

RELEVANCE OF MEDIA RENTAL SERVICES IN QUALITY EDUCATION OF THE NIGERIAN SCHOOL CHILD

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Abstract

In the library and information sector, there are two methods of service delivery namely the free service and fee-based service. Any of these two methods could be operated by either the public or private sector. Media rental services promote information and national development. It is a veritable means of providing quality education to the Nigerian school child. The media rental is also a place where the library and information professionals carry out private practice for skill update and financial reward. Just as the teachers in schools engage in private practice, the school teacher librarian or media specialist can also engage in private practice as desired. The following issues are discussed in this paper, Quality education and MDGS, media rental centres as educational centres, concepts of media rental libraries and relevance to quality education of the Nigerian school child both at jubilee year and beyond, types and their services, basic infrastructure for setting up media rentals and feasibility study.

Introduction

In a true democracy, governments give the people every opportunity to express their opinion. Part of this opportunity is that the government tries to communicate its plans, activities and progress to the people. Participatory governance in Nigeria means that the citizens should be able to contribute effectively in determination of government objectives and are able to hold the government accountable for the delivery of these objectives. Participatory governance is people centred and this takes into account people's well being, access to education and information on public matters like gender and financial equality and basic human rights. Today, government objectives as expressed in 2004 Nigerian policy on education is not

demonstrative of this aspiration because in Nigeria generally, reading culture is low and the government efforts are inadequate to alleviate the problem. Reading skills which is very important in participatory governance has not been effectively developed in the school child in Nigeria. Reading culture is best developed early in children and young adults. Developed nations cultivate on youths by providing quality school library and media services that can assist the school child to develop information literacy, participatory governance and lifelong learning. The school media and teacher librarians therefore, constitute partners in progress by mediating and assisting the government to actualize set objectives.

PURPOSE OF THE PAPER

The purpose of this paper is to indicate the value of media rental in library and information centres for quality education of the Nigerian school child. Specifically, the following issues are discussed: MDGS as precursor of quality education of the Nigerian school child, the concept of media rentals, library and information centres as educational institutions, relevance of media rentals to quality education of the Nigerian school child at jubilee year and beyond, types and their services, basic infrastructure for setting up media rentals and feasibility study.

Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) AND QUALITY EDUCATION

Millennium Development goals (MDGS) are the universally accepted framework for measuring development progress anywhere in the world. Consequently, poverty alleviation is based on the attainment of the goals as follows: eradication of hunger, universal primary education for all, promotion of gender equality and empowerment of women, reduction of child mortality, combating HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases, ensuring environmental sustainability and developing a global partnership for development.

As a part of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGS) of the United Nations, the Federal government in Nigeria made effort to ensure even development at the grassroots by embarking on a number of reform programmes as contained in the National Economic Development Strategy (NEEDS, 2004). The NEEDS document describes strategies to solve the development challenges of Nigeria which include the following major areas: public reform (e.g. capacity building or training of civil servants) which includes pension reforms, monetization, L.G.A reforms, police, prisons customs and immigration reforms, due-process and

deregulation of the down stream petroleum sector, agriculture, food security, rural development and solid minerals reforms among others. In consideration of the current economic down turn of the public sector, and in view of the fact that it is difficult to achieve reform without changing the attitude of civil servants, SERVICON which is civil service reform (Service Compact with all Nigerians) was introduced. SERVICON is an integral part of NEEDS. It is an attitudinal change needed to encourage public servants to be client friendly. SERVICON is a declaration by public officials to dedicate themselves to providing basic and essential services on time, in an effective, fair, honest, transparent and friendly manner.

Taking a clue from the Federal Government Millennium Development Goals, most state governments now embark on the Poverty Reduction Strategy (PRS) and State Economic Empowerment and Developments (SEEDS). They are reforms that have positive impact on the life of people especially on their attitude to information handling. Information and provision of verile media and library services are therefore, essential counterbalance to national poverty and illiteracy alleviation of the Nigeria school child.

WHAT IS QUALITY EDUCATION?

Quality education is a multi-dimensional concept that expresses student's physical, economic and social environment. It is a process that is associated with continuous improvement in the knowledge and skill capacity of students. Quality education assist student to manage themselves and their physical environment for their own benefit. Quality education carries the notion that students should be able to: recognize information and its knowledge dimensions, critically analyse problem(s), identify and formulate strategies for tackling them. It then means that a student that has quality education should have information literacy, visual literacy, media literacy, computer literacy, digital literacy and network literacy (Etim 2008). They also require information search skills as well as analytical skills. Ability to memorize, recall and organize knowledge and access and apply knowledge in problem solving.

These and more are skills that media rentals can provide to the school child. The media rental centres as adjunct and veritable access to humanistic, scientific and technological knowledge are agencies for quality education. The MDGs, NEEDS and SEEDS represent global and national economic empowerment of people which are educationally oriented and which the media rentals are set up to

serve. Because the existing school media system is handicapped to meet all the required information delivery of the school child, other methods of ensuring equitable access to information for this user system are invariably required. Here again lies the rationale for the media rental, library and information centres. Literature indicates that this area has not been fully exploited (Umar: 2005). An analysis of participatory governance and people's need for participation therefore, led to the conclusion that the media rentals can be an adjunct as the school media resources and services cannot provide quick and efficient access to sources of education for all the requirements of the school child.

WHAT IS MEDIA RENTAL/LIBRARY RESOURCE?

This has been variously defined as library and information services that are fee-based. (Umar, 2005). These services includes freelance librarianship, information brokerage, media rentals, library consultancy and a host of other names. Whatever name given, it is an institution that undertakes to search and provide information on demand for a fee (Bøpp and Smith, 2001). Operators of media and library rentals recognize that users of their centres value their services and will pay for them. Media rentals are like lesson homes for school children where the children rather than listen to teacher's instructions would request, pay for and collect relevant teaching aids or instructional materials to carry out their assignments or to learn.

MEDIA RENTAL AS EDUCATIONAL CENTRES

As a reference library outside the school system the media rental library and information centres provide the following information and knowledge to the school child: access to materials for school assignments, multi-media for learning, for debates, inter-house and inter-school sports as well as other school activities. Students can also access useful information on health issues such as types of diseases and how to prevent or treat them. For career decisions in medicine, engineering and law, students also require information which the media rental services can provide. The teacher-librarians and media specialists can set up services to enable students to access information from book and non-book media. Students apply the knowledge they acquire not only from school but also from outside the school environment for which media rentals provide useful resources.

RELEVANCE OF MEDIA RENTAL LIBRARIES IN QUALITY EDUCATION

The relevance of media rental services in quality education of the Nigerian school child is not in doubt. This is because school children carry out research and they require the assistance of the School Library Media Specialist more than the teacher. The school library media specialist provides this service with minimum waste of time. Service to media users who engage in special research attract some fees. In public, academic and special libraries, fee-based services serve the information needs of students, businessmen and professionals who are willing to pay for 'extra services' such as school project and assignments, information on scholarships, public examinations, extensive data search, document delivery, compilation of bibliographies, expert consultation, trademarks and patent research. White (1980) and Heim (1984) in support of the media rental and library and information brokerage, note the ample opportunities available in the information industries and the fact that conventional library and information centres cannot cope because of information explosion and high demand from users, as a result of information consciousness.

With ICT many media rentals are fast springing up. Majority of these centres aside from making money, helped to sustain the reading habits and literary interest of students. They are path-finders to other areas of entrepreneurship in the country. This is because the financial reward of a broker could encourage other interest group to join the business. This in turn, has a multiplier effect on the country's economy. The attendant economic factors are growth and development of market. With demographic increase in number of people interested in the business and their ability to pay for services, these are essential factors to encourage this business and support the phenomenon of quality education and national development. With success stories being recorded in some parts of the country, there is hope that media rental brokerage will thrive.

Notable of these centres are the *Ramat Reading Café* at Lamido Mustapha Social Centre in Zaria (Umar, 2005), ABIC Children's Reading Centre at Edozien street Uwani Enugu, the *Ivory reading club*, noted for children's literature and T/V sessions with NTA Enugu. The John and Lucy bookcafé located at 53 Udoji Street Enugu among others that are coming up. Media and rental libraries encourage students to keep abreast of information and they encourage lifelong education. These and more are areas of services the media specialists in schools and librarians should explore for enhanced financial empowerment (Achebe, 2004).

TYPES OF MEDIA RENTAL LIBRARY AND INFORMATION BROKERAGE

Media rental, libraries and information brokerage can be carried out in both public, private school, academic and special/research libraries. Fee based operations in these libraries range from separate units to those without separate unit. It can be established and run by one person or group of people. It can be private and public enterprise, the important feature is that the operators charge fees for their services. The concern of this paper is private fee-based media rental, library and information centres.

Fee-based Media Rental and Library Services

Fee-based media rental and information services can be exciting, rewarding and challenging for the school teacher-librarian or media specialist, for the following reasons: fee is charged for every extra time spent in handling patron's information needs. This is because keeping long with one patron without attending to others can be time consuming. This time computed in monetary terms can be enormous. The media specialist should consider this factor in billing services.

As we all know, in any business setting, time is money and the entrepreneur is not usually disposed to time wasting, a reason for charging fees for services rendered. Although typical examples of media rentals, library and information brokerage are few in Nigeria, they are many in the developed world like Germany, United States of America, Sweden, Finland, India, among others. In Germany for example, there is the popular '*SUBITO*' rental library, which provides a variety of services such as document delivery, lending services within and outside the country for users including students through electronic means. Its customers were National libraries, University libraries, specialist libraries and media centres. Most often these libraries offer services on behalf of the library user. They provide learning resources such as books, electronic note pads, computer equipment, and software packages for solving students' problems. In the USA, there is the *Atheneum Music and Art library* located in San Diego, California which provides electronic teaching and learning materials for music and art students. They also provide long vacation activities and workshop for students and teachers. Most of the services there are on how to improve students' learning and keeping them gainfully occupied during school sessions and vacations.

In Sweden, there are three media centres making the waves. First is the *Arts in Reading media centre* set up by Christine Wenner and associates. The purpose

of this media centre is to promote reading, drama, art and music for children to participate. Their major aim was to create different forms of exciting "*Literary Houses*" where different art forms are used to animate and create new ways into books and where children's own creativity and participation are central. This centre provides book and non-book materials for rental.

According to Wenner (2008), the *Arts in Reading project* which culminated in setting a media centre, was aimed at linking books, reading and stories to the experience of school children. Their aim was finding out whether the experiences of children who used the media centre made their learning to be more eternalized or memorable to the point of their making more requests for use of the media centre. Surely, the unexpected encounter arising from book and non-book materials has yielded huge success story as it enables children to make network of friends, hold talks and discussions as well as improve their knowledge on topical issues.

The Apple Shelf: Joy of reading for children with special needs. This is a media rental service for children and young adults. It provides book and non-book materials for children with visual impairment and other disabilities. It has braille books, talking books and audio-books, video and DVD sign language (made by children), computers and different software packages that encourage interaction and communication among children. These materials are rented for a fee on hourly, daily or weekly basis, long term loans are not encouraged.

Homework Extra setup by Everybody's Grand children NGO in Sweden. This is a media centre for training children in lifelong learning. It provides materials in different subjects. It is an NGO that runs on voluntary and charity basis. It provides story hours during which books are read to school children who are often given souvenir to encourage attendance. On the whole, these media centres in Sweden are well advertised to the public and schools who patronize them tremendously.

In Helsinki Finland, there is *Library 10*, which is a contemporary library in the City Centre that provides sheet music and books on selected themes. *Library 10* also has books on IT, tourism, different media and film as well as comics and magazines for children. There is a work room for children's meeting and trial of various media for learning. This centre has more than 10, 000 customers per week including school children.

In Nepal, India, there is the *Read Global* which is for rural education and development. This is a village library that assists in developing sound reading habits in school children and adults. But this is more than just a library or media

centre. *Read Global* provides the villagers with access to education, technology, vocational training and programmes in a variety of topics. It produces literate and educated individuals with the means to raise themselves out of poverty. It turns village into viable places to live by giving residents valuable skills, creating jobs, providing access to technology, thus balancing urban and rural opportunities. The facilities available in this village library include: Over 3,000 books, child friendly furniture, computer and multi media rentals, DVD player, CD player, OHP, T/V, photocopying, learning toys, meeting rooms, telephone, scanning, fax and internet services etc. The sizes of most of the Read libraries are at least 285sq. meters or 3050sq. feet.

BASIC FACILITIES FOR SETTING UP MEDIA RENTAL LIBRARY AND INFORMATION CENTRE

For purposes of setting up and running effective and efficient media rental and library, the following facilities are required:

Infrastructure

Regular electricity supply dedicated telephone line, regular water supply good access road and accommodation.

Accommodation: this is very essential for the take off of the media rental. The media specialist best bet is to rent one, if he has no property to use. Depending on funds available, he may rent a room, a flat or duplex.

Equipment

There is a need for a complete computer set with printer and scanner, T/V and Video cassette players and recorders, OHP, Multi media, radio and cassette players, tape recorder, manual and electric typewriters, satellite dish, dedicated telephone line and trusted server. Other necessary equipment include accounted calculated machine, CD/DVD player and recorder (camcorder), film projector, slides and its projector, childrens magazines and comic films, generator set, air conditioners, fan, as well as motor vehicles.

Cleaning Facilities

Brush, broom, mop and bucket, cutlass, hoe, shovel and rake for keeping the environment tidy and attractive.

Furniture

Quality chairs and reading tables for children, bulletin boards, book and audio-visual equipment shelves, window valence, curtains for windows and rug or carpets for the floor.

Security and time keeping gadgets. Alarm clock (set at opening and closing hours), quality keys, strong burglar proof for doors and windows.

FEASIBILITY STUDY AND POINTS TO NOTE IN SETTING UP MEDIA RENTAL, LIBRARY AND INFORMATION CENTRES

Like any business, setting up a media rental or rental library requires careful *plan* and feasibility study, the following steps are recommended:

1. **Self Assessment:** The information broker should be able to weigh himself to see if he has the capability to provide services to satisfy patrons.
2. **Community Analysis:** Efforts should be made to assess the community information needs. This would determine the type of media rental, or library rental to be set up. The analysis should aim at identifying potential target groups in the area the service is to be established. For example, the people in that area could be students, farmers, traders, drivers, tourists, artisans, politicians, patients in hospitals among others, the information broker should always monitor the information trend and requirements of his/her target group and potential target too.
3. **Nature of Services to be provided:** The information broker should determine the type of information to be provided to clients to keep them in constant demand of the centre's services. There are many services the media rentals, library and information centres can provide. They are photocopying, typesetting, literature search, internet browsing, information on scholarship, desktop publishing, space for general reading, book talks, film-show, teaching information skills, bibliography and clinical therapy. Other services to be provided also includes space for meetings, advisory and guidance, group discussion, binding and lamination of documents, Selective Dissemination of Information (SDI), job adverts, grants and tourism as well as referral services. The most important aspect of this decision is setting out the

objectives, mission and vision of the media and library rentals in clear, concise and achievable goals.

It is the duty of the information broker to identify services the patrons can afford and the promotional methods that can influence the patrons to develop favourable attitude to the services. This could be done by providing a business plan which contains all information required to start the business. This project plan is also useful in raising funds and obtaining relevant support to start and operate the media and rental library.

4. Funding

This has to do with initial capital for setting up the media centre. It also involves determining the cost of the media and rental library and ways and means of financing it. The following ways can be exploited:

- a. Self finance
- b. Government assisted finance
- c. Grants from charity organizations, corporations NGOs, both National and International.
- d. Bank loan.
- e. Cooperative effort or partnership finance.

5. Location and Setting

Choosing the right location is a strong success factor on the media and rental library. Three major considerations can be taken for this purpose:

- a. Availability of infrastructure such as electricity, water, good road, accommodation and telephone are very essential for locating a media rental library as well as information centres.
- b. Economic factors in terms of the purchasing power of patrons, that is, the ability of patrons to pay for services rendered in the media and rental library for information brokerage.
- c. Geographical factors to be considered are closeness to the users accessibility to the site of the media and library centres.

6. Management of Media and Library Rentals

Here, the information broker should consider selection and recruitment of personnel required to operate this centre in terms of the skills, experience and qualifications the staff require to be able to work creditably in different aspects

and unit of this centre. Specifically, an applicant who has management, advertising and communication skills is best suited for recruitment to run the centre.

7. Economic Viability

The information broker has to determine how the media and library resources would contribute to the economic growth of the location or town. Part of this requirement is that the information broker should register the business with the Corporate Affairs Commission (CAC) to avoid being harassed by the officials of this agency. Part of the gains of registering with the Corporate Affairs Commission is that this agency helps to market the centre through their publications. Marketing is a crucial aspect of the business which should not be underrated if the centre is to achieve sustainable growth and development. (Gana: 2002).

Sources of Funds for Running Cost/Over Head

Basic sources include:

- **Membership Fee:** This can be categorized according to users thus; individual, institutional like NGOs, CBOs, Schools and Professional associations etc.
- **Rental Fees:** This should be charged on the resources taken outside the media/library such as books, CD/DVD, and other non-books, cost of running an errand delivering messages or parcels.
- **Service Charge:** This is the costing of library services in terms of duration e.g. cost of telephone in terms of calls per minute, word processing or typesetting and photocopying services in terms of number of pages typeset.

Conclusion And Recommendations

Media rental, library and information brokerage is a viable resource for people-centred development and quality education for the Nigerian school child. It can be a useful tool in the hands of media specialist to contribute positively to the United Nation's Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the Federal Government Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS), the State Economic Empowerment and Developments (SEEDs), and the state Poverty Reduction Strategy (PRS). As these programmes require the participation of everybody in the country, the school media specialists, the librarians and information brokers should also contribute through the utilization of their skills. They are expected to

lead the way because they provide useful information to people for their personal development, through which they could provide solution to problems in the society. The school library media specialists, library and information professionals should take the challenge and begin to establish media rental, library and information centres in their locality. Providing reference service through an information broker can be satisfying alternative career for the school teacher librarian and media specialist.

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