of the school libraries did not meet the requirements for schools to realize the potential benefits of their libraries. Similarly, National Education Infrastructure System (NEIMS) and Education Statistics in South Africa revealed that 79.3% of the public school libraries did not have any form of library infrastructure, 13.7% had library space without resources, and only 7.23% had functioning school libraries in South Africa. This affected students' performance as the result of primary learners' reading skills in 40 nations indicated that South Africa students' score was low. The low performance of students was attributed to lack of functioning libraries that will support teaching and learning programs of the schools (Equal Education, 2010).

In Nigeria, Owate and Oroha (2013) assert that school library lacks basic library facilities and resources, and their services are poorly administered. This seems to have affected student learning performance. The

school library and students' learning outcome in Ekiti State, Nigeria was investigated by Adeyemi. He discovered that the level of development of school libraries and their resources were inadequate, the condition of school libraries were poor as it affected the performance of the students. The students learning outcome was poor, however, few students that had access to and used school library resources performed above average (Adeyemi, 2010). Similarly, the study of Idiegbeyan-Ose and Okoedion (2012) revealed that all the school investigated in Benin city have inadequate library materials and only outdated resources were available in the few schools that have school libraries. The libraries also lack audio-visual materials and have unqualified staff. The study of Idris (2013) revealed that school libraries in Kano lacked trained manpower, financial support, space and resources, and other valuable resources for use while some do not even have libraries at all.

Common to the above is the sub-standard nature of school libraries across many states, despite the effort made by IFLA to develop and upgrade school libraries. The libraries are inadequately stocked, materials available were outdated, and accommodations provided for libraries are

ill-equipped with no librarian to organized and make the information accessible to users. Adewusi (2013) posit that since the introduction of library in schools, their growth is being very slow while some were pathetic. This has contributed to sharp decline in the use of library resources as students hardly visit the library to use its resources (Owate and Oroha 2013). This means that school libraries are not purpose built and where they exist, they are depositories of outdated information resources. Such environment (library) cannot effectively support or contribute significantly to the learning process of students. As such, performance level is likely to drop.

Relevance of School Library

The library exists to provide information resources and ideas that are fundamental for learning to function effectively in today's information and knowledge-driven society as well as help students to become critical and creative thinkers through the provision of relevant information resources necessary for school educational programmes (IFLA/UNESCO School Library Manifesto 2015). These information resources are selected based on the present and anticipated needs of the students and teachers. Selected resources are further acquired and carefully

organized to give quick access to the content. The information resources provided by school library, support curricula and instructional needs, supplement class teaching, enhance and improve teaching and learning throughout school community. The relevance of school library to the school community also includes:

- The school library serve as a learning environment to students, teachers and other staff by providing information resources in print and non-print formats in an effort to support teaching and learning.
- School library supports the school curriculum by providing resources to aids teaching and learning. It also offers advice, professional development and knowledge of appropriate learning and teaching materials (Boelens, 2012). This fosters learning and development of knowledge thereby improving the required standard of Education.
- Learning is an active process which is far more than direct interaction between teachers and students within the classroom. Students need opportunities to interact with other information resources to learn on their

own. The school library offers a common learning environment that gives students opportunity for independent learning. This allows creation of new knowledge from their understanding derived from the use of variety of sources provided in the library.

- The emergence of technology in education has given teachers and students the opportunity to learn and develop their knowledge and that has changed the ways learners access and explore information. Ultimately, the use of information and communication technologies in school libraries encourages curiosity and sharing of knowledge among students as well as support students and teachers with information searching skills.

Statement of Problem

One of the missions of education for pupils and students is the development of skills for self enquiry rather than mere inculcation of subject matter. This can be achieved through a well equipped library where students have equal access to wide range of appealing and curriculum based resources. The demand to develop school

library is born from the need to improve and enhanced quality education for all young people. Having recognized that the school library is an essential component of educational institution and the need to be given due attention, the Federal Government of Nigeria formulated a Policy on education in 1981 that states among others things that “libraries are one of the most important educational services. Proprietors of schools shall provide functional libraries in all their educational institutions in accordance with the established standards”(Ifenkwe, 2013). And the federal Government through State Government is to ensure that all schools have financial backing to implement this policy to the fullest. The works of Adeyemi (2010) and Fabunmi (2010) established among other things the inability of government to adequately fund, support and maintain school libraries, and lack of political will to enforce the policy. This calls for the need to assess the school library of facilities in selected public secondary schools in Minna, Niger state. The study is aimed to investigate the availability and use of library facilities in public secondary schools Minna, Niger State.

Objectives of the Study

The following are the objectives of the study

1. To determine the adequacy of library facilities in public secondary schools in Minna, Niger State.
2. To determine the types of information resources available in public secondary school libraries in Minna, Niger State?
3. To identify the relevance of information resources used in public secondary schools libraries in Minna, Niger State?
4. To find out the purpose/reasons of using public secondary school libraries in Minna, Niger State

Methodology

Qualitative research method was the research methodology adopted for the study. The population for this study comprised of the entire students of the six selected public secondary schools in Minna Niger State. The total population of the students is 17,763. Simple random sampling technique was adopted to select the sample size from the population. The researcher selected 40% as the sample size of the population of the six secondary schools. In all, 7,104 students were selected as sample for this study. Questionnaire was used as an instrument for data collection and simple percentage

distribution was used to analyze the data collected for this study.

Results and Discussion

The study administered 7,104 questionnaires, of which 6471 were filled and returned, which amounted to 91.09% of the total number of questionnaires administered. From the responses returned, 6405 (98.98%) respondents indicated the existence of school

library in their respective secondary schools. This is because the school library is an essential component of educational institution which can enhance the quality of education for all learners. This implies that schools in the study area have adhered to Government policy that mandates all schools to have standard libraries in their educational institutions.

Research Question 1:

How adequate are the following facilities in your School library?

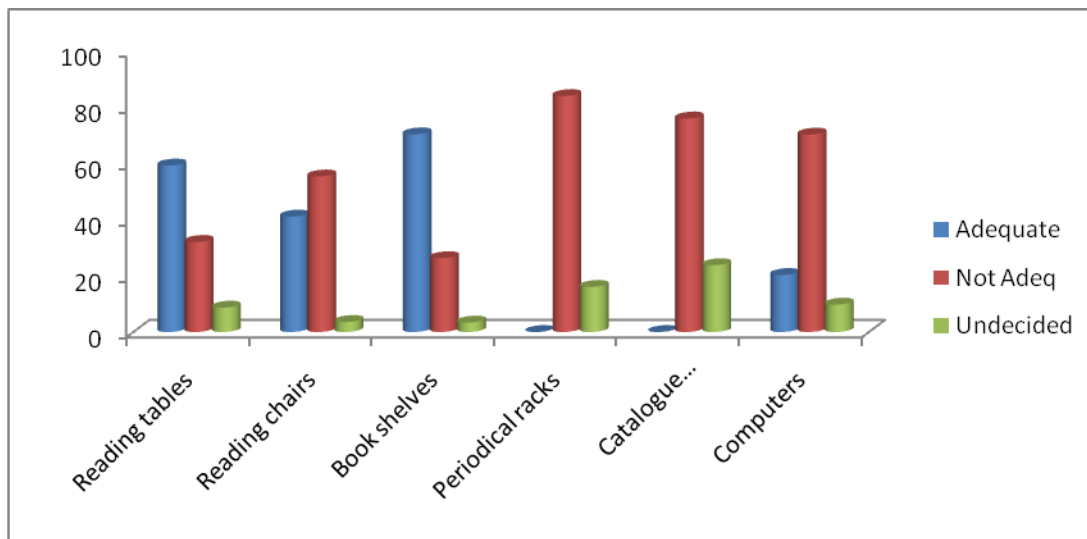


Fig. 1: Adequacy of school library facilities

Question 1 sought to determine the availability and adequacy of library facilities.

Fig. 1 revealed the availability of reading tables and chairs, books shelves, periodical racks, catalogue, cabinets and computers in the school libraries under study. However, 59.25% of respondents indicated that reading

tables are adequate while 32.08% of the respondents indicated that reading tables are inadequate. 41.08% indicated that the reading chairs are adequate while 55.35% of the respondents indicated that the reading chairs

are inadequate. This implies that the schools do not have enough seating capacity for their users and these could hinder effective learning as the comfort and serenity required for a library is not available. This finding is in line with Ahmad (2011) who discovered in his research that not all schools had adequate tables and chairs in the secondary school libraries in Jammu and Kashmir. 70.33% of the respondents indicated that book shelves were adequate hence books were well arranged on the shelves. On the other hand, 83.96% of respondents indicated that periodical racks are inadequate; catalogue cabinets were also inadequate with 75.99% score. A careful observation also revealed the absence of periodical racks and catalogue cabinets in the libraries. This could be attributed to lack of professional librarian who will advice the management on the need to acquire these facilities therefore displaying periodical and preparing catalogues for use. Lack of these facilities makes access to

library materials difficult and not many students may be willing to go through the rigour of looking for information materials when they are not easily accessible, hence loose out in knowledge they could easily acquire. Respondents also revealed that computers were inadequate in the library with 70.23% score. Although 20.30% of the respondents indicated that computers are adequate. This means that majority of the students do not have access to the computers, possibly because they are limited in number or they are not in good shape or they are not allowed access to them for fear of damage. In this ICT driven age the need for computers has increased and their availability and access are vital to effective learning. Similar to this study is the work of Adeyemi who investigated the school library and students' learning outcome in Ekiti State, Nigeria. He discovered that the level of development of school library facilities were inadequate (Adeyemi, 2010).

Research Question 2:

Which information resources are available in your schools library?

This question sought to determine the availability of information resources.

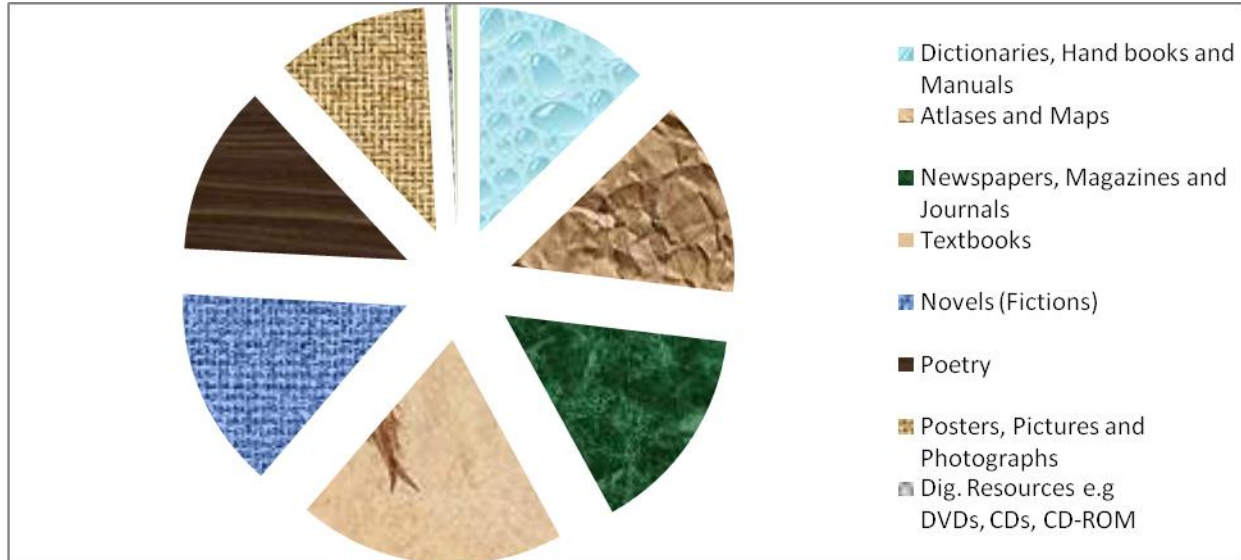


Fig. 2: Availability of information resources

Fig. 2 shows the availability of information resources in the school libraries under study.

62.44% of respondents indicated that the libraries have dictionaries, handbooks and manuals; respondents also indicated the existence of atlases and maps with 69.59%; Newspapers, magazines and journals scored 74.27%; textbooks had the highest score with 94.62%. respondents also indicated the availability of Novels (Fictions) with 71.35%; poetry 60.08% of and posters, pictures and photographs accounted for 54.61% of respondents. The school libraries are stocked with different resources, but textbooks had more resources in the collection when compared to other information resources in the library. This means that textbooks accounted for the bulk

of the collection in the library. The high percentage of textbooks over other information resources in the libraries could be due to emphasis on reading and studying for academic purposes by the schools' authorities rather than reading a wide range of materials to broaden knowledge and for leisure. This is in line with Mutungi's research which revealed that majority of school libraries under study had much print information resources that exceed IFLA/UNESCO requirement of 10 books per student (Mutungi, 2012). Thus, the libraries acquire and provide access to information resources to support teaching and learning activities in the schools. Respondents also indicated the presence of digital resources e.g. DVDs, CDs, CD-ROM with 2.27% and

online resources including databases with 1.76% collection in the library, although the score is very low. This is an indication that

most students are not aware of the existence of digital and online resources in the libraries.

Research Question 3:

Indicate whether you use/access the following information resources from your schools library

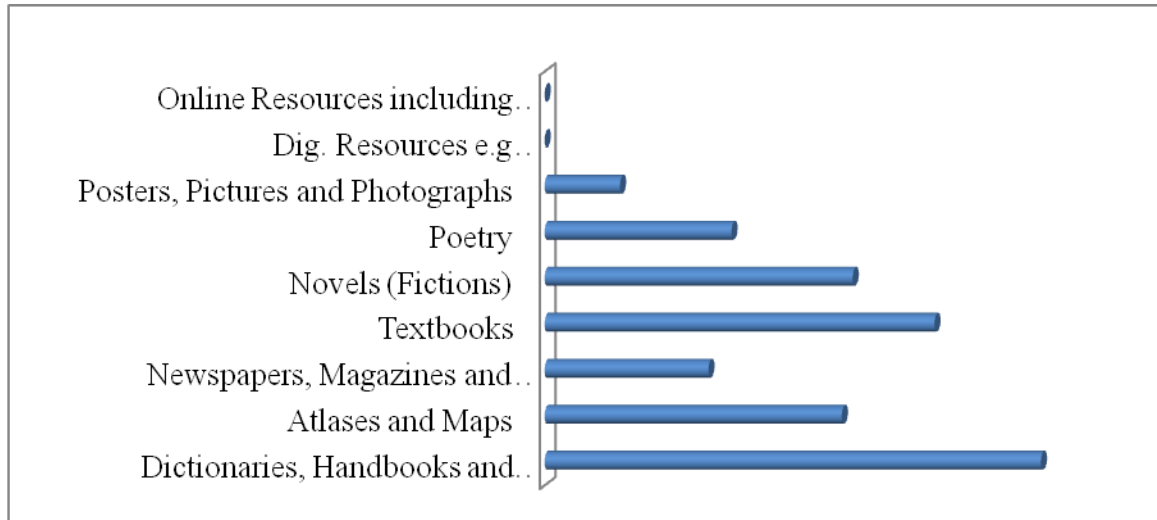


Fig. 3: Use/Access to information resources

Respondents were asked to indicate the information resources they use from the available collection in their libraries.

Fig. 3 revealed that 65.88% of the respondents indicated that dictionaries, handbooks and manuals were mostly used. This means that many students use the library in order to find or search for basic facts like meaning of words. Closely followed to this are textbooks with 51.74% of the respondents. Novels (Fictions) followed with 40.89% of respondents which indicated their use. 39.45% of respondents indicated that

they use atlases and maps while 24.8% of respondents indicated that they use Poetry. Respondents also indicated that the use of newspapers, magazines and journals with 21.74%. The low score (21.74%) for the use of newspapers, magazines and journals may be due to lack of direct application to teaching and learning in secondary schools when compared to the use of textbooks, dictionaries, handbooks and manuals. Although textbooks are the bulk of the resources found in the school library, but they are not utilized as much as dictionaries,

handbooks and manual as shown above. This could be attributed to lack of current textbooks and professional Librarians in the library that will guide them. A careful observation revealed that the school libraries are not managed by Librarians. Although students were seen browsing for information from their handheld devices, however, fig. 3 revealed that digital resources e.g DVDs, CDs, CD-ROM and online resources including databases were not being used by the students. The absence of digital resources

and online resources may be responsible for the low response rate of availability of digital and online resources in the library (fig 2). The study of ERIC (2010) revealed that students that had access to technological resources and were assisted by the librarian for effective use of library resources have an increased understanding which enhances their knowledge. Digital and online resources improve learning when students have access to adequate resources.

Research Question 4:

For what purpose/reasons do you use the school's library

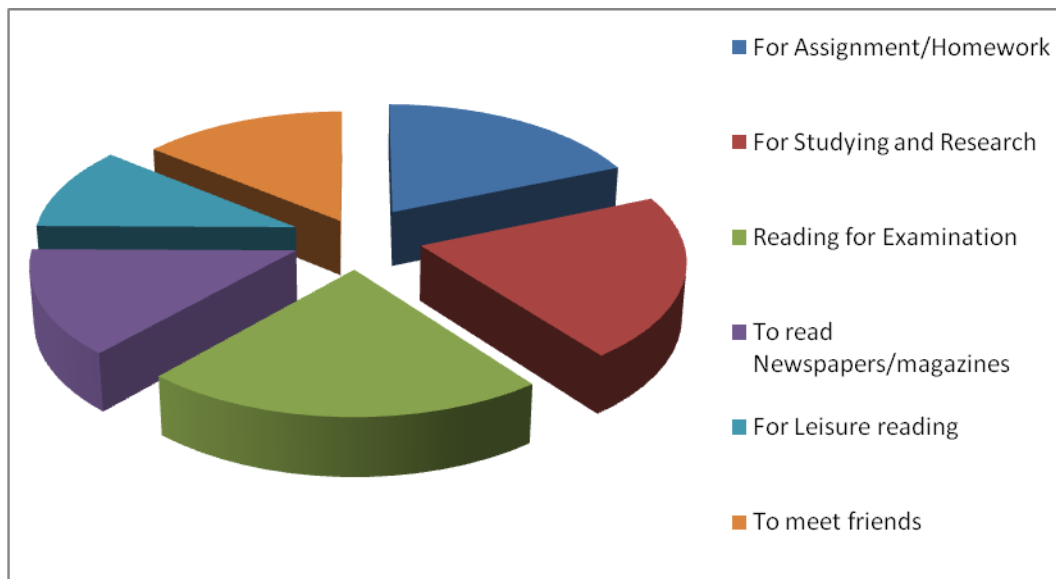


Fig. 4: Purpose/reasons for library use

Respondents were asked to identify the purpose/reasons for using school library.

Fig. 4 revealed that 80.3% of respondents indicated that they use school library to read in preparation for examination; 76.77% of

respondents use the library for study and research. Assignment/ homework accounted for 68.2%, while meeting friends in the library accounted for 51.65%. This confirms the role of the library as a social institution. 49.47% respondents also indicated that they use the library to seek for information from newspapers/magazines and reading for leisure had the least score (39.22%) suggesting that very few students read for leisure as reading is mostly in the area of their study.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The school library is an instrument that enhances teaching and learning if properly used. It is essential to learning and plays a key role as a learning environment for encouraging inquiry, research, thinking, imagination and creativity. School library basically functions as a centre that acquires and provides information resources in different formats that will meet the information needs of the school community. The study concluded that most secondary schools in Minna have libraries with facilities and information resources that are being used by the students. Although the facilities and the information resources are inadequate with non existence of digital and online resources as well as Professional

Librarians to manage the libraries. The study recommended that

- ✓ School management should make every effort to improve their library facilities and information resource.
- ✓ School authorities should improve in the acquisition of diverse library information resources that are appealing, so that more students be attracted to use the library resources.
- ✓ Professional Librarians should be employed to assist the students in the use of library resources.
- ✓ School libraries should acquire more computers and ensure that students have access to digital and online resources.
- ✓ Relevant supervisory authorities should enforced the policy that requires that each school should have a standard library.

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