
Library Services and Achievement of Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) at the Primary School Level

By

DR. EBORO E. UMOREN

*Acquisition Librarian, Nyong Essien Library,
University of Uyo,
Uyo.*

And

DR. UDUAK U. ENANG

*Department of Educational Technology and Library Science,
University of Uyo,
Uyo.*

Abstract

Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) are progressive vision statements. The government of the day in Nigeria desires to meet every aspect of these goals by the year 2015. Several structures are put in place as vehicles to help government achieve these. Among these is one of the support services in the educational sector, the library services. This paper takes a look at goal number two of the MDGs and attempts to x-ray how library services at the primary school level can help government achieve this goal and also sustain what has been achieved. It is concluded that appropriate curriculum design that will enhance a child's learning activities in the library be developed. Also committed personnel that have strategy for service and training are some of the ways that can help for these goals to be achieved.

Education is one of the catalysts that ascertain freedom and civilization both for an individual and a nation. It is therefore necessary that a nation puts all vital arrangement in place to eradicate ignorance and by extension, slavery and poverty from her populace.

Proper education and even functional literacy go a long way to forestall lack of

ability to read and write, and also, abject poverty and modern slavery from the citizenry. In the National Policy on Education (NPE) (2004) stated that education is an important tool for national development, that foster the worth and development of a people or society in general. To this end, it is very important that the best be taught and achieved for the generality of the people right from primary school level.

Overtime, the nation Nigeria has seen the need to have support services in the educational sector for proper education of her citizens. It is also indicated in NPE (2004) that certain education services like school library; counseling, educational resource centres among other services will be provided. Also Lockhead and Vesper (1990) had indicated that education for children in primary schools is a pre-requisite for developing of human resource base required to meet the changing demands of the twenty-first century.

This is to say that primary education is a very important and fundamental level of a child's education, on which the other levels are built. Further more, provision of the Universal Basic Education (which includes education for ages 6-12_ is one of the goals for millennium development. A child therefore, needs to be provided with basic educational tools and skills that will assist him/her in advancing in his/her education. It is not out of place that part of what can help the child to achieve these are the tools, skills and services he/she derives from the school library.

The MDGs Ideology and Information Dissemination

The MDGs are spelt out as follows:-

- 1 Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger
- 2 Achieve a universal primary education
- 3 Promote gender equality and empower women
- 4 Reduce child mortality
- 5 Improve maternal health
- 6 Combat HIV/AIDs, malaria, and other diseases
- 7 Ensure environmental sustainability
- 8 Develop a global partnership for development

The import of the MDGs is the desire to achieve what has been set out, and the dream of the nation is that these be achieved by the 2015 as declared at the UN Assembly in 2000. It is a known fact that only through proper information dissemination to the people in the society that any of these goals can be achieved effectively. The effect of the sustainability of these goals can best be felt as the dissemination of information is done continuously and constantly.

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Information dissemination can best be effective at grass root level where communal talks can readily take place. The message can also be spread by printing pamphlets and distributing to schools. At this stage, the potentials of the library is seen clearly in the area of preserving what has been documented for posterity, thereby spreading the information constantly from generation to generation.

Fundamental Services of the Library

The library is an educational agency that also inculcates a level of social change in the life of individuals and the nation at large. Its function includes providing and making ready for effective use, information and educational material by people to help them in their pursuits and decision making. No matter the organization where the library is situated, its main function is to disseminate information to its users through the various media that is at its disposal.

The library has the duty of providing current information to its users so as to keep them abreast of current issues in the society, school and around the world. It also encourages good reading habits in people both for pleasure and research (Aniebo, 2007). Libraries inculcate information handling skill into the lives of people as needed in modern day society. Aguolu and Aguolu (2002) depicted beautifully another very suitable role of the library to be the ability to deflate the generally held notion that education is a terminal activity which is complete at level of graduation of the school child.

Library roles then are many that they stretch from educating the user on his cultural, research and recreational function and needs to giving them a life long training and a continuous training and good knowledge in the things they do.

The main avenue of achieving this is through books, periodicals, newspapers, technical reports and conference papers that they store. Again Aguolu and Aguolu (2002) maintained that the progress of any country is impossible without creative and imaginative utilization of accumulated information sources such as the ones mentioned and many more. Also, National Policy on Education (2004) states among other things, that there is need for functional education for the promotion of a progressive and united Nigeria, more so, the educational activities should centre on the learner for maximum self development and self fulfillment. To this end, the library and library workers take upon themselves to educate the library users so that they can have a wholesome education that will take them further in their ambition and fulfillment in life. Ughebu (2001) explained the effect that proper library use can have on a person thus:

The Retrieval and Utilization of Library Resources

The user becomes very conscious of the information potentials of the library and turns to it for information and self improvement whenever the need arises. This is not farfetched from the opinion of Pjalbrant (1977) who opined that library user education improves a user's ability to use library resources more effectively and it instills in them desirable attitudes that further help them appreciate the worth of the library and information service generally in the society.

The efficacy of user education is more appreciated when the activities is able to create in the user the right attitude to learning and use of information than contemporary solution to academic problems. It creates long lasting habit in the child not only while in school but continues even after school days.

Library Services at the Primary School Level

The library at this level of education is meant to harbour a collection of learning materials that are mainly for young people. Its usefulness can fully be accepted as the trend of education changes. Morris in Aniebo (2007) maintained an age long principle that school library has a collection of wide variety of learning and teaching materials (carries out) services and activities which will support the educational programme of the child and the school.

In a good school library, children are taught a number of things that will enhance their learning and boost a lot of courage and willingness to advance in their educational pursuit. Fayose (1995) opined that good reading skills, encouraging long term learning habit through listening, reading and viewing a wide variety of learning resources are some of the services that a school library renders to the primary school child.

Every library has a set priority task for itself because it may not meet all the programme needs of its users (Etim, 2006). For the school library, a run down of it services to the school child include to:

- a support and enrich teaching and learning in the school
- b encourage good reading habit
- c enhance independent study
- d stimulate elementary project work
- e enrich the material used for study outside, that of classroom
- f initiate a critical, creative and independent thought
- g help a child to make use of his leisure time meaningfully
- h provide student with vocational information through materials to the child
- i provides avenue for them to know more about social and cultural norms of their people and their community

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- j train a child in proper listening and comprehension skills during story telling session in the library, and
- k helps to take away shyness as the child may be prompted to tell or read a story to his/her mates also (Fayose, 1995 and Aniebo, 2007).

Fayose (1995) further asserted that a level of discipline is also encouraged during the story telling time as these particular sessions is not meant to be a rowdy one. It therefore means that the noise heard can be so “organized” that it does not attract unnecessary attention of school children in other classes at the time.

In the words of Bisset (1977) about story telling and book reading to children in a school library: “books are to be read to children to get familiar with the language of books, the development of ideas; makes them familiar with direction in which pages turn.... And have the view that prints hold meanings which can be extracted by those who know how to”. It is only at the provision of a vibrant school library that these laudable objectives and services of the school library can be met.

School Library Services and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)

Number two of the MDGs indicates that the nation hopes to achieve a universal primary education for every Nigerian child. The machinery that will hel[this to be accomplished is the Universal Basic Education (UBE) Through this programme. It is hoped that efficiency of primary education will be improved upon. The interest of government in the education of our children at primary level is:

- a) To show that education is not a privilege but the sacred and inalienable right of every Nigeria citizen.
- b) That primary education need not the terminal but rather, the first stage of formal education whose distance is only measured by one’s life span and his interest, ability and attitude.
- c) That in the past, good education was given to the children of rich and poor (Umoh, 2006), so government wants to continue with this gesture and to even improve on it.

The library on it part, is a partner in the child’s education, and as a partner creates an environment for the child to progress in his academic endeavours. According to Ugbomo (2010), children’s libraries need to be situated within the school premises. This makes it part of the school and also part of the school activities. The classroom environment is arranged so as to make it be of interest too because as the children identify with the leaders especially the enthusiastic ones, they are introduced to the book world and all the benefits that o with it. It is also known that one of the aims of the library is to encourage the child to seek and use information. As the child does this, from the information sources provided by the library, he/she gradually discovers

him/herself following the information needs that he is interested in and the information s\courses that he/she is attracted to. The library has ways of the child to sustain his learning ability within the school and beyond. Some of these include talks either on books, mannerism, hours of opening and many other things of interest to the child. It helps all the children to stand on the same pedestal by providing enough books for them: those that can afford and those that cannot afford. With this gesture, the library keys into the premise of millennium goal two by making educational materials used in support of the education to be available to every Nigerian child. As the child adopts the new ideas put forward to him/her, he/she proves that the library has impacted on him or her through its services.

Strategies for Sustainability of MDGs through Library Services

Sustainability is the process, method or ability to use and maintain resources in such a way that they are not indebted. Sustainability strategies therefore can be seen as the ability to adapt to behaviour or use resources as instruments to achieve prolonged goal which cannot be changed. It means the adaptation of the life style and principles that will prolong conformity to the ethical standard of life. Such an adaptation helps one to participate in gainful livelihood in society.

To be able to sustain readability and meaningful literacy at the primary level, core activities in the school curriculum plan must be integrated with library activities. For instance, for a child to effectively appreciate and use his/her books and other learning resources, he/she must be correctly taught the library requires skills at this level of education.

At this stage, children should be taught how to identify and locate the library materials, also, the value of books and related materials as media of teaching and learning need to be instilled in them. When given the opportunity to use, feel, touch and play with the materials as the case may be and given a chance to construct some of the make-belief instruments, as they get acquainted with these thereby enlarging their knowledge and use in them. There are many changes in the society of today, the library relents no effort to integrate the modern ideas while serving the people. What readily comes to mind is mode of communication today which has changed much and fast too compared to what it was in the past. The library through its programmes at the primary school level should help the child to utilize library materials. This will enhance his skills and potentials in communication. As the library provides media and information carrying technology for instructional purposes; these gadgets help the child to retain the skills he has acquired. It also helps to sustain modern way of leaning and communicating.

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Conclusion

Library services have a lot to do in the education of the child at the primary school level of education. It creates meaningful discovery and good learning situation for them &Fayose (1995). As one of the MDGs is to give basic education to every Nigerian child, the proper inclusion of library services in the programme will encourage the sustainability of the MDGs in the Nigerian society. This can best be achieved when certain salient principles for vibrant services of the primary school level are in place. These are:

- 1 A curriculum design that is appropriate for development that includes learning activities for the children in a supportive environment like the library is provided.
- 2 That attention is paid to the selection of committed personnel who also have strategy for service and training.
- 3 Have a strong administrative support from the immediate community i.e. the parent-body with which the library works as they constitute the backbone on which the library stands to carry out its services.

As adequate machineries are put in place for the smooth running of the primary school, the dream millennium goal of education for every child will be achieved and library services do support this to be effectively sustained in the life of every Nigerian child of primary education level.

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