

STRATEGIES FOR EFFECTIVE SCHOOL LIBRARY ADMINISTRATION IN SUPPORT OF THE UNIVERSAL BASIC EDUCATION (UBE) PROGRAMME

By

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Abstract

The key to achieving success in the UBE Programme is greatly dependent on adequate planning. To avoid the pitfalls of UPE (Universal Primary Education) of 1976, strategies of achieving the goals of UBE should be effectively implemented. This paper discusses the various strategies for effective library administration, a very major component of the UBE Programme. Some of the strategies discussed are library policies, the three tiers of government, funding, non-governmental organization, PTA, infrastructure and publishing e.tc.

Introduction

The Nigerian Government has always put education on her priority agenda. The introduction of the Universal Primary Education in 1976, was aimed at universalizing access to education. The national policy on education (1977) also aimed at achieving functional, universal and qualitative education. This policy dealers government intention to use a variety of strategies for the provision of universal basic education for all citizens. One of such strategies is the school library.

The school library

The school library is acknowledged in the National Policy on Education as one of the educational institutions required to achieve the nation's education goals. Proprietors are required to provide functional libraries in all their educational institutions in accordance with the established standards. They should also train librarians and library officers for the service. The states and local governments are also required to establish public libraries. It might be necessary to remind ourselves of the goals and objectives of the UBE to be able to discuss the strategies required to achieving the objectives fully.

The goals of the UBE are:-

- i. To develop in the entire citizenry a strong consciousness for education and a strong commitment to its various promotion

- ii. Provide free, compulsory Universal Basic Education for every Nigerian child of school age.
- iii. Reduce drastically, dropout rate from the formal school system through improved relevance and efficiency. Cater for dropouts and out-of-school children/adolescents through various forms of complementary approaches to the provision and promotion of basic education.
- iv. Ensure the acquisition of the appropriate levels of literacy, numeracy, manipulative and life skills (as well as the ethical moral and civic values)

The school library has an important role to play in achieving the above objectives. IFLA and UNESCO (2000) listed the core services of school library, which are essential to the development of education, literacy, teaching, learning and culture as:

- i. Supporting and enhancing educational goals as outlined in the school's mission and curriculum.
- ii. Developing and sustaining children the habit and enjoyment of reading and learning and the use of library throughout their lives.
- iii. Offering opportunities for experiences in creating and using information for knowledge, understanding, imagination and enjoyment.
- iv. Supporting all students in learning and practising skills for evaluation and, using information, regardless of communication within the communities
- v. Providing access to local, state, national and global resources and opportunities that expose learners to diverse ideas, experiences and opinions.
- vi. Organizing activities that encourage cultural and social awareness and sensitivity.
- vii. Working with students, teachers, administrators and parents to achieve the mission of the school.
- viii. Proclaiming the concept that intellectual freedom and access to information that are essential to effective and responsible citizenship and participation in a democracy.

Strategy

For any planned programme there should be strategies. In the case of Universal Basic Education, what are the strategies for effective school library administration? For the purpose of this paper, the word strategy means "the skills of operating a well-planned series of action for achieving an aim". It is therefore the focus of this paper to suggest strategies for effective school library administration that can make the UBE Programme a success include:

- Library policy
- The three tiers of government

- Funding
- Voluntary Organisations
- P.T.A.
- Training
- Infrastructure
- Publishing

Library policy

In recent time, efforts have been made to co-ordinate various discussions on the UBE Programme. The Nigerian Library Association (NLA) and the Nigeria School Library Association (NSLA) have a major role to play in furnishing the UBE commission with necessary data and information on school library in Nigeria. From my FCT experience, a survey carried out on the state of school library, yielded a policy on "Library Hour" in the school timetable. Data has known to help in adequate planning. No stone should be left unturned by these two professional bodies in supplying necessary data on school library. For now many committees set up on UBE have no library representation, this trend should be checked to avoid the mistake of UPE Programme of 1976. This will not be the first time the NSLA would be involved in policy-making decision on Nigeria Education. In 1977, the Nigeria School Library Association submitted a paper to the National Conference on Education. It gave the Association an opportunity to have a strong input on provision of libraries as an integral part of the education programme in the National Policy on Education. This policy influenced the provision of secondary school libraries. It became one of the conditions for the approval of secondary school. The executive of the Nigerian Library Association recently paid a courtesy call on the co-ordinator of the UBE Programme, Prof. Pai Obanya to draw the attention of the commission to the place of library in the UBE Programme. The 2000 conference of the NSLA with the theme: "The successful implementation of the UBE Programme in Nigeria", is very timely for it would focus the attention of the Nigerian Government on the need to include library in the UBE programme.

The three tiers of Government

Lapses in various aspects of administration have accounted for difficulties in policy implementation.

The Governments at the federal, state and local levels are the stakeholders in the UBE programme. Adequate planning must be done at all these levels. A certain percentage of the budgetary allocation for the UBE should be allocated to the development of school library. The National University Commission allocates 10% of its budgetary allocation to the development of library Universities Education for all in the year 2010 should be made a reality..

Funding

In Nigeria, there appears to be a perennial shortage of funds for the education system at all levels. Politicians, economists and educationists are in constant search for answers to such questions as who should pay for educational support from different tiers of government. Is it parent, community, corporation whether public or private? Fund must be sought by all concerned for library development in the UBE.

Voluntary organization

No library no matter how adequate funded by the government can be self-sufficient. Efforts therefore must be made by the library stakeholders to sensitise various voluntary organizations to contribute to the development of school libraries. Such contributions could be in the form of seminar, workshop, book donations, gifts, training etc. Voluntary bodies such as UNESCO, UNICEF, British Council, Book-International Aid World Bank have been in the forefront of library development in Nigeria. The UNESCO, in collaboration with the Department of Education, FCDA, organized a seminar/workshop on the theme "Libraries and promotion of reading culture for principals and school librarians in FCT secondary schools". The programme was well attended. Many of the principals have already implemented decisions taken at the school level. This type of initiative should be carried to the state and local governments.

Parents/teachers association

The Parents/Teachers Association and the school administrators have a vital role to play in the administration of school library. It is sad to note that many school principals do not know the importance of library to the school system. Principals should not be allowed to be ignorant of their responsibility to the students in the UBE programme. Principals should work hand-in-hand with the PTA to provide standard library for the schools. The PTA has been very enthusiastic in the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) in getting involved in school library development. The principal of a secondary school in the FCT invited me to present a paper at the PTA meeting on "the importance of libraries in education". After the presentation, substantial amounts of money and book donation were collected towards the development of the school library.

Many parents because of the economic situation of the nation cannot afford to provide learning resources for their children and wards. therefore, a joint effort in terms of library provision is a welcome idea. It is the responsibility of the school principal to see that "Library Hour" is include on the school timetable and also effectively observed. Library hour is already on the school timeTable In the FCT and is made compulsory.

Training

Training of school librarians should be a matter of concern to the management. No library no matter how well equipped can provide required services if not manned by trained personnel. The era of untrained persons in the school library is over. The UBE school library should not be anybody's library; professional librarians must be employed to organize the collections. The Nigeria Library Association, Voluntary Associations, such as UNESCO, British Council, National Library of Nigeria can be of tremendous assistance in the area of training. In-house seminars and local school library association such as F.C.T. School Library Association should train librarians on new developments in the field.

Infrastructure

At present, there are inadequate infrastructure such as classrooms, libraries, laboratories, workshops, play fields, school farms and gardens etc. However, the focus of this paper which is the library. The school library of the UBE must be student centred. The teaching learning materials will be dependent on the demands of the curricular. The structure of packaging information must meet the challenges of the present time. Printed and non-printed learning materials would always be required in the school library media centre and should be procured in the appropriate quantity, size and quality, to meet the minimum standards for promoting any meaningful teaching and learning. Efforts must be made to computerize the UBE library. At present, many children attend schools without books because the prices of books are not within the reach of the average parent or the books are simply not available. Learning resources in the mother tongue are also difficult to come by.

Apart from the World Bank Book project for UBE, teachers should be mobilized to write textbooks based on specific curricular requirement. (The Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council) NERDC The Science Teachers' Association of Nigeria STAN National teacher institute NTI are among the agencies and institutions which have built up considerable expertise in this area. Non-text materials should also be procured for instance from the National Education Technology Centre NETC and the science materials development centres (Enugu, Awka, Akure, Ijanikin-Lagos etc).

Publishing

The publishing industry should be encouraged to publish the right learning materials in this dispensation. Too much focus have been on classroom textbooks. But for life-long education to be sustained, relevant materials especially in local languages should be published

The Federal Government should make a definite policy statement on book publishing and resuscitated all print-materials related industries in order to make books more available in quantity and quality, and also subsidize the publication of textbooks. Indigenous writers' authors should be encourage and assisted to write relevant materials.

Conclusion

The library is a major component of UBE programme. From our past experiences and research studies, known areas of defect like lack of adequate infrastructure such as standard library, financial provision, staffing, non-inclusions of librarians in planning must be avoided.

Presently existing facilities in our schools, cannot carry the nation far in her urge to achieve University Basic Education, as such, all stakeholders must come on board to work hand-in-hand for the success of UBE.

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