EFFECTIVE MANAGEMENT OF POST PRIMARY SCHOOL LIBRARIES FOR EDUCATIONAL EXCELLENCE

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BEING

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ABSTRACT

Despite the present state of school libraries in Nigeria, this paper proposes strategies through which they could effectively, efficiently and successfully be managed. It concludes that hope is still not lost and that if the proposed strategics are adopted and implemented, school libraries could help produce an excellent school and Educational systems.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The history of Education in Nigeria shows that it has undergone major changes ever since the submission of Asby commission report of 1964. Infact, Bello (1984:63) averred that since the adoption of this report, various Govts of Nigeria have been trying to improve the Education system of the country. This zeal according to him led to the continuous review and revision of the country's Educational programmes. The Establishment of Universal Primary Education (UPE) scheme and the formulation and subsequent revision of the National policy on Education (NPE) are just two important legacies produced by past Govts in order to improve the quality and quantity of education in the country.

The present Govt. of president Obasanjo, following the good steps of the past govts, has, in an effort to lunch the country into a new millenium with a befitting educational system, came up with another giant and important Educational programme known as the Universal Basic Education (UBE) programme. The scheme is specifically designed to ensure the acquisition of the appropriate levels of literacy, numeracy manipulative, communicative and life skills as well as the ethical, moral and civic values needed for laying a solid foundation for life-long learning. It is to cover primary and junior secondary Education.

At this juncture, I will hasten to note that the effectiveness of any educational programmes depends largely on the effective inputs of many Educational facilities: just as the school science laboratories, the curriculum and guidance depts, etc are important so also the provision of adequate and functional library facilities. Therefore to successfully implement and sustain the standard expected from UBE programme or any other, school libraries must be given their due position and roles.

It is evidently clear that the UPE programs and other strategies evolved by different govts to revamp the standard of education such as, the establishment of special, science and model schools have failed largely due to a number of reasons among which are the lack of adequate provision of school text and library materials, and also, in most cases school libraries are not well integrated into the planning of these programmes and strategies. Ibrahim (1995:1) criticized the formulation of book policies by some state Govts. He argued that these book policies would not have failed had school libraries been empowered to be the custodian of the book policies. Hence, an excellent school library with dynamic programmes should be an essential requirement for the UBE and educational system in general.

Coming back to the main theme of this paper and looking closely at one of the key words of the title-management, I wonder if I will do justice to this topic, especially as its relate to post primary school libraries. It is a known fact that only few post primary schools in Nigeria have libraries. Even those that have, they are without adequate funds, resources and qualified staff. So, in view of this, one fundamental question arises. What is there in these school libraries to manage?

My bewilderment is however bailed out by the simple definition of the term management by Appleby (1994:5). He defined management as a process by which scarce resources are combined to achieve given ends. In the same vian Brockington (1993:1) made it explicit clear that the most commonly presumed objectives of management is the maximization of the value of the firm. The Librarian glossary (1987:463) specifically defined library management as the techniques of organizing priorities, motivating staff, securing resources, and evaluating performance in order to obtain the optimum efficiency and benefit from a library service.

From the above definitions, it can be discerned that management have just have to do with the use of scarce resources to maximize the value of an organisation to obtain optimum benefits. From these definitions, Appleby (1994:25) has successfully identified four essential Elements of management, these are:

1. **PLANNING:** Includes determination of organisation objectives; planning the direction of the organisation; selection of objectives with the policies ,programmes and procedures for achieving them; and forecasting.
2. **ORGANISING:** Involves determining and noting activities needed to achieve the objectives of the under taking, grouping those and assigning such groups of activities to managers, ensuring effective' delegation of authority to enable activities to be carried out and providing coordination of authority relationships.
3. **DIRECTION:** Involves guiding and supervising subordinates. These subordinates must be oriented into the undertaking ways guided towards improved performance and motivated to wok efficiently towards enterprise goals.

4. **CONTROL**: Performance should be measured and evaluations from plans corrected or accounted for.

From the above foregoing it is significant to note that whatever little resources, funds, personnel and services that are available to the school library have to be well planned, organised directed and controlled if the school libraries are to make any meaningful impact on our school system thereby producing functional and excellent Education.

Again, before devolving into the act of managing school libraries, this writer will like to re-echo an earlier important point raised on the issue of effective management of school libraries. Ibrahim (1995) in a submission to the Committee on Guide and standard for school libraries in Kaduna state proposed that for meaningful development and effective management of school libraries, school libraries should be removed from states ministry of education and placed under state library boards. This proposal was accepted by Kaduna state Govt but unfortunately never implemented up to now.

The proposal averred how difficult it is for school libraries to develop and be effectively managed because school library services is just a section of a dept headed by an asst. Director/chief librarian in the ministry of education. This means that the chief librarian is responsible to a Director who is responsible to Director General or permanent secretary who in turn is responsible to the commissioner. Thus the management became very difficult in view of the bureaucracy the chief librarian has to go through before policies and decisions are approved and implemented. Additionally, the lack of enough and qualified staff for effective supervision of school libraries in the Ministry of Education hinder the Development and effective management of school libraries.

On the other hand placing School libraries under states library board will ensure proper planning, quick implementation of programmes and effective supervision because the board is a statutory government corporation, autonomous and manned by professionals. In the same vain, since the states library boards have a network of branch public libraries located in Local Governments headquarters and manned by both professionals and para-professionals, bringing school libraries under the boards would no doubt provide effective supervision at the grassroots level as well as unifying library services.

2.0 STRATEGIES FOR EFFECTIVE MANAGEMENT OF SCHOOL LIBRARY

In order for school libraries to become more relevant, effective, efficient and functional thereby helping to revamp and produce an excellent Education, the following management strategies have been proposed.

2.1 DEVELOPMENT OF SCHOOL LIBRARY POLICY/ MISSION STATEMENT

The School libraries should first and foremost come up with a written policy/mission statement which should include goals; missions; objectives; short and long term programmes, use and services up the library; and type of activities. The policy/mission statement should be "school – based", drawn in collaboration with principal and teachers. This is because as noted by Pain and Lesquereux (1985:33) needs differ from school to school due to the variety in pupil's background, curriculum, teaching methods, and even from year to year.

2.2 ESTABLISHMENT OF SHOOL LIBRARY COMMITTEE

The school librarian should also work towards setting up of a broad base library committee. Members of the committee should be drawn from among teachers identified to have interest in the development of the library. Also members should include one or two representative of P.T.A and old boys association each. The committee should serve in an advisory capacity as well as pressure group that will ensure that the school authority has accorded the school library its deserved attention. This committee will also ensure that all decision taken on the library are implemented.

2.3 FUNDING THE SCHOOL LIBRARY

For effective management of school libraries, there should be an adopted written policy on funding and procedures for budgeting, expending and accounting for funds. Ibrahim (1997:91) have identified four major sources of funds for effective management of school libraries. These include the setting aside of specific percentages of budgetary allocation to MOE, NPEC, SPEB, LEA and Education Tax Fund (ETF) for school library development; certain percentages of monies collected from PTA and old boys association should also be made available to school libraries for their daily purchases and needs; and finally, some schools charge various fees from the students: school fees, games, caution or even library fees. Therefore, also, certain percentages of all the monies collected should be allocated for the development and running of the libraries.

Monies sourced from the above should be well budgeted, expended and accounted for by the school librarian. When expending the money, particular attention should be given to providing services that would have direct impact on the teachers and the students. Newspapers and magazines

should be provided daily so as to attract teachers to the library and to encourage students to read for current affairs, especially members of press club, Quiz and debating clubs.

2.4 PLANNING

Planning is the most basic of managerial functions. It determines organization objectives and purposes thereby planning the direction of the organization. Planning involves selecting enterprise goals and department objectives, then finding the ways of achieving them. Plans depend upon the existence of alternatives, and then decisions have to be made regarding what to do, how to do it, when to do it and by whom it is to be done.

Therefore, it is essential for the school librarian to review and analyse the school programmes and activities for each term. From this, the librarian should set objectives for that term, draw up library programmes and activities, and strategies to meet these objectives should be evolved. Finally, specific checkpoints should be fixed in order to measure the progress of the above plans. It should be noted also that in drawing plans constant attention must be given to changing circumstances and many revision of plans may be needed.

2.5 MANAGEMENT SERVICES

To allow for the maximization of the value of the school library by both teachers and students, the school librarian should evolve, plan and sustain meaningful services that would have direct bearing on the school curriculum and on the teachers and students. The value of the school library lies not only in the collection alone but more on the unique services it provides. Bower (1971:10) argued that for itself alone, there is no reason for

a library to exist. It is assumed that the provision of these library services and activities would cultivate some library skills in the students and this will enable them to enjoy and make the library their second place within the school system. Equally, the provision of varied library services and activities would help students form reading habits and make them continue to read and consult books and libraries even after leaving school. This will in turn, undoubtedly, not only raise the standard of education but also help in producing an excellent Education.

In view of the above, library services such as book talk, story telling, puppet show, guide to research, etc could be done even with a small collection. Unique library services should be initiated by school Librarians, e.g. providing current awareness services, selective dissemination of information to various subject teachers and principal. Also different clubs and associations such as Quiz and debating, cultural and drama, press, man-o-war scouts, etc should be identified so that their needs be satisfied through the provision of services derived from the library collection and other sources.

2.6 MANAGERIAL SKILLS

In order to provide sound management to school library, it is imperative for the school librarian to poses the following managerial skills.

i. **TECHNICAL SKILLS**: Ability to use both library and Education tools, procedures and techniques in general and special areas.

ii. **HUMAN SKILLS**: Ability to work with and under-stand and motivate subordinates, teachers and especially students as Individuals and groups.

iii. **CONCEPTUAL SKILLS**: Mental ability to coordinate and integrate all of the school activities, especially in the long term decisions affecting the school.

iv. **OTHER SKILLS**: The school librarian also needs to be political, diplomatic, creative, initiative, Entrepreneur etc.

2.7 MANAGEMENT APPRAISAL

To ensure effective management of the school library, the school librarian should make a provision for periodic Evaluation of the school library resources, mission statements, vision, funding and services. Particularly with respect to: determining the extent to which the resources and services are meeting the needs of the curriculum and extra curricular programmes of the school. Provision should also be put up to measure or assess the impact of these services on the teachers, students and the Entire school system. These checks and balances would no doubt help the school librarian to plan and replan for effective, efficient and successful management of school library for an excellent Education.

3.0 CONCLUSION

This paper concludes that despite the sorry state of school libraries in the country, school libraries could still be managed. The paper therefore believes that if strategies proposed in this paper are effectively put to use, the value therein in the scare resources and the school library itself could be maximized to obtain optimum benefit. This will undoubtedly make the desirable impact in our school system and will help in producing an excellent Educational system for the new millenium.

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