

Managing the School Library Collection for Ease of Access in the Foundation Phase School Library

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ABSTRACT The purpose of this study is to investigate teachers' views about accessing school library collections used in teaching learner in the foundation phase. A qualitative research method was employed based on the nature of the study. The target population included Foundation Phase teacher librarians. Eight schools were selected purposively from Vhembe District. Eight participants were sampled by virtue of their being teacher librarians serving in the Foundation Phase school libraries. Data were gathered by means of individual interviews and observation. This study revealed that teacher librarian's encounter challenges in as far as managing library collections that are not well-arranged for ease of access by both teachers and learners. As a result, this leads to school library collections not effectively used. The paper recommends that all teacher librarians be trained on all library activities so that they will be able to perform their tasks effectively. The Department of Basic Education (DBE) must develop regular workshops and short courses for teacher librarians to train them on how to arrange books to facilitate ease of access.

INTRODUCTION

Krashen (2004) asserts that well-arranged books in school libraries facilitate access to classroom, and that such school libraries encourage more reading. Furthermore, access to books offer children with chances to rehearse reading, as well as developing their reading habits. Krashen (2004) and South Africa Department of Education (2005) concur that children who go to schools that have well equipped school libraries that are well-organized and well-arranged tend to do better in reading.

Both the school library and classroom library materials that are well-organized support school reading programmes. The school library cannot replace the classroom reading collection; the two supplement each other. The school library consists of "collection of resources that are organised according to a standard system with materials catalogued and classified for universal accessibility" (Frances and Webster 2002). The collection can be rich with all kinds of resources in different formats, but if it is not accessible, it becomes useless because no one will be able to

use it. Therefore, the classroom reading collection should be organised according to the grade level of the individual classroom so as to support reading programmes and activities.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The qualitative approach was adopted in this study. A case study was employed because after the researcher has clearly observed instances of limitations, she decided to offer a comprehensive understanding of the case (Cresswell 2008). A phenomenological interview type strive for to find important connotation or the core of a precise occurrence of a crowd or person (Creswell 2008).

Participants and Sampling

The target population included Foundation Phase teacher librarians in Vhembe District. It was from this population that a sample of eight schools were purposively selected, and as a result, teacher librarians of each school automatically became some of the participants.

Data Collection Procedure

The researcher collected data by means of individual interviews as well as classroom ob-

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servations in which the researcher visited teacher librarians who facilitated direct communication between the researcher and the participants.

Data Analysis

Data analysis started immediately after the data had been collected. The data were physically sorted and analysed. The recorded voices of the participants were transcribed verbatim, coded and categorized into three main themes.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The researcher went on contracting and categorizing the ideas to the point of fullness as far as themes and categories are concerned. The researcher was able to come out with three comprehensive cores which are as follows: subject teachers' attitudes, viewpoints and awareness of the situation and circumstances relating to the arrangement of library collections; teacher librarians' opinions on the arrangement of school library collections in school libraries and the availability of reading spaces in libraries; and the challenges encountered with a library collection that is not properly arranged. Thereafter, the researcher looked at sub-themes or categories that showed frequently. The researcher presented three themes by making use of quotations or direct responses from the collected data (responses) as follows:

Theme 1: Teacher Librarians' Attitudes, Viewpoints and Awareness of the Situation and Circumstances Relating to the Arrangement of the Library Collection

Categories

- 1.1 "There is no formal arrangement followed in arranging books. In our library, books are just packed on the shelves."
- 1.2 "No proper arrangement is followed, the books are just packed on the shelves. There is no arrangement they are mixed up."
- 1.3 "We receive our books from the Regional library and they come having being catalogued so our books are arranged according to a system."

Theme 2: Teachers' View on How they Arrange School Library Collections

Categories

- 2.1 "We have got a section wherein we have got the colouring books for learners, another section for reading."
- 2.2 "Books are arranged by their types, picture books are put in their section."

Theme 3: The Challenges Encountered with the Library Collection that is Not Properly Arranged

Categories

- 3.1 "It is difficult to find a book in the library collection that is mixed up and it is not arranged according to a system."
- 3.2 "It is difficult for us to be able to arrange the library collection according to the library standards because we are not trained on how to do that."
- 3.3 "We do not send our learners to go and pick up the book they like to borrow them because the books are mixed up."

During classroom observation, it was evident that the library materials are very old. The researcher noted that there is no addition of new reading materials; in other words, it seemed that the schools are not acquiring new reading materials. It is important that school libraries have to purchase latest reading materials always. Consequently, the library classification system should assist in finding the best helpful place for each of the accessible library collections. The latest books could be about a topic that has previously been offered for in the scheme of library classification; it can be about a recently developing discipline that cannot have been offered for in the current programme. As a result, the books would be classified and placed in the accurate location. It was also observed that no classification system was followed in all the libraries. With the exemption of one teacher, all other schools indicated that their school library collection is arranged according to subject. On the other hand, only one teacher librarian pointed out that their collection is arranged according to languages such as English and Afrikaans, with most of the books being in the latter language. This is also evidence that the collection

is way too outdated considering that Afrikaans has been faced out many years ago as a language of learning (medium of instruction). The issue at stake here is that of making the library collection accessible to learners by arranging books using a classification scheme. Therefore, the reading materials that are no longer utilised in the library collection for some motive should be removed, and that the library classification system should enable such removal.

Libraries should use the Dewey decimal classification scheme (DDC) to arrange books as well as other library resources on the shelves so that they may be easily retrieved. DDC allows items concerning the similar topic to be shelved concurrently. During the interviews, it became apparent that teachers have knowledge concerning the arrangement of books; and that books should be arranged according to a particular system so that they are kept in order to enable learners to search and find them easily in the school library collection. Teachers were not completely certain of the specific system used in arranging books. If books are arranged according to a certain system, it will be easy to locate them. According to Radford, Radford and Ingel (2012) and Hunter (2002), classification plays an important role especially in assisting the search process. In libraries, books are usually “arranged in general sections as languages, education, history, travel and so on. Such an arrangement is used to advantage clients when they want to search for a particular book. Without classification it is impractical to search library shelves one by one while the reader only wants to look for a certain subject or topic. There are often too many books.”

The study found that it is important for teacher librarians to follow the correct method of arranging books in the school library so as to facilitate ease of access to books packed in the library. Three main themes emerged from data analysis. In the subsequent section, the researcher presented different themes as well as interconnected categories which were stimulated from the data analysis. Data originated from different instruments used, and these are interviews with subject teachers, interviews with teacher librarians and observations. The themes, together with confirmation of the emergence of these themes, is presented below.

Theme 1: Teacher Librarians’ Attitudes, Viewpoints and Awareness of the Situation and Circumstances of the Arrangement of the Library Collection

Category 1.1

“There is no formal arrangement followed in arranging books. In our library books are just packed on the shelves.”

In theme 1 the participating teacher librarians indicated mixed attitudes in as far as the arrangement of the library collection is concerned. The participants said:

“There is no formal arrangement followed in arranging books. In our library books are just packed on the shelves, the reading books are arranged one side while the numeracy books are on the other side.”

One participant also said: “Most of our books are lost inside the library because our books are not arranged according to any type of arrangement system.”

The above statement seems to indicate that teacher librarians are aware of the fact that books should be arranged properly to facilitate ease of access. Classification provides a system for organising knowledge represented in any form such as books and electronics resources. Therefore, it is clear that to maintain order in the library collection, whenever books or reading materials are taken out from the shelves, they should be replaced in their proper places. It is, therefore, understandable why the International Federation of Library Association (IFLA) (2017) and South Baylo University (2012) say that it is of paramount importance that the library classification should enable the correct replacement of documents after they have been returned from use. This should require a permanent mechanised arrangement.

Category 1.2

“No proper arrangement is followed, the books are just packed on the shelves. There is no arrangement they are mixed up.”

The participating subject teachers seemed to be aware that there is a need for arrangement that will help them in organising documents. This includes a method that is most convenient to learners as well as to the library staff. Documents should be systematically arranged in

classes based on mutual relationships between them, which brings together all closely related classes. The arrangement should be in such a manner that the user should be able to retrieve the required documents, resulting in a helpful sequence.

Category 1.3

"We receive our books from the Regional library and they come having being catalogued so our books are arranged according to a system so as to facilitate access to a wide range of books in our library."

From the above statement, it is clear that library usage by learners depend on the availability and conditions of the school library. For this reason, "the main function of an educational library is to serve as an auxiliary to a parent institution in carrying out its objectives. This is consistent with literature that the library is an important intellectual resource of the academic community, which helps them to fulfil curriculum requirements and to promote studies and research" (IFLA 2017; Rathinasabapathy 2005). Furthermore, to remain indispensable, in serving their institutions, libraries must define and fulfil a configured set of roles. School libraries are important resources for the acquisition of basic literacy as well as information literacy (Hoskins 2006; IFLA 2002).

"In my experience many of the so called school libraries in existence are dysfunctional, often locked, and used as storerooms for old and irrelevant stock. Classroom libraries or reading corners consists of tattered and toned magazines and text books" (Wessels 2010).

Theme 2: Teachers' View on How they Arrange the School Library Collection

Category 2.1

"We have got a section wherein we have got the colouring books for learners, another section for reading"

Arranging books according to a certain system facilitates book display, and can be used to record books issued out to users, and allows easy replacement of books to the shelves and in their right places (Sharma 1978; Cabonero and Dolendo 2013).

In addition to poor and unsatisfactory conditions in school libraries as expressed in interviews, subject teachers indicated that the library space is not large and the arrangement of books is poor. This was supported by one participant, who said:

"According to learners as a teacher I used to go there and pick up the books so that they must read inside the classroom rather than to go to the library because they cannot pick up those books because of that arrangement that is poor, and the library space that is not large enough to accommodate our learners."

The above comment indicates that subject teachers have insight into the fact that books should be arranged according to a specific system. The respondent said that the poor arrangement of books in libraries is a barrier to using the library by learners. Shelving and shelf rectification of reading materials in different collections must be done preferably everyday to ensure that the shelf arrangement of books and other reading materials is in line with a recommended order. Shelf rectification is undertaken to ensure that books and other reading materials are kept on the shelves as per prescribed order. In case they are not in order, the necessary rectification should be done to restore their order on the shelves. This is important so that one could locate books from their recommended positions on the shelves as needed. Classification is very significant in libraries' administrative system. Deprived of classification, library resources become difficult to locate (Gholamreza 2004; Cabonero and Dolendo 2013).

Some participants said: *It is not easy though we want our children to meet the needs of the reading level. We try to receive some books from the circuit office even though they are not enough and when we arrange them, as we teach Grade three learners, we focus on arranging them according to the language as we use mother tongue like Tshivenda and the other one is English First Additional Language.*

Minter (2009) and Kumar (1993) stress that "classification is a procedure of grouping similar items and objects, and is essential in formulating groups, which results in classification. This process helps the user to arrange, organise and make logical sense of articles, and to locate them with ease. Classification is the ability to distinguish objects through their similarities and dissimilarities."

Category 2.2

“Books are arranged by their types, picture books are put in their section”.

To simplify the utilisation of the library resources by the children, educators as well as the school community in its entirety, book exhibition have to be implemented for special display of books and other library resources on a dedicated theme. The word ‘display’ is utilised to point out that the library resources are an open access and is well- accessible and directed. The library classification system have to be advantageous in the organisation of book display. In support of this view, the participant said:

“Books are arranged by their types, picture books are put in their section, colouring books are put on their shelves, literacy books aside and numeracy books are put separately to make it easy to find them.”

Theme 3: Challenges Encountered with the Library Collection that is Not Properly Arranged

Category 3.1

“It is difficult to find a book in the library collection that is mixed up and it is not arranged according to a system.”

In this category, the participant teacher librarians pointed out the challenges that they encounter as a result of library collections that are not arranged according to a system in their school libraries. The participant said:

“One can take a long time to find a books if the library collection is not arranged according to formal system because one cannot know where the book is lying.”

It is also logical to stress that library cataloguing is associated to the organisation of resources in the library in a way that serve learner in the best possible way. Moreover, library arrangement can also be regarded as a procedure of placing books and other reading materials on a topic in a consistent arrangement on the shelf, which could also be of enormous assistance to clients (Omenyo 2016; Wells 2012). To support this view, another participant made the following point:

“The library collection in our school library is not arranged, so we end up not using the library for all library activities. We are like those schools that do not have any library be-

cause we cannot access the collection in our school library.”

This implies that school libraries should adopt a particular arrangement suitable for a particular arrangement utilised as a device for every sample still substantially fundamental aim. Its aim is to protect an order which will be valuable to learners as well as individuals who search for information in the slightest difficulty of search, also known as technique, intended to accelerate the full utilisation of knowledge stored in books and other materials contained in the collection (Hunter 2002; Horsman 2002).

Category 3.2

“It is difficult for us to be able to arrange the library collection according to the library standards because we are not trained on how to do that.”

Classification plays a significant role and is an indispensable method for numerous organisations and in many individuals’ lives. It makes it easier to locate, retrieve and organise information. According to South Baylo University (2012) and Hopkins (2007), without classification we will not be able to organise things and as a result, we find things in a much harder way because there is no index to refer to. The bottom line is that the library customer or client should be capable of finding library collections in an organised fashion.

Category 3.3

“We do not send our learners to go and pick up the book they like to borrow them because the books are mixed up.”

During the interview with one teacher librarian, she expressed her concern about the frequency of library use by learners as a result of a library collection that is not well-arranged to facilitate ease of access to library books. The participants expressed their concern about not sending their learners to the school library because books are not well-arranged. They said:

“It is difficult to send learners to use the library our books are not arranged to make it easy for learners to select and pick the book of their choice. I do not send them at all because it is a waste of time searching for a book that you will not find.”

Another participant said: "We are unable to access the rich collection that we have in our library because the books are not well shelved, some of the books are heaped on the table top."

The school library should be a silent and harmless place where children are subjected to a print and text-rich surroundings, and where they can be wrapped up in reading activities (Celano and Neuman 2001; PIRLS 2006). The requirement for libraries, has grown and have to address literacy as a lifetime learning process. Therefore, libraries inspire learners, by both sustaining the teaching and learning in the school, as well as by providing them freedom to render their personal selections concerning reading and learning knowledges (Library Association 2000).

CONCLUSION

The conclusion is based on the literature review as well as empirical data. As a result, teacher librarians experience challenges in managing library collections for ease of access by learners in lower grades. This influences library use by both learners and educators in a negative way. This study revealed that the available resources are being wasted and becoming outdated because of lack of a proper system of arranging books to facilitate their ease of access.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The researcher recommends that all teacher librarians should receive library training so that they are able to know what they are supposed to do and how they should manage the library. As a result, the Department of Basic Education (DBE) must develop regular workshops and short courses for teacher librarians to train them on how to arrange books to facilitate ease of access by both learners and teachers. Moreover, the Department of Education can invite professional librarians from the Department of Sports, Arts and Culture to check if books are arranged properly and to guide them to maintain the library in such a way that it is conducive for use by both learners and teachers.

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