

# THE LIBRARIAN IN NIGERIAN SCHOOLS

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## **Introduction**

Education in this country has become an important tool for effecting rapid social change and the development of the nation's citizenry. Policies guiding the education of our children continue to be improved upon. Education, for Nigeria, now stresses self-reliance, respect for dignity of labour, technological skills, moral integrity, development of aptitudes and talents of the individual as well as the acquisition of knowledge.

The emphasis is now placed on education of mind for problem solving and on character development for positive citizenship. There has therefore been a shift away from the purely cognitive acquisitive type of education, to the developmental and effective aspects of education that make the individual a productive member of the society.

The Nigerian National Policy on Education is more concerned with education that promotes the application of knowledge for generating productivity resulting not only in the area of intellectual needs such as knowledge for decision making and problem solving, or even in the area of spiritual and recreational needs that enrich the life of individuals and society, but in the area of material needs like food, shelter and clothing. The education system thus stresses development-oriented skills. The first principle of human development is that all people can learn under the right conditions and it is the responsibility of effective organisations to determine the right condition for each and every learner.

At the secondary level of education in Nigeria (the level with which this paper is concerned), educational objectives, among others, demand that schools should:

- equip students to live in our modern age of science and technology.
- Develop and project Nigerian culture, art and language.
- Raise a generation of people who can think for themselves, respect the views and feelings of others, respect the dignity of labour.

In implementation, it means the inclusion of subjects in science, art, music, practical agriculture and prevocational spheres such as metal work, woodwork, home economics in the curriculum.

#### **The school library**

These innovations have far-reaching implications for the library media centre and the leaning resource materials contained in it. The library media centre has the function of supporting, implementing, encouraging, vitalizing, and humanizing the educational programme as it strive to attain excellence in content, process, and product. Direct involment in the instructional process demands that the library media centre function as a learning laboratory where the students come to work intensively and productively with ideals. Test books as well as other learning resources in the audio-visual formats will need to be acquired. These materials will assume increasing importance as we try to bring culture, science, technology and reflective thinking effectively into the classroom.

#### **The school librarian**

The all-popular saying that books do not speak makes it imperative to have adequate and well-trained librarians to guide readers, to motivate readers, and generally make the art of learning leisurely, pleasurable and profitable.

The trained librarian should assist the teacher and help him (the teacher) in his role as guide, facilitator, and manager of the learning environment. The school librarian also has obligations to the school directly, or through the class teacher. Some children have physical, mental or emotional conditions that require particular attention. They need special help in learning how to compensate for their differences and lead productive and satisfying lives. Various categories of handicaps and disabilities exist. They include the orthopedically handicapped, the speech handicapped, the blind and partially blind, the deaf and hard-of-hearing, the mentally retarded, learning disabled, and the emotionally disturbed.

The student, whether disabled or not, can do many things; he is anxious to learn and is learning the whole time. For much of his learning however, certainly when it comes to synthesizing the kind of public information which makes up the school curriculum and which make up a lot else outside school, he has to learn how learn concepts and relationships which do not come naturally to his environment. For this, a guide is necessary. As well as guiding, the guide must cleverly wean him from dependence and to liberate. Learning how to learn is a matter of training. Attention had to be directed to the resources available, only in the school, but within the community, as well as at home, to the use of human as well as material resources, how to get other teachers, other adults for children to give them information. Learning the art of questioning others as well as the art of interrogating material is part of the process of weaning into indolence.

With what has been said so far, what then be the profile of the school Librarian? The school librarian is the energising force that powers the education thrust of the instructional process. His services must permeate the entire instructional process. The quality of leadership, guidance and instruction provided by him directly influence and affect the quality of the education

program. A school librarian is a competent and effective member of the school system who brings into position the following:

- Knowledge of teaching theories, methods and practice;
- Knowledge of subject content and curriculum design and implementation;
- Knowledge of how to select, organise, administer, and utilise instructional media and media content;
- Knowledge of the science and the art of communication;
- Knowledge of how to integrate the resources and the service of the library media programme with the on – going instructional programme.

The school librarian holds membership in both the teaching and the library professions. He is both an education generalist and media (print and non – print) specialist. Respecting the duality of his professional role (as an educationist and a librarian), the school librarian places equal significance on each aspect, realizing that, like the two sides of a coin, neither role has value without the other.

As mentioned earlier, the effective school librarian is expected to provide service to both teachers and students in his school, as well as to others in his community who may require his assistance.

#### **General service to the school community**

General duties of the school librarian include the following:

- Developing library policies and regulations (in conjunction with the school library committee) which will guide users on library operations, such as, hours of opening of the library, number of books that can be borrowed at a time. Rules and regulations governing reserved books, fines, damages to books and so on;
- Developing a highly varied and well organized collection of books and non – books materials in order to ensure efficient service;
- Continued revision of library programme and services so that the library is performing at its optimal level;
- Providing extended hours of service after school hours.

#### **Library services of student**

- The school librarian has the professional obligation to deal realistically but humanely with each student; to provide learning resource, and to design leaning experiences which will be compatible with the needs, interests and abilities, goals, concerns and learning styles of each student.
- The school librarian must be accessible, approachable, and responsive; must establish a climate conducive to maximum learning.

a warm, happy, invitation place where the student may taste success, where the student may taste success, where his disabilities are not on public display, where he can work at his own speed, in his own private way.

- The school librarian must personalise the services of the library media centre. He must hold and demonstrate authentic concern for the intellectual, moral, spiritual, social and cultural well being of each student no matter how rich or poor, how brilliant.
- He must consistently build his knowledge of the student by face-to-face communication with the student as he works with him as mentor, counsellor and friend.
- He must have as his constant goal the desire to make learning the library media centre a totally satisfying experience.

#### Library service to teachers

The co-operation of the school librarian with the classroom teacher is basic to actualising an educational programme of excellence. Direct communication and cooperation are the operational basis for meaningful, effective, and services to the instructional process. The services of the school librarian to the classroom teacher include the following:

- Assisting the teacher to know exactly the resources available in the library, in the subjects, which he is teacher? This can be done by inviting teachers to view the library collection, circulation publishers' catalogues as well as booklist, involving teachers in the book selection process, and by mounting library displays;
- Teaching the teacher how to use the book and non-book collections in the library. A teacher should be helped to develop skill to identify the significant, parts of the media he/she is going to be using, as well as the basic skills involved in using the library to obtain information. Workshops and induction courses may be organised for this propose;
- Helping the teacher plan for his class by assisting him to locate materials that are available in the school or the community for the subject or project at hand. Where recommended materials are not available, the librarian is expected to identify alternative strategies and media that the teacher can use for his students. This is instructional development and it should be visible in the daily activities of the library.
- Providing facilities and teaching the teacher skill in designing, production the and the use of the instructional material; cooperating with the teacher to develop reading skill with the student;
- Linking the teacher with the resources of other libraries through interlibrary cooperation.
- Keeping abreast of current opportunities for attending courses and l.

- Lectures and to inform teacher as it affects them;
- Providing reserved collections of books and other materials in demand for class need;
- Scheduling the use of materials so that conflicts with the plans of other teachers are avoided.
- Making available to teachers through a professional collection, knowledge of recent developments in their subject areas and the general field of education.

### Conclusion

In conclusion, a school librarian must be motivated by a continuous compelling zest for learning. He must regard his service as a creative challenge—a never ending quest for added understanding and deepened insight. He must possess an infectious enthusiasm for learning which permeates his work with teachers and students. He must derive satisfaction from exploring the new, the untried, the unfamiliar as well as from uncovering in the familiar something new, significant, and unsuspected. He must possess an insatiable curiosity about the hidden value and potential utility of every library resource. He must value media not as things but as ideas, delighting in searching for, identifying, analysing, grouping, and organising ideas into patterns of logical, cohesive inter-relatedness. He must derive stimulation and satisfaction from the realisation that his work is never done; new materials must be searched for and evaluated; old material must not service. In the light of current needs; new curricular trend, content, and methods must be studied and reflected in the library programme; new faculty and students must be welcomed and their interests and concerns discovered and translated into commensurate patterns of library support service. The school librarian must be capable of finding challenge and satisfaction in learning and in helping others to learn. He must view his service as an adventure of the mind and of the spirit, a demanding but rewarding adventure in creative self-realisation, self-expression, and professional self-fulfilment.

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