

Chapter 8

Snapshot of the Status Quo of Selected Zimbabwe School Libraries

Sindiso Bhebhe

University of South Africa, South Africa

ABSTRACT

The aim of this chapter is to discuss the challenges and opportunities faced by selected school libraries in Zimbabwe. It is based on the observation that the school's library system in Zimbabwe, including rural schools, is plagued by a plethora of challenges ranging from neglect in relation to funding and policy issues. It is from this perspective that this chapter seeks to deeply understand and address the challenges and opportunities faced by Zimbabwe's school libraries. The study adopted interpretivism approach and was qualitative in nature. It is a multiple case study with purposively eight schools being selected to be part of the research. Some of the findings noted were that expensive schools mainly frequented by the elites had modern libraries which are manned by qualified librarians with most of them being well remunerated. This was not the case with rural schools in which there were no libraries whilst those with libraries had few outdated and irrelevant books and there were no trained librarians in those schools.

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INTRODUCTION

The aim of this article is to discuss the challenges and opportunities faced by the selected school libraries in Zimbabwe. It is based on the observation that the school's library system in Zimbabwe including rural schools is plagued by a plethora of challenges ranging from neglect in relation to funding and policy issues. It is from this perspective that this article would seek to deeply understand and address the challenges and opportunities faced by Zimbabwe's school libraries. The study adopted interpretivism approach and was qualitative in nature. It is a multiple case study with purposively eight schools being selected to be part of the research. Data was collected through interviews, relevant document analysis and observations on the ground. Interviews were mainly conducted with individuals from library fraternity and the experiences of the writer as a teacher in rural school were incorporated. Some of the findings noted were that expensive schools mainly frequented by the elites had modern libraries which are manned by qualified librarians with most of them being well remunerated. This was not the case with rural schools in which there were no libraries whilst those with libraries had few outdated and irrelevant books and there were no trained librarians in those schools. Therefore this paper would offer critical analysis to the subject.

BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

According to Mchombu and Cadbury (2006: 2) it is sad that “while the west manufactures and ingests a glut of information every day the vast majority of Africans subsist on very little... books must often be shared between six or more pupils. Few schools have a school library...” The library school's system in Zimbabwe including rural schools is plagued by a plethora of challenges ranging from neglect in relation to funding and policy issues. This is worsened by the shortfalls of the National Library Documentation Services (NLDS) Act and the lack of National Library Policy. Writing about the importance of the library legislation and policies Mojapelo and Dube (2005: 111) said:

Clearly the policy would be an overarching and strategic framework that would inform school library development and practice by providing relevant canons, guidelines and frames. Without such a framework, there is likely to be a stalemate in critical aspects such as school library governance, support, appreciation, prioritisation, positioning, and resource-provisioning. These aspects are interrelated and interdependent.

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