

SCHOOL LIBRARIES

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1. INTRODUCTION

This chapter examines school libraries in Africa by tracing their development, examining their state, and identifying the challenges facing them. School libraries in Africa cannot usefully be summarized on a continent-wide scale due to the region's general division into five different geographical units, each with widely varying cultures, distinct social forms and traditions, and different levels of development. The five units are as follows: the Arab world and the Maghreb countries of the north; the Anglophone west, east, central and southern Africa; the Franco-phone west and central Africa (and the Indian Ocean islands); the Lusophone Africa and South Africa. The chapter mainly focuses on school libraries in English-speaking Africa, although a few Arab countries are included. These libraries must be interpreted against the backdrop of a number of social and infrastructural concerns, including the impact of colonialism, the effects of growing populations, underdevelopment in the African publishing industry, the prevailing political situations on the continent (particularly military conflict in some countries like Chad, Congo Democratic Republic, Somalia etc, lack of resources, and profound social problems (Gill, 2001). Furthermore, factors such as the institutional preference of teachers as opposed to librarians in the running of libraries; reluctance of school-governing bodies in recognizing the importance of school libraries in the attainment of school objectives; library illiteracy amongst pupils; the role of donors; and the entry of computers into the school system; cannot be overlooked.

A school library is a learning center through which students and teachers alike further their educational programs (Otike, 1987:413). Wikipedia (updated Sept, 2007), defines a school library as "... a library that serves the students, faculty, staff and parents of a public or private school." Essentially, the library's mission is to offer learning services, books and resources that enable the school community to use information effectively in various formats and media, and thus enhance critical thinking. A school library brings together four components, namely information resources, users, library staff and the environment. The first three elements must be operating in an environment that supports learning in order for a library to function effectively.

A school library is also alternatively referred to as a school library resource center (SLRC) in the United Kingdom or a library media center (LMC) in the USA. The major differences between the traditional school library and the SLRC or LMC are that the latter play a more integrative role in the learning and teaching done in a school, there is an emphasis on both print and non-print based materials, and there are facilities for recreation. The resource center/school media library center is therefore a place where there is a fusion of the skills of teachers, librari-

ans, audiovisual experts and technicians. The school library/media center is a generic term for the different types of libraries identified by the level of education or grades, i.e. secondary (senior or junior, or high school), primary and elementary or kindergarten.

1.2 School library standards

In order to achieve the school library's objectives, schools are expected to either implement or to already have a school library policy. Besides the policy, standards have been set up by national departments of education, educational accrediting agencies, library associations and the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions, and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (IFLA/UNESCO) to guide school managers. Standards are specific and quantitative statements that act as guidelines for institutions to follow in the establishment, maintenance and management of school libraries. For instance, schools in various enrolment brackets have requirements laid down to cover the number of books on shelves, seating capacity, technical organization and budgetary allocation. IFLA/UNESCO standards provide a general idea of what individual countries should have and do. These standards specify that the school library should provide information and ideas that allow individuals to function successfully in today's information and knowledge-based society. The school library should equip students with life-long learning skills and assist with the development of thought processes that will enable them to live as responsible citizens. It should link with other library and information networks in keeping with the principles found in the UNESCO Public Library Manifesto. Its staff should promote the use of books and other information resources, and its library services must be provided equally to all members of the school community, regardless of age, race, gender, religion, nationality, language, or professional or social status. Special services and materials must be provided for those who are unable to use mainstream library services and materials such as the blind pupils.

2. STATE OF SCHOOL LIBRARIES IN AFRICA

A review of literature has shown that school libraries appear to play a very limited role in Africa in the light of how many amount to no more than shelves of outdated and worn-out material, nominally supervised by teachers who are too busy, disinterested, or ill-paid to pay much attention (Olden, 1995:127). Rosenberg (2002) reinforced this, and argued that the early promise of libraries has not been fulfilled in Africa. For instance, the activities of libraries in countries such as Ghana, Tanzania, Kenya and Uganda have declined significantly from when they were first established. Through his study in Tanzania, Ilomo (1985) concluded that financial limitation was the main obstacle, although this reason is often used to disguise the existence of other crucial factors. He noted that the availability of financing did not necessarily mean that it would be channeled to the development

financing did not necessarily mean that it would be channeled to the development of school libraries. Nigeria in the 80s is an example, because despite being rich with oil money during that period, libraries in schools continued to decline. Buildings and other facilities were not maintained, shelves were either empty or, full of irrelevant materials; funding was inadequate, and the percentage of the population using the services was negligible. This is more or less still true – albeit at different levels in different countries such as Uganda for all libraries in the public sector. In her study focusing specifically on school libraries, Rosenberg (1998) found that the school library systems set up during independence are no longer active. The most immediate cause of this loss appears to be that libraries are no longer adequately financed by their parent bodies or institutions because the institutional budget covers only the cost of staff salaries and basic building maintenance. The libraries are therefore highly dependant on external assistance. Donations can provide between 90 percent and 100 percent of all acquisitions (Rosenberg, 2002:10). Rosenberg concluded that for young people who constitute the majority of Africa's population, this is nothing short of tragic.

Similarly in Ghana's case, Alemna (1990) found that school libraries still faced a myriad of problems and that they were not being solved by School and College Division (SCD) of the Ministry of Education. School libraries were deteriorating because of lack of government attention and low interest from administrators. In an unpublished paper (Alemna, 1996 in Rosenberg, 1998), the author argued on the overall lack of impact, saying that the official interest in libraries was “cool and casual”, rather than active and sustained. This lack of commitment by government and lack of interest by school principals and heads had been the main reason behind why standards (neither those laid down in the 1972 *Manual for School Libraries in Ghana*, nor those proposed by Alemna in 1993) had still not been adopted, legislation had yet to be introduced, and why monies allocated to libraries were often diverted to meet other ends. There were no specific training requirements for school librarians in Ghana at least by 1996. The resulting use of unqualified staff led to poor services and libraries did not add to the quality of education offered in the schools. In 1994, Alemna lamented that no one appeared to be in a position to give any clear indication as to whether the growth of organized library services in schools had any impact on the poor reading habits of school leavers – which was the key reason for setting up SCD. He argued that even the introduction of a new educational system in Ghana in 1986 – one that demanded a greater use of books and libraries – did not result in more support for SCD and its role in developing school libraries. It is highly likely that the same status quo remains to this day taking into consideration that any change in the school library development would require massive capital inputs and commitment by school boards of governors and teachers. No spectacular change in this direction has been reported lately.

In this paragraph, I examine the Libyan school libraries. In Libya, the majority of school libraries are not entirely satisfactory. Lack of progress has been caused by a shortage of competent staff with adequate training, experience and/or knowledge. The lack of buildings specifically designed to serve as libraries is also a major obstacle blocking service delivery. Other reasons include lack of awareness on the part of the principals and administrators of the basic scientific and cultural role of the school library, and the lack of trained persons to select suitable books and other materials such as films, microfilms, slides etc. It is reported that there are also problems with cataloguing, classification and providing reader advice.

In the previous section the state of school libraries in Libya was described briefly. In this section school libraries in Mali are examined. The Malian state of school libraries, according to Sidibe (1998), is that the existing libraries are fairly equipped. The librarians (all teachers) manning them have all been through a training course. But the libraries struggle with the poverty of their collections, as books and reading materials require money. Lack of funds has resulted in: the libraries being almost totally dependent on external aid and gifts of books and materials; no suitable premises to house libraries are available as most books are stored in cupboards and in classrooms; and most importantly, the absence of a national documentation policy. Absence of policy means that problems libraries face cannot be effectively addressed because it is always in policy that power to raise and spend money or funds are included. In order to remedy these problems, Sidibe suggests that his government considers equipping each library with an autonomous budget; incorporating a library in the architectural design of every future school; ensuring the further training of librarians in general, and teacher-librarians in particular; and preparing a national documentation policy that should involve the population in its planning.

In this section I turn to East Africa beginning with Kenya. The state of school libraries in Kenya is almost similar to those in most other African countries. Kenya's government does not have any policy on school libraries although it is conscious of the value of school libraries (Otike, 1986). School libraries lack heightened recognition, suffer from inadequate funds, and lack qualified librarians. These libraries are mostly at the mercy of head teachers. The quality of library service is also dependent on the type of school it is serving. Primary schools generally have inadequate provision for libraries. And as for secondary schools, differences are bound to occur depending on the nature of those funding them. Old established schools have more superior collections than *harambee* (self-help) schools. Private schools run by international communities have sizeable collections run by professional staff, while those run as commercial enterprises generally offer the poor quality of service.

In Tanzania, the situation is as follows: government primary schools receive little or no grants for school libraries and are dependent on donations or on raising money locally; libraries are disorganized and normally in the hands of already overworked teachers who are usually unqualified for library work; few schools

have purpose-built libraries, and the existing equipment and furniture is unsuitable for library use; and school libraries are not well used – except, perhaps, as study areas by senior pupils. Ilomo (1985) found that very few primary schools had libraries of any significance. In many cases, they were merely cupboards filled with purchased books, and many primary schools borrowed books from the National Library Center. According to him, much as the Ministry of Education would have liked to develop and modernize primary school libraries, implementation was, and still is, hampered by the lack of funds and the sheer numbers involved, and for this reason, priority is given to the improvement of secondary school libraries. Finance and staffing have both been limiting factors in the implementation of this service, although some development has taken place. Rosenberg's study (1998) summarized this position well, stating that school libraries in government-owned primary and secondary schools were dead. The few existing school libraries were run by private organizations. The situation in 1997 was much the same as it was thirty years earlier. The overriding problem the study unearthed was that schools did not even ask for libraries, let alone good ones. Rosenberg thought rightly that librarians have to be pro active and demand for libraries and recognize them as important. They have to want libraries, to recognize the need for libraries, and to realize that a well-stocked and well-organized library is essential for teaching and learning. Only then, according to Rosenberg and likeminded thinkers, would a part of the per capita grant given to each school be reserved for library expenditure. And only then would schools see the need to permanently appoint trained library staff and thus ensure control and continuity, rather than rely on teachers who are frequently transferred and, in any case, have other duties to perform. Rosenberg also attributed the problem to the school curriculum. According to the author, the education curriculum in Tanzania like in most African countries was biased towards formal instruction, and teachers only expected textbooks to be read – broad reading was discouraged. Therefore, unless there are changes in the attitude towards libraries, no lessons could be learnt from model libraries. Advice and training are generally of little use if they fell on deaf ears. Similar reasons were reiterated by those she interviewed in 1997. Funding or the lack of it was again cited as a reason for the failure of School Library Service (SLS) to maintain services, whether for the purchase of books, the running of mobile services or even for making transport available for librarians to visit schools. From Tanzania, examination of Uganda follows.

The White Paper on Education (1992) in Uganda recognizes that the state of libraries in educational institutions in the country is pathetic and has not changed since then. The facilities are either non-existent, or out of date. Although the government explicitly mentions the rehabilitation of existing libraries and the establishment of new school libraries as essential facilities in the construction of new schools, what is significant in the White Paper is the complete silence around li-

braries below secondary school level (Uganda, 1992). A further issue is the vicious circle of non-library use that is almost universal in Uganda. The teacher-training curriculum is non-library-oriented. The result is non-library-user teachers teaching a non-library-oriented curriculum to children of non-library-user parents (Kigongo-Bukenya in Nakabuye, 1996). Other reasons have also been advanced for the generally poor image of Ugandan school libraries. Some have blamed it on the lack of any clear and progressive ideology or commitment to library development. Others blame the education system and its lack of support for the school library as a teaching and learning resource that should be part of the curricula. Kibirige in Kigongo-Bukenya (1984) outlined the following factors as responsible for the predicament of Ugandan school libraries: the missionary influence; the British colonial influence (on schooling and the curriculum); the examination-oriented education system; attitudes of the educated (i.e. qualification and status achievement as the main aim of education); inadequate development (concentration of projects in or near urban areas); inadequate funding of education (as a result of an underdeveloped economic base); generally poor library services in public libraries without children's collections to serve as examples for schools; lack of defined national standards for libraries in general and school libraries in particular; the role and influence of external agencies and charity organizations on school library development (negative and positive effects); political disruptions; a *laissez faire* attitude towards the library by school administrators; the lack of a well-equipped indigenous book industry; inadequate and often out-of-date stock; and improper use, and in some cases, complete absence of library accommodation and facilities. Improvements in school libraries appear to result from individual head teachers' efforts and the work of school inspectors in their personal capacities, rather than consistent government policy.

In terms of the school library situation in Ghana, Alemna (1996) portrayed that the school libraries were not functioning well enough to take their proper place in the learning and teaching programs. The author found that existing school library facilities and services were mere collections of materials in space, with very little equipment for students to use. Few schools had special blocks or buildings for libraries, although a number of them had single rooms often attached to the classrooms that were used as school libraries. Book stocks were seriously inadequate, outdated and worn out, and therefore of very little use to students; and there were very few schools in Ghana with professional, full-time school librarians. All schools made use of library clerks and student-assistants. However, there were some good points about these libraries, such as the fact that the acquisition and processing of books was done by the Ghanaian Library Board, and the relationship with public libraries was very close.

In the neighboring Nigeria, Aguolu (1975) has revealed that, there was a general misconception that a library is a luxury that can be dispensed with, or that is not worth worrying about. The author found that school administrators were skeptical about the usefulness of a school library, or were not convinced that it could im-

prove the quality of education given to pupils. Thus, primary school teachers saw no value in libraries, as they believed that the main aim of primary education is to teach the three Rs – reading, writing and arithmetic. Because of this mindset, the school library service was, and still is, the most neglected of all library services in Nigeria. Aina (1979:58) reinforced Aguolu's observations, noting that the development of school libraries was not encouraging because organized libraries did not feature in Nigerian primary schools, although library corners existed in many classrooms. The state of development in secondary school libraries wasn't any better. Aina (1979) found that it was only in Lagos that there was an effective school library service that assisted with the development of primary school libraries in the state.

For Lesotho, McGrath (1978) provides an overview of the development of school library services in that country. First of all Lesotho is a small country with less than two million people. It has primary and secondary schools managed by the Ministry of Education and by religious missions. While school library development commenced in many post-primary schools and in some high schools, there is almost no development at all in primary schools. The nation has not developed the school library policy. However, most schools have some space for a library collection but even while library spaces are available, they remain inadequate for the number of pupils enrolled in most schools. Many schools also lack sufficient shelves and have inadequate provision (i.e. tables, chairs, etc.) for a class of pupils to sit, read and write in. Few schools possess basic library equipment. The number, quality, and relevance of book stocks reveal marked variations from school to school. Collections in most schools do not meet the schools' educational needs. A few schools had started developing their libraries into multi-media resource centers and commenced in the acquisition of audiovisual materials and equipment. The dismal condition of most collections in schools is mainly due to the absence of a trained teacher-librarian with enough time to select materials, organize the collection and provide service. Only a very small number of schools have a teacher with enough scheduled time to serve as a Library Resource Teacher. The schools also suffer the absence of a regular, annual budget for the library to buy books. Many schools allocate no money from their funds for the purchase of library books. In the absence of the required funds, schools accept all donations without criticism and, as a matter of policy, generally never discard books, however unsuitable. Most of the organization within libraries is incomplete; some libraries exhibit no evidence of any organization. Organizational problems were a direct result of: (a) lack of trained teacher-librarians and, (b) lack of the time it would take for the available library teachers to organize and maintain the library's collection. Although some libraries provided pupils with adequate access to the library, most did not. Some instruction in book and library use was given in some schools, but there was little evidence of a planned sequential programme for the

acquisition of the necessary book, library, and research skills over the years in secondary/high schooling. Current curricula did not encourage resource-based, research-oriented individual learning and small-group activity. The potential of most libraries to contribute to this development has scarcely been touched on.

In Zambia, Mukwato (1972) found the state of school libraries to be unimpressive, highlighting the lack of school library buildings within primary schools. Putting up buildings in thousands of primary schools was such an expensive business that authorities tended to argue that the classroom library, which already operated in nearly all primary schools, was the ideal solution. Mukwato acknowledged, however, that the Public Library Service in Zambia provided primary and secondary schools with books and that there was also a postal and mobile service. In another report on Zambia, Olden (1990) quoted Julie Carpenter and her colleagues in summing up the state of secondary school libraries as mainly responsive, passive elements within their institutions. The buildings were run down, the furniture was dilapidated, and the books were outdated and showing signs of intensive prolonged use. There were also a high proportion of largely irrelevant donated books taking up shelf space that would otherwise be empty. Olden cited a Zambian librarian who lamented that there are effectively no libraries in government schools in Kitwe, the second largest city. Mismanagement, vandalism, and dependency on book donations were among other problems that were reported. An IFLA report (2001) showed that while the educational infrastructure in Zambia is generally inadequate, there is also a great disparity between the resources that go to urban schools and the meager supplies available to rural schools. When a school or children's library exists within a community, it typically has fewer books and educational materials, or doesn't even have a library management system in place. The Ministry of Education (MOE) is struggling to promote a culture of reading amongst both adults and children.

Totemeyer (1996) described the Namibian school library scene prior to independence as a product of a century of colonialism, the last decades of which were dominated by its apartheid. Primary and secondary schools were fragmented to the point that eleven different ethnic authorities managed Namibian schools. The funding of schools was also arranged along ethnic lines. The result of this system was that a vast sum of money was made available to white schools, which were privileged with everything they required, including computers, books and other printed materials, and audio-visual software and hardware for their school libraries. The state of library provision for the schools designated for black students, on the other hand, was appalling. A study conducted in 1990 by the Department of Information Studies from the University of Namibia established that 77 percent of Namibian schools had no libraries or even book collections until recently when the Government of Namibia has began including a library room in each secondary school it builds. However, this room is often used for other purposes or stands empty without any furniture or stock (University of Namibia, 1990). There was no school library policy until the late 1990s. Obviously, the lack of school libraries in

Namibian schools was not the sole cause of this phenomenon. Other factors, such as poorly qualified teachers, the lack of classrooms and textbooks, and poor social environments within the home and community, were also responsible for this state of affairs. In the next paragraph school library development in Zimbabwe is described.

Made (2000) traced the development of library services in Zimbabwe to 1895-1927, when public/subscription libraries, school libraries and special libraries were established. School libraries were established as part of the rural library service by the National Library and Documentation Service. The aim of this arrangement was to enable students from schools with no static libraries to have access to reading material through this service. The operation of school libraries had been largely left to individual school authorities, with minimal central guidance and direction. At primary school level, there was virtually no library facility – not even one based on the class library. In schools where there were libraries books were stolen and abused and the library was likely to be locked up when the designated teacher-librarian was away. Only a limited number of titles, in English, were commensurate with the reading ability of African pupils.

A number of people have written about school libraries in South Africa. Dick (2007:13) for example found that there was a lot that had been written and published on the historical development of libraries in South Africa. He documented that as early as 1803, there were attempts to set up school libraries in mission stations, such as near Port Elizabeth. This was due to the missionaries' efforts to teach reading and writing that raised the literacy levels at these stations to the extent that they, the missionaries requested religious societies back at their places of origin, such as the Religious Tract Society, to supply schools with reading and religious materials. Other developments included the launching of reading rooms and library depots. Another author, Fourie (2007), who while discussing the library and information service structure in South Africa touched on the development of school libraries since the Carnegie survey in 1928 and the Interdependent Committee Report of 1937. He said there had been attempts to establish closer ties between libraries and education. The latest was based on Curriculum 2005, which was implemented in 1997 and was expected to raise the importance of school libraries – but did not. The National Education Act also comments on the provision of facilities such as libraries and their impact on schools. According to Le Roux (2002:16), the role of developing school libraries was assigned to the school governing bodies, which were expected to do their best to improve the quality of education in their schools and, therefore, to increase the budgets for their libraries.

Radebe (1996) also discussed school library development in South Africa within the framework of the historical development of its education. She cited policy discussions and how these attempted to inform the perspectives of the African National Congress (ANC) on education in general and on school library provision

in particular. Policy proposals focused more on redressing past imbalances in favour of previously deprived black communities. On the whole, school libraries in South Africa have been marginalised and undervalued. Citing Lor (1992) and Stadler (1992), Radebe found that the general, across-the-board marginalisation of school librarians both within the school and in the library profession, the absence of a school library organization, a lack of realistic funding for these services and the low level of substantial policy research were issues that needed attention. Similarly, Hart (2006) identified key events and factors associated with school libraries. According to her, in order to understand the school library situation in South Africa, the following had to be taken into account: the legacy of apartheid; two government-sponsored surveys in 1997 and 1999; educational legislation since 1994; national norms and standards for school funding; Curriculum 2005 and the National Policy Framework for school library standards; increasing concerns over the poor reading abilities of South African learners; and the Technology-Enhanced Learning Initiative Policy Framework of 1996. Regarding apartheid, Hart highlighted the position of school libraries based on racial lines. The schools belonging to the white sector of education had libraries that were on par with those in the developed world, whereas libraries in black African schools were virtually non-existent. It was only in the 1980s that libraries in black schools began to improve with the appointment of school librarians and the addition of library materials' budgets. But the 1990s brought problems when government enforced national pupil/teacher ratios – in the interest of equity. This action saw a fresh wave of retrenchments of school librarians. The schools' governing boards paid those who remained. However in 1997, the Department of Education conducted a national audit of school facilities and found that less than 30 percent of South African schools had libraries. Another survey by the Human Sciences Research Council in 1999 revealed that during that period, 32 percent of South African schools had "on-site" libraries, and in terms of their distribution, there were huge provincial disparities. The report commented on the unavailability of many already existing libraries, which were often used as classrooms or shut for most of the day because the 'librarian' was also a fulltime teacher. A school Register of Needs audit of school facilities conducted by the Department of Education estimated that 8 million out of 12 million South African learners did not have access to libraries in their schools (Hart and Zinn, 2007:92). It should be remembered that South Africa held her first democratic election in 1994. This election brought about widespread changes in education. School libraries came to be recognized as the responsibility of three layers of government, i.e. national, provincial and school. In terms of the legislation passed following 1994, two are relevant – the national Education Policy Act of 1996, and the SA Schools Act of 1996. The National Education Policy Act spells out the responsibilities of the various layers, i.e. the central government retains policy building as its primary function, the provinces implement the policy, and the schools to run the libraries. The SA Schools Act aims to bring democratic management down to school level. It grants powers

to governing bodies to appoint librarians. Curriculum 2005 emphasized outcomes-based learning, where libraries were meant to play a central role. Teachers were expected to move away from a *chalk-and-talk* format and reliance on textbooks towards *resource-based learning*. The result of this was no better. Citing Karlson, de Jager et al. (2007:143) stated that the adoption of outcomes-based education (OBE) by the department of Education was welcomed by school librarians, who saw a space in the education program for the inclusion of information literacy skills and consistent advocacy for the library and its role in learning. But this did not happen because of the dismal progress in finalizing the school library policy. Rather wittingly, the response had been that the Department of Education was still working on a policy framework that should have been completed in 2005. (Note: Improve links.) Teachers were overworked and there weren't enough books in the libraries. It was in 1997 that the government began the process of drawing up a national policy statement for school libraries. After wide consultations, the result came to be the *National Policy Framework for School Library Standards* (1998).

It should also be mentioned here that many policy provisions have been made that directly relate to school library service development in South Africa. These include: the ANC Policy Framework for Education and Training (1995); an NGO named Read, Educate and Develop (READ), an initiative that investigated the school library policy (1990); the 1992 National Policy Conference; and the National Education Policy Investigation (1992), renamed the National Education Coordinating Committee. In this document, Radebe (1996) highlighted a programme for the introduction of school libraries – particularly in disadvantaged black schools – and the sharing of resources. Radebe (1996) stated that in 1994, the ANC hired a research body, the CEPD, to develop a LIS policy and to translate policy proposals into implementation plans or strategies. This resulted in the Implementation Plan for Education and Training (IPET). The IPET document motivated the placing of LIS within the Ministry of Education, arguing that without libraries and information services, student-centered and resourced-based learning – designed to liberate students and teachers from authority and textbook-based learning – are doomed to failure. Radebe stated that almost all white schools had been provided with adequate school libraries or media centers. Citing Braude, Radebe (1996) conceded that school libraries in South Africa cannot be viewed through a single lens because of the existence of different and separate education departments. There are vast differences in the provision of libraries, ranging from a complete lack of services, to collections in small boxes, to fully equipped 'First World' media centers.

The South African results of a 2004 survey for the implementation of new a policy document makes for sober reading: 19 percent of the responding 5156 schools have a central library; 31 percent have a storeroom for a library; and 20 percent have no library at all (Hart & Zinn, 2007:93).

3. CHALLENGES OF SCHOOL LIBRARIES IN AFRICA

There is evidently a fundamental lack of appreciation amongst policy-makers and educators when viewing the role of the school library. Underpinning this thinking is the noted absence of school library policies and the lack of will on the part of governing bodies, both of which are important aspects of library management (Hart & Zinn, 2007:93). Educators across the board appear less than convinced that school libraries are beneficial. The reluctance of school governing bodies to recognize the need for school libraries is of particular concern. The marginalization of school libraries is an issue that stands out very clearly in the writings of Otiye, Aina and Rosenberg. Through studies set in Nigeria, Carroll (1981) and Rosenberg (1998) reinforced the idea that commitment to school libraries is very low, partly due to the educational background of many administrators and teachers who rarely prioritize libraries at primary and secondary school levels. The present educational system is also very examination-oriented. The demands of the syllabus, lack of facilities, and the value attached to examinations all contribute to a system characterized by the provision of instruction by teachers, the study of a single textbook per subject, and copying of notes from a chalkboard. Library use seems to have little relevance in this system, even with the existence of an adequate school library, and this appears to be the norm throughout the continent. For this reason, many believe that advances in adequate accommodation and resources, insufficient commitment to school libraries, lack of materials, lack of trained librarians, and the weak state of school library provision are tied to larger issues of educational reform. Carroll stated that the challenges and obstacles facing school libraries in Africa include the lack of also local publishing. The author stated that accommodation is generally a serious problem for school libraries in Africa. Because of rapidly increasing school populations stemming from growing populations, classes are held in every available room or even outside. While a number of schools have a library the size of at least one classroom, a significant minority has no separate room. Those without such rooms have the library collection in the staffroom or head teacher's office. Where space is available, libraries often lack basic items such as tables, chairs and bookshelves. Funds available from governments are limited. This scarcity is compounded by the rapid expansion of education. Nigeria, for instance, introduced universal primary education (UPE) in 1976, and Uganda in 1996, and this has led to big surges in the primary school population. Linking this to an observation about the school libraries in Lesotho, it is found that a number of secondary schools had space for a library collection, but that the spaces were inadequate for the number of pupils enrolled. Even where a library existed, there was a constant temptation to transform the room into a classroom, especially if the library was poorly stocked or equipped and had no trained staff to run it. Sturges and Neill (1992:142) place the blame on librarians. They believe that African librarians are themselves less than convinced of the importance of librarianship for young people and do not generally place a

high value on school libraries. Needless to say, I can also add that school administrators who consider librarians expensive are a likewise bottleneck.

The absence of library management tools such as classification schemes and cataloguing tools certainly diminish the effective use of a library – users simply cannot locate information. Lack of proper cataloguing and other bibliographic tools and failure to apply library standards in the methods of classification and cataloguing pose a problem in the organization and provision of library services, irrespective of how old the stock may be. In nearly all the countries surveyed, housekeeping jobs are reportedly performed manually and poorly. But through personal observation, I would add that the tools for library management are expensive and generally not available in African bookshops. The local publishing industry and book trade are also part of the failure of school libraries in Africa. African publishing is weak and underdeveloped, and few titles rooted in local situations are published. This situation is against the principle of effective library services, which requires relevant materials to be rooted in local culture. Research has shown that initial literacy skills are best acquired when taught in one's mother tongue.

Local books and a flourishing information sector are needed in order for local publications to become widely accessible, to promote local languages, culture and literature, and to underpin literacy and reading skills. Shelves mirror mostly foreign texts of little relevance to the African environment, and this is despite the feeling that primary schools would do better if the books available to them were published in the relevant local languages. Finally, rapid advances in information and communication technology offer exciting opportunities to address the challenges of the information divide. School libraries badly need computerization. However, the information infrastructure in Africa is not developed enough for computers to be roped in, and where computers exist, they are inadequate.

4. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

School libraries in Africa as a whole are struggling in terms of budgets, value, and governmental support. The African publishing industry is developing, but not fast enough to get African books to school libraries. Preference for teachers to run libraries as opposed to librarians is a big handicap to school library development and progress. Current attempts at stressing learner-centered methodologies are largely theoretical; learning practices remain strongly teacher-centered. However, despite their relative lack of success in practice, school libraries remain a popular solution for ensuring access to reading materials (Rosenberg, 1998). This is because libraries have the capacity to acquire, organize and make reading materials available for use of teachers and school pupils. There is, therefore, need for all stakeholders to accept school libraries as essential institutions in schools; and their

value (e.g. in improving examination results) has to be demonstrable. Thus, the support offered for a school library service has to stem from demand. Rosenberg contended correctly that libraries are bottom-up rather than top-down operations; they stem from community needs. Only upon fulfilling these needs would financial support be forthcoming. Generally, school libraries are there to provide supplementary reading materials. Some of the reading material may come from outside the country and through donations, and at the moment most of the material distributed in almost all the African countries consists of donations. But the core material, if it is to be relevant to school needs, must be published and available locally. This requires a vibrant local book industry, and if this is lacking (and it is), then the contribution of any school library to education will be drastically reduced (Rosenberg, 1998).

Having stated that the onus is for governments and other stakeholders to find urgent solutions to reverse the situation and improve the state of school libraries of the future, key elements of any program intended to bring school libraries back to a reasonable standard should include:

- *Developing and implementing a genuine school library policy in every country.*
A school library policy is a necessary framework for the development of school libraries. The policy needs national and institutional support in order to contribute towards the attainment of the overall educational objectives. This would ensure that money, regulations, governance, procurements of information products and furniture, bibliographic tools and other requirements are made available, and infrastructure is improved or built and equipment brought in. Almost every other thing revolves around this.
- *Recognizing and employing a skilled professional.*
School libraries need trained librarians in numbers that allow libraries to significantly contribute to their schools' objectives. The days of librarians as the sole 'gatekeepers' of information are long gone. Librarians today have the additional responsibility of ensuring that their clients are information-literate. Head teachers need to realize that school libraries without competent and motivated librarians are a liability. Library associations should work hard to support efforts or cause situations towards ensuring that there is a policy that recognizes employment of school librarians.
- *Space*
Governments and schools should find ways to improve the infrastructure of their libraries. Using dysfunctional buildings, or having no room or space at all for a library, signifies that a school is struggling on a number of levels. Rehabilitating existing functional structures or extending them improves their value and impressions about their purpose. Governments should take lead in the process of building school libraries and furnishing them. Other stakeholders should not wait until government comes in. Initiatives should come from everybody to roll out development idea of library development.

- *Local language publishing program*

Africa needs to develop the capacity to write, edit, illustrate and publish books in local languages and to get children to read these books. This requires research on what is needed by pupils in order to develop viable local language publishing programs, which would go a long way in developing the book trade in various countries and the stocking of school libraries. National Curriculum Development Centers have responsibility to participate in this endeavor. Indigenous publishers and authors are likewise encouraged to invest or engage in this virgin area of publishing.

- *Curriculum orientation*

Rote-learning and single textbook dependence in teaching has destroyed the impetus to use school libraries. New methods of content delivery emphasizing self-directed learning using thematic curricula should be encouraged to make the use of school libraries a success. Education authorities particularly trainers must work towards making teachers understand the value of self-directed learning and the need to relate reading to the use of the school library.

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