UNIVERSITY OF UYO

UNITY, LEARNING & SERVICE

NIGERIA

# JOURNAL OF RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT IN EDUCATION

## (JORDE)

### (SPECIAL EDITION ON LIBRARY AND LIBRARY RESOURCES)

## Vol. III, No. 1, 2005

# STRATEGIES FOR MAXIMIZING THE POTENTIALS OF THE SCHOOL LIBRARY

## FELICIA E. ETIM

## ABSTRACT

*The world of children is a world of curiosity, ecstasy, fantasy, uncertainty, queries and adventure, and the school library is where they satisfy their curiosity, get answers to their queries, and discover themselves and the world around them by being connected to information, interacting with information and utilising information. This paper sets out to help the child accomplish the above. The first part offers operational definitions of the key concept, the second part looks at the school library, its objectives and potentials while the last explores tactics for optimising the latent capabilities of the school library to ensure life-long education.*

## INTRODUCTION

To put this topic "Strategies for Maximizing the Potentials of the School Library" in perspective, one needs to define certain concepts like **potentials, strategy** and **maximize**. Roget A - Z Thesaurus (1995) and Webster's New World Thesaurus (1990) give as synonyms to the word potential the following - capacity, possible, ability, latent, the goods, promising and inherent while Thorndike (1979) defines the word potential as "that which is existing and is capable of being developed or used". Hornby (1998) sees it as "that which can or may in future develop into something" or "expressing possibility by the use of". From the above, this paper adopts the word potentials as meaning " the inherent capability of the School Library or the dormant possibility of the school library expressed in its use. Synonyms for strategy include - design, scheme, tactics, programme of activity, working plan, methodology, approach, maneuvering, procedure etc. By definition, strategy is "the process of planning something or carrying out a plan in a skillful way"(Hornby: 1998). It is also defined as a plan designed for a particular purpose which in this case has to do with a plan for school library effectiveness. Synonyms of Maximum according to Chapman (1995) are highest, uppermost, greatest and best. To maximize means to increase as much as possible, "to make the best use of something".

## Potentials

From the discussion above, this paper adopts the word potential as meaning the "inherent capability" of the School Library or as a matter of fact, the dormant possibility of the School Library expressed in its use.

## Strategy:

Synonyms for strategy include -- design, scheme, tactics, programme of activity, working plan, methodology, approach, maneuvering, procedure etc.
By definition, strategy is the process of planning something or carrying out a plan in a skilful way" (Hornby: 1998). It is also defined as a plan designed for a particular purpose which in this case has to do with plan designed for school Library effectiveness.

## Maximize

Synonyms of maximum according to Chapman (1995) are highest, uppermost, greatest and best. To maximize means to increase as much as possible, "to make the best use of something".

From the foregone, the paper's topic can be seen as that which requires a look at the tactics involved in making the best or uppermost use of the school Library or the maneuvering of the capability of the school library to have the best out of it.

This topic is very timely in our days when the function of the school library has changed from that of a store-house learning centre and library service an auxiliary service; to a centre for independent study where the learner acquires a major share of his experience through... Librarian motivated studies (Udoh: 1998). This is summarized with the inscription of a typical school library poster which reads – we EDUCATE, ENLIGHTEN & ENTERTAIN; and we INFORM, INSTRUCT AND INSPIRE.

## The School Library

Traditionally, the school library is a library that is in the primary or secondary school whose collection is meant to serve the young (Onifade & Olanlokun: 1990). It is also defined by Ogunmilade (1995) as an organized collection of books and other materials placed in a school for the use of teachers and pupils. He also refers to it as a laboratory where children may work alone or in groups to develop independent thinking and effective reading habits. Fafunwa (1992) defined school library as the heart of the school around which all school programmes revolve. Today's school library is indeed a place for all categories of children because in it, with a combination of print and non-print resources, the

slow learner/ reader gains confidence, the average increases his abilities and the gifted child finds challenges and stimulation. It provides opportunities for independent study and self - directed enquiry .As an integral part of the educational system, the school library has the following objectives.

## Objectives of the School Library

Libraries are the collectors and preservers of all the knowledge that people have accumulated throughout the ages, their function being to organize and share that knowledge. Specifically, they are meant to:
- Provide materials and services most appropriate and meaningful for students' growth and development.
- Provide for a wide range of individual differences; taking each child from where he is and helping him to grow.
- Provide experience through its resources for children to appreciate the past, comprehend the world of today, and intelligently prepare for the future
- Provide opportunity for the child to develop himself through the use of these resources.
- Ensure that the best materials are available to supplement classroom teaching.
- Improve the literary tastes of the child.

- The potentials for achieving the above are available in the school Library or media/resource centre as they are now called.

## Potentials of the School Library

The school Library is capable of making the child develop the following as highlighted by Ibrahimah (1986)
- Familiarity with the structures of knowledge and not mere facts
- Skills at adapting the tools of learning and the structures of disciplines to new tasks
- Possession of different learning strategies
- Being well equipped with basic learning skills (e.g. observing, reading, listening being able to understand non-verbal communication).
- Being well equipped with basic intellectual skills (e.g. reasoning, critical thinking and interpreting data)
- Being equipped with skills at using learning devices (e.g. print, mass media, computer)
- Skills at identifying their own learning needs.

# STRATEGIES FOR MAXIMIZING THE POTENTIALS OF THE SCHOOL LIBRARY

The concept of school library is anchored on three basic variables – service, instruction and activity. These shall form the strata under which the strategies for effective school Library shall be discussed in this paper.

## SERVICE

To take a discourse on service, three pertinent questions are to be answered. These are:
- Who constitute the clientele ?
- With what should they be served?
- How should they be served?

Basically the school library serves the child and the teacher.

### The child:

Serving the child entails knowing who the child is, what the child likes and what he hates. The summary of it all was given by Ruskin (2004) who said "give the child a little love and you get a great deal back". Obinaju (2000) defines the child as a young person especially between infancy and youth. To serve the child effectively, the librarian and other staff need to understand the following characteristics of the child as listed by Nkang and Eneh (2001).
- the child is a unique individual and no two children are the same;

Serving the above-discussed set of clientele requires a lot of flexibility, creativity and understanding.

### The Teacher

Service to teachers is meant to complement the curricula. This entails that the Librarian must maintain good working relationship with the teachers who may not initially understand what the duties of the Librarian are outside the pre misconceived book keeping. The Librarian also needs to be on instructional partnership with teachers to develop assignment, which provide learning experiences by serving as a link between the Library resources and relevant materials. Up-to-dateness is very crucial to today's teaching with the rapid metamorphosis of knowledge. It is the duty of the librarian and other personnel to help teachers keep up-to date by notifying them of innovations and useful new materials in their subject fields. With what should the clientele be served?

## Resources – Hints on Choice

School media centres are for learning and should be literacy-based. They combine printed materials with non-print materials which are called media. The present day media centres should contain a wide variety of resources like: text books, reference books, fiction, newspapers, and magazines / journals, maps and globes, film strips, slides / transparencies, videos / films, radio / tape recorders, puzzles, games, charts, flashcards, toys, science models and computer. Let's discuss some.

## Flash Cards / Puzzles/ Audio Tapes

The secret to independent reading is cards. Flash cards are important sources of catching attention. They captivate children's interest in reading and consequently knowing about the world around them. Puzzles stir up children's thinking and reasoning faculties. Audio tapes provide excitement and help children develop attention.

## Shoebox Libraries

With guided reading through Shoebox Libraries, children can learn and practice to become independent readers. Shoebox Libraries provide materials such as wordless books, some with captions that children can talk about to build story meaning. These discussions lead to an extension of concepts and content. They also contain books with simple story line with subject matter and concepts that are familiar to the children. An example is "Country Mouse and City Mouse".

## Reading Discovery

Whether children are exploring nature, celebrating or studying animals, space and so on, they need books full of child- centred materials waiting to be discovered. RD books are designed to help children gain confidence. These little books combine quality illustrations, subtle humour and appealing looks with control that guarantees success e.g. 'Lunch at the Zoo"

## Lexile Libraries

Lexile books provide a positive approach for matching books to readers. They offer a step by step progression toward reading fluency, making children begin with books they can handle comfortably and move with confidence to the next selection.

## Sprint Plus

These are also called "Levelled Books for Intervention". As the name implies, they are designed to help the struggling reader, by intermediating grades pupils can read and want to read and what they should be able to read. In other words,

sprint plus or levelled books move below –level readers beyond their present reading levels.

## Chills and Thrills

These encourage the brave to become braver and the fearful to become brave.

## Wiggle Works /Entertainment Software

These are books and technology that help emerging readers develop fluency, confidence and control. In this Infotech World, we need to move children's reading from just print and AV media to computers. So the school library should be provided with edutainment software and Electronic books that will captivate children; maturate them to read, listen and speak. Wiggle works helps children to build confidence and makes it easy to observe, monitor and support each child.

This is the guideline for the distribution of school library stock
Fig. 1: Guidelines for distribution of stock

| No. | STOCK | Percentage |
|-----|-------|------------|
| 1. | General Reference | 8% |
| 2. | Non-fiction | 60% |
| 3. | AV materials | 15% |
| 4. | Periodicals | 2% |
| 5. | Professional materials | 1% |
| 6. | Total | 100% |

Adapted from Ogunmilade (1995)

## Furniture

The furniture for children's library should be such that the children can use easily with desks, tables, shelves, chairs being at convenient height.

## Environmental Stimuli

The first and most relevant consideration for serving the school Library clientele is creating an environment that can stimulate the child to personal reading and research. This serves as a continuous urge to use the school Library. Denga (1988) states that "the creation of a favourable environment for learning is the basic function of our education system". Environmental stimuli includes "occasional noise time" as against the perpetual inhibiting SILENCE. The librarians' and other staff's friendly and understanding attitude make the school library fun. Physically, a bright, cheerful atmosphere of the reading room invites

use. Therefore, pictures and well decorated walls form part of the atmosphere of a school library.

## INSTRUCTION

A school library no matter how rich its resources, becomes dormant and useless without the skills of accessing information and knowledge of utilizing what resources for what information. Hence the need for library education with the Librarian at the heart of the matter acting as a catalyst (Ibrahimah: 1986).

It is the responsibility of the Librarian to mount first of all user education programmes for the teaching and administrative staff and particularly for the children to ensure proper exploitation of all forms of resources in the school library. Awareness and enlightenment programmes should also be organised to educate the clientele of the school library on the nature, format and methods of handling and utilizing information. For effective running of the library use regulations should also be given and explained, especially the rationale behind each, to the school library clientele.

Other programmes include:
- providing individual guidance in the selection of reading, viewing and listening materials
- providing individual instruction in the location and use of information materials
- giving book talks, multimedia presentations, puppet shows and story hours to classes
- teaching lessons in library research skills especially from the upper primary classes in consonance with class needs
- providing patrons with alternative sources of information within and outside the library/information centre and
- manning effectively the I T resources for information dissemination.

## ACTIVITIES

School media centres are centres of activities. They are places where the learner is brought to meet with learning. Some of the strategies that make for life long learning which Moen (1998) tagged "learning ingredients", are authorship, co-operative learning, games, comprehension, listening lab, dramatization and so on.

### Co-operative Learning Strategy - Reading Aloud

Reading aloud brings literature alive, helping children to understand characters and story action. This is a reading – enhancement -- and-recovery programme. In this programme, a higher class child is made to read aloud to a lower class.

This is very fascinating. This adds to the number of books each pupil interacts with and also enforces reading habit in older children. This cross age activity should be done with comics or tongue twisters. The important thing here is co-operation not competition.

## Games Strategy – Black -Out Blocks

This is a close reading activity that teaches children to use syntactic and semantic language cues to construct meaning during the reading process. You do this by first blocking out words with strips; then leave a beginning letter and word length to be guides. Pupils are then made to supply the missing word above the block out areas. In small groups they are later made to compare their words with the original text.

## Synectics Strategy – Job Banks

In this strategy, children are made to " play" with comparisons or analogies to expand their thinking. Job banks help to stimulate pupils' curiosity, awareness and understanding of different occupations and professions. Plots of books can enable children identify occupations associated with any of the plots e.g.

Surveyor:           The Little House
Lawyer:             Why Monkeys Look  a Little Like Men
Teacher:            Helen Keller
Politician:          Martin Luther King Jr.
Engineer:           J. J. and the Washing Machine

Children are made to read other books and add their own professions to the list. This way, the reading culture is developed as well as creates job awareness.

## Comprehension Strategy – SWBS (Plot Chart)

This strategy sharpens pupils' comprehension skills and their writing skills too. Children are taught to decode the letters as shown below and  relate them to a story.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| S | - Somebody | – Chicken Licken, Henny Penny, Cocky Locky etc |
| W | - Wanted | - wanted to tell the king that the sky was falling down |
| B | - But | - but Foxy Loxy tricked them to its  den and they ate them up for dinner. |
| S | - So | - So they ended up not telling the king that the sky was falling down. |

## Project Strategy

Projects stimulate children to discover for themselves, know about the world, and stir up their eagerness to discover more. Series like- Science on Machines, the Body, Universe, Electricity, Animals etc used in small groups will greatly arouse children's curiosity and satisfy; making children desire more to use the library. Higher classes can be made to work on dictionaries and other reference source in groups.

Making Activities Effective
It is worthy of note that every one of these activities discussed must be goal oriented and the goal set before embarking on it. These will make the activities functional.

## *Oral Reading*

These are meant to sharpen particularly phonetic skills so there is need to use standard models of personnel, tape or disc.

## *Silent Reading*

This aims at imparting comprehension skills, provoking critical thinking, criticism and extracting moral value.

## *Reading and Discussion*

The children should be able to pick out important facts and actions that lead to others and present them logically.

## *Rhymes*

Rhymes are meant to offer entertainment and literary skills.

## *Dramatisation*

Again this is for enjoyment. Characters must fit into parts to bring out the raison d'etre of their circumstances.

## *Library Exploration*

This is meant for discovery and must be closely guided and supervised.

## *Project*

Again this is for discovery, development of spirit of team work and enquiry. They should be made to know what information to look for and how they could be found.

## Computer Games / Puzzles

These are for entertainment and learning. Requires close supervision and guidance for purpose fulfilment. There is therefore need to retrain the existing school library personnel to cope with the reality of today.

## CONCLUSION

The strategies discussed in this paper can only be implemented if school libraries are well funded and well staffed with professionals; with training and retraining seen as an on-going process. This also necessitates that school librarians prove worthy media professionals not individuals who sit as book keepers. As was done at the beginning by Regional Library Associations, School Library conferences should involve Ministries of Education who will provide the necessary facilities, employ skilled personnel, open and stock school libraries for the attainment of its goal of co-implementing the school curriculum. Finally, rapport with school administration is very important as this will give the librarian opportunity to explain needs and to get them.

## REFERENCES

Chapman, Robert L. (ed) (1995). *Roget A – Z: The Definitive thesaurus of Synonyms in Dictionary form*. New York: Harper Perennial.

Denga, D. I (1988). *Educational and Social Psychology for Schools and Other Social Organisations*. Calabar: Rapid Educational Publishers Ltd.

Elaturoti, D. F. (1998). *Nigerian School Librarianship: Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow*. Ibadan: NSLA.

Fafunwa Babs A. (1992). *Minimum Standards for School Libraries in Nigeria*. Lagos: Federal Ministry of Education

Hornby A. S. (1998). *Oxford Advanced Dictionary of Current English*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Ibrahimah, M. Z. (1986) "Educating Library Users". Workshop paper presented at the conference tagged "Libraries and Nation Building". Kano: Bayero University. 24th – 25th January.

Laird, C. (1990). *Webster's New World Thesaurus*. (school ed). Cleveland: Silver Burdett Gin.

Moen, C. (1998). *Scholastic Supplemental:* Mexico: Scholastic Inc.

Nkang, I. E. & Eneh, G. A. (2001). *An Insight into Developmental psychology.* Uyo: Afahide and Bros. Publishing Co.

Obinaju, Q. I. (2000). *The Nigeria Child: His Education in a Sociological and Psychological Environment.* Lagos: Ivy Press Ltd.

Ogunmilade, J. O. (1995*). College Library Practice for Staff and Students of Library Studies.* Yaba: Patrick Ade Pres.

Ogunsheye, F. A. (1998) "Reminiscences on School Library Development" in D. F. Electureti (ed) *Nigerian School Librarianship: Yesterday, Today and tomorrow.* Ibadan: Nigeria School Library Association P 3-15.

Onifade, A. and Olanokun, O. (1990) *Library Education for You.* Abeokuta: Kunle Alayande printing Co. Ltd.

Ruskin, John (2004) "Remarkable Quotes" *The Punch* Mon. Feb 2 2004 P50.

Thorndike, E. L and Lambert, C. L. (1979). *Scott, Foresman Intermediate Dictionary.* Scott, Foresman and Company.

Udofia, E. P. (2000). "Disseminating Information to the Nigerian Child" in Q. I. Obinaju. *The Nigerian Child: His Education in a Sociological Cal and psychological Environment.* Lagos. IVY Press.

Udoh, V. F. (1998). 'The Perceived Role of the Teacher Librarian in Effective Implementation of the Educational Programme of the School in D. F. Elaturoti(ed). *Nigerian School Librarianship; Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow.* Ibadan: NSLA

---

**Felicia E. Etim,**   Associate Professor - Department of Educational Technology & Library Science, University of Uyo