



AN APPRAISAL OF SPECIAL LIBRARY SERVICES AS A NECESSITY FOR SPECIAL EDUCATION IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

This paper argues that environmental education can play a vital role in the Nigeria's quest for sustainable development. Constraints on the introduction of environmental education in schools were identified and the

Keywords

Services, Special, Education, Necessity, Appraisal ways to overcome these constraints were proposed. It was concluded that ideas such as natural resources conservation,

INTRODUCTION

It is well known that libraries acquire process, preserve, organize and disseminate information to its targeted readers. Consequently we have different types of libraries, which include private, school. Public, academic and special libraries. Special library, therefore as one of the types of libraries, is categorized according to the nature of its clients, collection, and staff operating the library, method of operation and lastly the aims and objectives of establishing the library. It is the type of library established to serve certain categories of users with special materials

*pollution, erosion, issues are too big to be outside the school
desertification and neglected within and system.
other environmental*

for special researchers. Despite all the problems relating to the progress of libraries generally, special libraries in Nigeria still play great roles in the development of special education in Nigeria. Special education, as defined by Kirk (1986:51), is an aspect of education, which applies to handicapped and gifted children. Such education necessitate special facilities including; special library, special laboratories special lecture theatre etc.

THE CONCEPT OF SPECIAL LIBRARY

The concept of a special library has its root as far back as the early 19th century (Answorth, 1979:5) and he perceived special library as one which is established to obtain and exploit specialized information for the private advantage of the organization which provide its financial support. To qualify as a special library, certain conditions have to be fulfilled. These conditions include proper handling of materials which must be special to match the needs of its clients, the library to be part of the organization, the collection to reflect the subject area of the establishing body, the personnel of the library should be able to interpret the resources/collection, the readers should be accessible to the resources, activities or services to be provided should be on the basis of the organization's needs and the financial capabilities and finally the size should accommodate the users conveniently.

From the foregoing, it can be seen that effective library service for educational programmes has a considerable effect on teaching and learning generally and special education in particular. This is because, when relevant materials (printed or non-printed) and adequately provided, production will be enhanced and effective.

To conclude, therefore, a special library can be regarded as department responsible for the acquisition, ordering, indexing and distribution (dissemination) of recorded knowledge directly concerned with the interest of its patrons. It is different from other libraries in terms of collection, accommodation and clientele.

APPRAISAL OF SPECIAL LIBRARIES IN NIGERIA

Special libraries in Nigeria mostly find it difficult to function effectively due to lack of adequate fund to purchase current information (NCCE, 2001.5). They previously depended on gifts exchange and special donation to survive. They also lack special infrastructure modern accommodation, equipment and up-to date information sources. Presently according to Adedigba (1992:1), there are about 350 special libraries in Nigeria today. The major ones among these include agricultural, medical and law libraries numbering up to 220 located in various research institutions, teaching hospitals, college of medicine, law courts, ministries of justices and other government parastatals.

The factors that led to the establishment and development of these libraries therefore include the following:

- The need for specialized information
- Inability of other libraries to meet the specialized needs of corporate bodies
- Desire to have accurate and current information within each organization
- Desire to have exclusive information within each organization (Utor, 1998, P. 20).

Consequently, the distinguishing characteristics of these libraries are their specialized clientel, personnel information, information resources, and

objectives of establishing the library. And for more clarification, the distinguishing characteristics are as follows:

Collection:

Most of special libraries particularly in research institution contains major national collection (Adeniyi, 1997, 1). Many of them pose rare materials, which cannot be found elsewhere. Most of their collections were obtained as a result of exchanges, gifts and donations, and the collection were mostly restricted in close access for the use of only members of the establishing body. As a result, the materials of these libraries are scanty in nature and hardly available in multiple copies.

Services

All special libraries provide customized services to their parent organization. Such services are pro-active and not passive. These services therefore, are always in anticipation not only in response to the need of their users. Such services, for the purpose of efficiency must be timely accurate and to the satisfaction of its members. Consequently, such services offered by special libraries are mostly qualitative and evaluative to the financing (organization) body. And the services include reference services, bibliographic services, documentary services, selective dissemination of information (SDI) and current awareness services (CAS).

Staffing

Formerly sub-professional staff managed most of the Nigerian special libraries. However, presently qualified libraries are managing them. As a result, there has been a corresponding improvement in the quality of the services by the special libraries in Nigeria (Kedem, 1993:15).

Funding

Almost all the major special libraries in Nigeria obtain their funds from government, especially state and federal governments. In addition, they generate fund from local charges, photography services, over due charges, charges for conferences, bindery services, audio visual services, production of newsletter/magazines, calendar, computer training, consultancy services and lastly aids from non governmental organizations. This is in line with the political and economic motives behind the supply of aid to developing countries (Sharpies, 1994:6).

SPECIAL LIBRARY AS A PRE-REQUISITE FOR SPECIAL EDUCATION

Within the context of the write-up, the concepts and types of special libraries have been discussed. And to see special library as a requisite for special education can only be vivid when the concept of special education is discussed.

Varying forms of definitions of special education do exist but very few may be mentioned. According to Mba (1991:2), special education is “an area within the framework of general education that provides”.

- i. Appropriate facilities
- ii. Specialized materials
- iii. Teachers with specialized training for children considered gifted handicapped.

Another definition by Adeniyi (1997:39) explains special education as that “education of children and adults who have learning difficulties because of different sorts of handicapping. This definition manifests that special education takes on the function of developing an individual to the maximum of his ability. The individual can later help in developing the nation by using his ability.

In order to achieve this aim, special education requires special facilities (including libraries). Such libraries can only be special clientele. For

effective special education, therefore, establishment of a library is very necessary with certain requirements and facilities. Such facilities include: library accommodation structured to be accessible to a wheel chair-bound students, braille machines, telephone, car moulds, hearing aids, computers, tape recorders, manual typewriters and interpreters preferably the library personnel. These facilities play vital role in library operation particularly in teaching/learning strategies in general for all categories of students under special training.

PROBLEMS ASSOCIATED WITH SPECIAL LIBRARIES

Among the problems facing libraries in Nigeria generally and with particular reference to special libraries include the following as ascertained by Ibennewo, (1997);

- 1) The major problem of special library is lack of adequate fund to purchase or procure necessary materials
- 2) Availability of foreign exchange must be part of the problem of special libraries in Nigeria as most of their materials cannot be obtained in this country.
- 3) Most of special libraries obtain some of their collection via donation and this creates problems of duplication and unnecessary occupation of spaces.
- 4) Lack of current books and journals.
- 5) Lack of qualified personnel to man the libraries, etc.

These few problems mentioned must affect the operation of special libraries. Looking into these problems the following recommendations may alleviate all or some of the problems. Thus recommendations include:

- 1) Allocation of enough fund to discharge operation effectively
- 2) Reliance on donation needs to be reduced or discarded.
- 3) Special libraries need to procure current books and other materials.
- 4) It is necessary library materials and be computer literate.

CONCLUSION

The total number of special libraries in Nigeria is not known. But the existing ones in the country came into existence to serve specialized body of users within a definite subject area. The information facilities are designed to provide access to a specialized information within reach and established to meet the needs of specialized clients. That is to say, special education can only be effective when there is special library with special materials for special information dissemination.

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