

UNIVERSAL BASIC EDUCATION PROGRAMME IN NIGERIA: IMPLICATION FOR THE TEACHING ROLE OF THE SCHOOL LIBRARY

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Abstract

The focus of this paper is on the role the school library could play in making the Universal Basic Education (UBE) programme successful in Nigeria. It discusses the skills of teaching library use and study skills to students and teachers for effective implementation of the UBE programme. Although the development of school libraries is not encouraging in Nigeria, the introduction of UBE programme calls for organised school libraries where students could develop independent atmosphere of enquiry to promote life long learning. The implications which the introduction of libraries would have on the UBE were also highlighted.

Introduction

The federal government of Nigeria took a bold step to develop an excellent educational system in the nation when the Universal Basic Education (UBE) was launched on September 30, 1999.

The objectives of the UBE programme are:

- i. developing in the entire citizenry a strong consciousness for Education and a strong commitment to its vigorous promotion.
- ii. The provision of free, universal basic education for every Nigerian child of school-young age.
- iii. Reducing drastically the incident of drop-out from formal school system (through improved relevance, quality and efficiency)
- iv. Catering for young persons who for one reason or the other have had to interrupt their schooling as well as other out-of-school children (adolescent through appropriate forms of complementary approaches to the provision and promotion of basic education.
- v. Ensuring the acquisition of the appropriate levels of literacy, numeracy, manipulative, communicative and life skills as well as the ethical, moral and civil values needed for laying a solid foundation for life-long learning.

The school library media centre.

Studies have shown that school libraries have been haphazardly developed in Nigeria. Elaturoti (1981) in his Survey of school libraries in the three states of Nigeria-(Oyo, Ogun and Ondo States) discovered that there were virtually no libraries provided in primary schools but that few secondary schools have buildings to accommodate the school library and many schools use classrooms to accommodate the library.

The school library media centre is the intellectual development unit within the school system that provides an organised collection of books and non-book media specially collected to support the teaching and educational work of the school from early childhood, to primary and junior and senior secondary levels. It offers programmes that promote the effective utilization of the library collection by students, and provide materials needed to supplement students classwork for it is impossible for the teachers to teach everything they would like their students to know about a subject. The school library should provide programme that will develop the students reading skill to achieve their full potentials and to prepare children to continue learning after they leave school when they can no longer enjoy the assistance of the teacher. The available resources and facilities in the school library should be used by teachers while preparing their lessons by incorporating reading materials available in the school library into the lesson plan. According to Gratz (1996), the school library is to provide students with tools for coping with both known and unknown types of knowledge enabling life long process of independent learning which is one of the focus aims of UBE programmes. The main place for providing these tools is the school library for it contains information related to students' main field of study and to other areas that are of interest to them. In essence, the school library can help students reach their potentials in their own ways, help them to make better use of their lives, according to the characteristics and needs of each students. Ogunshye (1991) stressed that a modern school library gives an awareness of the wide scope of knowledge and therefore stimulates the desire to fund owe, to investigate and collect information. It gives an opportunity for the individual child to learn according to his own talent or learning style.

In order to promote the objectives of the school it serves, the library must be an organised collection of books and non book learning resources which are relevant to the students education. The modern school library should have a book collection and audiovisual collection comprising of pictures, flashcards, motion pictures, posters, models, educational games, photographic slides, realia and specimen. These resources are supposed to meet the needs of the teachers and students.

The teaching role of the school library

The school library has a teaching role in the education programme of the school. The teaching role comes up in the areas of imparting the library skills, study skills including planning with the subject teachers, class projects and his involvement in curriculum or lesson planning.

For this role to be carried out effectively in the UBE programme, there **must be** a school librarian. However, not many schools in Nigeria have **qualified school libraries that are the reason why teacher/librarians are used as substitutes.** Whoever, is in charge of the school library must identify the information needs of the school library in support of the current UBE programme. The school librarian has to select resource materials to meet the UBE objectives, promote efficient use of learning resources, and plan learning activities within the school library for the production of instructional materials.

Library skills

The school librarian has to teach the library use skills in the UBE to make the students competent in using a well organised library for locating information necessary for promoting life long learning in the school and after leaving school in areas of numeracy, manipulative, communicative and social life skills in accordance with the aims of UBE. Among the important skills to be taught are :

- i. the skills of reading picture books and other beginners books at early childhood. Such books are lap books, concept books counting books and picture storybooks to support the UBE programme for the very young ones. Educational toys are to be used with the children at this stage to provide insight into the real world for children through simulations activities;
- ii. the older children that can read have to be introduced to the types of library collection, the arrangement of books on the shelves and use of classified order to locate materials in the library;
- iii. the rules and regulations of the library;
- iv. skills required by students in searching for facts independently from appropriate resources and use the resources for study and work on the assignments given to them in the school;
- v. The library culture of taking proper care of library books and other media consulted or borrowed for use;
- vi. The habit of reading for pleasure through provision of appropriate literature and other media for the children and young adults in order to develop the students creative and information skills. This will enhance students who are out of school and could not go through higher institution the opportunity to continue to use available local or public libraries for updating their knowledge since they have already **acquired library skills** leaving the formal school system.

Since the Nigerian government is committed to ensuring the success of UBE and teachers will therefore always be a major part of the **planning and execution.** It is therefore pertinent to extend the teaching role of the **school library** to the teachers because the level of the general education of teachers **should be raised.** Teachers have to master the library use skills which **could be taught by the librarian.**

Study skills

After the school librarian has introduced the students to variety of learning resources, he needs to teach the study skills required to use the learning resources in the library. The skill to use books is applicable to all books on all subjects that will be taught in the UBE programme. Once the skills are mastered the students' academic performance will improve. These students should be taught the significant parts of a book and the features of the non-book media; identification of the bibliographic information of the resources, the skill of using reference books such as encyclopaedia, dictionaries, handbooks and audio-visual resources.

In locating information in a book, students should be taught the relevance of table of content, chapters headings, pagination, index, glossary, bibliographies and illustrations when studying. For non-book media like 16mm films, audio-cassettes, video cassettes, the use of accompanying captions for evaluating media should be emphasised.

Students should be taught differences among the types of books-fiction, textbooks, reference books and periodicals as well as non-print media. They should know the differences between the reference sources including see and see also references when found in books. The school librarian should expose the students to sources to be consulted in carrying out projects and assignments.

Other information handling skills, the students and teachers should be knowledgeable are:

- i. data collection, analysis and interpretation;
- ii. locating particular piece of information in a book rather than reading the book from beginning to end;
- iii. making notes rather than copying out every word in a book;
- iv. comparing and combining information from more than one source.

When the teachers are taught these skills, they will be in a position to teach their students to reinforce whatever library instruction the librarian has given the students.

The implication for the UBE to achieve (any success) effectively its objective are as follows:

- i. It needs to incorporate school libraries into primary and secondary schools and its programme should include individualized instruction inquiry – based learning. UBE must recognise school libraries as valuable resource centres and vital instrument of education and adopt school library standard. The libraries should have good collection that is well organised.
- ii. The UBE should make facilities available for training personnel to manage the library and implement the school library programme.
- iii. The UBE has to ensure that library hour features on the schools' timetable at both primary and secondary levels of education.

- iv. The libraries should be adequately stocked and systematically, organised to meet the needs of the students and their teachers.
- v. The UBE coordinators should cooperate with the Nigerian School Library Association by working together with all sincerity to discuss share experiences on how the school libraries could perform better and uplift the UBE programme. Measures that will enhance that development of school libraries committees in schools to ensure that funds meant for the library is not diverted to other areas by heads who have different priorities.

The syllabus for teaching the required library and study skills has been developed and published by the Abadina Media Resource Centre (AMRC), University of Ibadan. It is designed for teaching library use education to pre-school children, primary school pupils, students in secondary schools, teacher training colleges and N.C.E, during the library period at least once a week in the primary, secondary schools and teacher training colleges including N.C.E.

The AMRC has investigated the effect of an administered library education curriculum in the published syllabus on the academic performance and development of the primary school children over a six-year period of the primary education and established the degree to which various areas of learning (i.e school subjects) are affected by the provision of libraries, alternative learning and library skills offered to them. General knowledge and learning use skill tests based on the syllabus were administered at the end of session annually for six years. The result showed that the experiment group showed significantly superior performance over the control group that was not exposed to the library use syllabus.

It is therefore very desirable that each school adopts the syllabus titled:

Ogunsheye, F.A. ed. (1978). *Syllabus for effective use of books and libraries for Primary Schools, Secondary Schools and Teacher Training Colleges.*

The most valuable skill a child needs to acquire is the information seeking skills which will be used throughout his life time.

If the school libraries are to play their expected role in the educational programme of the UBE in Nigeria, all arms involved in the area of education at the local government levels, educational associations should work as a team in the development of the standards of education.

Conclusion

For the UBE programmes to achieve any success libraries have to be established by the government in schools for they are essential ingredients to the teaching and learning programme. The school library must contain all the resources that will enable the teacher to implement as the educational objectives of the UBE promote the discovery, learning as the skill of enquiry and independent learning skills in the students. The schools must adhere to the minimum standards for school library services.

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