

MANDATORY INVESTMENT IN THE CRITICAL COMPONENTS OF EDUCATION: A STUDY OF SCHOOL LIBRARIES IN NIGERIA

Lawrence Ogbeni

Dove-Image Associates Limited

Abstract

The school library is the fulcrum upon which academic activities in primary and secondary schools revolve. But over the years, the school library that was an integral part of primary and secondary schools' education has been completely neglected. The reason for this neglect is attributed to several factors which are pointed out in this study. Observations and interviews techniques were used to gather data from public and private primary and secondary schools selected randomly in Lagos state. The cosmopolitan nature and economic viability of Lagos state makes it ideal for this study. The outcome of the study revealed that majority of the public and private primary and secondary schools in Nigeria don't have libraries due to several factors amongst which are inadequate funding, corruption, unqualified and inadequate personnel. Recommendations of how school libraries can be resuscitated to support the academic activities of students and teachers in primary and secondary schools were made amongst which are adequate budgetary allocation, strengthening policy enforcement, capacity building and professionalization and public-private partnerships.

Keywords: Investment, Education, School libraries, Corruption, Curriculum, Monitoring, Supervision

Introduction

Education is simply all the processes involved in giving or receiving a systematic set of instructions especially in a school. Wiktionary defined education as the process of imparting knowledge, skill and judgment. It went further to say that good education is essential for a well-run society. In a broader sense, Emile Durkheim (1956) defined education as "the influence exercised by adult generations on those that are not yet ready

for social life,” emphasizing its role in socialization and the development of moral values. Similarly, John Dewey (1916) viewed education as a continuous process of growth, stating that it is not merely preparation for life but life itself, focusing on experience and active learning. From an African perspective, Babs Fafunwa (1974) described education as the aggregate of all processes by which a child or young adult develops abilities, attitudes, and other forms of behavior that are of positive value to the society in which he lives.

Often than not, one’s economic, political and social status is determined by the quality of education received. Education has remained the most crucial contributor to social, political and economic development of any nation. The contribution of education to development has been re-iterated by many scholars. Todaro (2003) asserted that a country which is unable to develop the skills and knowledge of her people and utilize them effectively in national economy will be unable to develop anything else. The importance of secondary education in stimulating social economic development was emphasized by Psacharopoulos and Woodhall, (1985) and Ayot and Briggs, (1992) who argued that enlightened labour force is crucial to economic development. This realization has created a high demand for secondary education especially in developing countries

. Education can take place in a formal or informal setting. The formal education is the type of education that is received based on a set of predetermined curricula of teaching and learning geared toward the achievement of set goals and objectives. Coombs & Ahmed, (1974) provide a much-cited definition of formal education as being “the institutionalized, chronologically graded and hierarchically structured... system, spanning lower primary school and the upper reaches of the university”

On the other hand, the informal type of education is the type received outside a structured curriculum with or without a particular time frame, like learning a particular trade, culture of a particular group of people, how to prepare different types of traditional delicacies etc. According to Coombs & Ahmed (1974) informal learning is the lifelong process by which every person acquires and accumulates knowledge, skills, attitudes and insights from daily experiences and exposure to the environment ... Generally [it] is unorganized and often unsystematic; yet it accounts for the great bulk of any person's total lifetime learning including that of even a highly 'schooled' person.

Education can be carried out through various medium such as the face-to-face interaction, online or offline. The global pandemic caused by the dreaded Covid-19 virus that broke out in 2020 has compelled the formal and informal education system to develop innovative ways of delivering education. However, the medium through which education is carried out is determined by the level of investment made in terms of provision of human and material resources. One of the key resources needed to enhance the quality of education in a formal setting especially at the primary and secondary school levels, is a functioning library manned by well trained personnel. Omole (2020) supported this view by arguing that library education should be included in the secondary school curriculum. For students to be intelligent and perform well in all subjects, it is necessary to expose them to the use of library. The effectiveness of any educational delivery method especially at the primary and secondary levels depends largely on the level of investment in critical infrastructure, including school libraries. Libraries are essential in education, acting as hubs for resources, academic support, and independent learning by providing access to

books, digital materials, and technology. They cultivate literacy, develop critical research skills, and offer a quiet environment for study, significantly supporting curriculum goals and student achievement.

Research questions

- i. What is the impact of mandatory investment in school libraries on the quality of education in Nigeria?
- ii. To what extent does government policy support mandatory investment in school libraries in Nigeria?
- iii. What are the current funding levels and mechanisms for school libraries in primary and secondary schools?

Methodology

This study adopted a qualitative research design using observation and semi-structured interviews. These methods enabled an in-depth assessment of the condition and utilization of school libraries.

A total of eight schools were randomly selected from Ikosi/Isheri and Agboyi/Ketu Local Council Development Areas in Kosofe Local Government Area of Lagos State. The sample comprised two public primary schools, two private primary schools, two public secondary schools, and two private secondary schools.

The choice of Lagos State was informed by its cosmopolitan nature and economic viability, making it a suitable context for assessing educational infrastructure in Nigeria.

Literature Review

There are different types of libraries with each having their aims and objectives. Libraries established in primary and secondary schools are referred to as School Libraries with a core mandate to complement the teaching and learning activities of both the teachers and students of the schools. According to Fayose, P. O. (2002), the primary aim of school libraries is to enhance the teaching and learning process in schools by providing access to educational resources. While the objectives are to support the school curriculum and classroom instruction, promote reading habits and information literacy among students, provide a conducive environment for independent and group learning and train students in effective use of library resources. Omole (2020) agreed with this by positing that “Library is a power house of education and should be seen as a compliment and an adjunct to schooling. It aids teaching and learning process and even reading”.

Empirical evidence from Nigerian studies demonstrates a significant relationship between the availability and effective utilization of school library resources and students’ academic performance. School libraries serve as essential learning hubs that support curriculum delivery, promote reading culture, and enhance students’ independent learning skills. For example, Busayo I. O. (2011) found that the school library is foundational to children’s learning and significantly contributes to literacy development and academic success. Similarly, Fayose P. O. (2002), in her study of secondary school students in Ibadan and Benin City, revealed that students who actively utilized library resources demonstrated better academic engagement and improved performance outcomes. Further

supporting this position, Owoeye J. S. and Yara P. O. (2011) established a positive correlation between school library facilities and students' academic achievement in secondary schools in Ekiti State. Their findings emphasized that well-resourced libraries significantly enhance students' study habits and examination performance. In addition, Olanlokun S. O. (2003) highlighted that access to relevant and current library materials improves students' comprehension, critical thinking, and overall academic productivity. Collectively, these studies underscore that inadequate investment in school libraries manifested in poor infrastructure, outdated materials, and lack of trained personnel continues to undermine the quality of education in Nigeria.

The National Policy on Education (2013), made it compulsory for every public and private primary and secondary school in Nigeria to have a functioning library managed by qualified personnel to complement the teaching and learning process in the classrooms. Supporting this interpretation, scholars note that the policy framework positions school libraries as central to Nigeria's resource-based and learner-centred education system, thereby implying the necessity for proper staffing and management to ensure functionality and effectiveness (Ngwuchukwu & Dike, 2018). The implementation of this policy remains to be seen as most public and privately owned primary and secondary schools in Nigeria lack functioning libraries. Akporobore (2020) alluded to this position by stating that "It is however pathetic that the state and status of school libraries in developing countries like Nigeria is very poor as most school libraries in Nigeria could be regarded as warehouse for old books, some of which were covered with dust that had gathered over time, with mismatched chairs and tables blending well with the ageing bookshelves".

The National Policy on Education in Nigeria (1981), section 3 Nos. 5 and 10 states that libraries are one of the most important educational services. The policy recommends that every state ministry of education should provide funds for the establishment of school libraries and for the training of librarians and library assistants. But unfortunately, this aspect of the policy has not been implemented due to the poor budgetary allocation to education which has consequently negatively affected the fortune of school libraries. Ajegbomogun and Salaam (2011) Argued that “About 90 per cent of the schools are substantially government funded. In recent times, government has not faithfully released due grants to the schools. The lack of financial resources retards positive change”.

Benefits of School Libraries

The benefits of school libraries to the quest and aspiration of both the students and teachers in primary and secondary schools cannot be overemphasized. For the scope of this study, some of the roles played by the school libraries amongst others are listed below:

- It positively affects the staff and students’ disposition towards the acquisition of knowledge through the provision relevant and current information and learning resources in print and non-print format.
- It serves as a repository of knowledge, housing several information resources like periodicals, books, and audio-visual materials in various formats.
- It gives access to a much greater range of free print and non-print information and learning materials than any student or teacher could possibly afford.

- It provides an opportunity for staff and students to engage in purposeful learning activities with the aim of improving their knowledge and skills.
- It helps in combating social isolation of students that could be formed knowingly or unknowingly as a result of economic, social or educational status of the students` family background through close interaction during library hours.
- It helps to improve language skills through shared reading, story times, and bounce and rhyme sessions especially for children who may not have such opportunities at home.

Findings

The findings from the observations and interviews conducted in the course of this study revealed that the lack of investment in critical components of education is attributed to several factors amongst which are:

Poor Funding: Inadequate budgetary allocation to the education sector has been the bane of the poor quality of education in Nigeria. Over the years, the budgetary allocation to education in Nigeria has continually dwindled as against the UNESCO recommendation of between 15 – 20% of total annual budget. Nigeria`s budget for education in recent time has been abysmally poor. The table below gives a graphical percentage representation of Nigeria`s annual education budget from the year 2011 to 2020.

Table 1: Federal Government of Nigeria Education Budget from 2011 - 2020

Year	Budget (₦ Trillion)	Educational allocation (₦ Billion)	Budget Percentage (%)
2011	4.972	306.30	6.16

2012	4.877	400.15	8.20
2013	4.987	426.53	8.55
2014	4.962	493.00	9.94
2015	5.068	392.20	7.74
2016	6.061	369.60	6.10
2017	7.444	550.00	7.38
2018	8.612	605.80	7.03
2019	8.830	620.50	7.03
2020	10.33	691.07	6.70

Source: Federal Ministry of Education report (2020)

This poor funding of education has negatively affected the fortune of school libraries as the schools barely get enough for recurrent expenditure with nothing for capital project. Bassey and Ikpeme (2018) submitted that for effective governance of school libraries, there must be adequate funds provided by government, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), donor agencies and well-meaning citizens of the country. Bolarinwa (2000) submitted that for proper functioning of a school library, every state ministry of education should provide funds for the establishment of libraries in all our schools. Even where school libraries exist, they are not well funded and therefore cannot extend the scope of library services to the larger segment of the children that really need the services. Ajegbomogun and Salaam (2011) in an interview with some head teachers of schools found out that the issue of

school library development is not in their plan at all and they could not be blamed for this lapse as the federal and state ministry of education has no budget allocation for such.

Poor policy implementation: In the past, most secondary schools in Nigeria have functioning libraries managed by well trained personnel. For example, schools like Urhobo College, Effurun in Uvwie Local Government Area of Delta State and Imade College, Owo in Ondo State had well stocked libraries with relevant teaching and learning resources to support the teaching and learning activities of the students and teachers. This is in line with the mandate of the National Policy on Education (2013) section 8 under educational support services (a & b) which stated that the library is at the heart of the education enterprise and one of the most important educational services. States and Local Governments, as well as proprietors of schools shall establish functional libraries in accordance with the established standards and actively promote reading culture in all their educational institutions. Weekly library period shall be part of the school curriculum, to aid learning activities.

In compliance with the above directive, schools had library periods on their timetable just like other subjects when students were made to visit the library to do their independent studies while taking advantage of the rich human and materials resources of the library to complement what they have been taught in the classrooms and laboratories. Omole (2020) justified the inclusion of library periods in the secondary school timetable when she posited that “It is an indisputable fact that library education as a discipline is vital and highly indispensable to all school subjects. This is due to the fact that it will aid reading skills since the students will be exposed to the use of library. With the injection of some

elementary library education subjects in Nigeria secondary schools, the curriculum will be richer, more beneficial to pupils and be able to meet the objectives of the secondary education in Nigeria”.

Corruption: The National Policy on Education (2013) states that the educational responsibilities of the Federal Government are carried out through the Federal Ministry of Education, the 36 State Ministries of Education and the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) Education Secretariat as well as the 774 Local Government Education Authorities. It went further to state that government shall regulate the establishment of schools, supervise and inspect schools regularly and ensure that all schools follow approved curricula and conform to the National Policy on Education. However, from the present state of education in Nigeria especially at the primary and secondary school levels, it is obvious that the Ministry, Department and Agency of government saddled with the above responsibilities have failed in this regard. One reason for this failure as revealed by this study is corruption.

Corruption is one of the cankerworms that have bedeviled the Nigerian educational sector for quite some time. There is an Inspectorate Division in the Ministry of Education at the state level and the Local Government Education Authorities saddled with the responsibility of monitoring and supervising primary and secondary schools to ensure that the necessary human and material resources including a functioning library managed by competent personnel are adequately in place to aid the teaching and learning process in the schools. But today, apart from the fact that the budget for education is grossly inadequate to provide the basic and necessary needs of the schools, those who are supposed to carry out the oversight function of ensuring that such resources are available in the schools and

where lacking report same to the authorities, have also failed in their duties. Okoroma (2006) averred that corruption has contributed to stagnate the development of education in Nigeria... The objectives of most policies in Nigeria are often derailed at the implementation stage due to a number of reasons: the budgets for the implementation of the policies are often passed by lawmakers with strings attached to them... the inadequate funds often released to the operators of the education system are not honestly and fully utilized to promote the cause of education.

The findings from this study revealed that they were instances when government officials sent to monitor and supervise primary and secondary schools turned a blind eye after been induced with gifts. Bassey and Ikpeme (2018) corroborated this point when they submitted that “This attitude has hampered the development of school libraries. This phenomenon known as corruption can be said to occur even when bribery is not involved. Hence, it can be said that any behaviour that differs or departs from established norms with regards to public trust be it exhibited by individuals who are selected, nominated, elected or appointed into an office of governance in any capacity, is a corrupt behavior”.

Unqualified and Inadequate Personnel: The findings from this study showed that there are few secondary schools that have a semblance of a library that are managed by unqualified personnel. The schools with such quasi-libraries hardly engage the services of competent persons to manage such places. These facilities are managed by people with no relevant academic or industry qualifications. There were instances where people who read courses outside library studies have been engaged to manage school libraries. Ajegbomogun and Salaam (2011) opined that staffing is also part of the problems hindering

effective use of library and information centre in primary and secondary schools in Nigeria. The idea of using unqualified personnel as school/teachers/librarian has not helped matters as most of them will not be able to assist in the full exploitation of library resources as they were not educationally equipped to do so.

It is not a surprise to find out that student and teachers hardly visit such quasi-libraries for any meaningful academic work. The effect of this according to Bassey (2015) is that such library personnel can be seen to display their incompetence in the governance of the school library as they are unable to utilize information effectively in order to disseminate information to library users or the school as a whole. The National Policy on Education (2013) section 8 under educational support services item 127(a) made it explicitly clear that apart from private and public primary and secondary schools having standard libraries, they must also ensure that they provide for the training of librarians, library officers and library assistants for these services.

This pathetic situation in most of the public and private primary and secondary schools in Nigeria can be attributed to unqualified and inadequate manpower. Alston (2018) traced this ugly situation to Nepotism ... which sees the entry and employment of unqualified staff to oversee the governance of the libraries in secondary schools by those who have godfathers of high-ranking status in the corridors of power. Fayose (2002) in her survey on students' use of secondary school library resources in Ibadan and Benin City found out that the reason why many libraries have remained infective appendages of their schools is that they are managed by ill prepared and incompetent staff who had not the

least idea of what their duties are let alone understanding what role the school library should play in the intellectual and social life of the students.

Recommendations

There is no doubt that school libraries are integral part of the formal education system at the primary and secondary school levels. Its role is so crucial to the career and academic well-being of the students and teachers without which, the students and teachers are not likely to maximize their academic and career potentials. To aid the school library to function effectively, the following steps should be taken by the government and other stakeholders in the educational sector:

Increased Funding: Adequate funding of education is supposed to reflect on the state of school libraries just as inadequate funding does. Hiring and retaining qualified library personnel such as librarians and support staff to run a 21st Century school library require funding. Provision of library and ICT accessories such as bookshelves, trolleys, barcode labels, computers, printers and automation can only be done when funds are made available as at when needed. Shonhe (2019) in his support for increased school library funding said “poor funding leads to inadequate resources and poor staffing. The issue of school library budget and funding need to be addressed within the school library policy and the national school library policy within the Ministry of Education”. Lack of funding is a major stumbling block in school library development. This thwarts all efforts for the development and maintenance of functional school libraries, Mojapelo (2018). Highlighting some of the reasons for the failure of government policies, Okoroma (2006) stated that

even when the budgets are passed, the executive arm of government is often reluctant to release the funds to facilitate implementation. Government must ensure that education is adequately catered for in the annual budget as recommended by UNESCO. The education budget in Nigeria in recent past were way below what is needed to make any meaningful impact in the education sector cum school libraries in Nigeria.

Effective Monitoring and Supervision: There is no gain saying the fact that government has been trying to improve the quality of education in Nigeria. However, there are inefficiency in the monitoring and supervision of education budget especially at the primary and secondary school levels. The government through the ministry of education should ensure that public and private primary and secondary schools have libraries manned by qualified personnel as stipulated in the National Policy on Education, and where such is not in place, such school(s) should be sanctioned.

There are so many leakages in the spending of education fund that needs to be checked. The government through the ministry of education at the state level should ensure that fund meant for the development of school libraries are judiciously utilized such that quality library and ICT accessories, relevant and current information and learning resources are provided to enable the school library to play its roles effectively.

Inclusion of Library Hours on the Timetable: There is no doubt that the school library is a key resource for the academic well-being of the students even after their primary and secondary school education. In order to ensure that the human and material resources of the school library are maximized, there should be a library period in the school timetable

just like other subjects as it used to be in the past and as mandated in the National Policy of Education. Leaving the students to choose when to use the library is another way of denying them the benefits of using the rich resources of the library to enhance their studies. Shandu, Evans and Mostert (2014) opine that, schools should allocate a specific library period to each class. This will allow for library orientation.

Public-Private Partnerships: Collaboration with private sector stakeholders and NGOs can provide additional support for library development. The partnerships between the public and the private sectors have attracted both positive and negative reviews. On the positive side, the scholars highlight that public-private partnerships have enabled the state to plug the large gaps that continue to exist in terms of quality, access, governance, and financing of education (LaRocque, 2008). Through public-private partnerships the state and the private sector can combine their efforts to provide more choices and better managed schools, which can generate positive competition and improve quality (Barrera-Osorio et al., 2009). By leveraging public-private partnerships, Nigerian school can access modern, well-resourced libraries, enhanced education and community development. Public-private partnerships can help bridge the funding gap and improve library infrastructure.

Conclusion

Education is pivotal to the economic and social well-being of a people and society. Therefore, government and other stakeholders should pay attention and ensure adequate funding of education in Nigeria. To this end, the school library which is a major component of the formal educational system should be given priority attention for it to support the

teaching and learning activities in primary and secondary schools. This study has shown that the school library is the wheel on which the academic and career success of the students and teachers runs, without which, any investment in education at the primary and secondary levels, will amount to an effort in futility.

References

Ajebomogun & Salaam (2011) The State of School Libraries in Nigeria. *PNLA Quarterly*, the official publication of the Pacific Northwest Library Association Volume 75, no. 3 (Spring 2011)

Akparobore, Daniel O. (2020) "Status of School Libraries in State Capitals in Nigeria: A Study of Selected Secondary and Primary Schools in Asaba, Delta State, Nigeria." *Library Philosophy and Practice (e-journal)*. 3868.

<https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/libphilprac/3868>

Alston, J. (2018). *4 Types of Political corruption*. <https://www.houstoncrimedefence.com>

Ayot, H.O & Briggs, H. (1992). *Economics of Education*. Nairobi: Educational research and publication.

Barrera-Osorio, F., Patrinos, H. A. & Wodon, Q. (2009). Public-private partnerships in education: An overview. *Emerging evidence on vouchers and faith-based providers in education: Case Studies from Africa, Latin America, and Asia*, 1–15.

Bassey, Umo Antigha & Ikpeme, Bassey Ballantyne (2018) Corruption: A bane to information utilization for governance in Secondary School libraries in Cross River State, Nigeria. *World Wide Journal of Multidisciplinary Research and Development*, 2018; 4(12): 1-4

Bassey, U. A. (2016) Information utilization and effectiveness in decision making process of secondary schools in Cross River State, Nigeria. *Unpublished Master's Degree thesis*. University of Calabar.

Bolarinwa, J. A. & Oloruntoba, A. A (2000) *Librarianship for beginners: A handout on the teaching of library education in Rufai Giwa Polytechnic Owo*: 11.

Busayo, I. O. (2011). The school library as a foundational step to children's learning in Nigeria. *Library Philosophy and Practice*, 1–8.

Coombs, P. H., & Ahmed, M. (1974) *Attacking Rural Poverty: How Nonformal Education Can Help*. A Research Report for the World Bank Prepared by the International Council for Educational Development. International Council for Educational Development

Dewey, J. (1916). *Democracy and education: An introduction to the philosophy of education*. Macmillan.

Durkheim, E. (1956). *Education and sociology*. New York: Free Press.

Fafunwa, A. B. (1974). *History of education in Nigeria*. London: George Allen & Unwin.

Fayose, P. O. (2002). School library resources and services in Nigeria. *Ibadan Journal of Educational Studies*, 2(1), 45–53.

Fayose, P. O. (1983). Students' use of secondary school library resources in Ibadan and Benin. *Nigerian Journal of Library and Information Science*, 2(2), 40–51

Federal Republic of Nigeria. (2013). *National policy on education* (6th ed.). Lagos: Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council (NERDC).

LaRocque, N. (2008). *Public-private partnerships in basic education: An international review*.

Mojapelo, S. M. (2018). Challenges in establishing and maintaining functional school libraries: Lessons from Limpopo Province, South Africa. *Journal of Librarianship and Information Science*, 50(4), 410–426. doi:10.1177/0961000616667801

Ngwuchukwu, M. N. & Dike, V. W. (2018). Attaining best practices in Nigerian school libraries through policy formulation and implementation. *Journal of Research in Education and Society*.

Okoroma N. S. (2006) Educational policies and problems of implementation in Nigeria *Australian Journal of Adult Learning* Volume 46, Number 2, p. 242 - 263

Olanlokun, S. O. (2003). Strategies for effective utilization of library resources in Nigerian schools. *Nigerian Libraries*, 37(1), 21–28.

Olufemi, Alfred (2020) *Buhari's 2021 budget share for education is Nigeria's lowest in 10 years: The troubled sector receives a meagre 5.6 per cent of the total budget, much below the recommended benchmark. October 4, 2020*

<https://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/headlines/422829-buharis-2021-budget-share-for-education-is-nigerias-lowest-in-10-years.html>

Omole, Victoria Imabong (2020) The Justification for the Inclusion of 'Library Education' in Nigeria Secondary School Curriculum, *International Journal of Library Science*, Vol. 9 No. 4, 2020, pp. 77-83. doi: 10.5923/j.library.20200904.01.

Owoeye, J. S., & Yara, P. O. (2011). School facilities and academic achievement of secondary school students in Ekiti State, Nigeria. *Asian Social Science*, 7(7), 170–176.

Psacharopolous, G. & Woodhall, M. (1985) *Education and Development: an analysis of Investment Choices*. New York: Oxford University Press

Shandu, L, Evans, N, & Mostert, J (2014) Challenges in the provision of school library services in Katlehong secondary schools. Mousaion: *South African Journal of Information Studies*, 32(4), 13-28

Shonhe, Liah (2019) A Consolidation of Challenges Faced by School Libraries in Developing Countries. *Library Philosophy and Practice (e-journal)*. 2467.
<https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/libphilprac/2467>

Todaro, M. P. (2003). *Economic Development* (8th ed.). New York: Addison-Wesley.

UNESCO (1969) Recommendations relating to school, public, national, university and special libraries Extract from working document (com/cs/I90/3), *International Library Review*, 1:3, 317-332, DOI: [10.1016/0020-7837\(69\)90017-X](https://doi.org/10.1016/0020-7837(69)90017-X)