THE STATUS OF SCHOOL LIBRARIES IN KENYA: THE CASE OF PUBLIC SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN NAIROBI COUNTY[1]

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ABSTRACT

In order for school libraries to contribute sufficiently to better information skills development and the creation of a culture of lifelong learning among students, they require backing through well-articulated policies both at national and individual school level. This article reports on a study that investigated the prevailing status of school libraries in public secondary schools in Nairobi County, Kenya. Using a survey research design, with a response rate of 68 per cent for school principals and 66 per cent for school librarians, the study established that the majority of the schools had school libraries but these were as a result of individual schools' efforts and not a nationwide government policy. Moreover, the school libraries lacked policies; had not embraced contemporary trends in technology; and lacked financial support. The study concluded that school libraries in Nairobi County were inadequately resourced and supported and recommended that the government of Kenya should develop national policies to entrench and support school libraries in the education system.

KEYWORDS

school libraries, Nairobi County Kenya, school library management

1 INTRODUCTION

School libraries help to inculcate a culture of lifelong learning among students (Wisconsin Library Association Foundation 2006). A school library is defined as a library in a public or private elementary or secondary school that serves the information needs of its students and the curriculum needs of its teachers and staff, and is usually managed by a school librarian or media specialist (Reitz 2007). Even though a school library is an essential facility in the school, the Kenya Ministry of Education (MoE) does not enforce it as a mandatory requirement for the establishment or management of a school.

A further consideration of the library situation in Kenya stems from the fact that relevant learning institutions in Kenya are affiliates of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) (via Kenya's government) and the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA) (via the Kenya Library Association [KLA] and the library fraternity). Hence, it is important to establish whether the existence of the IFLA/UNESCO school library manifesto has any significance in helping to raise the status of secondary school libraries in Kenya. Thus, the problem of the study centred on the fact that there is a lack of concrete information regarding the status of secondary school libraries in Kenya. For this vacuum to be filled, it is imperative to establish the prevailing status of school libraries in Kenya, particularly to determine if schools have any policies in place for setting up and managing the school library.

All schools in Kenya are registered by the MoE, and are expected to comply with certain minimum conditions in terms of teacher qualifications; norms and standards; length of school day; health standards; inspection and physical standards (Government of Kenya 2003:13). According to the Kenya Education Sector Support Program (KESSP) (Republic of Kenya 2005:202), the government of Kenya seeks to expand and improve quality in secondary schools by acting on the following:

- provision of bursaries for the needy students;
- construction of more classrooms and provision of 'basic' equipment and facilities;
- provision of science equipment;
- more teacher recruitment and orientation;
- provision of ICT facilities;
- introduction of open and distance learning.

Interestingly, the requirement in respect of school libraries is not addressed among these areas that need attention and funding. Public secondary schools are the mandate of the MoE and hence the lack of an official directive for schools to have school libraries implies that every school is left to determine for itself and chart its own course. This state of affairs may have resulted in the different secondary schools in Kenya placing a different emphasis as to the importance of the school library. Furthermore, each individual secondary school has unique circumstances, such as the school governing body, and its location, among others, which impact on the manner in which a school library may be viewed or developed. It is not clear how well school libraries in Kenya are funded and managed.

In Kenya, a public secondary school refers to a secondary school where the government is responsible for paying teachers' salaries as well as providing other subsidies in terms of supervision, curriculum development and pedagogical development. In some public schools, the non-teaching staff's salaries are met by local authorities (city or county councils) (Onsomu 2004:13). Kenya is divided into administrative sections, called provinces, which are further subdivided in to smaller units, called districts. There are eight administrative provinces which are divided into 47 districts.[2] In August 2010, Kenya promulgated a new constitution which created a new devolved governance structure with 47 counties as the administrative units (Burugu 2010:1). According to Burugu (2010:4), the essence of the county is to ensure that citizens make optimal use of resources for socio-economic development. Nairobi County is largely cosmopolitan and multicultural, and most of the inhabitants are people from all over the country who come to Nairobi in search of employment. It is primarily the children of such inhabitants who attend Nairobi schools, which are largely urban in nature. Nairobi County, however, has some semi-rural schools especially in areas outside and away from Nairobi city.

Little is known of the status of school libraries in Kenya (Mutungi 2012). This could probably explain why there has been little progress in the establishment and recognition of the role of school libraries. The aim of the current study was to investigate the status of school libraries in public secondary schools in Nairobi County; to establish the gaps; and to propose recommendations for improvement. To achieve this, the following objectives guided the study:

- To establish the extent to which public secondary schools in Nairobi County have libraries.
- To determine the extent to which a school library policy exists and the quality of such a policy in terms of explicitly focusing on funding and staffing matters.
- To assess the relevance and implementation of the IFLA/UNESCO school library manifesto as a guide in developing and executing policies and services in the quest for an effective or adequate school library.
- To map and audit the information resources in school libraries in Nairobi County.

- To assess the organisation and management of the information resources in the library as well as the competence of the professional managing the library.
- To map and audit the role and function of school librarians in public secondary schools in Nairobi County.
- To establish the extent to which the school principals' understanding of the role of the school library affects the funding and staffing for the library.
- To determine the challenges faced by school libraries in public secondary schools in Kenya and make recommendations for improvement.

The status of school libraries is intricately related to student performance (Lance 2001:1). Bush (2002:68) indicates that school libraries allow children to ask questions about the world and find the answers. Moreover, once a child learns to use a library, the doors to learning are always open. Thus, the school with a well-stocked and staffed library is likely to lead to better information skills development; creating a culture of lifelong learning; and enhancing life chances among students.

The study looked into the existing situation in Nairobi County with a view to address the factors that either enhance or inhibit the development of school libraries as well as to suggest solutions for the establishment and running of adequate school libraries. The World Bank (2008:71) notes that lack of adequate provision for secondary school libraries is a serious issue for secondary education. According to its study of some African countries, including Togo, Cameroon, Rwanda, Cote d'Ivoire, Mali, Burkina Faso, Senegal, Lesotho, Kenya, Tanzania, Malawi, Uganda and Botswana, only Botswana has a good basic secondary school library system in all its schools (World Bank 2008:72). In Kenya, only a few well established and prestigious secondary schools (both government and private) maintain effective school libraries. The World Bank (2008) study is, however, rather broad in nature and does not highlight the specific scenario in Kenya. The current research, therefore, attempted to be more specific in order to provide further details of the status on school libraries. As a result it could be of significance to:

1. School administrators, teachers and parents who are interested in developing an adequate school library in order to enhance the culture of reading; to research effectively; to discover new ideas; to learn more; and, ultimately, to improve their students' academic output.

2. The government of Kenya, as the study has shed light on weaknesses inherent in school libraries with a view to determine the points of intervention, and the magnitude of the effort required to attain excellence in school libraries. The study could, therefore, play a part by contributing relevant information that the government could use in coming up with a policy to stipulate both the standards and implementation strategy for the management of school libraries in Kenya.

3. Scholars and academicians, who may wish to use the findings of the study to conduct further research on the subject.

2   REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

School libraries are essential to the development of learning skills (Darrow 2009:78). Herring (1988:5) gives a simple definition of a school library as all types of library or collections of materials in schools whether staffing of any kind is provided or not. Although the roots of the modern school library lie in the past, the movement is rightly considered a 20th century development. According to Cole (1959:87), at the beginning of the 20th century, only few schools had libraries that were regarded primarily as depositories for certain volumes and were under the supervision of a school custodian or clerk who had no formal librarianship training.

Since the turn of the century, information professionals concerned about the status of school libraries have conducted studies that, for most part, reveal that though the importance of the school library has been emphasised, normally the reality of the situation is different (Library Association 1996:31). One such study conducted by the United Kingdom (UK) Library Association (1996:31) into library services for children in the UK revealed that 75 per cent of the locations visited, services and resources were found to be sub-standard, and that the situation in school libraries was particularly bad. The study further noted that in secondary schools only £4.18 per head was spent on books and other library resources and only 20 per cent of schools reached the Her Majesty's Inspector of Schools (HMI) minimum recommended level of 13 resource items per head.

Carrol (1981:12) states that a large number of people in the world understand and accept the description of a school library as it was in the 1970s, that is, a collection of books and audio-visual materials centralised in a school under the supervision of a person with appropriate educational qualification. Times have changed though, and with the rapid developments in information and communications technologies (ICTs), it would be grossly inappropriate to believe that information in school libraries will be in print or audio-visual format only. This explains the term 'school media centres or e-centres' used recently to describe school libraries.

The school library is directed towards definitive educational objectives, which students, teachers and librarians or teacher/librarians must know. Herring (1988:6) states that the objectives of the school library should include the following:

- To support the teaching and educational work of the school by supplementing classroom work with further reading.
- To equip students with skills that will enable them to learn more effectively through using the variety of materials held within the library.
- To develop in students the habit of reading both for pleasure and for the purpose of gathering information which is not taught as part of the curriculum.
- To develop in students an enquiring mind that will continue to prompt them to use the library in later life.

The school library provides information and ideas that are fundamental to functioning in today's information and knowledge based society. The school library equips students with lifelong learning skills and develops the imagination, enabling them to live as responsible citizens (IFLA/UNESCO 2002). By the development of the school library manifesto, IFLA/UNESCO pointed out that the school library would fulfil these objectives by developing policies and services; selecting and acquiring resources; providing physical and intellectual access to appropriate sources of information; providing instructional facilities; and employing trained staff.

2.1 ROLE OF THE SCHOOL LIBRARY

International organisations have acknowledged the importance of the school library. In 2000, IFLA, in partnership with UNESCO, published a school library manifesto which stated, in part:

> The school library is essential to every long term strategy for literacy, education, information provision and economic, social and cultural development. It has been demonstrated that when librarians and teachers work together, students achieve higher levels of literacy, reading, learning, problem solving and Information and Communication Technology (ICT) skills (IFLA/UNESCO 2002:1).

The above manifesto also detailed the core school library service goals as follows:

> developing and sustaining in children the habit and enjoyment of reading and learning and the use of libraries throughout their lives and offering opportunities for experiences in creating and using information for knowledge, understanding, imagination and enjoyment (IFLA/UNESCO 2000:1).

As education in Kenya as well as in many parts of the world becomes increasingly student centred, students are required to know how to solve problems, to work in teams, and to use available resources effectively. According to the American Library Association (1998), it is evident that school libraries play an important role in the education process. Students and teachers in secondary schools rely on their school libraries for access to research material, reading materials and instructional materials that support the school's curriculum. With recent developments in ICT, students have resorted to the use of ICTs to source information. Lance (2001:1) notes that the school library media centre has become not only the hub of academic research, but also the hub of technology and the 21st century tools and is integral in helping students attain information skills. According to research (Lance 2000:14), there exists a positive correlation between the presence of adequate library media centres staffed with library media specialists and higher academic achievement. This suggests the large role played by school libraries in improving academic achievement.

Apart from providing support for academics, school libraries also help students with personal development (Bundy 2006:1). Strong school library programmes have never

been needed more. Businesses, organisations and school districts realise that information handling is and will continue to be important. Information literacy, that is, the ability to access, process and communicate information, is recognised as a universal life skill today (Koechlin & Zwaan 2002:21).

Bush (2002:68), from a general perspective of the library, notes that the library is meant to satisfy the curiosity of the curious and provide a place for the lonely where they may enjoy the companionship and the warmth of the word. The library supplies handbooks for the handy, novels for the insomniacs, scholarship for the scholarly and makes available works of literature to those people they will eventually haunt so successfully

2.2 SCHOOL LIBRARIES IN AFRICA

As recently as the 20th century, governments and ministries of education in many African nations had not accepted that library and book provision should be a component of educational investment (Rosenberg 1993:37). Even so, the establishment of school libraries has always been the traditional and preferred solution to providing access to supplementary reading material in schools (Department for International Development 1998). These not only have the capacity to acquire, organise and make general reading materials available for the use of teachers and school pupils, but can also organise collections of multiple copies of textbooks for loan, when it is impossible to purchase them. But, in Africa, whilst the need for education has been recognised, the need for school libraries in many countries has not. Since the Universal Declaration of Human Rights asserted that everyone has a right to education in 1948, there have been attempts by most African governments to promote education and literacy (Unagha 2008:2). These efforts have, however, had little impact because there have been no provisions for school libraries in the implementation of these programmes (Unagha 2008:2). According to the World Bank (2008:71), in a study on secondary school libraries in sub-Saharan Africa, the lack of adequate provision for secondary school libraries is a serious issue for secondary education. According to the World Bank (2008:72), of the countries reviewed (which included Togo, Cameroon, Rwanda, Cote d'Ivoire, Mali, Burkina Faso, Senegal, Lesotho, Kenya, Tanzania, Malawi, Uganda and Botswana), only Botswana had a good basic secondary school library system in all schools.

Buchan and Denning (1991:1) have noted that it is generally accepted that school libraries in African countries are poorly developed. Whereas textbooks are prescribed for schools, they are inaccessible due to various factors ranging from economic constraints to the under-developed distribution infrastructure. The establishment and maintenance of school libraries has been relegated to the last place on the scale of priorities. Most of the schools do not have libraries. Where some semblance of a school library does exist, it is often no more than a few shelves of outdated and worn out material, is inadequately staffed, and is thus marginal to the teaching process (Department for International Development 1998).

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From the literature gathered, there have been more active campaigns for national policy frameworks for school libraries in Africa, and an example can be drawn from South Africa. According to Hart and Zinn (2007:98), five draft policy documents have been produced by a unit in the South African Department of Basic Education (SA DoBE) responsible for school libraries, after consultation with the various provincial school library support services and other players, since 1997. In 2012, the National Guidelines for School Library and Information Services was published by the SA DoBE. If children and citizens are to acquire literacy, libraries must be supported, as Krolak (2005:13) notes, 'with sufficient investment and support, libraries will have a major impact on the achievement of education for all and the Millennium Development Goals'.

Africa has unique circumstances that have an impact on the provision of quality library services. According to Anderson (2009:1), economic difficulties within Sub-Saharan African countries and the lack of a significant publishing industry have contributed to the lack of sufficient indigenous resources available to stock libraries. Western donors, through support programmes, often attempt to fill the gap with donated Western material (Anderson 2009:1). How such information resources that were developed within the context and culture of the West help to improve literacy levels within the African context is a subject for debate. Whereas ICTs have undeniably become ubiquitous with current and future social and organisational development (Minishi-Majanja 2007:1), and whereas there has been a lot of emphasis on how such ICTs facilitate access to information, from the African perspective, challenges such as lack of electricity, non-availability of computers and poor internet connectivity cannot be ignored (World Economic Forum 2009).

Despite the challenges faced by libraries in Africa, it is undeniable that school libraries help citizens to be literate in different spheres of life. Therefore, the crucial importance of school libraries in literacy, social and cultural development demands that they be supported by legislation, policy and funding (Unagha 2008:2).

2.3   SCHOOL LIBRARIES IN KENYA

As mentioned in the introduction, little is known about school libraries in Kenya (Mutungi 2012). It is evident, however, that there has been some progress in the establishment and recognition of the role of school libraries. Kenya lacks specific government policy guidelines on school libraries. As such, the establishment of school libraries is left to the initiative of the management of the schools (Rosenberg 1993:37).

Otike (1988:98) observes that the situation in Kenya is on the whole gloomy, and even though this source is quite dated, it is imperative that the situation has not changed much. In 1988, Otike found that out of a total of over 3 000 secondary schools in Kenya, less than 40 had positions for trained paraprofessionals and so clerical staff and pupil assistants were employed in many school libraries. Otike (1988:88) further observes

that teacher librarians did not receive any allowance for their additional responsibilities and the majority never had any training in librarianship. However, it is important to note that Otike's (1988) study is not recent and the current situation may be different. The current study sought to reveal recent trends or developments.

3   RESEARCH METHOD

The study employed a survey approach that included a concurrent triangulation strategy, which as Creswell (2003:213) points out, happens when the researcher collects both quantitative and qualitative data concurrently. Thereafter, a comparison of the two datasets is done to establish whether they corroborate each other. Most of the data was collected quantitatively, although certain qualitative data was added for the study. The data was gathered quantitatively with the use of self-administered questionnaires from the school librarians and the school principals, while at the same time personal interviews were conducted with officers in the MoE as well as officials of the Kenya Library Association ([KLA], the library professional body in Kenya) for purposes of cross validation.

3.1   VARIABLES

Four main variables were included in the study to inform the findings, namely:

3.1.1   Library staff

The school librarian is the manager of the school library. The American Library Association (2006:4) states that the success of any school library media programme, no matter how well designed, depends ultimately on the quality and number of personnel responsible for the programme.

3.1.2   Support provided by the principal

School principals are managers of the schools and, therefore, provide useful information, including policy and funding of the school library. Haycock (1990:48) identifies the principal as the single most important element in the development of an effective library media programme. According to McGregor (2002:72), good leaders foster leadership at other levels. In schools where teacher-librarians are encouraged to lead, reforms related to effective information access and use are more likely to be possible. As such principals provided important information for the research.

3.1.3   Financial support (funding)

Funding is another variable that impacts on the status of the school library. With sufficient funds, libraries can: purchase up-to-date school library media resources,

including books; acquire and use advanced technology; facilitate internet links and other resource sharing networks; provide professional development for school library media specialists; and also facilitate access to the school library during non-school hours, weekends and vacations. The lack of sufficient financial support may well mean the absence of the above.

3.1.4 Policy

A school library policy sets out the requirements for the school library and the responsibilities of school principals, school librarians and other school staff or bodies in relation to the programmes of the school library. The presence or absence of clear policies would impact on the status of the library.

3.2 STUDY POPULATION

The population under study comprised all the public secondary schools in Nairobi County, Kenya. Owing to the population size, it was felt that studying the entire population would help in justifying the reliability and validity of the findings. School libraries in secondary schools were chosen as it was felt that this was the level at which the more elaborate school libraries would be found. School libraries are almost non-existent in public primary schools in Kenya. The choice to use public secondary schools, as opposed to private schools, was because public secondary schools share a similar management structure and all receive some form of government support. Private secondary schools were varied in structure and management. It was felt that, by studying the public secondary schools, a fairer playing field would be offered than by studying private secondary schools.

Nairobi County was chosen because the County offered a wide spectrum of public secondary schools ranging from large to small, schools in up market suburbs to schools in slums, day schools as well as boarding schools, girls only schools, boys only schools and co-education schools. Therefore, it was felt that the spectrum of schools was representative of the country. Nevertheless, the fact that Nairobi County was largely metropolitan and hosted the capital city of Kenya, would be borne in mind before generalising the findings, especially to rural Kenya.

There were a total of 4 215 registered secondary schools in Kenya in the year 2006 (*Official Kenya Education Directory* 2008:46). More recent statistics had not been published and were not available for the study. Nairobi County has 202 secondary schools which represents 4.8 per cent of the total secondary schools. Of the 202 secondary schools in Nairobi County, 47 (23%) were public secondary schools (*Official Kenya Education Directory* 2008:187). Within these secondary schools, the study targeted principals and school librarians. The researcher was interested in the strategic support of the school library at the level of the principal and the funding of the school library as well as the role of the school librarian in the management of the school library as well as in the

education process. The population of study thus was the 47 public secondary schools in Nairobi County. Self-administered questionnaires were distributed to all principals and the school librarians. In schools where there were no school librarians, teacher librarians, or any other persons employed by the school to be in charge of the library, filled in the questionnaire. There was a response rate of 32 (68%) principals and 31 (66%) librarians. Face-to-face interviews were also conducted with three government officers in the MoE and one official of the KLA.

4   FINDINGS

To summarise all the data collected, a tabulation process was done using the SPSS data analysis software. Coding of data was necessary for efficient analysis and, through it, the multitude of replies were reduced to a small number of classes which contained the critical information for analysis (Kothari 2004:123). In the end the following were deduced as pertinent findings.

4.1   EXTENT TO WHICH PUBLIC SECONDARY SCHOOLS HAVE LIBRARIES

The research findings indicated that a school library was not one of the basic requirements in the establishment and operation of a school. The government did not give any support for the establishment of school libraries either and, as such, establishing and equipping school libraries was an initiative of individual schools. Even with this scenario, a high percentage (84.4%) of secondary schools in Nairobi County had established school libraries (as per Table 1), with their prevalence being higher in full boarding schools.

Table 1: Do you have a library facility in your school?

		Frequency	Percentage	Valid Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
Valid	Yes	27	84.4	84.4	84.4
	No	5	15.6	15.6	100.0
	Total	32	100.0	100.0	

4.2   EXISTENCE AND QUALITY OF SCHOOL LIBRARY POLICIES

This research further established that there was a problem in the institutionalisation of school libraries because the country did not as yet have in place a national policy on school libraries. The operation and management of school libraries was the sole initiative of individual schools. There was no mechanism to promote the establishment

of libraries in schools and consequently no system of inspection to ensure suitable facilities, organisation, staffing and maintenance. In the assessment of the individual schools for policies, the study indicated that most schools (85.7%) did not have written policies that stipulated the role and place of the school library in the school and the education process (Table 2). The policies that existed in a few schools seemed to be problematic as most were not drafted in an all-inclusive process that involved all relevant stakeholders.

Table 2: Presence of a written library policy

		Frequency	Percentage	Valid Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
Valid	Yes	2	6.2	14.3	14.3
	No	12	37.5	85.7	100.0
	Total	14	43.7	100.0	
	No response	18	56.3		
Total		**32**	**100.0**		

4.3   RELEVANCE OF THE IFLA/UNESCO SCHOOL LIBRARY MANIFESTO

Kenya is a member of the UNESCO member states. UNESCO, in partnership with IFLA, developed a very elaborate school library manifesto which is freely available and is a useful guide in the promotion of school libraries within schools. UNESCO has a regional office in Nairobi. It was anticipated that with the proximity of the regional office, the manifesto would be widely circulated. On the contrary, the study found out that 20 (74.1%) librarians and 25 (83.9%) school principals were unaware of the existence of the above manifesto, and though quite relevant, the manifesto had not been applied or put to use. This, therefore, pointed to a problem in the manner of dissemination or circulation of the manifesto for implementation in schools.

4.4   MAP AND AUDIT INFORMATION RESOURCES

The research findings revealed that print books formed the most common information resources in school libraries in Nairobi County, averaging 1 500 books per school. Only seven schools (22.6%) had print journals, averaging two per school. There was an average of two newspapers and two print magazines per school. Only one school (3.2%) had audio visual material, while six schools had some form of digital resources (CDs, DVDs). Fourteen schools (45.2%) had no computers in the library. Seven schools (22.6%) had one computer each; six schools had two computers each; and one school had five computers. None of the schools sampled subscribed to electronic resources.

The seating capacity per library ranged between 20 and 150 (Table 3) with the average being 63.

Table 3: Total seating capacity of the library

	Capacity	Frequency	Percentage	Valid Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
Valid	20	2	6.5	7.1	7.1
	25	4	12.9	14.3	21.4
	30	1	3.2	3.6	25.0
	48	1	32	3.6	28.6
	50	8	25.8	28.6	57.1
	60	2	6.5	7.1	64.3
	63	1	3.2	3.6	67.9
	70	1	3.2	3.6	71.4
	92	1	3.2	3.6	75.0
	100	4	12.9	14.3	89.3
	120	2	6.5	7.1	96.4
	150	1	3.2	3.6	100.0
	Total	28	90.3	100.0	
	No response	3	9.7		
Total		**31**	**100.0**		

The resources were organised in traditional systems of classification, and thus the libraries were rightly, as per Koechlin, Zwaan and Loertscher (2008:10), warehouses of information. They operated more or less as physical spaces as opposed to the more recent concept of a virtual learning centre.

4.5 STAFFING AND INFORMATION RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

The research findings confirmed that there were 25 trained librarians (86.2%) managing school libraries in Nairobi County. There were some initiatives by these librarians to put in place systems for the libraries (catalogues, systems of classification and schedules of operation to ensure exploitation of the resources). These were largely manual and did not match favourably with recent trends in technology developments. Of the trained librarians, the majority (64%) had a diploma level qualification (Table 4).

Table 4: Qualifications of school librarians

		Frequency	Percentage	Valid Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
Valid	Certificate in LIS	5	16.1	20.0	20.0
	Diploma in LIS	16	51.6	64.0	84.0
	Bachelor in in LIS	1	3.2	4.0	88.0
	Bachelor of Education (Library studies)	3	9.7	12.0	100.0
	Total	25	80.6	100.0	
	No response	6	19.4		
Total		**31**	**100.0**		

Because the majority of these librarians had a lower level of qualification (certificate and diploma level) compared to teachers who were at undergraduate level, school librarians were not adequately collaborating with teachers (they were not consulted on teaching resources, did not participate in staff meetings to discuss performance and curriculum matters and most were not even consulted during procurement of information resources for the library). They were thus not participating as equal partners in the education process.

4.6 ROLE OF THE PRINCIPAL IN SUPPORTING SCHOOL LIBRARIES

The school principal's support is required in order to have a successful school library programme. In a study conducted by Oberg (1995:19), school principals show support for the school library programme in three ways, namely, by: working directly with teachers to develop their understanding of the programme; clearly demonstrating personal commitment to the programme; and by using the management role of the school leader to enable the programme. Oberg (1995:19) notes that principals can demonstrate active personal commitment for the school library programme by making explicit statements about the value of the programme; by being visible in the library; and by being a model for teachers by using the programme in their teaching. The principal can also interpret the role of the school library programme for students, parents, County level personnel and other principals. The current study established that this kind of support was lacking in the schools in Nairobi County. School principals cannot fully support the school library programme if they themselves do not understand it or its usefulness. The research findings established that the school principals in public secondary schools in Nairobi County did not fully understand the role and importance of the school library media programme since 20 principals (64.6%) were not inducted on the important role played by school libraries, nor did they benefit from them during their school days. Therefore, they did not fully understand their leadership role in the school library programme. This was thus identified as the main reason why their support was lacking.

4.7   SUPPORT FROM THE GOVERNMENT

The Government of Kenya provides free secondary education by meeting the tuition costs for all students enrolled in public schools as well as providing teaching staff. However, as confirmed through interviews with government officers in the MoE as well as the information from school principals, the government does not employ school librarians, nor is there any budgetary allocation from the government to support school libraries. The establishment, management and funding of the school library is fully an initiative of individual schools. The provision of library resources is non-existent, however, though the government has established a programme to supply some textbooks to secondary schools, there is no clear directive or policy stipulating how the textbooks are to be managed. Each school thus apportions a library budget based on its available resources as well as what the school principal considers to be a priority. School library staff are also hired by individual schools without any form of government support.

4.8   THE ROLE OF THE PROFESSIONAL BODY IN KENYA

The KLA has put together some mild initiatives to try and improve the situation of school libraries in the country. For example, it has organised book donations and is trying to sensitise the government to employ school librarians with diploma level qualification as a way of lifting the standards of school libraries. However, there is very little evidence on the ground of any major accomplishments towards improving the status of school libraries in the country.

5   CONCLUSION

Based on the objectives of the study, several conclusions can be inferred. Firstly, the study concluded that the majority of secondary schools in Nairobi County have made an effort to create space for a library, and efforts have been made to equip these libraries with information resources in different formats, with most being in print form. Kenyan public secondary schools appear to realise that an investment in a library can play a major role in education as asserted by Krolak (2005). However, establishing these libraries is up to the individual school as there is no government support in putting up library structures; procuring information resources for the library; or even in remunerating staff working as school librarians. Secondly, one of the impediments to establishing and managing adequate school libraries is the absence of policies both at school and national level.

One of the objectives of the current study was to determine the extent to which the IFLA/UNESCO school library manifesto influenced the quality of school libraries in public secondary schools in Nairobi County. It was clear that the IFLA/UNESCO school library is a useful tool in institutionalising the library in the education process, but that school librarians and school principals in Nairobi County are unaware of the manifesto,

and so cannot benefit from its guidelines. Though the manifesto is available online, it is still inaccessible to school librarians and school principals primarily because of the lack of information about its existence.

A further observation was that print books are the most common information resources in school libraries in Nairobi County, and the availability of other formats of information resources is quite low. Traditional systems of classification are used. The school libraries have not embraced newer technologies for storage and access to information, and operate more or less as physical spaces as opposed to the more recent concept of a virtual learning centre.

Besides, trained librarians manage most school libraries in Nairobi County, most of whom have a diploma level qualification. These librarians have put minimal initiatives in place to manage and organise information resources. The initiatives that are in place (catalogues, systems of classification) are largely manual and do not match favourably with recent trends in technology developments as well as changing trends in information seeking behaviour. It would seem that teachers and school librarians of public secondary schools in Nairobi County are not working as equal partners in the education process. Secondary school teachers are employed by the government through the Teacher's Service Commission and most of them have attained an undergraduate level qualification. On the other hand, the majority of school librarians are employed by the school boards either on contract or permanent terms and have a diploma level qualification. Therefore, there is an imbalance in the employment terms and the level of qualifications for teachers and school librarians. This imbalance could be one of the reasons why both teachers and school librarians do not participate as equal partners in the education process.

Moreover, the majority of school principals of secondary schools in Nairobi County do not understand or fully appreciate that school libraries are a necessity in achieving academic success among students. This is because they have not been prepared or sensitised to this fact during their teacher training programs or on how they can support it. They have also not been sensitised to the complementary roles of teachers, school principals and librarians in ensuring that students have higher levels of literacy and problem-solving skills.

Lastly, the study concludes that the lack of government support is a major challenge. The government employs teachers but does not employ school librarians. There is no budgetary allocation from the government to support school libraries and so establishing, managing and funding a library is left to the initiative of the individual schools. It is notable that this conclusion is consistent with the findings of similar literature (Unagha 2008). Most secondary schools cannot afford to support a vibrant school library programme. Even though the government has established a programme to supply some textbooks to secondary schools, there is no clear directive or policy stipulating how the textbooks are to be managed. There are also no mechanisms to ensure standards for

school libraries. Even though the KLA intends supporting school library programmes, there is little evidence of any success in this regard.

6 RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the research findings, the following recommendations are made.

6.1 NATIONAL POLICY ON SCHOOL LIBRARIES

The vision for the education sector for 2030 is to have globally competitive quality education, training and research for sustainable development (Government of Kenya 2007:81). According to Hart and Zinn (2007:102), it is difficult to see any future without a national policy framework. From the research findings, it is clear that the country lacks a national policy on school libraries. It is hereby recommended that the government should formulate a national policy to guide and coordinate operations of school libraries. The policy will need to provide for and ensure that there is a library for every school. It will thus become a mandatory requirement for every school. Secondly, the policy will legislate on the human resources needed to operate the libraries, as well as the information resources and equipment. Thirdly, the policy will need to be specific on funding, for instance it could legislate that a certain percentage of the free secondary education funds be dedicated for libraries. Once the policy is in place, then it will provide the MoE with the necessary framework for the planning, development and evaluation of school libraries in the country. The government could do this by tasking the MoE to engage specialists and professionals in the school libraries field and in consultation with various stakeholders such as the KLA to come up with a draft national policy on school libraries for consideration and adoption.

6.2 INDIVIDUAL SCHOOL LIBRARY POLICIES

It is recommended that each school library formulates its own policies that clearly communicate the terms of operation of their library. The librarian should propose policies in line with the national policy (recommended above) and drafted in consultation with the appropriate stakeholders for adoption by the governing body. This is because he/she has the expertise in the library area. IFLA/UNESCO (2006) states that the library policy should not be drafted by the school librarian alone, but jointly with the teaching staff and senior managers. The draft should be consulted widely throughout the school and supported by exhaustive open discussion (IFLA/UNESCO 2002:4). After adoption of these policies, it becomes the responsibility of the school librarian to implement these policies.

6.3   IFLA/UNESCO SCHOOL LIBRARY MANIFESTO

IFLA/UNESCO (2006) states that governments, through their ministries responsible for education, are urged to develop strategies, policies and plans which implement the principles of the manifesto. Plans should include the dissemination of the manifesto to initial and continuing training programmes for librarians and teachers. Considering that dissemination of the manifesto through the government of Kenya has not been effective, it is recommended that IFLA/UNESCO sensitise the government through the MoE about the need to revisit and act on the manifesto. IFLA/UNESCO should also consider a different approach to disseminating the manifesto, for instance, by possibly using the librarians' professional associations, or even organising workshops that bring together school librarians, principals and other representatives in the ministry of education to create awareness of the manifesto.

6.4   GUIDELINES FOR SETTING UP SCHOOL LIBRARIES

A national consensus document on school libraries, or simply national guidelines for setting up school libraries, will help to reinforce minimum expectations in the creation and operation of any school library within any school in the country. Leaving the school libraries without guidelines allows room for ambiguity. Each school operates its school library in their own style. However, standards can give assistance in maintaining cohesion in the way the libraries operate. Ultimately, they help to improve the quality of the school libraries thereby enhancing student learning experience. In the manner in which the Kenya Commission for Higher Education (2007) has set up guidelines for setting up and managing university and college libraries, it is hereby recommended that the government sets up a taskforce of school library experts to recommend guidelines for setting up and managing school libraries in line with the national school library policy earlier recommended. This taskforce should work on a comprehensive document that specifies the building requirements, information resources and staffing. This will be guided by international standards but tailored for the Kenyan circumstances. The taskforce could also recommend to the government an effective and efficient system of inspection and evaluation of the school libraries to ensure that these guidelines are adhered to.

6.5   ICTs IN SCHOOL LIBRARIES

With rapid changes in technology, there is need to transform the school libraries from being print rich to embracing new technologies. The role of the 21st century school library has evolved as a result of the exponential growth of information, rapid technological advancements and the challenge to contribute to student achievement (Koechlin, Zwaan & Loertscher 2008:10). ICT provision in the school library widens the range of material or information available for the users and makes access to it quite easier. From the

findings of this study, it was clear that school libraries, in Kenya stocked largely print resources. There is, therefore, a need to act to move them from Loertscher's (2002:4) older school library model to the new model. To do this, the recommendations below are proposed:

1. The government could apportion a budget to create a robust ICT infrastructure in schools and school libraries.

2. Individual schools could make a deliberate attempt to improve on the situation by allocating a budget for library ICT infrastructure. This could take a phased approach in consideration of the meagre resources available in schools.

3. The KLA needs to act on its objective of encouraging and supporting efforts in integration of ICT in libraries. Towards this end, the KLA should come up with action plans that have specific targets and timelines as well as ways of measuring its performance.

6.6 MANAGEMENT OF SCHOOL LIBRARIES

School librarians play an important role in the education process. To strengthen this assertion, the American Association of School Librarians (2010) in its statement on the school librarian's role in reading, states that:

Equipped with a deep knowledge of the wide variety of authentic reading materials available in the school library and beyond, the school librarian has a key role in supporting print and online reading comprehension strategy instruction in collaboration with classroom teachers and reading specialists. School librarians co-design, co-implement and co-evaluate interdisciplinary lessons and units of instruction that result in increased student learning.

It clearly means that the school librarians are not lesser, but equal, partners in the education process. If the school librarian is to be an equal partner in the education process and is to be effective in advising the teaching staff on resources for the curriculum, then he/she needs to be at the same level of qualification as the teachers. The research findings revealed that most librarians were of a lesser qualification compared to teachers. It was observed that the KLA was in the process of lobbying to have diploma holders employed by the government to manage school libraries in secondary schools. However, it is recommended that the KLA considers lobbying to have the government employ graduate librarians to head the school library programme in secondary schools instead. Diploma and certificate holders could be employed to assist the graduates in the running of the libraries.

6.7   THE SCHOOL PRINCIPAL AND TEACHER'S ROLE

School principals are first and foremost trained teachers and because they identify themselves as teachers, they are knowledgeable about what the teachers they are in charge of do. However, Morris (2009:291) notes that the same is not true when they need to support the media specialist as a collaborator with classroom teachers in instruction. The role of the media specialist in the instructional process is, unfortunately, not thoroughly understood by most school principals because they lack similar background (Morris 2009:291). The findings of the study established that a majority of school principals in Nairobi's schools never benefited from school library media programmes during their school days. The role and importance of the school library programme had also not been made clear to them during their training as school principals. This clearly means that the majority of them do not clearly understand the school library's role. When the principal works to facilitate school library media specialists and classroom teacher collaboration, student achievement improves (Lance, Rodney & Hamilton-Pennel 2005:1). The principal cannot fully support the programme if he/she does not fully understand it or its value in the education process. To get this support, the principal (and even classroom teachers) need to be sensitised to the important role of the school library. It is recommended that the Kenya education curriculum that prepares both teachers and principals is revised to include training on what role libraries play in the education process. In this way, they can better appreciate and support their school libraries.

NOTES

1. This study was conducted in fulfilment of the Master of Information Science degree of the University of South Africa by Mr BM Mutungi under the guidance of both Prof MK Minishi-Majanja and Mrs N Mnkeni-Saurombe.
2. In early 2007, 37 new districts were created by the government. Many more districts have been created since then such that there were 254 districts by July 2009. On 4 September 2009, however, the High Court of Kenya declared all districts created after 1992 illegal.

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