

Use of Media in Promoting Diversity in School Libraries in Osun State, Nigeria

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Abstract

The imperative for an incursion into the aspect of diversity in school libraries in Osun State hinges on the belief that our schools are culturally diverse places that have students and staff who represent varieties of race, culture, ability, sexual class. There is therefore the need to factor all these differences into the processes selection, acquisition, display and dissemination of information materials either in the physical form in the library catalogue or books on the shelves or in the media such as Facebook, Youtube, WhatsApp, Twitter, Blog, email, telegram, LinkedIn, Flickr and so on. The inclusion of diversity in the library routines is essentially for critical thinking and enabling environment for development of the people such that they are not alienated and it is also akin to SDG4 which has to do with inclusion in today's diverse society, providing opportunities for diverse opinions and worlds through books is just one of the things school libraries can do to help their students. All school libraries can get started by analyzing their student population and analyzing the corresponding diversity of the school library collection. Another way are personal research, hashtags, like *weneediversebooks*, browsing collection lists, and reading reviews. In order to serve all student, school librarians must be ready to advocate and promote diversity within their own environment placing diverse books in the hands of students helps develop empathy and understanding, allowing students to get to know those around them. This helps students to grow and understand each other and themselves.

Keywords: *Media, Diversity, School library*

Introduction

Osun has a fairly large population according to the 2006 National Population Census, the population of the state is put at 3,423,535. The state is rich in human and material resources (Osun State Portal, 2022). The social environment in the state is characterized by a people filled warmth hospitable, tolerant and accommodating. The social relationship existent in Osun is a plus to the economic grows in an atmosphere of peace. This affords indigenes and foreigners the opportunity to carry out their commercial activities in a conducive environment devoid of violence and arson. Osun is a multi-religious environment with inhabitants practicing the Islam, Christianity and Traditional worship. The diverse nature of their faiths and the peaceful nature characterizing the way everyone goes about it harmoniously is a lesson in tolerance. The state has never witnessed a religious crisis whether minor or major since its creation. There is also the presence of non-indigenes from other parts of the country representing different ethnic nationalities which has been assumed to be over 250 ethnic nationalities. These nationals are in Osun State either through the Federal establishments or through other means.

Literature Review

The modern school library must strive to continually add diverse titles to the collection so that all students feel represented and can find real books to which they can relate (Sarah Jorgenson and Rene Burress, 2020). Wenenda and Okeke (2018) strongly supported this assertion and opined that library books that are problematic must be weeded out such that students will not be alienated. Jorgenson and Burress (2020) stated that diverse texts allow students to see themselves in mirror books with characters who look and act like them; they also enable

students to look through windows to gain a better understanding of others' lives by reading about characters from different backgrounds. School librarians need to provide book collection to represent diversity in population such that every nationality can see mirror of themselves in books. It is only when this is done that books will be relevant and appeal to the readers. This is akin to one of the laws of librarianship says "every person his or her book is book". This means every nationality must be able to see the mirror of his character in books for better understanding and exchange of ideas for individual development.

Onyebuchi (2021) said that the issue of diversity can be tackled in the classroom but ... According to Teaching News (2020) diversity is essential in the library because it helps students develop critical thinking skills at the same time that they develop different libraries. When diversity is promoted in the library, all barriers or other inhibiting factors to reading are eliminated such that students will have the opportunity to study other races and begin to have a deeper insight into their well-being which can lead to a better understanding. It is only when an equitable and inclusive access is provided in the library that librarians will be in the position to understand the needs and aspirations of the communities they represent.

It has been affirmed that equity, diversity and inclusion are central to the promotion and practice of intellectual freedom. Libraries are essential to democracy and self-government, to personal development and social progress and to every individual's inalienable right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. This must be incorporated and practiced in the library for the sake of development. Diversity in the library is beyond acquisition of books but a constant review of the library routines to confirm with inclusion and equitable provision of services for better understanding and critical thinking.

According to Larsen (2017) lack of diversity has been lamented as a problem for decades, yet in spite of efforts to increase the diversity of the library workforce, there has been minimal progress. According to Teaching News (2020) some of the ways diversity can be reflected in the collections is by selecting books that highlight characters with intersecting identities, feature characters with different gender identities, family structures and disability experiences. Others include books that access social justice issues in the community, the nation and the world and books that focus on perspective of people of colour.

It is when libraries feature a focus on diversity, students learn effectively, especially when they see their own identities in the material they consume, they engage better in the learning process. Libraries now provide digital and information literacy tools to students apart from the traditional books. The Association for Library Service to Children as reported by the Teaching News (2020) that "one way that children learn about the world around them and other cultures is through the social messages found in stories. Stories help children understand how society perceives their culture as well as the cultures of their classmates, teachers, caregivers and others, thereby influencing their social and identity development.

It is generally believed that as librarians factored diversity in their collection, the more their understanding and hindsight and value attached to diversity which will ultimately lead to the building of more culturally responsive programmes which ultimately facilitate understanding and acceptance of diversity based upon culture, ethnicity, linguistic ability, religion, physical ability, immigration status and sexual orientation. As a result, school libraries will be able to engage with more perspectives in the classroom and invite students to adopt stronger critical thinking skills. Asalu (2017) posited that diversity in the classroom is seen as a source of strength rather than a problem. Nigeria is a country of diverse people and cultures. The beauty of the Nigerian nation with its diverse people, educating the young and future generations is very germane and

important factor in nation building. Shaefer (2000) as cited by Asalu (2017) said that no group can survive unless its new members are encouraged to learn and accept its values and customs.

The concept, diversity is viewed as understanding each individual in unique and recognizing our individual differences. These can be along the dimensions of race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, status, age, physical abilities, religious beliefs, political beliefs or the ideologies. Essentially, diversity in the library is all about inclusive education packaged for the benefit of all.

The Use of Media in Library Routines

There is an unprecedented increase in the use of social media in the library in recent times. Folorunso (2019) was of the opinion that the use of social media tools in the library is increasing everyday such social media tools include, Yahoo mail, You Tube, Wikis, Blogs, Chatrooms, Instant Messengers, Message Boards and Social Book marking which are web based.

Technology applications for social interactions and library routines. Social media is a communication forum that allows users to electronically share information and knowledge with each other. Ala (2007) stated that a primary mission of libraries is to provide a full spectrum of resources and services to the communities they serve.

1. Collection Development and Management

There is the need to make and create room for a responsive collection of materials likewise, the cataloguing and organization of materials should facilitate access to the full range of resources acquired by a library. In this wise, materials can be prepared and revised to conform with diversity in the library.

In addition to this, library staff can be instructed to adhere to the policy guidelines in respect of diversity in the library.

2. Acquisition

The library acquisition practices must of necessity reflect the vision for the library. The library acquisition practices are the “nuts” and “bolts” that translate policies into reality. Libraries should and review acquisition procedures on a regular basis to ascertain their effectiveness. The use of publishers’ catalogue both physical and electronic mode must of necessity be in tune with objective of acquiring different collections for various categories of people. In addition to this, users’ engagement is also important through WhatsApp constant discussion can take place such that the materials obtained at the end will be relevant to the needs of the users.

3. Cataloguing of Materials

Ala (2017) stated that user-centred cataloguing and classification practices help to facilitate access to library collections. Irrespective of any media use, the emphasis must be on both small, independent and alternative medial resources. In addition to this, subject heading that reflect ideas in small, independent, alternative media materials. Essentially, the use of information technologies to access, organize and manage the library’s electronic resources also impacts the quality and richness of a collection. Libraries often adopt proprietary technology for their open public access catalogue (OPAC) and other library systems that look them into expensive license agreements and inflexible software and management systems. According to Ala (2017) the open sources systems which emerged in the mid-1980s, challenge more traditional software concepts. The term open source refers to software in which the source code is freely available for others to view, modify, and use. Free/open source software (FOSS) is developed and maintained by a community of developers that crosses various communities and national boundaries rather than a single corporation. As such, FOSS has openness and the concept of access to information embedded in its structure and design. Because open software is becoming increasingly robust, libraries no longer need to rely solely on expensive programming software. Free access to information is inherent in these technologies. Information

systems and technology applications that incorporate these features help libraries build diverse digital collections.

4 Reference Collection

The use of indexes, databases and bibliographies play a unique role as gateways to other materials. Apart from these tools, in-house guides and pathfinders that include diverse sources to information can be created. For instance, there is google map on the internet, dictionary, thesaurus, etc. can be easily replayed and these are available on phones with Android facility. Effective use of these tools can go a long way to achieve the desired objectives.

5 Circulation of Library Collections

The circulation loan desk no matter how small it is, must be manned by competent librarian with bias for diversity. Materials must be circulated fairly among different categories of people in the community. It must not be lopsided or tilted to one segment of the society such that there will be no suspicion. The deployment of computer system for a comprehensive database of the library materials which will enable the library practitioners to have an overview of library holdings at a glance for an informed decision at any point in time. Facebook, instant message, chat room, WhatsApp as social media tools can be useful for this task.

Media Use and Its Challenges

The use of media for diversity in the library has its own shortcomings or what we can call some inhibiting factors in the execution of the task. These factors range from media phobia to the following factors; poverty, lack of awareness, bandwidth problem, lack of maintenance culture, epileptic power supply, and lack of adequate staff training. Media use is good and hastens library process but it has not been fully embraced by many people. The traditional ways of doing things is still on the front burner in most libraries due to knowledge deficit and lack of awareness of the importance of media. But, with a gradual approach it will be fully embraced.

Folorunso (2019) stated that people have not fully embraced social media owing paucity of information about its importance. There is a slogan that says "leave facebook and face your book". This assertion portrays facebook as a mere distraction rather than a visual tool for development. It is noted that facebook and other social media if fully embraced will surely complement the roles of librarians in achieving the set goals and objectives especially in the area of diversity. The point is media are vital tools for development. There is also the issue of bandwidth problem which is most of the time epileptic and slows down the growth and development of the library.

Another factor is lack of maintenance culture most public infrastructure is viewed nobody's property. There is no adequate care for public infrastructures hence there is constant damage of public infrastructures. There is also the issue of lack of adequate training on the use of social media. What is happening is the negative use of social media instead for profitable things social media can be used to disseminate vital information that will assist librarians.

Recommendations and Conclusion

Mon, (2015) as reported by Folorunso (2019) stated that librarians face uncertain future driven by technological and demographic changes in which the forms and the functions of the library are under constant pressure to adapt to new roles and realities.

The following are the recommendations;

1. Incorporate a diversity of media sources into library instruction sessions when appropriate and direct users to these sources as part of the individual instruction/interview process.
2. Teach media literacy and critical thinking skills as part of the library programme.

3. Efforts should be made to reflect diversity in the book selection process, dissemination of materials as well as learning of books.
4. Mainstream discussions about small/independent/alternative publishers and producers within Nigerian school library association.
5. Sponsor programmes that focus on diversity and use of media

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