

DEVELOPING AND RUNNING A VIABLE SCHOOL LIBRARY

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Introduction:

The School Library exists to help the students and teachers gain the most they can out of school instructions. Therefore, by definition the school Library is "Where children learning resources are organised for the purpose of effective teaching and learning in schools, it is a resource centre for any school" (Gupiyem, 1988.).

Why School Libraries are Necessary in Schools

According to Sharr's Report (1963) "School Library should and can contribute to, and enrich all the educational aims of the school". The report further stated that the specific aims of any ideal library are:

- (a) To teach and excise students/pupils in the use of books and of a collection of books as tools of enquiry;
- (b) To stimulate and encourage free-choice reading both as a means of acquiring facility in reading for enrichment of experience, mind and personality which worth while reading brings;
- (c) To implant in the students/pupils the confident assumption that a library is the natural place to obtain information;
- (d) To train children to have self control, respect for public properties and other social disciplines;
- (e) To help foster a love for reading among the young ones.

These aims are transitive. This stems from the conception and definition of a library as not a building, not a quantity of books, but a dynamic organism of people, books and techniques. Subsequently, a school which lacks dynamic spirit is useless in any society (especially Nigeria). Therefore to put a collection of assorted books in a room and expect students/pupils to find their own way among them, unaided is as fruitless as putting apparatus and reagents into a laboratory and hoping the pupils will thereby learn chemistry.

In a similar vein Obi (1977: pp1 & 2) informed that a good school library can make the following contributions:

1. Promote the developing of reading skills and encourage long-term learning habits through reading, listening to and viewing a variety of learning materials. Such learning habits form the key to continuous success in school, and to the personal enrichment of leisure time throughout life. A student who learns to read does not automatically become a continuous reader. The habit must be encouraged by the provision of interesting and challenging reading materials both for study and recreation;
2. Provide a framework for academic achievement in present schooling and increase students' chances of success in institutions of higher education, or other professional pursuits;
3. Provide students with vocational information leading to the choice of a suitable career;

4. Help in discovering and developing the special gifts and talents of students;
5. Train students to study independently by providing a wide range of materials for class projects, individual reports, and class assignments;
6. Provide up-to-date resources to keep staff and students abreast of new developments.

In the light of the role and importance of library services in enhancing educational and national development in Nigeria, the Federal Republic of Nigeria documented in the National Policy of Education of 1979 and revised 1981 that, "Government will establish junior school libraries in every school, ~~state-ministry~~ ^{Ministry of} and that every education will provide funds for the development and maintenance of the school libraries; and also train librarians and library assistants for this service". This points to the fact that school libraries are vital in national development. It is therefore necessary for all those involved in the educational development in our society at all levels, to implement this to the latter.

Essentials of a good school Library

A good school library contribute essentially in maintaining and upholding high academic standard in a school. Such a library is usually a point of attraction to serious students. Therefore, it is important to encourage the development of good school libraries in any dynamic society. The essentials of a good school library as postulated by Obi (1977:5 & 6) include the following:

1. A room to house the library that is not used for any other purpose. It should be open for library purposes a maximum number of hours. It should be the size of at least two classrooms. It should accommodate existing library stock and provide shelves for the additions. It should seat not less than one class at any give time. Unless the space is a temporary location for the library it must provide for expansion by possible extension of the block, redesign of corridor space etc.
2. Good ventilation. This is particularly important in the tropics. To ensure the free flow of air through the building a single width construction is recommended with sufficient windows for a through breeze.
3. Natural lighting during the day time and fluorescent lighting at night to prevent eyestrain.
4. An attractive appearance - Light airy, bright and colourful - which will invite both pupils and teachers to make use of its resource. some of the ways in which this can be achieved are by the use of Formica-topped tables, colourful chairs, artistically painted walls and patterned floor tiles. The arrangement of the library furniture, the books, as well as special displays of the books also play an important part in the overall appearance of the library.
5. A separate workroom with a locking store.
6. Storage facilities, preferably a separate room, for audio-visual materials and equipment.
7. Optional, but highly desirable, is a separate reading hall which can also serve as a classroom for library lessons and audio-visual education.
8. Also highly desirable is a permanent notice board outside the library entrance (covered with glass to protect it from the weather) to provide:
 - (a) details of the times the library is open;

- (b) Regular notices of new books and new exhibitions;
- (c) Any special announcements;
- (d) Library Regulations.

Developing An Ideal School Library

In the opinion of Oni-Orisan (1987) that school libraries have often been in the forefront of provision for students as total persons with a wide variety of interests and needs. To him that school libraries are well suited to arrange facilities in a way that expenses the attitude that human beings are makers and users of knowledge not just custodians of it and that the mastery over materials usually develop with freedom to discover new users for them.

To achieve the above and also to enable an effective well run viable school library, it is necessary that the following needs be done by Ogunshye (1978) and Elaturoti (1990).

A. (i) Material Selection and supply

For any library to be effective it must have a stock of books and other materials carefully selected to further its purpose. The selection, odd to be continuous to take care of current publications and revised editions. Problems of book selection in schools could be in any of the following ways:

- (a) Lack of consistent policy;
- (b) Lack of adequate knowledge of students/pupils' difficulties and interest.
- (c) Unfamiliarity of teachers with books outside their own academic field and private tastes;
- (d) Lack of bibliographical information on books in print and new books;
- (e) Unskillful book selection by teachers who have naturally had no training in the techniques. For it is difficult for a person who is not a librarian to put aside his own subject business and select books objectively.

(ii) Book Selection Policy

The aim of book selection policy is to acquire materials that the user needs. It is sad to note that in most of our schools (Nigeria) there are no set down selection policies to guide whoever is in charge of the library. However, it is recommended for schools to set a library committee with the librarian or teacher - librarian (someone with some knowledge of librarianship) to be the Chairman and thereby come up with a selection policy that will guide the librarian in his selection of materials for the school library.

(iii) Discarding of Materials:

Discarding materials in any library is the obverse of books selection and is almost equally important. A book should be discarded when:

- (a) It is worn out, physically;
- (b) It is out of date especially if its actually misleading;
- (c) It is inappropriate to the present purpose of the library.

An expressed by Chukwu (1980) that the term "discard" does not mean to destroy, it means to remove from the library and dispose of, either by destruction or by transfer to

another library where the books is most appropriate. However, it should be emphatically stated that it is as much the duty of anyone in charge of a library to keep his stock alive and effective by discarding, as it is to strengthen and refresh it by the addition of new titles.

B. Staffing

Ogunsheye and ATCDE (1978) (1961:8) informed that staffing of a school library is needed for several purposes, namely:-

- (a) to select, discard and maintain the stock;
- (b) to teach and guide students/pupils in the use of books and other library collections;
- (c) to develop free-choice reading;
- (d) to help students/pupils overcome difficulties o reading and comprehension;
- (e) to organise the library in the sense of carrying out cataloguing, classification, displays etc.
- (f) to maintain routines such as the issue and recovery of library materials;
- (g) to supervise the library while it is being put into operation.

The library personnel should either be a professional or para-professional. The professional is the person who acquired degree or post graduate diploma in librarianship, while the para-professional, mostly got in schools, are those who have not attended professional training in librarianship. They learn on the job.

This category of staff known as library Assistants/Attendants, for effective organisation and supervision in any school library, it is necessary for schools to employ them on the staff list. This would enable maximum utilization of the library collections by users and it will guarantee opening of the library. Library Assistants' minimum qualification should be Senior - Secondary School Certificate or GCE (General Certificate of Education) or Grade II, whereas the Library Attendants should possess the minimum qualification of Primary Six or J.S.S. (Junior secondary school) certificate.

The major duties of the library Para-Professional include taking charge of the day to day running of the library and guiding users on how to locate materials and information available in the library. Where a school is to employ the participation of students in running the school library it requires, of course, enthusiasm, good leadership and time on the part of the teacher-librarian or library master to make it effective.

C. Accommodation

If a school is to fulfill the aims of establishing an ideal and viable school library, then it must have suitable accommodation, equipment and effective planning and organisation. It is good for the school library building to occupy a central position in the school (if possible); this gives room for proximity to every member of the school community, but it should not be too near noisy areas such as playing fields and dining hall.

Ideally, a library should be designed for that purpose, though many schools have to use rooms or buildings mainly designed for other purposes. Most of these are, or could be made attractive and suitable. The commonest structural defect is gloom due to inadequate natural light.

Consequently, if a library is to attract readers and stimulate reading, especially for pleasure, it must be attractive. The books should be in good condition and neatly arranged on the shelves, furniture, pleasant and cared for, the lighting should be good and the room clean and tidy.

An attractive library expresses at once, welcome, and it is a fact that those in authority regard it as worthwhile. Therefore the obvious way of encouraging library use is to make the place so attractive that students/pupils would like to go and use it.

As indicated by Sharr's Reports to Kaduna Ministry of Information in 1963 that:

One function of a school is to inculcate the social virtues of respect for property, self control, good manners, another is to impart standards of value. Therefore, a well kept library contributes to the aims, stated above and the effect on the user may be subconscious but it is real. While, an untidy, ill organised library with books in poor condition has the reverse effects. Students/pupils can be trained to respect public properties in not misappropriating books by building up pride in the library; Appearance is an important ingredient in pride. Therefore, appearance then is an important function in library service and not merely as a form of window dressing.

D. Finance

This, being the life-wire for the successful development and maintenance of any school library, adequate financial backing from the school authority is necessary. If the library is to grow and to continue attracting users, a standard reasonable allowance for a school library is ten books per head. This implies that the bigger the school the more books it is supposed to have in its collection. A viable library should have a wide variety and a reasonable balance between fiction and non-fiction. Such a library studies children's tastes and thereby satisfies such-needs. Therefore, room for development, should be granted by proper financial backing if the library is to grow to an ideal standard.

Operating a Viable School Library:

As expressed by various authors like School Library Association (1972), Chukwu (1980) and Mitchell (1989) that a viable school library:

1. is a centre where most of the pupils or students will normally go to enjoy the pleasure of reading. In large measure, the material for this enjoyment need to be found on the fiction shelves. book on these shelves should be loaned for reading elsewhere. The movements of the materials involved, should be planned as not to interfere with studious concentration elsewhere in the library.
2. is considered as centre for studies, whether these are part of the organised curriculum or the outcome of personal curiosity. Many books, very many books, are therefore required, books to supports taught and all aspects of integrated studies, and books on subjects that the school does not officially present, such as sociology, philosophy and aeronautics should be obtained in the school library. also books bearing on the school's social and club activities, and on hobbies and games should be obtained in such library as well. There must be space not only to house the books and other materials but to allow readers to settle with them quietly and without mutual disturbances.

3. is a reference area or area housing the dictionaries, encyclopedias, time-tables, guide books, year books etc. There should be a space or provision for laying down large volumes of references tools in the library and taking notes for them by users.
4. Should have two areas therein:
 - (i) For staff usage:- That is an office for their records, book-lists and clerical activities, and
 - (ii) A workroom store for the technical processing of new stocks.
5. Should permit teachers to bring a class of 30 or more younger students or pupils to the library to undertake special lessons requiring a range of books, magazines, Newspapers. Therefore, a room in the complex should be available and equipped for this purpose.
6. Lastly, the school that operates a viable library, in its time-table planning, should provide sufficient time for students or pupils, at all stages, for individual study. Such a time should be spent in the library, or in study room adjacent either to the library or to the subject teaching areas.

Ways in which a school Library should be viable

Gupiyem (1997: xviii) opined that a viable school library refers to the centre of excellence in any school with basic facilities, qualified staff, well stock and current materials, and the ability to render effective services to the community of users at any given time. This therefore means

for any school library to be viable , it should be balanced in its resource provision. According to Udoh (1983:3) that:

a good (viable) school library comprises a combination of any good instructional materials which should include textbooks, regular library books, newspapers, pamphlets, magazines, charts, globes, recordings, films, film-strips, pictures, specimens of objects and any other materials that would add to students knowledge and interest for exhibition purposes and further any other media of communication which contributes to students learning and for the teachers and researchers use.

To encourage the development and maintenance of viable school libraries in Nigeria, the following ways should be explored by school libraries and school administrators.

(i) Organise parents Day or open Day Show: Schools should endeavor to make it a duty to organize parents day or Open Day Show on yearly bases to generate funds for the purchase of library materials. It should be mandatory for every parent and guardian who has a ward or wards in the school to be in attendance and to contribute at least the minimum levy approved for each child by the committee charge with the planning of the Day or Show. Monies realised in such special occasion should be spent on up-to-date (current) library resources.

(ii) Appeal Launching: It is a truism that majority of parents in Nigeria can not afford to purchase for their children every single recommended textbooks by teachers. Therefore, organising Appeal Fund Launching for the purpose of equipping every school library is a

welcome view. Such an appeal fund launching can motivate parents, guardians, friends of the school and Philantrophists to donate freely toward this course. However, this can be organised every two years, three years etc., depending on mobilization. Donations can be in kind or cash and should be put into effective use to encourage donors. Highest donors should be moralized in the school library in every launching.

(iii)Charging library levy: The library is a dynamic organism which needs to grow and to be current at all times. Therefore charging library levy by every school will help in this direction. Consequently, every state Ministry of Education, Local Government Education Department, school library Board should permit the charging of library fees per child in every school. When implemented this will alleviate the problems of school administrators and soften the stress of school librarians in maintaining the status quo of a standard school library. I wish to recommended the minimum charge per child to be fifty (N50.00) naira per term. A separate account should be opened for this purpose, every kobo realised from such collection should be religiously used in improving the stock of the school library.

(iv)Contribution from Old students Association: Old students are always proud of their alma-mater, and the successful ones in the society always want to identify with there alma-matter. Therefore, school administrators should use such relationship to appeal to old students to contribute in kind and in cash in the maintenance of their school libraries. This can be encouraged thorough the main body of the Association or branches or sets. If this is done, it will certainly improve the standard of the school.

(v) Government subvention: Libraries in all sectors are service points in the institution or organisation they are established in. With high cost of printing, books are rarely obtained on library shelves. However, with information exploitation Government at all levels need to come to the aid of school libraries in form of quarterly subvention. It is recommended that Government should give grant - in - aid of minimum of N100.00 (One hundred naira) per child at every quarter. this will go a long way in solving the scarcity of library resources in schools, thereby making school libraries viable.

Conclusion:

In conclusion a well organised and equipped library is a pride to the institution and a centre for attraction to visitors, therefore all those involved in running schools, should endeavour to make school libraries in Nigeria to serve as models to other developing Countries. Consequently, as stated by Gupiyem (1994) that we should not be discouraged in our struggle to create conducive learning atmosphere in school s via the library services because of economic depression or inflation that affects the cost of library resources, but rather the long term benefits that such service in the school aim to achieve should be the goal of all and sundry.

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