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# Information Literacy Skills and Equitable Access to Learning Resources in Selected Secondary Schools in Ilesa City: An Empirical Perspective

Margret Abimbola 010

Samuel Adegboyega University, m.abimbola10@gmail.com

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## **Information Literacy Skills and Equitable Access to Learning Resources in Selected Secondary Schools in Ilesa City: An Empirical Perspective**

### **ABSTRACT**

*Information literacy skills are indispensable skill every secondary school student must possess not only to succeed in their present academic endeavours but to become a lifelong learner. Giving every student equal right to learning resources in the schools is also pivotal to their academic achievement. This study investigated the information literacy skills and equitable access to learning resources in selected secondary schools in Ilesa City. 240 respondents were selected from eight schools in the two Local Government Councils in the city. The data were analysed using SPSS. It was discovered that even though there are school libraries and school librarians in the schools the idea the students have about information literacy skills is more of theory than practical, as the students are deficient in reading skills which is an integral part of information literacy skills. The study also established that there are barriers to equitable access to learning resources in the secondary schools. The study concluded that there is a need to train and retrain teacher-librarians so that they will be better positioned to teach information literacy skills in a practical way that will make the acquisition of the skills realistic for the students. The Government, school owners and other stakeholders should see to the possibility of every student having equitable access to all the learning resources in the schools without any restrictions.*

**KEYWORDS:** Information Literacy Skills, Learning resources, Equitable access, school libraries, School librarians, Secondary schools, Ilesa City.

## **INTRODUCTION**

Equitable access to learning imparts positively on the academic performance of secondary school students. The fundamental purpose of school libraries is to provide unfettered access to books and other leaning resources. Equitable access is the primary precipitating factor that influences students' academic performances. When students have access to good learning resources their academic performances are boosted (AASL, 2013). In a study carried out by Lance (2005), it was observed that students who have access to well -staffed, well- stocked libraries scored from 10-25% higher on standardised test than students in schools with poorly resourced libraries .

Equitable access is the removal of barriers to learning resources. Such barriers may be cost, distance, format, language and or skills that are needed to access information.

Equitable access is a key component to education. All students in the secondary schools deserve equitable access to books, journals electronic resources as well as information technology in an environment that is safe and conducive to learning (AASL, 2007).

Learning resources available in the school libraries will be useless if students do not have equitable access to them. To have equitable access to these resources students must be empowered with requisite information literacy skills.

Learning resources constitute books, periodicals, magazines, and newspapers, films, computers, filmstrip, videotapes, recording of all types, good materials for secondary education on arts and sciences, reference books such as dictionaries, encyclopaedia, and directories of local and state governments, yearbooks, handbooks and subject bibliographies, CD ROMs and information resources in the school libraries.

Information literacy skills are a set of competencies achieved when people can recognise when an information is needed and have the ability to locate and evaluate the information effectively (Averill and Lewis 2013). The acquisition of information literacy skills is imperative to the students' ability to search and use information effectively (Ilogho and Nkiko, 2014). To become independent learners, each student must acquire the skills to select, evaluate and use information appropriately (AASL 2007). Information literacy skills are needed by students in the secondary schools not only for the purpose of success in examinations but also for lifelong learning.

An information literate person must be able to:

- analyse information critically in all its formats to solve problem
- apply information strategically to solve personal and social problems
- make decisions based on accurate and current information
- use information and communication technologies
- respects information sources and diverse perspectives
- honours intellectual property and privacy rights
- communicates effectively and expressively using a variety of information and media formats (CASL, 2006).

This study is premised on the fact that the academic performance and all round effectiveness of the secondary students are dependent not only on the availability and equitable access of students to learning resources but also the ability of the students to access necessary information through the acquisition and development of necessary information literacy skills. Information literacy is important in the contemporary environment of rapid technological changes and proliferating information resources, due to the escalating complexity of this information age, students are faced with diverse, abundant information choices--in their academic studies. The possession of relevant information literacy skills and equitable access to learning resources will help the students to overcome barriers to academic achievement (Ukpebor and Emojorho, 2012).

For students to be outstanding in their academic endeavours, they must be able to use information with aesthetic appreciation, use information responsibly, critically, strategically, expressively, for decision making and they must be able to use information and media tools with technical competencies (CASL, 2006), These can only be achievable where there is equitable access to available learning resources with the corresponding literacy skills to access the resources. If secondary school students have equitable access to learning resources in the school libraries and acquire the information literacy skills, not only will their success in external and internal examinations will be guaranteed but solid foundation for learning in the higher institution of learning will also be assured.

The loss of interest in meaningful reading which is expressed in the alarming rate of examination malpractices may not be unconnected to either lack of necessary learning resources or lack of equitable access to the available resources or lack of information literacy skills.

Egudu (2015) reported that Nigeria has the highest number of examination malpractices among the five member countries. Similarly Uwakwe (2016) noted that out of 7,410,030 candidates that sat for NECO examination between 2010 and 2016, 1,283,485 which amount to 17.32% were involved in examination malpractices. After the release of 2017 June/July NECO examinations results, it was announced that 50,586 candidates were involved in examination malpractices (Uwakwe, 2017). The scenario suggests deficiency in the learning capabilities of the students hence the need to investigate the availability of learning resources in the secondary schools as well as equitable access to such resources and to find out if the students have acquired the information literacy skills that are needed to access those resources.

Ilesa is one of the major cities in fact the largest city in Osun State. There are about are about fifty (50) secondary schools in Ilesa (Public and private) with the student population of about fifty thousand. Almost all the indigenes of other local governments and in fact other parts of Nigeria are represented in Ilesa and their wards attend secondary schools in Ilesa. The city therefore represents a miniature Nigeria judging from its demographics and other characteristics, thus a veritable population to investigate the relationship between information literacy skills and equitable access to learning resources on the academic performance of secondary school students in Nigeria

### **Statement of the objectives**

This study is investigated the following objectives:

- Examine the availability of learning resources in the secondary school libraries
- Determine the barriers to equitable access to the learning resources in the school libraries
- Identify the information literacy skill of secondary school students
- Examine the roles of school libraries in the acquisition of information literacy skills by secondary school students.

## **Literature Review**

### **Availability of Learning Resources in the Secondary School Libraries**

Studies have shown the relevance of school libraries to all round development of students in the secondary schools. School libraries have always been an indispensable adjunct to education, a base for gathering innovative thinking, a stimulus to culture and an aid to self-development (Onal, 2009). Libraries play a vital role in all stages of education especially in secondary and senior secondary education- the basic foundation on which the edifice of higher education is built (Ahmad, 2011). The school libraries will be of no use to the students they are meant to serve if the relevant learning resources are not available. Citing Arua and Chinaka, (2011) Benard and Dulle, (2014) stated that school library learning resources are seen as all inputs which are utilized in the library in order to provide good learning environment for students and teachers so as to be able to achieve educational goals. School library resources should include books, periodicals, magazines, and newspapers, films, computers, filmstrip, videotapes, recording of all types, good materials for secondary education on arts and sciences, reference books such as dictionaries, encyclopaedia, and directories of local and state governments, yearbooks, handbooks and subject bibliographies, CD ROMs, periodicals, e-books, CDs, DVDs, videos, software, and access to databases, among many other types of resources among others.

Oniovosa (2004) asserted that, in a survey around the world on the reading ability of students, one of the factors that positively influence children's reading achievement is the availability and accessibility of books and other non-books resources in their immediate environment, at home, in the classroom and in the library.

School library learning resources inform, educate, entertain and enrich students at all levels. Students learn faster and their literacy skills grow rapidly when they are able to explore information that is meaningful to them (SLW, 2008).

### **Barriers to Equitable Access to Learning Resources in the School Libraries**

A school library should be a primary resource for gaining access to information available in both print and electronic formats. School libraries help to support the school curriculum by providing learners and teachers with access to a wide variety of information resources, exposing learners to diverse ideas, experiences and opinions. A school library is a physical and digital learning space where research, reading, inquiry, critical thinking, imagination and

creativity are made possible by access to an organised collection of resources. The universal mission of libraries is to provide equitable access to information and to facilitate and protect the right to freely pursue knowledge. Equitable access to learning resources by students is absolutely essential to enable them to execute their curriculum-related tasks (Mojapelo and Dube, 2014).

Factors such as cost of learning resources which can result in non-availability of recent and useful materials, the formats, language and the environment of the school libraries can constitute barriers to equitable access of learning resources. Major barriers between students and resources include but are not limited: to imposing age, grade - level, or reading – level restrictions on the use of resources; limiting the use of interlibrary loan and access to electronic information; charging fees for information in specific formats; requiring permission from parents or teachers; establishing restricted shelves or closed collections; and labelling. Policies, procedures, and rules related to the use of resources and services support free and open access to information (ALA, 2014). The American Library Association Library Bill of Rights stated that books and other learning resources for the interest, information and enlightenment of all the people of the community the library serves and that a person's right to use a library should not be denied or abridged because of origin, age, background or view (ALA, 2014). There must be reliable access to current and emerging technologies and digital resources with connectivity for all students including those with special needs. Equitable access means more than simply providing learning resources; it also means giving every student the opportunity to understand how to use those resources to meet their immediate and future needs (ISTE 2017). For school library to fulfil its purpose, students from diverse backgrounds must have more or less similar opportunities when it comes to accessing and using learning resources in different formats. All students must have the information they need - regardless of age, physical limitations or geographic barriers. It means they are able to obtain information in a variety of formats - electronic, as well as print. It also means they are free to exercise their right to know without fear of censorship or reprisal (ALA 2017)

Equity of access is the founding principle of all libraries. Libraries exist, in large part, to give everyone in the community access to information and to reading, regardless of any barriers that may exist in their lives. In essence, secondary school students in Nigeria must have equitable access to learning resources available not only in the school libraries but also in other places as provided by the stakeholders.

## **Information Literacy Skills of Secondary School Students**

The amount of information available to students necessitates that each individual acquire the skills to select, evaluate, and use information appropriately and effectively. Information literacy skills have been defined as a set of competencies needed to acquire, critically evaluate, select, use and communicate information in ways that lead to knowledge and wisdom (AASL 2007). The concept of information literacy had been a point of concern to librarians and teachers. There has always been a recognition among library and information professionals that users need some assistance and training to identify, select and use relevant and more appropriate information sources to meet their diverse information needs (Andretta, Pope and Walton 2008). Without the necessary skills to search, locate, process, evaluate, and use information, people may experience various information - related problems, such as using low - quality information, experiencing information overload, inability to find the needed information , and lack of skills to avoid using misinformation and disinformation (Miller and Bartlet 2012).

In their research on the auditing of Information Literacy (IL) Skills of Singapore secondary school students, Majid Chang and Foo confirmed that IL skills were taught to students right from their younger ages and that a number of IL competencies were incorporated into textbooks of various subjects at different grade levels (Chang et al 2014). In a study carried out on the effect of integrating IL skills into science instruction in Malaysia by Chen, Chen and Ma, two seventh-grade classes (age 12-13) from a public junior-high school in Taiwan were selected and students were divided into experimental and control groups. While the experiment group received an inquiry-based science curriculum infused with IL skills the control group received traditional lecture-oriented IL instruction. Both groups were taught by the same teacher. It was observed that students in the experimental group performed significantly better than the students in the control group on reading comprehension and problem solving (Chen, Chen and Ma 2014). Consistent and comprehensive implementation of information literacy programme is critical for 21<sup>st</sup> century learners (CASL, 2006).

Eight (8) information literacy outcomes with relevant indicators were developed by Canadian Association for School Libraries (CASL) as follows:

Students who are exposed to information literacy skills should be able to:

- use information with aesthetic appreciation

- use information responsibly
- use information respectfully
- use information critically
- use information strategically
- use information for decision-making
- use information expressively
- use information and media tools with technical competence (CASL, 2006).

These IL outcomes can be used as standard to access the IL skills of the secondary school students and where students fall short of one or more the school librarians as well as teachers should do all it takes to impart the needed skills.

### **The Roles of School Libraries in the Acquisition of Information Literacy Skills by Secondary School Students.**

School libraries play significant roles in inculcating information literacy skills into the secondary school students. Canadian Association Of School Libraries (CASL) stated that if each school library were to have a school librarian who taught children and youth the skills necessary to be effective users of information in all its forms, a powerful mechanism would be in place for enabling Canadian children and youth to be literate citizens, lifelong learners, and contributing adults in a learning society (CASL, 2006).

The information age characterized by internet and other ICT technologies provides for the professional librarian opportunities to influence, contribute, and make changes to information processing, management and access (Ilogho and Nkiko, 2014). Information literacy is the key to helping students use learning throughout their lives as a way to solve problems, act ethically, plan for the future and prepare for change. The school librarians must work collaboratively with classroom teachers in planning, and teaching information literacy skills. Recognizing that library collections are becoming a balance of in-house and on-line sources, school libraries must focus on acquiring relevant learning resources and inculcating the skills needed to access those resources and the school librarians must use their professional skills to build the gap between the information needs of the students and their abilities to access and use the information they need and the challenge for the school library is to consider how to provide intellectual access and actively support the construction of knowledge of its target groups. The school librarian must not only serve as a guide to the learning resources but also as a counsellor on the overall process of accessing information

through a continuous interaction with the user (Kuhlthau, 2004, Skov, 2004). The school librarian and the teachers share responsibilities for ensuring that students have opportunities to develop the literacy and information literate skills and aptitudes they will need throughout their lives (Sullivan ,2007)

In a study carried on the effects of teaching information literacy on the academic performance of students in Imam Mohammad Baqer Technical Higher Education Centre in Sari. It was observed that there was a significant difference between the academic performance of the two groups of testing and control, the ability to recognize and specify information needs, getting skills at locating and accessing information, getting related skills at using information effectively and responsibly, the way of using information resources at libraries (Soleymani, 2004, Hasanzadeh and Asadi, 2007).

### **Methodology**

Descriptive survey method was used for this research. Ilesa city has two Local Government Councils. The population of the study is all the secondary school students in Ilesa city.

Multi stage sampling technique was used to select the sample size for the research. The first stage was the selection of all the secondary schools in Ilesa West and Ilesa East Local Government Councils. The second stage was the use of purposive sampling to the select public and private secondary schools in the two Local Councils that had existed for more than ten (10) years.

The third stage was the use of simple random sampling to select four secondary schools comprising two public and two private secondary schools from each of the Local Government Councils making a total of eight (8) schools. The fourth stage was the selection of ten (10) SSII students from Arts, Commercial and Science classes in each of the eight (8) schools making a total of thirty (30) students in each school and two hundred and forty (240) students in all through the simple random sampling technique.

The instrument used for this research was the questionnaires. Two hundred and forty (240) copies of questionnaire were distributed to students to investigate their information literacy skills and equitable access to learning resources in the selected schools. The questionnaire was divided into twelve sections. Sections A was designed to elicit background information such as name of school, location of school, gender, class, ages and subject classifications from students. Section B was divided into sub sections and the following indicators were

used to gather information from the students: Availability of learning resources, barriers to learning resources, information literacy skills of secondary school students, School libraries' roles in students' acquisition of information literacy skills, acquisition of reading skills and Frequency of library visit and book loan. Each of the indicator was measured using the five point Likert scales of Strongly Agreed (SA=5), Agreed (A=4), Disagreed (D=4), Strongly Disagreed (SD=2), and Undecided (U=1).

Data were analysed using SPSS. Descriptive statistics of Mean and Standard Deviation were used to analyse the data collected. Inference was made using the value of mean. A variable was deemed to be significant if the value obtained for mean was close to the highest obtainable value of 5, which was the highest value in the Likert Scale.

### Data Analysis

This section deals with the analysis of data and discussion of the findings obtained on the survey conducted.

**Table I**

#### Availability of Learning Resources in the School Library

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Availability of Well stocked Library	240	1.00	5.00	4.0958	.96551
Availability of Audio visual facilities	240	1.00	5.00	3.2208	1.07325
Availability of functioning computer laboratory	240	1.00	5.00	4.0458	1.04800
Availability of reference books in the library	240	1.00	5.00	3.9375	1.08250
Availability of learning resources that meet informational needs of students	240	1.00	5.00	3.7708	1.01123
Availability of E-books and Databases in my school libraries	240	1.00	5.00	3.5292	1.10873
Availability of materials to support learning and assignment	240	1.00	5.00	3.0625	.97256
Availability of internet connectivity in the school library	240	1.00	5.00	3.3542	1.18374

Table I depicts the availability of learning resources in the school libraries in selected secondary schools in the two Local Government Councils .From the value of Mean for inference it can be seen that the value of mean for each of the item is close to 5 which is the

highest score obtainable. It can therefore be concluded that all the schools have the available learning resources.

**Table 2**  
**Barriers to Equitable Access to Learning Resources**

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Paying to access some materials in the school library	239	1.00	5.00	3.3222	1.08115
Restrictions hinder my access to electronic resources	240	1.00	5.00	3.2208	1.08488
School library is not conducive for studying and learning	240	1.00	5.00	2.9208	1.06188
Low bandwidth makes internet access slow and frustrating	240	1.00	5.00	3.1667	1.19856
Lack of skills to access materials in the school library	240	1.00	5.00	3.0333	1.08957
Poor electricity supply hampers access to online resources in the library	240	1.00	5.00	3.0625	1.08250
Technical and difficult to understand catalogue system	240	1.00	5.00	3.1458	1.10513
Shelf reading library stacks to find appropriate book of choice	240	1.00	5.00	3.1917	1.12258
Using library catalogue to select appropriate book of choice	240	1.00	5.00	3.5167	1.13509
	239				

Table 2 shows possible barriers to equitable access to learning resources. From the value of mean which is close to the maximum of 5, it can be deduced that the barriers exist indeed that hinder equitable access to learning resources in the secondary schools.

**Table 3**  
**Information Literacy Skills of Secondary School Students**

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Possession of skills to locate any information I need in any format on my own	240	1.00	5.00	3.5333	1.08957
Ability to use digital and traditional tools effectively to access information	240	1.00	5.00	3.5583	1.11884
Ability to modify, revise and transform learning resources to needed information	240	1.00	5.00	3.6458	1.06856
Ability to cite references sources consulted for assignment	240	1.00	5.00	3.9208	.98842

Being taught to reference and cite sources consulted for assignment	239	1.00	5.00	3.9121	1.03541
Possession of skills to process and evaluate information personally	240	1.00	5.00	3.7292	1.11550

Table 3 shows the information literacy skills of the students. From the mean of the table which shows a value close to 5 which is the maximum value, it can be shown that the students possess the information literacy skills needed at their level to access learning resources.

**Table 4**  
**School Libraries Roles in the Acquisition of Information Literacy Skills by Secondary School Students**

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Availability of professional librarians	240	1.00	5.00	3.8458	1.08488
Availability of well stocked library	240	1.00	5.00	3.8875	.96370
School librarians teach information Literacy Skills	240	1.00	5.00	3.5500	1.05775
School librarians counsels and guides on the best method to access information	240	1.00	5.00	3.4583	1.10832
School librarians work with subject teachers to teach information literacy skills	240	1.00	5.00	3.6417	2.70532
school librarians taught the skills to evaluate internet resources and other sources of information	240	1.00	5.00	3.3750	1.02735

Table 4 describes the roles of School librarians in the acquisition of information literacy skills. It can be seen from the table that where there are school librarians, their roles in impacting information literacy skills to the students are well acknowledged.

**Table 5**  
**Frequency of School library visit**

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Frequency of School library visit	240	1.00	5.00	3.2875	1.04933

Table 5 Shows the frequency at which the students visit the library and it can be discovered that the mean value is close to 5 which is for the daily visit.

**Table 6**  
**Frequency of book loan from the library**

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Frequency of book loan from the library	240	1.00	5.00	3.3375	.97170

Table 6 Shows the frequency at which the students loan books the library and it can be discovered that majority of the students loan books daily

**Table 7**  
**Reading skills of the students**

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Voluntary reading of books other than assigned textbooks	240	1.00	5.00	3.0458	1.04400
Independent comprehension ,synthesis and summarising of materials	240	1.00	5.00	3.0458	2.69083
Reading is boring	239	1.00	5.00	3.8368	.93628
Enjoying reading all types of book	239	1.00	5.00	2.9958	.99789
Ability to read and comprehend	240	1.00	5.00	3.8458	.95789
Taking long time to read and comprehend	240	1.00	5.00	3.7042	1.01040

Table 7 depicts the reading skills of the students. Majority of the students admit that reading is boring to them and they take long time to read and comprehend, few of them enjoy reading all types of books while a good number of them engage in voluntary reading

## **Findings**

The following findings were made from the analysis

- All the schools involved have a school library
- Learning resources are available in the selected schools.
- There are barriers to equitable access to learning resources in the schools.
- Where there are School librarians, they teach information literacy skills to the students.
- Students visit the school libraries and loan books as much as possible.
- Reading skills of the secondary school students need to be developed. Reading is boring to many of the students and they take longer time to read and comprehend even though they engage in voluntary readings.

## **Conclusion**

The response of the students from the selected eight schools in the two local Government Councils in Ilesa City revealed that there are school libraries and school librarians in all the selected secondary schools in Ilesa City and the students are being taught by the school librarian, the information literacy skills needed to access information resources. However, the responses showed that barriers such as poor electricity supply, lack of skills to access information in different format, low internet bandwidth, difficult and technical catalogue make it difficult for students to have access to the learning resources in the school libraries.

It can also be deduced from the responses, that though students visit the libraries regularly and loan books as much as possible, yet they lack the reading skills required to comprehend, assimilate and even enjoy reading. It can be inferred that the information literacy skills being taught the students is more of theory than practical hence reading is boring and uninteresting to the students.

## **Recommendations**

Teacher-librarians should be trained and retrained in the art of imparting the information literacy skills to the secondary school students. All inclusive information literacy skills should be infused into the curriculum of the secondary school students and this should be taught by the trained teacher- librarian.

There should be co-operation between the teacher librarians and the subject teachers in the teaching of information literacy skills, if the information literacy skills of the secondary school students are developed at this level; there is likelihood that students will be empowered to search and get their information needs met independently when they move up the ladder of education.

The barriers to equitable access to learning resources must be removed. The Government and the school owners should as a matter of urgency remove the barriers such as epileptic power supply and increase their internet bandwidth, make Online Public Access Catalogue (OPAC) available to reduce the technicality of catalogue and the school libraries should be made attractive and conducive to increase the patronage and interest of the students.

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