

SCHOOL LIBRARY MANAGEMENT IN THE 21ST CENTURY THE WAY FORWARD

By

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Abstract

This paper is a study of school library management in the 21st century. It seeks to determine whether school library managers employ managerial technique in the day to day running of the library, also to ascertain manager's utilization of information and communication technology in staff routine and service delivery. Twenty-five School Library managers were used for the study, a questionnaire was designed to elicit information and simple percentage and frequency counts were used for the analysis. The findings revealed that most of the school Library managers are not professional librarians, managerial skills are poor, the ICT devices are not available due to poor funding, utilization of ICT in library operations was poor, and use of internet by library managers amongst others. It was recommended that professional librarians be employed; capacity building for library managers and support staff especially in ICT and management techniques on how to plan, organize, communicate, coordinate staff and budget for library resources for effective goals achievement.

Keywords: Administration, Management, School, Libraries, Resources, 21st Century.

Introduction

Primary and secondary school libraries are known and refer to as school libraries or school resource center or school media center or learning resource center: The school library though small, but has been greatly influenced by the changing context of the library because the modern concept of teaching has shifted from teacher-centred to student centred, and library resources acquired must be tailored for that purpose. The school library is not a new phenomenon, but demands urgent attention because of the 21st century library context where E-learning, E-Classrooms and Interactive learning is the modus operandi. Therefore, the school library manager must blend with the trend to include E-Library facilities in school Library services. Since the school libraries are set up to meet the objective of the parent organization, which is to acquire, process and make available information/ materials with emphasis on fiction and non-book materials such as films, filmstrips, videotapes/videocassettes, video games, internet browsing, slides, photographs, maps, charts, globes, and newspaper, to enable it serve

teachers, pupils and students alike. One wonders why school libraries and managers are not meeting up as expected, poor staffing and poor collections are main characteristic features posited.

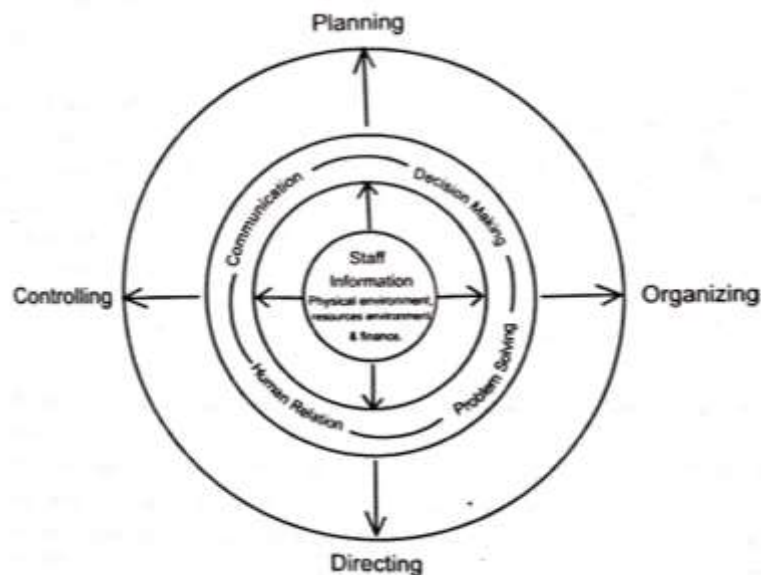
The importance of primary and secondary school libraries cannot be over emphasized, Mohammed (1998) in Udoumoh and Usoro (2004) claimed that school libraries help to integrate teaching and learning using print and non- print media resources, as earlier reiterated by Fadero (1986) in Olalokun and Salisu (2001) that school libraries enriches the school curriculum and remains the common laboratory of the school, because it provides all instructional materials for the teachers to enrich the curriculum, to supplement text-books and classroom instruction, so that users in the 21st century can have unlimited opportunities to learning especially the internet provision and other information communication technology devices. The UNESCO manifesto for school libraries (2000) equally highlighted some core school library services as supporting and enhancing educational goals as outlined in schools mission and curriculum, to help develop and sustain in children the habit and enjoyment of reading and learning, by working with pupils, teachers, parents, and administrators to achieve goals.

Again, the National Policy on Education (NPE 1981) emphasizes on the importance of education in Nigeria as a vehicle for human development also identified the library as one of the most important educational services that government must provide for its citizens in the 21st century. It becomes imperative to manage school libraries effectively by incorporating and utilizing information technology to store and disseminate information. From the foregoing, school library management has become complex because of dramatic increases in interdisciplinary resources, combined with information technological development, the changing user's needs, increase in pupils and students enrolment, few library professional amongst others further compounded the job of the school library manager. Therefore, adopting management techniques and ICT for the school libraries becomes imperative, according to Amirize, B. (1995), management is a process designed to ensure the cooperation, participation, involvement and intervention of others in the effective achievement of some set or specific objectives in an organization. It can also be referred to as a social process or an art of guiding the activities and energy of a group of people towards the accomplishment of some goals. Ebaye and Afebede (2007) opine that management is a key factor in the mobilization and co-ordination of human and material resources for the growth and development of any

organization. This again implies that management is the key to effective organization, because it helps in the actualization of specific objectives of every organizational set up.

It is worthy of mention, that school librarians are managers and must have managerial skills to pilot the activities of the library. The problems usually envisaged in the development and management of school libraries are enormous because some school heads do not involve the librarian in crucial library decisions. In the light of this, Aina L.(2004) asserts that library managers must seek to mobilize resources and the willing cooperation of others towards the achievement of set goals. Also Ifidon and Ifidon (2007), affirms that managerial skills be acquired by all library managers especially school librarians and that the various elements of management are similar irrespective of the organization or certain peculiarities. According to Aguolu, I and Aguolu, E-(2002), school librarian must seek to perform these functions in both physical and digital information because the 21 century demands that librarians understand information creation, knowledge of research, digital preservation, mobile environment, collaboration and coach users on information literacy amongst others. In view of the above, Management has become extensive and incorporates information and communication technology in all aspects of human and material resources which are central to the growth and development of the library in the 21st century.

Literature Review School libraries are mostly owned by government, private or religious organisations, the staffing and library resources are mostly handled by the parent organization. Olanlokun, and Salisu (2001). Ifidon, S. and Ifidon, E (2007) identified four key resources managed in any library as the people (staff and users); information (bibliographic and media resources); physical facilities (building, furniture, equipment ICT devices and others); and finance, which the library managers must identify. On the basic elements of managements, Nwankwo, J.(1985) opine that school library managers must be aware of the key management functions as shown in the diagram below;



Culled from Nwankwo, J. I. (1983)

From the above diagram, objectives and functions of management can be weaved into the school library management for goal achievement. Nwankwo (1985) added that coordination of all this functions and techniques such as; planning, organizing, communicating, directing, coordinating, controlling and budgeting for every activity and units in the library will be purposeful. Stueat and Morm (1998) in Aina, L. (2004) advised that Librarians must make plans, by formulating mission statement to attain set goals, such as forecasting, acquiring and installing ICT facilities and good staffing. Uhegbu (2001) affirm that management entails organizing, communication and directing of all variables, that all the units in the library play complimentary roles to one another and therefore advised that a good framework be put in place to ensure job description and specification. Tiamuyu (2000) reported that Libraries needs effective control and coordination skills for staff, so that all the library resources will not be misused especially equipment like reprographic equipment, computers, and internet facilities.

Consequently, communication and directing of staff in the library has being a thing of great concern, which Uhegbu (2001) again, complained that poor communication ruins effective management, because vital information will be stunted. He proposed that information communication technology be used in communicating in the library such as emails, whatsapp, facebook, icloud, blogging and Instagram. Ajala (1998) reiterated that information communication technology makes it possible to automate library operations as part of coping with new emerging realities, and that ICT is changing the ways users seek information, as well as librarians method of acquisition, processing, and dissemination of information

The utilization of information and communication technology in libraries has been acknowledged worldwide as the fastest means of disseminating information to users. Invariably, information communication technology has overwhelmed all library routines, practice and services; it becomes difficult therefore, to manage library services without knowledge of information technology. Uhegbu (2001) admitted that ICT is best suited in the organization of library routine such as the open public access catalogue OPAC, serials management, charging and discharging of books, cataloguing and classification of library materials, union catalogue and a list of others, that the 21st century librarian is an information professional who must be equipped with a range of necessary skills because he is basically contending with emerging technologies to function effectively.

Although, the infrastructure are expensive for a small school library with little or no budget, Nwankwo (1985) argued that increased budgetary allocation to school libraries and managers would enhance their resources and material acquisition especially information technology, since the library is a non-profit making organization.

In conclusion, school library managers must be abreast with latest information technologies, the various management functions and techniques such as planning, organizing, coordinating, communicating and budgeting to achieve desired goals.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to determine whether school library managers employ management techniques and information technology in the management of the library, the study specifically sought to

- ascertain school library manager's qualification
- ascertain school library manager's awareness of management functions in managing school libraries.
- ascertain school library manager's utilization of information and communication technology devices in library operations.

Methodology

The population of the study comprises of twenty five school library managers from twenty-five secondary schools in Port Harcourt City, Rivers state. Nigeria. A questionnaire on school library management in the 21st century was developed for the study using simple frequency score and percentages to analyze the findings

Result and Discussion

Distribution of respondents by sex

Male	8	32%
Female	17	68%
Total	25	100%

The above table merely shows the distribution of gender in school libraries in Port Harcourt city, Rivers state that 68% of the library staff are females, while only 32% are males.

Table 1: Qualifications of Respondents in School Libraries

	Frequency	Percentage
DLS	3	12%
BLS	4	15%
MLS	-	-
Others	18	72%
Total	25	100%

Table 1 reveals that there are few qualified librarians in the school libraries, only 3(12%) respondent have DLS qualification. 4 representing (15%) have degrees in library and information science. It also revealed that no respondent have the MLS qualification. While the bulk of school library managers18 (72%) are not librarians and have no knowledge of library practices or organization. This confirms Aguolu, C. and Aguolu, 1 (2002) fears that school libraries in Nigeria are poorly managed because of dearth of professionals, government and school administrators' refusal to engage qualified librarians to man school libraries.

Table 2: Utilization of ICT on school library operations

	Yes	No
Classification and cataloguing	0%	25(100%)
Reference services	0%	25(100%)
Database services	0%	25(100%)
Taking statistics of users	0%	25(100%)

Table 2 reveals that ICT utilization is not use in school libraries in Port Harcourt city. It also reveals that School libraries and managers do not use ICT devices to catalogue or do reference services, nor use information technology for taking daily library users statistics, also computers and database services are not available, this shows that the ICT facilities though very important in library management in the 21st century, but are readily not available in school libraries in Rivers State. This again confirms Olanlokun and Salisu (2001) reviews that school libraries are poorly funded and lack ICT facilities, that most libraries are still manually operated in the information age.

Table 3: Utilisation of internet by SLM amongst school library staff

	Yes	No
Email	10(40%)	15(60%)
Instagram	06(24%)	19(76%)
Facebook	09(36%)	16(64%)
Whatsapp	10(40%)	15(60%)
Blog	05(20%)	20(80%)
Icloud	03(12%)	22(88%)

Table 3 reveals that respondents use private mobile phones with internet facilities to convey messages amongst themselves. 80% send Emails, 20% use Instagram, 60% use whatsapp, 60% are on facebook, 20% on blog, and only 12% are on Icloud. This indicates that ICT is popular irrespective of the non-availability of computers or ICT facilities in school libraries in Port

Harcourt. All the respondents admitted owing private mobile phones to communicate information with colleagues. This again buttress the importance of ICT to school library managers for quick information dissemination for effective service delivery and management which Ashrafi and Murtana (2008), kwapony (2009) in Alakpodia and Ikolo(2010) all attested to, that the ICT utilization helps in facilitating communication and transmission of information and ideas for quality service in the library to meet the changing demands of the information age.

Table 4 Management functions utilized in library operations

	Yes	No
Planning	07(28%)	18(72%)
Organising	07(28%)	18(2%)
Communication	13(52%)	12(48%)
Coordinating	06(24%)	19(76%)
Directing	03(12%)	222(88%)
Staffing	10(40%)	15(60%)
Budgeting	02(08%)	23(92%)

As revealed in table 4, only 7(28%) of school librarians formulate plans, have vision, and mission statement, forecast library activities for the future. This function Nwankwo (1985) revealed, is one of the most crucial function of a Library Manager, because he must plan to succeed or he plans to fail. On library organization only 7(28%) again claim to perform this function of designing a job description or job specification to guide staff, others revealed that it is not necessary because of few or no staff in school libraries. This again confirms Olanlokun and Salisu findings that school libraries are dearth of professionals. Only 3 (12%) revealed that school libraries lack control because school heads are basically in charge of directing the affairs of the library. 13(52%) claim to have effective communication in the library, via letters, memo, internet and personal mobile phones. In coordinating human physical and ICT facilities only 6(24%) claim to do the task effectively. Budgeting function only 2(8%) agrees that they are aware and are part of the school library budget because school heads have hijacked that function. This confirms Ifidon and Ifidon (2007) fears that most librarian are by passed by

school administrators when they are allocating budget for the library, and the 10% concession fee approved long ago only few school administrators have complied. Therefore, managing school libraries is an herculean task, faced with mirage of management lapses, poor knowledge of management skills and techniques and the non-recognition of libraries and librarians role by some school heads have long been reported by Aguolu and Aguolu, Olanlokun, Salisu, Ifidon and Ifidon.

Summary of Findings

- Majority of the school library managers are not professional librarians, they do not have requisite qualifications to man libraries.
- Majority of the school library managers do not have managerial skills, neither are some of them aware of management functions which entails planning to achieve organizational goals, budget preparation, communicating information within the library, even to delegate responsibility was a difficult task because of few professional staff and uncommitted support staff.
- Majority of the respondents cannot utilize information and communication technology devices because they are not available in the library and are mostly expensive.
- Communication is very poor in school libraries because the library managers have very poor medium of transferring information within or outside the library. The ICT devices privately used are expensive.
- Majority of the support staff are not trained in library practices and service delivery they are just book givers.

Way Forward

- School Librarians must be trained to acquire managerial skills in the Library School long before they get jobs. Basically on how to plan, control, direct, organize, communicate and coordinate activities within the library organization and make budgets because of limited funds. Also how to create alternative measures or channels on how to raise funds for the library.

- Professionals must be employed who are ICT complainant and with dedicated support staff, who have interest for books. They must train and retrain staff in the requisite areas, as the case may be so that plans, visions, goals and objectives are defined from the onset.
- For school Libraries to survive, especially in schools where there are no professionals, Library committees should be appointed with professionals as members, the parent institution or the Ministry of Education to manage, supervise, monitor and evaluate the library activities from time to time.
- Funding is very crucial in any organizational setup. The school library manager must employ alternative sources of revenue through library registration fees, fines, gifts, income from reprographic services, Multinational bodies and government. Kumar (2001) had suggested that library managers should use the per capita method to determine the quality or quantity per pupil/student through the yearly admission figure to provide the library resources.
- Librarians must be versatile in management functions and information communication technologies to enable them manage the huge human and material resources and the changing needs of users in the information world.
- Resourcefulness and innovation drives dream when a professionals are not available. Classroom teachers could be co- opted to manage, after intensive training and re-training especially on how to manage and organize the library resources and the virtual library techniques available.

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