

REQUIRED COMPETENCIES FOR SCHOOL LIBRARIANS FOR SUSTAINABLE NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT: IMPLICATIONS FOR A REVISED CURRICULUM

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Abstract

Competency areas for school librarian have been identified as: knowledge of the broad context of the information environment, information seeking, information architecture, information organization and access, information services, sources and production, information management and employability skills and attributes which are broadly classified as generic and specific skills. The training of school librarians and the content of the curriculum become very important. The paper discusses the curriculum for training school librarians at the Centre for Educational Media Resource Studies and its relevance to development of the identified competencies highlighted earlier.

Introduction

The quest for sustainable development is a global phenomenon. It is so paramount that the World leaders comprising the Heads of State and Government and High Representatives met in New York from 25 to 27 September, 2015 to agree on 17 global goals for Sustainable development. The passion to achieve the goals make the leaders to commit themselves to working tirelessly for the full implementation of the Agenda by 2030.

Knowing fully well that year 2030 is just 12 years away, all hands must be on deck to ensure that Nigeria is not left behind come 2030. Out of the 17 sustainable development goals, Goal 4 which is specifically on education is very relevant to school library development Goal 4 states that by 2030, all Nations must: "Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all". According to the United Nations document on Transforming our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (2015), Goal 4 Section 4.1 states that by 2030, Ensure that all girls and boys complete free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education leading to relevant and effective learning outcomes".

Equally, Section 4.4 states that: by 2030, "substantially increase the number of youth and adults who have relevant skills, including technical and vocational skills, for employment, decent jobs and entrepreneurship". By implication, Sections 4.1 and 4.4 under Goal 4 emphasize effective learning outcomes measurable in terms of knowledge, skills, values, and attitude. Therefore, education of Nigerian children and youth should be regarded as an instrument to equip them with lifelong learning skills that will make them creative thinkers, problem solvers and responsible citizens that can contribute meaningfully to sustainable development in Nigeria. In line with this submission, National Policy on Education (2014) ascribe education to a process that

pave way for development of appropriate skills, mental, physical and social abilities and competencies to empower the individual to live in and contribute positively to the society.

Competencies Required for Sustainable Development

The National Policy on Education (2014) consider education as an instrument for national development. With quality education, individuals are provided with high-quality competencies so that they will be able to fulfil their potential in private life, at work and in society. According to the Education Ministers of Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) (2018), Sustainable development depends critically on the competencies of all of our population with competencies understood to cover knowledge, skills, attitude and values.

The environment in which children and students learn can be a major determinant of their educational attainment. A well-equipped school library managed by a competent professional school librarian will create a conducive resource – based learning environment where pupils can acquire and develop life-long learning skills.

Provision of library services to students and teachers in Nigerian schools require competencies. School librarians must be competent to be able to teach their clientele to be information and technology literate people. The Australian Library and Information Association (ALIA) (2014) describe competencies as core knowledge, skills and attributes of school librarians. These competencies required for professional practice have been categorized as: knowledge of the broad context of the information environment, information seeking, information architecture, information organisation and access, information services, sources and products, information management, employability skills and attributes. These skills were broadly classified as generic and specific skills. The role of school librarians in children education are so crucial that Dike, Osadebe and Babarinde (2016) assert that the teacher- librarian require competence in teaching, literacy promotion, librarianship, administration and advocacy. Similarly, Professional bodies have identified competencies that school librarians must possess before they can practice effectively. For example, the American Library Association (ALA) has published a list of the core competencies of librarianship that define the knowledge to be possessed by all persons graduating from ALA – accredited Bachelor's programme in Library and Information Studies. The six competency standards identified by the American Library Association (ALA) and the American Association of School Librarianship (AASL) (2010) for initial preparation of school librarians are: advocacy and leadership, administration, literacy and reading, programme management, competencies in teaching, information and knowledge. In addition, as cited in Dike, Osadebe and Babarinde (2016), an international working group of IFLA headed by Hannisdottir (1995) divided the required competencies into three categories: teaching competencies, library competencies and administrative competencies.

Curriculum for Training School Librarians for Sustainable National Development

The development of individual results in the development of the nation. Therefore, the professional development of school librarians in Nigeria will impact on the quality of

education of Nigerian children and young adults in schools. As a human resource saddled with the responsibility of acquisition of learning materials and provision of access to information in all formats, the school librarians must be skilled and professionally trained to be effective. Several studies like Gregory and Cunningham 2006; Greenwood, Greaser and Maynard (2008), Elaturoti (1993), Fayose (2003); Dike, Osadebe and Babarinde (2016) agreed that a professionally qualified school librarians occupy a significant position in provision of information services which can enhance educational attainment of students and pupils in schools.

In view of their contributions to children education, there is need to design a curriculum which will take care of the skills required by school librarians before they engage in professional practices. As a result, the training of school librarians and the content of their curriculum becomes very important. In line with this, Reghharan (2007) remarked that if LIS professionals (including school librarians) are to be relevant and be able to meet the requirements of the emerging job markets and manpower needs, library schools need to pay close attention to education and training of their personnel in terms of relevance to these needs. Haigh (2007) also buttressed this fact by his assertion that the vision, mission and goal statement of LIS education must change to reflect evolving trends in the 21st century. In the Centre for Educational Media Resource Studies (CEMRS), University of Ibadan, a curriculum for training school librarians has been designed to take care of the changes and innovations constantly manifesting in the field of school librarianship.

Curriculum for Bachelor's Degree Programme for School Library Media Studies in CEMRS, University of Ibadan.

Matus (1997) defines curriculum as the selected integrative, evaluative and innovative experiences given to the learner either consciously or unconsciously under the direction of a school. This implies that curriculum is a planned course of study for use in the learning institution. More specific is the definition given by Oluochi (2006) that curriculum is all that is planned to enable the students acquire and develop the desired knowledge, skills and attitudes. These skills and attitudes are those desired by the society. These are 25 approved / accredited Universities in Nigeria offering library and information science programmes (<https://www.lrcn.ng>) according to Librarian Registration Council of Nigeria (LRCN). In all these universities, there is no single one offering degree in School Librarianship neither MPhil/nor Ph.D. in School Media. To meet the competency needs of school librarians for 21st century, there is an urgent need to develop a curriculum with content that will reflect the needs of the school children and students. General knowledge and skills acquired by graduates in library and information science for professional practice in various types of libraries may not be adequate for school librarians.

The CEMRS' curriculum proposed for Bachelor's Degree in School Library Media Studies took cognizance of the competency areas required by a prospective school librarian for professional practice. The following basic courses to be offered are compulsory in status:

1. Knowledge of cataloguing and classification

- 2 Information literacy skills for children's information needs
- 3 Copyright and intellectual property rights
- 4 Reference sources and services
- 5 Media and children's literature
- 6 Research methods and design
- 7 Marketing and advocacy
- 8 Reading literacy instruction
- 9 Technology application in school libraries
- 10 History and philosophy of School Library Media Centres
- 11 Curriculum and the school library media programmes
- 12 Management of SLMCs
- 13 Research Project in School Media
- 14 Practicum in SLMCs

If school librarians will contribute significantly to Sustainable National Development in Nigeria, the process of training and the curriculum must keep changing to reflect and meet the societal needs. Now that knowledge is increasing and technology keeps changing and improving our ways of living, the curriculum for training school librarians must be re-designed to prepare them for challenges of quality service delivery in schools. The world is fast changing and every time there are changes or new developments, the school curricula will definitely be affected. Consequently, the curricula for training the school librarians must also change.

AASL (2018) Standards Framework anchored by six shared foundations – Inquire, Include, Collaborate, Curate, Explore and Engage – highlight the standards' core educational concept for children and students in schools. The AASL standards frameworks serves as a yardstick for designing curriculum for learners. It is one of three sets of AASL standards for learners, school librarians and school libraries (AASL, 2018). The AASL standards framework reflects a comprehensive approach to teaching and learning by demonstrating the connection between learners, librarian and the school library standards.

The Standards Frameworks which reveals a tripod of learners (Nigerian schools' students and pupils), librarian (school librarians) and the school library shows which areas should be addressed in curriculum. To produce knowledgeable and skilled personnel for effective and efficient library service delivery in Nigerian school libraries, the AASL standards Framework could serve as a guide in developing our curriculum.

School librarians serve the learners by providing them information and services. Therefore, their training must equip them with knowledge, values, skills and attitude that will make them prepared in discharging their responsibilities. The six integrated frameworks explain the competences of a school librarian.

To meet with the global changes in education which is child-centered and inquiry-based, school librarians must possess skills that will position them as effective information providers, instructional leaders, collaborators, curriculum development

leaders, and technology leaders (Scheirer, 2000). The implication for this is that the curriculum must be more specific and focused on courses that will equip school librarians with knowledge and skills.

Different types of libraries demand different types of competence. Therefore, a curriculum developed for training library professionals for all types of libraries in Nigeria may not be adequate for training school librarians. The LRCN (2017) Library and Information Science Curriculum and Benchmark is prepared for training professionals for all types of libraries. To be more specific, one of the objectives of education and training in LIS as revealed in the document is to produce library and information professionals for all types of libraries, information and documentation Centres. In consonance with the objectives of Education for LIS, departments of library and information science in Nigerian Universities is training professional to run all types of libraries and other information agencies such as the archives and the publishing industry. The conventional curriculum for training LIS professionals for all types of libraries as shown in the content of curriculum of some library schools does not address some areas where knowledge and skills are needed by school librarians.

The need for a revised curriculum becomes very obvious based on the emphasis attached to resource-based learning which can make students active learners in schools. According to Laverty (1977), resource-based learning is a philosophy of education and a methodology of teaching and learning, which involves the achievement of both the subject and information literacy objectives through the exposure to and practice with diverse resources making students active learners. Mendrinoss (1994) supports the use of learning resources in school because they are necessary elements to increase the learning achievement of the students. The curriculum for training school librarians must therefore emphasize acquisition of skills that will make them competent in teaching students and staff how to use learning resources and thus becoming instructional and technology leaders. Based on their collaborative role, school librarians/ teacher-librarians must be at the forefront of helping teachers use resource-based learning materials in their classrooms. In addition, as observed by Scheiver (2000), school/ teacher librarians can assist students in developing skills like - technological, information literacy, critical, creative thinking and inquiry skills. The content of the curriculum for training school/teacher librarians must accommodate all these competencies to prepare them for a job market that is highly competitive. For the attainment of this goal, a revised curriculum different from the conventional one for training and educating students in library and information science must be developed. The basis being that the skills and competencies needed in school libraries are different from those needed in other libraries. For example, school librarians are considered as information providers, consultants, curriculum activists, instructional designers, instructional leaders, production specialists and most important, teachers (Kreiser and Horton, 1992). The competencies needed to carry out these activities cannot be acquired by using the conventional curriculum which is general for training professional for all types of libraries. Therefore, the CEMRS has developed a curriculum to be used for Bachelor's degree in School Library Media Studies which can impart knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes that school librarians could use in

school libraries.

Another component of the role of school librarians that necessitates a revised curriculum for their training is what Saskatchewan Education (1992) describes as Adaptive Dimension. Adaptive Dimension is defined as a concept of making adjustments in approved educational programs to accommodate diversity in student learning needs. In the National Policy on Education (2014), it is emphasized that education to be provided for Nigerian children and youths will include special needs education. This is defined as a customized educational programme, designed to meet the unique needs of persons with special needs that the general education programme cannot cater for. In that circumstances as suggested by Scheiver (2000), the teacher/school librarian would be seen as an important factor in achieving the Adaptive Dimension by assisting teachers in planning a variety of instructional strategies to accommodate individual differences in abilities and learning styles.

The Association of Teacher-Librarians of Canada and the Canadian School Library Association (1998) listed the roles and responsibilities of Teacher-Librarians as:

1. Collaborative and the curriculum leadership
2. Instructional
3. Instructional technologist role
4. Library management
5. Information specialist
6. Advocacy
7. Information literacy

All the roles listed above could not be carried out with knowledge and competencies gained in taking courses which are general for all types of libraries. For example, the collaborative, curriculum leadership, instructional, reading literacy and information literacy roles appear to be more peculiar to activities to be carried out with teachers and student in schools. In building a country of readers, who can participate in sustainable national development, the children and students in Nigerian schools must imbibe a reading culture from their formative early years. This is why "catching them young" is so crucial to CEMRS.

Courses of Study for Bachelor of School Library Media Studies

The National Policy on education (2014) has made it mandatory for states, Local Governments, as well as proprietors of schools to establish functional libraries and actively promote reading culture in all their educational institutions. The owners of schools are also required to provide for the training of school librarians and other categories of staff. However, lack of legislation to back this policy has adversely affected its implementation and little wonder that school libraries are not developed in Nigeria. Many schools do not have functional libraries and where they are available, there are no qualified staff to manage them (David –West and Bassey, 2017).

To solve the problem of lack of qualified personnel to develop school libraries, the Center for Educational Media Resource Studies, University of Ibadan, (formerly Abadina Media Resource Center) was established in 1972 to train school librarians.

Some of the functions of the Center as listed in the Senate paper which established it include:

1. Establishment of a model school library resources Center;
2. Conduct courses of study for school library media specialists and school librarians in regular programme and through workshops;
3. Design and promote curricula for library use education (information literacy skills) in our schools' system.
4. The focus of the Center since its inception is the training of staff (school librarians) for primary and secondary schools and the Center has been training school library personnel through workshops, seminars and conferences. Although the Center started academic programs at Master's degree and Doctoral levels in 2006, the need to run academic programmes at Bachelor's degree level to produce the manpower that will manage school libraries has now become an imperative.

The justification for the programme is based on the following:

Personnel specifically trained for inculcating and promoting reading culture is very essential due to continuing decline in reading culture in Nigerian schools;

Qualified staff competent in imparting knowledge and skills in media use is lacking in schools;

No institution in Nigerian Library Schools is awarding Bachelor degree in School Media/School Library Media Studies. What we have is Bachelor's degree in library and information science which is general for use in all types of libraries. This new programme will provide personnel specifically for primary and secondary school libraries as contained in the National Policy on Education. In comparing the conventional curriculum for training professionals to run all types of libraries and other information agencies with the revised curriculum designed for training personnel for school libraries, the following observations could be made:-

The conventional curriculum being used for Bachelor's degree in library and information science is intended to provide students with professional knowledge and skills which will enable them to work in various types of libraries and information centers. However, school librarianship being a specialty in library and information science need a revised curriculum to train personnel for school libraries which CEMRS has designed.

Looking at the conventional curriculum in library schools in Nigeria, it is obvious that very few courses are offered in school librarianship. Most of the courses to be offered are general and meant to provide knowledge and skills in all the aspects of librarianship. The curriculum does not contain enough content on the specific knowledge and skills needed for practice in primary and secondary school libraries. It is expected that the few courses offered in school librarianship as spelt out in the curriculum for library and information science programme would be made compulsory for all students. However, these courses carry required/elective/optional status. For example, courses like children's literature, school libraries and media resource Center, literature and library service to children and adolescents, school and media librarianship, literature and library services for young people are either required or Optional/electives as indicated in the prospectus of library schools; Reading literacy

is very germane in school librarianship and school librarians are to promote reading and nurture literacy development. The conventional curriculum in library schools have very few or no courses on reading and development strategies through which school librarians can acquire knowledge and develop competencies for use in schools.

Based on the above submissions, it is essential that a revised curriculum that will be tailored towards the need of children and young adults be developed. The Center for Educational Media Resource Studies (CEMRS), University of Ibadan, has developed one that can fill the knowledge and skills gap observed in the conventional curriculum. This is adequate for training qualified personnel for school libraries in Nigeria.

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