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<td><strong>Category</strong></td>
<td>Library</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Publisher</strong></td>
<td>The Nigerian UBE Journal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Publication Date</strong></td>
<td>2003</td>
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<td><strong>Signature</strong></td>
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LIBRARY EDUCATION: A VITAL MISSING LINK IN THE UNIVERSAL BASIC EDUCATION CURRICULUM.

By

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Abstract

This paper identified the place of library education in the curriculum mapped out to achieve Universal Basic Education (UBE) objectives. Against this background, the implication for education planners as well as suggestions on the way forward were discussed in the paper.

Universal Basic Education

The Universal Basic Education (UBE), which was launched in Sokoto, Nigeria in 1999, emphasizes both formal and informal education, in and out of school for everyone from the youngest to adults. "UBE is an educational reform which tries to bring about increased access, improved quality and people's greater commitment and support to this sub sector of education" (Tahir 2002). The UBE aims at righting the wrongs of unfulfilled curriculum dreams.

The objectives of UBE are:

1. Developing in the entire citizenry a strong consciousness for Education and a strong commitment to its vigorous promotion;
2. The provision of free, universal basic education for every Nigeria child of school-going age;
3. Reducing drastically the incidence of drop-out from the formal school system (through improved relevance, quality and efficiency);
4. Catering for the learning needs of young person who for one reason or another, have to interrupt their schooling through appropriate forms of complementary approaches to the provisions and promotion of basic education;
5. Ensuring the acquisition of the appropriate levels of literacy, numeracy, manipulative, communicative and life skills as well as the ethical, moral and civic values needed for laying a solid foundation for life-long learning. (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2000)

In seeking to achieve the objectives of the programmer, some of the appropriate approaches will be to develop "enriched curricula" in several dimensions;

1. Laying the foundation for life-long learning;
   a. The inculcation of appropriate levels of literacy and numeracy;
   b. Developing an aptitude for practical work;
   c. The acquisition of socially desirable life skills.
All these have implications for what should be taught in schools, the way and manner in which they are to be taught, school organizations and the classroom work. They equally apply to all forms and conditions of out-of-school learning, which are parts of the UBE programmer. To make the curricula meet the needs of 21st century Nigerians, a stronger emphasis will have to be put on:

(i) Generic skills such as communication, the spirit of enquiry, term work and computer literacy;
(ii) A deeper understanding of core subject discipline;
(iii) The integration of key social and life skills into formal and non-formal education activities and;
(iv) Reducing curriculum overload. (31:11)

What should be taught in school and the way and manner in which they are to be taught in order to meet the requirement of the UBE programmer are what this paper will address.

Presently there is no place for library Education, an essential component of any basic education, on the timetable for UBE primary schools or pivotal Teacher Training programme. This supports the negligence of library instructions to pupils and teachers. Achebe's (2000) study revealed that major factor for non-utilization of school library resources are lack of library integration in the education programme of the school and absence of library hours in the school programme. Sokan (2002) also observed that one of the problems with school system is inflexibility He goes on to give the problem with curriculum as inflexibility, limited capacity building for curriculum experts and inability to respond to the need of the immediate environment.

In 2000, International Federation for Library Association and the United Nations Education Social and Cultural Organization listed some core information literacy, teaching and culture as:

1. Supporting and enhancing education goals as outlined in the schools mission and curriculum;
2. Developing and sustaining in children the habit and enjoyments of reading and learning and the use of library throughout their lives;
3. Offering opportunities for experience in creating and using information for knowledge, understanding, imagination and enjoyment;
4. Organizing activities that encourage culture and social awareness and sensitivity;
5. Working with students, teachers administrators and parents to achieve the mission of the school;
6. Proclaiming the concept that intellectual freedom and access to information are essential to effective and responsible citizenship and participation in a democracy;
7. Providing access to local, state, national and global resources and opportunities that expose learners to diverse ideas, experiences and opinions.

When one analyses the objectives of UBE and services of school library, some similarities are seen. (a) Both are concerned with providing unlimited access to relevant information for functional living. (b) Both emphasize learning.
a life habit (reading culture). The UBE Implementation Guideline of 2000 registers libraries as spatial enablers of learning without which no meaningful learning and teaching can take place. Libraries need to become a vital link in providing educational resources for all learners pre-school through adulthood, in school and non-school settings. A library is both space as well as a collection of reading and studying material, but it is also more of the use that is made of these spatial and material resources. Obanya (2000) stresses that since the emphasis of UBE is on learning how to learn, whatever is provided in the physical sense must be a place where one can learn. He goes on to give some criteria that can turn physical library into a pedagogic one as:

- The capacity of the library to GUIDE the learner-user
- The capacity of the available material to broaden the horizon of both teachers and learners
- The relevance of available material to the immediate and future use of the learner.

Library Education

The library must identify the information needs of the learners. He needs to acquaint himself with any change in the curriculum. Teachers and students need to be introduced to the skills in the use of libraries (library skills). These skills are not innate but are learnt. Kolade (2000) affirms that teaching librarian make students competent in using a well organized library. They need to know:

(a) The general organization of the library
(b) The use of the catalogue as guide to holdings of the library
(c) How to use bibliographic materials to find out the resources that exist in the library and select material to fulfill individual purposes.

Kolade (2000) goes to add that simulation activities should be organized to expose young children to the opportunity to start reading through pictures, picture story books, talking books and other beginner books. Rule and regulation of the library should be taught to students. The habit of reading for pleasure and knowledge should be reinforced by the school library through provision of appropriate literature and other media for the children with the librarian using his knowledge in the field. Even when students are out of library to widen their knowledge as a result of the library or information seeking skills already acquired before leaving formal school system. It is an invaluable skill throughout one’s lifetime.

Library Education teacher/librarian.

The globalizes revolution brought about by the information Communication Technology (ICT) bears on the library system in terms of providing access to information. The Federal Ministry of Education embarks now upon project of National virtual Library; a system by which users will have access to information that resides solely in electronic format on computer network regardless of the physical location of the information. “Digitization is now the in-thing, the state of the art of technology in information storage and dissemination” Opara (2000).
Library had been transformed into Resources Center and was now in the vanguard of delivering wider, social, political, economical and educational benefits with the impact of the new digital revolution. The librarian has to offer electronic services. Internet is a cluster of information. It is the librarian who has training in this technology who will organize the information to be meaningful. The information scientist (librarian) should teach the computer literacy skills where the school has access to computer to enable them make effective use of books and other learning resources. Mastery of study skills will help the students excel in academics. In locating information in a book, students should be taught the relevance of table of content, bibliographies illustrations, chapter heading, index and pagination when studying. Thus library education is the bedrock of any basic education and should be accorded its proper place in UBE curriculum.

Implications for education planners

Library education, which is learning-to-learn, is completely missing in the basic education timetable. Adequate planning must be done at all levels. Education for all becomes education for nothing if not properly planned, that students cheat in various examinations is lack of library education. That some people in the northern parts of the country regard UBE programmer as an attempt to interfere in their way of life (Tahir 2001) is lack of Library Education.

The Way Forward

1. There is need for upgrading and or provision of physical school libraries in all schools.
2. Where this is not the case now, library periods should be on all schools timetable (decision to be at schools management level).
3. Library Boards/committees to be compulsory features of Parent-Teachers Association at the three tiers of government.
4. Provision of library resource materials should be more systematic than in the case now.
5. Public Libraries to be established in each local government Area to enhance equalization of education opportunities.
6. The need for the establishment of Ministry of Library and Information Science. Ministry of Education has not been able to introduce effective library services in the school system.
7. A concerted effort by all library bodies to ensure that government policy on libraries in UBE actualized.
8. The UBE school library should not be anybody’s library, professional librarians must be employed to organize the collections.
9. Apart from World Bank project for UBE, teachers should be encouraged to write textbooks based on specific curriculum.
10. There should be inclusion of library representation in various committees set up on UBE.
Conclusion

Libraries form a vital part of the world's system of education. Some aspects of UBE anchored on a sound and responsive library education. The new Basic Education involves giving the children, youth and adults essential ingredients that contemporary society requires for wholesome living. Library Education which has been missing on planned timetables, is the qualitative basic education that everyone needs in order to heed Fafunwa's (2001) warning that, mass literacy may not be achieved in the next 50 years in the country going by current efforts.

References


Tahir, G. (2001) UBE is not new to Nigeria, this day, Wednesday, November 7, P. 50.