WAYS OF IMPROVING THE USE OF SCHOOL LIBRARY BY SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN AWKA SOUTH LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA OF ANAMBRA STATE.

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Abstract

This study examines ways of improving the use of school libraries by secondary school students in Awka South L.G.A of Anambra State. Four research questions guided the study. The design of the study was a descriptive survey research design. The population of the study comprised all the S.S 2 students in the fourteen government secondary schools in Awka South L.G.A of Anambra State. Stratified random sampling technique was adopted to select a sample size of two hundred and fifty students from the fourteen government secondary schools in Awka South L.G.A. A structured questionnaire on five point Likert rating scale was the main instrument for data collection. Data collected was analysed and interpreted using mean score rating. The study found that adequate provision of fund is necessary for the provision of current and up-to-date information resources and also for employment of qualified and trained teacher-librarian. The school libraries should be equipped in accordance with acceptable standard while the state government should improve its level of funding school libraries. The result also shows that students are not taught the rudiments of library and its usage. Teaching the students how to use the library will enhance their use of library. The study recommend that secondary schools in Awka South LGA should be properly funded to enable them acquire adequate and up-to-date information resources in their libraries as well as to employ qualified and experienced teacher-librarians.

Keywords: ***Information Resources, School Library, Secondary School Students, School Librarian, Awka South LGA.***

Introduction

The school library belongs to the category of libraries found in primary and secondary schools. The school library is the academic nerve centre of the secondary school system (Anyaegbu, Aghauche and Okafor, 2016). The Nigerian government acknowledges the importance of the school library in the *National Policy on Education* (2013). This policy document made provision for the establishment of school libraries by both the state and federal governments in every school in Nigeria. Hence the school libraries according to Edoka, (2000) are libraries in primary or secondary schools. Students and their teachers need the information resources in the library as well as the services of a professionally trained librarian to organise the collection to facilitate both the teaching and learning going on in the school.

School libraries serve both students and their teachers by providing reading materials to meet their various information and academic needs. Expectedly, reading culture is first nurtured in this category of libraries. Books are stimuli to intelligence. A child should be introduced to the habit of reading from his formative years. Once this is achieved in both primary and secondary school children, the foundation for literacy is secured from an early age. However, when the reverse becomes the case, the educational foundation of such children becomes problematic. The resultant effect is usually visible in their academic performance

all through life. The use of books and acknowledgement of their value is a continuous process. The library is one of the means through which education planners and administrators promote qualitative education. Thus school libraries are indispensable tools for improving speaking, reading and writing skills. School children who make judicious use of libraries grow into enlightened and well informed citizens. They are the information literate citizens.

Statement of the Problem

The primary purpose of school libraries is to support teaching, learning and research in ways consistent with, and supportive of the school's mission and goals. In addition, library resources and services should be sufficient in quality, depth, diversity, and currency to support the school curriculum. In spite of this role, it does appear that these libraries are grossly underutilized for the teaching and learning process. This might be as a result of lack of relevant information resources in secondary school libraries in Anambra State. Equally, secondary education in Nigeria is facing a critical challenge in meeting the demands of the 21st century which is characterised by rapid technological advancement and information explosion. These claims are however not supported by research hence the present study was carried out to find out strategies to promote the use of school libraries in Anambra State.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of this study is to determine the extent of the use of school library by secondary school students in Awka South Local Government Area. Specifically, the study to find out:

1. how often students make use of their school library in Awka South LGA in Anambra State;
2. how the school library affects the academic performance of students in Awka South LGA in Anambra State;
3. problems hindering the use of school libraries by secondary school students in Awka South LGA in Anambra State;
4. measures to adopt to improve the use of school libraries by secondary school students in Awka South LGA of Anambra State.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. how often do secondary students make use of their school library in Awka South LGA of Anambra State?
2. how does the school library affect the academic performance of students in Awka South LGA in Anambra State?
3. what problems hinder the use of school libraries by secondary school students in Awka South LGA in Anambra State?
4. what measures can be taken to improve the use of school libraries by secondary school students in Awka South LGA in Anambra State?

Methodology

The research design adopted for this study is descriptive survey research. This method is most suitable for carrying out a research involving a large population. The population of the study consists of all the SS2 students in the fourteen government secondary schools in Awka South Local Government Area of Anambra State. A sample size of two hundred and fifty respondents was drawn from the population. Stratified random sampling was used to select the sample. Only students from SS2 classes were involved. This is because at this stage, the students are fairly matured to respond and interpret questions with minimum difficulty and also because this group of students constitute the majority of those who make use of the school library resources hence can provide useful information for the study. A 20-item structured questionnaire based on the four research questions that guided the study was used for data collection. The questionnaire has two parts. Part A dealt with respondents' personal information while Part B consists of questions designed to elicit information from the respondents according to the research questions. Responses in the questionnaire were based on five point Likert rating scale.. A total of 250 copies of the questionnaire were distributed. The entire questionnaire distributed was collected back. This represents a 100% return.

Decision Rule:

An internal scale of 0.5 was added to the mean, the nominal value thus 3.0+0.5=3.5. Therefore, a mean of 3.5 and above indicated that the respondents agreed with an item while a mean of 3.49 and below indicate that the respondent disagreed with the item.

Results

Data collected which was based on the research questions were analysed and presented below:

1. **Research Question 1**:
   How often do secondary students make use of their school library in Awka South LGA of Anambra State?

Table 1: Mean response on the extent of school library use by students.

S/N	Items	SA	A	UN	D	SD	N	$\bar{x}$	Decision
1.	Students use the library regularly.	50	50	-	50	100	250	2.6	Rejected
2.	Students use the school library occasionally.	75	175	-	-	-	250	4.3	Accepted
3.	Students do not use the school library at all.	-	-	25	50	175	250	1.3	Rejected
4.	Students use the school library during examination period only.	175	50	-	25	-	250	4.5	Accepted
5.	Students use the school library when compelled.	75	-	25	75	75	250	2.7	Rejected

Analysis in Table 1 was aimed at answering research question one. It shows how often secondary school students use their school library. The respondents disagree with item 1(students use the library regularly) with a mean score of 2.6. This indicates that students do not make use of the school library on a regular basis. By implication, the school library is not fully functional. Item 3 (students do not use the school library at all) has a mean rating of 1.3. It shows respondents' disagreement with the claim that students do not use the school library at all. The respondents also disagreed with item 5 (students use the school library when compelled). It has a mean score of 2.7 which means that the students are not compelled by the teachers to use the library on a regular basis. The respondents however agreed with item2 which sought to know whether the students use the school library occasionally as well as item 4which bother on whether the students use the school library only during examination period. Both of them have mean score of 4.3 and 4.5 respectively. This shows that secondary school students in Awka South LGA use the school library occasionally or during the examination period.

Research Question 2: How does the school library affect the academic performance of students in Awka South LGA of Anambra State?

Table 2: Mean response on how the library affects the academic performance of students.

s/n	Items	SA	A	UN	D	SD	N	$\bar{x}$	Decision
6.	School library provides avenue for independent study for the students.	-	-	25	50	175	250	1.3	Rejected
7.	The school library enables them gain access to equipment and facilities which students cannot afford.	75	175	-	-	-	250	4.3	Accepted
8.	The school library develops students' imagination thus enabling them to live as responsible citizens.	150	75	-	25	-	250	4.4	Accepted
9.	The school library equips students with lifelong learning skills.	50	50	-	50	100	250	2.6	Rejected
10.	The school library prompts readers/students to library appreciation.	-	35	65	75	75	250	1.8	Rejected

In Table 2, the analysis of data designed to answer research question two was presented. The result shows the role school library plays in the academic performance of students. The respondents disagree with item 6,the school library provides avenue for independent work for the students. It received a mean score of 1.3. This indicates that school libraries in Awka South L.G.A of Anambra State do not provide avenue for independent study. The low rating it received shows that these libraries lack the information resources that will aid students to carry out independent work. Item 9 also had a low mean rating of 2.6. It bothers on whether the school library equips students with lifelong learning skills. The respondents also disagreed with item 10 "The school library prompts the readers/students to library appreciation" It had a mean score of 1.8 which is an indication that the school library does

not prompt students to library appreciation. Going by this rating, these students do not see the usefulness of the school library in their academic pursuit. However, the respondents agreed with items 7 and 8. Both received mean scores of 4.3 and 4.4 respectively. The result shows that the school library provides students with reading materials such as textbooks which some students cannot afford.

Research Question 3: What problems hinder the use of school libraries by secondary school students in Awka South LGA of Anambra State?

Table 3: Mean response on the problems that hinder the use of school libraries by Students.

s/n	Items	SA	A	UN	D	SD	N	$\bar{x}$	Decision
11.	The school library lacks relevant materials.	50	150	25	-	25	250	3.8	Accepted
12.	Apathy on the part of school administration and government.	50	150	50	-	-	250	4.0	Accepted
13.	The school library experiences inadequate staffing.	150	50	-	50	-	250	4.2	Accepted
14.	Lack of infrastructure and uncomfortable setting for users.	75	75	-	75	25	250	3.4	Rejected
15.	Insufficient awareness of the significance of the libraries in educational setting.	125	25	100	-	50	250	3.5	Accepted

Table 3 presents the analysis on research question three. It deals with problems which hinder the use of school libraries. The respondents disagree with item 14 "Lack of infrastructure and uncomfortable setting for users" with a mean of 3.4. This indicates that school libraries in Awka South L.G.A of Anambra State do not lack the infrastructure and a comfortable setting for students. The result suggests that the library buildings in Awka South are conducive for learning but lack the requisite learning materials. The respondents agree with item 11 "The school library lacks relevant materials" with a mean of 3.8, which shows that school libraries in Awka South L.G.A of Anambra State lack relevant information materials. With mean score rating of 4.0 and 4.2 respectively on items 12 "Apathy on the part of school administration and government" and 13 "The school library experiences inadequate staffing", it could be said that school libraries in Awka South LGA are faced with the challenges of inadequate staffing. The government has not been able to motivate school library staff by providing their needs. The school administration equally has not been able to draw the attention of the government to their schools. Finally, the respondents agree that there is an insufficient awareness of the100

Research Question 4: What measures can be taken to improve the use of school library by secondary school students in Awka South Local Government Area?

Table 4: Mean response on the measures to be taken to improve the use of school library.

s/n	Items	SA	A	UN	D	SD	N	$\overline{x}$	Decision
16.	Provision of relevant materials in the school library.	225	25	-	-	-	250	4.9	Accepted
17.	The school administration and government should motivate the school library by supplying their needs.	125	125	-	-	-	250	4.5	Accepted
18.	The school library should be provided with adequate staff.	150	100	-	-	-	250	4.6	Accepted
19.	Provision of good infrastructure and comfortable setting for the users.	-	25	-	75	100	250	1.4	Rejected
20.	Awareness of the significance of school libraries in educational setting.	100	150	-	-	-	250	4.4	Accepted

Data presented in Table 4was meant to answer research question four. The result of the analysis in this table gives insight on measures that can be taken to solve the problems and challenges that hinder the use of school libraries by secondary school students. The response with a mean score of 4.9, shows that respondents agree with item 16 "Provision of relevant materials in the school library". This means that there is need to provide relevant information resources in the school library. The respondents also agree with item 17"The school administration and government should motivate the school library by supplying their needs" with a mean score of 4.5. The import of this result suggests that there is need for the school administration to motivate the school library by meeting their needs. Further analysis of the result shows that item 18"The school library should be provided with adequate staff" received a mean score of 4.6. Staffing of the school library should be given top priority. In item 20 "Awareness of the significance of school libraries in educational setting", respondents agree with mean figure of 4.4, which indicates that the school library should create awareness of its significance in the educational setting. Finally, item 19, received a mean score of 1.4. The interpretation could be that respondents disagree that it is one of the measures for improving the use of library.

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Discussion of Findings

Analysis of the findings under Research Question one, reveal that school libraries in Awka South L.G.A of Anambra State are not functional. It was also discovered that students only make use of their school library during examination period. From the analysis, the operation of many school libraries in Awka South L.G.A is below acceptable standard. From the researcher's observation, school libraries in Awka South L.G.A are faced with the challenge of scarcity of current reading and research materials students need. This alone can deter students from using the school library for their academic work.

With regards to how the school library affect the academic performance of students, the findings in Table 2 indicate that school libraries do not contribute immensely to the academic performance of students. This is due to the fact that these school libraries do not provide an avenue for independent study as they lack relevant and current reading materials. There is virtually nothing in the library that could impact the future of students in these schools. Consequently, this affects the academic performance of the students negatively.

The result of the finding in Research question 3 indicates that there are possible ways the school library can improve its services. School libraries can satisfy the needs of their students through the application of ICT in library operation. The use of ICT in library operation more especially in the recent times cannot be over emphasised. Okeagu *et al* (2008) emphasized that libraries have realized that no matter how they are funded, it is difficult for a school library

to provide all materials need by their students. It was also discovered that the advancement of information technology will enable free flow of information and online usage of information resources as possible ways of improving library services. The provision and promotion of quality fiction texts cannot be over emphasised. This will not only sustain students reading habit, but also widen their life experiences.

Similarly, the findings in research question 4 indicate that there are measures which can be taken or applied by school libraries to encourage students to use the library. Among them is that school administration and the state government should join forces to revive and resuscitate school library system.

The school administration should solicit for support from the state, federal, and non-governmental organisations. This will help to improve their level of funding. Secondary schools should indulge in giving its library staff quality training on how to manage the school's library effectively. Also the school should make sure they employ qualified staff that can manage library effectively.

Conclusion

Based on the findings, the following conclusions were made:

1. School libraries in Awka South LGA are poorly funded as a result; they do not have adequate and up-to-date information resources in their collection.
2. Most of these schools do not have steady supply of electricity supply so the enabling environment for the use of ICT facilities is absent.
3. Most of these school libraries are not manned by professional librarians.
4. Anambra State government do not train officers who man these school libraries before posting them to these schools.
5. School libraries in Awka South LGA are not

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