

School Library Services for Educational Rebirth: The Case of Lumen Christi International High School, Uromi, Edo State, Nigeria

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Abstract - The paper explores the roles of school libraries in the rebirth of Nigerian Education system with particular focus on Edo state. The strategies employed at Lumen Christi International High School were carefully examined. The paper employed the document analysis and exploratory approach to gather facts for making conclusions. Very prominent among facts gathered from literature were that: there is a decay in the Nigerian Education system; and that school libraries have crucial roles to play in the rebirth of the education system. The paper concluded that for there to be meaningful development in the education system, the school library must be positioned to contribute to the process, and the school librarian must devise strategies to effect a change in the orientation of the students in the primary and secondary schools.

Keywords: Education, School Libraries, Education-Nigeria, Lumen Christi International High School

I. INTRODUCTION

Primary and secondary educations are seen as critical pillars in the education system in any country of the world. This is because the teaching and learning that goes on at this level of education directly affects the quality of tertiary education in any nation. In is because of this that school libraries are set up and managed to provide the necessary support to build standard education systems all over the world. A school library is a school's physical and digital learning space where reading, inquiry, research, thinking, imagination, and creativity are central to students' information-to-knowledge journey and to their personal, social, and cultural growth (IFLA, 2015). A school library is a type of library commonly found in elementary, primary and post-primary schools. This library can be likened to a learning hub where acquisition, exchange and creation of new knowledge are done. They support the school curriculum by providing up to date information, facilitate teaching and learning and to keep staff and students abreast of new development (Abdullahi & Abubakar, 2015).

The school library exposes students to information resources and teaches them to imbibe independent learning skills. In recognising the important role that libraries play in the lives of students, the Federal Republic of Nigeria (2013) in its revised National Policy on Education, urged government at all levels as well as proprietors to establish functional school libraries in accordance with established standards and actively promote reading culture in all their

institutions. The policy stresses the need for a weekly library period to be included in the school's curriculum. According to the policy, 'school libraries are at the heart of the education enterprise'.

School libraries need more than mere recognition of their importance to be effective and efficient in service delivery. In order to support the implementation of curriculum within the school, facilities and resources are needed in the school library. Functional school libraries are characterized by a qualified librarian, robust resources to support teaching and learning, adequate accommodation. With these on ground, school libraries would be equipped with tools for preparing students for lifelong learning in the 21st century. The school library also provides an environment where users in the learning community interact with each other and share ideas. According to Unagha (2008) "the school library makes reading, learning and using library resources enjoyable for children". This can also be seen in the IFLA/UNESCO School Library Manifesto 1999, which stated that one of the goals of the school library is to "develop and sustain in children the habit of enjoyment of reading and learning, and the use of libraries throughout their lives." This enjoyment however can only be possible if the library has the right resources and provides the right services. And only when the right library services are provided by qualified professionals would there be a revival in the education system. Library services are carried out in different degrees in various libraries. The services peculiar to school libraries are: reference, circulation, interlibrary loan, serials, and Information and Communication Technology (ICT) services.

Reference services are also referred to as reference and information services and they include assistance rendered by library staff to users who seek information. Providing this service to users is very important because, the library houses thousands of information in different formats and students do not often know how to access the right, reliable and accurate information they need (Kadir, 2012). This service could be of these types: information service, user guidance and instructional service. Information service entails providing patrons with answers to specific questions. User guidance is direct assistance given to patrons in finding the information they need themselves. Instructional

service involves activities that teach people how to use information resources, so as to utilize them fully.

Circulation services include the activities of a library that make it possible for patrons to have access to library resources. It is not enough that resources are acquired, their utilization is even more important. Circulation services are the most visible of all library services and their activities help to create the right or wrong perceptions about any library. They include the following: registration of users, lending, shelf maintenance, and, providing statistics for reporting.

Inter-library loan service is carried out by libraries to promote access to a wider variety of resources, by sharing their resources. It is a form of library cooperation which is being encouraged in all types of libraries. Sharing of resources among libraries makes users have unlimited access to information. This can be done either formally or informally for their patrons' benefits.

Serials services are geared towards making available materials that are issued in successive parts regularly and require special handling, for example, newspapers, journals, and magazines. These materials are enjoyable to read either for leisure or academic purpose (Nwalo, 2006). Serials service is therefore important to students so as to keep students and staff abreast with current information as well as entertain them.

ICT services have become indispensable in libraries due to the constantly changing nature of the world. It entails the use of computers and allied technologies in providing library services, thereby making available information to users in school libraries in various electronic formats. These technologies employed in delivering library services remove constraints that arise as a result of distance and time. ICT services also involves assisting users in school libraries, in the use of these technologies where and when necessary. This assistance would help teachers, students and other users in the school community to develop computer skills that they can in turn use to search for information in any media, thereby improving access to information.

The roles that school libraries play in the lives of secondary school students cannot be overemphasized especially in equipping them with life-long learning skills. The services that a school library provides must be well researched and should actively engage the educational community so as to fulfil its role in education (IFLA, 2015.) These services vary from one school library to another. School libraries, if well-equipped and positioned, have capacity to build literate societies and guide the society on its way to development and progress. School libraries can become catalyst for educational rebirth especially in a country like Nigeria where, due to factors such as poor funding, lack of opportunities, and societal disorientation, education is becoming a neglected sector for the economy.

II. THE NEED FOR EDUCATIONAL REBIRTH

The decay in the Nigeria Education system is a product of many factors. Some of these factors are tied to government neglect and lack of priority in education financing. As Babalola (2016) rightly noted “decreased funding of education brought about dilapidated structures, exodus of highly trained and qualified staff, labour unrests and student disturbances”. Over the years, these factors have contributed in pushing the Nigerian educational system to a point where it almost no longer count for anything in the society since its products are so poorly trained that they have little or nothing to contribute to national development. Odia and Omofonwan (2007) further reiterated the poor state of the Nigerian educational system, when they asserted that “when the issues of Nigeria education system today is raised, the first set of thoughts that come to mind are: decline in standard, deterioration of facilities, examination practices....” Some of the other factors that have contributed to the current sorry state of the Nigerian Education system are society-induced such as emphasis on material wealth, get-rich-quick mentality, and general lack of value for education.

The general consensus among educationists is that the Nigerian educational system needs a rebirth and a total overhauling (Odia and Omofonwan, 2007). This is more so because of the importance of education in the development process of the nation. For Nigeria, and particularly Edo state to develop, clearly thought out strategies must be implemented to birth a new education system where government, parents, students and other stakeholders, understand and play their part. The Edo state government, while mapping out strategies for revamping education in Edo state, clearly noted that all stakeholders must play their part to restore the educational system (I made, 2017).

Librarians as custodians of knowledge must be at forefront of any effort aimed at revamping the education system. Libraries and librarians have become long standing development partners that provide cost effective alternatives. In many countries, libraries are given special recognition because of the vital role they play in guiding societies to development. In fact, libraries have been recognized as “key public institutions that have a vital role to play in development at every level of society” (IFLA, 2015). In view of this, the school library has crucial roles to play in the rebirth of the educational system in Nigeria. Some of these roles involve the setting in motion a process of social re-engineering and mental re-orientation of the students through well planned programmes in primary and secondary schools.

III. STRATEGIES FOR PROMOTING EDUCATIONAL REBIRTH AT LUMEN CHRISTI INTERNATIONAL HIGH SCHOOL

The effort to bring about educational rebirth is a deliberate one and this can be seen in the various service activities that

Rev. Fr. Dr. Theophilus Itaman’s Library, Lumen Christi International High School performs. The school is a private secondary school, all boarding and owned by the Catholic mission. Its library is named after the current principal, Rev. Fr. Dr. Theophilus Itaman. The school library has two professional librarians, a para-professional librarian, and three student assistants managing its affairs.

The school library over the past six years have implemented strategies to mitigate the rising cases of apathy towards education, poor reading culture, and general lack of interest in schooling by youths in Nigeria, with particular focus on Edo state. Apart from circulation, reference, serials and ICT services, the following activities and programs have been introduced in order to support the students’ learning process and promote reading culture:

1. Reading club
2. Extending opening hours
3. Celebrating World Book Day
4. Book game
5. Library period /Teaching information literacy

IV. READING CLUB

In 2015, the library introduced a reading club by name, ‘Just a Book’ club. The club is open to students and staff who love reading or would like to improve their reading skills.

The club on an annual basis donates educational materials to schools to encourage their libraries where they exist or motivate them to have a library where they do not exist.

V. EXTENDING OPENING HOURS

Access to a library's resources and services is very important irrespective of the robust resources and efficient services being rendered by a library. The library had observed that some students without free periods between their classes were not benefiting from the library services as a result of time. The need therefore arose to extend the opening hours so as to cater for those students. In 2017, the library extended its opening hours to Saturdays, for at least 4 hours.

VI. CELEBRATING WORLD BOOK DAY

The World Book and Copyright Day is an annual event which was initiated by UNESCO in the year 1995. It is celebrated on the 23rd of April by all United Nations Member states with the aim promoting reading habits. However, in Ireland and some other countries including Nigeria, this event is marked on the first Thursday of March because of the Easter holidays. The celebration of this event in this school was introduced by the librarian in 2014 and has been consistently marked with a variety of activities.

TABLE I WORLD BOOK DAY AT LUMEN CHRISTI

DATE	THEME	ATTENDANCE	ACTIVITIES
15 th March, 2014	Revitalizing the Reading Culture	650	i. Short story/poem competition among students of the host school ii. Lectures iii. Spelling competition iv. Story telling v. Book exhibition
7 th March, 2015	Books Can Talk Too	773	i. Lectures ii. Spelling competition iii. ‘Know your Author’ quiz iv. Nigerian writers puzzle v. Author visit vi. Book exhibition
12 th March, 2016	Reviving and Sustaining Reading Culture in the Digital Era	733	i. Lectures ii. Spelling competition iii. “Know Your Author” quiz iv. Writing competition organised by ‘Better-A-Child’ organization v. Drama by ‘Just A Book’ Club vi. Book exhibition
4 th March, 2017	Reading is Fun	766	i. Lecture ii. Spelling competition iii. Author visit iv. Book exhibition
17 th March, 2018	“Read and Lead”	762	i. Lecture ii. Spelling competition iii. Author puzzle iv. Spelling competition v. Book exhibition
24 th March, 2019	“Share a Story”	703	i. Lecture ii. Author visit iii. Backward spelling competition iv. Book exhibition

Typically, attendance at the book day programme is not restricted to students in the school. Students and youths from neighbouring schools are usually invited to take part in the programme. The idea behind the invitation of people outside the school is to get the message as far as possible into the communities and schools in Edo state

VII. BOOK GAME

This game was introduced in the 2017/2018 session. On a weekly basis, except during the period of examination, the first few lines of a book are read out on the assembly ground. The students are expected to guess correctly the title and author of the book. The first three students to get the correct answers are exempted from the general labour during the weekend and given extra snacks. You can imagine how excited the students were when this game began.

VIII. LIBRARY PERIOD/TEACHING INFORMATION LITERACY

To ensure that students have a proper orientation about the library as well an independent time for studying and using the library, the librarian fought tenaciously for a library period to be reintroduced into the timetable. This was achieved in the 2015/2016 academic session. Use of the Library as it is called in the school is taught once a week to students in the junior classes, specifically Basic 7 & 8. Information literacy was introduced in 2017 and is being taught to students in basic 8 classes. Using the Big6 skills model, the students are taught a research process.

IX. CONCLUSION

It has been established that there is a direct relationship between education and development; hence, no nation can develop beyond its standard of education. In Nigeria today, the standard of education and attitude towards education is such that cannot facilitate development. To change this, there is need for a total rebirth of the education system. This rebirth includes many aspects; prominent among them is the need to change the orientation of the students through effective school library services. As exemplified by Lumen Christi International School, with proper planning, school libraries can become catalyst for driving the necessary change in the education system in Edo state, and Nigeria in general. It is, therefore, safe to conclude that librarians, especially school librarians have critical roles to play in the rebirth of education in Nigeria.

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