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PROVISION OF SCHOOL LIBRARY SERVICES FOR ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE

H.M. Daudu H. M. Daudu

The need for school libraries can hot be over-emphasised, The Federal, government ackhowledge the importance of libraries in schools. The school library plays -a- vital role'in education as a\ laboratory does. The library provides,materials that support, the. curriculum. This is done through careful selection of such materials, by.a professional Materials selected are not Only books but include others such as artifacts,, specimens, charts, filmstrips etc. Funds have to be providea to enable the school to make any meaningful contribution to the education programme of a school

Introduction

A good educational environment consists of the teacher, the pupil, and teaching/learning materials. The world of knowledge is introduced to the pupils by the teacher who, remains a source of inspiration and help. A successful teacher is ultimately measured by the ability of the pupils has taught to learn independently. Good teaching demands that students consult many sources of information which are available mostly only in the library.

The pre-eminent position of the library in the realization of objectives is re-emphasized in the National Policy on Education thus:

"Libraries are one of the most important educational services. Every state ministry needs to provide funds for libraries in all our educational institutions and to train librarians and library assistants for this service".

It is, therefore, stating the obvious to say that the school library is an indispensable unit in any school, whatever its educational philosophy. It serves as an instrument for the enrichment of learning, student guidance and an alternative to formal classroom atmosphere. The school library can serve as a workshop, a center for research and independent study, inspiration and communication. It has always been a stimulus to students with superior academic aptitude. Its multi-faceted functions has made it come under various names like:

instructional materials centre, learning resources centre, educational media centre, names deriving from a feeling that the library must participate more fully in the technological revolution in order to fulfill its mission.

The Librarian as a key figure

The essential purpose of the school library/media centre is to help students find the media and information which they need to carry out classroom assignments and

satisfy their own personal interest. The librarian who is a specialist in his field works with teachers to enrich the programme of instruction by providing the necessary materials and organizing them for efficient use, teaching the students what the materials are, and how they are used.

In modern school library, the work of a librarian is now complex. This requires a corps of specialists to staff the library properly. While the head librarian functions as the chairmen planning, setting out policies, assigning duties, and meeting with other chairman, another librarian would be involved in the selection and acquisition of materials. Yet, another would be part of a teaching team, co-ordinating library instruction; and another handling the schools audio-visual programme.

Management, in its broad application, is working with and through individuals and groups to accomplish organizational goals. The school librarian's management techniques will play a vital part in ensuring that the school library achieves its aims and objectives. The major resource in the school library, in terms of its effectiveness and funding, is the school librarian. There is always the tendency to concentrate too much on the organization and effectiveness of other resources like books or equipment and play down the importance of effective management of the persons responsible for the management of the school library. Most school librarians make use of pupil, assistants to cope with routines like issue and discharge, shelving, newspaper cutting and filling of cards.

To provide adequate guidelines for resource provision in schools, school librarians may produce written policies on the types of materials to be required, the purpose of the materials and the criteria to be used in the selection. This policy is of greater effectiveness if it is drawn up by the librarian and teachers.

The aim of a School Library

According to Ogunseye (1993), a school library is an essential facility for continuing the education of the teacher and improving his teaching methods, and techniques. It is also a means through which students improve their learning capacity by making good use of the resources available in the library. For the school library to meet up these, all resources must have direct relevance to the curriculum of that school. Resources need to be selected bearing in mind the abilities of different ages and groups in the school. Relevance to the schools curriculum is the main criterion for selecting resources and also the main criterion for retaining them. Resources of all kinds will have to be constantly checked to see whether they are still up-to-date and are still relevant to the schools curriculum.

One major aim of the school library is to facilitate pupils' use of curriculum related resources which are usually acquired and organised. Since the aim of the library is to ensure that these resources are put into use, it is its responsibility to provide the means of accessing the resources through easy information retrieval system such as:

i. Card Catalogue:

The school library catalogue is not only to produce a list of resources for stock

check, but also to provide pupils with an educational tool with which they can find out about the existence of particular resources. It will also enable learners to discover links between resources in different formats and resources related to the pupils particular search terms. In developed societies, card catalogues are being replaced by OPACS (On line Public Access Catalogues).

A school's information retrieval system will reflect the structure of the curricular topics and the terminologies which exist in the syllabus of different courses. Resources will be indexed according to how they will be used, who will use them and in what curricular context they will be used.

ii. Computerised information retrieval

In developed countries like Britain, many school libraries are now using microcomputers, a normal part of their roles as information providers. There has been a remarkable growth in the creation and use of curriculum-related database which has allowed school librarians to discuss with teachers the problems of pupils' access to variety of resources.

New developments in school Librarianship

The use of books in the library cannot be considered in isolation since it continues through each successive stage in education. However, we have noted that the traditional school library has lost out to the modern resources center. Thus, within the confines of the school library building, we encounter not only books but other materials-mostly non-books, too. Some of which include:

a. **Artifacts and specimens**

While an artifact is an article made by man, a specimen is an article made by nature. Artifacts include stamps which are stored in albums, coins and medals in view-pack, while shells, buttons, geological specimens and similar objects inserted into polythene bags and labelled are classified as Artifacts. Specimens need not go through the usual classification. But as real charts, they should be stored in tubes available in different lengths in plastic or cardboard forms.

b. **Charts**

Physically, they are difficult to control but a few are small enough to be dealt with e.g. illustrations. Others need protection since the slightest careless handling can easily damage them beyond repair. If a chart does not have to be folded, it can be treated, catalogued, and filed as an illustration. But as real charts, they should be stored in tubes available in different lengths in plastic or cardboard forms.

c. **Filmstrips (Black and White, Coloured or Tinted)**

A filmstrip is a length of film normally 35mm wide containing a number of still camera shots. In the sequence in which they appear, they may form a story or a

serried in steps in the development of a theme. They may be photographs of places, people or object. They may be diagrams. Some are in cassettes requiring a compatible projector for viewing. Others will require a filmstrip hand-viewer, a film strip projector or projector which takes slides or film strips. A strip may be cut into separate frame and put into slide mounts. Although, this introduces some problems of organization for the librarian in terms of cataloguing and classification. Just like books, they are accessible. Hence, they can be shelved. They can be stored in container and labelled and then kept in shallow drawers made for the purpose.

d. **Illustrations**

Wall charts have been part of the equipment of most classrooms and they have been established as a valuable visual aid. Unfortunately, much of these potentially valuable materials have suffered from unsuitable handling mainly due to lack of wide, shallow drawers which will ensure that items will remain flat, and easily handled. Lateral filing is preferable so that in assembling and classifying materials under subjects, a folder can be used to accommodate a certain coverage of subject in the way a shelf in a book accommodates a particular subject coverage of books.

e. **Periodicals**

The current issue of every periodical should be on display in the library where it would be accessible to every one. It should be displayed in its own place.

Funding

Funding for books in school libraries should never be treated in the off-handed manner that is characteristic of the Nigerian educational system. In the ideal sense, this is well understood by planners, hence the statement in the National Policy on Education that "every state ministry of education needs to provide funds for the establishment of libraries in all educational institutions". This comes within the context of section 12 of the policy which states that "financing of education is necessary to provide adequate and balanced financial support for the educational system".

In fact, the school library should be adequately financed so that it can meet its many demands for the provision and furnishing of library rooms as well as grant for the books, equipment and stationery. For books, provision of fund is not even a once-and for-all affair. It is recurrent because a library stock cannot be static in the face of the need to acquire current publications on new and existing subject areas, replacement of old editions, replacement of lost or damaged copies and, indeed, the continuous development of the collection. Obi (1977) opined that funding is required for the constant maintenance of the building and equipment which may even need to undergo some changes and renovation.

In the National Policy on Education, some ways of funding school libraries were indicated. Such ways include:

- Recurrent grant on the basis of enrolment

- Grants for capital project
- Special grants for specific education project.

It is not known to what extent governments on their own part have been faithful in providing the needed funds. But it is common knowledge that almost to the last, all arms of the educational sector have been crying out for more funds or complaining of woefully inadequate funding.

To worsen the situation is the fact that state and local government hardly comply with the letters of the National Policy on funding. Special provision are not made for libraries. Or where they are made, they are usuallydiverted into something else. The ministry officials are to function as monitoring agencies while the schools insist on complying with the National Policy. The ministries are the best-places to observe any anomaly and set it right. But one wonders whether they do so. There is supposed to be a centralized school library system recognized. It is only when the centralized school is recognized that funds set aside for the libraries would be utilized under close supervision and fair distribution of materials to individual schools can be ensured.

The Federal Government of Nigeria has considered the education of its citizens sufficiently important to enter into a loan agreement with the World Bank which resulted in setting up of such bodies as the National Primary Education Board (NPEC). These organization have been trying to rehabilitate the education sector through establishment of model libraries in their headquarters, and encouraging the establishment of same in schools. Schools have to take the challenge and see that libraries are established.

Having a school library is right. But a regular supply of funds is the first requirement in the process of establishing a library. It is essential that a regular sum be made available regardless of gifts or donations. Gifts are no substitutes for steady, planned development. Nigeria has grown beyond relying on donations to build its collections, particularly school libraries. Of course, donations can form only part of library collection but not the main part.

Standards for School Libraries

Of the value of school libraries there can be no argument. That is why many countries set up standards to them guide in the establishment of school libraries. In Nigeria, the Nigerian Library Association took up the responsibility of setting standards for School Librarianship in Nigeria. Standards of School Librarianship are related in most countries. Based on the London Library Association standards, it is hereby recommended that principals should adopt these standards for establishing libraries in their schools:

a. Provide books and other learning materials for the staff and pupils of the school. Its resources must satisfy the demand for books and materials for personal and individual use;
b. Employ staff who should encourage the use of the library and provide opportunity for

learning how to use it;

c. Encourage the development of a collection which will meet:
   i curricular requirement needs and background reading
   ii. culture development and out-of-school interest
   iii the need for home reading
   iv. the need for provision of opportunities for learning how to use books and of training in the use of libraries. Where possible, these opportunities should be offered during the course of study or day-to-day-work.

d. Set a strong administrative and financial base for the library where:
   i. there would be close cooperation between the education authority and the school library. For this to be achieved. there should be school library service department financed fromthe education fund.
   ii. the school library would be encouraged to cooperate with the public library near it.
   iii. all education authorities would have a defined policy on the provision of school libraries.
   iv. all library staff working in schools would be given opportunities to attend regular meetings organized for them.
   v. the principal would ensure that appropriate learning environment for high success is provided. The learning environment includes the establishment of a library/media centre which the principal should support. His level of support will be determined by the efforts he makes to ensure that materials are acquired regularly, and that adequate use is ensured.

e. Ensure the Status and Qualifications of Staff can meet the challenges of the School:

For the school library service to play an integral part in the education services of a school, it is essential that it be staffed with qualified librarians who would be able to communicate with all appropriate levels of educational personnel-advisory, administrative and academic, as well as with the pupils/ students themselves.

f. Provide Funds for Library Collection:

School Library which is to be really effective and of maximum use to the staff and students must contain a well- balanced and carefully selected stock. The needs of all students should be taken into consideration with proper regards for the complete range of their ability.

When a new school library is to be established, the initial expenditure should be met by a special grant. Heads of schools should pressurize government to release some special grant for the establishment of school libraries, where they are not available.

G. Provide a School Library Accommodation:

Library areas must be so designed as to enable staff to carry out their functions

effectively. Ensure that the house built as a school library is not converted into something else.

Conclusion

The facts outlined above as standards for the establishment of School Libraries go a long way to confirm that the need for libraries in Schools can not be overemphasized. Libraries are needed because no single medium can represent information in every way except different sources are pulled together. Elaturoti (1990) stated that the modern philosophy of education recognises an educated individual as one who has learned how to learn to think and to use methods of disciplined inquiry to examine and explore ideas as opposed to one who has memorized facts. The library is a good tool for developing such an individual. This paper, in agreement with these facts, is suggesting that school libraries should be established without delay. This is one of the factors that will improve the quality of education in the country.

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