

**HUMAN RESOURCES FACTOR IN THE DEVELOPMENT
OF APPROPRIATE INFORMATION LITERACY SKILLS OF
THE NIGERIAN SCHOOL-CHILD; THE ROLE OF THE
TEACHER-LIBRARIAN**

By

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Abstract

Discussions on information literacy skills of the School child in Nigeria bring to mind a composite requirement of relevant human resource in the school library. The stakeholders have been identified as veritable human resource in the school library that should encourage the Teacher-Librarian to carry out effective library services of inculcating appropriate information literacy skills in the school child.

Introduction:

In this paper, we shall analyze the human resource factors in the development of appropriate information literacy skills in the Nigerian school child. The following questions will guide discussion. What is human resource and who are the school library human resource? Human resource is characterized by man in his ability to support or supply services that are utilized by other men. The human resource component promotes access to and use of the school library in order to improve student learning. For the school child to develop information literacy skills, it is essential to establish a desired contact between the child and the reservoir of information systems. This contact is made possible by available human resource in the school library. The most valuable asset

of a school library is therefore, its human resources that is, its organised work force that should fulfill the plans and objectives of the school. The human resource gives life to the functions of the school library without which the library would be only a theoretical structure.

Assumption on the Problems of School Libraries in Nigeria

- * Stakeholders seem not to accept the role of a modern school library because they employ few teacher-librarians and seem to have little regards for the qualification and job description of teacher-librarians.
- * Stakeholders may be barriers to effective information literacy skills of the school child as they seem not to adequately plan personnel services in the school library.
- * Students seem to have more positive attitude to the school library where there is a full time teacher librarian.
The job of stakeholders may be incomplete if they cannot provide a clear definition of the role of the teacher-librarian and support their existence in the school as partners in progress.
- * Stakeholders seem not to consider themselves a part of the school library human resource.

The School Library Human Resource

Dike (1993) views the School library as the heart of the school around which the school programme revolves. This perception makes the school library look like an entity, an institution in its own right that offers library services to students, teachers, members of the school community and friends of the library. As a functional institution, the school library requires three elements to remain active. They are book and non-book materials, accommodation and personnel. While facilities are important, the human resource component is overriding.

Today, there is greater emphasis in education, on

humanizing and individualizing instruction, on learning how to learn, on creative thinking and of library skills as a life long skill for children's education. These are learning experiences in the affective, cognitive and psychomo for domains. Pertinent questions are: what type of human resources do we need to teach information literacy in our schools? How are these resources utilized to help our children to learn?

Elaturoti (2004) observes the school library as a media centre, a learning laboratory and resource centre where school children are entrusted to a specialist who directs learning activities to their benefit. Other scholars also share this view. But who and who are the school human resources? We shall identify them in the rest of this paper.

Stakeholders as Human Resources

Teachers Librarians (TL) in Nigeria are confronted with far reaching problems with regards to teaching the school child information literacy. They are concerned with a continued stream of revolutionary and sophisticated breakthroughs in Information Communication Technology (ICT), a teeming population of school age children and dwindling budgetary condition of schools. The possibility also exists that library budgets in schools might be replaced with other expenditures to meet the strains of our financially driven system. There is great concern that services are being considered first on the basis of cost and not on need and quality. Under these conditions, the challenge to the teacher-librarian as information manager is stronger than ever. Furthermore, library practice is changing greatly with ICT, the traditional library oriented concepts are undergoing radical changes. All these changes in the school system have far reaching implications on the stakeholders notable among whom are the education ministers, permanent secretaries (be they in Federal Ministry of Education, Federal Ministry of Finance, Federal Capital Territory or Local Government Educational Authorities), Director of Schools, Directors of Educational

support and Library services, Executive Chairmen of SUBEB and PPSMB, the Board Secretaries, Commissioners for Education, Supervisors for Education and Library Services, National and State Librarians, National Presidents of NLA and NSLA, ANCOPS, NUT, Principals, Head teachers, Proprietors of private schools, PTA Chairmen, Teacher-librarians and school children. However, among these people the Teacher-Librarian is one of the human resources in the school system that can bring together the various human efforts and physical facilities. Therefore, it is necessary that other stakeholders assist the Teacher-librarian in enriching the learning environment that will enhance quality education in Nigerian schools.

In order to contribute to improved learning environment and inculcate information literacy skills in the school child, stakeholders must accept their position in the school library as resource persons. They should understand their unique positions primarily as a function of an outstanding contribution they made in their chosen career. The Human resource factor is critical to the entire structure of any education system. This group of professional plan, organise, staff, influence and control educational programmes. A stakeholder who does not perform any of these functions is not a school library human resource in the true sense of the word regardless of title. In table 1, let us discuss some of the roles of each stakeholder as a human resource in the school library.

Table 1: Task Clusters and Responsibilities of Stakeholders as Human Resources Factor.

Roles Model	Task Cluster Responsibilities	Nature of Stakeholder
1. Education Minister	IARLPPS, PELP & IDAE	Indirect
2. Permanent Secretaries	PEP/PLP & IOD	"
3. Director of School Services	IOD	"
4. Director of Educational Support/ Library Services	PELP & IOD	"
5. Executive Chairmen of SUBEB/PPSMB	PEP/PLP & IOD	"
6. Commissioners for Education	PEP & IOD	"
7. Supervisors for Educational and Libraries	SLEP & IOD	"
8. National and State Librarians	PLP & IOD	"
9. National Presidents of NLA, ANCOPSS, NSLA & NUT	SLEP	"
10. Principals/ Head teachers	SLEP / IOD	"
11. Proprietors of Private Schools, PTA Chairmen & Reps of School Children	IOD	"
12. The Teacher-Librarian	PLP & IOD	Direct

Key Expressing Responsibilities

- Plan Education and Library Programmes, (PELP)
- Issue Directives on Appointment and Establishment (IDAE)
- Implement Official Directives (IOD)
- Plan Library Programme (PLP)
- Plan Education Programme (PEP)
- Supervise Library and Education Programme (SLEP)
- Initiate Action on Review of Library Programme and Policies (IARLPPS)

The Human Resource Factor in the School Library

In table I, two types of human resources are presented namely the direct and indirect. In this table, numbers 1 to 11 represent indirect human resource while number 12 represents the direct. This table also presents a summary of human resource factor in the school library. It indicates the role models and their task cluster or responsibilities with key to their explanation. In role “model 1”, The Education Minister doubles as a stakeholder and human resource for the school library. He is responsible for initiating action, review of library programmes and policies (IARLPPS), issue directives on appointment and establishment and is also involved in planning education and library programmes (PELP). The reason an Education Minister should be a human resource is that he occupies a strategic position in the administrative structure of our educational system and the school library is under his ministry. What is needed from this category of human resource is ‘Action’ on IARLPP/ PELPA & IDAE to encourage better learning environment for the Nigerian school child. Education Ministers are management savvy. They know how to use some management smart tools in mentoring, shadowing and modeling. In the final analysis it is this chief executive, regardless of the title and nature of work, who is responsible for the overall efficiency and progress made in not only the

school library but also in the school system as a whole. Essentially, his responsibilities in bringing information literacy skills to the doorstep of the school child are planning, organizing, appropriate staffing influencing and controlling all the variable in the school system.

In role model 2, Permanent Secretaries are veritable crop of human resource in both the school system and the library profession. Permanent Secretaries whether in Federal Ministry of Education or Federal Ministry of Finance perform similar functions. They represent inter-locking, interacting systems but which are easily discernible. While the Education Permanent Secretary plans and implements educational programmes including library facilities, his counterpart in the Finance Ministry provides funds and monitors library expenditure. As stated earlier, these functions are closely related and they have far reaching impact on the method, material and manpower interactions geared at enriching the school library for enhanced information literacy skills of the school child.

The concerns of role models 3 to 11 are mainly to join in the planning of educational and library programmes and supervise their implementation at the school level. In their category as supervisors, they constitute school library human resource because they are expected to have the three essential skills of management namely: conceptual skills, technical skills and human skills. Homann (1991) describes and relate these skills as follows:

- (1) **Conceptual skills:** These enable the supervisor to visualize something mentally in its entirety, to see the big picture, to understand how all the parts of the whole contribute and coordinate their efforts in order to bring success to the organization.
- (2) **Technical skills:** These skills are primarily concerned with the professional background of the role model --- who knows the clinical and technical aspects of the work to be done. In relating the supervisor's technical skills to school

library operations, this group of human resource is expected to also have information handling skills and the use of library materials.

(3) **Human relation skills:** These are the skills that concern working with people, understanding individual and group feelings; motivating them, controlling and eliminating conditions that are likely to waste and destroy human talents and productivity.

Information Literacy Role of the Teacher-Librarian (TL)

In table 1 role 'model 12' the TL is expected to perform a direct role as a human resource factor in the school and library systems. The central questions one may ask about this role are: Who are the teacher librarians? Why are they so called? What skill do they have to help the school child to develop appropriate information literacy skills? How do they enrich the learning environment of the school child and bring about an enhanced quality education in Nigerian schools? Although books and other materials are the stock of a library, the teacher-librarian is the most important resource in its make-up. The image of the school library is important to its ability to serve its users. Because it is the TL that users see when they enter the library, this group of human resource is an essential image-maker and information manager in the school library without whom the library can neither exist nor function. Literature review indicates that the teacher-librarian is a concept that has different meaning in different countries. In UK, US, Canada, New Zealand and Australia the concept is used in terms of quality and the unified role of the 'teacher' and 'librarian'. Following this perspective, Haycock (1992) draws distinctions between a teacher-librarian with hyphen as a link mark between these two words. According to Haycock, (1992) the distinctive marks indicates that the two concepts are not the same. While the teacher/librarian is used to indicate part time teacher and part-time library work. This is not a unified role as that of 'the teacher-librarian'. Teacher-

Librarians in these countries are certified teacher with successful classroom teaching experience and post graduate degree in teacher-librarianship. Following the professional-unified-dual role concept, the teacher / librarians acquired this name probably because of their employment status as professional teachers who were also assigned library work in the school. A point to note that in these countries, the 'teacher/librarian' is into a 'teacher-librarian' per se. For the professionals here the two concepts should not be used interchangeably. This is to avoid confusion about the role each should play in the school system.

In the Nigerian context, the 'teacher-librarian' in the school system, is not classification between the 'teacher-librarian' and the 'teacher/librarian's concepts discussed above. There seem to be free hand in usage of this term. Most educators and students call the school librarian, 'library teacher' because they are teachers who teach in the classroom and also manage the library as a second responsibility without necessarily being trained for library job. This is a misnomer, and clearly not how the term should be used. A certified teacher without a qualification in librarianship is ill qualified and the equipped to manage a school library. As a result, he should not be designated a 'teacher-librarian'. He is an assistant librarian. Aguolu (2002) seems to disagree with this nomenclature as he reveals the deplorable situation in school libraries in Bornu State where library assistants were put in search of school libraries. According to him, the existing libraries in this state were managed by "unmotivated ill-qualified library assistants some of whom have only attempted TCII., or its equivalent and were erroneously called 'librarians'. This misnomer has no requisite skills and managerial ability to enrich and extend the school library facilities to the school child. The work of Dike (2004), Elaturoti (2004), Ekpo (2004) and Kolade (2004) all express notable contributions of the human resource factor and the role the teacher librarians can play in a functional school library in order to implement the

school curriculum. It is therefore, necessary to differentiate among professional 'school-librarian' or 'teacher-librarian' and 'library assistant' to enable each stakeholder to appreciate and consolidate his position and use it to leverage the information literacy skills of the school child.

The role of a teacher-librarian can be derived from the library instruction he carries out in the school library. The school library is an extension of classroom activities, its purpose is to make education in the school more effective. The school library viewed in this way is both a place of learning and place that houses the tools of learning. The teacher-librarian as a resource person uses the organised materials in the library to help the teacher to teach and the students to learn. However, Aguolu (2002) and Elaturoti (2004), observe that the role of the TL goes beyond this organisational skills. Skapura (1988) suggests that other skills required are, teaching students to find information and materials by themselves i.e. (information literacy skill), teaching of reading skills and promoting activities that produce a positive attitude towards books (e.g. quiz, debate, story reading, speech making etc), lending books to students in the library (e.g fiction and non-fiction, reference section etc. in the library), maintaining consistency in the performance of these functions, organising the card catalogue, audio-visual materials, books and periodicals and implementing the policy governing their use, providing photocopy services, generating over dues and collecting library fees, issuing library passes, acquiring new books, weeding and discarding obsolete library materials, repairing damaged books, treating the new ones with chemicals to avoid animal and insect attack and reinforcing books on the paper back, promoting library materials to teachers and students, recruiting and organising staff as well as preparing the library budget. These technical skills enumerated fall under three main categories of effective library management namely:

1. Library and subject matter teaching skills. The skills here enable the teacher-librarian to work with the class teacher

- to prepare class assignments, and to promote the use of book and non-books media in the library.
2. Search skills: These are the subject areas of the teacher-librarian that involve how to find information quickly and efficiently.
 3. Managerial skills: These involve having rapport with teachers, students and friends of the library as well as a thorough knowledge of the collection

Conclusion

An integration of information literacy skills in the Nigerian school curriculum requires all stakeholders to work together; both direct and indirect as explained in table 1. The school library should be seen in two ways: as a resource entre, which provides relevant materials and facilitate the use of those materials on one hand, and on the other hand as a provider, a collaborative focus for professional partnership. This is unique opportunity for stakeholders to leverage the information literacy skills of the Nigerian school child to greater heights. To achieve this objective, different categories and levels of education of library staff are required at the school level namely: school librarian II & I, Teacher librarian with a degree in librarianship, library officer with diploma WASC/GCE/NECO, library attendant with First School Leaving Certificate, library perfect-a student of the school and a library security with a School Leaving Certificate. Albeit, it is necessary to inculcate in the Nigerian school child good reading habits and information literacy skills which are the most enduring value the teacher-librarian should impact on the subject.

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