

Need For Effective Staffing of Secondary School Libraries in Port Harcourt City Council Area of Rivers State.

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Abstract

The need for Effective Staffing of School Libraries in Port Harcourt City Council Area of Rivers State seeks to examine the importance of staffing to the Attainment of the purpose, objectives and goals of school libraries. A survey research design was adopted in the study, the questionnaire was the instrument used in collecting data and data collected were assigned it was discovered that the present states of school libraries were mended by unqualified librarians and there were inadequate staff, and recommended that qualified librarian, skill and non-skill staff be engaged for the work if the school libraries for effective productivity.

Keywords: School Library, Staff, Teacher Librarian

Introduction

Effective and efficient organization management of available resources and facilities are cardinal to the attainment of the goals and objectives of the school libraries. Library resources are those possessions or property which facilitate routine operations of the library. Effective library services are only possible when there are qualitative and quantitative adequacies of relevant library resources. It is a philosophical truism that satisfactory library and information services are impossible without adequate provision of library resources, especially manpower.

According to Nnadozie (2007), library resources are stuff, finance information resources (books printers non-print) and furniture, fitting, building and equipment. Staff is probably the most important resource in our library. This is because the staff of the library provides the possession of the managerial, technical, professional duties and other supporting services. The planning of library services, organization of resources and consideration of routine activities rest on the shoulders of the staff, it is very obvious that the achievement of set goals of the library depends to a large extent on the calibre of its staff.

Aguolu and Aguolu (2002) observe that no aspect of school library management is as crucial and central to the development of school libraries as the preparation and employment of appropriate personnel to promote qualitative teaching and learning. Ifidon and Ifidon (2007), state that of all the resources that make for quality assurance, staffing is probably the most important if any would agree with the fact that people are vital for the effective operation of the library. Yet human assets are hardly ever shown on the balance sheet but the success or failure of a library as a service organization depends on the type and mix of staff.

Therefore, this study is to investigate the status of staffing and make a case for effective staffing of school libraries especially secondary school libraries in Port Harcourt City Council Area of Rivers State and Nigeria in general

School Library

The school library is an integral part of the school. It is a laboratory where many activities are experiments are carried out, and all these activities and experiments are geared towards the development of the child and the nation. The school library provides the total learning package required by the students and their teachers. Fayose (1995) defined school libraries as “that part of a school where a collection of books, periodicals, magazines and newspapers. Of the films, and filmstrips, videotapes, recordings of all types, slides, computers. Study skills, regalia and other information-bearing resources are housed for use by teachers and students for learning, recreational activities, personal interest and interpersonal relationships of children in a school.

According to Rossof (1971), the school library is an instructional centre supporting not only the basic incentives, the guidance, climate essentials and information service centre. Also, Ahanxe (1990) see the school library as an informative services centre located in the primary school, post-primary school or teacher training college, whose objective is to in support learning activities in the school”.

The International Federation of Library Association (IFLA) and United Nation Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) developed a school library manifesto, whose main purpose was to help create adequate school libraries which fulfil their objectives by developing policies and services, selecting and acquiring resource, providing physical and intellectual access to appropriate sources of information, providing instructional facilities and employing trained staff. The IFLA/UNESCO school library manifesto (1999) defines the school library as “a physical and digital learning space, where reading, inquiry, research, thinking imagination and creativity are central to students' information to knowledge “journey and their personal, school and cultural growth”. It also identifies the following as features that distinguish school libraries.

- It has qualified school librarians with formal education in librarianship and classroom teaching that enables the professional expense required for complex roles of instruction, reading and literally development, school library management collaboration with teaching staff and engagement with the educational community.
- It provides targeted high-quality diverse collections (prints, multimedia, digital) that support the school’s formal and informal curriculum, including individual projects and personal development.
- It has an explicit policy and plan for ongoing growth and development.

The school library can be regarded as the home of knowledge, the house of all reading materials, the area where necessary information is obtained and the laboratory of all laboratories (Ifemesia, 1984). There is no doubt that any functional school library must have three elements namely personnel (staff) books and accommodation to enable users to respond positively to it. The Federal Ministry of Education summarized the following as the Aims and Objectives of Secondary School Libraries.

- i. Teaching each student the necessary skills in the use of books and libraries, so that they will be able to use reference and research materials.
- ii. Complementing classroom instruction by exposing the students to a wide selection of books and other resources.
- iii. Inculcating in students the habit of reading for pleasure.
- iv. Providing students with vocational information, which will help them in their selection of suitable careers.
- v. Helping students to discover and develop their special gifts.

- vi. Providing users of the library with information on current issues through the use of display materials.

The functions of school libraries as enshrined in the minimum standard for school libraries in Nigeria (1992) are:

- i) To support teaching and learning within the school system.
- ii) To enrich the school curriculum.
- iii) To promote the development of reading skills and encourage long-term learning and habits through reading and viewing of variety of learning materials.
- iv) To stimulate research and independent study by providing a wide variety of materials so that it will not only supply information in printed form, but also in pictures, films tapes, etc.
- v) To provide opportunities for further reading and use of materials other than prescribed classroom textbooks.
- vi) To provide materials for recreation and encourage students/pupils to read for pleasure.
- vii) To encourage students/pupils to develop their power of analytical appraisal by exposing them to varied collections of printed and non-printed materials in the library.
- viii) To provide students/pupils with vocational information leading to the choice of a suitable career.
- ix) To provide up-to-date information to keep staff and students abreast of new developments.

With the above-stated aim, objectives and functions of school libraries, the importance of school libraries for the educational development of the child cannot be overemphasized. The National Policy on Education (1977) revised in 1981 captured the importance of school libraries thus:

Libraries are one of the most important educational series. Every state ministry of education needs to provide funds for the establishment of libraries in all our educational institutions and to train librarians and library assistants for the service.

From this policy statement, it is clear that staff is vital as the library itself establishes with professional and non-professional staff is an as the library its establishment is a dead venture.

Staff is key anal staff in the foundation to achieve the objectives, goals and function of school libraries.

Staffing (Human Resources) of School Libraries

Among all the resources of the library, staff (Human Resources) is the most important possession of any library, because it is the staff that provides the managerial, technical and professional duties and other support services (Ifidon and Ifidon 2007, Nnadozie 2007). The planning of library services, organization of resources and coordination of routine activities rest on the shoulders of the staff. It is therefore obvious that the achievement of set goals and objectives of any library depends to a large extent on the calibre of staff. Nnadozie (2007) argue that the choice of employees is very crucial to the success of the library. Library work is no longer an all-corner affair because of the rapid growth and complexity of the profession. Therefore, rigid standards must be set for those entering the profession, especially, at the managerial, technical or professional levels. Aguolu and Aguolu (2002) observe that no aspect of school library management is as crucial and central to the development of school libraries as the preparation and employment of appropriate personnel to promote qualitative teaching and learning.

The IFLA/UNESCO School Library Manifesto (2002) states that because of school library facilities for teaching and learning, the programme of a school library needs to be under the direction of a professional staff with the same level of education and preparation as a classroom teacher. The operational aspects of a school library are best handled by trained clerical and technical support staff to ensure that the school librarian has the time needed for the professional roles of instruction, management, collaboration and leadership. Akanwa (2002) notes that the effectiveness of the school library depends not only on the strength of its collection and physical facilities available but also on the performance of the library personnel. The most important element that determines success in school library management is the individual skill flexibility and welcoming personality of the library staff. Callison (2001) notes also that the most successful school library media specialists are those who can appreciate and can work with all the personality types in an institution, those who are empathetic towards others and as a result can provide services that best meet the various expectations. They are also people who care deeply about student and their success.

The American Library Association (ALA) (2006) reckons that the success of any school library programme, no matter how well designed depends ultimately on the quality and number of the

personnel responsible for the programme. A well-educated and highly motivated professional staff, adequately supported by technical and clerical staff, is critical to the endeavour.

Aguolu and Aguolu (2007) observe that work in a school library requires staff of various categories and levels of education and training. About two third all library work is either para-professional or nonprofessional in nature. This means that a large part of library work is done by non-librarians, most of which depend upon on-the-job training for their performance. In Nigeria, the following staff requirements are recommended for effective and proper functioning of the school libraries.

- i) The School Librarian or Teacher Librarian
- ii) Library Assistants
- iii) Library prefects
- iv) Other staff (like typist, cleaner, security man)(Akanwa, 2015; Ag and Aguolu, 2002)

Corroborating Nnadozie (2007) placed the staff of library into three categories namely:

- i) Professional staff: Made up of the Librarian who have a qualification's Librarianship?
- ii) Para-professional staff. These categories consist of library officer library assistants.
- iii) Non-professional staff: This includes all employees of the library who do not possess any educational qualification in librarianship. Examples are Account Clerk, technicians, student helpers, typist, cleaner and security man.

Lance (2001) further summarize the responsibility of the school library specialist into three roles: first, in the learning and a collaborator in teaching and the learning community, secondly, as the provider of information role where the school library media specialist is vital in helping students locate information from a variety of sources and assisting them in synthesizing information for practical use. Thirdly, as the program administrator the role. Where the librarian helps others in his school to understand the uses of the school library and the means by which the school library he can help with the many school curricular programs. Being involved with the curricula process and assisting teachers and students in the learning process has made the school librarian vital to education and academic success in the view of Akanua (2807) the school librarian should be responsible for selection, acquisition and organization of school library materials. She is also responsible for preparing library budget.

Fadero (1969) state thus "a well-trained school librarian is one who is normally educated as a teacher and qualified to teach within the government's accepted definition of the term

“qualified”. In addition, he must also have received special training in school library work in such a way to be competent in the administration and organization of school libraries. The qualification for the school-teacher librarian is Degree in education with library science as a major 13.A(Ed) or B.Ed or NCE plus BLS certificate or Diploma in education plus BES.

Methodology

The research design for the study is survey design; the population of study was the entire principals (senior secondary school section) of the sixteen public secondary schools in Port Harcourt City Council Area of Rivers State.

The questionnaire was the instrument used for the collection of data and a total of 16 questionnaires were administered and all were returned, duly completed and found usable for the study. The data collected were presented and analyzed using descriptive statistics.

Data, Analysis, Results and Discussion of Findings Status of the Head of the School Library.

Table 1: Qualification of the head of the school library

S/N	Statement	Responses	
		F	%
1	Has a degree in library science only	1	6
2	Has a degree in library science and other qualification in education	2	12.5
3	Has only degree in education	13	81
	Total	16	100

Evident on table 1 above, showed clearly that the school libraries were headed by non-professional as 13 (81%) of the respondents agreed that the head of the school library is a trained classroom teacher with a degree in Education.

This fact agreed with Clarke (1999) that the school libraries in Nigeria were managed by unqualified staff instead of experienced and qualified teacher – librarian. Also confirmed the findings of Owate and Okpa (2013) Okiy (2000), Kanu (1994) and Mbagwu and Akanva (2012) that unqualified library staff constituted major constraint to the effective management of the school Libraries.

Staffing of the School Library

Table 2: Staff of the school library.

S/N	Statement	Responses	
		F	%
1	School librarian or teacher-librarian	3	18.7
2	Library officer	-	-
3	Library assistant	5	31
4	Library prefect	16	100
5	Typist	-	100
6	Cleaner	-	100
7	Security man	-	100

Responses of respondents as presented in the table revealed that only 3 libraries out of the 16 has teacher-Liberian and 5 libraries has Library Assistant and all the 16 libraries has Library Prefect. None of the 16 libraries has Typist, Cleaner and Security Man in the school library. This is a clear case of inadequate staffing.

These findings tends to support findings made by previous researchers like Idris (2013), Mbagwu and Akanwa (2012), Mutungi (2012) and Fayose (1991); where they agreed that unqualified staff head the school library, the school library has shortage of library staff.

Effect of Non-Staffing of School Libraries

Table 3: Effect of Non-Staffing of School Libraries

S/N	Statement	Responses	
		F	%
1	Students don't know the usefulness if the school library	15	93.7
2	There are difficulty of findings books of interest in the school library	16	100
3	No knowledge of books that are available in the school library	15	93.7
4	The school library is always lock	13	81

Table 3 above indicated that the effect of non-staffing of school libraries includes: the difficulty of finding books of interest in the school library and all the 16 respondents agreed to it, while 15 (93.7%) respondents agreed that students don't know the usefulness of the school library and they had no knowledge of books that are available in the school library. And 13 (81%) respondents agreed that the school library is always lack due to lack of staff. This is due to non-availability of professional librarian and staff who should guide the pupils/students on how to locate books on the shelves in the library. These findings agreed that the Teacher-Librarian is a guardian in line with Rossof (1971) definition of school library as "an instructional centre, which not only supplies the basic necessary information materials, but also provides the incentive, the guidance and the climate essential and conducive for learning". What is essential in this definition is that Rossof brought in a phenomenon that is very essential to the use of school libraries and that is guidance, these implies that the school library cannot work on its own but someone must guide the pupils/students in their choice of books etc. and this is an important duty of the Teacher-Librarian.

Conclusion and Recommendation

The present staffing of school libraries in Port Harcourt City Local Government Area of Rivers State as in most other Local Government Areas in Nigeria, is too inadequate to make the desired contribution to the teaching and learning process. Almost all 'the school libraries visited in the cause of this study are manned by either unqualified teacher-librarians or untrained library assistants, there is no way such staff can help achieve the aims and objectives of Nigerian primary and secondary education.

The school library is the most neglected and underdeveloped of all types of libraries in Nigeria. Its budgetary allocation if any, is still very meager, and more often, its funds are diverted to another questionable purpose. The present inadequacies in accommodation, staff collection and other learning materials amply demonstrate the abject neglect of school libraries in Nigeria. The situation can be ameliorated by the immediate adoption of these measures:

- i) The school management as a matter of urgency, should adequately staff the school library with qualified librarians entrusted with responsibilities for handling matters relating to the school library. They should be responsible for selecting and acquiring processes. The school librarians should assist the school in providing in-service training to library staff and the school teacher.

- ii) To encourage and motivate the teacher-librarians, the time spent in the library should be considered in computing their weekly class period, and they should not be overburdened with teaching responsibilities, due to the neglect of the school library service.
- iii) Principals should be compelled by the State Ministry of Education to include librarians in equipping the students with library and information-finding skills and in helping the students develop good reading habits.

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