

*Full Length Research Paper*

# **Library and information science policy formulation and implementation: Implications for school library services in Nigeria**

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**This paper examined library policy formulation and implementation as well as its implications in relation to school library services in Nigeria. The paper reviewed the concept of library and information science policy and school library services in today's society as one that is required at every step of the way, highlighting that the progress of any nation depends on information generation, dissemination and use which is required early enough at the primary and secondary foundation levels of education. The paper reviewed the present situation of school libraries in the country and found that the school libraries were characterized with poor accommodation, unavailability of trained staff, inadequate relevant materials and apathy on the part of school administrators and government and posited that the situation of school libraries in the country is still unsatisfactory. This paper highlighted the importance of library and information science policy formulation and implementation to achieve a progressive education and development via the provision of access to and the availability of information and knowledge with speed and efficiency to all. The paper takes a position that formulating policy for school library services will lead to a massive infrastructural development in school library development. It will also enhance quality library service delivery and ensures that school libraries are managed by professionals. The paper was concluded with recommendations that government should set up a committee of experts made up of librarians, school managers and publishers to help in policy formulation and implementation for school library development in Nigeria.**

**Key words:** Policy, formulation, implementation, school library, services.

## **INTRODUCTION**

School library is charged with the responsibility of making information resources available to the primary and secondary school pupils and students for the purpose of

developing reading habit and use of library at early stage. To achieve this objective, the library is thus organized with relevant sections or units charged with various

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services and duties of collecting resources, processing them and creating access to its use. Library science according to Obi (2013) is a body of organized knowledge concerned with the purposes, objectives and functions of the libraries. Its principles, theories methods, organization and techniques employed in performing library services are all considered in the body of librarianship. Policy formulation and implementation is therefore the wheel of progress required for successful execution of school library services and responsibility of providing reading materials in primary and secondary schools to enhance education at elementary and secondary levels of education.

The library as a service rendering organization is established with various sections or units to ensure the attainment of library objective of getting knowledge to solve information needs. The sections that constitute the organizational services of the library that are governed by policy formulation and implementation are readers' services in the form of circulation, reserve services, technical services, communication and information technology (ICT) services, administrative services acquisitions and reference services. The implementation of library policies in the realization of these services becomes the key for satisfactory service delivery in school library.

Policy is a regulatory instrument which guides and regulates the activities, programmes and services of any organization, in this case the library. Without written policy, a library may suffer from self-inflicted harm and making the library become a place where anything goes and every staff to his or her own conscience. Policy formulation and implementation is thus required for the library to deliver effective services. Policy formulation and implementation helps to guide library services to solve problems and prevent further occurrence of errors in the system. Policy formulation and implementation can strategically be used to attain desired results leading to an improved system of doing things and consequently enhancing satisfaction particularly in school libraries (Okereke, 2003; Uhegbu, 2007).

Policy formulation and implementation result to consolidating library practices especially school libraries thereby promoting public interest. This according to Egonmwan, (1991) is usually justified by the authorities that put them in place. Ekpo (2005), charged librarians and library officers to be responsible for policy implementation by admonishing them to see themselves as members of a system having responsibilities for matters and taking actions that are accepted as being necessary for attaining policy goals. Librarians and library officers must assume the responsibility of ensuring services in school libraries by implementing formulated policies. Policy formulation and implementation as it concerns school libraries must be effective. Staff and school authority must be responsible to their policy obligations as it concerns school library development in

Nigeria. Policy formulation and implementation is set to encourage consistency and growth of school library and also discourage unforeseen political and socio-economic conditions that can hinder growth and service delivery. Library operations generally should be regulated via instrumentality of policy formulation and implementation. Akpan (2000) notes that through policy formulation and implementation, government and its institutions react to problems and situations as they arise.

Smith (2003) identifies policy formulation and implementation as substantive or administrative. The author went further to buttress the fact that policy is substantive when it prescribes how a goal can be achieved, and notes that it is administrative when the policy relates to the ways of doing things or taking decisions for rules. For instance, an administrative policy and implementation of the library is to see that every book is processed before taken to the shelves. It becomes a wrong practice to put a book on a shelf without cataloguing and classifying it. Or every e-resource must get to the end user. On the other hand, substantive policy formulation and implementation refers to the content of what is to be done. In this case, policy formulation and implementation answers questions of what is usually done in an organization, for instance a library's substantive policy formulation and implementation could be to acquire, organize, disseminate and preserve information resources for users to meet their information needs.

Be that as it may, policy is a regulatory instrument which guides and regulates the activities, programmes and services of any organization, the library inclusive. Without written policy, a library may become under developed and not function well. Based on the aforementioned, this paper seeks to look at the implication of library and information science policy formulation and implementation on school library services.

## **CONCEPT OF LIBRARY AND INFORMATION SCIENCE POLICY AND SCHOOL LIBRARY**

Library and information science policy originates as a result of developments in the society. Today's society is known as information society which requires information at every step of the way. The progress of any nation depends on the information generation, dissemination and use which are required to be considered early enough at the foundation levels of education. Due to the increasing demand for information, the need for policy formulation and implementation is expedient for collecting, storing and organizing knowledge in school libraries.

Library and information science policy is a set of decisions taken by a government, through appropriate laws and regulations to orient the harmonious

development of information transfer activities in order to satisfy the information needs. National information policy on school libraries helps to ensure that there is proper packaging of information by determining the nature and format of information resources to meet local needs. This is very expedient to make sure that book and non book materials that violate local content specifications are not allowed in circulation more so for the school libraries in the country. Library and information science policy ensures that internet service providers do not expose young Nigerians to inappropriate contents (Uhegbu, 2008). UNESCO advocates for the adoption of national science information policy by all countries of the world. This, UNESCO does by undertaking regional meetings and seminars in various countries of the world. Library and information science policy provides a framework for the coordinated and strategic development of libraries in Nigeria (Okojie, 2014).

Library and information science is also concerned with the principles, theories, methods, organization and techniques employed in performing library services. The application of knowledge of library science in the collection, organization, preservation, dissemination and the use of books and other information materials in the school library is thus required to be subjected to policy formulation and implementation to support the administration of school libraries.

School library is a library established for primary and secondary schools. It is a library built to develop and enhance reading habit of primary pupils and secondary school students. The collections of school libraries are basically children literature and other reading materials of their levels. They are written with simple language for easy comprehension. It is at this level that children start to develop their reading habit and begin to prepare for higher education. Policy formulation and implementation for school libraries is thus recommended to establish, maintain and strengthen school libraries. Its implications are targeted for staffing, development of information system and databases in the different fields, manpower planning and development, library legislation and regulation of information flow, use of technology, etc.

International Federation of Library Associations and institutions (IFLA, 2001) describes a school library as such that provides information and ideas that are very fundamental to successful functioning in society and gives students lifelong learning skills, develops the imaginative thinking, citizenship critical thinking skills and ability to use ICT information in different media. IFLA (2001) further stresses that the crucial importance of school libraries in literacy, social and cultural development demands that they be supported by legislation, policy and funding. School libraries are seen as invaluable sources of information resources for primary and secondary schools which must work to realize educational objectives.

The National Policy on Education section 3 Nos. 5 and

10 of 1981 states that school library is one of the most important educational services. The policy recommends that every state ministry of education should provide funds for the establishment of school library and for the training of librarians and library assistants to work in the library.

The five main objectives of the philosophy of Nigeria education as stated in the National Policy on Education (Federal Ministry of Education, 1981) revised edition is concerned with building of Nigeria on the following foundations:

- (1) A free and democratic society
- (2) A just and egalitarian society
- (3) A united strong and self-reliant nation
- (4) A great and dynamic economy
- (5) A land of bright and full opportunities to all citizens.

To achieve these objectives at the early stage of education, school libraries must be established to help pupils and children of school age to enjoy reading, learning and using library resources as lifelong habits which gives them the chance to evaluate and use information. Omehia (2005) adds that school libraries and media centers are needed by pupils and students all over the world, noting that this is the foundation upon which western education was built.

## **THE PRESENT SITUATION OF SCHOOL LIBRARIES IN NIGERIA**

School library is a library established for primary and secondary schools. It is a library built to develop and enhance reading habit of primary pupils and secondary school students. The collections of school libraries are basically children literature and other reading materials of their levels. They are written with simple language for easy comprehension. It is at this level that children start to develop their reading habit and begin to prepare for higher education. To achieve these objectives at the early stage of education, school libraries must be established and equipped with the relevant resources in print and non-print format to help pupils and children of school age to enjoy reading, learning and using library resources as lifelong habits as to be able to evaluate and use information.

However, the present situation of school libraries in the country is poor accommodation, unavailability of trained staff, inadequate of relevant materials and apathy on the part of the school administration and government. These are some of the challenges of school libraries in Nigeria today. Egesimba et al. (2011) confirms that inadequate staffing, inadequate materials, inadequate funding, obsolete library collections, poor infrastructures and poor reading environment for pupils and students as well as insufficient awareness of the role of school libraries in

education are the challenges facing school library development in the country.

The ministry of education rarely provides funds for the establishment of school libraries and for the training of librarians and library assistants. The Nigerian government has not provided adequate financial backing to support the school libraries in the country. Most of the school libraries in Nigeria could be regarded as warehouse for old books, some of the books in them which were covered with dust that had gathered overtime due to lack of library staff. Quadri (2009) adds that the challenges that hinder effective performance of most school library services in Nigeria were that of personnel for library services and finance for acquisition of library materials.

The findings of Daramola (2013) on the issues and options in selected secondary school libraries in Akure, Ondo State was an exposure of the situation of school libraries in Nigeria. The study found out that most secondary schools had libraries, but they enjoy very low patronage and were not properly located. There is also the problem of limited facilities in most of the school libraries. Computers, electronic media as well as the internet facilities are also absent in most school libraries. This is the present situation of school library in Nigeria.

### **NEED FOR NATIONAL LIBRARY AND INFORMATION SERVICE POLICY**

The primary aim of an information policy formulation and implementation is to achieve a progressive upliftment of the socioeconomic development of the country via the provision of access to and availability of information and knowledge with speed and efficiency to all. According to Obi (2013), a library is concerned with the collection, processing, storage and dissemination of recorded information for the purpose of reading, studying and consultation. In order for a library to attain this goal, many activities are performed by a library which translates into library's information services. The library as a growing social organism also responds to changes from external environment.

The need for IT policy formulation and implementation creates the opportunity for Nigeria to be an Information Technology compliant nation capable of making her play significant role in Africa through the use of ICT resources and services. By this policy, Nigeria will be able to utilize IT as the engine for sustainable development and global competitiveness. To achieve this desire, there must be early introduction of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) early in school libraries. The mission is to use IT to prepare education for creation of wealth, poverty eradication, job creation and global competitiveness. The impacts of ICT technologies make tremendous and revolutionary changes in the practice and services of librarianship.

The need for national library policy, puts library and information services among and part of wider policies like National Information Policies, National Information Technology Strategies and National Policy on Education, etc. According to Priestley (2012), they can also be developed either additionally or independently for specific types of libraries. School library policy formulation and implementation, will also help the library provide the necessary connections to help prevent the division of our society into information of have and have not. Gamboa (2001) notes that the western style of universal access is not a practical reality in African countries due to the fact that much of the population cannot afford individual access, suggesting that focus should be on IT information policy formulation and implementation to provide access through community facilities like school libraries and public libraries. In this role, libraries help in poverty alleviation since information poverty is the basis of economic poverty.

Libraries are becoming not only internet access points, but also places where people may receive help in using the Internet and other information sources. From this point, it becomes very important to note that the roles that library services play for any successful education cannot be overemphasized. Policy formulation and implementation can never be discountenanced. The national information policy enhances librarianship providing the environment for unprecedented heights in knowledge acquisition, management and communication. It helps to sustain and encourage education stressing focus on providing access through school libraries. Akintunde (2004) further highlights the importance of policy formulation and implementation by noting that vocabulary of librarianship is changing, pointing that "Dissemination" is being replaced by "communication," "repository" by "data," "literature" by "knowledge", "search by "navigation," etc. Libraries more than ever are becoming an integral part of ICT in education, governance, health, public and social services.

The importance of policy formulation and implementation cannot be overemphasized as Nigeria's information environment had been characterized as a risky area, unstable, uncoordinated and easily abused especially with unhindered global access to all sorts of information and its resources (Uhegbu, 2008). The author notes that Nigeria's information environment is opened to all sorts of information and information generating products, while some are relevant to the information needs of Nigerians, others are character destroying. Policy formulation and implementation for the school library ensures standards in services, building and staffing of school libraries. Policy also ensures standards for uniformity of school libraries throughout the country as to reflect in its building, staffing, collection, funding, services and other infrastructures.

National information policy will therefore help to ensure that there is proper packaging of information by

determining the nature and format of information resources to meet the local needs. Books and non-book materials that violate local content specifications will no longer be allowed into the country. Internet service providers will no longer expose young Nigerians to inappropriate contents (Uhegbu, 2008).

The need for a national policy on library and information service and effective implementation is therefore necessary for positive development. Dr. Victoria Okojie, the then CEO of Librarians Registration Council of Nigeria (LRCN) hints that plan was on the way to develop a National Library and Information Service Policy (NLISP) for Nigeria. She stated this at the 5th induction ceremony of certified librarians held in Abuja in 2014. Nigeria has no policy in place for its library services sector, hence the need for well-crafted policy that will provide a framework for the coordinated and strategic development of libraries in Nigeria. To achieve this, Librarians Registration Council of Nigeria (LRCN) will do a desk research leading to preparation of a background paper on the history and current best practice; develop case studies and a draft library policy framework; facilitate consultative meetings and workshops to discuss and finalize documents and publish a model framework for the library sector that will provide a clear direction for the stakeholders to contribute to national development (Okojie, 2014).

The formulation of library and information policy will guide the country in taking advantage of the information resources at our disposal. No nation could develop without access to the right information. Policy provides the framework for planning, development and evaluation of library services especially school libraries.

### **IMPORTANCE OF SCHOOL LIBRARIES**

The library especially the school library has a major role to play towards the provision of functional education at early stage of schooling. It is the type of library that is charged with the responsibility of making information resources available to the primary and secondary school pupils or students for the purpose of developing reading habit and use of library at early stage of education. Daramola (2013) posits that the significance of a library in a school environment is inestimable, most especially at the foundation stage of education. The development of reading culture in the life of people takes its root from early use of school libraries. Morris (2004) points that school libraries are established to provide a range of learning opportunities for both large and small groups as well as individuals with a focus on intellectual content and information literacy to enhance and improve the intellectual content of school libraries, they must be subjected to sound policy formulation and effective implementation. Udofia (1997) notes that school library helps in encouraging the development of skills in reading,

prompting readers to literary appreciation, providing a source of subject information and intellectual development as stimulating factor in education. Adedeji (2004) and Ajayi (2007) illustrate the importance of school library in attaining the educational objectives by:

- (1) Developing in the entire citizenry a strong consciousness for education and strong commitment to its vigorous promotion,
- (2) Catering for the learning needs of young persons, their schooling through appropriate forms of complementary approaches to the provision and promotion of basic information resources,
- (3) Ensuring the acquisition of appropriate level of literacy, numeracy, manipulative, communicative and life skills as well as the ethical, moral and civic values needed for laying a solid foundation for lifelong learning.

As a matter of national objective, school library must be established in every public school built with the country's tax payers' money. It has to be a condition for establishing any public school. The collections of the school library must be adequate and relevant. Obi (2009) illustrates that school library collections are provided to achieve the following:

- (1) provision of information sources required for school education,
- (2) improving the reading skills and learning habits of pupils,
- (3) providing pupils with the skills required to transform the gathered information into knowledge,
- (4) assisting pupils to broaden their knowledge by reading fictions which form 75% at the library's collections,
- (5) helping pupils and secondary school students develop the habit of using libraries later in life.

Based on these facts, Omehia (2005) adds that school libraries are needed by pupils and students all over the world. It is upon this background that sound education will be built. With the assertions of these authors, the importance of school libraries in the life of Nigerian children as it concerns primary and secondary school education cannot be discountenanced.

### **LIBRARY AND INFORMATION SCIENCE POLICY AND ITS IMPLICATIONS IN SCHOOL LIBRARY DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA**

The implications of library and information science policy formulation and implementation in school library development will be that both the teachers and pupils will be happy visiting the library in search of information. Library and information policy will ensure that libraries provide information in print and non-print format suitable

to the learning level of pupils and students concerned. The policy will also ensure that in this era of ICT, virtual library and internet facilities are provided in the school libraries. The library especially the school library has a major role to play towards the provision of functional education at early stage of schooling. Daramola (2013) posits that the significance of a library in a school environment is inestimable, most especially at the foundation stage of education. The development of reading culture in the life of people takes its root from early use of school libraries.

The policy statement of library and information policy should be very strong against lack of standards. There must be a set standard for libraries and their services. These standards must include building, staffing, collections, funding, services and also how to manage the school library services. The necessary professional, technical and other auxiliary staff must be planned for and employed to take care of media and other audio visual equipment to be in the library. School library management requires policies and implementation of policies that will ensure equitable access to resources for school library users.

Poor accommodation, unavailability of trained staff, lack of relevant materials which are frustrating as challenges of school libraries will be addressed by library and information service policy. It will also help to realize the national policy on education in the country. A library and information service policy will tenaciously help to address gaps in funding, streamline school library building, professionalize the staff and duties, and stipulate the nature of infrastructural facilities in the library such as tables, chairs, cooling system, seat arrangement, location and line of operation. It will also help to attract and harmonize the government desire to encourage public-private partnership in schools and facilitate robust development of reading culture in children.

School library policy formulation in the country would outline the full content and direction for school library development and services. It would give vent to the issues relating to the establishment, nature, facilities, services, personnel and resources that will be part of the school library system.

## THE WAY FORWARD

For school libraries to fulfill its mission, the library policies must be formulated and implemented objectively. These policies must also be subjected to evaluation from time to time as to remove some of the weaknesses that will hinder smooth operation of school libraries.

Ministries of education in the country should provide adequate funding for the establishment and sustenance of school libraries in primary and secondary schools. Training of librarians and library assistants should be given due attention as to encourage improved service

delivery. In addition to training of staff, finance should be made available for the purchase of relevant library resources in print and non-print format.

Government should set up a committee of experts made up of librarians and school managers to help formulate policies to be implemented for the development of school libraries in Nigeria. Policies formulated should be implemented with utmost sense of responsibility by relevant authorities of government.

Corruption has been identified as a major bane of positive development in the country. Adequate measures should be taken to punish corrupt officials who in one way or the other hinder the implementation library policies formulated for the development of school libraries in the country.

United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) through its school library Manifesto emphasized the importance of school library in teaching and learning for all. The Manifesto was well received all over the world and translated into many languages. The Manifesto states that government through their ministries responsible for education, are urged to develop strategies, policies and plans that will help to implement the principles of the manifesto. This statement by its implication charges every government through their respective ministries for education to develop strategies, policies and plans to realize and give support, guidance to school library services. This is what a library and information service policy will help to realize in the country.

## CONCLUSION

Policy is a plan or course of action in directing affair as chosen by government, business organizations and individuals. Policy is stated and guided to achieve desired purposes. The objectives of UBE as stated in the national policy cannot be achieved without functional school libraries. The libraries must be established according to standards recognized, even by international standards to help achieve the policy goals.

The policy formulation and implementation seek to realize the objectives of library services in terms of building, staffing, collections, funding and training. This is the road map for future development as regards library and information science with focus on school libraries. The implications of the library and information policy especially on the school library development is to ensure that there is proper packaging of school library and information services by determining the nature and format of information resources to meet information needs of primary pupils and secondary students. Unavailability of trained staff, lack of relevant materials and building structures which constitutes challenges to school libraries will be controlled and addressed by library and information science policy formulation and

implementation as it affects the school library. This paper recommends that the government should set up a committee of experts made up of librarians and school managers to help formulate policy for school libraries in Nigeria. The policies formulated should be implemented objectively.

## CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

The authors have not declared any conflict of interests.

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