SCHOOL FACILITY PLANNING IN RWANDA: AN ASSESSMENT SURVEY ON THE NATURE OF LIBRARIES IN THE SELECTED PUBLIC SCHOOLS OF MUHANGA, NYANZA, NGORORERO, AND KARONGI DISTRICTS

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Abstract

This study was conducted with the aim of assessing the nature of school libraries and whether the libraries have librarians in the selected public schools of Muhanga, Nyanza, Ngororero and Karongi Districts. The rationale for this study was that various education reforms have been done in Rwanda, including building of new class rooms to accommodate students in the EFA programs. However, the library issue has not been given attention in those reforms, yet various researches from different countries reveal that library component in any school establishment is vital for student's self-learning. There is no conclusive research in Rwanda, however, that has been conducted on this topic and this justifies the need for this research. The theories of learning and environmental psychology guided this study. The study was designed as descriptive. The study population was 8292 teachers in the four districts. The sample size was 400 but only 374 responded. Purposive sampling was used to select the four districts as well as determining the number of respondents in each school. Simple random sampling was used to select eight schools in each district while cluster sampling was used to select respondents in schools. A four likert scale structured item instrument collected both pilot data for reliability testing and final data. Alpha coefficient was set at .065. Reliability on the nature of school libraries was .823 and .685 for the school librarian. Collected data were computed in SPSS. Descriptive statistics was used to analyze data. Study findings indicated that public school libraries were very inadequate because they lacked reading space, seats, enough shelves, and a librarian. The implications were that promotion of self-learning and creativity skills which are the main focus of the newly established competency-based curriculum was hampered. It was recommended that the public schools libraries be built and staffed with qualified librarians.

Keywords: Nature of school library, school librarian

Introduction and Literature Review

The school libraries are very crucial in the promotion of instruction and learning in schools. They are places for self-learning, enquiry and self-study motivation. Their quality not only help students read more, but also help them learn how to use and process information better and to perform better on achievement tests (Gretes, 2013). The objective of the Rwanda's National Policy for Library Services is the provision and progressive improvement of library facilities and services that support education process, planning, and research (MINISPOC, 2013). Within the framework of this policy, the MINEDUC has to ensure the establishment of libraries in all academic institutions of learning with minimum required standards and norms as well as incorporate information literacy into education curricula (MINISPOC, 2013). It has also to provide high quality education through world-class learning facilities (MINEDUC, 2014). These world class learning facilities include school libraries. The school library roles should include teaching and learning information literacy across the curriculum, provide an environment suitable for group and independent research, and provide opportunities for students to browse and discover, as well as stimulate independent individual learning (Pratchett, 2014).

Since 2009, the MINEDUC has embarked on implementing the EFA program so as to achieve the MDGs by 2015 and the Vision 2020. It has strived to achieve this through the changing of school curriculum (knowledge based curriculum) from French to English Language from 2009 to 2015, and the Competency Based Curriculum from 2016 to 2021 (REB, 2015). A countrywide campaign for mobilizing needed resources was then conducted so as to construct 3100 new classrooms. The local community was mobilized to provide manpower and some materi-

als like brick laying, laying the building foundations, participation in construction, while the MINEDUC provided the financial support and construction materials like roofs, nails, cement, among others (Grafweg, 2010). Besides, the international community, civil society organizations, private sector, and donor agencies were mobilized and greatly provided support for the construction of school buildings and the purchase of school teaching-learning materials and aids. UNICEF sponsored the "Child-friendly school infrastructure. Save the Children has been providing early childhood learning materials. DFID has been sponsoring the purchase of one book per child. Every year, between 2000-3000 classes are being constructed or rehabilitated. Furthermore, billions of RWF are being spent on the purchasing of school textbooks and supplementary materials from 2008- 2016.

Despite such collaborative endeavors to promote learning in the EFA program, the library element in school facilities construction isn't emphasized and is neglected in this EFA program. Yet, it should facilitate in accommodating the procured books, and act as a learning center. Lonsdale (2003) asserts that school libraries in most cases are conceived as non-essential, optional, or luxury expenditures for schools and are targeted for cuts when funding is reduced. Chan (2008) concludes that people charged with making decisions related to the staffing and funding of school libraries are either unaware or unconvinced about research evidences of the prioritizing libraries. This library neglect has a tremendous effect not only to promotion of learning and literacy development, but also puts the library use in public schools in jeopardy. Lack of library consideration in the public schools' planning is further exacerbated by lack of recruitment and training of school librarians. Good resources, skilled librarian, collaboration with all teaching departments, determine the extent of the school library's impact on student's achievement (Pratchett, 2014).

According to Pratchett (2014), the way to get children reading is to leave the library door open and let them read anything and everything they want. Grafweg (2010) notes that Rwanda's education sector faces many challenges including constructing and rehabilitation of school infrastructure. Honeyman (2014) found that "Literacy promotion in Rwanda has arisen as a definite focus of policy-making; yet the specific strategies for achieving this objective are not completely thought-out" (p. 4). Issak (2000) found the public libraries usage in Botswana being hampered by the

shortage of qualified staff, insufficient physical space, inappropriate opening hours and limited facilities.

Matovu (2001) revealed that in Uganda, the majority schools didn't have anything close to a library. Rahman et al (2008) found the majority schools in Bangladesh either having no library or inadequate collection of textbooks. Similarly, the UNESCO/ADEA survey for the 2000 EFA assessment in developing countries revealed that the mass schools had no library. In regard to education spending, school libraries were allotted the lowest funds. Where similitude of the school library existed, it was regularly no more than a "few shelves of outdated and worn-out materials, as well as inadequately staffed" (Montagnes, p. 27, cited in Krolak, 2005). Issak (2000) found the public libraries usage in Botswana being hampered by the shortage of qualified staff, insufficient physical space, inappropriate opening hours and limited facilities. A study of schools in Ontario, Canada indicated that Reading test scores tend to be higher when there is a full-time librarian rather than a part-time one, a part-time librarian rather than no librarian at all. Furthermore, higher levels of librarian staffing lead to longer hours of operation, higher levels of library staff activity and higher student usage, and consequently, higher test scores.

Nature of the Library

A school library is a hub for student learning. Therefore, a good school library needs to be a vibrant and inviting place with flexible, multifunctional spaces in which various groups of learners can do their work; where formal teaching can occur; and where the librarian can work in collaboration with teachers and students. (Bolan, 2009). Such a school library enables students to have further reading, as well as facilitate them to discover how to use and process information better (Gretes, 2013). Krolak (2005) complements this argument by noting that school libraries support learners in discovering, utilizing, and infer correct information that unlocks prospects for lifelong learning, literacy enhancement, creative imagination, critical thinking, and individual research.

School libraries are viewed as influential agents of learning because they engage students in the conversion of information into deep knowledge and comprehension, thereby acquainting them with life skills. They also enhance students' confidence as

information seekers and users as well as enables them to work independently. Having seen what the school libraries should be, what is the reality about their nature? Songa (1995) assessed the Ugandan secondary schools library appearance and categorizes them as appalling, disorganized, neglected, to well organized, and near excellent. Riggs (1998) considers the situation of the developing countries libraries as the one with insufficient book collections, absence of a qualified staff, and the inadequate funding capacity. Rahman, Khatun, and Islam (2008) found that majority of the schools either had no library or inadequate collection of textbooks in Bangladesh. For Johnson (2007), libraries in developing countries experience lack of financial support from governments. Knuth (1994) provides an antidote to these poor libraries nature by urging that a shift in the perception of library services by policy makers can give libraries a new role in developing countries.

School Librarian

A school librarian is a trained staff whose work is to facilitate learners access the appropriate information they need, looks after the storage and retrieval of information. He/she is professional who is trained and educated to deal with information in a variety of formats and settings (Wordi, 2010; BLS, 2011). Students visit the library and find the librarian who orients them on which information to access and even how to access it (Lance, Rodney, & Schwarz, 1999; Rodney, Lance, & Hamilton-Pennell, 2002; Todd & Kuhlthau, 2005; Pratchett, 2014). The custom of using the library is measured by the number of visits made, the number of books and materials checked out, and the amount of time spent in the library. This frequent visits results in the students' increased achievement. Because of that relationship between library usage and students' performance, the school leadership and teachers should ensure that library attendance is made part of the academic schedule and the opening of the library is made before and after the school hours and the librarians are on duty all the time. The subsequent effect will be a positive influence and development of students' reading interests (Bleidt, 2011). It is the librarians' role therefore, to welcome learners into the library and develop programmes together with the school leadership and teachers that provide learners with literacy experiences.

This performance relationship is also evidenced by research in people with special needs. Disadvantaged students in schools with full-time librarians are twice likely to have higher writing scores. On the other hand, 99.44% of surveyed students in schools with qualified librarians indicated that the library was very helpful in regard to their learning (Todd & Kuhlthau, 2003). Since school libraries, librarians and their relationship with students' performance are highly remarkable as discussed above; do the existing educational policies, plans, and strategies consider the school library as part of the education component? In his synthesis report about the library use in Sub Sahara Africa, Issak (2000) established that libraries were very weak and constrained by financial constraints, lack of human resources, outdated materials and poor use. Sagna (1992) echoes in this and stresses that although school libraries exist in Africa, they don't have legal standards. Such library situation emanates from poor planning and lack of library policies because they are considered none essential (Lonsdale, 2003).

Study Rationale

The rationale for this study was that various education reforms have been done in Rwanda, including building of new class rooms to accommodate students in the EFA programs as well as purchasing learning and teaching materials. However, the library issue has not been given attention in those reforms, yet various literature highlighted above from different countries reveal that library component in any school establishment is vital for student's self-learning. The literature also highlights the existing nature of public school libraries in developing countries as appalling and none existent. The literature is however shallow in regard to the exploration of the library nature in Rwanda. It only highlights lack of infrastructure but doesn't specifically focus on the library infrastructure. Hence a research gap. This study therefore aimed at assessing the nature of school libraries and whether they are staffed with librarians. Study findings would fill this literature gaps as well as inform policy on the current state of the public school libraries in Rwanda.

Research Questions

This study was guided by the following research questions:

1.   What is the physical nature of the school library?

2.   What is the status of the school librarian?

Theoretical Framework

The underlying theories of this study were the constructivist theories of learning, environmental psychology and social design. In the constructivist theory the child is an active participant in her own learning, learning is a social element where children learn through cooperation, the child explores the purpose of knowledge, and learning is child centered and emphasizes individual differences. According to Taylor (1988), the learning environments can be designed, engineered, and equipped to function as a learning tool. Tanner and Lackney (2006) highlight that the arrangements and materials used in the learning environment contribute to the amount of learning taking place in that learning environment. For Sanoff (1994), various school buildings do not well serve the functions for which they were designed. Hence, a need for the variety in physical learning environments to accommodate learning and teaching styles. Wiles and Bondi (2007) highlight that learning space priorities in educational facilities are indicated by the size and location in the building.

Methodology

This study was designed as a descriptive study as it explored the nature of Rwanda public school libraries and whether they are staffed with school librarians. A mixed methodological approach was used and it included quantitative methods that collected primary data and qualitative methods for secondary data. The study was conducted in the schools constituting the districts of Muhanga, Nyanza, Ngororero, and Karongi. The total population of the study was all teachers in the schools in the four districts. There were 8450 primary and secondary school teachers in those four districts (MINEDUC, 2015).

 The sample size was 400 and was determined using the Sloven's formula: $n = N/(1+Ne^2)$. Where n, is the sample size, N, is the total population and e, is the sampling error margin which is estimated at 0.05. Purposive sampling was employed to study only 100 teachers in eight schools in each district. The simple random sampling technique was used to select eight schools; while teachers in those eight schools of each district were selected using cluster sampling technique. A research instrument was designed to gather quantitative data. It contained structured items measured on a 4-point scale and ranked with a numerical score as: Strongly disagree (1), disagree (2), agree (3), and strongly agree (4). The reliability test was performed to measure the its items internal consistency through a pilot study conducted on 44 teachers in four schools of Kamonyi District. Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of ≥0.65 was set as the cut-off point. Reliability results on the nature of school libraries was .823 while on the school librarian was .685. Ethical issues in data gathering were also ensured.

Data Presentation, Analysis and Discussion

The collected primary data was entered in SPSS for easy presentation and analysis. It was then analyzed using the descriptive statistics whereby the respondents' actual scores were converted into the mean scores, and standard deviations as highlighted in the proceeding tables according to each study variable.

Background Information of Respondents

The first section of the research instrument contained items that collected data about the respondents' background information on the name of the district, name of school, and the working experience. Data on background information was analyzed through converting the actual scores into percentages and frequencies. According to table 1 below, respondents were categorized in districts as follows: Muhanga=93; Nyanza=100; Ngororero= 91; and finally Karongi=90. These district totals represent respondents from 8 schools in each district.

Table 1

Respondents' Background Information on the District Name

District	Frequency	Percent
Muhanga	93	93
Nyanza	100	100
Ngororero	9I	91.0
Karongi	90	90.0
Total	374	

The Nature of School Libraries

The first research question aimed at describing the nature of the school libraries. 10 items were formulated to elicit responses as indicated in table 2 below. A four-point scaled item was designed to interpret the mean scores. The interpretation scale used was: 1.00-1.49=low; 1.50-2.49=below average; 2.50-3.49= average; and 3.50-4.00= high.

Table 2

Descriptive Statistics on the Nature of School Libraries

Item	Mean	Std. Deviation
The school has a library	1.9917	.78100
library is big enough to accommodate all books	1.8459	.52632
The Library contains enough book shelves	1.8076	.55005
All books are well classified in book shelves	1.3659	.59803
The library has a reading space	1.4727	.68891
The reading space can accommodate over ten users	1.7622	.54864
There are seats for use in the library by users	1.7602	.56030
Some books are still kept in boxes due to lack of library space and book shelves	3.0082	.66319
Students use the library reading space to do assignments	1.4297	.59509
The library needs to be built	3.4835	.74763

On the item whether the school has a library, majority respondents were in disagreement with a below average mean of 1.9917. This signifies that schools have inadequate libraries. This finding complements with the existing literature in that school libraries in most cases are conceived as either non-essential, optional, or luxury expenditures whose budgets are slashed whenever funding for schools is reduced (Lonsdale, 2003).

On the item whether the library is big enough to accommodate all books, majority respondents were in disagreement with below average mean of 1.8459.

This implies that since schools have very inadequate libraries which can't accommodate all books. Issak (2000) revealed insufficient physical space as hampering library usage in Botswana. Similarly, two related items asked whether the library contained bookshelves and whether all books were contained in bookshelves. The majority respondents were in disagreement with a below average mean of 1.8076 that there were bookshelves   and with a low mean   of 1.3659 that all books were contained in book shelves. These findings confirm with Sagna's (1992) assertion that although school libraries exist in Africa, they don't have legal

standards. Besides, Montagnes (2001) indicated that where some semblance of the school library existed, it was often no more than a "few shelves of outdated and worn-out materials, and inadequately staffed" (p. 27).

In addition to that, two items investigated whether the library had a reading space and whether the reading space accommodated over ten users. Majority respondents were in disagreement with a low mean of 1.4727 that it had a reading space, as well as the reading space accommodated over ten users with a below average mean of 1.7622. This implies that school libraries lack reading spaces for use while reading. Wiles and Bondi (2007) highlight that learning space priorities in educational facilities are indicated by the size and location in the building. Another item aimed at finding out whether there were seats for use in the library. Majority respondents were in disagreement with this statement with a below average mean of 1.7602. This indicates that in addition to lacking reading spaces, bookshelves, school libraries also lack seats for users to use. Bleidt (2011) proposed that students should be given greater opportunity to visit school library by ensuring its attendance is part of the academic schedule and opening the library before and after the school hours.

On the item whether some books were still kept in boxes due to lack of library space and book shelves, the majority respondents were in agreement with the statement with an average mean of 3.0082. This implies that as indicated in the previous findings above, some books were found untouched while kept in boxes. This justifies the insufficient physical space as revealed by Issak (2000). Still more, item 9 investigated whether students used the library reading space to do the assignments. Most respondents were in disagreement with this statement with a low mean of 1.4297. This means that students don't use the libraries because there are no reading spaces. Library usage is measured by among other factors, the number of visits, the number of books and materials checked out, and the amount of time spent in the library. Student achievement increases when students visit the school library frequently and it is open during school hours.

The last item attempted to find out whether there is need to build or expand the school library. The majority respondents were in agreement with this statement with an average mean of 3.4835. This means that school libraries are greatly needed to facilitate teaching and learning, especially the competency based curriculum which emphasizes student's creativity, critical thinking, research and discovery. The school libraries are a hub for student learning because they provide students with a variety of knowledge, and inspire individual learning (Pratchett, 2014).

The School Librarian

The second research question endeavored to establish the status of school librarians. Eight research items were used to elicit information from respondents as highlighted in table 3. The first item on the school librarian investigated whether the school has a librarian. The majority respondents were in disagreement with the statement with a below mean of 1.4142. This signifies that majority of the schools do not have librarians. The presence of certified school librarians correlates with higher students' test scores (Lance et al., 2010; Rodney et al., 2002; Todd & Kuhlthau., 2005).

Table 3

Descriptive Statistics on the Status of the School Librarian

Item	Mean	Std. Deviation
The school has a librarian	1.4142	.61637
The librarian is paid	1.3423	.56837
The librarian's role is to open the library during the school hours	1.7775	.58676
The library is closed most of the time because the librarian is engaged in other activities	3.1413	.67386
The librarian is trained	1.4636	.62872
The librarian needs to be hired	3.5054	.70709
Students don't use the library because there is no librarian	3.5134	.77864
There is no need of librarian because there is no library	3.0838	.66748

The second item investigated whether the librarian is paid. The majority respondents were in disagreement with the statement with a low mean of 1.3423. This implies that lack of a librarian as indicated in the finding on the first item above might be attributed to no allocated budgets for his/her pay, or the neglect of library usage and personnel staffing by educational planners. literature indicates that the reading test scores tend to be higher when there is a librarian, a full-time librarian rather than a part-time one, a part-time librarian rather than no librarian at all. The third item investigated whether the librarian's role is to open the library during the school hours. Most respondents were in disagreement with this statement with a below average mean of 1.7775. This finding complements the preceding findings, implying that since there is no librarian who is paid the role of opening the library during school hours doesn't exist. Hence there is no library to be opened and no librarian to assume that role. Schwindt (cited in Gretes, 2013) stressed that it is the school librarians' responsibility to welcome young learners into the library as well as develop programmes that provides them with beginning literacy experiences.

The fourth item aimed at finding out whether the library is closed most of the time because the librarian is engaged in other activities. The majority respondents indicated with agreement with an average mean of 3.1413. Having agreed implies a three-fold perception: Either the library doesn't exist, there is no hired librarian or a person who is in charge of the library is the one who is either a teacher or support staff who is busy in other school activities but momentarily opens depending on the need. According to Riggs (1998), developing countries libraries are characterized with the absence of a qualified staff, and the inadequate funding capacity. The fifth item attempted to establish whether the librarian is trained. The majority respondents were in disagreement with this statement with a below mean of 1.4636. The respondents' disagreement implies that since the librarian doesn't exist, the one who assists in giving books to either students or teachers is not trained because he/she is voluntarily doing it. A librarian is a professional person who is trained and educated to deal with information in a variety of formats and settings (Wordi, 2010).

The sixth item investigated whether the librarian needs to be hired. Most respondents were in strong agreement with the statement with a high mean of 3.5054. This strongly signifies the need of the librarian and library services at schools. According to Gordon (2012), school libraries are agents of learning. They are central to engaging students in the transformation of information into deep knowledge and understanding, and providing them with life skills. The seventh item wanted to find out whether the students do not use the library because there is no librarian. Most respondents were in agreement with this statement with a high mean of 3.5134. This implies that students don't use library because nobody to assist them to access information that supplement their learning in classroom. This affects students' learning and performance in regard self-learning, developing the culture of reading, creative learning among others. Krashen and Shin (2004) asserted that the school library serves a major role in supporting early learning by motivating early learners to read.

The last item investigated whether there is no need of the librarian because there is no library. Most respondents were in agreement with this statement with an average mean of 3.0838. This indicates that at schools there is no libraries for which librarians should be hired to deliver library services. This signifies that during school facility planning, school libraries were not included for funding. The impact is that educational outcomes will not be effectively achieved. Issak (2000) found that libraries were very weak and challenged by financial constraints, lack of human resources, outdated materials and poor use.

Summary of Findings

Major findings from this study are as follows:

1. Nature of library: The schools had very inadequate libraries because they lacked reading space, seats, and enough shelves. Furthermore, there was urgent need to build and staff the school libraries.
2. School librarian: Majority of the schools had no librarians. The inadequately staffed libraries were closed most of the time because the person in charge of opening is engaged in other school activities, not trained, and works on a voluntary basis. Students could not use the library due to lack of school librarian. There is need to hire a librarian.

Conclusions, Implications and Recommendations

This study assessed the physical nature of

the libraries in selected public schools of Muhanga, Nyanza, Ngororero, and Karongi districts of Rwanda. Various literatures were analyzed to provide the study rationale as well as supporting evidence in regard to study findings. Both the learning and environmental psychology theories provided the theoretical framework of this study. The study was descriptive in nature and used quantitative method to collect and analyse primary data. From the findings, it was concluded that public schools in Rwanda had very inadequate libraries because they lacked reading space, seats, enough shelves, and a librarian. The implication of these findings are that student's self-learning and discovery is not promoted, reading, creativity and motivation is hindered. This further implies that students' performance and competences in regard to reading, analysis, communication, learning creativity and motivation will rag behind, and this will serve as a stumbling block to achieving the new competence-based curriculum goals in the Rwanda public schools. This will also affect literacy promotion which is a 21st century challenge.

Based on the findings, the researcher recommends that the government should mobilize resources from all stake holders in education and build libraries in public schools like the way it did when it mobilized resources for the construction of classrooms for the EFA programme since 2009 so as to achieve functional literacy. Furthermore, school authorities should improvise rooms for use as libraries as well as establish clear policies about the library usage. This will create reading space and promote individual learning, there by leading to the culture of reading. The government and schools should allocate budget for library usage in terms of library construction, renovation, expansion, purchase of seats, bookshelves, librarian hire and his/her salary.

School facility planning at all levels should include the library component as a priority. School facility planning should involve all stake holders, specifically teachers so that they participate in the designing of libraries. Related studies should be conducted on the impact of school libraries on students' performance. A mixed method that uses quantitative and qualitative primary data collection should be used to replicate and validate the findings of this study.

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