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A Survey of Prison Inmates' Utilisation of Library Media Resources in Preparation for Senior Secondary School Certificate Examination in Nigeria

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This study takes a cursory look at prison inmates' utilisation of library media resources in preparation for Senior Secondary School Certificate Examination in Nigeria from 2009 to 2013. Three of the prisons that prepare and register inmates for these Examinations were randomly selected for the study. These are Abakaliki prisons in the South-East, Ikoyi prisons in South-West and Kuje prisons in North-Central Nigeria. A total of five hundred questionnaires were administered on the inmates registered for SSSCE in the various prisons sampled, namely: Abakaliki 160 inmates with a response rate of 142, Ikoyi 240 inmates with a response rate of 209 and Kuje 100 inmates with a response rate of 87. However, 438 questionnaires were duly completed and returned, and found useable for the study, representing a response rate of 87.6%. The study revealed that 353 inmates(80.6%) utilise photocopying services, 322 inmates(73.5%) utilise journals, 311 inmates(71.0%) utilise Book loan services, 237 inmates (54.1%) utilise past examination questions, 211 inmates(50.5%) utilise West African Examinations Council curricula and syllabi, while 320 inmates(73.1%) claimed that staff attitude was not a hindrance to their utilisation of the library resources. Also, 79.0% claimed that weekend opening was not a challenge to their utilisation of library media resources, 83.6% do not see non-book loan as a challenge and 90.4% equally do not see library opening hours as a hindrance. However, 268 inmates (61.2%) claimed that they do not utilise the general reading materials and 312 inmates(71.2%) do not utilise the prescribed (recommended) textbooks. Recommendations were made accordingly as deduced from the findings.

Keywords: *Utilisation of library media resources, Prison inmates in Nigeria, Senior Secondary School Certificate Examination.*

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0 INTRODUCTION

The education of prison inmates is a rehabilitative measure that helps to prepare the inmates for gainful employment ahead of their release. It also helps to enhance their admission status particularly, those inmates who have quest for knowledge and flair for education. The role of the library in this regard cannot be over-emphasised. Learning cannot be said to be complete without a functional library. Thus, the rightful use of library media resources would, by extension, influence the academic performance of prison inmates in all examinations especially the Senior Secondary School Certificate Examinations, which is the focus of this research.

Prisons are total communities where all aspects of life are conducted in the same place and prisoners read the same materials one would find in a local public library including titles on bestseller lists as stressed by Shirley (2003)¹⁹. Arua and Chinaka (2011)³ state that school library information resources are seen as all inputs which are utilised in the library in order to provide good learning environment for students and teachers to enable them achieve educational goals. This variety of library information resources is essential to facilitate the school library in fulfilling its functions among which are: to thoroughly provide information resources necessary for the school's educational programmes and to help in improving and raising the reading skills and learning habits of students. This is also applicable to the prison library and the inmates.

1 REVIEW OF LITERATURE

A number of publications exist in the area of utilisation of library media resources by users but not much is said about the Nigerian prisons inmates. Mohammed (1998) defines library as a collection of a wide variety of library materials housed in each school, centrally organized by staff professionally prepared to offer service to students and teachers that will enrich and support the educational programme of the school. In other words, it is an integral part of the school not an adjunct. It is also the intellectual centre of the school. Ibetoh (1998)⁹ confirms this when he opines that school library is an essential ingredient in learning at any level of education, pointing out that it is the intellectual centre of the school containing records not only of the intellectual but also cultural and social products. The Federal Ministry of Education's minimum standard for school libraries (1992)⁸ identifies the following types of books (library resources) which school libraries should acquire: reference books, non-

fiction including text books, supplementary orders (materials) (easy to read book) and fiction (story books, novels, cartoons). The establishment of school libraries stock with variety of reading materials is one thing but the exploitation of such resources to achieve one's ends is another. Elaturoti (1993)⁵ posits that the usefulness of any school library media centre like the Abadina Media Resource Centre Ibadan depends on its maximum utilisation by students otherwise it is as good as wasted.

Information is of paramount importance to the development of an individual and for the growth of the nation. Information can be put into several uses and for various purposes. Hawkins cited in Faboyinde (2006)⁷ notes that knowledge and information have become the most important currency for productivity, competitiveness and increased wealth and prosperity. The library is the store house of knowledge and information, it provides both access to information resources and the information itself. Library helps to achieve the objectives of producing patrons that are information literate and are prepared for life long education. Ubegu (2006)²² states that libraries should provide access to information resources; expert professional support to facilitate thorough and accurate use of all library resources, access to library materials and services to the community. Therefore libraries are important in helping academics generate information for the purpose of effective teaching of students and research. Prison inmates are no exception in this regard.

Lucas (2003)¹⁰ laments that valuable information generated from research is not widely applied to the benefit of the Nigerian people due to the fact that many practitioners are not aware of the current scientific information. Many practitioners do not have regular access to current literature that library users can acquire. The absence of current relevant literature has resulted in students, teachers, faculty, practitioners and policy makers who have failed to take notice of current ideas on best teaching methods, indigenous practice or take advantage of experience from other parts of the world in practice and teaching. Studies of use of printed materials show differences in awareness of research and availability of information resources, both of which are often limited in school library, hospitals and primary care setting (Mitchell,1995)¹².

Orji (1996)¹⁸ also finds out that users use the library for many and varied reasons namely: to prepare for examination, for leisure, recreation for serious academic work, to see friends and people, and so on. He concludes that school libraries are as good as wasted if they are not

properly used by students. Likewise the prison libraries if not judiciously used by the prison inmates. Okeason and Okpeota (1993)¹⁶ in their views on students' utilisation of library resources remark that the ability to read is the most important mental skill that a person can acquire, pointing out that people read for ideas and for information to release tensions of lives and for opportunities to savour all varieties of experience. Reading ability and the mental capacity that go with it are vital in passing examinations, and solving office problem when engaged after leaving school. They are also vital in business as well as the industrial world.

Aguolu & Aguolu (2002)² posits that work in any school library requires staff of various categories and levels of education and training, indicating that the following may be needed depending on the enrolment, staff, collection and academic programme: librarian employed as school librarian with or without any teaching qualification, teacher librarian (currently teaching and teacher put in charge of the school library with or without any library training); library officers, library attendants and library prefects. It is only when these are in place that effective library service can be guaranteed. Such services are needful in the prison libraries for the benefit of the inmates.

Arua and Chinaka (2011)³, in a study on use of library resources by staff and students of secondary schools in Umuahia North Local Government Area of Abia State, observe that 63.6% of the respondents visited the school library to read and borrow library books, 43.6% visited school library to do assignment and homework, 33.6% to read for examinations only, 21.4% to read newspapers and magazines, 17.9% for leisure reading while 3.6% visited the library to meet friends. This indicates that the majority of students make use of library purposefully for reading and to borrow books and also for doing their assignments and homework. Therefore, government and other institutions responsible should strengthen the existing school libraries and the prison libraries by building more libraries and stock them with different information resources that can meet diverse students' information needs and hence raise their academic performance. Spreadbury and Spiller (1999)²⁰ support that school libraries are still responsible for acquiring and providing access to books, reference materials, and other media that meet the educational, recreational and informational needs of their users.

The findings further reveal that 77.1% of the respondents use textbooks as information resources in their school libraries, 55% use

novels as information resources, 49.3% use atlases and maps, 37.7% use poetry, 37.1% of the respondents use dictionaries, but, only 7.1% use audio visuals. These findings are consistent with those of Arua and Chinaka (2011)³, Moswela (2005)¹³ on the use of school library's information resources. This indicates that the vast majority of the respondents used text books to satisfy their information needs. This is probable because textbooks may contain useful information which is relevant to their subjects' areas. Therefore there is need for school and prison libraries to be stocked with more text books covering different subjects which are relevant to secondary schools curriculum. Moreover, very few respondents use audio visual materials as their information resources in the secondary schools in the study. This probably, might be due to its accessibility and or lack of awareness of its existence.

Likewise, the findings by Arua and Chinaka (2011)³ further reveal that the information resources frequently consulted by students were textbooks (55%), and novels (35.7%), while 30.7% of the respondents use dictionaries occasionally. However, 96.4% of respondents claim that they had never used the audiovisual materials, 85% claimed they had never used newspapers/magazines, 70% claimed they had never used atlases/maps, 65% claimed they had never used poetry, 50.7% claimed they had never used dictionaries. The implication of this is that provision of textbooks and novels to all secondary schools is of a great importance. This will encourage reading habits of students and enhance student independent learning thus improving their school performance.

Bolodeoku (1979)⁴, in her study on the use of school libraries in some secondary schools in Ibadan finds out that only two schools out of the ten sampled had school libraries and accommodated in separate buildings. Fayose (1982)⁶, in her survey on students' use of secondary school library resources in Ibadan and Benin City, says the reason many libraries have remained infective appendages of their school 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 school. In her study on secondary school library service in Oyo State of Nigeria, Opeke (1980)¹⁷ finds out that not all the schools investigated had libraries while the few that had were accommodated in classrooms. The school libraries were looked after by teacher/Librarians or Library clerks with the assistance of students in few cases.

Similarly, Adeoti-Adeleke (1996)¹, in the study carried out on the provision of school library services in selected secondary schools in Ilorin metropolis, reports that though the selected schools have libraries, their development leaves much to be desired. Some of the problems as identified by this study include: lack of adequate furniture, obsolete library collection, unqualified library personnel, poor funding and apathy on the part of government and school heads towards school library development. Quoting Udo (1987), Obajemu (2002)¹⁴ is of the view that school library services in Nigeria are still at the developing stage, displaying inadequacies in staffing, funding and services provided. Tawete (1995)²¹ shares the opinion that the lack of vision of what School libraries can provide to education had led to their slow development in Africa.

Ogunseye (1978)¹⁵ observes that neither a good book nor a good library can make an individual educated. To her, it is the successful use of books and libraries that makes a well-informed, stable and well-adjusted learned individual. Thus, for the school library to effectively perform and support effectively the educational programme of the school, it requires an organized collection of variety of learning resources - book and non-book, the suitable accommodation that provides space for storage and utilisation of the learning resources and the trained staff to develop and organise the collection and as well teach students and teachers how to use the resources effectively. This way, pupils are prepared and are well-grounded to continue learning even after their formal education comes to an end. Majid (2005)¹¹, in the research on use of school library resources in Singapore, reveals that teachers generally do not use their school libraries and various information resources effectively due to inadequacy of education materials in libraries.

The results of these various studies are revealing and also show that school library development in this part of the world is not receiving the necessary attention it deserves. The prison library is the worst affected as many of the prisons in Nigeria have no functional library as obtained in developed countries where the school and prison libraries have moved far beyond a room with books to become an active, technology-rich learning environment with an array of information resources.

2 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This study is out to examine and ascertain:

- (1) The various library media resources that prison inmates utilise in

preparation for Senior Secondary School Certificate Examinations in Nigeria.

- (2) The challenges encountered in utilisation of library media resources, if any, and
- (3) To make recommendations for improvement as appropriate.

3 METHODOLOGY

A structured questionnaire was drawn and administered on the prison inmates from Abakaliki, Ikoyi and Kuje prisons that enrolled for and wrote the Senior Secondary School Certificate Examinations from 2009 to 2013. These three prisons were visited and five hundred questionnaires were administered on the inmates. Four hundred and thirty eight questionnaires, representing 87.6% response rate were received and used for this study. The brake-down of responses from the prisons are: Abakaliki 142, Ikoyi 209 and Kuje 87, totaling 438. The results of the findings are as shown below.

4 FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

Table-A Shows the frequency and percentage distribution of utilisation of library media resources by prison inmates in preparation for Senior Secondary School Certificate Examinations in Nigeria.

The findings revealed the areas of strength and weakness in the utilisation of library media resources by Prison inmates in preparation for Senior Secondary School Certificate Examinations in Nigeria as follows:

For the areas of strength, the findings are:

- 353 inmates (80.6%) utilise photocopying services while preparing for SSSCE.
- 322 inmates (73.5%) utilise journal materials in preparation for SSSCE.
- 311 inmates (71.0%) utilise book loan services.
- 237 inmates (54.1%) utilise past examination questions for revision purposes.
- 221 inmates (50.5%) utilise WAEC/SSSCE curricula and syllabi for exams preparation.
- 320 inmates (73.1%) claimed that library staff attitude was not a hindrance to their utilisation of library resources.

TABLE A

S. No	Questions on Utilisation of Library Media Resources	Yes	%	No	%
1	I make use of photocopying services for SSSCE examinations	353	80.6	85	19.4
2	I utilise journal materials in preparation for SSSCE exams	322	73.5	116	26.5
3	I make use of book loans services for SSSCE examinations	311	71.0	127	29.0
4	I use past examination questions for revision for SSSCE exams	237	54.1	201	45.9
5	I use SSSCE curricula and syllabi for examination preparation	221	50.5	217	49.5
6	I utilise reference books in preparation for SSSCE exams	219	50.0	219	50.0
7	I utilise the general library reading materials for SSSCE exams	170	38.8	268	61.2
8	I utilize recommended textbooks by WAEC for SSSCE exams	126	28.8	312	71.2
9	Library staff attitude is a hindrance to utilisation of library resources	118	26.9	320	73.1
10	No weekend opening is a hindrance to utilisation of library resources	92	21.0	346	79.0
11	Non-book loan policy is a hindrance to utilisation of library resources	72	16.4	366	83.6
12	Opening hours is a hindrance to utilisation of library resources	42	9.6	396	90.4

- 346 inmates (79.0%) claimed that non-weekend opening was not a hindrance to utilisation of library resources.
- 366 inmates (83.6%) admitted that non-book loan policy was not a hindrance to utilisation of library resources.
- Likewise, 396 inmates (90.4%) claimed that opening hours was not a hindrance to utilisation of library resources

On the other hand, some areas of weakness were revealed by the study namely:

- 268 inmates (61.2%) claimed that they do not utilise the general library reading materials in preparation for SSSCE.

- 312 inmates (71.2%) do not utilise the prescribed (recommended) textbooks by WAEC/SSSCE for examination preparation.

5 DISCUSSIONS

The study revealed that majority of the inmates, 353(80.6%) utilise photocopying services while preparing for SSSCE, 322 (73.5%) utilise journal materials in preparation for SSSCE, 311 (71.0%) utilise book loan services, 237 (54.1%) utilise past examination questions for revision purposes, 221 (50.5%) utilise WAEC/SSSCE curricula and syllabi for exams preparation, 320 (73.1%) claimed that library staff attitude was not a hindrance to their utilisation of library resources, 346 (79.0%) claimed that non-weekend opening was not a hindrance to utilisation of library resources, 366 (83.6%) admitted that non-book loan policy was not a hindrance to utilisation of library resources and 396 inmates (90.4%) claimed that opening hours was not a hindrance to their utilisation of library resources. The above serves as areas of strength of utilisation of library media resources.

On the other hand, 268 inmates (61.2%) claimed that they do not utilise the general library reading materials in preparation for SSSCE and 312 inmates (71.2%), equally claimed that do not utilise the prescribed (recommended) textbooks by WAEC/SSSCE for examination preparation. This is considered as the areas of weakness of utilisation of library media resources by prison inmates in preparation for Senior Secondary School Certificate Examinations in Nigeria.

6 CONCLUSION

The general reading materials that 61.2% of the prison inmates do not utilise in preparing for Senior Secondary School Certificate Examinations are novels, newspapers, reference materials and the like that are needful and useful for general knowledge enrichment. Likewise, the prescribed (recommended) textbooks by the West African Examinations Council for use in preparation for Senior Secondary School Certificate Examination was not utilised by 71.2% of the prison inmates. This is no doubt responsible for the mass failure of inmates in SSSCE in Nigeria, because examiners base the setting of their questions on this premise and the marking scheme is equally drawn based on this criterion.

7 RECOMMENDATIONS

The following are being recommended to guarantee better utilisation of library media resources by prison inmates in preparation for Senior

Secondary School Certificate Examinations, based on the findings of the study:

- The prison library should be well stocked with diverse general reading materials that enhances general knowledge, like the fictions, newspapers, magazines etc
- Current and multiple copies of prescribed (recommended) textbooks by the West African Examinations Council for Senior Secondary School Certificate Examinations must be stocked in the prison library for the utilisation of the inmates.
- Library weekend opening must be encouraged by the prison authorities to grant inmates access to utilise the library resources maximally while preparing for SSSCE.
- There should be Book loan services to prison inmates to ensure personal reading in their respective cells at their leisure time and when the library is not opened.
- The prison library should ensure regular opening during the week and closing beyond the working hours, for the inmates' utilisation of the resources.
- The prison library should provide photocopying facilities and at subsidized rate to the inmates.
- The prison library must be manned by professional librarian who would be able to organize the library resources and make them available on demand.

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