

PROGRAMME COLLABORATION AMONG EDUCATIONAL AGENCIES: A PANACEA FOR EFFECTIVE SCHOOL LIBRARY MEDIA PROGRAMME IN NIGERIAN SCHOOLS

BY

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Abstract

The paper identified the sections of the National Policy on Education that refers to the provision of libraries in schools and who should provide them as well as the share of responsibilities for school supervision among the three tiers of government.

The paper highlights the landmarks in school library development in the last three and a half decade in Nigeria and the significance of each. The contribution to school library development in Nigeria was highlighted for public awareness and patronage

The paper also identifies some areas of collaboration among the providers of school library service for greater efficiency and more meaningful impact on quality of education in Nigerian schools.

PROGRAMME COLLABORATION AND DEVELOPMENT OF LIBRARIES IN NIGERIAN SCHOOLS

Basic and Post Basic Education in Nigeria

Provision of education in Nigeria is a shared responsibility among the three tiers of government-local, state and federal. The levels of education that are of interest to the discussion in this paper are the basic education (primary and junior secondary schools) senior secondary schools and technical and vocational colleges. Government welcomes the contributions of voluntary agencies, communities and private individuals in the establishment and management of pre-primary, primary, junior secondary and senior secondary schools as well as the technical and vocational colleges in Nigeria (National Policy on Education Section 2: 14 (a), 4: 19(i), 5: 26&27, 7:39(c) 2004). This provision in the National Policy on Education has increased the categories of proprietors of schools beyond the 3 tiers of government to include private, individual, voluntary agencies and communities.

Section (11 (e) and (f) of the policy states the following on the provision of library service in schools.

The library is at the heart of education enterprise. The virtual library as a platform for sharing knowledge is aimed at rejuvenating Nigerian schools through the provision of current books, journals and other information resources using technology.

Since libraries constitute one of the most important educational services, proprietors of schools shall also provide functional libraries in all their educational institutions in accordance with the established standards. They should also provide for training of librarians and library assistance for this service. (NPE, 2004).

Also, section 12 number 115 & 116 of the National Policy on Education states as follows on supervision of education:

Government shall establish efficient inspectorate service at federal, state and local government levels for monitoring and maintaining minimum standards at all levels of education below the tertiary level (section 12:115). State Ministries of Education and Local Education Authorities in collaboration with the Federal Inspectorate Services, shall be responsible for the organisation of supervision and inspection of all education institutions under their jurisdiction. (NPE, 2004).

Maintenance of good standard of education is the responsibility of all stakeholders. The school library is an integral part of the school system and cannot develop to play its expected role in effective curriculum delivery in schools when proprietors of schools do not accord it the necessary recognition or when the stakeholders in education do not collaborate in programme implementation to complement each other's effort. With the present situation in school library development in Nigeria, the expected collaboration in programme implementation is not noticeable; hence the need for stakeholders in school library development to have an interactive session to deliberate on the forms of collaboration in programme implementation for maximum result.

Landmarks in School Library Development in Nigeria

Having been on the scene of school library development in Nigeria for more than three decades and a half years one is in position to assess the state of school library development in the nation's schools. The landmarks identified are as follows.

- i The establishment of Abadina Media Resource Centre, University of Ibadan in 1974 to develop a model school library resource centre that could be replicated in Nigerian schools. It was also established to develop the reading habits of the Nigerian child, to conduct research into school library needs, to train qualified personnel for

the Nigerian school libraries and to serve as consultant to government and other proprietors of schools on school library development project.

- ii The establishment of the Children's Library at the University of Nigeria Nsukka by the University Women Association of that University has also provided services that promote the development of libraries in schools and the reading culture of the Nigerian child.
- iii The founding of the Nigerian School Library Association (NSLA) in July 1977 and its formal launching in October of same year to create a platform for all stakeholders to meet regularly and deliberate on school library development matters. The NSLA needs the support and encouragement of all stakeholders in education to fulfil its mission.
- iv The inclusion of some policy statements in the *National Policy on Education* on the provision of libraries in all schools and the training of personnel to manage them. The invitation of the first president of the NSLA Prof. F. Adetowun Ogunshye to participate in the implementation workshop of the *National Policy on Education* in November, 1979 gave the NSLA an opportunity to have a strong input in the document on provision of libraries as an integral part of the education system in Nigerian Schools.
- v The greater involvement of government in the development of functional libraries in Nigerian schools as witnessed in the programme of UBEC, SUBEBs, State Public Library Boards, Federal Ministry of Education, NERDC and other agencies. There has been a paradigm shift from the attitude of government and proprietors of schools in the provision of functional libraries in schools for effective curriculum delivery.

Abadina Media Resource Centre and School Library Development in Nigeria

At the eve of the launching of the Universal Primary Education Scheme (UPE) in 1976, the Abadina Media Resource Centre was established by the University of Ibadan to promote the development of school libraries in support of the UPE.

The following programmes were embarked upon by the Centre to promote development of school libraries in Nigerian schools at the onset:

- i Setting up a model school library resource centre for replication in Nigerian schools and use the facilities to organize workshops for teacher-librarians, authors of children's books, and stakeholders in education on development of virile school library media programmes in support of the schools curricula.
- ii Conducting of a 6-year longitudinal research on impact of library use education programme on the social and academic achievement of the primary school child, the report of which was published in 1980.

- iii Publishing a *Manual for Nigerian School Libraries* which will serve as standard for school libraries and also a set of *Syllabuses for Effective Use of Books and Libraries* to guide in the selection of information literacy skills for teaching pupils during the library period in the school time-table. The two publications were made in 1978 and the latter has been revised in 2001 under a modified title: *Syllabuses for Library use Education Programme in Primary, Secondary Schools and Teachers' Colleges* to meet the challenges of school librarianship. There are also occasional publications for imparting skills on management of school library media centres.
- iv The Centre was instrumental to the founding of the Nigerian School Library Association (NSLA) in October 1977 to create a platform for school librarians and stakeholders in school library development to deliberate upon and advise government and proprietors of schools on matters pertaining to school library service in Nigeria schools. Annual conferences of the Association to facilitate envisaged deliberations and the Abadina Media Resource Centre has served as its secretariat.

Training Programmes for School Media Personnel

The annual conferences, occasional workshops and seminars held by the NSLA on school librarianship have revealed the dearth of qualified personnel to provide effective school library service in the nation's schools. As no appreciable level of school library development could be achieved without the qualified personnel to provide the service, the Abadina Media Resource Centre has developed training programmes for School Library Media Specialist (School Librarians) at the Diploma and Postgraduate levels. The programmes are listed below.

- i **Diploma in School Media Programme.**
It is a part-time (sandwich) programme run under the Distance Learning Centre of the University of Ibadan within a span of three years. Courses are at 100 and 200 levels and it admits candidates with four credits in SSCE/GCE/NECO including a pass in English language. Mature candidates with lesser qualifications are admitted. Holders of Nigeria Certificate of Education (NCE) who are in-charge of school library media centres (school libraries) could also be admitted. We regard this qualification as the minimum required for school library media specialists in the schools (pre-primary, primary & secondary).
- ii **Professional Master in Media Resource Management (MMRM)**
The programme is professional and admits candidates with university degrees and Higher National Diploma (HND) in any discipline. The products will be qualified to run school library media centres at the primary and secondary schools. They can

also work as library media specialist at study/resource centres for Distance Learning Programmes and other institutions. The course is to be completed within three to five semesters (full-time) and five to seven semesters (part-time).

iii Master in School Media

This is an academic with more courses in the area of research. Its duration is the same with the MMRM. The programme is to produce graduates who wish to teach school media programme at the tertiary levels or wish to upgrade knowledge and research skills in the field of school media.

iv M.Phil and Ph.D in School Media Programme

This is for graduate of the MSM or Master's degree in Library and Information Science (MLIS). Candidates with qualifications other than the MSM may not be admitted directly to the Ph.D programme.

The School Library Media Programme is a specialisation within the field of Library and Information Science (LIS) that offers core LIS courses and specified course work in instruction, youth services and management of school library media centres.

All the training programme took off from the 2006/2007 academic session. Patronage has been mainly from the tertiary institutions. So far, there has been no patronage from the UBEC, SUBEBs and Public Libraries. A similar situation is observed in the patronage of the Diploma programme. We recommend these training programmes for patronage.

Expected Areas of Collaboration among Educational Agencies in Nigeria

1. Training of School Library Personnel

There is no programme that can take-off and be effectively implemented without the qualified personnel to man the system. The bane of school library development in Nigeria has been largely due to the dearth of qualified school library media specialists (School Librarians). The Abadina Media Resource Centre has developed the model school library media centre, the capacity to train school library media personnel through workshops, short courses and formal university programmes. The education agencies should embrace these programmes and sponsor staff to attend them. They could also established positions for school library media specialist (school librarians) which the products of the Abadina Media Resource Centre programmes could fill in the school system. Career development will automatically follow as the graduates are being employed in the schools. The career prospect for school library media specialist (school librarian) will make them stay on their jobs long enough to make positive impact on school library development in schools

2 Setting up of School Library Media Centres (school libraries)

Provision of school libraries in school is another area of collaboration. The present situation where Federal Ministry of Education, UBEC/SUBEBs, State Ministries of Education, State Library Boards have separate and uncoordinated plan for school library provision is not helping matters as education is on the concurrent list. The school they are planning for are for the same Nigerian children in the states and local governments. The system should make it possible for information to be known on which number of schools particular agency has fund to provide school libraries for in a particular state. With this system in place other agencies could easily identify the schools without school libraries and concentrate on such thereby increasing access to school library service to more schools.

3. Inspection / Supervision of School Library Media Centre

Collaboration could also be extended to the supervision of school library services by making use of the librarians in the state ministries of Education or the state library boards. There is usually a pool of professional librarians in the service of the state / library boards which could be involved for improved quality school library service. The pool of professional librarians can also assist in the implementation of school library projects funded by Federal Government Agencies in their states. In many places, the SUBEB librarians and librarians in the state library Board / Ministries rarely work together to improve the quality of school library service in the state. This situation is not wholesome and needs to be redressed in the interest of the Nigerian School child.

4. Preparation of Select List of Learning Resources

A select list of learning resources for school library media centres will facilitate development of school library collections that will meet the information needs of school curriculum in Nigeria. This could be a project funded by Federal agencies like ETF, NERDC, UBEC etc.

There are pools of librarians and education experts that can compile and revise the list regularly.

5. Teaching of Basic Library Use Skills to Pupils and Leaders

These essential skills can be imparted into the school children early in their education to make effective use of learning resources in organised libraries in the learning process. The Abadina Media Resource Centres has developed set of curricular for library use education for primary, secondary and teachers colleges which could be completed for use in school. The creation of a library period on the school timetable will facilitate the teaching of these essential life-long learning skills.

Conclusion

Greater attention is now being paid to the provision of effective library service in the nation's schools by the various proprietors/stakeholders than ever before. A lot of resources are also being committed to this course particularly at the federal level. Since the intended beneficiaries of library development programme are the same schools in our localities in which the other tiers of government also have interest, it stands to reason that a collaborative effort will yield greater and better results in the existence of effective learning and quality education in Nigerian schools. Embracing this new strategy will be in the interest of our educational system in Nigeria.

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