

**CONFERENCE PAPER**

**NO.2**

**The Role of School Library Media Centre in the  
Management of Education Resources**

**BY**

**H. M. Daudu (Mrs.)**

**Librarian**

**Institute of Education**

**A.B.U.Zaria**

A paper presented at the conference of the Association of  
Education Planners and Managers in Collaboration with the  
Department of Education A.B.U. Zaria. 21<sup>st</sup> August 2001

## Abstract

The paper started by assessing the term "Media Centre" that is currently in some quarters used in place of School Library. The functions of the media center were enumerated. Using the resources provided at the centre, the paper discussed what both teachers, curriculum planners and students can benefit, from the media center. The paper gave a run-down of what would be required to establish school libraries. Among the requirements apart from materials, personnel requirement was discussed. The paper agreed with other writers that a professional is required. Finally, the paper discussed the monitoring role of the ERC vis-a-vis its position in promoting Library services in schools.

## MANAGING EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES

### INTRODUCTION

Libraries and audiovisual programmes are what make up educational resources. They have been cited as critical in the changing process of education. In many countries, school libraries have been transformed into or renamed "instructional materials center" which others simply call it "Media Centre". This is because although the name Library is still seen above the doors of such centers, the appearance as well as the functions have changed. In the library are found a comprehensive sources of materials in many different forms including transparencies, a bird's nest and other authentic objects, tape cassettes, microfiche, filmstrips, recordings, books, magazines, pamphlets, models. They are all the print and non-print resources used in the instructional program or for the recreation and enjoyment of the students.

### FUNCTIONS

According to Nickel (1975) the school library media center functions as a vital instrument as well as a basic requirement for quality education by enriching all parts of the educational process. It reflects and supports the philosophy of the school; it reflects and implements the school's aims and objectives.

As a dynamic and integral supporting component of the total educational programme, the school library media center is many things. It is

- a resource center
- a learning laboratory
- a teaching agency
- a service agency
- a coordinator
- a guidance agency

How does it perform this multi-faceted functions? As a resource center, all form of printed and audio-visual communication and their complementary technology are organized and stocked for accessibility and utilization.

As a learning laboratory, it makes available materials, which will enrich and implement the curriculum providing materials and facilities for research and self directed learning.

As a teaching agency, it teaches students how to find information and encourages them to use a variety of media while at the same time keeping teachers informed about new materials.

As a service agency, it is structured in such a way as to serve students and teachers, circulating materials and equipment to where and when they are needed.

Its service as a central depository for all forms of media makes it a coordinating agency. It is a place in the school where anyone may come at any time.

That it helps students learn to study effectively and provides assistance to them in exploring a wide variety of materials makes it also a guidance agency.

In performing the functions of a recreational center for reading, viewing and listening it provides a wide variety of recreational materials and assistance to students in selecting these materials, also using a variety of promotional techniques to encourage use of materials.

The School Library/Media Centre therefore functions as a central source of all kinds of teaching and learning materials, as a service agency for the people it is at present servings, and as an agent for change. Infact these functions portrays the center as multi-dimensional.

The usefulness of an educational resource center is seen through the activities it undertakes. Such activities include:

### **ACQUISITION OF MATERIALS**

The media specialist derives a great satisfaction in bringing together a child or young adult and the right material at the right time. This, indeed, tends to take precedence over any other task.

The library plays a central role in the selection and acquisition of materials to support the total instructional programme that is centred around the educational resource center. The school library according to the American Association of School Libraries has the responsibility:

- To provide materials that will enrich and support the curriculum, taking into consideration the varied interests, abilities and maturity levels of the pupils served.
- To provide materials that will stimulate growth in factual knowledge, literacy appreciation and ethical standards.
- To provide a background of information which will enable pupils to make intelligent judgements in their daily life.
- To provide materials on opposing sides of controversial issues so that young citizens may develop under guidance the practice of critical reading and thinking.
- To provide materials representative of the many religions, ethnic and cultural groups and their contributions to their heritage.

Materials acquired to enhance quality education are of two categories – print and audiovisual materials. There are criteria that should be a guide in selecting and acquiring them. For print materials the criteria are under the following:

- Suitability of materials
- Qualifications of the subject matter
- Format of the book
- Recognized value

For audiovisual materials the criteria are:

- Content should effectively fulfill the desired objectives of the teacher and the curriculum
- Content should be true to fact or true to life and true to text if based on writing.
- Judge filmstrips, slides and other visual materials for their style of presentation, originality and other aesthetic qualities.

The expedient thing to do is to make one's selection from the printed materials that one actually sees: new books and magazines on the shelves or bookshops, or the salesman's catalogue/list etc. But it is unwise and undesirable that a library restricts itself to only new and recent materials.

Ideally all materials – print and audiovisual should be read and examined before a decision is reached. In reality, librarians rely greatly on many kinds of lists and catalogues containing materials of both types, selected and annotated by experts. The best lists, however, are those compiled by librarians and subject specialists who have

critically read and review the books listed. The review/annotation gives an idea of the subject matter, the target audience, the format and complete bibliographical data.

For audiovisuals, special tools are used for selection. Since there are numerous companies advertising audiovisual equipment, it is easy to simply select the ones most attractively advertised or sold locally. But it is wiser to examine and read descriptions using selection criteria such as: performance, sturdiness, reputation, safety, provisions for service and repair etc. Also special criteria for projectors, television receivers and other items are necessary.

A perfect selection job is impossible but the use of expertly compiled lists and guides; together with slow and careful consideration of each possible title in relation to the needs of the individual school will assist in making wise selections.

#### **BASIC CONSIDERATIONS IN SELECTION**

To those responsible for selecting school library materials, the wealth of books, films, filmstrips, tapes, pictures and other media available is in itself a challenge. The needs of the school is however most paramount. There are certain basic books, which nearly every secondary school needs, size or educational goals notwithstanding, e.g. particular reference books. For others, the library staff should decide. Even as selection continues, opportunities will come up for finding out more closely the needs and interest of teachers and students. Changes may take place in curriculum, which may necessitate development of the library's collection in new directions.

The librarian should be aware of what he/she encounters while trying to select and acquire materials for the library. These encounters can include the format of materials to be acquired, up to type based on the location of the school, which may lead to self-



ensorship. Care should be taken that balanced collection is acquired. Balance collection include the materials the teachers want and materials that meet the needs of the curriculum which the teachers may not be aware of. In the selection process, the curriculum and the student body of the individual school must always be kept in mind. It is for this reason that the librarian/educational resource specialist must always be part of the curriculum design process. He is not just to be presented with a complete list of curriculum design as a matter of routine; he is to take an active part in its creation because the ultimate responsibility is on him to provide the appropriate materials. There can be no talk of materials in an educational resource center being the backbone of quality education in the area it serves if the specialist is left out in the policy-making process.

#### **PROCESSING AND UTILIZATION**

The materials selected and purchased by/for the media resource center are meant to be used. Yet, they cannot be used if they cannot be found when needed. To be found, they have to be logically organized. This is what cataloguing and classification are all about.

The media resource specialist needs a knowledge of cataloguing and classification mainly to understand how the basic principles can be applied and modified when necessary. All the steps in processing materials are necessary even if they serve as means to an end. (Providing materials needed to serve the school). Processing had been made much easier through "cataloguing-in-publication (C.P.) - a cooperative effort between the library of congress and some publishers whereby bibliographic information is provided

on the verso of the title page. Machine Readable Cataloguing (MARC) is similarly made available.

School Library media centers generally use the Dewey Decimal Classification (DDC) scheme, which is most suitable for them. For their centers, elaborate and detailed classification may not be necessary; hence no need to use more than two or three numbers beyond the decimal point. Centres may even create some systems of classification that they find convenient by using easily identifiable symbols e.g.

F – For fiction

SC – For story collections

E – For easy (i.e. juvenile) materials

R – To indicate “Reference” with or without the classification number

B – to generally designate biographies

Cataloguing also need not be elaborate. If the specialist considers it not necessary to go the whole hog, the first level of description may be applied where the barest necessary details are given thus, saving the time of the staff and preventing the process of searching from being confusing and cumbersome to the pupil.

It is however desirable that subject headings be given-assigned to each item as a whole – books, filmstrip, cassettes recordings etc

## **PERSONNEL**

All the functions and activities discussed above can only be performed by a professional in the Educational Resource Centre who should act as a guide to the librarians in the schools. The growing demands on the school library require a variety of extra skills that can only be found through training of more than one person and who

would subsequently work as a team of specialists. For instance the organizer of the school library/resource center needs to have skills for information storage and retrieval; selecting items to be purchased or borrowed from outside; organizing lending systems; advising students in their choice and use of materials for their work, giving advise on source materials. In short skills in information retrieval, organization and dissemination.

As a result of the additional roles of school libraries with media resources, technical skills are required for those who would work with sound recording, video recording, photographic techniques, graphics and design simple maintenance of equipment.

However, for the full exploitation of the materials and opportunities provided by those staff, there must be active involvement of all the teaching staff. Not only would they be consulted on the choice of items included in the collection, but they should also evaluate the educational effectiveness of the selection of materials and equipment.

The need for professional librarians to take charge of the Educational Resource Centre library cannot be over emphasized. It will take only a professional to be able to supervise the establishment of school libraries effectively. Likewise, schools will need professionals or at least para-professionals to be charge of school libraries. This is in compliance with the provision in the National Policy on Education (1981).

#### **REQUIREMENT FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT OF LIBRARIES**

In establishing school libraries there is need for space. Space allocation should be related to functions, which include:

- Large and small group reading and study
- Large and small group viewing and listening

- Individual browsing, reading and study
- Individual viewing and listening
- Instruction
- Housing of materials
- Housing of equipment
- Management of routines
- Information services
- Acquisition

Space should be large enough to house the materials and equipment to be use in the library

- Adequate lighting is necessary everywhere
- Temperature and humidity should be controlled

The building plan should be able to provide the following facilities:-

- Reading area
- Circulation area
- Reference area
- Workroom/Office area
- Open shelves for books and non-print materials.
- Current and backset magazine/newspapers shelves
- Space for housing A.V. equipment
- Space for producing and storing materials and teaching aids.

Though itemized, each facility doesn't need to have one area to itself. Rather those that serve related functions can be combined into one large area.

The reading area usually also will include the circulation area, the reference desk and even current magazines and newspapers stand.

The workroom area may also include space for production, maintenance and repair of equipment and teaching materials. Also for storing back issues of magazines, housing of audiovisuals and even office for staff members.

#### **THE ROLE OF E.R.C. IN MANAGING EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES**

Educational Resource Centre according to Edwards (1973) should store a wide range of books; non-book printed and graphic materials audio-visual software and apparatus needed for their operation; and objects such as models, specimens etc. It should have records of all materials in the school and in addition provide an information service about materials, organizations, persons and places available outside the school, which would aid the learning process.

The Resource Centre should form a link between the state and the schools whereby more expensive educational materials could be stored at the state's Resource Centres and schools could use them through the states centers. Some people believe that a teacher must be closely involved in the production of many of the resources he is to use. This is true, but there are some limitations; the problem of uneconomic duplication (in case of expensive equipment), the difficulties of knowing what other people are doing, the problems of catching up with ever increasing demand, and the relative isolation of the classroom can be handled by E.R.C. who would simply provide actual links from one school to the other.

## CONCLUSION

Much of the preceding discussion is on the school library/media center. What is implicit however is that the ERC has the function of not only facilitating the establishment of such but should also set the standards as well as play the monitoring role of ensuring compliance in terms of such standards, materials, staffing, etc

As it is, the best way of leading is by example: the ERC can set up a model from which others can copy while such would simultaneously serve the immediate locality. It is not unusual that the headquarter building and facilities are often the best from which the rest take their cue. However, the ERC would be in a rather weak position to call the time, if on its own it has nothing to point to as an example.

Its personnel should be well knowledgeable in ideals and standards so that their monitory can bring out the best results. Though the degree of success may depend on funding, yet with whatever is available something can be seen to be done.

## REFERENCES

1. Allan, Margaret (1974). *The School Library Resource Centre*. – London: Crosby Lockwood Staples, p. 42.
2. Case, R. N. and Lowrey, Ann Mary (1974). *Curriculum Alternatives Experiments in School Library Media Education*. – Chicago: American Library Association, p.53-70
3. Nickel, Mildred L. (1975). *Steps to Service: A Handbook of Procedures for the School Library Media Centre*. – Chicago: American Library Association, p. 1-44
4. *School Library Resource Centres: Recommended Standards for Policy and Provision, a Supplement on Non-Book Materials* (1972). Chicago: Library Association.
5. Saunders, Helen E. (1968). *The Modern School Library: Its Administration as Material Centre*: Methuchen. The Scarecrow Press Inc., p. 54