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School Library Development Initiatives in a Democratic South Africa: Roles of the Various Stakeholders

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School Library Development Initiatives in a Democratic South Africa: Roles of the Various Stakeholders

Abstract

Equitable resource allocation and provision is critical in all schools including those in the disadvantaged rural communities to improve learner outcomes and the quality of education irrespective of the educational paradigm. With a wide variety of educational resources in a school environment, quality of education and learner achievement can be entrenched and improved. However, the majority of the schools in poor and developing countries are still characterised by an inferior quality education and poor learner outcomes owing to an array of contextual realities and factors – amongst them high poverty levels and lack of adequate educational facilities and resources in schools. The aim of this conceptual article is to highlight the roles various stakeholders can play to advance and champion effective development of libraries in all South African schools in the post-apartheid era. Based on the literature review, the study highlights roles various stakeholders can play to champion and advance effective library development initiatives in all schools. The study recommends that a cohort of distinct stakeholders need to play their roles actively for all schools to have an effective library and information services (LIS) to enable teachers and learners to have equitable access to information for curriculum and non-curriculum related activities.

Keywords: school library and information services, educational resources, quality education, learner outcomes, South Africa.

Introduction and Background to the Study

Education is a key component of any nation. An adage, “a winning nation is a reading nation” emphasises the value of an educated nation all over the continents. While education remains an essential component of man’s life, quality education is indispensable in all countries to produce knowledgeable, competent and skilled citizens who will contribute significantly to the world economy. Spaul (2015, 34) states that:

Quality education can be defined as the acquisition of the knowledge, skills and values that society deems valuable – usually articulated in the curriculum. While it is difficult to get reliable information on whether learners are acquiring appropriate values at school, there is considerable information on the extent to which they are acquiring the knowledge and skills expressed in the curriculum.

Africa Institute of South Africa (2012,1) states that:

In South Africa, there are many signs that show that there is a crisis in education. With high enrolment rates each year, and increasingly poor grade 12 output, it is clear that more concentration needs to be focused on the quality of education. Quantity should, however, also be considered when the majority of those learners who pass matric do not meet the minimum requirements for university entrance. In addition, of the number of learners enrolled in grade 1, only half make it to grade 12. It has been established that a number of factors or problems hinder learners from receiving a good standard of education.

In most disadvantaged rural communities, informal settlements and townships of South Africa in particular, most public schools are dysfunctional owing to the inheritance of the apartheid rule prior to 1994. Rakabe (2015/16, 105) states that:

Not only are South African schools struggling with the reality of resource constraints and public pressure for improved performance, but the entire public basic education is plagued by high levels of weakness and inequality and is criticised, in particular, for producing poor quality outcomes.

In disadvantaged rural communities where the majority of the populations reside, the situation leaves much to be desired. Legotlo (2014, 2) states that “without adequately addressing the problems, challenges and issues that need urgent attention, the quality of education offered in schools, will be eroded and remain a pipe dream.” Legotlo (2014, 6) further states that:

In South Africa, the greatest challenge is to provide adequate resources and quality education to all learners, including those learners in remote rural areas and learners from the poorest of the poor. In addition, there is instability in the provincial leadership and in top management, with acting appointments made almost weekly. So, in many cases, those in positions of power begin work and are replaced before they can evaluate and reflect on their actions.”

Daunting challenges faced by the majority of the needy public schools in the disadvantaged rural communities therefore need to be addressed and redressed to improve quality of education. With all powers vested in her, the national government needs to intervene decisively to reverse the anomaly in affected rural schools. Legotlo (2014) states that:

The quality of education is pivotal for the production of human capital and this cannot be compromised by failing to refocus on the quality of education offered in school. The inputs in the system such as trained and motivated teachers, buildings and classrooms including sanitation, clean water, instructional materials such as textbooks, as well as strong leadership with vision to steer the winds of change are important in providing the desired outcomes.

This is particularly true in poor and developing African countries where economies are low and struggling to grow.

Adequate infrastructure is a key priority in a school set-up. With the teacher-learner ratio of 1:32 in South Africa, sufficient classrooms are essential in all communities to avoid learner congestion and overcrowding in schools (Africa Institute of South Africa 2012). Even parents in the disadvantaged rural communities are concerned about the low quality of education given to their children. With influx of black learners into the inner city schools for better educational opportunities in South Africa, more classrooms and other educational resources are imperative to cope with the trend. With dilapidated structures particularly in the disadvantaged rural communities, informal settlements and townships, the post-apartheid government has a huge responsibility to ensure that decent and standardised classrooms are made available in all schools. This has huge financial implications. In addition, well-equipped and well-staffed libraries, laboratories and sport fields are required to entrench quality education to all learners. Moreover, adequate and professionally qualified teachers are essential in all schools to entrench the notion of quality education. To guarantee quality education, adequate and suitable educational resources are critical in all schools to improve the learner performance and standard of education in all societies. In contrast, Chisholm (2011, 50) states that:

The quality of education, linked to equity in the system, was identified as the main challenge facing South African education since the early 1990s. Its principal manifestation until recently was matric results. However, as international and provincial assessments of children's literacy and numeracy skills lower down in the system gathered momentum, so the full extent of the problem in South Africa was also laid bare through scholarly and popular syntheses and elaborations of the evidence relating to underperformance.

Good and effective LIS is imperative in schools to enable teachers and learners to access multi-media resources for curriculum and non-curriculum related activities. This is particularly true in poor and developing African countries where quality of education is currently a nightmare. Fombad and Jiyane (2015, 192) state that:

Since 1994, the South African government has done a lot more than most modern democracies in producing laws, regulations, policies and curriculums to govern education, eliminate the inequalities of apartheid years and redress the injustices of the Bantu Education.

However, even in the new political dispensation, South Africa "had a dual education system and labour market. The dualistic education system limits social mobility and perpetuates labour market inequality. It also perpetuates a 'cycle of desperation'." (Fengu (2017a, 8).

In the apartheid South Africa, quality education for the black learners in the disadvantaged rural communities in the homelands or bantustans was never a National Party's priority. The aim was to disempower black learners educationally for political gains. Their schools were therefore characterised by lack of adequate educational resources. For learners, that had resulted in parrot learning and memorisation of facts without understanding them. It was mostly chalk and chalkboard type of interaction between teachers and learners. Consequently, black teachers and learners lacked requisite information skills needed for effective retrieval of information to accomplish curriculum related activities. As learner outcomes were very poor, schooling system in disadvantaged rural communities was characterised by high failure rates and high drop outs.

In contrast, advantaged Model C schools reserved for white learners in affluent suburbs were well-resourced and well-staffed to offer high quality education. These schools had well-resourced and staffed libraries, laboratories and sports fields. Learner outcomes were high and examination results were outstanding. With learners paying school fees, advantaged Model C schools were able to buy extra resources for their teachers and learners (Hart, 2013). Schools were also able to employ extra teachers to share workload amongst staff members evenly. Equal Education (2011b) avers that:

The massive inequality in the South African education system produces massive inequalities in learner results. In 2009 the Western Cape Education Department (WCED) tested every Grade 6 learner at numeracy. 60% of those in former white schools could count and do maths at Grade 6 level. Only 2% of learners in former black schools could do the same!

Fengu (2017a, 8) indicates that in South Africa, "the majority of the schools are of low quality. Teachers are demotivated. There is very little evidence showing they are improving. Top jobs in the labour market are fed by advantaged Model C schools learners." With dismantling of the apartheid system in 1994, with better educational facilities, resources and professionally qualified teachers, advantaged Model C schools persistently continued to attract more black

learners from the disadvantaged rural communities, informal settlements and townships because of outstanding achievements of their learners (Rakabe, 2015/16).

In South Africa, for government subsidy, all schools have been categorised into five quintiles where the socio-economic backgrounds of their communities are taken into account (Mojapelo, 2016). While schools in rural, poor and marginalised communities which were under-funded during the apartheid era are grouped in quintiles 1-3 (no fee-schools), schools in the affluent communities are grouped in quintiles 4-5 (fee paying-schools). Equal Education (2017, 4), indicates that:

A disproportionately high number of quintiles 1 to 3 schools are located in rural provinces: 92.5% of learners in Limpopo attended no-fee schools in 2016, in stark contrast to the 41.6% of Western Cape learners that attended no-fee-schools in the same year. This high number of learners attending quintiles 1 to 3 schools renders the cost of education far higher there than in urban provinces, since government's 'per learner' funding is based on these numbers.

It implies that the disadvantaged schools in mostly rural provinces such as Limpopo, KwaZulu-Natal and Eastern Cape are still characterised by resource constraints negatively affecting teaching and learning accomplishments.

However, advantaged Model C schools which were earmarked for white only learners during the apartheid are in quintile 5. Although they receive government subsidy, they are allowed to supplement their funds through school fees and fundraising initiatives (Rakabe, 2015/16). They are also allowed to scout donations from rich people and private sector companies to augment quality educational resources they have. Owing to high quality of their examination outcomes, advantaged Model C schools attract sponsors and donors to guarantee high quality education for their learners. With poor learner outcomes in schools in marginalised rural communities, some black parents have opted to send their children to these schools for better educational opportunities. However, not all parents can afford to send their learners to these schools because learners are paying school fees for provision of extra educational resources. The Department of Basic Education (2009,1) states that:

South Africa has a high-cost, low-performance education system that does not compare favourably with education systems in other African countries, or in similar developing economies. There is a multitude of well-publicised problems, including a shortage of teachers, underqualified teachers and poor teacher performance. In the classroom, this results in poor learner standards and results, a lack of classroom discipline and is exacerbated by insufficient resources and inadequate infrastructure.

Petitt (2016,1) states that:

South Africa remains a society marked by stark inequalities – none more obvious than in the education sector. The challenges facing many schools in South Africa include: inadequate infrastructure, lack of resources in various arenas, lack of sanitation and security, lack of discipline and management and critical social welfare issues. There are 25 000 public schools in South Africa: of these, 3 544 (14%) have no electricity supply, 2 402 (10%) have no water supply and 23 562 (93%) do not have stocked and functioning libraries.

In South Africa, it remains rhetoric to talk of quality education without provision of adequate educational resources in all schools. Quality education involves a multiple of realities in a school environment and it is therefore multifaceted. Social and economic inequalities contribute to abject poverty in most remote and rural communities in Africa. The National Planning Commission (2011, 24) states that:

South Africa remains a highly unequal society where too many people live in poverty and too few work. The quality of school education for most black learners is poor. The apartheid spatial divide continues to dominate the landscape. A large proportion of young people feel that the odds are stacked against them. And the legacy of apartheid continues to determine the life opportunities for the vast majority. These immense challenges can only be addressed through a step change in the country's performance.

Writer 2015:1) affirms that “South Africa faces the ‘triple challenge’ of poverty, inequality and unemployment” which are interconnected factors which cause needy people to live in miserable conditions. In poor and developing countries in Africa, abject poverty remains an obstacle for the development of nations in all spheres. In high poverty stricken disadvantaged African communities, education is greatly affected. Various factors such as income, food and commodity are used to measure poverty levels in a particular country. In South Africa, mostly rural provinces such as Limpopo, Eastern Cape and KwaZulu-Natal are characterised by the high unemployment rates among their black youths. High unemployment levels in the disadvantaged rural communities culminate into abject poverty which is associated with social ills such as drugs, teenage pregnancy, prostitution, human trafficking and crime. Fengu (2017a, 8) stresses that “the persistence of inequality was an indictment on the education system’s failure to overcome past injustices, despite the amount of money South Africa spends on education.” Without adequate educational resources, schools particularly in the disadvantaged rural schools offer inferior quality education which Spaul (2015, 34) dubs it “poverty trap”. Owing to resource disparities, many schools particularly in the disadvantaged rural communities are poverty traps because they fail or struggle to produce competent learners who are able to filter through the education system and eventually get decent and well-paid jobs. Spaul (2015, 34) states that:

The poor quality of education that learners receive helps drive an intergenerational cycle of poverty where children inherit the social standing of their parents or caregivers, irrespective of their own abilities or effort. Recent assessments show that over the past decade there has been some progress at the grade 9 level, yet performance levels remain extraordinarily low.

With high unemployment and resultant high poverty levels in South Africa, “schooling for many rural children was disrupted because they were left to fend for themselves as their parents did not live with them.” (Fengu 2017b, 1) The National Planning Commission (2011, 1) states that:

Public spending on education has gone from being highly unequal on the basis of race under apartheid to being well targeted towards poor children. Despite these mainly positive trends, a far more resilient legacy from the past has been the low quality of education within the historically disadvantaged parts of the school system. This seriously constrains the ability of the education system to provide a pathway out of poverty for poor children.

There is a need therefore in poor and developing countries to improve the quality of education to break the poverty cycle. Dirks (2013, 1) affirms that “a proper education has the potential to increase the employability or income generating capacity of South Africa’s majority poor thereby enabling them to be employed or be entrepreneurs in their own right mitigating on the high inequality levels in South Africa.” Rakabe (2015/6, 105) states that:

Public ordinary schools are fundamental drivers of socio-economic development: if their funding and performance are inadequate or inequitable, the goals envisioned in the National Development Plan (NDP) cannot be realised. The NDP proposes to increase learner literacy and mathematics achievement levels, as well as to improve learner retention and completion rates to 80% by 2030 (NPC, 2011). Reaching the NDP targets will require far-reaching reforms and interventions, including increased parent involvement; teacher training and reskilling; improved curriculum; school management and accountability; and, most importantly, redirecting resources (human, infrastructure and funding) to areas with the greatest needs.

Spaull (2015, 34) states that:

Apartheid certainly left South Africa with a deeply divided education system, with low standards in most schools, which were poorly resourced, contrasted with ‘international’ standards in the well-resourced white schools. Further, apartheid left South Africa with a teaching force that is seriously under-trained. This has had devastating effects on the ability of teachers to make sense of, and implement reforms, particularly in relation to the curriculum since 1994. After multiple rounds of training and very little observable improvement in the classroom, it would not be far from the truth to argue that many South African teachers appear to be untrainable, or at least that their initial training (which for over 50% was prior to 1994) has not given them the foundation for professional development.

In South Africa, all black teachers who entered the teaching profession before 1994 were trained to teach bantu education which was derogatory and offensive to black masses. Under this Act, schools designated to subordinate groups (blacks, coloureds and Indians) were poorly resourced without libraries, laboratories and sports grounds. With high unemployment and poverty levels in the disadvantaged rural communities, the education was a mess. “The Bantu Education Act, passed in 1953, initiated one of the deadliest arcs of which Freda Tromp, writing in 1976, described as the ‘vicious circle of denial from which the African cannot escape’.” Kros (2010, 115). The effects and inheritance of bantu education particularly on South African black learners are appalling.

However, learners and teachers need sufficient learning and teaching support materials for curriculum-related activities. Since the inception of the new political dispensation in 1994, Limpopo province has been rocked by the scandals concerning non-delivery of textbooks in schools on time. There are many issues involved such as flawed tendering processes, late ordering and late delivering of textbooks to schools. News24 (2017, 1) states that:

In 2012, the province was embroiled in controversy when a court order declared that the non-delivery of textbooks to thousands of pupils was a failure by the provincial and national departments of education.

The Non Governmental Organisation (NGO) fighting for human rights such as access to education, Section 27, has taken the provincial Department of Basic Education (DBE) to court several times concerning non-delivery of textbooks to schools on time. Even this year, (2017),

some schools in the province still experience shortage of textbooks stalling teaching and learning endeavours to the detriment of the poor learners. Poor matric results in schools in the disadvantaged rural communities are a sequel that quality education is not yet taken seriously in this mostly rural province.

While learners need educational resources for assignments, homework and research projects, teachers need them for preparing and planning lessons. With wide-ranging educational resources particularly in the disadvantaged rural schools, lessons can be enriched, thought-provoking, stimulating and fulfilling. As the majority of schools in poor and developing countries lack well-equipped and functioning libraries, their provision is absolutely essential to address and redress inequalities and disproportions in the schooling sector in South Africa. Lonsdale (2003) asserts that there is a correlation or causal relationship between performance of the learners and provision of adequate educational resources in a school setting. It is apparent that poorly resourced schools struggle to improve the learner achievement and desired outcomes. However, in South Africa, the post-apartheid government repeatedly ignored the provision of educational resources such as libraries and laboratories in all schools with disastrous effects and consequences. Haycock (1995a, 1995b) as cited by Lonsdale (2003, 12) presents an overview of the evidence that links functional school libraries and learner achievement in schools. The key research findings in a range of pre-1990 studies show that:

- in schools with good libraries and the services of a school librarian students perform significantly better on tests for basic research skills;
- students perform significantly better in reading comprehension and in their ability to express effectively ideas in relation to their reading;
- more reading occurs when there is a school library;
- the guidance of a librarian appears to exert significant influence on student achievement in information-gathering;
- in schools with good libraries and full-time librarians, students perform better at higher levels in reading comprehension, and in knowledge and use of reference materials than students in schools with minimal or no library service;
- student achievement in reading, study skills and use of newspapers was significantly greater at seventh grade level in schools with professional librarians than in schools without them.

The preceding findings indicate the potential power of well-resourced and well-staffed school libraries on the learner achievement. However, in poor and developing African countries, governments lack political will to roll-out well-stocked and well-staffed libraries in all schools to improve the quality of education. Hell (2005, 4) states that:

In 1994, the first democratic election was held in South Africa. The new government started a process to transform the country from an unjust apartheid society to a democratic, non-racial and just society. The constitution is from 1997. The commitment to transformation was affirmed after the next two elections held in 1999 and in 2004. The country is new, but the old structures are lingering on. They have left deep imprints and are not easy to get rid of. Segregated and unequal education in the country in the first part of the 20th century and the Bantu Education, part of the racial segregation that the Nationalist Party government institutionalized from 1949, still hamper the development.

However, the NGO, Equal Education has attempted several times to sensitise the new government about the significance of diverse resources in all schools. Through their slogan, "One school, One library, One teacher-librarian", the NGO had organised marches throughout

the country to conscientise the government to roll-out effective and decent libraries and flushing toilets for all schools.

School Library Policy Challenges in South Africa

Policy is significant to ensure that all relevant stakeholders work towards achieving a common goal. Without a policy in a particular organisation or institution, conflicts and chaos reign because there is nothing tangible to guide the operations. A number of school library lobbyists such as Le Roux (2002), Hart and Zinn (2007), Du Toit and Stilwell (2012), Mojapelo (2014) and Hart and Zinn (2015) wrote extensively about the absence of a legislated school library policy and its implication on the resource provision on South African schooling system. Owing to its absence, library development initiatives are not taken seriously to improve the quality of education in this country which was once torn apart by the racial discrimination and apartheid. In her article, *School library policy in South Africa: where do we stand?*, Le Roux (2002, 112) asserts that:

The absence of national school library policy guidelines is of great concern to the school library profession as this has an adverse effect on the provision of school library services and curriculum reform initiatives in South Africa.

In his article, *A legislated school library policy: can functional school libraries be envisioned without one?*, Mojapelo (2015, 44) asserts that:

A legislated school library policy is a document authorised by parliament for a country to dispense an active, dynamic and well-resourced and functional LIS for all schools.

Lack of a legislated school library policy remains a stumbling block to resuscitate effective school library development initiatives by all the relevant stakeholders in South Africa (Mojapelo, 2014). A legislated school library policy by the government is indispensable to steer all initiatives and efforts by the relevant stakeholders to advance good and effective school LIS. Prior to 1994, to perpetuate inferior bantu education through Bantu Education Act (Act 53 of 1953), schools designated to black learners in the homelands were built without libraries resulting in low literacy skills for them. Schools in the disadvantaged rural communities were built by local community members without laboratories for research and experimentation as it was not bantu education's intention to produce black scientists and mathematicians. With demise of apartheid legislation in 1994, hopes were high that the new democratic government will take education seriously particularly in the disadvantaged rural schools which were mostly affected by the marginalisation and grossly under-funding during the apartheid era. A legislated school library policy is a key to develop and sustain a good LIS in all schools. This is even more true for South African schools where resource provision is based on apartheid foundations. A legislated school library policy is even more needed to direct and steer resource provision process in schools. However, in South Africa, development of a school library policy has been a stalled process implying that libraries are not yet given priority they deserve in the new South African school system. Reluctance on part of the government to commit herself through a legislated school library policy remains a hurdle to advance and champion the establishment and maintenance of vigorous, dynamic and innovative libraries in all schools if the quality of education is to be improved.

- ***The National Policy Framework for School Library Standards (1997)***

To transform the education system which was unequal and racially-based prior to 1994, the new democratic government introduced progressive and constructivist education model, Outcomes-Based Education (OBE) in January 1998. Mojapelo and Fourie (2014, 126), aver that:

OBE is a learner-centred approach to teaching and learning where the emphasis is on the achievement of learning outcomes (LOs) in various learning areas. It replaced the previous system in which the teaching methods tended to be teacher-centred. OBE emphasises the use of multimedia resources to enable learners to acquire knowledge, skills, attitudes, competencies, orientations and values which are the LOs of OBE. It is regarded as a resource-based method of teaching and learning.

Realising that OBE strand cannot be successfully implemented without access to wide-ranging educational resources, the then Minister of Education, Professor Kader Asmal developed a draft discussion document, the *National Policy Framework for School Library Standards (1997)* (Department of Education, 1997; Hell, 2005). School library lobbyists were hopeful that the document will advance a legislated school library policy to support and achieve LOs as stipulated by the OBE model. Taking socio-economic conditions of different communities in South Africa into consideration, the draft document gave many “alternatives” of the school library models to allow schools to choose “appropriate and suitable” ones for their schools. The document also proposed generic minimum standards for effective school library development. However, without approval of the South African parliament or legislature, the document was a guideline for the development of school libraries in the country. Consequently, the good intentions in the document could not be implemented by the schools and provinces because they had not been enacted and approved by the parliament or the legislature. Without an enactment and approval by the legislative authority or parliament, the document was just a mere discussion document, which lacked the mandate and credibility to force the government, provinces, schools and other role players to implement its good intentions.

However, the discussion document had emphasised the significance of well-resourced and functional school libraries in enhancing a learner-centred curriculum, progressive and constructivist teaching and learning approaches and strategies as embodied in OBE. It had also highlighted the significance of the plethora of educational resources to create an enabling and conducive environment for effective resource-based teaching and learning styles for learners, specifically to achieve the outcomes of the learner-centred curriculum (Hell, 2005). However, OBE model failed dismally in South Africa particularly in needy schools in rural communities, informal settlements and townships. In addition to array of contextual realities, lack of access to wide ranging information resources was one of the reasons the model had failed. Without adequate educational resources in all schools, teachers tended to use outmoded teaching methods, strategies and approaches directly and indirectly compromising attainment of learning outcomes by the learners. With a few (7%) public schools with well-stocked and well-staffed libraries and inadequate community libraries in all South African communities, the model was destined for a failure (Hart and Zinn, 2015). This document was followed by a series of other draft documents on school libraries.

- **The National Guidelines for School Library and Information Services (2012)**

In 2010, the first draft of the *National Guidelines for School Library and Information Services* (2010) was developed by the Department of Education. In 2012, the national Department of Basic Education published the revised document to provide guidelines on the provision of effective school LIS in all South African schools. It was distributed to schools, circuits and district offices in various formats, hard copies and CDs. It was also available online. The *National Guidelines for School Library and Information Services* (2012:1) states that:

These guidelines are intended to offer useful guidance to all role-players. They provide information and ideas that are fundamental to the provision of school library and information services for learners and teachers at schools, and they address a number of audiences who work with schools, including district and provincial education offices. In the development of these guidelines, the Department consulted, amongst others, the International Association of School Librarianship (IASL), the International Federation of Library Associations (IFLA) and the *School Library Manifesto* of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO), as well as the *National Library and Information Services Transformation Charter* of the Department of Arts and Culture (DAC), and the National Council of Library and Information Services (NCLIS). These guidelines therefore benefited from partners with appropriate experience in the provision and support of libraries.

Although the document supports the development of LIS in all South African schools, school library lobbyists such as Hart (2013) and Hart and Zinn (2015) had criticised the document for being a mere guideline. The document lacked mandate and credibility from the national government because it was not a legislated school library policy. Although the document indicates clearly roles and responsibilities of the various stakeholders to advance and champion effective development of school libraries, it is not mandatory because it not a policy and therefore not binding. In addition, the document is silent about crucial factors such as funding, infrastructure and appointment of dedicated staff for effective school libraries. Employing dedicated librarians, buying multimedia resources, housing resources and internet connectivity all need adequate funding. Unfortunately, the majority of poor schools in the disadvantaged rural communities lack adequate funds to implement most of these guidelines.

- **The Library and Information Services Transformation Charter (2014)**

The LIS Transformation Charter (2014) commissioned by the Department of Arts and Culture and the National Council for Library and Information Services provides an overview of LIS situation in South Africa. Chapter 3, sub-section 3.1 deals specifically with school libraries. The document emphasises the importance of “well-managed collections of learning resources” to support the curriculum accomplishments. *The LIS Transformation Charter* (2014, 49) states that:

Good school LIS are essential to the transformation of the South African education system, which aims to provide quality schools for *all* South African learners. Apartheid’s Bantu education calculatedly under-resourced the schools designated for black learners. If school libraries are deemed to be important for quality learning, then the principles of redress and equity enshrined in the South African Constitution and educational legislation mean that ways must be found to provide them.

With poor reading literacy, an array of educational resources is essential to all learners to address and overcome this anomaly. *The LIS Transformation Charter* (2014, 48) affirms that:

School libraries develop the reading literacy crucial for academic achievement and participation in a democracy. Teachers might teach children *how to* read but everyday access to attractive books in their home languages leads children to *enjoy* reading. The more they enjoy reading, the more they will read – and the better they will read. Internationally, reading ability has been shown to be a critical factor in academic performance and in keeping learners at school.

Without access to diverse reading materials in all schools, it is impossible for learners to develop critical reading skills, habits and culture essential for life-long learning.

- **South African Schools Act (No. 84 of 1996)**

The amended *South African Schools Act (No. 84 of 1996)* (2013, 5) stipulates that:

Since the democratic transition of 1994, the Department of Education has endeavored to redress the stark historical inequalities in the distribution of education resource inputs and outcomes. By 2006, the per capita spending on a white child had declined to 22 percent more than what is spent on a black child.

However, little has been done to deal with historical inequalities on education and provision of educational resources in particular in all schools. Resource provision remains unequal in the schooling system between historically advantaged and disadvantaged schools. After a string of court battles with the government, Equal Education's successful struggle with the South African government over the Norms and Standards Act was not in vain. The amended *South African Schools Act* (No. 84 of 1996) indicates that "all schools should have a library facility or media centre facility or library stocks." (Department of Basic Education 2013, 11; Department of Basic Education 2015, 11). Unfortunately for school library lobbyists, the Act makes no mention of staff and materials in terms of school library provision. However, Equal Education (2011b) estimates that more than R12 billion is required from the government coffers to provide all public schools with a decent, standardised, well-stocked and staffed school library. The amount quoted includes funds for library infrastructure (buildings), library materials, training and employing of a full-time librarian or administrator.

However, with nothing tangible, all pleas fell on deaf ears despite hopes and promises.

Problem Statement

Superior quality education is critical in any country to produce skilled, competent and knowledgeable learners. This is even true particularly in poor and developing countries where economies are not performing well and therefore struggling to grow. Irrespective of the educational paradigm, diverse educational resources are therefore critical in all schools to improve learner outcomes in particular and that of the quality of education in general. However, huge disparities still exist in the schooling system in South Africa regarding resource provision. Consequently, quality of education is compromised in the majority of the schools particularly in disadvantaged rural communities, informal settlements and townships. Schools in the disadvantaged rural communities battle to produce good results owing to lack of wide-ranging educational facilities and resources to support teaching and learning accomplishments. The National Planning Commission (2011, 1) states that:

A cross-country comparison of educational attainment reveals a peculiar pattern specific to South Africa. The rate of attainment of levels of education up until about 11 years is high in South Africa relative to other middle-income countries. Beyond 12 years of education, however,

South Africa's attainment rate is amongst the lowest of these countries. As far as access to education is concerned, it would therefore appear that South Africa is doing well throughout most of the primary and secondary phases and poorly thereafter.

Equal Education (2017a, 1) states that "schools which historically served black learners have remained dysfunctional and unable to teach learners how to read, write and calculate at the appropriate level." International and local standardised tests, the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) and Annual National Assessment results, respectively, indicate that the literacy levels of learners in South Africa are disastrous. South African Vision (2014, 1) affirms that "the level and quality of education in South Africa is one of the worst in the world." In addition to other contextual realities and factors, adequate allocation and provision of educational resources is critical in all schools to improve the quality and standard of education. The significance of well-resourced and well-staffed libraries in all schools therefore cannot be over-emphasised. Various stakeholders have a significant role to play to guarantee effective library development initiatives in all schools to improve quality of education in all South African schools.

Purpose of the Study

Well-equipped and staffed libraries are critical in all schools to boost learner performance which is deteriorating particularly in most disadvantaged rural communities in African countries. Owing to disparities in resource provision in the schooling system even in the post-apartheid era, the majority of South African learners struggle to read, write and calculate at appropriate level. Quality education remains a nightmare particularly in many schools in the disadvantaged rural communities. The political will from the national government is critical to advance and champion decent, standardised and dynamic libraries to improve and better learner outcomes in schools. With poor quality education in the disadvantaged rural communities, informal settlements and townships in South Africa, the purpose of the study was to highlight the roles various stakeholders can play in championing and advancement of effective libraries in all South African schools to boost learner achievement in particular and that of the quality of education in general.

Methodology: A Literature Review

The research method used to gather information regarding quality education, library resource provision in schools and its impact, school library challenges, library policy making process and various roles of stakeholders was a literature review. Key findings and recommendations of this conceptual article are also based on literature review. A review of the existing and relevant literature is a key component of academic research (Bryman, 2012). The literature review for this article included both international and local documents such as books, articles, theses, dissertations and e-resources. Local documents were reviewed and analysed to highlight school library development initiatives and roles of stakeholders in South Africa. The international literature such as the IFLA/UNESCO (2015) were reviewed for benchmarking purposes.

School Library Development Initiatives in South Africa

Although the national government has a core responsibility to come up with and implement a legislated school library policy to ensure equal provision of educational resources in all

schools, other stakeholders also have a pivotal role to play to advance and champion effective school library development initiatives.

Roles of the Various Stakeholders

To advance effective school library development initiatives, there is an immense need for various stakeholders to take their active roles concerning the matter. There is also a need for stakeholders to channel their synergies for effective school library development initiatives.

National Government

According to the South African Bill of Rights, everyone has the right to basic education. The government therefore shoulders a huge responsibility to build enough schools and to provide enough professionally qualified and knowledgeable teachers for everyone to be able to go to school and obtain a proper education. The post-apartheid national government has a responsibility to allocate educational resources and facilities to guarantee superior quality education to all learners irrespective of the socio-economic backgrounds. Equitable allocation and provision of facilities and resources to all schools is significant to entrench the notion of free and high quality education. With inheritance of the legacy of the apartheid rule (1948 - 1994), as already alluded to, schools designated for previously marginalised groups (blacks, coloureds and Indians) need adequate libraries and laboratories. The government therefore has an obligation to ensure that all schools have adequate resources to improve the education standards, learner outcomes and quality of education to produce skilled, competent and knowledgeable youths to work hard to increase world economy. In South Africa, owing to the apartheid education system prior to 1994, schooling system is still characterised by inequalities and disparities in the provision of educational resources. However, Department of Basic Education (2013, 5) reiterates that:

Equality of educational opportunity is one of the principles enshrined in our Constitution. The Department of Education (DoE) interprets this principle as entailing equity of both education resource inputs and thus education outcomes. The historical heritage of South Africa's Education, Training and Skills Development System (ETSDS) has been one of institutionalised inequalities. Just before the democratic transition in 1994, the per capita spending on a white child was 350 percent more than on a black child. Consequently, the distribution of key resource inputs that are known to facilitate teaching and learning were skewed.

In South Africa, owing to inheritance of apartheid, educational transformation is essential to deal with physical infrastructure in all schools. In addition to adequate classrooms, libraries and laboratories are critical particularly in the disadvantaged rural communities for needy learners to access information resources for homework, assignments and projects. The government has a responsibility to provide a legislated library policy which deals specifically with burning issues such as funding, staffing and infrastructure in schools. Different authors give different definitions of the concept "policy". Political scientist, Friedrich CJ defines policy as:

A proposed course of action of a person, group or government within a given environment providing obstacles and opportunities which the policy was proposed to utilize and overcome in an effort to reach a goal or realise an objective or a purpose (Anderson 2000, 4).

However, Le Roux (2002, 112) defines policy as:

A definite course or method of action selected from among alternatives and in light of given conditions to guide and determine present and future decision and also: a high-level overall plan embracing the general goals and acceptable procedures especially of a governmental body.

The preceding definitions have some things in common: course of action, goal and entity such as a person or government. In South Africa, the government through the parliament or legislature has a responsibility to take action and formulate, legislate and finally implement a library policy which will guide and steer library development initiatives in all schools to achieve a particular goal – to improve the quality of education. In poor and developing countries, a school library policy needs to offer many alternatives to accommodate all stakeholders. Policymakers therefore need to be vigilant about prevailing different socioeconomic conditions and circumstances, such as those found in various South African schools. A legislated school library policy in South Africa is expected to have approved school library models and minimum standards to guide effective provision of library resources in all schools (Department of Basic Education, 2012; Department of Education, 1997).

Legislation is defined as an “enacted or approved statement of policy, a proposal, statute or a bill” (Birkland 2011, 263). Statutory laws or bills that are presented by the parliament or legislature are approved and signed by the president, governor or minister of a particular department (Birkland, 2011). Therefore, the parliament or legislature is responsible for approving policies after they have been signed by the authoritative body. Cabinet ministers can also sign and approve policies affecting their respective departments. Therefore, through the national DBE, the government has a responsibility to formulate, legislate and promulgate a national school library policy and to ensure that it is implemented in all schools. There are various steps in public policy making process, however, the author decided only on the following:

- **Identification and Definition of the Problem or Agenda Setting**

According to the Makumbe (2001, 4), “the questions to be answered pertain to what the problem or need is, whether it affects an individual citizen, household, a section of a society or the whole society, and the number of people who perceive it to be a problem.” With poor quality education and low reading literacy levels in South Africa, all learners need equitable access to diverse resources and reading materials. The government needs to take a decisive action to try to address this anomaly. Well-stocked and staffed libraries in all schools cannot be overemphasised. Dye (2013, 33) indicates that “the power to decide what will be a policy issue is crucial to the policy making process.” With South African schooling system still characterised by inadequate resource provision in all schools, quality of education is affected which in turn affects the whole society. Therefore the issue of educational resources needs to be “discussed and placed on the agenda of national decision making.” (Dye 2013, 33). Buying in from the community members is extremely important as education is a national priority and societal issue. Various mass media such as television, radio and newspapers can be used to disseminate information on this agenda setting. Inputs from community members are needed to involve them. Interest groups and other relevant stakeholders on school libraries need to be invited during agenda setting for their inputs.

- **Development of Solution to a Problem**

After the problem has been identified and defined, policy proposals need to be developed to try to come up with a solution to address it adequately. The president and the executive office need to take a lead. Various other role players such as interest groups need to be identified and invited for their inputs towards a solution (Drye, 2013). Members of School Libraries and Youth Services Interest Group (SLYSIG) of Library and Information Service Association of South Africa (LIASA) can be invited for their inputs.

- **Legitimation and Budgeting**

At this stage, an authoritative body such as a parliament selects a proposal and enacted it into a law and becomes a legislated policy (Drye, 2013). Legitimation is the “process of ensuring support for the proposed solution, identifying the groups, organisations and individual in support of a preferred solution, and how that support could be maintained”. Financial and human resources are determined at this stage to achieve the proposed goal. Sufficient resources are critical to meet the perceived needs. Adequate budgeting is critical to accomplish the proposed or intended goal. In South Africa, adequate budget from the national government is essential to roll-out well-resourced and staffed libraries in all schools.

- **Adoption and Implementation**

When adequate resources have been allocated, a policy can now be adopted and implemented. A particular model needs to be identified to implement the policy. Policy instruments such as funding, capacity building, professional development, reorganisation and transformation are used to support policy initiatives (Anderson, 2000). In South Africa, decent and standardised library buildings are needed in most schools. While an adequate budget is critical to provide all schools with well-stocked and functional libraries, sufficient manpower such as teacher-librarians and school library facilitators are required to successfully implement school library policy. This has huge financial implications. The national government needs an adequate budget to implement a school library policy and to roll-out libraries in all schools.

- **Policy Evaluation**

After a certain period, the impact of the implemented school library policy needs to be evaluated on the performance of the learners. Drye (2013, 34) states that “reporting outputs of government programs” is essential to assess the impact. Learner outcomes specifically need to be evaluated to measure the impact of the policy on the provision of educational resources in schools. Through this evaluation, changes and reforms with regard to the policy can be proposed and implemented.

Provincial Governments

From the legislated national school library policy, the provincial governments have a responsibility to develop their own school library policies and to ensure that they are effectively implemented in all schools. Alignment of the provincial policy with the national one is crucial to avoid misunderstandings.

District or Circuit Offices

Education officials at district and circuit levels have a responsibility to ensure that the policy is implemented in all schools. With qualifications and skills they have, they can run workshops to empower and develop teacher-librarians professionally. They can also monitor and visit schools to support teacher-librarians. They can also organise events to promote effective use of library resources. They can also organise exhibitions for schools to select and acquire appropriate and relevant resources for their schools.

Schools

The principal, as head of the school, has a responsibility to ensure that a library policy at school level is drawn and it is aligned with national and provincial policies. He or she also has a responsibility to ensure that policies such as a school library policy are implemented. A library period needs to be on the general time-table to ensure that learners take turns in visiting and interacting with information resources. Security needs to be tightened in all schools to prevent burglary and vandalism of educational resources (Mojapelo 2016).

Parents and Their Communities

Africa Institute of South Africa (2012, 3) indicates that “there are many good reasons why parents should be involved in their child’s education.” All community members therefore have a pivotal role to play to enhance development of effective libraries in schools. As “the greatest ‘resource’ any classroom teacher can utilise”, through School Governing Bodies (SGBs), parents in various communities need to come together to scout educational resources to enhance the quality of the education of their children. Mojapelo and Dube (2017, 228) reiterate that:

Community members therefore have a crucial role in donating educational resources to poor and needy schools for the benefit of the learners. Community-based organisations need to be established to work collaboratively with schools to scout library resources to ensure the quality of the education improves.

In South Africa, although many parents have never attended schools themselves, they are not off hook concerning the provision of educational resources at schools. This is particularly true in the disadvantaged rural communities where most schools lack well-resourced and well-staffed libraries. “The more parents participate in the schooling of their children, in a sustainable way, at every level: in advocacy, decision making and oversight roles, as fundraisers and boosters, as volunteers and para-professionals, and as home teachers, the better for learner achievements (Africa Institute of South Africa 2012, 3).

Community-based organisations such as Equal Education in Cape Town can be established in all communities to work together with schools to scout resources (Silbert and Bitso, 2015). Private sector companies can also be approached for donation of educational resources. Community members can assist schools by donating materials such as books, magazines, journals, newspapers, dictionaries and encyclopaedias. Retired teacher-librarians can approach schools to offer free services. Elderly members of the communities need to approach schools to initiate story telling activities for learners. Africa Institute of South Africa (2012, 3) states that:

Parents who are well informed on policies and resource allocation in the education sector, and involved in decision making regarding their children, can exert considerable influence and contribute solutions to the challenges in the education system. Involved communities are able to articulate local school needs, hold officials accountable and mobilise local resources to fill gaps when government response is not adequate.

Community Libraries

Given a dramatic shortage of decent, standardised, well-stocked and well-staffed school libraries in South African schooling system, community libraries where available need to work collaboratively with schools in meeting the information needs of the teachers and learners. With adequate educational resources from the community libraries, disadvantaged rural schools can work effectively towards the improvement of the learner outcomes which is currently a nightmare in many black schools (Mojapelo and Dube, 2017). The LIS Transformation Charter (2014, 49) states that:

As South Africa builds its school LIS systems in the next few years, the connections between the staff in the school and other role-players in the wider world of information and knowledge, like public librarians, will be crucial.

Community libraries therefore need to work cooperatively with schools to augment few relevant resources in their collections. Block loans can be arranged between schools and community libraries. In addition to assisting learners with homework, assignments and projects, community libraries can donate library resources to schools. As non-formal education entities, community libraries need to regularly conduct story telling sessions which may arouse learners to read and to love books.

Universities

As institutions of higher learning, universities need be to initiative and work together with schools concerning resource provision. Mojapelo and Dube (2017, 228) state that “there is a need for university libraries to support and cater for the curriculum needs of the teachers and learners in local communities due to few schools with well-resourced and functional libraries.” University libraries can donate library resources to schools in disadvantaged rural communities. In addition, owing to shortage of adequate educational resources particularly in schools in the disadvantaged rural communities, university libraries in close proximity with those schools need to allow teachers and learners to have access to their information resources. Universities can also assist in the professional capacity building and empowerment of teacher-librarians.

Private Sector Companies

With a huge backlog on the provision of educational resources in all schools, the government cannot shoulder this responsibility alone. Private sector companies have a critical part to play to advance effective school library development initiatives in all South African schools. Private sector companies can assist schools by erecting mobile classrooms to serve as libraries. They can also assist in donating resources such as tables, computers, chairs, cupboards and shelves. They can also assist in hiring library assistants by paying them a stipend. Competitions are essential to encourage teachers and learners to participate fully in library events (Mojapelo, 2014). Private sector companies have a role to play by donating gifts and presents to the participants. Book companies can donate

materials to the schools to develop libraries. Educational officials need to liaise with private sector companies when organising library events.

Summary

Quality education is critical in a particular country to produce skilled, competent and knowledgeable learners. In poor and developing countries, this is particularly true because of a staggering and declining economy. Even in the post-apartheid South Africa, the schooling system is still characterised by enormous inequalities and disparities in the provision of adequate educational resources. The low reading literacy levels of the South African learners is a sequel to this impasse. Without adequate educational resources, it is impossible to acquire reading, writing and calculating skills at appropriate levels. With dilapidated structures, lack of libraries and laboratories, insufficient and underqualified teachers in most schools, quality teaching and learning accomplishments are compromised. The national government has a pivotal role to formulate, legislate and finally implement a school library policy to roll-out decent, standardised, innovative and dynamic libraries for all schools to improve learner performance and quality of education in general. In addition to the government, other relevant stakeholders also have a role to play to advance and champion effective library development initiatives in all schools.

Conclusions

All learners in all communities deserve a better education. Owing to apartheid legislation prior to 1994, there are huge inequalities and disproportions with regard to resource provision in all schools. Since inception of democracy in 1994, nothing much has changed in the majority of the schools in rural communities, informal settlements and townships. The study concludes that if various stakeholders can play their active roles, all schools can have well-equipped and well-staffed libraries to improve learner performance.

Recommendations

Learner performance particularly in disadvantaged communities can improve when learners are exposed to a plethora of educational resources. With adequate resources in all schools, reading, writing and numeracy skills of the learners may improve drastically. The study recommends that various stakeholders need to play their active roles to advance and champion effective and vibrant school libraries in all schools.

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