

An Investigation of the Role the School Library Space Plays in Promoting Reading Habits in Foundation Phase Learners in Vhembe District in South Africa

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ABSTRACT The school library space is of utmost importance in the school community as a whole. A library space provides, both teachers and their learners, with a space, which is safe and conducive to learning. The aim of this paper is to explore the role the school library space plays in promoting reading habits of the foundation phase learners in Vhembe District. The paper employed or followed a qualitative research method based on the nature of the study. The population of the study is the teacher librarians who are responsible for school libraries in the foundation phase. Purposive sampling was used to select eight schools from Vhembe District. Eight participants were sampled by virtue of their being teacher librarians serving in the Foundation Phase school libraries. Data was collected by means of individual interviews. The finding revealed that although they have a separate building for the library, the sitting space for learners is not sufficient because there are many learners. Secondly, the finding was concerned with the capacity of the school libraries in as far as the space to accommodate bookshelves, computers and other library facilities required in the library. The third finding was concerned with the challenges like overcrowding due to the lack of enough space in the school library. The fourth finding was concerned with the school libraries being used for purposes other than library activities. The study recommended that the library should also provide both teacher and learners with a space that encourages individual study, group cooperation and big group exhibition.

INTRODUCTION

Hassinger-Dasa et al. (2020) opined that as far as space is concerned, library space matters a lot in a school. Ayorinde (2005) referred to UNESCO's recommendation of 10,000 books and journals per annum in an average school library while on the other hand for a mainstream library must make available sitting amenities for at least a quarter of the people of the society in which the library is situated (Hassinger-Dasa et al. 2020; Ayorinde 2005). Insufficient reading space in the library limits or deprives teacher librarians and learners from enough space to utilise the library effectively. The dimension of the accommodating volume of reading area should be determined by the highest number of learners the school registers. At the heart of the reflections a library should offer space for a minimum number of 60 learners of a class at a go as well as ten percent additional space for added group activities, undertakings and reference service apart from a room for librarian (Surendran 2014). An important point that repeatedly emerged from the responses was the issue of overcrowding, which causes the library to be dysfunctional.

Aim of the Study

The main aim of this study is to explore the role of the school libraries' space in promoting reading habits of the foundation phase learners in the Vhembe District.

Objectives of the Study

In order to accomplish the above main aim, the researcher set out to achieve the following objectives:

1. To investigate the availability of the school library space for foundation phase learners in the Vhembe District.
2. To analyse the challenges that the teacher librarians encounter when using their school libraries with their foundation phase learners.
3. To examine the role of school libraries' space in encouraging reading habits of the foundation phase learners in Vhembe District.

Literature Review

School libraries continue to be relegated in numerous black schools and this has destabilised

the responsibility they perform in encouraging a smaller amount of differentiated social dealings in post-apartheid South Africa (Hoskins 2006). School libraries offer an extensive variety of materials, both print and non-print, as well as electronic media, and access to information, which encourage learning in the learner (Hoskins 2006). The school library serves as a fundamental tool in the learning procedure, not as a distinct object secluded from the entire school curriculum however participating in the teaching and learning procedure (Hoskins 2006).

A functional school library is indispensable to the advancement of an individual's behaviour, and their religious, moral, social and cultural development. The library desires to be the core of the school, an active and attractive place that has variable, multifunctional spaces in which minor, average and large groups can sit and operate, more than in class can be seated and at the same time digital media can be utilised and generated, official teaching can take place and where the teacher librarians can function cooperatively with teachers (Bolan 2009; Erikson and Markuson 2007). The responsibility of the school library is to perform a fundamental role in encouraging reading and studying. It is imperative that the school library be a harmless situation, which is encouraging to learning. The school library is not just a place to take out books. In addition to that, the library should also make available the resources for research, a noiseless area for reading and writing, an area for learners to function cooperatively, as well as a well-qualified staff to be available to promote learning (Bleidt 2011).

Library is a place to study and a symbol of civilisation. Library enables people to meet, brainstorm, share thoughts, and generate new ideas. Library can change the world by providing information sources, which stimulate the user's creativity. Library is not merely a place to read or borrow books, but also a space to socialise and to find new values in life. Library provides knowledge, skills and hopes for a better future (Kurniasih 2016).

A welcoming, harmless and relaxing library's surroundings is an encouraging inspiration on library utility by the learners as well as their teachers (Small 2010). A library should provide learners with surroundings that are encouraging to the orientation of the learner and learning procedures surrounding them. It is considered that the impression of a

profoundly functional library should be encouraged. This requirement is extremely experienced in both the lower primary and higher primary schools where learners are not familiarised with the notion of library and reading spots. Therefore, a school library should be a place that influences seat and area for details and literatures, leisure and information and into the inconceivable. This idea is linked to the IFLA School Guidelines (2015b). The following functional areas need to be provided:

- "Informal reading area: Space for books and periodicals that encourage literacy, lifelong learning and reading for pleasure.
- Instructional area: Space with seats catering for small groups, large groups and whole class formal instruction, with appropriate instructional technology and display space is often recommended.
- Media production and group project area, space for individuals, teams and classes.
- Administrative area, space for circulation desk, office area, space for processing of library media materials, and storage space for equipment, supplies, and material."

Therefore, the dimension and sitting volume of the reading space will be influenced by the highest number of learners permitted in that school. On the basis of this understanding a library should make available space for about 60 learners of a class at a time in addition to ten percent of an extra area for other tasks, undertakings and reference service apart from a room for the librarian, circulation, reference desk, books and periodical display, etc. (Surendran 2014). The traditional reading room is a hallmark of the academic library and remains one of the most popular campus learning spaces. Spaces that manifest tradition, in such things as long wooden tables and decorative task lighting, enforce quiet traditional work (Foster 2010).

Other campus spaces may meet some requirements such as Wi-Fi, comfortable seating, large tables or accommodations for groups and conversation, but few also combine the communal, contemplative, and scholarly atmosphere (Cunningham and Tabur 2012). Nowadays, a library is not only required to provide accessible information, but also to provide a learning space for individuals and groups, discussion space, collaboration, socialisation, relaxation with other users, and a space for special events held by the library itself. Library continues to seek inspiration to satisfy the users'

expectation by improving its human resources (Kurniasih 2016).

METHODOLOGY

The study adopted or followed a qualitative research approach. Qualitative research approach is defined as a method used by researchers to explore and understand the meaning attributed to social or human problems (Creswell 2014: 4). It is concerned with collecting information about the feelings, opinions and beliefs of participants, as well as the reasons behind those feelings, opinions and beliefs. Qualitative research approach was adopted because its methods are typically more flexible, that is, it allows greater naturalness and adjustment of communication between the researcher and the study participants.

Sampling Method and Population

Population

The targeted population for this study consists of teacher librarians of selected primary schools in Vhembe District, Limpopo Province. One librarian or teacher librarian from each participating school was selected to participate in the study. The targeted population was from eight circuits in the district.

Sampling Method

In this study a purposive sampling technique was used to select the schools. Purposive sampling entailed selecting things or research objects that had identical or common attributes in order to accomplish a specific goal or purpose. In this study, only schools that meet certain characteristics or features, that is, of having a functional library in their premises, were selected for the study.

Data Collection Method

Interviews

According to Corbetta (2003:269), structured interviews are “...interviews in which all respondents are asked the same questions with the same wording and in the same sequence.” It would be perfect if questions can also be read out to the participants using a consistent tone of voice so that the respondents

would not be manipulated by the interviewer’s tone (Gray 2004: 215). Bryman (2001:107) explains that a structured interview involves the administration of an interview schedule by an interviewer. “*The aim is for all interviewees to be given exactly the same context of questioning. This means that each respondent receives exactly the same interview stimulus as any other*”. The reason for using interviews is that there is a need to attain highly personalised data. With interviews there are opportunities required for probing. There is also a good return rate. The researcher asked questions on how large is the reading space in their school library? How would they describe the usage of the library in the school where they are currently working by foundation phase learners?

RESULTS

Four findings emerged from the data analysis.

The first finding was that although there is a separate building for the library, the **sitting space** for learners is not sufficient because there are many learners.

This is illustrated by the following comments by teacher librarian 1 who said, “*The sitting space is not enough at all. In our school we do not have a library space. We use the classes, one class. The space is not enough for learners. I sometimes request learners to come group by group so that each learner must have a chance to access books in the library. The sitting space is not enough due to the size of the classroom.*”

Another teacher librarian added and stated, “*There is no sufficient reading space in our school library because our library is housed in a room set aside for library purposes. There are shelves of books and few computers. So, the space is insufficient, as we have large classes of learners.*”

This response indicates that the teacher librarian is aware of the disadvantage that goes with the inadequate sitting space in their school library. This teacher librarian seemed to understand that the limited space in the school library results in depriving the learners of the privilege that goes together with the availability of enough space in the library. The statement explained the disadvantage of not having enough space in the library because the teacher librarian indicated that for learners to be attended in the library as a whole class is not possible, and as a result learners from the same class had to be divided and sent to the library in groups. The

negative response from the participating teacher librarian of this investigation made it obvious that they are not satisfied with the condition of the availability of the reading space in the school libraries. The conditions of the school libraries raised mixed feelings among the teacher librarians because they communicated various views and understandings concerning the availability of reading space in the school library.

The second finding was concerned with the capacity of the school libraries of the schools under the study. For example, the teacher librarian responded as follows concerning the capacity of the school library in her school for the space to accommodate bookshelves, computers and other library facilities required in the library, *"The space is large, but it cannot accommodate our quite well because there are three Grade 3s each containing about 50 learners."*

Still on the capacity of school library space, another teacher librarian revealed, *"The reading space is not much because of the shelves of books that we have in our library. A reasonable number of learners are accommodated and seated on the mats."*

According to the above comment, the shelves for books are taking more space, leaving inadequate space for both teachers and learners. As a result, this results in lack of space, which also results in difficulty in using the library and accessing the books by the learners. Therefore, school libraries should be furnished in agreement with acknowledged standards while on the other hand the department is required to put additional precedence on the financial support of school libraries (Adeyemi 2010). This idea can be correlated to what the subsequent teacher librarian emphasised during the interviews where she stated, *"There is no sufficient reading space in our school library because our library is housed in a room set aside for library purposes. There are shelves of books and few computers. So, the space is insufficient."* From the response above, it is clear that teachers are concerned with the insufficient space in the school library as a result of the size of the classroom set aside in which the library is housed. However, this was observed strongly during the classroom observations because they all did not take the learners to the library to conduct the lessons or to pick up the books for reading. What seemed to emerge from the response is that teachers seemed to be aware of the disadvantages brought about by the problem of inadequate sitting space in the school library. "Library is a growing organism", this should

be kept in mind when planning and erecting the building for the school library. There should be provision for area extension in time to come. The space utilisation in the 21st century Information Technology (IT) age is extremely significant because there ought to be specification for providing both conventional printed and IT established services to the clients in a meaningful way (Ranganathan 2006). This requires that provision be made when developing the school library keeping in mind the large number of learners as well as all the library facilities and resources needed for successful use of the library. In this way the library will be able to function effectively, accommodating all the learners at the same time and providing a space for the teachers to be able to work with learners in the library.

The third finding was concerned with the challenges caused by the lack of enough space in the school library. There are many challenges associated with space in the library. For example, one of the teacher librarians had this to say concerning the question on how they would describe the usage of the library by their foundation phase learners, *"As a place where they can go and read, they go and make their plays there. Like for instance, as an educator, while I will be reading them a story, sometimes we try to role play the story. The library is currently being used as a multipurpose centre wherein the grade 3s for example will be there doing the role players' reading and after that some of the staff members will use the library as a staffroom because we have shortage."* This remark suggests that school libraries should be large enough to accommodate the school collection, the activities as well as a sufficient sitting space where both the teacher and learners can conduct some of the library activities. This finding is reiterated by (Merga 2021; Willis et al. 2019; Butler et al. 2017) who stressed that the perception of sufficient space ought to also embrace visual space and be a safe place. On the challenges caused by the lack of space, another teacher librarian stated, *"We only go there during the period of life skill wherein I realise that it comes 5 times per week. So, as we don't have enough space in the library, we give time for other learners to go there with their educators. We usually visit the library with our learners twice per week if I can say so. Only twice a week."* The above response indicates that the teacher librarian seemed to be aware and

understands the library situation that disadvantages the library activities of the learners in the school. According to Losdale (2003), a satisfactory school library is the nucleus of a school learning community. It offers an adaptable place for learning, where projects operate, personal study, investigation, reading and the instructing of ICT can all materialise. The respondent seemed to be aware that adequate space in the school libraries encourages learners and promotes learning and inventiveness as well as assists teachers in embracing a comprehensive variety of teaching approaches (Losdale 2003). Concerning the challenges caused by the shortage of library space another teacher librarian uttered, "The reading space is not that large because you will find that at times as an educator I will prefer to sit down with my learners. I read stories for them. I elaborate, tell them everything related to the story and try to put the story into real life. The space is not large enough for all the learners [in the class]. Some of the classes have 53 learners in each classroom and then the space is not enough for them in the library." This comment implies that space planning involves establishing how big spaces inside a structure are positioned and connect to all inside the bigger space. This finding is emphasised by Surendran (2014) who stated that the space required for a school library should estimate and sustain a forthcoming necessity, established on library school concentration, anticipated resources and service objectives. The school library is considered as part and parcel of the academic set up. As a result, when constructing a new building for the school and while constructing a library room the matter should be discussed with the library professionals or senior librarians. The number of learners is greater than the library space they have. This is a challenge because they have large space but due to the large number of their learners, the space cannot accommodate the learners as a class as a whole. Growing enrolment of learners ultimately leads to overcrowding as most of the libraries are not built to accommodate a large number at any given time. Overcrowding often results in disappointment for those learners who can merely utilise the school library during breaks. Learners who need to hang around outside for space become yet more discouraged, since occasionally they will have to return without having accessed the library (Shandu 2014).

In the fourth finding the participants revealed that in some schools, the school library is used as a classroom for the intention of teaching the learners. What seemed to emerge from this response is that the libraries are being used for different purposes apart from what they were meant for, that is, providing both learners and teachers with the space for doing their schoolwork. With regards to the school library being used for other purposes, one of the teacher librarians stressed, "*Our school library is large enough to accommodate book shelves and remains with enough space for reading space, but hmm, the only problem is that the whole reading space is used to accommodate boxes of stationary for next year.*"

Another participant added that the library was not used for library purposes, which is a real challenge. She said the following about the library space being used for other purposes apart from library issues, "*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 multipurpose 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.*"

This finding was not surprising because Shandu (2014) also supported that and revealed that occasionally libraries are also utilised for locking up learners as a punishment measure and that the school library is entitled to provide the needs of the learners, teachers as well as the school curriculum of the school in which it is situated. The aspect of the library space being used for various purposes instead of serving the library purpose, the library space is intended for, raised a mixed feeling among the teacher librarians because they conveyed various opinions and understandings concerning how the library space is put in use instead of meeting the needs of both teachers and learners. It transpired that most teacher librarians participating in the study agreed that the library space is not enough due to some extra purpose it has to fulfil. While on the other hand, the library purposes are being compromised. IFLA (2002) supported the opinion and said that the school library provides learners with enduring competences and elaborates inspiration, permitting them to be dependable people.

The fifth and last finding was that the sitting space cannot accommodate large classes at the same time. In this regard another teacher librarian said, *“We use mats in our school library for learners and their teachers to sit down during the lessons in the library, as by sitting on the mats it saves space for our learners.”* The teacher librarian’s effort to provide a means for teachers and learners to sit on the mats may seem to be contributing to providing a space solution although it is a short-term solution. When teacher librarians know what to do during such situations, it will certainly relieve the subject teachers and learners from space stress. Therefore, the library room should be large enough to permit for at least one type of learner to use the library at the same time. Space restrictions may prevent one from making available the space for learners. If this is a circumstance, one could lay floor pillows or carpets in a spot of the room for relaxed reading. This is specifically advantageous for primary school learners and will cause the library to be a trendy area for storytelling (Baird 2012).

DISCUSSION

If there is no space to install tables and chairs for learners, rugs and carpets can be utilised to sit on and learners may realise that it is relaxing (Baird 2012). This idea implies that the school librarians should assess their library space and their patrons in order to employ user-based design strategies to improve students’ learning, provide easier access to resources, and create a more welcoming space for students and teachers. Instead of clients searching for sources to utilise somewhere else, school libraries have turned out to be places where learners and teachers get together to retrieve library collections and establish the latest information that can be distributed (Clark 2017; American Library Association (ALA) 2014). The researcher’s argument is that teacher librarians should be actively involved in decision making when making some improvement on the library buildings, facilities and resources. The subject concentrates on means to establish, adjust and utilise learner-centred substantial and automated library spaces and incorporates conversation of learning commons, “maker spaces”, mobile libraries, virtual libraries, and sustaining a noiseless area in addition to cooperative learning and interactive programs (Hassinger-Dasa et al. 2020; ALA 2014).

Clients utilise the library for numerous and different motives, in addition to getting ready for the examinations, for relaxation, innovation, for important educational functions, to meet companions and many other things. School libraries are unproductive if they are not appropriately utilised by learners (Omenyo 2016; Orji 1996). The fact that school libraries are used for many various reasons suggests the need for increased emphasis on the fact that school libraries have evolved over 20 years since they were developed, and no extension has been done and no new books were added to the collection. A universal challenge is that for the duration of the organisation stage of a school, appropriate attention should be provided to the future extension of the library and the sources as well as the rising number of learners (Nuku 2019; Tilke 1995). Therefore, it is crucial that the school libraries should be used for library related activities and services. The amenities, tools, resources and services of the school library should encourage the teaching and learning requirements of both the learners and the teachers, and these amenities, tools, resources and services should change as teaching and learning requirements transform (Omenyo 2016; IFLA 2015a).

Moreover, school libraries are underutilised resources, often perceived by head teachers to be a low priority. What should be a vital ingredient of the school’s system is marginalised and seems not to be connected with the knowledge educational priorities of literacy and information skills supporting knowledge acquisition, which are the core business (McPherson 2020; Caser et al. 2006). School libraries have a significant role to play for children who for a variety of needs find the school environment particularly unwelcoming (McPherson 2020; Caser et al. 2006).

This led to the underutilisation of school libraries by both learners and teachers. For this reason, the school library should be developed in such a way that they are fully functional so as to stimulate all the learners to use the library as the need arises. It is also apparent from the above comment that sharing of the library accommodation for reasons other than for learners’ educational purpose is discouraging learners from having the opportunity to properly use the library as it is intended to. Therefore, school libraries should acquire tools to answer to various needs of learners such as, for instance, opening the school library at certain periods for various kinds

of library use, for example, noiseless study, reading groups, discussion groups and group learning (Jibril 2020; UNICEF 2007).

School libraries make available reasonable physical and academic access to the library material and tools essential for learning in a sincere, inspiring, and harmless surroundings school libraries cooperate with others to offer teaching and learning approaches and repetition in using the fundamental learning expertise required in utilising in the 21st century (Nuku 2019; American Association of School Librarians 2007). The teachers participating in this study seemed to be aware of the important roles played by the school library that is well equipped with library resources that are satisfactory. Therefore, a school library with resources that are satisfactory and well managed is an imperative element of any school. It has a focal responsibility in encouraging the learning and teaching of every member of the school community. It sustains and improves the educational and pastoral programme and encourages an essential role in fostering policies of fairness, insertion and the uplifting of accomplishment (American Association of School Librarians 2007). For learners to develop good reading habits, they need a well-resourced library because a school library is regarded as an organised collection of books and additional learning resources put in a school for the utility of both teachers and learners, who are the most important clients in the school libraries.

The school library is of pivotal attention in the teaching and learning procedure. One of the main objectives of the school library is to motivate a love for reading, to promote a reading culture among its use. Although there are still challenges to establishing a reading atmosphere that will be able to inductinate suitable reading habits in learners, a functional school library is nevertheless the finest place for silent study. In school libraries there should be sufficient reading space as well as associated amenities to speed up reading habits (Wallace and Husid 2017; Kumar et al. 2010). The achievement of learners in school is influenced to a great degree on their competence to read and understand, which is in turn dependent on the encouragement provided in promoting reading habits. The roles of school and public libraries in training learners for achievement in education are very critical and cannot be dented. Schools and public libraries perform a prominent role in the reading habit of kids and youths (Oji and Habibu 2011).

As a result, the size of the space in the library regulates the disposition of the reading area (IPF/Book Trust 2007). Moreover, it requires a period of extensive term dedication to frequently expand the library at the school. To some degree, forthcoming plans are reliant on transformations within the community organisation, but the school should elaborate the library, which means the whole classes could be accommodated at once (Greenwood et al. 2008). Teacher librarians feel that there should be extra ICT and additional facilities in the library, but absence of adequate space inconveniences them (Khanya 2021; Ismail et al. 2018). As a result, the school should intend to expand the school library by expanding the prevailing space or by positioning the library somewhere else in the school (Greenwood et al. 2008).

“The school library offered an abundance of curriculum -founded collections as well as chances for learners to learn at an individual’s level of inquisitiveness, beyond the designated programme” (Goodin 2010). A powerful school library is furnished by the library team of a professional qualified teacher librarian backed by the managerial staff, has recent appropriate books, resources, tools and technology, incorporate normal teamwork between subject teachers and teacher librarians and also sustains the advancement of digital literacy expertise (Baker et al. 2020; Haverkamp 2021; Kachel 2011).

Conclusions Pertaining Sitting Space in the School Libraries

Lack of sitting space in the library is a disadvantage for both teachers and learners. The teachers seemed to be aware and understand the shortcoming of unavailability of reading or sitting space in the library. It is also clear that teachers appeared to be dissatisfied with regard to having insufficient sitting space for learners in the school library. In addition, they were also aware of the detriments of the library with inadequate sitting space to accommodate the whole class at once. They seemed to know that their school libraries are not able to provide the space where their learners can sit and be immersed with books without any interference.

As a result of one of the sustainable development goals of quality education, classes are too large to be able to fit in the available sitting space in their school libraries. However, it was evident that these teachers are frustrated by the

large number of learners that are overcrowded in a single class. The available school libraries are no longer large enough due to the large numbers of learners in Grade 3. Both subject teachers and teacher librarians seemed dissatisfied about the limited sitting space in their school library as well as in the classrooms. As a result of the high rate of learners accessing both primary and secondary schools, this gave rise to shortage of space in schools and school libraries. In addition to the increased enrolment in different primary schools, the majority of learners do not go to the school libraries due to space problems. The teachers were unable to reach children in the backbench groups freely because it was not easy to move in between the groups of the tables for learners.

In most instances the library is being used for other purposes. It is also apparent that sharing of the library accommodation for reasons other than for learners' educational purpose is discouraging learners from having the opportunity to properly use the library as it is intended to. The school libraries are being used for purposes apart from what they were meant for, that is, providing both learners and teachers with the space for doing their schoolwork. The boxes of stationary to be used in the next academic year filled the library in such a way that it was obvious that it would be difficult to access and use it. In some schools the library accommodation is used as the HODs office, as staff room and as a venue where teachers hold meetings.

It is clear that the teachers seemed to be aware that the school libraries are not serving the right purpose. Most teachers agreed that the library space is not enough due to some extra purpose it has to fulfil. While on the other hand, the library purposes are being compromised.

The teacher librarian seemed to understand that the limited space in the school library results in depriving the learners of the privilege that goes together with the availability of enough space in the library. It is apparent that they are aware of the inconvenience of not having enough space in the library. The teacher librarians were aware that for learners to be attended to in the library as a whole class is not possible, and as a result, learners from the same class had to be divided and sent to the library in groups. The whole classes cannot fit into the library at once and as a result, limits the time each group is supposed to have. They used groups of learners that will be manageable and accommodated in the library space.

Accessibility in the school libraries in all 16 respondents was not possible, and they used the classroom for their reading lessons so as to accommodate all learners in the same classroom. They all did not take the learners to the library to conduct the lessons or to pick up the books for reading. This contradicted what most teachers indicated wherein they conduct reading lessons in the school library. This could be attributed to insufficient sitting space in the school library that is able to accommodate all their learners in their classes, even those who have large buildings built specifically for library purposes. It was clear that the library space is a challenge for all schools that were investigated with the exception of one school, which is also a public school in which every classroom is provided with a room specifically for class library, but they also experience the space challenges.

The researcher was squeezed in a corner where she will be able to observe everything taking place in the class. It was clear that it was difficult for the teachers to move among the rows because learners were closely seated to each other though it was better in the classrooms as compared to the sitting space in their libraries.

Moreover, school libraries are underutilised resources, often perceived by head teachers to be a low priority. This led to the underutilisation of school libraries by both learners and teachers. However, overcrowding causes the library to be dysfunctional. On the other hand, teachers too are unable to effectively use the library to benefit the learners. Subject teachers and teacher librarians did not take their learners to the library for their reading or any other activity to be done in the library because the classroom timetable did not cater for library activities. Some teachers used the life skills period to attend to library matters, while others used the literacy skills period to attend to library affairs. Both teachers' librarians and subject teachers seemed to be aware that their school libraries are not able to accommodate them and as a result they conducted their lessons as they were supposed to conduct in the library in the classroom.

On the other hand, shelves for books are taking more space, leaving inadequate space for both teachers and learners. Lack of space also results in that very few chairs and tables can be accommodated for learners to read and work in. As a consequence, this results in constrained space, which also results in

difficulty in using the library and accessing the books by the learners. The library door was locked so that no one can have access in the library as a measure of security to protect stationary from being stolen. The space left was so limited in such a way that it was difficult for the teacher to pick the books for learners, which is also an indication that the books in the library are not used.

CONCLUSION

The findings stated in this paper have shared some insights into an investigation of the role the school library space plays in promoting reading habits of foundation phase learners in Vhembe District. The library space is of utmost importance in promoting the reading habits of the foundation phase learners. The issue of space constraint is common in all the schools irrespective of whether they have a large library building or not. It appeared that all teacher librarians concurred that the reading/sitting space in the library is indeed a challenge that disadvantages both teachers and learners to do their work effectively. Therefore, the library is expected to have a large capacity that can accommodate bookshelves, as well as the sitting space for learners to use. The library space is expected to be used strictly for library purposes and not for other purposes.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The library space should be expanded so that it can accommodate all the learners in the class at the same time. To be able to use the library effectively, teachers should use groups of learners that will be manageable and accommodated in the library space. The teachers should also be aware and understand the importance of the availability of reading or sitting space in the library and be able to improvise as far as the library activities are concerned. The school principals as well as the department of education should be made aware of the benefits of the library with adequate sitting space to accommodate the whole class at once. They should also know that the library is the only place where learners can sit and be immersed with books without any interference.

The library awareness should be conducted to make the school community as a whole aware of the advantages of having a school library, which is

well equipped, and responses seem to indicate that the subject teacher is aware of the poor condition of their school library resources. The respondent indicated that their school library collection is non-satisfactory and as a result cannot support the curricular of the school. On the contrary school libraries should support the curriculum, promote literacy, development and nurture lifelong reading habits among learners owing to the promotion of cautiously chosen print material and the combination of educational technology. Therefore, the library should also provide both teachers and learners with a location that encourages individual study, group cooperation and big group exhibition.

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