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LIBRARY DEVELOPMENT IN NURSERY/PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN ILORIN, KWARA STATE: FINDINGS OF A PILOT STUDY

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The fact has been established that a well-stocked, professionally staffed school library will assist individualised learning and improve students/pupils performance throughout the school curriculum (Shaibu, 1997). Wali (1978) rightly pointed out that the school library serves as the “web” of the school, the axis on which the intellectual life of the school revolves, however, he was quick to say that “yet in practice the school libraries are not the real centres of attention in our schools.”

The importance of education for human development cannot be over stressed. Government policies, particularly the Nigerian Policy on Education over the years have stated that the nation educational system is based on the integration and modelling of the individual into a sound and effective citizen and the provision of equal opportunities for citizens at primary, secondary, and tertiary levels of education. A well-equipped and well managed library is therefore fundamental to the attainment of the above stated objective. The school library is therefore an integral to the education process. There is need for effective library service in nursery, primary and secondary schools. The school library provided information and ideas that are fundamental to functioning successfully in today’s information and knowledge-based society (Elaturoti, 2000).

In Kwara State, a few studies have investigated the development of school library system. An area that has received the least attention is library development at Nursery/Primary Schools. This article intends to examine the development of Nursery/Primary school libraries in Ilorin metropolis. The pilot study discussed in this article involved only five Nursery/Primary schools. The main goal of the study was to investigate or determine the status and development of libraries in Nursery/Primary Schools in the state, particularly Ilorin metropolis. This will enable the author to come up with recommendations that may result in this study to improve or change the situation confronting Nursery/Primary school library development in

Kwara State in particular and Nigeria in general.

THE LITERATURE

A great deal has emerged on the role and importance of school libraries. This makes it extremely impossible to review all that have emerged on the topic. However, attempt will be made to review works that are pertinent and fairly current on the topic.

A peep into history has revealed that the National Policy on Education (1977, 1981) highlighted the provision of libraries in schools as an integral compliment of quality education and stated that each school is to be provided libraries with trained staff to run them. This aspect of the policy has been poorly implemented, hence the persistent poor quality of school library service in Nigerian schools (Elateroti, 2000).

In an attempt to show the importance of school library to quality education, Obi (1964) listed seven contributions a good school library can make to quality education. The points centred 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 vic provision of up-to-date resources to meet the greatest challenge of education. Das and Mahapatra (1994) have identified some reasons for such reasons are: the absence of library knowledge among teachers regarding good school library programme, lack of time of teachers to read due to multifarious activities in their personal lives and non-exposure of teachers to good library services, lack of reading culture/habit. The authors further noted that the main objective of school library "should be to train pupils in using the library, in finding out facts for themselves through books. Good schools, very good schools, and excellent schools all need excellent libraries". Also "inferior schools need excellent libraries too to overcome the omissions of the curriculum to compensate for the poor instructional programme".

The literature revealed that government in an effort to improve the quality of

primary education took a World Bank Loan in the 1990s. The provision of school libraries is one of the components of the programme for which the loan was granted. If fully implemented, the programme will improve the situation of library provision in the nations primary schools. Sometime in September 1999 the Federal Government launched the Universal Basic Education (UBE), and the programme has provision for library development in the primary and junior secondary schools, as school library is listed among the infrastructural facilities to be provided in the schools. This gives a sketch of government's realisation of the place of school libraries in educational development.

There is dearth of literature on the role of the Parent-Teacher Association have played in the development of school libraries generally, however, this is not to conclude that they have not made any meaningful contribution. In spite of the seemingly low interest of librarians in this aspect as it affects school library development most Parent Teacher Associations have contributed immensely to school library development by donating books to school libraries. Notably, some Parent-Teachers Associations have endorsed decisions of school authority imposing library development levy on students and school pupils. Muoglim (1984) revealed that a good number of principals and communities out of personal conviction or mere tradition embrace the idea of imposing levies ranging from N 3 to N 20 per child, and the funds so realised spent on library development. It must be admitted that the Parent-Teachers Associations have not been able to achieve much in the development of school libraries, one, because a library project, is indeed a capital intensive one which goes beyond the donation of books or reliance on pupils levy. From experience, the few books donated by some Parent Teacher's Association in the state have disappeared from the so-called school libraries, and those left are badly mutilated due to inadequate security.

OBJECTIVES

The objectives in embarking on the pilot study were to:

1. Examine the status of school libraries in Nursery/Primary in Kwara State.

2. Determine the availability or otherwise of school libraries in Nursery/Primary in Kwara State.
3. Examine the staffing, budgeting situations, and administration of school libraries.
4. Find out the volumes of books and other material held in the libraries of Nursery/Primary Schools.
5. Determine the availability of library accommodation and suitability for that purpose.
6. Collect demographic information about the Nursery/Primary Schools that are crucial to the development of school libraries.
7. Solicit information on what could be responsible for non-development of school libraries.

METHODOLOGY

Five Nursery/Primary schools were selected: University of Ilorin Nursery/Primary School, Okiki Nursery/Primary School, 4 Mechanised Nursery/Primary School, Rukayat Nursery/Primary School and Omega Nursery/Primary school.

The main criteria for selection was those who accepted to participate in the pilot study. Initially, the author visited almost all the Nursery/Primary schools in Ilorin/at least ten schools were visited. At the end of the exercise, only five schools were ready to participate in the pilot study.

The questionnaire was the major instrument used to elicit information from responding schools. In addition to the questionnaire, the author conducted interviews with heads of schools surveyed, and observations were used to complement the major method applied for the study. Analysis of the data was done descriptively, using tables and percentages where applicable and necessary.

RESULTS

In analysing the result of this study, the five schools surveyed will be represented thus:

- A University school
- B Okiki Nursery/Primary School
- C 4 Mechanised Brigade Nursery/Primary School.
- D Rukayat Nursery/Primary School
- E Omega Nursery/Primary School

Demographic information about the schools reveal that school A, which is the oldest has the largest population. It is a Nursery/Primary school attached to the University of Ilorin.

Table 1 School's Establishment and Pupils Population

School	Year Established	No. of Pupils
A	1977	1,150
B	1990	700
C	1990	550
D	1994	600
E	1992	150

Looking at Table 1 the enrollment in school A represents 36.5% of the total population of the five schools. On staff strength of schools, the table below (Table 2) flows that most of the schools - schools A, B, and C have a total staff strength of between 20 and above, while the staff strength of the remaining two schools fall between 1 -15.

Table 2 Staff Strength of Schools

School	Less than 10	11-15	16-20
A			X
B			X
C			X
D		X	
E	X		

A question was designed to find out the schools that have established school library. Three schools indicated that they have libraries, while two schools indicated that they do not have school libraries. Even the school that ranked second in terms of pupils population has no library.

Next, information was sought on the schools that have teacher-librarians and their qualifications. Three of the schools have teacher librarians, while two have no teacher librarians. However, only one school has a graduate or National Certificate of Education (NEC) with minor in Library Science. In the area of library budget three schools maintain no library budget, while two claimed to have library budget, and the amount of the budget was not specified. When asked how money is sourced for school library development, only one school indicated that a sum of N50 per new child is charged as library development levy. School C that made this response additionally responded that sum of N5,000 was realised annually for 1998 and 1999.

A question examined the book collection of the libraries. Of the five schools, school E remains the only one that has over 500 books in its library, followed by school C with 200 books. The rest three schools A, B and D did not indicate their book stock. This result shows a good picture of the collection of the school libraries, indeed the collection is in grossly inadequate.

Effort was made to find out the adequacy of library accommodation in the schools surveyed. Three of the schools responded that they have accommodation for under 50 pupils, and the remaining schools did not respond to the question. A close observation revealed that the non-response was due to inadequacy or lack of accommodation for library services.

COMMENTS

The last question in the questionnaire solicited opinion of non-development of libraries in Nursery/Primary generally. In the comment made by respondents,

two main themes were raised in relation to school library development. First, was inadequate financial resources, this was emphasised by two responding schools. This according to respondents has hindered effective and meaningful library development at Nursery/Primary school level.

Closely tied to lack of funds is the ignorance of Nursery/Primary school proprietors on the role of library in education. Most respondents indicated this as the major problem. A respondent said "most proprietors do not recognise the importance of libraries in schools". While another respondent remarked that "the attitude of proprietors is that of profit making, as such they take no interest in what will encroach on their profit margin".

This pilot study has shown that a lot needs to be done if library service is to have a firm root at the Nursery/Primary schools. By and large, in order to appreciate the role of the library in the educational development of the child, school administrators at the primary school level should handle the library "as a gardener who structures his garden in which the plants are to grow by providing all the essential needs and then leaves them with the task of growing at their own pace" (Mohammed, 1985).

The development of Nursery/Primary school libraries in Ilorin metropolis, and indeed the whole Kwara State certainly should be of concern to librarians and educationists. Unfortunately the proprietors of Nursery/Primary schools have not accorded library development its right place in the scheme of things.

Finally, in order to achieve the educational objectives of Nigeria, the library should be allowed to supplement or complement the efforts of the teachers or instructors.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In view of the foregoing, and the fact that the quality of school libraries in Nursery/Primary schools in Ilorin metropolis is abysmally poor, the following

proposal need be considered.

1. The head of Nursery/Primary schools should as a matter of urgency and priority put up a strong case and proposal for adequate funding of school libraries consideration by proprietors.
2. It is an record that the Kwara State chapter of the Nigerian Library Association (NLA) has initiated efforts in educating schools at both secondary and primary levels the need to have functional libraries. This effort should be sustained, and a meeting with Nursery/Primary school proprietors is desirable.
3. Efforts should be made at the Parent-Teachers Association forum to recommend a befitting library development levy per child, payable annually. This would form the nucleus on which the school can build its budget allocation for the library.
4. For effective running and provision of library service in Nursery/Primary schools, there is the need to employ teacher-librarians who have some form of library qualifications.

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