

THE PLACE OF SCHOOL LIBRARY IN CONTINUOUS ASSESSMENT IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN NIGERIA

Introduction

In evaluating the effectiveness of the new policy on education and the products of the system, the federal government of Nigeria recommends a continuous assessment scheme especially at the junior secondary school level. This is categorically stated in the section dealing with secondary education in these words:

Junior Secondary School Leaving Certificates will also be based on the continuous assessment method¹.

In the same policy, under Educational Services, item 9 states that "Libraries are of the most important educational service. Every state ministry needs to provide funds for the establishment of libraries in all educational institutions and train librarians and library assistants for this service"².

This last statement at least recognises the importance of libraries in schools even though lip service continues to be paid to this especially in secondary schools where the students have at least acquired some reading skills. Agreeing with Rogers (1974) that "continuous assessment, represents continuing awareness by the teacher, of the development and knowledge of his pupil, it is a process which extends over a period of time and the gradual build-up of a cumulative judgement about performance"³; it then becomes clear that emphasis should be laid on changing teaching and learning methods in secondary schools.

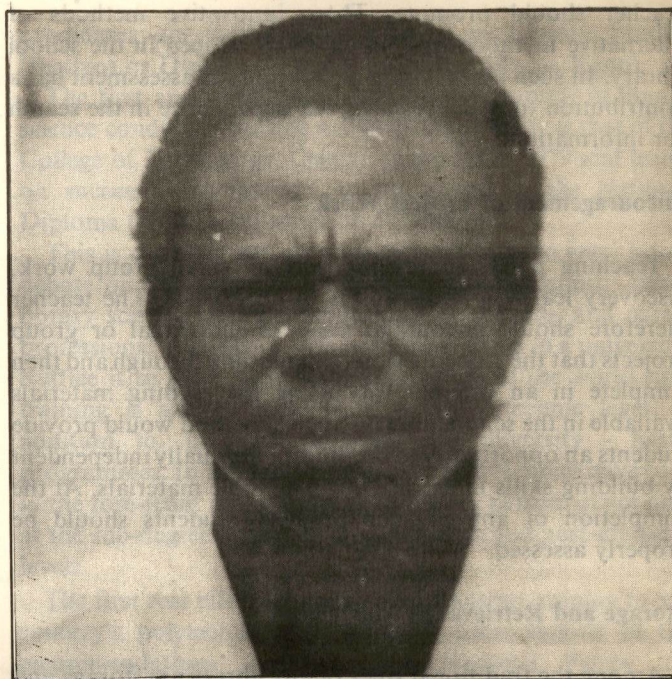
An effective way of doing this therefore is the involvement of the school library in the teaching and learning processes in secondary schools especially in the new continuous assessment programme. This becomes necessary for according to Davies (1974) "the scope of knowledge has become too vast to be covered extensively within the boundaries of the classroom instruction, superior though that instruction may be.

Through the school library these boundaries can be extended immeasurably in all areas of knowledge and in all forms of creative expression ...⁴ The demerits of the end-of-year examination which is heavily based on the mechanical **regurgitate of class notes, need to be changed to a situation where students could be made to search for facts by themselves.**

This paper is out therefore to examine areas where the classroom teacher and the secondary school librarian could work together towards achieving the goals of continuous assessment in secondary school in Nigeria. For this paper, school library embraces both books and any audio-visual materials in the library acquired for the improvement of teaching and learning in secondary schools.

The Teacher, School Library and Lesson Preparation

The school library can be defined as a collection of materials, selected, organised and appropriately housed for use. Selection is determined by the school curriculum and the various teaching methods and learning styles of students. The school library, like all other educational instruments, should be properly used by the teacher while preparing his lesson to break the popular assumption by the students who regard the classroom teacher as a store of knowledge thereby pushing



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aside their textbooks and relying on the dictated notes of the teacher.

The classroom teacher should work in close co-operation with the school librarian while preparing his lessons so as to incorporate the points in the reading materials available in the school library into his lesson plan. These references should be made known to the students as the lesson progresses or at the end of the lesson.

The teacher has to be very open-minded in this area so as to avoid "self protectionism," for in the words of Kosemani (1984) teachers at times "feel their authority is questioned by an enthusiastic pupil whose main objective is to seek understanding, clarify difficult points or modify inaccurate knowledge.

Caught in this situation, the inadequately prepared teacher who is both inadequately trained, might allow his sense of insecurity to force him to resort to punitive measures which might find expression in an unfair assessment of pupils"⁵.

Assignments or Homework

Continuous assessment in secondary schools apart from written tests, oral questioning and discussions should include assignments or homework. The homework should be designed to involve that students consult books or other materials in prosecuting the assignment. Majority of the relevant materials should be available in the school library for easy consultation by the students.

To make this method work, the teacher should as indicated earlier, work closely with the school Librarian. The teacher also should be willing to work hard by going through the materials where references should be made for the homework

to make sure that they are adequate and relevant so that teaching eventually becomes a form of learning on the part of the teacher while learning on the part of the students becomes teaching.

Students should be encouraged to be original and this the teacher should promote. These innovative methods of alternative methodology should be developed in the school library. In such a development, continuous assessment has a contribution to make towards self dependence in the search for information.

Encouragement of Project Work

Teaching places more emphasis on small group work, discovery learning and transfer of experience. The teacher therefore should encourage more of individual or group projects that the students would plan, study through and then complete in an original way using the reading materials available in the school library. Such a method would provide students an opportunity to become intellectually independent by building skills in the use of all possible materials. At the completion of any of such projects, students should be properly assessed.

Storage and Retrieval of Materials

Among the traditional roles of any library are storage and retrieval of materials, the school library is not an exception. In many school libraries in Nigeria today, the first function seems to be fulfilled for the libraries often have the old and dusty books locked up in cupboards either in the principal's office or in an obsolescent room where little or no use is made of them.

This role has to be changed yielding way to the new role the school library is being called upon to play in the continuous assessment programme in secondary schools. Given a good library building and furniture, the secondary school library in addition to storing, and making the materials available to teachers and students, has a further responsibility of proper organization, storing and making available books, journals, teaching aids, test items specially developed for various purposes, and other audio-visual materials acquired by the school for the teaching staff. Even though a few of them are trained in the preparation of teaching materials, they lack the knowledge of storage and retrieval of these materials.

Essentially, education is the interaction of two individuals - the teacher and the taught and the nature of the interaction differs over time. Each learning situation is unique; each requires a different solution or to put it into more direct terms which reflect the significance of this truth for library services - teaching becomes learning, classes become people and people become individuals. Individuals therefore need individual resources⁷.

The school library like all educational instruments, therefore should be properly tuned towards the performance of its function in the continuous assessment in secondary schools. It should among other things, make all types of teaching and learning materials available at one space for immediate use; provide the space where certain types of activities which cannot take place either in the classroom or in the laboratories can best be performed; enhance the systematic introduction of teachers and students to the proper use of books and libraries; become a learning centre; a learning laboratory, a resource and information centre.⁸

The school library should be unique in its ability to make personal study possible especially if the school itself exists for the purpose of enabling each student to develop personal characteristics. The secondary school library by focussing its services on the interaction between teacher, materials and the learner systems, teachers should therefore by their training or by in-service self-improvement emphasise the use of resources and should draw on the skills and experience of school librarians working in the field.

Teachers themselves should be made to realise that all learning does not take place in the classroom alone and that the school libraries are themselves complete learning laboratories. New methods of teacher-education should start fostering approaches that enable students to solve problems through personal gathering of information.

If school library is to perform its roles effectively variables like the building, furniture, finance and personnel, have to be improved in the following ways to make it take its proper place in the continuous assessment programme in secondary schools.

Personnel

A situation where in most secondary schools in Nigeria, the library is run by a teacher heavily committed to a teaching time-table with little or no training or experience in library resource work or by an attendant who does not know what to do, should be stopped. In its place, a professionally trained Librarian with training in educational theory, psychology and educational technology should be employed as school librarian.

Where such a personnel is difficult to get, graduate teachers in education who show keen interest in school library should be sponsored for training. Such trained librarians definitely will be more competent working with teachers in planning and developing units of instruction, achieving input in curriculum development and linking the use of the school library to the new curriculum development vis-a-vis the continuous assessment.

Finance

It was customary in most secondary schools in Nigeria to charge each student library levy annually. The schools were supposed to buy books and audio-visual materials with this money. In many states of the federation, this has been scrapped and the supply of books is now the responsibility of the state governments which provide books to secondary schools on shift basis through the State Library Board.

No matter the merit of this system, it lacks what it is to build up a good secondary school library. The library levy in secondary schools should therefore be re-established and the money should be made payable to the State Ministry of Education which in turn should set up a Secondary School Library Unit whose responsibility it would be to take charge of providing library services to schools.

Acquisition of materials should be largely based on the curricular requirements of the school, while classroom teachers and the school librarians should be heavily involved in the selection and recommendation of materials to be bought.

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