

# INSIGHT INTO ENHANCING CHILDREN'S EDUCATION THROUGH THE USE OF SCHOOL LIBRARY IN THE 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY

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## **Abstract**

The use of the library in enhancing the education of children has increased the opportunities of enriching their studies. It is essential therefore that in their educational career children are brought into contact with a good school library. This paper examines the concept of school library, its roles in the educational development of the child. An attempt is made to look into the basic problems which must be solved by relevant authorities if the library is to play its role in enhancing education of the children. It went further to recommend some measures to improve the role of the school library towards education of children.

## **Introduction**

It is a known fact that the fundamental role of the library is education. In this age of multi-media communication, it appears children are continually distracted from reading. However the educational growth and development of children depend on reading hence we cannot over emphasize the importance of the library.

Yakubu (2001) noted that library as an institution of learning needs to be established for the education of children. For success in academic work, the children need to develop independent study habits through contacts with books and this will help them to become independent, self directed and resource based learners.

Using library maximally at an early age helps children to become skillful, which will eventually enhance their education and career. For the individual to contribute maximally towards the social and economic development of his society, he must be physically, morally and intellectually sound. Obinyan (1998) stated that the type of citizen desired by a nation at any given point in time can be attained in the systematic and orderly process of education in which the library is a major player. A child who has access to a good library can learn and be judged on his skill in classifying problems, collecting information related to their solutions and formulation of conclusion. Therefore, to acquire reading knowledge, children must know the library and its use become the essence of establishing the library is its "use". The more the children read, the faster their vocabulary ability in English will improve.

The library is also a stimulating factor in education, making available to children a wealth of selected material and services to facilitate learning and promote the continuing development of individuals. The library is one place children can have diverse intellectual, artistic and musical output of men, living or dead, hence the library stands as a symbol for the truthful expression of man's knowledge and experience. The boundaries of the content of the library resources available to children determine the extent to which children of today can be creative, informed, knowledgeable within their own age.

Above all the library can sell its services to parents, the positive effect of which is to inculcate a positive attitude towards reading and love for books in them as the first step in the right direction. It is only when parents have responsible outlook towards the library that we can expect their children to be so encouraged and trained in the use of the library when they become older.

## **The School Library**

The school library is the library established in pre-primary, primary and post-primary educational institutions to support learning. According to Bowers (1971), a school library is "a marriage of planned space and climate, materials, service, instruction and personnel which operate as an integral part of the entire school environment". A school library can therefore be said to be an organized collection of reading materials placed in a school for the use of teachers and learners which may be under the headship of a professional or teacher-librarian. The materials needed in school library include; books collection in all facets of subjects e.g. mathematics, English, religious books, story books, science books etc. reference materials such as children encyclopedia, dictionaries, charts, posters, atlas, globe pictures etc. Audio materials for listening to story telling and other educational lectures, television and video for watching educational programmes and films. Computer and cycloteacher for self learning and amusement. Ogunshye (1991), mentioned realia and specimen section as one of the sections needed in school library. One of the places or things that encourage independent learning is the library hence Aguolu (1989), observed that for the personal, intellectual and social development by

the Nigerian child, the school library whether at primary or secondary level is essential. It is his first exposure to information. It would enhance his information gathering behaviour for the future and play a crucial role in readying him for an adult role in the society.

### **Aims of School Library**

The school library anywhere it may be situated has the aim as contained in the *National Policy on Education* as follows: (i) To encourage the development of skill in reading; (ii) To prompt the readers to some literacy recitation; (iii) To be a source of subject information centre and support the curriculum; and (iv) To be a "clinic" for intellectual development.

These go in line with Cooke (1974), when he summarized that the aim of a school library service is to become a full functioning part of the educational process, a stimulating factor in education, making available to teachers and students, a wealth of selected materials, equipment and services to facilitate learning and promote the continuing development of an individual.

### **Functions of School Library**

Obi (1977), identified the functions of a good school library as follows:

1. Promotes the development of reading and encourages long term learning habits through reading, listening to and viewing a variety of learning materials.
2. Provides a framework for academic achievement in present schooling and increase students' chances of success in institutions of higher education or other professional pursuits.
3. Provides students with vocational information leading to the choice of suitable career.
4. Helps in discovering and developing the special gifts and talent of students.
5. Trains students to study independently by providing a wide range of materials for class projects, individual reports and class assignments and
6. Provide up-to-date resources to keep staff and students abreast of new development.

### **Enhancing Children's Education Through the use of School Library**

Maduwesi (1998) reiterated the importance of library and commented that, "of all the valuable skills which the average person learn in a life time, the ability to read easily heads the list because it is the most universal and generally useful for everyone". A child who is library literate can study independently, develop initiative and learn at his own pace. Being library literate at an early age help children become skillful users of the library.

Akinwumi (1995) describes the library as "the pulsating heart, which quickens all learning activities". It is first an accessible mentor to whom every student should turn to for guidance. It is beacon light whose rays illuminate the parts of those who have the responsibility of finding solutions to problems of education which daily assumes a greater ever increasing degree of complexity. Popoola (1990) said that the library can serve an educational purpose by the provision of learning resources and providing both immediate access to knowledge and practice in the use of knowledge sources.

There is need to be available a large supply of textbooks and instructional materials from which students and teachers can choose in the library to accommodate a variety of immediate learning needs.

The library is associated with improvement in education and the library should be a centre of the process and the hub of the curriculum and as a resource center, library should play a great role in learning process. Where a school exists without a library the implication is that student will find it extremely difficult to successfully continue their studies and the progress of education would automatically be slow.

Effective use of the library by children will engage their leisure time meaningfully while at school and during vacation which will go a long way in managing the leisure time of children effectively. As a result effective time management by school librarian for children will go a long way in eradicating cultism and also help in reducing examination malpractice and bring back sanity to our educational system.

According to Gojeh and Dutse (2000), the library when maximally utilized can help arrest children's restiveness hence they summarized the benefits of the use of the library in the following ways: 1. It will mould children's information gathering behaviour for the future and it also plays crucial

role in readjusting them for their adult role in the society.

- 7<sup>1</sup>, It can also develop in children reading culture. Habits and attitudes sufficient for developing more love for books would have been established-New discoveries are made in (he library which build up children knowledge of the environment as well as reinforce their ability to adopt and make meaningful contributing to the society. The varieties of materials in the library which are usually found in the classroom teaching brighten and deepen the children's' ideas, knowledge and intellect.
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5. The school libraries also provide children with vocational information leading to the choice or suitable career in life. This means that maximum use of the school library by children can make them to be well informed and well informed citizens are assets to national progress and development.

Enhancing children's education through the use of the school library cannot be achieved if proper user education service is not given to the children.

### **User Education**

User education is an instruction given by the teacher librarian or library personnel to educate users especially children in library culture. It is one of the most effective ways of stimulating potential children and introducing them to the vast amount of available information. It is of paramount importance to library users in order for them (o master arrangement of library. Specific reasons for teaching the use of library include: 1. To teach students how to use the library effectively.

To develop in the students the interest and habit of using the library always.

To teach them the different types of library materials and how to use them.

To teach them to engage their leisure time in reading for pleasure.

To enable them to master the rules and regulation of the library in order to exploit the resources of the library effectively.

6. To teach them the various services in the library and benefits derivable from them.

To further enhance children's education through the use of the school library, the following should be done for effective output:

- a. **Book Talk:** This is a situation whereby the librarian discusses about a book so as to encourage the children to read a particular book.  
**Reading Competition:** This could be done by giving them books to read at home and comprehend over the weekend and relate (he story either verbally or in written form to the library during the week. It is also a measure to determine the number of books read by a child.
- c. **Book Exhibition:** This is exposing children fo the world of books. It is done by displaying books on the various fields.
- d. **Lending System:** This is to lend hooks and other library materials to children for home use and assignment. Lending system \\oukl give them courage to make use of the library and form the habit of learning independently.

### **Problems**

Kuye (1991) observed that the situation in primary school where no libraries exist is rather pathetic and the authorities seem to have forgotten that their children, at this time of their intellectual development could be helped to form the habit of using libraries for exploring the world knowledge around them. Thus making it easier and less difficult to cultivate the habit by the time they enter post-primary schools. Schools library is often neglected by either government or school authorities. Many schools do not have libraries and even where they do exist they are poorly maintained or even totally neglected.

There is also the problem of lack of sufficient funding for school libraries which has hampered the efforts of many creative children in achieving the optimum gain derived from using library resources.

The traditional attitude of government which is not fully appreciated bas made it difficult for priority to be attached to employing trained librarians in school libraries.

There is also the problem of stocking school libraries with outdated materials that are not relevant to the children which can help them to build confidence, self -respect, enhance their creativity and make them feel energetic which will empower them for positive contribution to the society.

## Recommendations

1. School librarian should be provided with bibliographical training in the use of books and libraries which are necessary to help a child in finding their ways about a subject. It will help them become familiar with the use of books and other materials in their course of study.
2. School librarians should promote the idea that library is there to promote independent reading and guide to study and library guides, reading list and other publications should be provided and exhibitions of library materials in order to reinforce the children's learning at school should be held.
3. Enough budget allocation should be made in favour of the school libraries every year so that relevant library materials and resources could be purchased to aid children's learning capability. The school librarian should have the zeal and charisma effacing the challenges of the school authorities by showing them that he/she knows what to do in regards to library service while the school authority should respect and give proper recognition to the school librarian by not looking down on him/her.
4. The Nigerian government should come to realize that the talk-chalk classroom mode of training has little to offer to enquiring children's mind. Educational materials should be acquired into the school libraries to enhance smooth learning by the children. By so doing, it makes the children learn independently and use library successfully in their chosen field of endeavour in future.

## Conclusion

Actually, the place of the library in performing its educational role cannot be over looked in this period of economic recession when the cost of learning materials is so high for the ordinary man to afford, hence the library is there to solve this problem. For the school library to achieve this, all hands must be on deck in equipping school children for effective library use and this will help children in developing good reading habits, which will make them to enhance their perception and attention to their studies and this will go a long way in curbing social menaces like cultism and examination malpractice.

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