

The Role of Community Stakeholders and Ministry of Education in the Effective Implementation of School Library Guidelines (SLGs) In Nigerian Schools

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Abstract:

This paper is theoretically centred on an in-depth analysis of the role of community stakeholders and ministry of education in the full implementation of school library guidelines in Nigerian schools. The focus of this paper is that community stakeholders and the ministry of education have major roles to play in supporting the full implementation of SLGs through synergy between the stakeholders in the community, the ministry of education and the school librarians. The various stakeholders which make up the socio-cultural structure of the Nigerian community setting that can support the implementation of SLGs were identified to include: Alumni Association (AA), Parents Teachers Association (PTA), Committee of Retired Teachers (CRT), Council of Traditional Rulers (CTR) e.t.c. The paper focuses on partnership between the community stakeholders and school libraries for sustainable implementation of SLGs. It identified the community stakeholders, areas of partnership between the

community stakeholders and school library for the implementation of SLGs, challenges to the joint effort were recognized with strategies for overcoming them. The position of this paper is that community stakeholders can only play a positive role in the implementation of the SLGs based on their level of awareness and mutual understanding. This has a strong implication for strategic lobbying and advocacy skills, co-sponsored activities aimed at attracting the stakeholders and school-community social responsibility among school librarians in Nigerian.

Keywords: Community Stakeholders, Ministry of Education, School Library Guidelines (SLGs), Nigeria

Introduction

As we move to the direction of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) while we bask in the euphoria of the seventeen (17) SDGs, it is important for information professionals both past and present, knowledge lovers and seekers to visualize where they would play a significant role towards the full realization of the laudable global initiatives. Societies that are knowledgeable are bound to develop tremendously in all sectors such as education, agriculture, health, financially and knowledge is acquired through access to available information.

One of the cardinal goals of the SDGs is focused on education for all. The success of the educational system both in developed and developing countries is hinged on their access to information resources in libraries and information centres (LICs). Therefore it could be said that qualitative education without a well equipped library is meaningless. Recognizing the essentials of school libraries in the actualization of educational goals, the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions came up with IFLA School Library Guidelines in order to ensure and promote quality assurance in the provision of school libraries to support the educational drive of government. In cognizance of the fact that school libraries do not exist in isolation, they are sub-unit of the school system, they are owned by government or private individuals. Often times these schools are situated in the community environment where they are being influenced by the socio-political structures of the area where they are located. Based on this, it has become paramount to examine the role of the community stakeholders that constitute the social-cultural and political structure of the Nigerian community towards the development of the school libraries located in these communities as regard the implementation of school library guidelines as required by IFLA.

The Parent Teachers Association (PTA), Alumni Association (AA), Council of Traditional Rulers (CTR), Committee of Retired Teachers (CRT), Ministry of Education and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), Women August Meeting, Entrepreneurial Philanthropists are among the stakeholders for the implementation of SLGs.

Traditional rulers are enthroned for the progress and the development of the society they oversee. Their relevance to both democratic processes, education inclusive, need not be over emphasized. They are viewed as intermediaries of societal tradition, culture and religion with their powers covering every sphere of their communities including social, economic, military, political and religious activities (Akinfenwa, 2008). The core functions of traditional rulers include mobilization of the communities for development purposes. The Council of

Traditional Rulers (CTR) are integral component of the society they rule. They can therefore through the instrumentality of traditional institutions collaborate and work with other stakeholders to drive the growth of school library system. Parent-Teachers Associations have contributed significantly to the growth and development of the school library through the provision of information resources to school libraries.

Some Community Stakeholders in the Educational Systems

i. Alumni Association (AA): This is an official group of former male and female students who are united for the good of their former institution. The relevance of Alumni participation in educational activities is best captured by Hayman & Partridge (2013:22):

There is no doubt that alumni networks can be used to help young people navigate the transition from education into employment and to support schools to finance extra-curricular activities and infrastructure projects

The Alumni Association (AA) of secondary schools and primary schools in Nigeria over the years have been contributing significantly towards the growth and development of their alma mater. Instances abound where Alumni associations have erected new buildings, provided chairs and other items of furniture to their alma mater. These commendable gestures can be extended to the school libraries.

ii. Parents Teachers Associations (PTA): Parents-Teachers Association is grossly burdened with the learning and teaching activities of the institutions, the co-ordination and management of the institutional growth and development, this it does both morally and financially (Ibezimako, n.d.). PTA participation in schools according to Abdullahi (1996) is the best way communities can participate on matters affecting education in Nigeria. According to him, virtually, every school in the country in which PTA exists has benefited from the activities of the PTA.

The PTA, as a formal organization which consists of parents, teachers and non-teaching staff in the school is a forum for teachers and parents to meet and discuss issues relating to the welfare of the students, parents and teachers. The Parents-Teachers Association was formed on the basis of the positive contributions of the association to the child's well-being. Apebende et al (2010) argued that where teachers are not qualified to cater for the children, through the PTA, parents could make this known in order to get qualified ones.

The PTA is a voluntary association of parents and teachers in a particular school establishment for its development. This no doubt has contributed significantly to the growth and development of the school library through the provision of information resources to school libraries. It has also helped to foster school community relationship and this contributes to the growth and development of the school system. Sometimes the PTA raise fund to establish and equip school libraries by levying each pupil or student to pay a stipulated amount of money. They act as source of fund raising for public schools in Nigeria.

iii. Council of Traditional Rulers (CRT): Traditional institutions are age-long socio-political institutions created from customary laws in an attempt to have an organized society. A traditional ruler is a person who by virtue of his ancestry occupies the throne of an area and who has been appointed to it in accordance with the customs and traditions of the area. The appointment and promotion of the traditional rulers is the responsibility of the State

governments that issue “Staff of Office” which symbolizes the political authority handed over to them by the State Governors (Akinfenwa, 2008). The traditional rulers rarely rule alone, but derive their authority from their position “in council” (Reed, 1982). The traditional rulers through the traditional council of chiefs and the kingmakers take decision for the communities. The society which the school system and the school libraries are sub-set cannot survive significantly without the traditional rulers. The traditional rulers through their capacity in Nigerian context usually initiate community development projects that cover the primary and secondary school system of education. In many instances, the traditional rulers have been able to attract funds from both private sectors and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). The core areas these have been practically realized are in the areas of building and providing resources.

Rationale for Integrating Traditional Rulers into the Educational System

As rightly captured by Donkoh, (n.d:4)

multi-sectoral development strategies need to include traditional leadership as one of the key sectors in order to increase the likelihood of success. Traditional rulers are keenly aware of the fact that their functions have been transformed from serving in merely political, military and ritual capacity that derives from their traditional role as moral and social leaders.

Ututama in (<http://thepointernews.com/p-18438>) pointed out that any traditional ruler who is not at peace with his people cannot be an engine for development and cannot be a hub for driving the agenda of the government.

The CRT therefore through their capacity mobilizes the community members to support the growth and development of school libraries. The Council of Traditional Rulers (CRT) can provide land for the building of an ultra-modern Central School Library (CSL) that can serve the students and pupils of a specified geographic region and can play a significant role during holiday tutorials/classes. The traditional rulers have succeeded in boosting community school development agenda through the provisions of library buildings, book resources and computers.

iv. Committee of Retired Teachers (CRT): The Committee of Retired Teachers (CRT) though not popular, is a proposal. The retired teachers in the community under this aegis can play significant role towards the implementation of school library guideline in public schools. The CRT if established, by virtue of their teaching experience in the teaching profession can go a long way in promoting the growth and development of school libraries in Nigeria. The CRT can act as a bridge between the PTAs, CTRs, school libraries and the school management. Having worked in the educational sector before retirement, they are adequately exposed to the intricacies and politics of school administration and can play advisory role to create awareness and help sensitize the CTR and PTAs on the necessity of partnering with the government to ensure that school libraries are repositioned and made functional in order to achieve the basic goal of providing assistance to the school systems. Some time they approach their ex-students that are well to do to assist in such venture. In some cases the projects are built and named after their names which might in turn attract more funds especially if the teacher was very popular when in service.

v. **Philanthropists and Entrepreneurs:** There are many philanthropists in Nigeria and other countries of the world that are willing to develop education and learning. They include Emeka Offor Foundation, Frank Nneji of ABC Transport, Dangote, and other names too numerous to mention. These people are willing to play their role in the development of school libraries if they are consulted.

vi. **Women Meetings / Women August Meeting:** Women in various communities in South East states of Nigeria hold meetings in August annually. The purpose of these meetings is to handle development projects and instil discipline among women. Their effort should be diversified towards the development of school libraries in line with IFLA School Library guidelines.

vii. **Non Governmental Organizations (NGOs):** Non-governmental organizations have played a major role in equipping public libraries and academic libraries. This role should be extended to school libraries. Non-governmental organizations like Emeka Offor Foundation, Carnegie Foundation, Books Aid International etc have contributed immensely towards the growth of public libraries. There is the need to channel their effort in the development of school libraries in line with IFLA school library guidelines.

Areas of Partnership between the Community Stakeholders and School Library for the Implementation of School Library Guidelines (SLGs)

The community stakeholders can partner with heads of school libraries in Nigeria in the following areas to ensure the smooth implementation of School Library Guidelines (SLGs).

a) ***Recruitment and Provision of Human Resources:*** In order to meet the teaching and learning needs of school community, it is essential to have a well-trained and highly motivated staff in sufficient numbers according to the size of the school and its unique needs (IFLA School Library Guidelines, 2015). One basic requirement for recruiting the human resources for effective management of the library is fund. In this case, the Alumni Association (AA), the PTA other stakeholders can decide to collaborate in the employment of professionally trained staff for their children's education. This mostly happens in government owned schools.

The Council of Traditional Rulers (CTR) in their wisdom could use their positions to identify unemployed graduates in the host community willing to do voluntary community services. Such a person can be employed and re-trained either by the nearest public library or through in-house training. It must be noted here that good collections in the best library buildings, without the required staff to manage them, are not different from the bookshop. This underscores the necessity of this area of partnership to ensure that our school libraries are adequately filled with the required number of staff, not just in quantity but in quality.

b) ***Provision of Legal and Financial Framework for School Library:*** A school library exists within a framework of local, regional and national authority to provide equity of opportunity for learning and for developing the abilities needed to participate in the knowledge society (IFLA, 2015). In Nigeria, the Ministry of Education is saddled with the responsibility of deciding the legal and financial framework upon which a school library operate. For instance the National Policy in Education (2004) stipulates the requirements for the establishment of functional school libraries in Nigeria school.

To ensure the currency and vitality of a school library's instructional information base, there is need for partnership with the Ministry of Education and various stakeholders. The PTAs can help in providing the necessary funding required. The Alumni Association in collaboration with the PTA can help in financing the school libraries to enable it fully implement the SLG in relation to recruitment of human resources, provision of physical and digital resources and funding of programs and activities of a school library.

c) ***Provision of Physical and Digital Resources of a School Library:*** The physical and digital resources of a school library include facilities, equipment, and collections of resources for teaching and learning (IFLA, 2015). The various community stakeholders in the school can partner with school libraries in ensuring implementation of SLGs. Most secondary schools in Nigeria have benefited substantially in this area. There have been cases, where Alumni Association (also known as: Old Boys and Girls Association) provided information resources for their Alma Mater and as well raised funds for infrastructural development (i.e. - building). The Council of Traditional Rulers (CRT) can attract funds from industries in their areas which can be committed to school library development programmes. They can liaise with the PTA executives and Heads of Schools to open a joint account with financial institutions where the generated revenue can be paid into, it will go a long way in implementing the IFLA School Library Guidelines as it concerns physical and digital resources. The CRTs and PTAs can through their position in the community influence and attract philanthropist who are willing to contribute towards school library development in that community. The CRT can liaise with corporate organizations and financial institutions on the need to provide resources for the school libraries as part of their Social Responsibility Services (SRS) to the community. When these approaches are systematically adopted and followed religiously, it will help heads of school libraries in Nigeria to revitalize school libraries and implement the IFLA School Library Guidelines as it concerns physical and digital resources. The Committee of Retired Teachers (CRT) in a community through their experiences and contacts can attract Information Technology (IT) based organizations that can provide ICT facilities like computers, laptops, internet facilities as part of their community social responsibilities.

d) ***Contributing towards programs and activities of school library:*** As pointed out in IFLA (2015), to be successful in fulfilling its educational mission, a school library must actively engage the educational community through well-research programs of instructional and service activities. In relation to this, the PTA executives can assist the school library to promote reading culture and functional literacy by organizing reading competitions. Most important is that the Committee of Retired Teachers (CRT) could help in translating foreign literature to local indigenous language that will help in promoting and stimulating the interest of the students to make use of the library. The Council of Traditional Rulers (CTR) could liaise with the heads of schools to design what is known as “**Compulsory Holiday Reading**” where it will be mandatory for students, pupils of the schools to participate in reading in the school library during the holidays. As enunciated in the IFLA School Library Guidelines (2015:p45), collaborative planning enhances the quality of instruction and is essential for providing media and information literacy instruction that is integrated into the curriculum. The emphasis of the research is that the school librarian should go beyond just collaborating with classroom teachers to collaborating with PTAs, CTR, CRT and AA, Philanthropists, NGOs etc to ensure that the programmes and activities of the school library in line with the SLGs is actualized and fully implemented.

e) ***Assisting in School Library Evaluation and Public Relations:*** Evaluation has been acknowledged as an essential aspect of implementing school library programmes and services. According to IFLA (2015), beside self-study, other possible approaches to school-based, school library evaluation can be explored; one of such is stakeholder perceptions. The school librarian can maximally explore the existing relationship between the school and various stakeholders who include CRT, CTR, PTA and AA to evaluate their perceptions of the programmes and activities of school libraries.

The evaluation process can help to determine the way forward and also inspire the creation of new visions for a school library of the future. The Committee of Retired Teachers can help in assessing the program quality, content and impact based on their years of experiences in the educational sector.

More fundamental, is that mutual relationship exists between the school librarian and the stakeholders. There is need for existence of interaction and strategic communication that build beneficial relationships between the school library and the public. The Committee of Retired Teachers (CRT), NGOs, entrepreneurs and organizations based on their wealth of experience and connections in the society can successfully influence the advocacy programmes of the school library which is about developing understanding and support from key decision makers in government.

Challenges of Stakeholders to Effective Implementation of SLG

1. ***Non-Inspection of School Libraries:*** the Ministry of Education in Nigeria, does not care about school libraries. Due to this gap, most school libraries where they exist are not functional, Heads of secondary and primary schools capitalize on this attitude, leaving the school libraries to degenerate to a mere rooms stocked with unorganized, out-dated and irrelevant books. This is against the standards of the IFLA School Library Guidelines. When the heads of schools become conscious of the fact that the Ministry of Education can come for impromptu inspection, it will ginger them to work towards resuscitating the dying school library system.

ii. ***Misappropriation of Funds:*** There have been instances where a group of people or individuals in collaboration with the heads of PTA and School Board embezzled the funds meant for the development of the schools. This act discourages effective partnership between the different stakeholders. Misappropriation of funds meant for the development of the schools is a cog in the wheel of school developmental process.

iii. ***Low Level Awareness on the Role of School Libraries:*** Most people are ignorant of the great role that school libraries play in the educational development of the Nigerian child. This has brought about high level of negligence of the school library system. The fast eroding reading culture is an aftermath of negligence of the school library. The Nigerian child finds it easier to chat online than to read. Therefore, the low level of awareness amongst stakeholders is an impediment to effective partnership between the different stakeholders.

iv. ***Proliferation of Private Schools in Nigeria:*** The rate at which private schools spring up in Nigeria is alarming. There are private schools in almost every street without functional school libraries. This poses a great challenge to the CRT, CTR and the Ministry of Education. The CRT and CTR are handicapped here because schools are privately owned and are profit oriented and as such, the influence of the stakeholders if the truth must be told, are to some extent are limited.

v. ***Indifferent Attitude of Government:*** The indifferent attitude of government towards the development of school libraries is having adverse effect on the implementation of school library guidelines. When governments – Federal, State and Local play their expected roles, it paves the way for stakeholders to successfully operate and contributes towards the success and implementation of the SLG. There is no budgetary allocation for school libraries in Nigeria.

vi. ***Non-recruitment of Qualified Personal in School Libraries:*** Most school libraries instead of recruiting qualified professional library staff who are knowledgeable in managing school libraries, prefer to use non professionals who read English language for the job of school librarian. This apparently affects the partnership process of the various stakeholders. When the stakeholders recognize that their inputs are not being maximized optimally, they are likely to withdraw from such partnership. However, because most officers in school libraries are unqualified, they cannot lobby and advocate for library development.

Strategies for Attracting Stakeholders for Developing School Libraries in line with IFLA School Library Guidelines

i. ***Use of Lobbying and Advocacy:*** The heads of the school system through the PTA can use intensive lobbying and advocacy to draw the attention of stakeholders to the necessity of their participation in the school community social responsibility. They can partner with the Committee of Traditional Rulers (CRT) to attract private sectors domiciled in the region to contribute towards the implementation of school library guidelines through the provision of infrastructural resources for the schools.

ii. ***Naming of Building/ Structures after Donors:*** Immortalizing the names of outstanding personalities who contribute to the development of school libraries and the school system as a whole is another strategic way of attracting various stakeholders to the provision of functional school libraries.

iii. ***Revisiting the Activities of School Library Section of Nigerian Library Association:*** There is an urgent need to re-visit the activities of the school library section of the Nigerian Library Association. The activities should not just be limited to meetings and publications of Journals. They should also work out the framework and modalities that will help towards the implementation of the SLG in Nigerian secondary schools. They should help in regulating the activities of school libraries in Nigeria.

Conclusion

The stakeholders should employ librarians who are ICT compliant and if possible ICT professionals who will help in the teaching and learning through the use of ultramodern new media facilities. The study has practically examined the various roles that stakeholders can play towards the implementation of the School Library Guidelines (SLGs). The heads of secondary schools in Nigeria should adopt a pragmatic and proactive measure that will attract stakeholders to contribute towards the school library development project. Intensive lobbying and advocacy can be adopted towards successful implementation of the School Library Guidelines.

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