



## INADEQUATE LIBRARY SERVICES: A CHALLENGE TO 21ST CENTURY EDUCATION IN A DEVELOPING ECONOMY

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**ABSTRACT:** *This paper examined inadequate library services as a challenge to 21st century education in a developing economy. The paper portrayed the library as a collection of books and other information materials in various formats, properly arranged for the promotion of human knowledge, stressing that the 21st century library, with the integration of ICT and as a custodian of both books and non-book materials in diverse formats, is expected to have quantum of information available to users at all times, in order to promote constructive education. The paper takes the position that for Nigeria's educational system to impact the knowledge and skills desired for development that endures, adequate library services must be provided at all levels of education. The paper reviewed that most libraries in Nigeria are plagued with outdated materials and lack the required facilities and resources to satisfy users' needs, which result in inadequate library services, poor academic performance in entrance examinations, and poor reading culture which negatively affects educational development. This paper presents the absence of technological literacy, inadequate workforce, scarcity of sufficient resources, poor funding and power outage as causes of inadequate library services. The paper therefore recommends that the library staff should be trained and retrained to initiate and manage technological tools. The library should be stocked with required materials. Inter-library services should be upheld and an alternative means of power should be provided to avoid power interruption and its associated consequences on library services for the proper functioning of 21st century education.*

**KEYWORDS:** Inadequate, Library Services, Developing Economy



## INTRODUCTION

Information is power and its significance to development and education cannot be overemphasized. It is an indispensable tool, a key that supports research and education. Interestingly, the library is seen as the store house of various kinds of information; it houses necessary items and resources that could be consulted for the extraction of unique and authentic information. The elementary purpose of the library is to provide adequate resources capable of satisfying the information needs of the clientele. In satisfying the needs of the user, the library must ensure adequate services, quality and useful resources. In reflection to the above, Ifidon (1997) asserts that beautiful buildings, well trained library staff and modern information storage and retrieval systems can only be cherished if adequate services are rendered to users.

Undoubtedly, libraries are very essential as they enable students to develop their full potential and broaden their horizon, which in turn inspires educational achievement. It is a well-known fact that no educational system can rise above the quality of its library; this implies that libraries play an extraordinary role in pursuing constructive education. In order to achieve educational goals, the library must play its role of collection and dissemination of vital information resources. Through the collection and dissemination of essential information materials, libraries make an unusual contribution to effective education. Notwithstanding, inadequate library services impair education at all levels and weaken its result or outcome.

### Statement of the Problem

Effective library services aid in the achievement of the objectives of education at all levels. Libraries are established to help teachers deliver effectively, and to enable students as well as pupils delight in reading, learning and using library resources as a lifetime culture which gives them the opportunity to evaluate and use information properly. Library services remain a prerequisite to the adequate realisation of educational goals.

Observation has shown that most libraries in Nigeria lack the required library services, facilities and resources to satisfy users' needs; hence, they cannot effectively promote successful education. Interestingly, some of the major problems of educational development such as mass failure of students in public examinations and poor reading culture could greatly be attributed to inadequate library services. If this is not gazed at, the good of education will remain invisible. It is in line with the above that the paper seeks to examine Inadequate Library Services as a Challenge to 21st Century Education in a Developing Economy.

### Concept of Library

The term library is coined from the Latin word *liber* which means 'book'. It has been given several names by various scholars; some described it as a dictionary of information, a compendium of knowledge as well as a glossary of information. The library is a collection of books and other information materials in various formats, properly arranged for the promotion of human knowledge.

According to Obi (2013), the library is a selected collection of print and non-print information materials that are acquired, organised, preserved and disseminated by qualified personnel of librarianship. In consonance to the above stated, Okwu (2021) admits that the library is a collection of records of human culture in diverse formats and languages preserved, organised



and interpreted to meet the varying needs of individuals for information, knowledge and recreation.

### **Concept of Library Services**

Library services entail the entirety of support provided by the library for its users. It can also be seen as the effort made by the library personnel to endeavour with the available and accessible resources to provide answers to users' requests. It comprises all library activities aimed at encouraging the use of the resources in the library.

According to Chukwueke et al. (2018), these services, to a large extent, define the well-being of the library clientele, educationally and otherwise. Amplifying the position of the previously mentioned scholars, Asogwa et al. (2020) added that the utmost aim of library service is the satisfaction of the users.

### **Expectations from the 21st Century Library**

The library has grown from the old format of documenting information via clay, parchment as well as scroll to the point of documenting information/records using paper. The library of the old had mainly print collections (books) and was not swift in information dissemination. There is now a paradigm shift in all aspects of the library as a result of Information and Communications Technology. As a result of this shift, most of the traditional ways of rendering services in the library have been enhanced greatly.

Nevertheless, the 21st century library is now a custodian of both books and non-book materials in diverse formats. Library materials or resources can now be accessed online from any location through the help of the internet and other essential devices. With the integration of ICT into the library and the proliferation of information in this era, the library is expected to have a quantum of information available to users at all times. Subsequently, observations have shown that most libraries in Nigeria are plagued with outdated materials, insufficient resources and staff which have weakened the level of services rendered. Knowledge is never static but dynamic; to this, Akanwa and Udo-Anyanwu (2017) submit that there is a need for libraries to always check their collections as the world of knowledge is not stagnant. This implies that users can change at any given time and this affects their information needs.

The ultimate objective of the library is to provide information resources to support and enrich the educational programme of its environment and its relevance in the 21st century is dependent on the effective delivery of qualitative services to users.

### **The Effect of Inadequate Library Services on the 21st Century Education**

Education is an instrument of transformation, where prospective learners are provided with the opportunity to develop cognitive, affective and psychomotor competencies. Effective library service is paramount at all levels of education so as to ensure that students are suitably armed with the right information at the right time; these services remain a sine qua non to adequate attainment of educational goals. Besides, a visit to most libraries in Nigeria shows that most of them lack the required facilities and resources to satisfy users' needs. Observations have shown that in some cases, library facilities like computers, generators and other necessary equipment are damaged and are not repaired or replaced. Hence, available ones are insufficient, thereby making library services inadequate.



However, to build a self-reliant nation which is one of the five national goals of Nigeria education as stated in the National Policy on Education (2004), the library remains a requirement. The inadequate library services rendered to students, especially in academic libraries, hinder the achievement of this goal as students in higher institutions are not exposed to enormous information that will enable them to acquire necessary practical skills, knowledge and competencies. With inadequacy in library services, students cannot keep pace with current trends in global education.

Subsequently, observations and literature have shown that some post primary school students in Nigeria cannot secure admission into institutions of higher learning due to poor academic performance in their entrance examinations. According to Chukwueke et al. (2018), this poor performance which negatively affects the educational development of pupils and students may be ascribed to poor or inadequate library services. In the same vein, the issue of poor achievement of post primary school students has been confirmed by the West African Examination Council (WAEC) and other examination bodies. Supporting this assertion, the WAEC result breakdown for the years 2007, 2008, 2009 and 2010 revealed the percentages of students who passed the examination to be 22.54, 13.76, 22.54 and 24.94 percent, respectively. According to Chukwueke et al. (2018), the breakdown is on the average. This means that less than a quarter (21.94 percent) of the students that sat for the May/June West African Senior Secondary School Certificate Examinations of the years under review, obtained credits in five subjects including English and Mathematics. With these statistics shown by WAEC, the academic performance of Nigerian post primary school students could be said to be poor. This poor performance could be attributed to insufficient library services. In connection to the above stated, Dike (2004) in Chukwueke et al. (2018) suggested that effective library services play a significant and indispensable role in developing good reading culture in students at all levels of education, which consistently enhance their academic performance.

Libraries serve as a medium of teaching and learning at all levels of education. Consequently, a situation where the library services provided are not sufficient, it leaves the educational system unproductive as teaching and learning is made to deteriorate. Bartholomew (2018) admits that insufficient library services especially in primary and secondary schools have created a huge gap in attaining desired literacy nationwide and particularly basic education. He further observed that there are little or no libraries in many primary and post primary schools for proper attainment of basic education. Students' inability to read has also been attributed to lack of proper library services by many. Hence, it must be emphasized in such a time as this that proper library services remain an indispensable prerequisite at all levels of education in the 21st century.

### **Causes of Inadequate Library Services in the 21st Century**

The inadequate services rendered by libraries could be attributed to several factors, which include the following:

- **Absence of technological literacy:** Technological literacy entails the ability of the librarian to reliably use appropriate technological gadgets to resolve problems, manage, evaluate and create or provide information capable of answering users' queries. Most professional librarians lack the required technological skill needed for effective library service delivery in the 21st century. There is a need for information professionals in this high-tech information era to flow with the current system, so as to remain relevant.



- **Inadequate workforce:** It cannot be overemphasized that the quality of library services provided eventually depends on the quality as well as the quantity of the library staff. A library that lacks adequate numbers of staff of the right caliber cannot be expected to deliver or achieve much.

Undoubtedly, staffing in many Nigerian libraries is very poor and totally inadequate, which in turn affects service delivery.

- **Scarcity of sufficient resources:** Information resources are not always available in the quality desired. Africa particularly is faced with a problem that researchers have identified as “*Book Famine*”. This means that information resources are scarce due to low publication output and where available, very costly.

Akanwa and Udo-Anyanwu (2017) are of the view that some of the indigenous publishers need to improve on the quality of their job. In consonance to the aforementioned, Nwalo (2000) submits that some popular Nigerian writers prefer publishing in book-publishing houses overseas as a result of the poor delivery of some indigenous publishers. Such publications cannot be available locally unless imported and paid for in hard currency. Also, school libraries are starved of necessary fictions that should help improve the reading culture of students and pupils.

- **Poor funding:** Funding is a key factor for effective and smooth running of any organisation, of which the library is not an exception. Lack of adequate funds is a major problem confronting the library today. It is important to note that the quality of resources provided is partly a function of the quantum of funds available.

Okoro (2006), as cited in Akanwa and Udo-Anyanwu (2017), expresses in rational terms that there is a direct bearing between the level of funding and the growth of library collection or resources. Fund is needed for the acquisition of both print and non-print resources, technological infrastructure, staff development and maintenance of other facilities. Libraries are often starved of vital funds that should be used in developing their collections.

- **Power outage:** This has to do with the momentary interruption of operation, especially electric supply. Lack of adequate power supply is one of the problems facing the utilisation ICT in libraries in Nigeria which hampers effective library services. Facilities in the electronic library, reprographic and other units of the library need power supply to function effectively. The absence of or irregularities in the supply of power leads to delay in information retrieval and loss of time on the side of the user.

## CONCLUSION

Education is the fulcrum on which every society stands. Making it serve its purpose is worth doing especially in this ever-evolving age. Realising quality education is impossible without adequate library services. Effective library services remain a requirement at all levels of education as its aim is geared towards the attainment of quality education. For Nigeria’s educational system to impact the knowledge and skills desired for development that endures, adequate library services must be provided at all levels of education. Libraries should make a



concentrated effort to improve their collections and services in order to meet the ever-increasing needs of users. Library services must be timely and of good quality in order for libraries to achieve their purpose of supporting education.

## RECOMMENDATION

To improve library services for the proper functioning of 21st century education, the researchers therefore recommend the following:

- For Nigerian libraries to make it in this technological age, they must ensure that library staff are adequately trained and retrained to initiate and manage technological tools.
- Libraries suffering from scarcity of adequate resources should learn to engage in inter-library services.
- The library personnel should ensure that good and appropriate information materials are selected and acquired for the library.
- There should be improvement on the supply of electricity in the country. Where this is not achievable, libraries should provide an alternative means of power to avoid power interruption and its associated consequences on library services.
- Libraries should be adequately funded by the parent bodies.

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