

Chapter 9

The Role of the School Library in Empowering Visually Impaired Children With Lifelong Information Literacy Skills

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ABSTRACT

Libraries provide the platform on which successful education systems are built through the provision of access to information. The ability to provide equal and nondiscriminatory access to library resources and services is the hallmark of modern librarianship. School libraries must be prepared to serve children with specific disabilities, such as visually impaired students who will need special types of technology and other specialized services. This preparation is even more important with the push for inclusion and the corresponding increase in children with disabilities attending regular (vs. specialized) schools and utilizing the school library resources. Thus, this chapter examines the role of school libraries in empowering visually impaired children with lifelong information literacy skills as a part of inclusive education.

INTRODUCTION

There is an inextricable relationship between libraries and education. Oguniola (2008) posited that the development of education and growth of libraries are highly synonymous. In other words, libraries are essential to the development of any educational system. Education for all is not meant to be a slogan but the goal of every country, especially since children are regarded as the hope and future of any nation. Sadly, children living with one form of disability or another often receive less attention. They are denied access to a quality education as a result of their disabilities. Basic education is aimed at equipping persons with the relevant knowledge, skill, and attitude required to live meaningfully and benefit fully within one's socioeconomic context. Education is a universal human right that must not be denied.

Libraries provide the platform on which successful education systems are built through the provision of access to information. Fundamentally, libraries and librarians are obligated to acquire, organize, and make information accessible to all categories of users regardless of their age, status, gender, ability, or even disability. In other words, the ability to provide equal and nondiscriminatory access to library resources and services is the hallmark of modern librarianship.

Usoro and Usanga (2007) outlined the following goals that a school library must strive to meet:

- Participate effectively in school activities and programs while striving to meet the needs of pupils, teachers, parents, and other community members.
- Provide students with equal opportunity and access to library resources and services most appropriate and most meaningful to their growth and development as individuals.

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