

FUNCTIONAL SCHOOL LIBRARIES AS PANACEA TO PROBLEMS OF BASIC EDUCATION FOR NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Soyele, Esther Kelechi & Olawepo, Saheed Adeshina Ph.D

Gani Bello Library, Federal College of Education, Abeokuta, Ogun State

soyelekelechi@gmail.com / Olawepo7158@gmail.com

+2347063956381 +2348034127531

Abstract

School libraries are libraries found in pre-primary, primary and secondary schools which supposed to support the basic education providing adequate educational resources and standard facilities in assisting pupils in learning and provide teachers with adequate reference service delivery are now ill-prepared for and limited awareness among stakeholders about the value of library service. This paper discusses how beneficial school libraries can address the challenges faced by basic education. It situates the research within the context of deteriorating library infrastructure, a lack of adequate learning materials, a poor reading culture, and limited access to information resources, all of which hinder the achievement of educational objectives. Drawing from the Information Literacy and Resource-Based View Theory, the paper argues that access to a diverse range of information resources and the ability to utilize them effectively are essential for academic success and lifelong learning. This paper establishes a strong link between functional school libraries and improved educational results through a qualitative examination of literature, policy documents, and empirical data. The findings indicate that well-funded and effectively managed school libraries enhance student academic achievement, critical thinking skills, and literacy development. However, problems such as inadequate integration of ICT, financial restrictions, inadequate staffing, and unfortunate implementation of policies have continue to hinder school library effectiveness and efficiency. The paper concludes that well-resourced school libraries are vital for achieving equitable and high-quality basic education. It recommends key approaches for improving library services, including ongoing funding, professional staffing, effective policy implementation, ICT integration, and fostering a culture of reading. In general, strengthening school libraries is crucial for improving educational outcomes and contributing to national development.

Keywords: Basic education, Functional, Integration, Information, Literacy,

Introduction

Basic education is the first step toward a good education, and it is the basis for national development, improving literacy, and lifelong learning. Basic education includes early childhood care, primary education, and junior secondary education. These are all meant to give students the basic knowledge, learning skills, and morals they need to grow as individuals and as a society. To make sure that learning is effective at the formation stage, which is primary education, there must be qualified teachers to teach students at this early stage of their education. There must also be a functional school library to support or complement the teaching or classroom activities.

This encourages students to read more and be excited about learning new things. If school libraries aren't be adequate enough, a lot of students might finish primary school without being able to read well. A working school library is a place where students can learn, get help with their homework, and become more information literate. It gives teachers and students access to a variety of information resources and sources, both in print and digital formats. This makes the teaching and learning process better. School libraries are very important for helping students learn how to be creative, think critically, and keep learning for the rest of their lives (Esan, (2022). But in many Nigerian schools, libraries are either not there at all or not well-stocked, which makes it harder for them to help with education and national growth (IFLA, 2015; Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2014; Aina, 2013).

Primary and secondary schools are the most important parts of the education system. Their goals are to make sure that everyone can read and write and to give students a good start for more advanced studies. It also gives the child a good base for more advanced studies and helps them deal with problems like illiteracy, political instability, and lack of knowledge. Adomi and Kpangba (2010) assert that national development can be realized through the accessibility and application of information resources, ethical principles, learning skills, and ICT resources within the educational process. All of these cannot be accomplished solely through classroom activities; they require the enhancement of functional school libraries (Nwogwugwu, 2020).

The purpose of launching Universal Basic Education (UBE) on the 30th September, 1999 was to provide free universal and compulsory basic education programme for every Nigerian child to give them equitable access to quality education for all children, irrespective of socio-economic, gender, or geographic disparities. (Universal Basic Education Commission, 2019). Its core purpose is to eradicate illiteracy, ignorance, and poverty by providing free, compulsory, and continuous education at the basic level, thereby laying a solid foundation for lifelong learning and national development. With this, education as a projectile is a driving force that propels a nation advancement (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2014).

It is anticipated that upon the completion of nine years of continuous education, every child within the system will attain adequate levels of literacy, numeracy, manipulative skills, communication abilities, and life skills, rendering them employable and beneficial to themselves, thereby facilitating their integration into society. The UBE initiative supports basic education by requiring functional school libraries (Universal Basic Education Commission, 2019).

These libraries provide supportive learning environments where students can easily find the information they need and are recognized as places that help with teaching and learning (Donohue & Keebler, 2016 & Universal Basic Education Commission, 2019).

However, regardless the level of education, the National Policy on Education has always identify with the importance of library in education as a priceless information hub and education resources but as for now is not case because the 1999 National Education Reports has observed that libraries that supposed to assist pupils in learning and provide teachers with adequate reference service delivery were now alien to the school system (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2014).

Theoretical framework

The foundation of this work is based on Information Literacy introduced by Paul Gilster in 1997, and the Resource-Based View (RBV) developed by Jay Barney in 1991. These theories together offer a thorough understanding of how functional school libraries contribute to improving basic education. Information Literacy Theory highlights the capacity of learners to find, assess, and use information effectively in a complex information world. Supporting this is the Resource-Based View (RBV) resources are considered as an essential factor that influence an organization's performance. In the educational setting, school libraries are seen as important and strategic resources that can greatly improve teaching and learning when used properly.

Information Literacy Theory suggests that literacy today goes beyond reading and writing to include critical thinking and the ability to use various information sources effectively. In this study, functional school libraries act as important spaces where students can develop these skills. By offering a variety of print and digital resources, school libraries encourage a reading culture, support independent learning, and promote critical thinking. RBV Theory explains that organizations which invest in and manage their resources, such as library facilities, collections, and staff, are more likely to perform better. In this context, functional

school libraries are considered vital educational tools that help in delivering the curriculum, boosting students' academic results, and supporting the goals of basic education.

The combination of these two theories creates a comprehensive approach to understanding the study, highlighting the need for learners to develop the ability to find, assess, and use information effectively. Functional school libraries serve as the key environment for building these skills, which help promote literacy and continuous learning. Following the Resource-Based View Theory (RBV), school libraries are considered essential educational resources that can improve both the performance of the institution and the learning results of students when used effectively. If school libraries are not properly maintained, students miss out on a wide range of information sources, which can hinder their intellectual growth. Research by Lance and Kachel (2018) backs this view, showing a clear link between well-supplied school libraries and better academic performance. Students in schools with good library facilities often show improvement in areas like reading and language skills, which are fundamental to basic education. This highlights the critical role that school libraries play in giving students access to necessary learning materials and supporting academic success, which is vital for the country's overall development. Despite the recognition of the importance of school libraries, several systemic barriers such as poor policy implementation, lack of government commitment, inadequate professional staffing, lack of integration of digital technologies which many school libraries are ill-prepared for and limited awareness among stakeholders about the value of library services hinders the effective utilization of school libraries in supporting basic education for national development in Nigeria. This study, therefore, examines how functional school libraries can serve as effective interventions in addressing the challenges facing basic education for national development.

Conceptual Review

Concept of a school library

School libraries are widely recognized as essential parts of effective educational systems in any country, especially in Nigeria. They are established in both primary and secondary schools. According to scholars like Okani, Nwogwugwu, Mbachu, and Enukorah (2003), school libraries serve as a vital link in the communication system that supports quality education. The International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (2015) emphasizes that a functional school library is not just a place for books but an active instructional Pattern that integrates information resources into teaching and learning processes. These libraries provide access to a wide range of materials, both in print and digital formats, which enhances students' academic abilities and supports teachers in delivering effective instruction. Okani et al. (2003) further note that school libraries are viewed as information resource centers that promote learning opportunities and lifelong learning through innovative approaches to information literacy, critical thinking, and creativity. They offer both physical and digital spaces with collections of books, periodicals, magazines, films, filmstrips, video tapes, recordings, slides, computers, study kits, realia, and other information-bearing resources, which are used by teachers and students for learning, recreation, personal interests, and interpersonal relationships. It is clear that school library resources play a vital role in enabling school libraries to fulfill their responsibilities of providing knowledge to both pupils and students (Bayero, 2019).

The increasing use of information technology has expanded the role of school libraries beyond their traditional functions. In today's digital age, school libraries are expected to incorporate information and communication technologies (ICT) to make it easier for students to access electronic resources and develop digital literacy skills (Adomi & Kpangban 2010). This transformation is essential for overcoming current challenges in basic education, as it

equips learners with the competencies required for the 21st century. Hence, it is crucial to reposition school libraries as dynamic, well-equipped, and technology-enabled centers that support learning. This shift is necessary to improve the quality and accessibility of basic education (Lance & Kachel, 2018). Nevertheless, in many developing countries, including Nigeria, the condition of school libraries remains a significant issue. Various studies have shown that insufficient funding, lack of trained staff, and poor implementation of policies have hindered the effectiveness of school libraries in supporting educational goals (Aina, 2013).

Basic Education

Basic education establishes the foundational stage of formal learning, designed to prepare individuals with crucial literacy, numeracy, and life skills needed for personal growth and active involvement in society. Basic education covers nine years of formal (compulsory) schooling of six years elementary/primary and first three years (Junior Secondary School) level. These levels are very essential to our education because they are foundation bricks on which whole building of academics stand and any misinformation at this level may threaten the growth of the other levels of education (National Policy on Education, 2014). Okiyi, (2012) opined that education is a key foundation in the concept of development and libraries are very important tools for attaining national objectives of human resources and economic growth. If basic education is well structured and directed towards grasping students young, it will go a long way to impacting on human capital growth.

According National Policy on Education, (2024) basic education is conceptualized as a holistic and inclusive framework that integrates cognitive, social, and moral development. In Nigeria, it encompasses early childhood education, primary education, and junior secondary education. The following are specific objectives of basic education in Nigeria as stipulated by Federal Republic of Nigeria (2013). The provision of free, universal basic education for every Nigerian child of school age, ensuring acquisition of the appropriate levels of literacy, numeracy, manipulative, communication and life skills as well as the ethical, morals and civic foundation for a lifelong learning. Catering for learning needs of young person who for one reason or the other, have had interrupt their schooling through forms of complementary approaches to the provision of basic education. Reducing drastically the incidence of drop-out from formal school system (through improved relevance, quality and efficient education). Development of the entire citizenry a strong consciousness for education and a strong commitment to its vigorous promotion. Okiyi (2006) stated that lack of functional school libraries significantly undermines the quality, effectiveness, and inclusiveness of basic educational objectives. Consequently, the integration of well-resourced and professionally managed school libraries into the education system is imperative for achieving sustainable improvements in basic education outcomes.

The Place of School Library in Basic Education for National Development

Functional school libraries play a key role in enhancing basic education outcomes, and for education to be successful, school libraries must be involved in well-funded research and programs of instructional and service activities. Empirical studies, particularly the school library impact studies led by Lance and Kachel (2018) demonstrate a consistent positive relationship between well-resourced library programme and students' academic achievement. Donohue & Keebler (2016) affirm that school is a vital tool of teaching and learning and equally contributes to goals of a school by providing instructional materials to both teachers and pupils/students. They further stated that without the establishment of a school library in schools, pupils lack the opportunities to develop information literacy skills, including the ability to analyze information for credibility, use information ethically, and conduct inquiry

based on research to seek information. In collaboration with this, Lance & Kachel, (2018) state that the students in schools with strong library systems tend to perform better in standardized tests, especially in reading, writing, and language development. The reports of Morris & Cahill (2017) have shown the extent to which school libraries independently influence educational outcomes has been questioned. One major critique is the methodological limitation of many existing studies, which often establish correlation rather than causation between library presence and student achievement.

Critics argue that factors such as socioeconomic status, school funding, and teacher quality may also significantly influence academic performance, thereby complicating claims about the direct impact of school libraries but contrary to this, in the research outcome of Clark and Teravainen-Goff (2018) reveals that students who use the library regardless of their socioeconomic status, school funding, and teacher quality had higher literacy engagement scores than the average child who did not use the library. Research of Chukwuji, Nwankwo, Gadanga, Sule & Yusuf (2017). also had it that there is a direct link between learning results, and access to reading materials as a key factor in developing enthusiastic and skilled readers. In another vein, Atanda (2014) opines that the school library enables students to get acquainted with books and information materials or resources to bounding the ideas and stimulating their devices for knowledge of the school library. Students/pupils can only achieve their potential in life if they have developed interest in the use of their school library: either physical or digital library learning environments. School libraries occupy a vital place in basic education systems.

Problems of School Libraries

Despite the claim that functional school libraries occupy a vital place in basic education, Esan (2022) affirm that the most prominent challenge facing school library as almost all school libraries are in sorry state due to inadequate funding and this have led to school libraries appearing to be the worst hit as many of them no longer fit the appendage 'library'. In recent times, research of Clark & Eravainen-Goff (2018). have showed no more interest in school libraries compared to the 1940s and 1950s, where libraries are seen to play an important role in the development of young ones, but fast-forward to this era, government through the State Ministry of Education has not been faithful in releasing due grants to the schools (Awe, 2007). Lack of financial resources retards positive change in school collection development. This has affected the acquisition of current and relevant information resources, quality infrastructure development, and overall library maintenance; invariably, this limits their usefulness to learners and teachers (Ajegbomogun, 2011). Poor staffing is another problem that possibly the most obstinate problem facing school libraries at both primary and secondary school levels and it hinders effective functioning of school library, as major number of school libraries lack competent librarians. Studies reveal that many personnel managing school libraries do not possess formal training in librarianship, thereby affecting service delivery and resource organization. This limits the full exploitation of library resources and also hampered the core function of library and invariably queers the needed reading campaign. (Olabode & Zinn, 2020; Irunegbo et al., 2013). Poor infrastructure, inadequate facilities and outdated library materials are another big problem facing school libraries. The structure accommodating the school libraries do not meet the specification of functional libraries in technology era. Adequate space for pupils, the furniture, physical and ICT resources always limit the transition to modern, technology-driven library services. In many cases, collections are relatively old which may be attributed to high cost of library resources, library resources poorly organized and dumping of irrelevant materials which are not useful to user's needs reducing student engagement and discouraging their reading habits/culture which affect knowledge acquisition (Shonhe, as cited in Olabode & Zinn,

2020). Non-implementation of educational policies regarding school library development is another problem killing school library existence even when national policies emphasize the establishment of functional libraries in schools, compliance remains weak, leading to the lack or poor state of libraries in many schools, especially public schools (Esan, 2022). With this dedicated library time and integration into the curriculum are also defeated and this hinders effective utilization of library resources, as students are rarely guided on how to use libraries for academic purposes.

School Library as Panacea to Problems of Basic Education

The place of school library cannot be over emphasized. For effective basic education to take place there is need for the establishment of school libraries in primary and secondary schools because the successful implementation of educational goals at all levels requires functional libraries. To achieve success in basic education, the school library ought to have the following according to, Associations and Institutions (2015), Aina (2013), Williams, Wavell & Morrison (2013);

Reasonable access to current diverse relevant physical and virtual collections that supports the curriculum thereby supporting literacy development, critical thinking, and independent learning. These foster a strong reading culture and improve literacy levels among students and contribute positively in achieving the core objectives of basic education. School libraries must be sufficiently funded, to provide up-to-date, curriculum-aligned resources that directly address the scarcity of instructional materials for basic education as this enhances teaching and improves academic learning outcomes of students/pupils. A qualified, full-time school librarian who is proactive with managerial skill. Professionally trained librarians play a vital role in bring together resources, guiding learners, and team up with teaching colleagues, senior management and outside agencies, including Federal Ministry of Education, to ensure that most appropriate services are delivered in support of teaching and learning. This strengthens instructional support and promotes information literacy, which is essential for effective basic education system. The availability of support staff to undertake routine tasks and enabling the librarian to initiate instructional, collaborative and promotional activities as well as professional duties to support collection development. Adequately funding to provide up-to-date resources that aligns with the school curriculum that directly address the shortage of instructional materials in basic education to effectively enhance teaching and improves learners' academic outcomes.

Way Forward

A well-integrated policy support, good financial support, professional development and enhanced technology responses will go a long way in addressing the plight of school libraries in basic education. Such measures are important so that school libraries may be seen as active mechanisms in the wheel of quality education rather than mere support units. It thus requires a collaborative machinery of all relevant stakeholders, including government, school administrators, librarians to make it effective and sustainable in the long run.

Adequate and Sustained Funding

School libraries must be adequately and consistently funded. Budgetary allocation for the expansion and upkeep of school library infrastructure, as well as the purchase of current information resources pertinent to the curriculum should be given top priority by all levels of government. Linda (2000) asserts that adequate financing positively improves teaching efficacy and student learning outcomes by increasing the availability of instructional materials. Libraries can offer a variety of print and digital materials that assist educators and students when they receive adequate funding. The school library, electronic database

subscriptions, and ongoing facility upgrades are all made possible by enough finance, which enhances the learning environment as a whole.

Professional Staffing and Capacity Development

Recruitment of qualified librarians and the continuous training of library personnel is very crucial as professional staffing ensures that library resources are properly organized, easily accessible, and effectively utilized by students and teachers. Librarians play a vital role in encouraging the development of lifelong learning in pupils/students by guiding them on how to locate, evaluate, and use information efficiently. Studies by Lance and Kachel (2018) reveal that schools with qualified librarians managed libraries record higher academic performance and improved information literacy skills among pupils/students. To achieve this, there is need for capacity development of librarians and other library staff through workshops, seminars, and in-service training which are essential to keep them updated with modern practices, including digital librarianship and information management. This will enable them to support curriculum delivery and foster a more interactive learning environment.

Effective Policy Implementation and Monitoring

Strengthening school libraries also requires the efficient implementation and execution of educational policies. There are laws that require school libraries to be established and run properly, but they are not sufficiently implemented. Although the Federal Republic of Nigeria (FRN, 2014) emphasizes the value of functional libraries in accomplishing educational objectives, compliance is still an issue. Perfect standards, consistent oversight, and accountability systems are necessary for the successful execution of these policies, which include minimum operational standards, library personnel, and resource provision. Enhancing oversight will guarantee that school libraries are viewed as essential parts of the fundamental education system rather than as optional amenities.

Integration of Information and Communication Technology (ICT)

Information and communication technology (ICT) must be included into school library services in order to transform library operations and improve information access. ICT resources like digital catalogs, online databases, and e-books can significantly improve the efficiency of library service delivery (Adomi & Kpangban 2010). The International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA, 2015) claims that ICT integration supports school libraries with international best practices, enhances access to global information resources, and fosters digital literacy. Additionally, digital libraries facilitate flexible and ongoing learning by allowing students to access educational resources outside of the physical library. This is particularly significant in the twenty-first century, since digital proficiency is a crucial component of education (Albirini, 2006).

Promotion of Reading Culture and Curriculum Integration

For school libraries to have the greatest possible impact, they must foster a strong reading culture among students. Regular library hours should be established in schools, and children should be encouraged to interact with a variety of reading resources. According to Chukwuji et al. (2017), reading fosters the growth of the human mind, intelligence, and personality. It is crucial that librarians collaborate with educators to improve the integration of library materials into the curriculum. This method encourages students to build critical thinking and self-research abilities while supporting inquiry-based learning. Students are more likely to acquire lifetime learning habits and advance their literacy skills when reading is ingrained in

the school culture. With this, functional school libraries thus become central to fostering a positive learning environment that supports academic excellence.

Conclusion

The paper concludes that functional school libraries are critical instruments for addressing the persistent challenges of basic education, including inadequate resources, poor literacy levels, and limited access to information resources. It emphasizes that while school libraries possess transformative potential, their impact is largely dependent on effective funding, professional management, and strong policy support. Ultimately, the paper asserts that repositioning school libraries as integral components of the education system will significantly enhance teaching and learning outcomes. This calls for a coordinated effort among policymakers, educators, and stakeholders to ensure that school libraries are fully developed and utilized as catalysts for sustainable educational improvement.

Suggestions

Based on the issues identified in the paper, the following were suggested:

1. Government and stakeholders should prioritize consistent funding for school libraries to ensure the provision of up-to-date information resources relevant to the school curriculum.
2. Qualified librarians and library supportive staff should be employed and continuously trained to enhance effective service delivery and integration into teaching and learning.
3. Educational policies on school library development should be enforced with proper monitoring and appraisal mechanisms to ensure compliance for better library service delivery.
4. For school libraries to meet up a modernized structure there is need to incorporate digital tools and e-resources to support 21st-century learning needs.
5. Library services should be embedded into the school curriculum, with structured library periods to promote reading culture and self-learning.

References

- Adesida, E. K. A. & Fatuyi, E. O. A. (2001) Obinna, J., & Chukwu, E. (2023). Sustainability strategies for digital libraries in Africa. *Journal of Digital Preservation*, 16(4), 102–119.
- Adomi, E.E. & Kpangban, E. (2010). *Application of ICTs in Nigerian Secondary Schools*. www.webpages.uidaho.edu/nmbolinladomi-kpangban.htm
- Aina, L. O. (2013). *Information and knowledge management in the digital age: Concepts, technologies and African perspectives*. Third World Information Services.
- Albirini, A. A. (2006). Teachers' attitudes toward information and communication technologies: The case of Syrian EFL teachers. *Computers & Education*, 47(4), 373–398. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.compedu.2004.10.013>
- Atanda, L.A. (2014). Impact of school on student's academic achievement in local

government areas of Osun State, Nigeria. *Journal of Information Science*, 4(4), 505-521.

Ajebomogun, F.O. & Salam, M. O. (2011). The state of school libraries in Nigeria. *PNLA Quarterly*, 74(3), 112-118.

Awe, T. (2006). Nigeria. —*The sorry state of Lagos central library*. *The Vanguard* January

25. <http://allafrica.com/stories/20070125060.html>

Barney, J. B. (2001). Resource-based theories of competitive advantage: A ten-year retrospective on the resource-based view. *Journal of Management*, 27(6), 643–650. <https://doi.org/10.1177/014920630102700602>

Bayero, S. (2019). *The use of the library for tertiary institutions in Nigeria*. Kumbosto College of Education Publishers, Kano. Pg 1-18.

Bouaamri, A. (2024). The roles of public libraries in enhancing educational systems and social inclusion in Africa. *Journal of Prospects*, 54, 467–473.

Clark, C. & Eravainen-Goff, A. (2018) School libraries: Why children and young people use them or not, their literacy engagement and mental wellbeing. National Literacy Trust. [https://cdn.literacytrust.uk/media/document/School libraries2018 1.pdf](https://cdn.literacytrust.uk/media/document/School%20libraries2018_1.pdf)

Chukwuji, C.N., Nwankwo, V.T., Gadanga, A.T., Sule, S. & Yusuf, Z. (2017). Availability and use of school library resources in post primary schools in Gusau Local Government Area, Zamfara State. *Journal of Applied Information Science and Technology*. 10(2)3-17

Donohue, M. & Keebler, J. (2016). *School library programs in New Jersey: building blocks for realizing student potential with ESSA Legislation Opportunities*. <http://njla.org/site/default/files>

Esan, A. O. (2022). School Libraries and Educational Development in Nigeria: Issues and Prospects. *Indonesian Journal of Librarianship*, 3 (2), 187-196. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.33701/ijolib.v3i2.2866>

Federal Republic of Nigeria. (2014). *National policy on education* (6th ed.).

NERDC Press. Gilster, P. (1997). *Digital literacy*. New York, NY: Wiley Computer Publishing.

International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions. (2015). *IFLA school library guidelines* (2nd ed.). IFLA.