

School Library Usage by Grade Three Learners in the Vhembe District in Limpopo Province, South Africa

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ABSTRACT Library usage is concerned with users' use or non-use of the library, their visits to the library, and the extent to which the facilities, collections and services are used or not used. Library usage is referred to in this paper as the frequency of use of the library and the time spent in the library. The aim of this paper is to investigate the school library usage by grade three learners in Vhembe District in Limpopo Province in South Africa. This paper pursued the qualitative research methodology where a case study design was utilised. The purposive sampling approach was employed to select eight subject teachers and eight teacher librarians. The following data collection methods were used to gather data: interviews, observations and document analysis. Four findings emerged from the study: the understanding of subject teachers concerning sending learners to the school library; the reason behind sending the learners to the school library; the compromising of school libraries, and its use for other purposes other than library activities. Recommendations are made based on the findings of the study that school libraries should be used for library activities by both learners and teachers.

INTRODUCTION

South African and African librarianship is rooted on its colonial past. As a result, the South African librarianship is shaped on Anglo-American, Euro-centric and Anglophone library practices (Sepeng 2020). Most South Africans' understanding of librarianship is derived from the public and library backgrounds of other countries. African authors such as Ken (2020), Berghammer and Karlsson (1988), Verbeeck and Stilwell (1988), Stilwell (1989) and Fairer-Wessels and Matchet (1993) feel that it is high time that a more community-oriented model library for African countries be considered. Africa as well as South Africa has to develop a library model of its own that will be suitable for use by African communities. During the time of apartheid, some communities were not provided with public library services in South Africa and, as a result, resource centres and community libraries were started in those areas as a new development for those disadvantaged areas of South Africa (Berghammer and Karlsson 1988; Verbeeck and Stilwell 1988; Stilwell 1989; Fairer-Wessels and Matchet 1993). This is evidence that the development of a suitable model for school libraries that would motivate learners to use the library and become habitual readers in rural schools might make a difference.

Witbooi (2005) and Ken (2020) share the same sentiments in developing a community-based service model, or a Community-Led Service Planning Model that incorporates all the endorsements of the above authors, which they believe is suitable for African and South African circumstances. Witbooi (2005) asserts that Opperman's endeavour corresponds with President Thabo Mbeki's and other academics' appeal for an African Renaissance, in which they call for continental orientation and unity. Moreover, Witbooi (2005) and Dube (2018) refer to Opperman's model as a developmental model in which libraries are there for the community, about the community, with the community and through the community. Ken (2020) asserts that there is also a need to facilitate the use of traditional library service planning against a community-led service planning model as the utmost operative method to make library services applicable to socially excluded community members. This is the trademark of this model. In this model, the "community-centric" research approach plays a critical role. Therefore, the kinds of progressive issues like literacy curricula, existence and life skills lectures and talks, as well as educational activities are organised in combination with the community, clubs and organisational establishments and unpaid workers from these sectors of the community (Witbooi 2005).

It is clear that there are different library models in South Africa: the only challenge is to identify which model works better. Library services are concerned with the entirety of support offered by the library for its clients. These services, as a whole, influence the welfare of library clients, academically and psychologically (Chukwueke 2018). Studies have indicated that there are only 7 percent of schools that have well equipped school libraries in South Africa. Millions of learners are disadvantaged in terms of access to reading and learning materials (National Education Infrastructure Management System (NEIMS) 2007; Education Statistics in South Africa 2007). Other studies indicate that there are only 7.2 percent of schools with school libraries that can be used by learners, while in 2007 it was indicated that 7 percent of schools have school libraries as well as an effective Library and Information System (LIS). This means that schools with libraries increased by only 2 percent (NEIMS 2011; Mojapelo and Dube 2014; Department of Arts and Culture and National Council for Library and Information Services (DAC and NCLIS) 2014; Mojapelo 2015). Lack of school libraries in South Africa is negatively affecting teachers, learners and public librarians. Learners rely on the use of public libraries as information sources to do their school-work such as projects, presentations, assignments, etc. As a result, schools should be furnished with school libraries that are well-equipped and have effective library services to sustain teaching and learning activities in schools (Shonhe 2019).

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study were:

- To describe school library usage by grade three learners in Vhembe District;
- to examine the existence and importance of school library usage by Grade three learners in Vhembe District; and
- to explore the frequency with which teacher librarians attend to grade three in school libraries.

The Concept Library

The history of the concept 'library' can be traced back to the beginning of the 1200s with the first efforts being the collection of recorded knowledge (Harris 1999). Topics of interest included accessibility of the collection,

acquisition of materials, arrangement relating to finding the tools, the book trade, and the influence of physical properties of different writing materials. The role of libraries began to be professionalised in the late eighteenth century in Western Europe in the face of complaints about the organisation of book collections and the ignorance of keepers. Librarians began to seek professional goals of being more industrious and effective with collections that were meant to promote their use and access.

In the late nineteenth century, libraries were at the cutting edge of bureaucratic innovations necessary for building a modern society (Black 1996). Trained experts provided numerous specialised users access to massive collections of information by organising holdings according to a scientific classification. Moreover, an effective school library managed by a professional school librarian performs a significant role in enabling learning and knowledge building by learners (Chukwueke 2018). The professional school librarians developed efficient methods of information management in terms of the lending of books and the recording of user activities. This development escalated into other disciplines, including reading, where the school library became the focus of attention. It is against this background that the usage of school libraries by grade three learners was studied. As a result, this study set out to analyse programmes and activities initiated by school librarians to encourage and motivate Grade three learners to use the library in order for them to become habitual readers. Moreover, the school library serves an exceptional and tactical part of educational organisations owing to abundant services offered by this library to all sections of the organisation for the progression of learners in all outcomes (Chukwueke 2018).

The Functions of School Library

Several studies on school libraries and the development of reading habits among learners have been conducted in developed countries (Martinez and Teale 1988; Fractor et al. 1993; Worthy 1996; Sangkaeo 1999; Celano and Neumann 2001), but it appears that such studies are still lacking in developing countries such as South Africa, especially those looking at the role of libraries in developing

the reading habits of grade 3 learners, which is the focus of this study. School libraries are responsible for catering the needs of learners in elementary schools (Foundation Phase), middle schools (Intermediate Phase), junior high schools and high schools (Senior Phase) in the United State of America. The main aim of a school library is to back-up different educational programmes as well as to advance learners' skills to search, retrieve and use information. "The developing countries should develop the libraries both in schools and as public libraries, and equip them with modern information resources so that learners in this era are able to develop an understanding of what a library is, and how a library works" (Mahwasane 2016: 258). On the other hand, teachers also need the school library in order to advance and back-up their classroom teaching and to prepare lessons to teach their learners. Learners use school library collections to do their schoolwork (Halsey 2009; Ginika 2017). This indicates that the emphasis is placed on the role played by school libraries in providing both teachers and learners with information to do their work.

School libraries contain and preserve library materials in different forms and formats. They contain collections such as books, magazines and newspapers. They can also preserve computers, CD-ROMS, games and maps, photographs, sound and video recordings as well as films. Certain school libraries may also comprise real objects, that is, artefacts such as different types of stones for studying geology, or different types of soil for studying geography. The reason being that according to the Department of Education, no school is expected to operate without a well-equipped school library. This means that it is important that each and every school library has a library collection to meet learners' and teachers' information needs in order to supplement the school curriculum. Moreover, recently most school libraries participate in school library competitions in which they share their library resources among participating school libraries (Halsey 2009; South Africa, Department of Basic Education 2012). In view of the current South African education system which depends on the usage of library resources for its implementation and success, a small-scale research should be conducted to determine the existence and usage of school libraries in South

African rural schools in order to improve the reading habits of learners. The study is a small-scale research because only schools in Vhembe District will be studied.

How Teachers Engage Learner in Using the Library

Halsey (2009) states that learners at different educational levels have specific information needs, preferences and interests. Elementary school libraries have a vital role to play in the early age of children's education by providing learners with books and other resources at their level of education. "The way in which school libraries are furnished has an effect on learners' academic achievement. If the school library is not well equipped, it will not be able to satisfy the demands of various subjects/ learning areas that learners have registered for" (Mahwasane 2017a:194). Therefore, in developed countries, elementary libraries specialise in illustrated children's storybooks, colouring books as well as audio-visual materials. Most of the elementary school libraries also comprise reference materials. For example, encyclopaedias for learners, and fiction and non-fiction books which are at the level and understanding of learners in those schools. In some elementary school libraries, there are computers equipped with kids' scholastic programmes. Foundation Phase, especially from Grade R to Grade three, are offered in classes in which they are trained basic skills for searching and retrieving information from the library collection. They master the skills on how to search a book by making use of the library catalogue, locating a book on bookshelves as well as borrowing the book from the issuing desk. However, it is clear that basic reading skills that learners need to master at an early stage are overlooked. Foundation Phase learners can also utilise the school library collection to master elementary computer skills, or to listen to stories during story hours (Halsey 2009; South Africa, Department of Basic Education 2012). This provides them opportunities to immerse themselves in books, and as a result, develop love for books while still in early grades. A study by Halsey (2009) and South Africa, Department of Basic Education (2012) revealed that the school library collection is used

to develop various skills, besides developing reading habits and skills to learners of which this study has set up to examine. Consequently, the present study aims to describe the state and conditions of school libraries, the existence, and use of school libraries by Foundation Phase (Grade three) learners.

Unlike this study, which focuses on the lower grade of the Foundation Phase, Busayo's (2011) study focused on teachers in advanced grades of elementary schools, that is, in the Intermediate Phase. "Teamwork is necessary between educators and librarians ensure the incorporated partaking approach of lecture distribution which requires students to transform to investigated projects as well as embrace tutorial addresses on some course outlines" (Mahwasane 2017b: 95). Learners are motivated to visit and use the school library during the course of the day in order to compile their school research projects and assignments for leisure reading, and to interact with learners of the same age group. For learners at this level of education, a flexible schedule influences schools to mix research skills and library materials during the day-to-day classroom teaching (Halsey 2009; Busayo 2011). Besides catering for the educational needs of children, school libraries have a bigger role to play in enhancing the reading habits of learners, which is the central focus of this research. But in the South African situation, we are still far from addressing the reading behaviour of Foundation Phase learners who still need well developed school libraries. The issue of developing the reading habits of learners in the Foundation Phase has not been well addressed, and one wonders whether this reading problem will be successfully addressed without the use of well-developed school libraries.

Fraser (2013) claims that South Africa has a good collection in as far as functional library service provision is concerned, specifically in the rural areas. Moreover, large numbers of schools that are funded by the government do not have school libraries that are necessary for supplementing the school curriculum through the provision of an indispensable library collection for teachers and learners. The combination of school libraries with public libraries was found to be the only solution to the problem of lack of school libraries. It is, therefore, evident that library clustering or co-operation among schools that are close to each

other can make a difference in as far as library usage by learners is concerned. Unfortunately, these libraries are not there.

According to The Library and Information Services (LIS) Transformation Charter (2014), excellent school LIS are indispensable in as far as the transformation of the South African education system is concerned, as it intends to offer excellent schools for South African learners as a whole. As a result of Bantu education, schools for blacks were not well equipped and therefore there is a need to restore this situation. On the other hand, schools for the white minority have libraries that are well equipped as they are economically advantaged. There are enormous disparities in South African library and information system, which results in most South African learners' reading and information needs not being realised. A large number of learners do not have access to any form of LIS. It is very difficult to encourage learners to use the library when we do not have full access to it. In terms of Ehri's theory, learners learn to pronounce and spell words as they constantly come into contact with texts, that is, in the reading materials. The right place to meet with various types of text is the library.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design and Approach

The study adopted or followed the qualitative research approach because its methods are typically more flexible, that is, they allow greater naturalness and adjustment of communication between the researcher and study participants. The advantage of using qualitative methods was that they asked mainly "open-ended" questions where participants had the opportunity to respond more elaborately and in greater detail. Moreover, researchers have the opportunity to respond immediately to what participants say by shaping consequent or follow-up questions to the information provided. They were asked questions like: if subject teachers send learners to the school library; the reason for sending learners to the library; and the frequency in which teacher librarians attend to grade three learners in the school library. Teacher librarians were requested to describe the usage of the school library in the school where they are currently working by Grade three learners.

According to McMillan and Schumacher (1993), research design is the plan and structure of the research employed to attain substantiation to answer the research question. The design explains the processes of carrying out the investigation. The research design used in this paper is the case study, which was chosen because it permits the researcher to ask follow-up questions to the investigation for additional information on the topic being studied.

Data were collected immediately during the third quarter of 2019 after the pilot testing of the instrument.

Data Collection Method

Polit and Hungler (1999: 267) opine that a data collection method is utilised to collect information during the course of a research study. The study used interviews, observations and content analysis as methods of data collection to achieve the objectives of this study. A description of each data collection method used in this study is provided below.

Interview

Interviews are means through which participants get engaged and communicate their opinions. Interviewees can reflect their understanding and description concerning the given situation. Questions were asked about issues such as the availability of a school library. The questions solicited information on the use of school libraries, the frequency of sending learners to the school library, the reason for sending learners to the library and learners' library usage. Open-ended questions were used to avoid getting 'yes' or 'no' answers as they do not yield much information in connection with the subject at hand. In instances where "yes" or "no" answers were unavoidable, follow up questions were posed to interviewees so that they should provide reasons behind their "yes" or "no" responses. Data was collected immediately after the pilot test during the last quarter of 2019.

Observation

According to Leedy and Ormond (2010: 147), observations involve the direct witnessing of phenomena in their natural setting. In observations, the observer collects information by observing as

an outsider, or as a participant while recording everything that takes place. Observation can be hidden (subjects of research not being aware that they are being investigated) or unhidden (subjects of research being aware that they are being investigated). In this study, direct and unhidden observations were carried out at selected primary schools. The researcher was requested to visit or expedite each selected school library with a checklist in order to identify facilities, collections and services provided.

Document Analysis

According to Leedy and Ormond (2010: 144), content analysis is a systematic examination of contents of a particular body of materials. Its purpose is to identify specific characteristics of a body of materials. This is done in order to establish patterns, themes or contents of particular types of materials. Document analysis is usually performed on forms of human communications such as books, newspapers, films, televisions, websites, policies, transcripts of conversations etc. In addition to literature review, document analysis was used in this study to inspect materials such as school library policies, literacy syllabi, school reports and teaching plans. This was done to identify features or activities that are related to the promotion of learners' reading habits.

Data Analysis

For qualitative data, it was important to follow the Richard Hycner's model of qualitative data analysis, which provides guideline steps on how to conduct interview data analysis. Giorgi et al. (1971) stress that every research method should begin out of attempt to be responsive to a phenomenon. Not any approach can be randomly enforced on a phenomenon because that might cause great unfairness to the truthfulness of that phenomenon. As a result, guidelines on how to analyse interview data by Hycner (1985) was followed in this study.

RESULTS

Interview Results

In order to determine if learners use school libraries, subject teachers were asked whether

they send their learners to the library. If they do send them, how frequently and for what tasks? If they do not send the learners, they should provide reasons for not doing so. Except for one subject teacher who indicated that she does not send her learners to the library because the collection is mixed up, most subject teachers indicated that they send their learners to libraries.

The first finding was about responses from subject teachers on the usage of school libraries by grade three learners who are in the Foundation Phase. The question asked if the subject teachers do send learners to the school library. One subject teacher responded and said *"Yes I send the learners to the library but not often only when the library is free because it helps them to read and search and find information"* Enri's theory relates to the belief that learners are likely to develop sufficient vocabulary if they are able to see the word several times and attentively so. This theory is relevant to this study because the child's ability to read is influenced by the availability and accessibility of reading materials that are at their level and language. This is to ensure that learners use school libraries to access reading materials that they are interested in. The other subject teacher commented that: *"I used to send them, but it seems as they are not interested, there is no order, like I said the collections are not well packed. They are not interested; they are not motivated because the collection is not well packed."* With regard to the usage of school libraries, there was really no evidence of effective use of the library because workbooks designed by the Department of Education are programmed with all reading and writing lessons. Workbooks consume a lot of time because teachers are compelled to have completed them by the end of the year. This makes it difficult for subject/literacy teachers to concentrate on library resources in order to teach reading. This may be a contributing factor to the ineffective use of school libraries which also results in the low level of reading habits among learners in Vhembe District. Because it is at times in which the library is accessible that teachers and learners can use the school library.

Workbooks cannot replace school library resources. Teachers have to push very hard to complete these workbooks so that when they are assessed at the end of the year, they would have completed and covered everything there. This

deprives learners of an opportunity to immerse themselves in books in the school library. The following remark was made by a subject teacher: *"Yes, I send them because there is an administrative clerk who can help the learners when the teachers are not there or busy."* Erikson and Markuson (2007) and Bolan (2009) confirmed that the library should be the core of the school; and an active and attractive place with variable, multi-functional spaces in which minor, average and large groups can sit and operate. More than one class can be accommodated in the library at the same time, digital media can be utilised and generated, official teaching can take place, and teacher librarians can function cooperatively with teachers in the library. Seemingly, the school programme channels subject teachers on what to use when teaching learners without using library resources. This compromises library resources, and workbooks cannot replace library books. According to Egesimba (2011), a functional school library must have a wide range of library collection, which consists of print and non-print resources necessary for effective teaching and for learners to practise reading.

The second finding concerned reasons for subject teachers to send learners to the library. For example, a subject teacher responded that *"I send learners to do lots of things."* On this finding, one subject teacher stated that: *"I send learners to read stories in books and to do assignments."* Moreover, another subject teacher commented that: *"I send learners to read but for the assignments I go with them so that I can help them."* The above responses indicate that subject teachers do send their learners to libraries to do various things, such as reading and writing assignments. Subject teachers share similar responses on the issue. This category reveals lots of things that teacher librarians do to encourage school library usage by learners. Most of the participating subject teachers seemed to have various ideas on how to encourage learners to use the school library. This was clear from a comment by another participant who said: *"I send learners to read anything or sometimes to do their assignments and even to find a reading book to borrow and take it home."* Moreover, another participant remarked that: *"I send learners to read books and sometimes to work on an assignment."*

However, teacher librarians and subject teachers explain how they collaborate with other staff members in their schools to encourage learners to use the library to read: One teacher librarian commented and said: *"In our school I am a school librarian. I collaborate with teachers by facilitating the use of the school library."* Moreover, the subject teacher commented and said: *"By facilitating collaboration in our school. We teacher librarians, subject teachers, admin clerk and the support staff help in encouraging learners to use the library and in searching the books and on how to use information they found in the book."* Klage et al. (2007) support the view and said that collaboration is fundamental to accomplishing effective "literature cycles". It is constructivist in nature; learners are vigorously occupied in the process of being taught to utilise their cooperative conversations to construct contemporary wisdom. This was supported by the following comments from a subject teacher who stated that: *"I send learners to the library to practice reading, storytelling dramatising the book they have read and sometimes if I have given them assignments to do I send them."* Teachers who would like to generate literacy projects immersed in inspiration and commitment will utilise certain kinds of collaboration to encourage and support learners to use the school library to read (Brozo and Flynt 2007). As a result, school library media specialists are in a significant and distinctive status to collaborate with other teachers to uplift the school library usage for reading development (American Library Association's (ALA) 2009; Schroeder 2010). Therefore, it is important that teacher librarians cooperate with other staff members to assist learners to develop love for the school library for reading and learning purposes. Teacher librarians, in collaboration with book publishers, might always organise the programme of reading tents to inspire library usage by learners to read for enjoyment. The librarians may possibly request individuals to perform traditional stories to learners in the library. (Kong and Li 2009). My argument is that the school library assists in encouraging and supporting learners to nurture a good reading culture and to develop love for books.

From the above responses, it is clear that subject teachers understand that collaboration is of paramount importance in encouraging learners to use the library to read. However, this

was not observed strongly during the classroom observations because subject teachers concentrated on how they encourage reading by making use of other reading activities in their specific classrooms.

The third finding was that teacher librarians find it necessary for learners to use the school library. The librarians were requested to describe the usage of the school library by learners in the school where they are currently working with Grade three pupils. For example, the teacher librarian responded regarding the use of school libraries and said: *"Some learners enjoy using the library because they felt that they want to know or to be used to reading different types of books. Grade three learners, especially the ones who sometimes come after school hours, use the library when waiting for the taxi. Currently, the Grade 3s are improving though there are some who don't want to go to the library."* This was supported by Blachowicz and Ogle (2008), who reported on research which supports the importance of a print-rich environment, either at home or at school, in the reading process. This has implications for schools in developing countries such as South Africa. Children who came from print-rich environments where they were given the time and encouragement to use the library to read did far better at school when compared to children who did not have the same advantage. On school library usage by grade three learners, another teacher-librarian said: *"As a place where they [learners] can go and read; they go and make their play there. Like for instance as an educator while I will be reading a story to them, sometimes we try to role-play the story. The library is currently being used as a multi-purpose centre where the Grade 3, for example, will be there doing role play, reading and after that some of the staff members will use the library as a staffroom because we have got a shortage."* The library has shifted from being a place where children had access to books for reading and information, to a place in which the learner is the focus. School libraries are no longer "repositories of information but transformational spaces" (Erikson and Markuson 2007: ix), where information is not only accessed, shared and stored, but also challenged and created (Erikson and Markuson 2007). The transition of the library into the school transformation hub has

resulted in the re-organisation of library spaces, furniture and collections. The library needs to be the centre of the school, a dynamic and inviting place which has flexible, multifunctional spaces in which small and big groups can work, more than one class can be accommodated at the same time, digital media can be used and created, formal teaching can occur, and where the librarian can work collaboratively with teachers (Bolan 2009; Erikson and Markuson 2007).

The fourth finding was on the frequency in which teacher librarians attend to grade three learners in the school library. For example, the teacher-librarian responded concerning the frequency they attend to grade three learners in the school library by saying: *"The learners are interested in coming to the library because they know that when they come to the library I read a story for them; I help them to select the books to read. That is why they like to be in the library in most of the times."* Another teacher-librarian added that the library is used for purposes other than library activities. She said the following about the frequency in which learners attend the school library: *"I don't always use the library for library activities because the library is used as the staffroom for teachers because there is shortage of accommodation in our school."* Still on the frequency of using the library another teacher-librarian responded and said: *"As a teacher-librarian we are forced to teach other subjects than library education. There is also no period for library in the timetable we use periods for other subject areas."* School library is the backbone of functional education without which academic excellence cannot be achieved. This view is supported by Kolade (1998), who defines the school library "as the nerve centre of the school for it is expected to play an important role in the school curriculum since it has unlimited fields of knowledge".

Moreover, in her contribution, Fayose (1983) defines "school libraries as that part of the school where there is an organized collection of books, periodicals, newspapers, filmstrips, video-tapes, audio recordings of all types, slide, computers, study kits, regalia and other information bearing materials housed for learning and personal interest and recreational activities".

At the same time, the value of school libraries is well established. As a recent Department for Education report on reading (2015) points out,

libraries play an important role in children's reading habits. With public libraries closing at a worrying rate (Wainwright et al. 2016), school libraries are becoming even more important. Moreover, it is important that all the resources available to support pupil achievement are targeted effectively and used efficiently (Douglas and Wilkinson 2010) as just half of children and young people enjoy reading, fewer than half read daily outside class (Clark 2016), and standards of literacy in England are behind many other countries (Department for Education 2015). A report by the Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals (CILIP 2010; Streatfield et al. 2010) offers a useful definition of the purpose of school libraries.

Results from Observation about the Usage of School Libraries by Learners

The researcher observed that in all the schools, participants do not use their school libraries optimally. All libraries have aged with obsolete book collections and limited materials for both reading and learning. In most schools, during reading lessons, learners had to share a book so that they will be able to read.

It was clear that teachers are concerned about insufficient space in school libraries as a result of the size of these libraries, especially those that have set aside a classroom as a library. Not all schools have set aside a classroom as a library. However, this was observed strongly during classroom observations because teacher librarians and subject teachers did not take learners to libraries to conduct lessons or to read. This contradicted teachers' comments that they conduct reading lessons in school libraries. During the observation, it was very clear that libraries were not used, and if they were, this happened after a long time.

During classroom observations, all subject teachers and teacher librarians indicated that libraries were also used as storerooms in which they have stored boxes of stationery for the next academic year. These boxes of stationery filled the libraries in such a way that it was obvious that it would be difficult to access and use them. The library door was locked as a measure of security to protect the stationery from being stolen. One of the teachers was fortunate to select reading books and to put them in boxes because she

realised well beforehand that the library would not be accessible.

In most instances, libraries are compromised for other purposes. In some schools, the library was used as office for Heads of Departments (HODs). Some used libraries as staffrooms while others use them as storerooms. The space left was so limited that it was difficult for the teacher to pick books for learners, which is also an indication that books in libraries are not used. For those who set aside a classroom for library purposes, the bookshelves took a large space, leaving a small space for use by learners and teachers.

In all eight schools, it was observed that both subject teachers and teacher librarians did not take their learners to libraries for reading or for other library activities. What was significant during classroom observations was that both teacher librarians and subject teachers seemed to be aware that their school libraries are not able to accommodate them. As a result, they conducted their lessons in the classroom instead of libraries. During the interview, all teacher librarians and subject teachers gave excuses that since libraries were filled with stationery for the following year, they were going to use the classroom in place of libraries.

During classroom observation, it was clear that the library collection is not effectively used because books were full of dust, and one could tell that the library collections are occasionally, if not completely, neglected. This is understandable because subject teachers have pressure of sticking to the workbook programme until they complete it to be ready for year-end assessment by education authorities.

Results of Document Analysis

In as far as document analysis is concerned, the researcher referred to a number of documents that are used in schools.

With the exception of one school which referred to it as the “retrieval document”, there were no school library policies in schools. Most schools indicated that their library policies are not documented.

What the researcher observed was that the classroom timetable did not cater for library activities. There are no periods provided for library education. Some teachers used life skills periods

to attend to library matters, while others used literacy skills for the same purpose.

Schools no longer have school documents such as school syllabi; instead they use a document called “Planner and Tracker”, in which all lessons are programmed. Schools use subject policies, mandate and strategies outlined by the Department of Education. In some schools, they also have a school intervention strategy, which is written by teachers themselves. The strategy is about intervention measures for learners who struggle with reading. The document requires parents to help learners at home. The school principal monitors the strategy to check if the number of struggling learners is being reduced.

There is also the National Education Collaboration Trust (NECT), which is a document provided to all schools by the government. The NECT provides schools with lesson plans and programmes outlining how the teacher should teach. The teacher should use the lesson plan according to his or her creativity. These lesson plans come with a weekly routine book that the teacher should use. No mention is made about the library use.

Secondly, there is also the Policy Document, which is provided by the Department of Education, which gives guidance on the use of the following documents:

- The Department of Education Workbook;
- Vula Bula series books;
- The Department of Education Graded Readers and Any other set of reading books that a school may have.

The above documents say nothing about the school library. The school library is not mentioned in these policy document in schools.

There is also a programme referred to as the Drop Everything and Read (DEAR), which was also introduced by the government at schools. This programme emphasises that for an hour every Friday, each and every one in the school premises should leave what they are doing and read. Nothing concerning the use of school libraries is mentioned by the policy documents from the Department of Education.

Workbooks are programmed with all reading and writing lessons. Teachers are compelled to stick to these workbooks so as to complete them to be ready for assessment at the end of the year. These workbooks do not have anything that relates to the library. The workbooks cannot replace the library.

DISCUSSION

Libraries in South Africa are still regarded as repositories of books and not as dynamic multimedia learning centres. In black schools, there is no budget to purchase library collections. There is also lack of space, reading and learning resources as well as other facilities for use in a library (International Federation of Library Association and Institutions/ United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (IFLA/UNESCO) 2002). According to the Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL) (2017), learners' use of library resources and services improves their achievement. The reading levels of primary school learners in South Africa are seen as being shockingly low in both reading and mathematics. Therefore, school library provisions is serious. Libraries remain a crucial community asset for both teaching and learning; they are trusted community spaces (Onwuemeziri 2017). It is not surprising that according to Fraser (2013), international research has proven conclusively that literacy level is vastly improved when learners are exposed to books and information resources from a young age. Thus, literacy plays a paramount role in the ability of learners to accomplish the anticipated stage of literacy and numeracy (Shonhe 2019). The above condition is aggravated by the fact that positions for professional school librarians in South African schools have not yet been funded at all.

The findings revealed that library collections in schools that formed part of my study were not effectively used because books were full of dust. Thus, one could tell that the library collections were occasionally if not totally unused. However, according to Shonhe (2019: 2), "A school library is vital to the learning and teaching activities of any school as it acts as an information hub and an innovation centre. A School library is a place where sustaining literacy, self-education and lifelong learning is inculcated and nurtured to children, pupils and students." Concerning library use, Hart (2010) stressed that the Charter's vision is that libraries are supposed to be freely available to all. But only a few percentages of learners, especially those from advantaged schools, are able to access them. This is understandable because school libraries supplement the school curriculum by providing both teachers and learners with a wide range of library collection. In support of this view, Egesimba

et al. (2011) stress that a functional library with relevant information at the level of learners play an important role in the child's reading habits starting from as early as preschool (the pre-alphabetic stage according to Ehri), progressing to secondary schools (the consolidated alphabetic stage according to Ehri). Interesting reading materials that are in the learners' language will be able to attract them to read. As a result, many children's libraries present a diversity of services and information resources that comprise a wide range of resources. All these services are meant to promote a reading culture amongst the children (Chaputula 2018).

Library use in primary schools was not effective. Teachers indicated that they use periods for other subject areas for library activities. Shonhe (2019) stressed that if this condition is not tackled, it will be challenging for developing countries to accomplish their anticipated stage of development and become knowledge-based economies. In terms of Ehri's reading theory, learners who are beginner readers and still in the Foundation Phase in primary schools learn to read sight words by forming relationships between letters in spellings and sounds in pronunciations of the words (Ehri 1998). These relationships are developed from learners' existing understanding of the alphabetic system such as knowledge of the connections between grapheme and phoneme, phonemic consciousness and understanding how to differentiate independent phonemes in the pronunciations of words by reading various texts. Library use will be able to ensure that books with various texts are provided. The library is not catered for and only workbooks are in use. This does not expose learners to a diversity of reading books. In terms of literature on the use of library and its resources, Marshall (1975) and Egesimba et al. (2011) confirm that the availability and accessibility of reading resources in different formats play a vital role on the reading habits of learners because their information needs differ. The information needs of a gifted child will, for example, not be the same as that of a slow learner. The child's reading interests and needs will be influenced by various stages of reading development.

Clients utilise the library for different motives in addition to readiness for the examinations, relaxation, innovation, important educational functions, companionship and many other things. School libraries are unproductive if they are not

appropriately utilised by learners (Orji 1996). During my classroom observation, evidence indicated that school libraries are underutilised resources, often perceived by head teachers to be a low priority. This led to their underutilisation also by both learners and teachers generally. Contrary to this finding, literature on the use of library and its resources emphasise that the South African education system, that is, Curriculum Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) has resulted in learning being a resource-orientated education system and that no effective teaching and learning can take place without library resources (Hart 2000; Le Roux and Lombo 2002; Arko-Cobbah 2004; De Vries 2004).

It is not surprising that Studies Australian Capital Territory (ACT) (2019), Ebozoje (1990), Kolade (1998), Dike (2004), Williams et al. (2013) and Agbo (2015) agree that one of the functions of the library is to provide learners with study space which is conducive to learning, support the school curriculum, as well as provide access to a wide range of library resources to all learning levels of learners. It was also apparent that the sharing of library accommodation for reasons other than learners' educational purpose was disadvantaging learners from the opportunity to properly use the library to support the development of their reading habits. This idea is echoed by Shandu (2014), who indicated that in some schools, the school library is utilised as a classroom for the purpose of teaching learners. Occasionally, they are also utilised for locking up learners as a measure of punishment.

School libraries are being used for different purposes apart from what they were meant for, that is, providing both learners and teachers with space to do their schoolwork. The boxes of stationery to be used in the next academic year filled libraries in such a way that it was obvious that it would be difficult to access and use them. In most instances, libraries were compromised for other purposes instead of hosting library resources and used by learners and their teachers. This finding is in opposition to literature on library usage. Ranganathan (2006) and Isebe (2015) indicate that the contemporary comprehension of education is well furnished with sufficient resources that enable school activities to be centred on the school library. During the last quarter of the previous year, the whole area was covered with boxes of stationery for use at the beginning of the following year, which means that learners and teachers can

only use the library after the stationery has been distributed at the beginning of the academic year. This indicates that the library was full of stationery throughout the last quarter of the academic year. This finding is confirmed by Mojapelo (2008: 100), who stressed that "collections are disorganised and unsystematic, making it difficult - if not impossible - to access and retrieve information and information sources. They function as storerooms rather than as school libraries." The finding also contradicts ideas that physical and virtual library spaces are all-encompassing and appreciating, inspiring learners and educators to join with one another for both learning or leisure (Australian Capital Territory (ACT) 2019).

CONCLUSION

The findings of the study shed light on school library usage by grade three learners, that is, Foundation Phase learners, the frequency of their library visit and reasons why teachers send them to the library. The school library is used for purposes other than library activities. Learners are robbed of their opportunity to use their school libraries. Subject teachers have various reasons why they send learners to the school library. On the one hand, learners and teachers do not have full access to the library. There are a number of things that grade three learners can do in the library.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of this paper, it is recommended that school libraries be used specifically for library activities only, so as to develop in learners love for books and a culture of reading.

Library authorities should consider the school library as being the heart of each and every school that plays an important role in assisting the school to achieve its goals. The value of the library has deteriorated in the last few years, especially libraries in the rural areas. The library is central in fulfilment of instructional goals and objectives of the school. The value and importance of the library cannot be overemphasised. As a result, education authorities should enforce the use of school libraries in the same way they are enforcing the policy document to formalise the use of these libraries in schools. The authorities should compel school teachers and learners to honour school libraries in relation to

access to library resources so as to bring back the spark that libraries used to have previously.

LIMITATIONS

The limitation of this study is that only school library usage by grade three learners, who are in the Foundation Phase attending school where there is a functional school library were studied and the school library usage by grade three learners in schools where no libraries exist, were not included in the study. It is also important to know about the library usage of the learners who attend schools without libraries.

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