Jamaican School Libraries Empowering Students with Life Skills: A Survey

There are many school library activities that can be planned and implemented collaboratively with classroom teachers or be designed as library-only activities to build students' self-confidence, develop responsible citizens, and improve students' interpersonal skills. A survey was conducted to determine which activities were planned and implemented by twenty school librarians to develop these life skills and to determine four hundred students' perception of the impact of these activities in the development of these life skills. The findings show that the activities implemented in these school libraries made a positive impact on the target life skills for the majority of students. However, it was discovered that certain important activities were not implemented by some school librarians and that a collaborative approach was not always used in the planning and implementation processes.

Introduction

The Jamaican Library Service, under a mandate from Ministry of Education to establish a national service for primary school, established school libraries in Jamaica in the second half of the 20th Century (Robinson, 2007). Primary school libraries and libraries and those in the in non-traditional high schools are supervised by the Jamaica Library Service. Libraries in traditional high schools are managed by those schools and are often times supported by organizations such as Past Students and parent Teachers' Associations. The physical facilities and collections of these libraries vary. Not all school librarians have the requisite qualification but those who do received a Bachelor of Education in School Librarianship from the Department of Library and Information Studies at the University of the West Indies, Mona or the Mico University College.

School librarians and their students engage in curricular activities with a view to develop competencies which will allow the students to function effectively at school and the society. In her work, *To Illuminate or Indoctrinate: Education for Preparatory Democracy*, Kelle (1996, p. 63) stated that "if we don't afford students the opportunity within schools to live in and be active members of a democratic community, they will not become active participatory citizens in the wider society." School libraries should thus design and implement programs to inculcate life skills in students. According to Kranich (2006) many libraries have programs encouraging active citizenship, and librarians have also helped individuals identify, evaluate, and use information essential for making decisions about the way they live, work, and learn.

Purpose and significance of the study

Numerous evidence-based research findings signal a direct relationship between fully functioning school libraries and students' academic achievement. However, there is a scarcity of research on the impact school libraries have on life skills development. Therefore, this research sets out to discover which of the school librarians' activities in the Jamaican schools are most likely to develop self-confidence, responsible citizens and interpersonal skills in students, as well as students' perceptions of the impact of these activities on the development of specific life skills.

Conceptual framework of life skills

The World Health Organization [WHO] (1993) defines life skills as "abilities that help to promote mental well-being and competency in young people as they face the realities of life" (p. 3). According to Seth (2002, p. 3), life skills include "a wide range of knowledge and skill interactions believed to be essential for adult independent living." Seth cites Joan Goodship's daily living skills: responsible citizenship, socially responsible behavior, good interpersonal skills and self-confidence. The researcher's focus is on school libraries as the environment within the school community, with the following diagram designed by the researcher to represent this concept.

Figure1:0 Stewart's Conceptual framework of Life Skills – Self-confidence, Responsible Citizens and Interpersonal Skills within the School Community

Operationalization of variables

Self-confidence: a feeling or consciousness of one's powers or of reliance on one's circumstances (disctionary.com).

Responsible citizen: answerable or accountable, as for something within one's power, control, or management (dictionary .com).

Interpersonal skills: the set of abilities enabling a person to interact positively and work effectively with others (Business dictionary.com).

Traditional secondary schools: Secondary level education is offered for 5-7 years to students who are 12 -17 years (Ministry of Education, Statistics, Jamaica, 2011-2012).

Non-traditional secondary school- Junior Secondary Schools that were converted to secondary schools (Miller, n.d.).

Literature Review

A literature search reveals little research on school libraries and building self-confidence, responsible citizenship and strong interpersonal relationships among students. Therefore, the literature review includes mainly position/professional papers written by librarians.

School library program builds self-confidence in students

A school library program structured to develop students' self-confidence empowers them to transfer the skills they learn to various situations. According to the Ontario School Library Association (2010), students will then view their capabilities positively and experience increased self-confidence. However, collaboration between the school librarian and the teacher is critical for students to develop the ability to transfer the skills they learn from one area to another.

Standards 6 of the *Information Literacy Standards for Student Learning* set out by American Research and College Libraries can also be used to develop self-confidence. For instance, according to Sanders-Brunner (2004), school librarians can use literature circles to promote self-confidence by allowing students the freedom to choose information they find interesting and relevant; the power to choose will then motivate them to continue seeking information (40).

In 2002, Todd and Kuhlthau (2005) conducted year-long research among 13,123 grade 3-12 students and 879 faculty members in thirty-nine school libraries across Ohio to determine how helpful the libraries were to these students' learning in and away from school (63). Among Todd and Kuhlthau's findings was that 17.3% and 17.7% participants, respectively, found the school library most helpful and quite helpful in increasing their confidence in doing their school work (72). Moreover, 29.5% and 22.3% indicated that the school library was most helpful and quite helpful in boosting their confidence in using computers to complete school work.

School libraries developing responsible citizens

The Ontario School Library Association (2010) pointed out that "society needs citizens who have respect for others and understand their responsibilities in participating in a safe and lawful society" (23). The school library program is designed to develop responsible citizens through the teaching of issues of "plagiarism, privacy, Intellectual Property Right, copyright, bias, stereotyping, gender which will require deep understanding as well as reasoned acceptance or rejection" (23). A collaborative approach is best taken to deliver these concepts beyond the library's curriculum into the school community.

Standards 7-9 of the *Information Literacy Standards for Student Learning* indicate the attributes of information literate individuals who have also attained the social responsibility standard

(ACRL, n. p.). According to Standard 8, students are responsible when they practice ethical behavior regarding information and information technology. This is evident when they 1) respect the principles of intellectual freedom; 2) respect intellectual property rights; and 3) use information technology responsibly.

The school library is the first point of reference for teaching information literacy skills, as well as the importance of acknowledging the work of others. For example, school librarians can demonstrate to students how to cite information used, avoid plagiarism and practice ethical behavior in relation to the use of technology. The UNESCO/IFLA School manifesto confirms this role of the school library by stating that "the school library equips students with life-long learning skills and develops the imagination, enabling them to live as responsible citizens" (UNESCO/IFLA School Library Manifesto 1).

In the 2011 *School Libraries Count!* Survey, Everhart (2012, n. p.) highlighted findings that 71% of school librarians surveyed were including digital citizenship — appropriate and responsible technology use – as part of their school or district curriculum, and 52% of school librarians were the primary teacher of digital citizenship in their school or district. Kranich then quoted Kellie's (1996, p. 63) warning that "if we don't afford students the opportunity within their schools to live in and be active members of a democratic community, they will not become active participatory citizens in the wider society" (11).

Lee (2011) conducted research over a two-year period with sixteen (16) vocational secondary school students to investigate how school library reading programs were designed to engage special education students in reading. A graphic novel club was formed and it was discovered that through this program students were covertly learning to be responsible by returning books they had read overnight and selecting new ones. Lee (2011) also indicated that there was opportunity for these students to develop leadership skills because the club was student-run.

School libraries developing interpersonal skills

The social responsibility standard grouped under Standards 7-9 of the *Information Literacy Standards for Student Learning* can be realized by using the literature circle because it can engage students in collaboratively producing knowledge. Standard 9 specifically states that the student who "contributes positively to the learning community and to society is information literate and participates effectively in groups to pursue and generate information". A literature circle program can achieve this as shown in Brunner-Sanders' (2004) example of Pierce, a school teacher, who mentioned that literature circles provide more opportunities for participation by each group member than a typical class discussion. Lee's (2011) research also illustrated that the Graphic Novel Club had a strong social component which resulted in entering and senior students forming a cohesive social group, thus developing their interpersonal skills.

Planning and implementation of life skills

Relationship with faculty

The Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL) (1980, n. p.) noted that "a primary goal of many library instruction programs is to play an essential role in the curriculum planning of the institution." This approach will unite all necessary stakeholders – school librarians, administrators, and the wider school community – to collaboratively create a curriculum achieving the mission and objectives of the educational institution. Doll's (2005, p.4) definition of

collaboration, used in this research, states that "the school library media specialist and teachers will work together to plan for, design, teach and evaluate instructional events for students."

The objectives of the research are:

1. To ascertain from a select group of Jamaican school librarians the activities they have implemented in their school library which are likely to: develop self-confidence in students; make students responsible citizens; and enhance their interpersonal skills;
2. To determine how these school library activities are planned and delivered; discern students' perception of the impact of these activities in boosting their self-confidence and ability to be responsible citizens; and improve their interpersonal skills.

Methodology

A survey-based quantitative methodological approach was used. This method was best suited to identifying activities implemented in selected secondary school libraries to develop students' self-confidence, produce responsible citizens and improve students' interpersonal skills; it was also designed to determine students' perception of the impact these activities had on them in relation to the specified life skills. The draft data collection instruments were pilot tested on two school librarians and five students representative of the sample to ensure that the items measured what they were intended to measure. A letter of request which included assurance of confidentiality, anonymity and voluntary participation, accompanied the instruments. Participants were asked to return the completed questionnaire within two weeks. The data were then organized and represented using graphs and tables. Findings were analysed according to the research questions, conclusions drawn and implications and recommendations stated.

Population and sample

The study's population consisted of the 87 Jamaican secondary schools with trained librarians. Each of these schools had approximately 200 fifth formers, making the student population 17,400. The sampling frame for the schools was the latest edition of the Ministry of Education's formal directory. The Jamaica Library Service list was used and supplemented by the Library and Information Association of Jamaica (LIAJA) list to determine the school libraries managed by trained librarians. Fifth form students were selected because their five years of secondary school attendance would have provided them adequate exposure to their school library activities; furthermore, they were a month away from exiting high school to enter the world of work or higher education.

The Krejcie, Robert and Morgan "*Determining Sample Size Chart for Research Activities*" (Powell, 75) was used to arrive at a sample size of 372. However, 400 students were selected from 20 schools to allow for absentees, unwillingness to participate and any other unforeseen circumstance. Simple random sampling was used to select 20 schools and 20 students from each school. Twenty schools librarians responded with a total of 366 students.

Data collection instruments

The data were collected from two newly developed instruments. The first set of items on the instruments sought participants' demographic information. The other sections of the school librarian's instrument were constructed in a table format. The table in the first section had the three life skills measured listed at the top along with the library activities likely to develop these

skills. The second, third and fourth tables included the list of activities, and the ways in which the activities were likely to be planned and delivered. Participants were asked to place an 'X' to indicate that the activities were planned and implemented in the school library.

The students' data collection instrument was also in a table format consisting of 38 items related to their perception of the impact of library activities on the three life skills identified. The Likert Scale responses – strongly agree, agree, strongly disagree, disagree and does not apply – were placed beside each statement. Students were instructed to place an 'X' to indicate their responses.

Findings and analyses

Findings from the school librarians and students will be presented and discussed together where possible so that data from both sets of participants can corroborate the findings.

Capacity-building activities for building the life skills of self-confidence, responsible citizenship and interpersonal skills
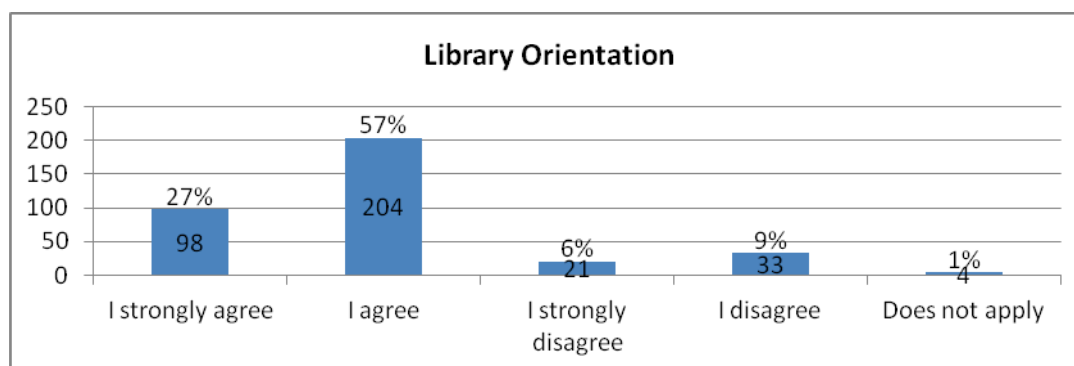
Orientation

The following table shows the library activities likely to build the targeted life skills of selected participants, as well as the number of school librarians who have implemented these activities.

Table 1.1: Activities School Librarians Implement to Build Self-confidence, Produce Responsible Citizens and Improve Interpersonal Skills

Self-confidence Activities	No. of school libraries	Responsible Citizens Activities	No of School Librarians	Interpersonal Skills activities	No. of School Librarians
Library orientation	19	Used library monitors	10	Literature circle	4
Knowledge creation		Intellectual Property Rights	20	Inquiry-based learning	13
Teach Computer literacy	18	Keeping records	14		
Research strategies for finding information on the Internet	18				
Career guidance	15				

The data in Table 1.1 show that all the school librarians included the specified life skill building activities in their library program. Nineteen out of 20 school librarians conducted library orientations to help students confidently use the library to find needed resources. As seen in Figure 1.2, this assumption is supported by the 27% (98) who strongly agreed and the 57% (204) who agreed to the statement, "I can find materials in the library on my own because of the library orientation I received."

Figure 1.2 The Impact of Orientation on Participants' Confidence in Library Use

Therefore, 302 out of 366 students were able to use the library independently because of the orientation exercises. However, 6% (21) and 9% (33) indicated strongly disagree and disagree, respectively, to this statement. It is possible that these students were independent users of their libraries at the primary school level and transferred the skills with them the secondary school. Only one library did not have library orientation, which reflects the 1% (4) students who responded "does not apply."

The data show that nine of the 20 school librarians planned their orientation sessions with teachers and 10 planned with library staff only. One school librarian reported that orientation was planned with class leaders. Eighteen of 20 school librarians also noted that orientation happens only once per year while seven confirmed that students who came to school after the school year commenced were given library orientation during their first week.
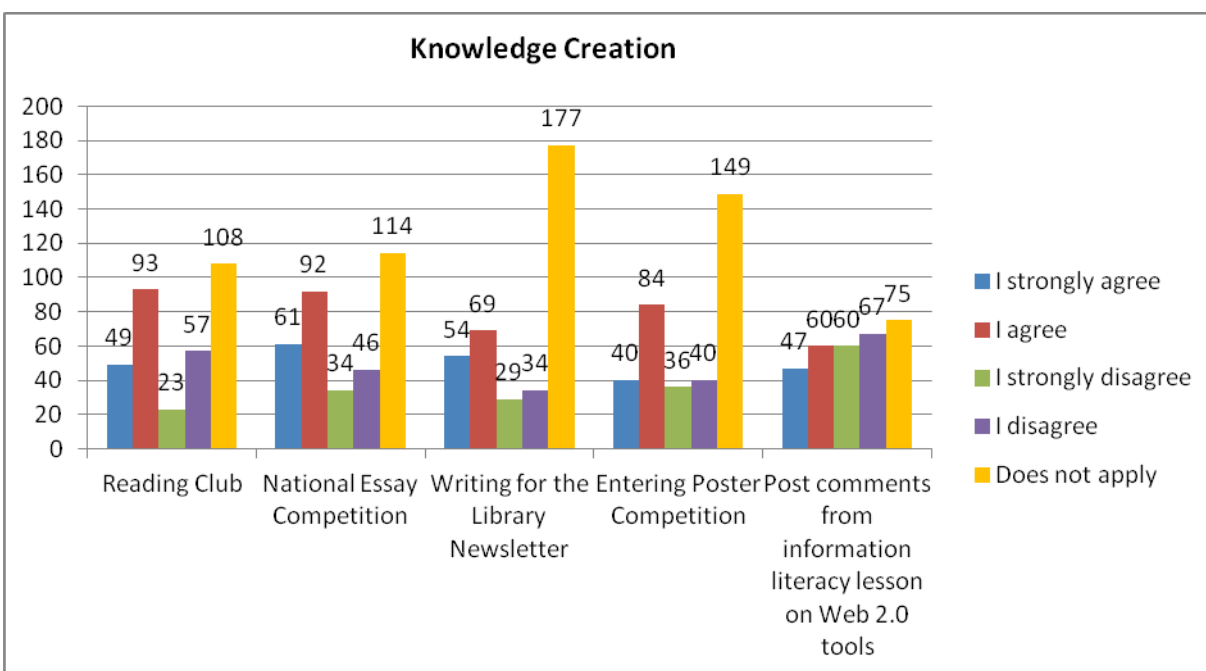
Planning with teachers only or library staff only was not ideal as collaboration with teachers would have given students a sense of the importance of the library and would most likely have seen it as an integral part of their learning experience. It appeared that the majority (13) of these school librarians were not aware that students who were admitted to the school subsequent to the library orientation should have been oriented to help them become better acquainted with that particular school library before using it independently.

In spite of shortcomings in the orientation process, it can therefore be concluded that these librarians have built students' self-confidence by engaging them in library orientation. According to the United Nations' document on life skills (2003, 7-3), this orientation process would give students coping and management skills needed in different contexts. Building this life skill was extremely important as these students were exiting secondary school to enter institutions of higher education where the effective use of libraries would impact the quality of their assignments.

Knowledge creation

Eleven of the 20 school librarians had students creating knowledge. According to Figure 1.3 below, knowledge was created by way of reading clubs, national essay competitions, school poster competitions, writing articles for the school library newsletter, blogging and tweeting information about information literacy lessons.

Figure 1.3 How Knowledge was Created

The data in Figure 1.3 show that when the strongly agreed and agreed are combined for activities encouraging knowledge creation, these school librarians implemented various activities that students indicated helped them gain confidence creating knowledge. According to the data, only nine school librarians collaborated with teachers in their reading clubs to involve students in writing stories; thirteen involved students writing for the school library newsletter as a library-only activity; seven worked in partnership with teachers to have students enter school and national essay and poster competitions. One school librarian specified that wiki and blogs were used to create knowledge and this was planned as a library-only activity. The high percentage of "does not apply" reflects the number of school librarians (11) who did not implement these activities.

It is evident that there could have been more collaboration between school librarians and teachers. Through collaboration, the library would not be seen as peripheral to both students and teacher. The other librarians could have involved the literature teachers in the reading clubs, as they could have help with the clarification and reinforcement of concepts taught in students' literature classes. Furthermore, the English teachers could have provided valuable

assistance in creating knowledge for the school library newsletter. Not only would students benefit, but also the teachers' perception and use of the library would also improve curriculum.

The data in Figure 1.3 show that 43% of the 330 strongly agreed and agreed that reading club activities helped them to gain confidence in their writing, while 47% who participated in national essay competitions strongly agreed and agreed that they have gained confidence in their writing skills. Thirty-nine percent of participants strongly agreed and agreed that writing for the school library newsletter helped them gain confidence producing information. Twenty-seven percent strongly agreed and agreed that the school poster competition increased their confidence in writing, and 34% of them strongly agreed and agreed that they benefitted from posting information about their library lessons on Web 2.0. Those who indicated strongly disagree and disagree might have felt their writing skills were already sufficient.

The high percentage of "does not apply" for each activity (reading club –108, national essay competitions –114, writing for the school library newsletter – 177, entering school poster competitions – 149 and posting comments on web 2.0 tools – 75) cannot be overlooked as it signifies that a large majority of students are not exposed to activities that will transform them from being mere consumers of information to actually producing information. School librarians' workloads could possibly contribute to the absence of these activities as anecdotal evidence shows that they often teach at least one other subject in addition to information literacy. Those who did plan and implement these activities were able to build students self-confidence in creating knowledge, which Lances suggested as a new mission for librarians: to improve society through facilitating knowledge creation in their communities. This life skill has prepared them for the writing that will be required at the university level or in the workplace.

Acknowledging intellectual property

Eighteen of the 20 school librarians engaged students in acknowledging the intellectual property rights of creators. Six of the librarians planned collaboratively with teachers and 12 as library-only activities. These librarians taught students to avoid plagiarism by using in-text citation and writing a list of references used at the end of their project or paper. One school librarian indicated that students were advised on how to cite as the need arose. Another stated that students created a poster with the theme, "*Are you a Plagiarist*?"

Figure 1.4: Confidence in Citing Sources

Confident in Citing Information Used

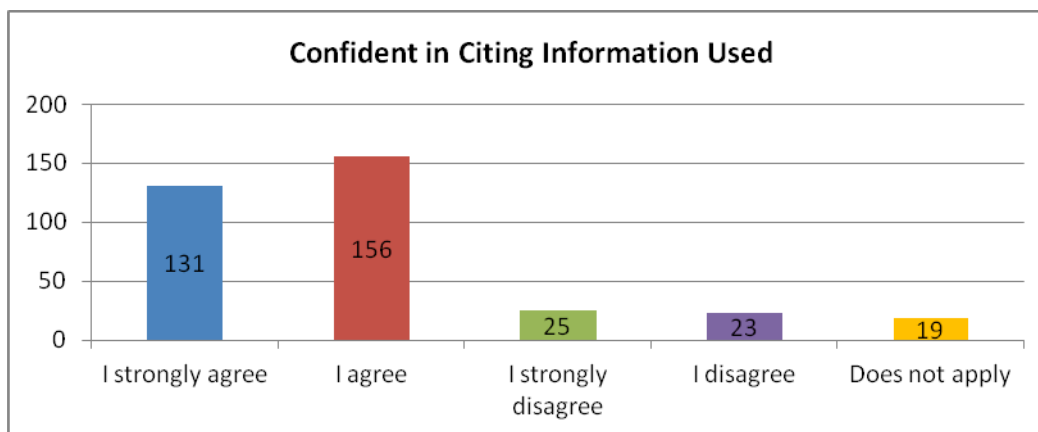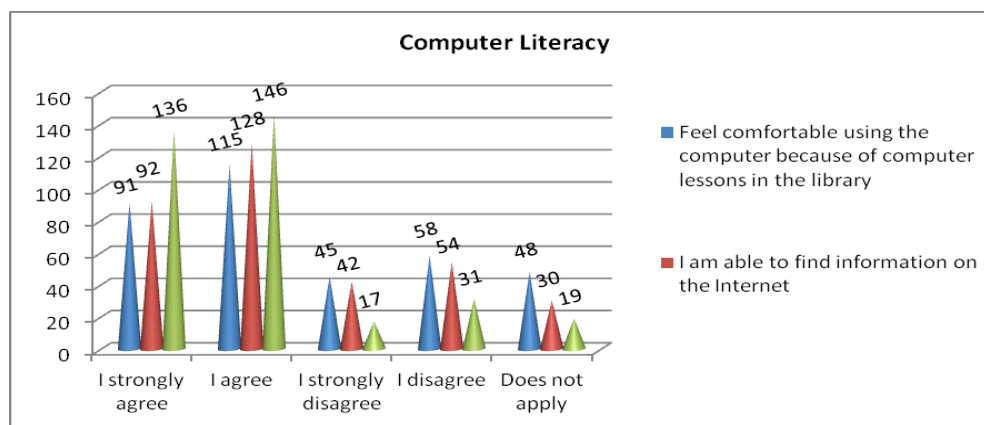| I strongly agree	I agree	I strongly disagree	I disagree	Does not apply
131	156	25	23	19

Figure 1.4 indicates that 287 of the 366 participants strongly agreed and agreed that they were confident in citing information correctly because of the lessons they had received on citing information in their essay, projects or research papers. Those who strongly disagreed and disagreed might have taken for granted the necessity of citing sources correctly as a life skill, especially for those who intend to go on to higher education. Of concern is the 5% (19 students) who indicated "does not reply," as it seems there were no formal lessons on plagiarism in their libraries.

It can be concluded that this life skill was instilled in the large number of students who indicated strongly agree and agree. This will prevent them from plagiarizing, a serious problem among students today, and foster confidence in citing sources when they enter a higher institution.

Computer literacy

Twelve of the 18 school librarians who taught computer literacy planned the lessons as a library-only activity; eight of them planned in collaboration with teachers and with the technology department. The lessons included word processing, using excel, finding information on the Internet and evaluating websites.

Figure 1.5: Confidence Using the Computer Because of Library Instructions

Computer Literacy

Legend:
- Feel comfortable using the computer because of computer lessons in the library
- I am able to find information on the Internet

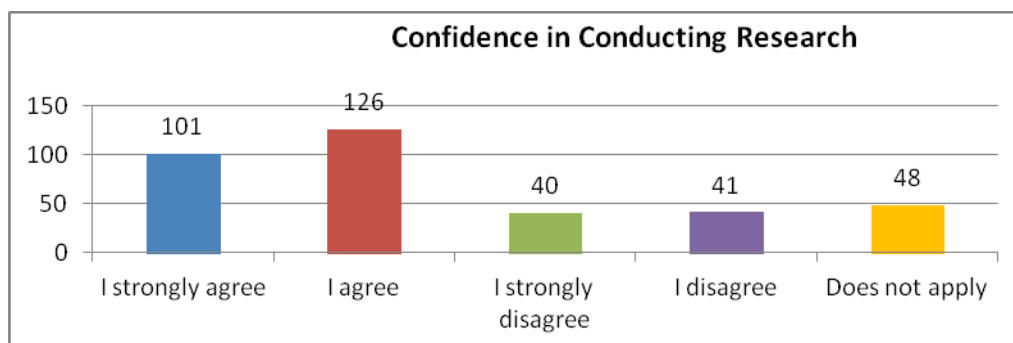|	I strongly agree	I agree	I strongly disagree	I disagree	Does not apply
Feel comfortable using the computer	91	115	45	58	48
I am able to find information on the Internet	92	128	42	54	30
(third series)	136	146	17	31	19

A total of 57%, or 206, of the 357 participants indicated that they strongly agreed and agreed that they felt comfortable using the computer because of the computer instructions given in the library. The 29% who strongly disagreed and disagreed might have already been able to use the computer sufficiently well. Two hundred-and-twenty, or 64%, of the participants responded that they were now confident in finding information on the Internet. The 96, or 28%, who strongly disagreed and disagreed might have not acquired the skills for searching precisely for the information they sought. A large majority, 82%, or 282 participants, indicated that they gained confidence that the information retrieved from the Internet was accurate because of the lessons they received on how to evaluate information on websites, while 5% responded "does not apply." Those who replied "does not apply" might not have computers but no Internet access, as is true of some Jamaican schools. However, the overall findings showed that within this population students gained self-confidence in the use of computers and for retrieval of required electronic information from library activities as discovered by Todd and Kuhlthau (2005, p. 63).

Research strategies

Seventeen school librarians indicated that they taught research strategies. Five planned their teaching session with other teachers while 12 planned it as a library-only activity. Five school librarians indicated that they taught research strategies only to students who were conducting research.

Figure 1.6: Confidence in Conducting Research

The data in Figure 1.6 point out that 237, or 63% of the 356 participants who responded to this question, developed confidence conducting their research because of research strategies taught by their school librarian. This was an important life skill as students needed to complete a number of research projects in the final two years of high school. The grades for these projects, called School Based Assessment, were added to the students' external examination grades. The 81, or 33%, who strongly disagreed and disagreed might have been unable to successfully complete their research projects because they did not fully grasp the research strategies taught.
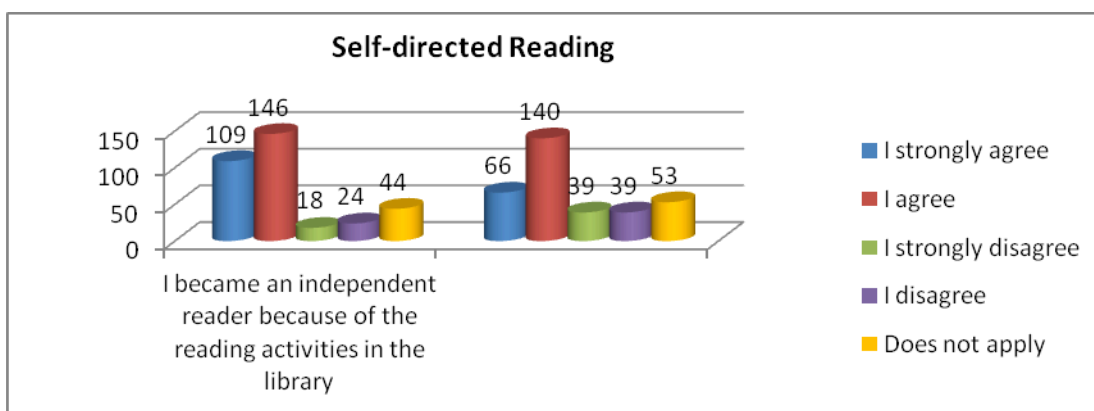
Forty-eight, or 13%, indicated "does not apply." These students might not have obtained any formal teaching on research strategies, with this teaching.ad hoc or, as one school librarian indicated, "taught as the needs arise." Findings suggest that overall, these school librarians can be commended for developing students' confidence in conducting research. This confidence is needed for higher education as well as the work place where participants might be required to do market research for their employer. Scribner (2012, n. p.) supports this notion, stating that

"in a time when information literacy is increasingly crucial to life and work, not teaching kids how to search for information is like sending them out into the world without knowing how to read"

Self-directed reading

Fifteen of the 18 school librarians included the following activities in their school library program to promote self-directed reading: Sustained Silent Reading (SSS), Drop Everything and Read (DEAR), and supplying titles and genres to meet individual reading interests and connect students with needed books or other reading materials. Ten of these school librarians planned these activities with teachers while five used it as a library-only activity.

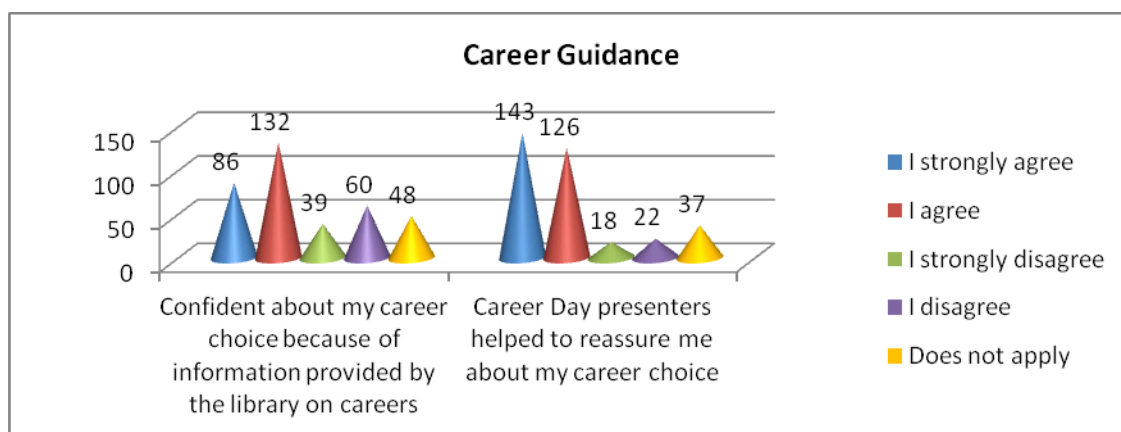Figure 1.7: Students Became Self-Directed Readers

The data depicted in Figure 1.7 indicates that 255, or 75% of the 341 participants who responded to this statement, became autonomous readers because of the reading activities to which they were exposed. This was supported by the reading guidance provided by the school librarians as indicated by 206, or 62%, of the participants. Some students are avid readers and these might be the 42, or 12%, and the 78, or 24%, who strongly agreed and disagreed in both instances. It is therefore safe to conclude that the majority of these school librarians have developed students' confidence in reading to the point where they have the ability to self-direct their reading materials (Sanders-Brunners, 2004, p.40).

Career guidance

Twelve of the 20 school librarians implemented activities pertaining to career guidance. Eight of them planned collaboratively with the schools' guidance counselor while four collaborated with teachers. Among the activities involved was Career Day, which comprised presentations by various professionals and human resources specialists, and presented books relating to several careers. One school librarian mentioned that a list of careers was placed in the libraries along with the qualification for each and the institutions offering programs for each career.

Figure 1.8 Confidence in Choice of Career

As a result of Career Day activities, 60%, or 218 of the 366 students who responded, became confident in their career choice, as indicated in Figure 1.8. The 27%, or 99, students who strongly disagreed or disagreed might have already decided on their career choice without the influence of any Career Day activities. The "does not apply" response represented those school libraries that did not have any activities pertaining to career choice.

It can be deduced that from the activities related to career guidance students in these schools have developed the life skill of confidently selecting a career. This is significant because these students were about to enter higher institution where they had to select a program to match their career choice. Others who planned to enter the world of work selected and pursued subjects that would qualify them for the job which they would seek.

Responsible citizens

Library monitor

Ten school librarians used some of their students as library monitors. The structure that seven librarians used was to have a recruitment and selection process. Six librarians had an initiation and three, job descriptions. Eight had a supervision program in place. Six indicated that their library monitors got special privileges and provided them with rewards.

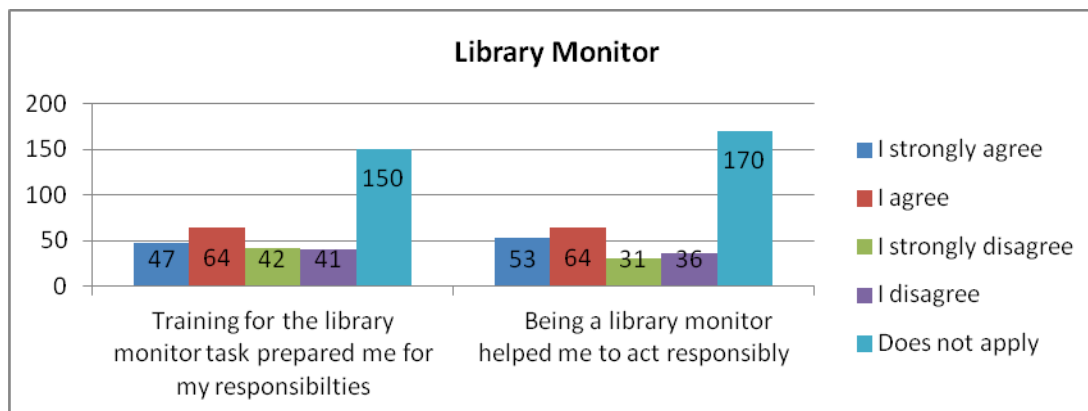Figure 1.9: Library Monitor's Role in Making Students Responsible

Figure 1:9 illustrates that 33%, or 111 of the 244 students who responded to this statement, were trained to assist in the library. The 24%, or 83, who strongly disagreed and disagreed that the training helped them become more responsible might have been selected because the librarian saw some level of responsibility in them. It is clear that a large number, 44%, or 150, were not exposed to any form of training for this position. This was a serious omission by these school librarians because students needed to learn some basic skills in order to function effectively and efficiently as library monitors.

Figure 1.9 also signifies that being a library monitor helped 33%, or 117 students, develop the life skill of responsibility. The researcher does not believe this low percentage means the majority of library monitors were irresponsible but that they might have judged themselves as being responsible before being assigned the task of library monitor. It was also discovered that a large number of students were not selected as library monitors.
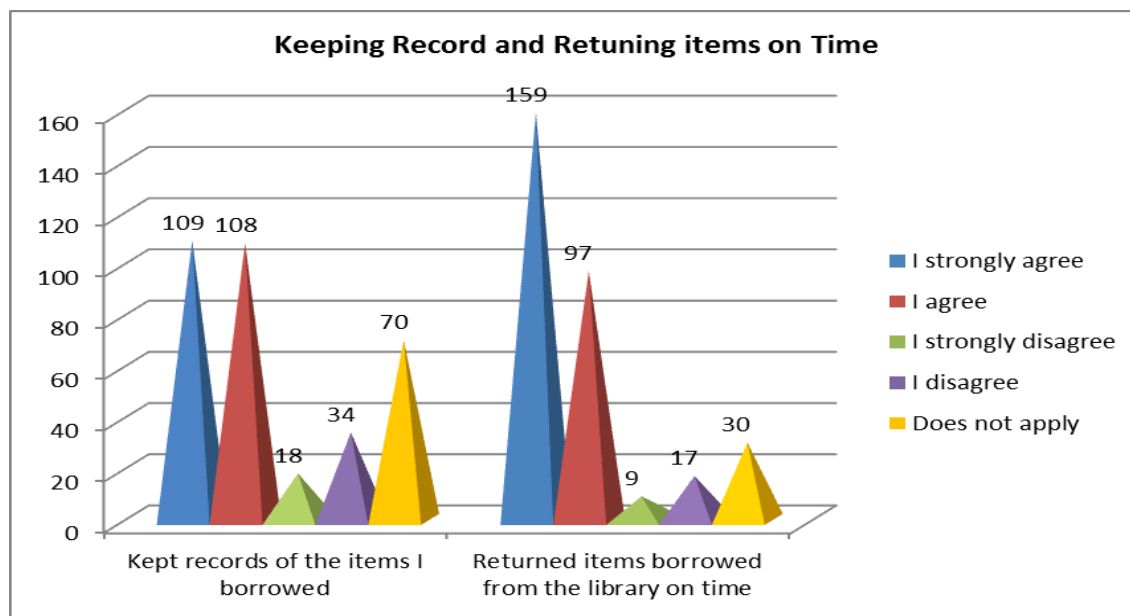
Ethical behaviour when using the Internet

Two school librarians indicated that they taught their students ethical use of the Internet. One taught it as a lesson within the school library program and the other had seminars with students on this topic. This seems to be an important area that these school librarians have neglected, particularly in this technological era when individuals are using the Internet unsrupulously.

Keep records

Thirteen school librarians included record-keeping in their library program to help students become responsible. Twelve had students use a separate notebook to record the bibliographic details to be used in writing references. Twelve had students use this book to record the due dates of items borrowed from the library.

Figure 1.10: Keeping Record and Returning Borrowed Items on Time

The data in figure 1.10 indicate that 64%, or 217 out of the 339 that responded to this statement, indicated that they have developed a sense of responsibility because they have been taught to keep the record of references used as well as the due dates for items borrowed from the library. This sense of responsibility is reflected in the high "on time" return rate of 251 out of 312, or 82%, of those who strongly agreed and agreed that they returned items borrowed on time. The 54, or 15%, who indicated that keeping records had no impact on them returning borrowed items on time might have been those who did not need this reminder.
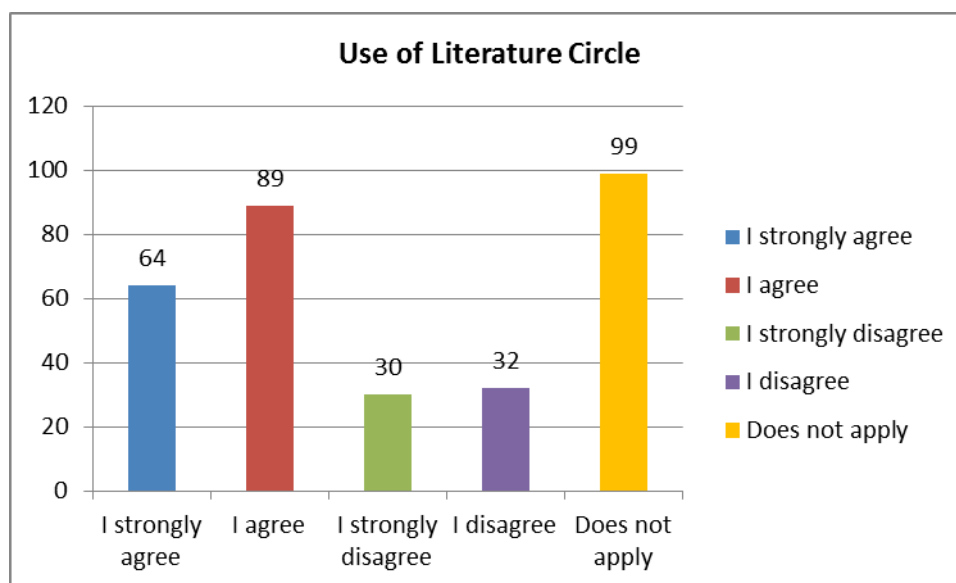
Studies on school libraries such as the one done by Hinds (2013), indicate that there are students who do not use their school library for reasons including: cannot find the information they need (47). It would appear that those who indicate "does not apply" in both instances might have been the non-users of their school library.

School library activities developing students' interpersonal skills

Literature circle

Four of the twenty school librarians included literature circle as a part of their library program. Three librarians indicated that their literature circle was designed to include face-to-face group work with each group member having a designated role. These groups were supervised by librarians as well as teachers, and were guided by rules.

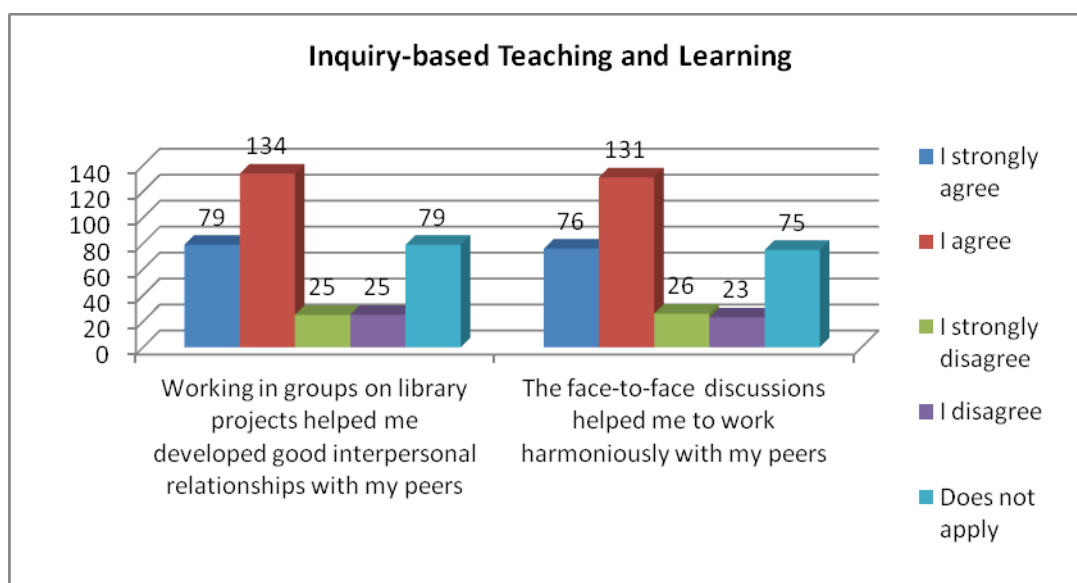Figure 1.11: Impact of the Use of the Literature Circle

Of the 314 students who responded to this statement a total of 153, or 48%, said they strongly agreed and agreed that their involvement in the literature circle activities have enhanced their social skills. It is apparent that the face-to-face discussions improved their interpersonal relationship with their peers and social skills such as "waiting their turn" and "listening attentively." Fifty-two, or 20%, strongly disagreed and diagreed that this activity impacted their interpersonal skills. It is possible that these students' interpersonal skills could be their strongest intelligence according to Howard Gardner's (1983) theory of multiple intelligences. The 99, or

32%, who indicated "does not apply" were students not exposed to this activity, possibly due to librarians' time constraints. However, it does appear that the literature circle activities were able to build students' interpersonal skills as they created an environemnt where students were able to work together(Brunner-Sanders, 2004, p. 4).

Inquiry-based teaching and learning

Thirteen school librarians used the inquiry-based approach as one method of instruction. This approach was structured to give students project-oriented assignments to facilitate cooperative work and strong interpersonal relationships. As illustrated in Figure 1.15 this approach did help improve students' interpersonal relationships.

Figure 1.12: Impact of Inquiry-based Teaching and Learning

Of the 333 students who responded to this statement, 213, or 62%, indicated that working in groups helped them develop good interpersonal relations with their peers; for instance, the discussions students had while working together helped them work harmoniously. There were 50 students, or 14%, and 49, or 13%, who expressed that working in groups and face-to-face discussions, respectively, had no impact on them. These students might have naturally possessed good interpersonal skills.

Conclusion and implications

Based on the findings, it can be concluded that many of the Jamaican school librarians in the study implemented various activities in their libraries to build students' self-confidence. The findings can be used to confirm that school librarians play a vital role in instilling self-confidence in students, and can do this collaboratively with teachers. It should also be noted that the environnment created gave students the opportunity to participate in activities that would help them practice the skills learned to the point where they felt comfortable applying them and sharing them easily share ideas with their peers and with others.

The findings also indicate that majority of the school librarians implemented activities that seemed effective in making students responsible for how they carried out their duties, and socially responsible for the way in which they used information. The practice given from being library monitors should provide them with the lifelong learning skills required to act responsibly beyond the school environment. Developing responsible citizens from the high school level is critcal to all families, communities and nation.

In addition the findings also demonstrate that the role of school libraries goes beyond educational goals to getting students to interact harmoniously with one another. These school librarians have managed to engage students in activities that have developed their interpersonal skills so that they are able to interact with their peers as well as the school librarians. The collaborative approach these school librarians took was a model to students as they observed their classroom teachers, technology teachers and guidance counsellors working with their librarians to deliver instructions. Although students may not have fully understood what they observed they should be able to replicate this type of behaviour when they are in a position to plan activities.

The findings also show that more of these activities should have been carried out collaboratively with subject teachers. This would have allowed students more opportunities to practice the skills learned thereby facilitating reinforcement. The library would then be seen as an extension of the classroom, a place integral to their learning.

Implications

These research findings clearly imply that, in addition to improving academic performance, Jamaican school libraries can provide activities to develop critical life skills in students. As a consequence each school should have a fully functional school librariy and librarian become au fait with the various activities that they can introduce in their library classess to help them as they grow and learn to function well in their community.

Recommendations

An analyses of the data and the conclusion drawn suggest the following recommendation

1. Considering the many "does not apply" responses, Jamaican school librarians need to practice greater networking among themselves so that they can learn from one another those activities that can be introduce in library sessions to produce students with the requisite life skills.

2. Greater collaboration between school librarians and teachers in the planning and implementation of activities that can take place in the library to develop the targeted life skills

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Bio Data

Paulette Stewart is a lecturer at The University of the West Indies, Mona in the Department of Library and Information Studies. Dr. Stewart was elected Librarian of the Year in 2009 by the Library and Information Association of Jamaica and served as the President of this Association in 2010. She received the Ken Haycock Leadership Award in 2006 for her outstanding contribution to librarianship in Jamaica and the Takeshi Murofushi Research Award in 2010 to conduct research on the attendance pattern at the IASL conferences from 1998-2010. Her research interests include information literacy and school libraries, and library education.