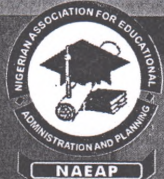
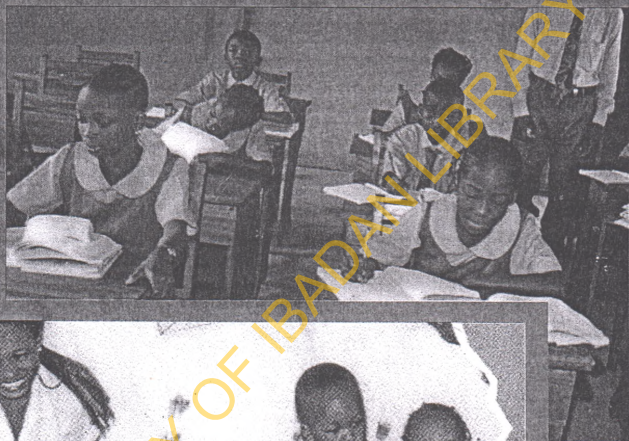


MANAGEMENT OF PRIMARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION IN NIGERIA



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Management of Primary and Secondary Education in Nigeria

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Managing Libraries for Effective Services in Nigerian Schools

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Abstract

This paper discusses how school libraries can be managed so that effective library services will be rendered in Nigerian primary and secondary schools. It views management from the process perspective and identified planning, organizing, staffing, controlling and directing as the management functions which the heads of school libraries have to perform so that effective services can be rendered. The paper also submits that the quality of library services depends on the level of performance of the chief executive of school libraries. It recommends formal training in both management and librarianship for school librarians so that they can perform well in their duties; the allocation of a percentage of the school subvention for the development of school libraries and the employment of only professionally qualified librarians in school libraries.

Introduction

Setting up of school libraries where both learners and teachers can search for information and update their knowledge is a global tradition. The school library is often located at a central place where every user can have easy access to it, perhaps because of its importance. Information is of great importance to the society. Information is essential in planning, decision-making and execution of programs. Aiyepoku (1982) describes information as being used to describe man's cumulated knowledge in all subjects, in all forms and from all sources which could help its users make rational decisions. Libraries from ages have been indispensable agents of information gathering, organization, storing, retrieval and dissemination.

Most library users depend on school libraries for acquisition of knowledge. The population of these library users is often large. Their information need is varying, often urgent and needs to be met on demand.

Most school libraries are not able to satisfy the user needs, because they are not properly managed. It is essential to manage library activities in such a way that will enable users to have greater satisfaction. According to Wilson (1972), school libraries are “the keystone of teaching and learning”. It is the heart of the school. No other single non-human factor is as closely related to the quality of education in a school more than a good library. In addition, it has been noted that a high quality education is impossible without a high quality library.

Aguolu (1983) is of the view that the school library is the most important organ in the institution. The academic health, intellectual vitality and effectiveness of any school depend largely upon the state of health and excellence of its library. Hence, the need to manage libraries efficiently in order to meet up the institutions’ goals. It is the responsibility of school libraries to acquire all the relevant information resources such as textbooks, journals, video tapes, cassettes, computers, photocopiers, cameras, microfilms, microfiche, etc. necessary for sustaining the teaching, learning, research and public service functions of the schools. They should also ensure that these resources are properly acquired and organized to facilitate their utilization by users.

Librarians from ages have been indispensable agents of information gathering, organizing, storing, retrieval and dissemination. Secondary school students and teachers depend on the school libraries for acquisition of knowledge.

Library is the engine room and the power house where information is collected, stored, processed and retrieved for usage. Sound academic pursuit rests on effective library services such as:

- teach all users about use the of a library;
- train library staff for library instruction;
- identify the problems and needs of users;
- recommend the inclusion of an elementary course on library skills in the school curriculum;
- educate teaching staff on how to use the library.

No academic institution whether primary, secondary, or tertiary can achieve educational objectives without effective library services.

School libraries in Nigeria today are currently facing financial crisis along with their parent institutions. This is due in most cases to the economic downturn in the country. Funding of school libraries in Nigeria is gradually decreasing. Most school Management Boards in Nigeria do not make any provision for the school libraries. Hence, most of them lack or do not have

enough educational materials and books, which users can consult. The quality of library materials, facilities and services has deteriorated in most cases. In older school libraries, renovation of buildings has not been carried out for many years. New buildings could not be completed or even embarked upon. The library stock of books, journals, and other materials are inadequate and outdated.

There is shortage of manpower at various levels. Materials like classification scheme, computers, etc. for processing and organizing the collection are also inadequate and those available are obsolete. Opportunities for continuing education of staff have diminished due to inadequate funding. Inter-library cooperation and communication have become very difficult and the dream of creating a functional national system of school libraries has not materialized.

Nevertheless, the school library is acknowledged in the National Policy on Education as one of the educational organs required to achieve the nation's educational goals. The services ought to be suitable for the challenges. According to Elaturoti, Udoh and Shyllon (2002), the newly established Universal Basic Education Programme has improved the state of school library service in the nation's primary schools. A cursory look at the school system in Nigeria suggests to us that many secondary schools have no libraries and the few that have could not meet the established minimum standards for school libraries. Thus, it is not surprising why Nigerian school libraries render poor services.

Libraries, like any other information system like record office, data centre, etc in school system, form a vital part of the world's system of education. Knowledge that has been accumulated through the ages is provided by the libraries through books, films, computer/internet, recording microforms, CD-ROMs and other media of information collection conservation.

Many people turn to libraries to satisfy a desire for knowledge or to obtain materials for some kind of leisure. Students, teachers, business executives, government officials, scientists and researchers require library resources for their various preoccupations. Thus, libraries play an important role in preserving a society's cultural heritage.

Every school needs a library. Teachers and students need to use the library materials in their teaching and learning processes. The achievement of a qualitative school education programme depends, to a great extent, on quick access to library materials.

The school library should be the heart of the school with a wide variety

of educational media such as books, magazines, newspapers and so on. School libraries provide boys and girls with some of their first experiences in using a library. Children go to their school libraries to listen to stories, to borrow materials and to get information for classroom assignments. The school library helps the child to build an enquiry mind and develop innate facilities that will enable him to put knowledge into good use.

The Problem

How can the school library be managed to enhance the quality of services rendered? Management refers to the use of scarce resources through team efforts to achieve organizational goals. Nwankwo (1982) and Fabunmi and Sheyin (2002) identified the functions of management as planning, organizing, staffing, directing and controlling. School libraries can be effectively managed if the management of school libraries performs well the five managerial functions mentioned above. Often it has been observed by the author of this paper that most staff of the school library lack the managerial competence needed for excellence.

The following directional questions will guide our discussion:

1. What is a school library?
2. What are the functions of school libraries?
3. What factors hinder the effective performance of these functions?
4. How can school libraries be managed to enhance effective services?

What is School Library?

The Oxford English Dictionary defines library as the storehouse of knowledge. It is the repository of information sources. One of the major functions of the library is to collect, organize, store and disseminate information. The school library is a resource center for students, teachers, researchers and others. The library provides answers to specific and general information queries and problems.

In the library, there are written, printed, information technology and other non-book materials like periodicals, films, and filmstrips, videotapes, audiotapes, microforms, study kits, atlases, calendars and other information-bearing resources. The above are learning, teaching, research and academic support materials geared towards enhancing the success of individual, group, institution, general academic and research endeavors.

There are different types of library in Nigeria as in other countries of the world. The different types represent different categories of people, professions and shades of opinion. We have the public libraries, special

libraries and academic libraries. School libraries fall into the category of academic libraries. Academic libraries cater for the learning, teaching, research and academic needs of students, teachers, and researchers in an academic environment. They support all the academic programmes offered in the institution. Examples of academic libraries are primary school, secondary school, polytechnic and university libraries.

The school library is viewed as a vital part of the school system. The objectives of the school system can be summed up as: conservation of knowledge; pursuit, promotion, and dissemination of knowledge through teaching; advancement of knowledge through research-pure, applied and development-oriented; provision of intellectual leadership; development of human resources for meeting manpower needs; promotion of social and economic modernization (Aguolu, 1983). School libraries are set up to assist in the performance of these objectives. Traditionally, the main function of libraries is to support the teaching-learning process and research needs of both teachers and learners. In order to perform this role effectively and efficiently, the librarian with recommendations from the students and faculty, acquires, organizes, stores and disseminates information to the target users.

It is generally accepted that the quality of library services depends to a large extent on the quantity and quality of its collections and the staff who provide the services. Traditionally, Nigerian school libraries built collections to meet the needs of their individual patrons. However, of recent, this pattern of collection development has been found to be unrealistic. The rate of growth of the libraries has reduced drastically as a result of the introduction of the Structural Adjustment Programme. The devaluation of the naira led to high cost of library materials and equipment. Since, most of these equipment and materials are imported from abroad, most libraries are no longer able to buy monographs and subscribe to journals.

Said (1987) laments that school libraries which are supposed to be "store-house" of knowledge are now without up-to-date books and journals, hence they are no longer able to perform their prime function of providing materials for teaching and research. This makes the researches that are being conducted using library facilities to be out-of-date. The situation has become appalling in recent years because of the increasing isolation of teachers in Africa. Most of them have not been able to afford to buy books for many years.

What are the functions of School Libraries?

The National Policy on Education (1998) stipulates the provision of libraries

in schools as an integral compliment of quality education and states that each school is to be provided with libraries which have trained staff to run them. The school library, according to UNESCO/IFLA School Library Manifesto (2000), has the following functions to perform:

1. supporting and enhancing educational goals as outlined in the school's mission statement and curriculum;
2. developing and sustaining in children the habit and enjoyment of reading and learning, and the use of libraries throughout their lives;
3. offering opportunities for experiences in creating and using information for knowledge, understanding, imagination and enjoyment;
4. supporting all students in learning and practicing skills for evaluation and using information, regardless of format or medium, including sensitivity to the modes of communication with the community;
5. providing access to local, regional, national and global resources and opportunities that expose learners to diverse ideas, experiences, and opinions;
6. organizing activities that encourage cultural and social awareness and sensitivity;
7. working with students, teachers, administrators and parents to achieve the mission of the school;
8. proclaiming the concept that intellectual freedom and access to information are essential to effective and responsible citizenship and participation in democracy; and
9. promoting reading and the resources and services of the school library to the whole school community and beyond.

What factors hinder the effective performance of these functions?

The common factors which hinder the effective performance of most school libraries include:

1. **Manpower problem:** In Nigeria, most of the primary and secondary schools do not have the trained personnel required for effective performance of library services. In schools where libraries are available, the typical library staff is a clerical staff without formal training in librarianship and information science.
2. **The Problem of Finance:** Most primary and secondary schools in Nigeria do not allocate any percentage of their subventions to the

development of their school libraries. In fact, some schools do not have any library. At the tertiary level, ten percent of the yearly allocation or subvention is meant for the development and maintenance of the library.

3. **Acquisition Problem:** Closely related to the problem of finance is the inability of most school libraries to acquire latest publications, such as books, journals, audio visual materials, computers, etc. Therefore, most library users have to use out-dated publications.
4. **Managerial Problem:** Most school libraries have weak leaders who lack the ability to source for fund and library materials. Most school librarians lack the rare privilege of combining formal training in management and librarianship. Thus, they found it difficult to effectively manage both human and material resources under their control.

How can School Libraries be Managed to Enhance Effective Services?

Effective management of school libraries entails efficient performance of the management tasks of planning, organizing, staffing, directing and controlling by the librarian. The librarian, as the Chief Executive or manager of the school library, ought to be well-trained in the art and science of management. The functions above are further exposed below.

Planning: The librarian should make good plan for the library. Planning is a deliberate, organized, continuous process of identifying different elements and aspects of an organism, determining their present state and interaction, projecting them in concert throughout a period of future time, and formulating and programming a set of actions with a view of attaining desired results (Branch and Robinson, 1968). A fore knowledge of the tastes of a consumer is a guide to the manufacturer to adjust his production processes to suit the customer as well as make more sales and profit. In the same vein, when a library service, at whatever level understands users expectations, it should adjust its services to satisfy them.

Organizing: The activities of the school library should be broken down into smaller tasks, and such tasks should be organized systematically with a view of enhancing performance. Organization is an important aspect to management. If the human and material resources are not properly organized,

no good result can be attained. As a result of this, staff members should be put in places where they will be most useful.

Staffing: Appropriate and adequate staff should be recruited for library services. It is only those that have the professional competence that can perform well in school libraries that ought to be employed.

Controlling: The school librarian should be able to carry along his subordinates in the discharge of his duties. He should be able to motivate them to perform and use appropriate management strategies to manage the school library.

Premised on the discussion so far, effective services will be rendered in school libraries, if the heads of such libraries are able to perform their managerial tasks well. Ability to manage organizations depends on experience and formal training in the art and science of management.

Conclusion

Training in both the art and science of management is very essential for librarians. This will enable them to perform well in the basic management functions. This paper identified the following as the basic management functions: planning, organizing, staffing, directing and controlling. Its submission is that school librarians will be able to manage their libraries well if they are able to perform the above management functions. The quality of library services rendered in schools will also depend on the librarian's level of performance of these management functions.

Recommendations

It is therefore recommended that: Librarians should be trained in the art and science of management so that they can manage school libraries well. Education authorities should assign 15-20% of the school subvention for the development of primary and secondary school libraries. On-the-job training in the art of librarianship should be provided for the staff without formal training on the job, while in the future only qualified librarians should be recruited for library services.

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