


Chapter 8

Social Media and School Libraries in the Wake of the COVID–19 Pandemic: Overview of Schools in a Selected District in Manicaland, Zimbabwe

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ABSTRACT

The COVID-19 pandemic has presented school libraries with opportunities and challenges that are unprecedented in the history of humankind as evidenced by total shutdowns, lockdown rules and regulations, and adaptation of emerging technologies for supporting teaching and learning in educational institutions. This chapter provides a general overview of the experiences of school libraries in a selected district in Manicaland, Zimbabwe. It highlights how the digital divide disadvantages school libraries that are resource famished. Using a qualitative methodology, the chapter interrogates how the adaptation of social media platforms has helped school libraries to contribute towards learning amidst the complications of the COVID-19 pandemic.

INTRODUCTION

Social media is mostly used in negativity, so much that those born before technology, including old-schoolers accept it with suspicions. This technological phenomenon is so instant that it captures events as they occur and unfiltered information is spread like veld fire to the masses around the world. Social

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media is in real-time captures phenomena instantly, thus, opening eyes just for capturing every detail. Virtually all organizations around the globe have incorporated this technology into their daily routines during Covid 19 lockdowns. School media centers are not an exception, they were also left with no option, since social media remained an innovative alternative source for facilitating the capturing of information and enabler instant shareability, without physical contact as required by Covid 19 regulations. During the pre-Covid 19 pandemic lockdowns, school libraries and other organizations were comfortable with their status regarding the provision of manual library services and gradually embracing new technologies, including, social media. The Covid- 19 pandemic brought about significant and instant changes, mostly requiring virtual access to learning and teaching resources. School media centers had also to adjust to the new normal just as all other organizations around the world were doing, embracing new technologies, such as social media.

Danladi and Soko (2018) heightened that the COVID-19 adversely affected the education sector as evidenced by the closure of universities, colleges, and schools. According to the aforementioned author, this predicament has resulted in the Work from home (WFH) *modus operandi* and online education even though this progressive development is undermined by the digital divide, poor ICT infrastructure, lack of information and digital skills, and non-availability of conducive workspaces at homes, especially in societies that are resource-starved, for example, Africa and other third world countries. The study will be guided by the following research questions:

- What is the social media?
- How did social media benefit school media centers with regards to information dissemination and access?
- How much support did school media centers receive from school administrators?
- Who funded virtual access to resources?
- What strategies should be utilized to enhance the effective use of social media by school media centers in Zimbabwe?

This chapter will expound on these questions, using a general approach regarding a selected district in Zimbabwe.

Background of School Libraries in Zimbabwe

This study is based on the adaptation and use of social media in a selected district in Zimbabwe in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. Zimbabwe's Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education, (2019) reported that in 2018, there were 6 242 schools with Education and Childhood Development (ECD) programs, 6 288 primary schools, and 2 871 secondary schools. The province where the district X under study is situated has one thousand and seventy-one (1071) registered schools and one hundred and thirty-one (131) satellite schools. Of the 1071 schools, eight hundred and one (801) are primary schools and two hundred and seventy (270) are secondary schools. The District to which this paper is giving the particular reference has 246 schools of which 21 were selected for this chapter. However, it should be noted that having a school library is not a strict requirement, a school may operate without or with a makeshift one. information obtained through a phone interview with the National Library and Documentation Services (NLDS) indicated that there are only eighty-two (82) registered libraries in public primary schools and one hundred and sixty-four for public secondary schools nationally. Surprisingly,

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